



## EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

### GENERAL STUDIES 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

DATE: 27.01.2025

#### GENOCIDE AND THE WORLD'S AVERTED GAZE

##### The Liberation of Auschwitz

- **Date and Significance:** On January 27, 1945, Soviet soldiers liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau, marking a pivotal moment in history by exposing the horrors of Nazi concentration camps.
- **Harrowing Discoveries:** Soldiers found 8,000 emaciated survivors alongside piles of shoes, spectacles, and cooking utensils, stark reminders of the 1.1 million lives lost, predominantly European Jews.
- **Evidence Destruction:** The retreating Nazis destroyed records to conceal the scale of their atrocities, leaving historians with only estimates of the victim count.
- **Commemoration and Pledge:** Survivors and world leaders gather annually on this day to honor the dead and reaffirm the commitment to preventing future genocides.

##### The Crime of Genocide

- **Definition:** Genocide, as defined by the 1948 Genocide Convention, involves deliberate acts aimed at exterminating a group based on nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion.
- **Recognizing Patterns:** UN Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted that genocide often provides clear warning signs, which are sometimes ignored or underestimated.
- **Nazi Systematic Discrimination:** The Nazis institutionalized persecution through laws, culminating in the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, which stripped Jews and others of German citizenship.
- **Barriers to Refuge:** When Jews sought to emigrate to escape persecution, they faced global bureaucratic hurdles, xenophobia, and widespread antisemitism, which limited their options for safety.

##### Global Response to Genocide During WWII

- **Inaction at Evian Conference:** The 1938 Evian Conference, convened to address the refugee crisis, resulted in sympathy for Jewish victims but failed to offer practical solutions or resettlement options.
- **Allied Awareness:** By 1943, reports such as the Riegner Telegram and Polish government publications documented the systematic extermination of Jews, yet Allied responses remained muted and insufficient.



- **Ignored Evidence:** Despite mounting proof from escapees and organizations, the Allies hesitated to act decisively against the Nazi genocide, prioritizing war strategies over humanitarian intervention.



## Post-WWII Genocides

- **Cambodia (1975-1979):**
  - The Khmer Rouge regime killed over 2 million people through mass executions, starvation, and forced labor, attempting to reshape society into a communist agrarian utopia.
  - The international community's inaction was shaped by Cold War politics, as nations like China and Western powers supported the exiled Khmer Rouge against Vietnam-backed forces.
- **Rwanda (1994):**
  - In just 100 days, approximately 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were brutally massacred.
  - Although UN peacekeepers were stationed in Rwanda, they lacked the mandate and resources to prevent the genocide.
- **Bosnia (1995):**
  - 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were executed in Srebrenica, a UN-declared safe zone, due to delayed international reinforcements.



- This genocide exposed the indecisiveness of Europe and the U.S. in responding to ethnic cleansing during the Yugoslav Wars.
- **Darfur, Sudan (2003-2005):**
  - Around 200,000 people were killed in Darfur in what the ICC recognized as genocide.
  - Ongoing violence in Sudan, even today, highlights the international community's inability to prevent recurring atrocities.

## 5. Gaza and Contemporary Concerns

- **Massive Destruction:**
  - Gaza has witnessed unprecedented devastation, with 92% of homes destroyed and healthcare and education infrastructure obliterated.
  - Over 47,000 deaths, predominantly women and children, have been reported during the ongoing conflict.
- **Legal Actions:**
  - The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants against Israeli and Hamas leaders, accusing both sides of war crimes and crimes against humanity.
  - This has sparked global criticism and debates over perceived double standards in accountability.
- **Moral and Ethical Questions:**
  - While Israel has a right to defend itself against Hamas' attacks, questions arise about when self-defense escalates into genocide.
  - The global community appears to accept unequal suffering, as arms flow to one side, and attention shifts away from the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

## The Reality of 'Never Again'

- **Failure to Prevent Genocide:**
  - Despite the 1945 pledge of "Never again," genocides continue due to political interests, strategic hesitations, or a lack of collective will.
  - Examples such as Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Darfur, and now Gaza reveal the international community's repeated failure to act promptly and decisively.
- **Need for Early Action:**
  - Recognizing and addressing early warning signs of genocide is crucial to preventing future atrocities.



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- A proactive global response is essential to translate the promise of "Never again" into reality.

**Source:** <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/genocide-and-the-worlds-averted-gaze/article69144172.ece>



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