



Budapest Centre

FOR MASS ATROCITIES PREVENTION

Unofficial translation

Anniversary...

Today, we mark the 73rd anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide at the United Nations. It comes one day before the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The latter usually distracts public and media attention from the Convention on Genocide.

Yet it is a document of great importance. For the sake of historical fidelity and for those who are not familiar with the document, I quote Articles II and III of the document below:

Article II

In the present Convention, genocide means 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.

Article III

The following acts shall be punishable:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- (e) Complicity in genocide.

Unfortunately, in the more than seven decades that have passed, the document drafted and lobbied for by the Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin has not been fully enforced. The genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica are perhaps the best-known cases, but there are many others, going on even now, in Sudan, Ethiopia, Syria, Yemen, Myanmar and China. One of the main reasons for this failure is that, to date, no body has been set up to monitor the implementation of the Convention, unlike all the internationally binding UN human rights conventions.

However, it is also important to underline that the international community has made many efforts to detect, punish and prevent these crimes. Among these, I would highlight the establishment of ad hoc International Criminal Tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda, as well as the International Criminal Court.

Particular mention should also be made of the adoption of the UN principle of the Responsibility to Protect, where Member States have committed to take consistent action to prevent genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Despite the facts that the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect is still the subject of much debate and, regrettably, the emerging new world order and intensified rivalries of leading powers constitute considerable headwind to preventing and stopping mass atrocity crimes, the camp and political will within the international community grow and strengthen for stepping up efforts to prevent further tragedies.

This should fill us with confidence and give strength to what often seems like a windmill battle.

Many see the Convention as something that applies to 'others' and put themselves in the comfortable position of "bystanders" who monitor the events with the feeling that nothing like that can happen to "us".

However, we must point out that history has shown the evolvement of genocide can last for decades. The conditions unfold slowly and guilefully. The main features of this process are hatred and its gradually growing intensification.

We are witnessing the increase of hate trends in the West, including the Central European region and in Hungary, too. Leaders, politicians, public figures, and the media have a distinct responsibility to ensure that hatred and hate do not spread, do not grow, will be removed from public discourse and the vicious process will be stopped as soon as possible. It is, perhaps, no coincidence that the European Commission has just today published its initiative to extend the list of "EU-crimes" to hate speech and hate crime.

The spirit of the Convention adopted on 9 December 1948 is reinforced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which envisages a world where human beings regardless of their belonging to any group within the society are equal, feel to be at home and in peace.

So let this day be a day Against Hate!

On this day, let us remember the victims of acts of hatred and let us strengthen the will and resolve to drive out the hate-mongers from the human community!

Budapest, 09 December 2021

György Tatár

Chair