

Genocide Resources for Educators

There is no subject more difficult to teach or learn about than genocide. Genocide is, by its very nature, beyond comprehension—it forces us to confront the unthinkable. As a “crime against humanity,” genocide represents not only an assault on a specific group but an offense against all of us. [The 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide](#) explicitly calls on the international community to take immediate action to prevent genocide, rather than waiting for it to unfold. This urgent responsibility begins with education: we must understand what genocide is, how it differs from other forms of mass violence, and how genocides have occurred across different historical, political, and cultural contexts.

This compilation of resources is intended as a work-in-progress tool for educators. It is not exhaustive but rather serves as a starting point for those seeking to engage students with the complex and painful histories of genocide. The list is organized by country and, within each section, divided into three main categories: (1) memoirs, fictional works, and literature suitable for classroom use; (2) background and introductory materials on each genocide case; and (3) additional recommended resources for educators, drawn from the expertise of our speakers and organizers.

Because genocide challenges the very foundations of human dignity and ethical responsibility, teaching about it requires care, rigor, and critical reflection. We hope this resource can support educators in fostering thoughtful, informed, and compassionate engagement with this most difficult of topics.

Listen to [this interview with Ben Kiernan](#), the founder of Yale’s renowned Genocide Studies Program and author of [Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur](#) (Yale, 2007) for an excellent overview of genocide, and answers to major questions people ask, such as how to define the term, what factors lead to genocide, and what motivates perpetrators.

[Here is the United Nation’s Definition of a Genocide:](#) (Article II of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide):

Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

Highly recommended sources for teaching on genocide more broadly:

- [The Ten Stages of Genocide](#), by Gregory Stanton (2020) -- abbreviated version [here](#)
- [Pyramid of Hate](#) model, with lesson plans by the Holocaust Center for Humanity
- [Centuries of Genocide: Essays and Eyewitness Accounts, 4th edition](#) (2012), eds., Samuel Totten and William S. Parsons. Each chapter focused on a different region or culture: Cambodia, Rwanda, Bangladesh, Armenia, Ukraine, Sudan, Bosnia Herzegovina, Holocaust, and Indigenous United States.
- Teaching History website – [section on Genocide & Mass Violence](#)

Argentina

The 1948 Genocide Convention defines genocide as the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. While Argentina's 'Dirty War' (1976–1983) doesn't meet this definition, many historians argue the military regime aimed to eliminate all political dissent. Unlike other Latin American dictatorships of the Cold War era, Argentina uniquely targeted the political left with extreme brutality, resulting in the disappearance and murder of up to 30,000 people. The regime collapsed after Argentina's 1982 defeat in the Falklands War, leading to civilian rule in 1983.

Recommended book for students:

- [The Art of Truth-Telling about Authoritarian Rule](#) Edited by Ksenija Bilbija (LACIS speaker for the workshop), et. Al: Features first-person stories, as well as illustrations from Nigeria, South Africa, Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia.

Background:

- Website: [World Without Genocide: Argentina](#) (excellent source in English that references Argentine genocide through WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY, HOW, RESPONSE, FUTURE headings)

Additional resources:

- **Selected Feature Films (English):**
 - [Secret in Their Eyes](#), directed by Billy Ray (2015)
- **Selected Feature Films (Spanish):**
 - [La historia oficial \(The Official Story\)](#), directed by Luis Puenzo (1985)
 - [La noche de los lápices \(Night of Pencils\)](#), directed by Héctor Olivera (1986)
 - [Garaje Olimpo \(Olympic Garage\)](#), directed by Marco Bechis (1999)
 - [El secreto de sus ojos \(Secret in Their Eyes\)](#), directed by Juan José Campanella, (2009)
- **Documentary Films (English):**
 - [The Disappeared](#), directed by Peter Sanders (2008)
- **Documentary Films (Spanish):**
 - [Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo](#), directed by Lourdes Portillo and Susana Blaustein (1985)
 - [Botín de guerra \(Spoils of War\)](#), directed by David Blaustein (2000)
- **Archives (English):**
 - <https://en.unesco.org/themes/holocaust-genocide-education/iceh>
 - <https://en.unesco.org/news/interview-education-about-holocaust-and-genocide-argentina>

Armenia

The Armenian Genocide of 1915 is widely seen as the first major genocide of the 20th century. Like the Holocaust, it occurred during a time of total war, when moral restraints on killing civilians collapsed. The Armenians, a minority in the Ottoman Empire, had long faced repression, and World War I gave Ottoman extremists the chance to attempt their extermination, killing over a million people. Raphael Lemkin, who later coined the term "genocide," cited the Armenian tragedy as a key influence on his push for international legal protections for vulnerable groups.

Recommended books for students:

- [Four Years in the Mountains of Kurdistan](#), by Aram Haigaz
- [Burning Orchards](#), by Gurgen Mahari

Additional resources (Armenia and Sudan):

- [Surviving the Forgotten Genocide: An Armenian Memoir](#), by John Minassian, 2020
 - [Genocide in the Middle East: The Ottoman Empire, Iraq, and Sudan](#), by Hannibal Travis
 - [The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response](#), by Peter Balakian
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Cambodia:

April 1975 marked a pivotal moment in Southeast Asia. As the Vietnam War ended with the fall of Saigon, the Khmer Rouge seized power in Cambodia, aiming to erase the old order and create a self-sufficient, isolated utopia. Declaring 1975 as “Year Zero,” they launched a brutal regime that led to the deaths of 1.5 to 2 million people—mostly ethnic Khmer—through starvation and violence, in what is often called an “auto-genocide.”

Recommended books for students:

- [First They Killed My Father](#), by Loung Ung (2006). (Film also available.)
- [On the Wings of a White Horse: A Cambodian Princess's Story of Surviving the Khmer Rouge Genocide](#), by Oni Vitandham (2006)
- [Year of the Rabbit](#), by Tian Veasna and Helge Dascher (2020) [Graphic novel]

Background:

- Go to [this](#) for background on the Cambodian genocide and the Khmer Rouge.
- Read [this](#) for brief summary of the genocide. (Other genocide case summaries are also on this site.)
- View this 4-minute [video](#) by the BBC for one of the more helpful video overviews of the Cambodian genocide.

Additional resources:

- [In the Shadow of the Banyan](#), by Vaddey Ratner (2013)
 - Feature film: [“The Missing Picture” by Rithy Panh](#) (There is also an excellent [book](#) by Rithy Pahn.)
 - Other: PBS Frontline’s [Sample Lessons for Teachers](#)
 - [Teacher’s Guidebook: The Teaching of “A History of Democratic Kampuchea \(1975-1979\)”](#), by the Documentation Center of Cambodia and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
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China

Since 2014, the Chinese government has been carrying out a systematic and wide-ranging program of human rights abuses and genocide against the Uyghur population in Xinjiang province of western China. Aspects that make this genocide unique is a vast surveillance system combined with a program of mass detention, forced assimilation to destroy Uyghur culture and identity, and enforced sterilization against Uyghur women. The remoteness of Xinjiang and the slow process of destruction of the Uyghur people often makes this genocide overlooked and underreported.

Recommended book for students:

- [Factory Girls](#) by Josanne La Valley (Ages 14+)

Background:

- Listen to [this podcast presentation](#) by Sean Roberts (George Washington University), titled “China and the Uyghurs: Cultural Genocide in the Name of Counterterrorism.”
- These articles in [Foreign Policy](#) and the [Asia-Pacific Journal](#), as well as this interactive Al Jazeera [website](#) provide additional information.

Additional resources:

- Autobiography: [The Land Drenched in Tears](#), by Söyüngül Chanisheff
- Book: [The War on the Uyghurs: China's Internal Campaign against a Muslim Minority](#), by Sean Roberts
- Book: [In the Camps: China's High-Tech Penal Colony](#), by Darren Byler (the page contains links to interviews and podcast episodes on this book)
- Book: [Worse than Death: Reflections on the Uyghur Genocide](#), by Mamtimin Ala
- Website: <https://camp-album.com/> A multi-media documentation project founded by Dr. Guldana Salimjan (Simon Fraser University) that showcases art and literature related to the human rights abuse and cultural genocide in Xinjiang. This project aims to provide communal healing and solidarity for diasporic Muslim communities out of China.
- Website: [The Xinjiang Documentation Project](#) at UBC School of Public Policy and Global Affairs systematically documents the ongoing mass incarceration of Turkic Muslims. It includes resources like a cultural destruction timeline, glossary, and [an entire page of materials designed for classroom use in university or advanced secondary schools](#).
- Website: [Living Otherwise](#) The site is focused on emerging forms of art and politics in Northwest China and Central Asia. Based on years of ethnographic fieldwork in the communities of Ürümqi, this site exists to provide a space for Xinjiang artists, film-makers, writers, musicians and poets. It is here to tell the stories of migrants who come to city in search of ways of living otherwise. The general aim is to recognize and create dialogue around the ways minority people create a durable existence and, in turn, how these voices from the margins link us together in simultaneously distinctive and connected ways.
- The [Central Eurasian Studies Summer Institute](#) at UW-Madison - A unique Wisconsin-based opportunity to learn a Central Eurasian language, like Uyghur, as well as learn about the cultures in which these languages are spoken and connect with local Central Eurasian communities. CESSI is an eight-week intensive language program supplemented by a rich program of cultural events, excursions, and a weekly academic lecture series. Teachers who are U.S. citizens are eligible for a Title VIII fellowship to attend CESSI, which covers full tuition and includes a \$2,500 stipend.

Europe & the Holocaust:

The Holocaust began in Nazi Germany with the persecution of homosexuals and other vulnerable groups. Jews, who made up less than 1% of the population, were considered by the Nazis to be an existential racial threat. Early Nazi racial policy focused on methods of expulsion, for example in the terror campaign known as Kristallnacht in November, 1938. With World War II, the policy of expulsion evolved into one of extermination. German citizens with disabilities, who the Nazis called ‘hereditarily ill’, were the first group targeted for destruction, primarily by gassing. These were some of the precursors that set the stage for the mass killing of Jews and Roma in the Nazi empire, which started in the summer of 1941 with the German invasion of the Soviet Union. Estimates range from 5.5-6 million murdered. This is the abyss that compelled Raphael Lemkin in 1944 to invent a new term genocide (a hybrid of genos - the Greek word for race, and cide - the Latin term for killing).

Recommended book for students:

- [I Have Lived a Thousand Years](#) by Livia Bitton-Jackson (1999)
- [Maus](#) by Art Spiegelman (1991, graphic novel)
- [White Bird](#) by R. J. Palacio (2022, graphic novel)

Background:

- Watch [this short video](#) for a review of the Holocaust, genocides, and mass murder of World War II.

Additional resources:

- [The Unwanted](#), by Michael Dobbs (2019)
 - [The Assignment](#), by Liza Wiemer
 - [Never Again: A History of the Holocaust](#), by Martin Gilbert (2000)
 - [The Kidnapping Campaign of Nazi Germany](#) (DW Documentary: 43 min)
 - [The Holocaust, 80 Years On \(PBS Show\)](#)
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Palestine

The roots of violence in Palestine trace back to the 1948 Nakba, when over 700,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes, and hundreds of villages were destroyed. Since then, Palestinians have faced ongoing displacement, military occupation, and systemic restrictions under Israeli control. In 2023, Israel launched its deadliest assault on Gaza to date, killing tens of thousands, displacing nearly the entire population, and destroying hospitals, schools, and basic infrastructure. UN officials and legal experts have warned that these actions may amount to genocide. In January 2024, the International Court of Justice found a plausible case for genocide and ordered provisional measures. Like other cases, the situation in Palestine highlights the difficulty of recognizing genocide as it occurs, especially when legal definitions remain contested and political will is lacking.

Recent rulings that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza:

- [Ruling by International Court of Justice \(Official United Nations Media video\)](#)
- [Anatomy of a Genocide](#), United Nations
- [Amnesty International investigation concludes Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza](#)
- A report from the [University Network for Human Rights \(UNHR\)](#), a consortium of human rights centers at colleges across the world
- [Top genocide scholars around the world unanimous that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza](#)
- A report by B'Tselem, an Israeli Human Rights Organization, called ["Our Genocide"](#)

Background:

[Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Primer](#) by Phyllis Bennis (2015)

[*A Very Short History of the Israel–Palestine Conflict*](#), by Israeli historian Ilan Pappé (2024)

[*The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine and A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples*](#) by Ilan Pappé (2003)

[*The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017*](#), by Rashid Khalidi (2020)

[*The Plight of the Palestinians: A Long History of Destruction*](#): A collection of voices from around the world that establishes in both theoretical and graphic terms the slow, methodical genocide taking place in Palestine beginning in the 1940s. (2010)

Graphic Novels:

[*Palestine*](#): The landmark work of comics journalism by Joe Sacco

[*Power Born of Dreams: My Story is Palestine*](#) by Mohammad Sabaaneh
Winner of the 2022 Palestine Book Award

Memoirs:

[*Light in Gaza*](#): Writings Born of Fire (2022)

[*Tasting the Sky*](#): A Palestinian Childhood by Ibtisam Barakat (2007)

[*They Called Me a Lioness*](#): A Palestinian Girl's Fight for Freedom by Ahed Tamimi (2001)

[*Young Palestinians Speak*](#): Living Under Occupation (2017)

Films:

[*Gaza in Context \(2016\)*](#): A superb 20 minute film accompanied by an excellent teaching guide with seminal articles on the various aspects of the subject, discussion questions, reading list and bibliography.

[Ten films to watch about the history of the Israel-Palestine conflict](#)

Teaching Resources and Lesson Plans:

[*Teaching the Seeds of Violence in Palestine-Israel*](#): A mixer/mystery activity on Zionism, anti-Zionism, peasant resistance, the Great War, the British Mandate, and more.

[*Teaching About Palestine-Israel and the Unfolding Genocide in Gaza*](#): Lessons and teaching stories on Palestine and Israel from [Rethinking Schools](#) and the [Zinn Education Project](#) website.

Rwanda

The roots of the Rwandan Genocide trace back to Belgian colonial rule after World War I, when social identities of Hutu and Tutsi were transformed into rigid racial categories, favoring the Tutsi minority. This created deep divisions and decades of resentment. After independence in the 1960s, violence against Tutsis escalated, fueled by the rise of the extremist “Hutu Power” ideology. Following the assassination of the Rwandan president in April 1994, a 100-day

genocide began, killing between 500,000 and over 1 million people. What sets Rwanda apart is the scale of public involvement, as many were forced to kill or be killed. Like other nations scarred by genocide, Rwanda continues to confront its past to prevent future atrocities.

Recommended book for students:

- [Blood Papa: Rwanda's New Generation](#) (2018), by Jean Hatzfeld

Background:

- Explore [this web-page](#) for context on the genocide in Rwanda, presented by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. All segments are recommended: Background, Violence, Response, and Aftermath.

Additional resources:

- [No Greater Love: How My Family Survived the Genocide in Rwanda](#) by Tharcisse Seminega
 - [God Sleeps in Rwanda: A Journey of Transformation](#) by Joseph Sebarenzi
 - [The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda](#) by Veronique Tadjo
 - [Cockroaches](#) by Scholastique Mukasonga
 - [Murambi, The Book of Bones](#) by Boris Boubacar Diop
 - [Ghosts of Rwanda](#) (PBS documentary)
 - [Understanding Genocide](#) by Newbury, David. Vol. 41, No. 1 (Apr., 1998), pp. 73-97. *(This is intended for teachers)*
 - [“The Teaching of History of Rwanda – A Participatory Approach: A Resource Book for Teachers For Secondary Schools in Rwanda”](#) (Particularly Modules 3 and 4)
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South Asia

Many genocides begin as ethnic cleansing or expulsions. For instance, the 1995 Srebrenica massacre during the Yugoslav breakup was a genocidal act by Bosnian Serbs against Bosnian Muslims. Similarly, in 1971, the Pakistani government used mass violence to suppress the Bangladeshi independence movement in East Pakistan, killing an estimated 300,000 to 3 million people and committing widespread rape in a campaign of genocide and sexual violence.

Recommended book for students:

- [A Golden Age](#), by Tahmima Anam (2009)

Additional resources:

- [Holocaust Museum of Houston: Bangladesh](#)
- [The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide](#) by Gary J. Bass (2013)