The phrase *never again* has been used for decades as a symbol of international resolve to never allow an abomination like the Holocaust to happen again. All nations seem to recognize an obligation to stop future genocides and mass atrocities, even if it means violating the near-sacred sovereignty of another country. That resolve has been tested many times, and too often it has failed.

Since the Holocaust we have seen mass killings take place the world over. In some cases the slow, deliberate killing of innocent people may have only captured the news media’s attention on occasion, leaving us with the impression that mass killings only happen in the context of war. What might have seemed like isolated incidents are symbolic of a larger epidemic.
Mass violence is a political tool used by those with power for their own strategic objectives. It is not an unpreventable and unmanageable explosion of existing tensions. Ethnic and other social divisions can be manipulated by the powerful, but genocide and mass atrocities don’t occur spontaneously. And that means they can be prevented.

Now Showing Before the Killing Begins: The Politics of Mass Violence considers how early preventive strategies by governments and the international community should build much-needed capacities within countries, and make it harder for leaders to resort to violence. It aims to encourage discussion of how future efforts might better protect populations under threat, giving new meaning to never again.

Suggested Discussion Questions

Before you watch, think about:
• What incidents of genocide or mass atrocity, past or present, come to mind?

• How are mass atrocities different from violence that occurs between warring parties?

• Do you believe there are actions that can be taken by governments or the international community to prevent mass atrocities from occurring?

Questions for discussion, including the above:
• Do you believe the international community is living up to its promise of never again? If not, what steps need to be taken to give meaning to the promise?

• Is it possible to create powerful enough disincentives for those leaders that would use mass violence as a political tool or, in other words, to keep mass atrocities and genocide from happening through capacity building and other preventive policies? What would some of the disincentives be?

• Is it in our national interest to have policies in place that work to prevent mass atrocities and genocide in other countries?

• In what ways should the United States work with regional (the African Union, for example) or intergovernmental (the United Nations, for example) organizations to address capacity gaps?

• The Responsibility to Protect has three pillars:
  1. A nation’s responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.
  2. International community support to help nations fulfill this responsibility.
  3. If needed, international action if nation’s fail this responsibility.

Do US policies do enough to address the second pillar before intervention becomes necessary? What about international policies or actions?

• After a country has suffered from violence, how important is peacekeeping and peacebuilding, whether under the auspices of the United Nations or otherwise?

• The Genocide Prevention Task Force, cochaired by Madeleine Albright and William Cohen, in its blueprint for US policymakers recommended that “The American people should build a permanent constituency for the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities.” What do you think the best way is to build this constituency? What impact could this constituency have?
Taking Action

• Discuss the issue with others.
• Write an opinion piece for your local newspapers.
• Raise the issue with elected officials and candidates.
• Expand your knowledge about the issue by exploring resources available online (see the Learn More section).
• Request the Now Showing Before the Killing Begins: The Politics of Mass Violence toolkit to hold your own event.

Learn More

Citizens for Global Solutions believes that, despite promising measures taken, further action and continued commitment remains necessary to ensure that the United States can act swiftly, cooperatively, and decisively to confront the horror of genocide worldwide. They have resources available on genocide prevention including reports, fact sheets, and white papers. They also offer action-oriented tools.
www.globalsolutions.org/prevent-war/genocide-prevention

The Enough Project is helping to build a permanent constituency to prevent genocide and crimes against humanity. Through analysis, advocacy, and activism, they work to change the way the world responds to these crises. The project's blog and intensive field research in areas afflicted by mass atrocities are among resources available. www.enoughproject.org

Friends Committee on National Legislation is focused on shifting US foreign policy away from late military reaction to crises and toward early, peaceful prevention. They offer advocacy-oriented tools and resources related to genocide prevention, including “Preventing Mass Atrocities: An Agenda for Policymakers and Citizens.” www.fcnl.org/issues/ppdc

Genocide Intervention Network empowers individuals and communities with the tools to prevent and stop genocide and is mobilizing the first permanent antigencide constituency committed to stopping the worst atrocities around the world. They have speakers available, offer a genocide monitor, and maintain a blog along with other resources. www.genocideintervention.net

Human Rights First seeks to improve responses to particular cases of mass atrocities and to contribute to the establishment of effective mechanisms to halt crimes against humanity through research, analysis, public education, and advocacy. To improve governments' responses to mass atrocities, Human Rights First targets enablers of those crimes. www.humanrightsfirst.org/our-work/crimes-against-humanity

International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect brings together nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world to strengthen normative consensus for the Responsibility to Protect (R2P); further the understanding of the norm; push for strengthened capacities to prevent and halt genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity; and mobilize NGOs to push for action to save lives in R2P country-specific situations. Resources include a listserv that offers breaking news, policy analysis, featured publications, speeches, events and other information related to R2P. www.responsibilitytoprotect.org
Preventing Genocide, a project of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, offers a number of action-oriented resources including podcasts, an e-newsletter, and a blog. The museum’s work on genocide and related crimes against humanity is guided by the Committee on Conscience. The Genocide Prevention Task Force final report and other related resources can also be found here.
www.ushmm.org/genocide

Stop Genocide Now seeks to change the way the world responds to genocide by putting a face to the numbers of dead, dying, and displaced. They offer a blog and many options for taking action against genocide.
www.stopgenocidenow.org

The Stanley Foundation is focused on coherent, strategic approaches to pre-crisis atrocity prevention; capacity-building tools; and greater international coordination for post-conflict peacebuilding, genocide prevention, and response. Policy analysis, articles, and multimedia resources are available.
www.stanleyfoundation.org/humanprotection

Voices of Rwanda is dedicated to recording and preserving testimonies of Rwandans and to ensuring that their stories inform the world about genocide and inspire a global sense of responsibility to prevent human rights atrocities. See testimonials from victims of the Rwandan genocide.
www.voicesofrwanda.org

About The Stanley Foundation

The Stanley Foundation is a nonpartisan, private operating foundation that seeks a secure peace with freedom and justice, built on world citizenship and effective global governance. It brings fresh voices and original ideas to debates on global and regional problems. The foundation advocates principled multilateralism—an approach that emphasizes working respectfully across differences to create fair, just, and lasting solutions.

The Stanley Foundation’s work recognizes the essential roles of the policy community, media professionals, and the involved public in building sustainable peace. Its work aims to connect people from different backgrounds, often producing clarifying insights and innovative solutions.

The foundation frequently collaborates with other organizations. It does not make grants. www.stanleyfoundation.org

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