

## Words Have Meaning

### What do we mean when we talk about GENOCIDE?

Before the Holocaust (1933-1945), the word GENOCIDE did not exist.

In 1941, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill acknowledged that there was no language to describe the Holocaust. He said, "We are in the presence of a crime without a name."

In his memoir, *Night*, Elie Wiesel writes about how language is insufficient to convey the depths of pain, depravity and loss of the Holocaust, "'... while I had many things to say, I did not have the words to say them.'"



It was only in 1944, from his safe vantage point in the United States, having escaped Poland immediately after the Nazi invasion in 1939 that Rafael Lemkin coined the term GENOCIDE. How else could one describe the systematic, government sponsored attempt to annihilate the Jews of Europe? Lemkin combined the term *geno* (from the Greek word for race or tribe) and the term *cide* (from the Latin word for killing). The term GENOCIDE was born.

GENOCIDE is now an internationally recognized crime.

When the following crimes are enacted, with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, they constitute GENOCIDE:

- Murdering members of the group
- Causing significant physical or mental harm to the group
- Creating conditions which lead to the destruction of the group
- Preventing births within the group
- Taking children, by force, away from the group

### 10 Stages of Genocide

"Ten Stages of Genocide," a blueprint for how groups or countries commit genocide, was developed by Dr. Gregory H. Stanton, a professor and leader of Genocide Watch, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the fight against genocide.

Genocide requires collaboration of many people and the state. Genocide begins with prejudices that are nurtured and grow over time. When we look at the 10 stages of genocide, we can identify the warning signs. Then we can intervene and stop the process before mass killings begin.

### Ten Stages of Genocide

--From the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh

Stage 1  
Classification

People are divided into "us" and "them"



Stage 2  
Symbolization

People are forced to identify themselves



Stage 3  
Discrimination

People begin to face systematic discrimination



Stage 4  
Dehumanization

People treated without human rights and personal dignity--equated with animals, vermin, or diseases



Stage 5  
Organization

The government creates special groups to enforce the policies



Stage 6  
Polarization

The government broadcasts propaganda to turn the populace against the group



Stage 7  
Preparation

Official action to remove/relocate people begins,  
often disguised as "self-defense"



Stage 8  
Persecution

Beginning of murders, theft of property, trial  
massacres



Stage 9  
Extermination

Wholesale elimination of the group. It is  
"extermination" and not murder because the  
people are not considered human



Stage 10  
Denial

The perpetrators or later generations deny  
that they have committed any crime



To view Country Case Studies, go to: <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries>