

Note: CIRP is in the process of developing this resolution and welcomes comments and input. Please email international@apa.org with your responses.

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Resolution Against Genocide DRAFT

Co-sponsored by the Committee on International Relations in Psychology and the Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs

Introduction

Throughout human history and continuing to the present, the issue of genocide or mass violence has been devastating reality (Staub, 2000). Psychology is in a unique position to both inform our understanding of the causes and solutions to genocide (Munn, 2006; Sternberg, 2003). While governments and the United Nations work to address this life altering and history altering crisis, Non-Governmental Organizations, such as the American Psychological Association, have the skills, knowledge, and expertise to increase awareness and ultimately peace and reconciliation (Howe, 2004). In keeping with its charge, APA's Committee on International Relations in Psychology calls on all psychologists to respond to this global continuing crisis with the unique contribution that can be made by mental health educators, researchers, and counselors.

1 **Whereas** the American Psychological Association has demonstrated its commitment to the fight for
2 human rights of all people through (1) its resolutions against racism, stereotypes, and violence against
3 women, (2) the establishment of the Committee on International Relations in Psychology, the Committee
4 on Ethnic Minority Affairs, and the Committee on Women in Psychology and (3) its ongoing support for
5 the efforts of the United Nations to promote and defend human rights; (Bryant-Davis, Okorodudu,
6 Holliday, 2004)
7

8 **Whereas** the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
9 defines the term as: Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a
10 national, ethnic, racial or religious group: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or
11 mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated
12 to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Forcibly transferring children of the group to
13 another group. (United Nations, 1948)
14

15 **Whereas** genocide is the ultimate display of hate, fear, and violence, which are learned attitudes and
16 behaviors; (Staub, 2006; Dutton, Boyanowsky, & Bond, 2005; Sternberg, 2003)
17

18 **Whereas** genocide is an outgrowth of prejudice which is unfavorable affective reactions or evaluations of
19 groups and their members; (Waller, 2006; Finzsch, 2005)
20

21 **Whereas** genocide threatens basic human rights of survival, security, development, and social
22 participation; (Lang, 2006; Mork, 2003)
23

24 **Whereas** genocide has negative cognitive, behavioral, affective, relational, and spiritual effects on child
25 and adult victims, as well as on perpetrators, historically and contemporarily; (Dutton, Boyanowsky, &
26 Bond, 2005)
27

28 **Whereas** genocide is often combined with systematic rape and displacement for victims and severe
29 mental health consequences for survivors of genocide that have been shown to increase anxiety,
30 depression, self-defeating thoughts, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, suicide, homicide,
31 and a host of health complications in targeted communities; (Bolton, 2001; Staub, 1999)

32
33 **Whereas** genocide has been shown to severely alter the developmental trajectory of children who are
34 exposed to it by negatively impacting academic and social development, self-esteem, and self-efficacy;
35 (Kaplan, 2006, Dyregrov, Gupta, Gjestad, & Mukanoheli, 2000)
36
37 **Whereas** genocide intersects with race, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status in ways that are
38 unique in creating disenfranchisement and environments of vulnerability; (Gangoli, 2006; Lindsey, 2002;
39 Moses, 2002; Bhavnani, & Backer, 2000)
40
41 **Whereas** genocide has long term intergenerational traumatic effects on whole communities; (Kaplan,
42 2006; Staub, 2000)
43
44 **Whereas** the United Nations has established genocide and systematic rape as crimes against humanity;
45 (United Nations, 2004; Osborn, 2001)
46
47 **Whereas** genocide negatively affects perpetrators by perpetuating distorting thinking about the self and
48 others, including cognitions that dehumanize those who are targeted; (Staub, Pearlman, Gubin, &
49 Hagengimana, 2005; Staub, 2004)
50
51 **Whereas** genocide has negative effects on intergroup relations, magnifying distrust, fear, vigilance,
52 suspicion, anxiety, stereotypes, and disconnection; (Kressel, 2003; Bolton, 2001)
53
54 **Whereas** genocide has continued to re-occur throughout human history; (Lal, 2005)
55
56 **Whereas** the psychological devastation of genocide has been established in psychological studies of the
57 genocides of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, Africans in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Jewish
58 people in the Holocaust, Armenians in World War I, the Tutsis in Rwanda, Cambodians, Guatemalans,
59 Ukrainians, Chinese in the Nanking Massacre, Muslims in Bosnia, and most currently the Black people of
60 the Darfur region of the Sudan where assaults against the Black Sudanese has resulted in the murder of
61 more than 450,000 persons, the rape of countless women and girls, and the displacement of 2.5 million
62 persons; (Hinton, 2005; Austin, 2004; Midlarsky & Midlarsky, 2004; Mueller, 2004; Beristain, Paez, &
63 González, 2000; Elovitz, 1999)
64
65 **Whereas** the American government and international health community have termed the situation in
66 Darfur a “genocide”; (Bush, 2007)
67
68 **Whereas** the struggle against genocide requires continued active resistance through science and
69 practice that promotes social justice and human rights globally; (McMillion, 2005; Howe, 2004;
70
71 **Whereas** passive observation of violent acts (the “bystander effect”) have negative consequences on
72 individuals and communities; (Fischer, Greitemeyer, Pollozek, & Frey, 2006)
73
74 **Whereas** the American Psychological Association opposes all manifestation of hate, prejudice,
75 discrimination, and violence and affirms the basic human rights of all people for survival, equality, dignity,
76 respect, and liberty; (Kahn, 1985)
77
78 **Whereas** psychological science and practice can inform reconciliation processes (Staub, 2006; Munn,
79 2006; McMillion, 2005; Suedfeld, 2000)
80
81 **Therefore** be it resolved that the American Psychological Association condemns genocide wherever it
82 occurs across the globe and confirms that every people have the right to survival and safety;
83
84 **Therefore** be it resolved that the American Psychological Association recommends
85 (1) The development of policies that work to eradicate and prevent genocide,
86 (2) The development of research that foster our understanding of the causes, effects, and solutions to
87 race-based and ethnicity-based hate crimes,

- 88 (3) The implementation of interventions that promote equality, social justice, and reconciliation across
89 cultures,
90 (4) The exploration of the gendered experience of genocide including systematic rape,
91 (5) The awareness raising of psychologists and psychologists-in-training about the prevalence and impact
92 of genocide through curriculum development, conference presentation, research dissemination, and use
93 of media outlets, and
94 (6) The promulgation of psychologically strategies to promote reconciliation and human rights for all
95 persons.

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Resolution Against Genocide Justification Statement

1. Historical perspective on this issue.

After numerous genocides in human history, particularly the Holocaust and the Rwandan Genocide, the global community committed itself to not allowing these atrocities to occur again. Unfortunately we have not been effective as global citizens in eradicating genocide. While political scientists and others have sought to study and address this issue, psychologists are in a distinct position to enhance the world's understanding of both the contributing factors and protective factors of mass violence, or genocide.

The American Psychological Association has a history of advocating for victims of violence nationally through the United States Congress and internationally through our representation at the United Nations. Additionally, the American Psychological Association has passed resolutions on such issues as violence against women, racism, and religious intolerance, but it is important to specifically address the phenomena of genocide, given the breadth of its impact and the potential ways in which psychologists can and should support peace-making initiatives.

2. Relevance to psychology and psychologists and importance to psychology or to society as a whole.

Psychology provides knowledge and research that can be used in responses to the prevention and minimizing of suffering associated with genocide. In addition psychology provides knowledge and research that can be used to take positive steps to mitigate the severe effects of genocide. The causes and consequences of genocide have also been a focus of psychological study. Genocide can be situated in psychological theories and studies of violence, trauma, prejudice, discrimination, racism, (forced) migration, and xenophobia. Genocide is also best understood within its cultural context of intersecting identities, including the targets and perpetrators' race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ability status, and socio-economic status.

Psychologists can help to elucidate the mental health impact of genocide including but not limited to depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Psychologists also have a unique contribution to addressing genocide based in science and practice aimed at exploring the cognitions and behaviors of both targets and perpetrators. In addition psychologists can provide information on how mere observation of genocide without action can affect groups and populations (the "bystander effect").

Of great importance as well is the contribution psychologists can make in the realm of prevention and intervention. By advocating with the support of empirical scholarship, the practices and policies that best

protect human rights and promote justice, healing, and reconciliation, psychologists can assist in transforming the intergenerational impact of genocide.

3. Likely degree of consensus among APA constituents.

As psychologists we commit ourselves to ethical standards that require us to: (1) Respect Peoples Rights and Dignities (Principle D), and (2) Have Concern for Others Welfare (Principle E). Endorsement of these standards would suggest unanimous consensus among APA constituents to support this awareness raising resolution with the ultimate goal of promoting peace and eradicating genocide globally.

4. Likelihood that the proposed resolution will have a constructive impact on public opinion, policy, assessment, consultation, and training.

The proposed resolution will have a constructive impact on public opinion and policy because it fills a unique void for governments and members of the general public; it provides a psychological context for understanding the causes, effects, and potential solutions to these crises. While other fields such as political science, economics, and sociology can shed light on the experience of genocide, psychology is uniquely able to connect the experience of genocide from the perspective of perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. This additional knowledge base are key to completing full assessment of crisis areas where genocides are in process, as well as in regions that are living in the aftermath of genocide. This resolution can also be useful as a quick summary sheet for psychologists providing consultation to humanitarian organizations and governments that are seeking to both comprehend and respond to genocide. Finally this resolution can be used in the training of future psychologists in courses such as Trauma and Violence; Abnormal Psychology; Culture and Psychology; Clinical Psychology; International Psychology; Psychology of Gender; and Peace Psychology.

Draft
June 21, 2007