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## GENOCIDE AS CONFLICT RESOLUTION?

By Christoph H. Benedikter

### Genocide as Conflict Resolution? Nagorno-Karabakh’s Uncertain Future

On the night of April 1, 2016 Azerbaijani troops attacked Nagorno-Karabakh positions along the Line of Contact (LoC). The subsequent “Four-Day War” brought the South Caucasus and the “frozen” conflict around Nagorno-Karabakh to the attention of the international world for a short while. Due to pressure emanating from Russia and, in particular, from the US, the bloodshed was quickly brought to an end; however, the roots of the conflict remain unchanged. A new escalation, more comprehensive than a previous one, is therefore likely to happen. If the well-equipped armed forces of Azerbaijan succeed in winning a decisive victory, this could mean the end of Armenian life and Armenian culture in Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan’s foreign and security policy and the increasingly clear statements of its president and other dignitaries suggest that genocide is at least accepted, if not already planned.

Although the conflict around Nagorno-Karabakh already began its formative phase in the 19th century, the short-term consideration here focuses on the sequence of events from the 1980s onwards. The conflicting parties are the two

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internationally recognised republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as the unrecognised Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. The two states emerged from the Armenian and Azerbaijani Soviet [Socialist] Republic (SSR) in 1991. The de facto state of Nagorno-Karabakh, also known as the Free Republic of Artsakh, originated from the territory of the Soviet Azerbaijani Autonomous Region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

### The Soviet Legacy

The Autonomous Region formed a geographic enclave within the Azerbaijani SSR, close to the Armenian SSR. According to the last Soviet census, about 189,000 people were living there, of whom 76.9 percent were Armenians and 21.5 percent were Azerbaijani.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the clear Armenian majority, Nagorno-Karabakh has been an autonomous region within the Azerbaijani SSR since 1921/23. This was based on a decision made by the Caucasus office of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It was the clear will of Joseph Stalin, the representative of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia, which was tasked with this decision. At this time, the Armenians made up about 95 percent of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>2</sup> During the entire existence of the Soviet Union, the Armenian nation did not accept the situation. From 1960s there had been repeated initiatives and petitions submitted to the Moscow headquarters to transfer Nagorno-Karabakh from the Azerbaijani to the Armenian SSR. The Communist Party Central Committee had consistently rejected or suppressed such requests in order not to create a precedent for similar constellations in the multiethnic empire.

1 The rest are Kurds and other minority groups. Christoph H. Benedikter, *Brennpunkt Berg-Karabach. Ein Konflikt gefriert. Hintergründe – Folgen – Auswege (Focus Nagorno-Karabakh. A Conflict Freezes. Background – Consequences – Ways Out)*. Innsbruck/Wien/Bozen: Studien Verlag, 2011, p. 74. Hereafter cited as Christoph H. Benedikter, *Brennpunkt Berg-Karabach*.  
2 Ibid.

Under the conditions of “Glasnost” and “Perestroika,” the Armenians of the USSR renewed their demands for Nagorno-Karabakh. In February 1988, the Nagorno-Karabakh region’s Soviet (Regional Parliament) decided to transfer the territory from the continuance of the Azerbaijani SSR to the Armenian SSR. This was due to the Azerbaijani Republic’s economic and cultural discrimination against Nagorno-Karabakh and its Armenian inhabitants. The transfer decision was accompanied and supported by mass demonstrations in Yerevan and Stepanakert (Karabakh’s capital), which were mirrored by counter-events in Baku and other Azerbaijani cities. On both sides the national mobilisation took place very quickly.

After a demonstration by Azerbaijanis, who marched on Stepanakert, was stopped by security forces and Armenian villagers at Askeran, and two young Azerbaijani men were killed, the spiral of violence and counter-violence began to move rapidly. At the end of February 1988 seemingly spontaneous violence against Armenian citizens broke out in the Azerbaijani cities of Sumgait and Kirovabad (today Ganja) and some villages of Nagorno-Karabakh. Remarkably, the local security forces did not intervene for days. On the contrary, some reports suggest that there might have been assistance from the authorities. In Sumgait, the focal point of violence, the mob even had firefighting trucks available to force people out of their barricaded homes and then slaughter them.<sup>3</sup> Only troops from the Moscow headquarters, or more precisely of the Caspian Soviet Fleet, put an end to the pogrom of Sumgait. The official sources spoke about 32 dead. Other sources at the time, in the majority Armenian, spoke of considerably

3 Elena Bonner cited after Johannes Rau, *Der Nagorny-Karabach-Konflikt (1988-2002)*. The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict (1988-2002). Band (Volume) 14. Ein Handbuch. (Handbook). Berlin: Verlag Dr. Koester, 2003, p. 95.

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larger number of killed and wounded.<sup>4</sup>

After Sumgait, the interethnic tensions have become irreversible. In both Soviet republics powerful national movements were formed, and the communist leadership became politically driven. What made the situation particularly explosive was the fact that there were large minorities of the other ethnic groups living in each SSR. While the Soviet central leadership lost control, Armenia and Azerbaijan, both theoretically committed to internationalism in “brother republics”, accepted a population exchange. Up until 1991 between 350,000 and 500,000 ethnic Armenians and 250,000 ethnic Azerbaijanis left their former “homelands, some under violent circumstances.”<sup>5</sup> As a result, these two Soviet republics were now ethnically homogenous entities (at least with regard to the hostile ethnic group); only in the contentious Nagorno-Karabakh did Armenians and Azerbaijanis still exist side by side — and bloody clashes were the order of the day.

### **The War of Nagorno-Karabakh 1991/92 – 1994**

In spring of 1991, the last year of the Soviet Union, the unruly autonomous region was to be forcibly returned to Azerbaijani administration. Soviet troops and units of the Azerbaijani Ministry of the Interior took action against Armenian villages in Nagorno-Karabakh. The coup against Mikhail Gorbachev, the last President of the Soviet Union, ended the campaign in summer 1991. Shortly

4 Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden. Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*. New York/London: New York University Press, 2003, pp. 40-41f. Hereafter cited as Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden*.

5 The great range in the sources is due to the fact that many Armenians fled to the Russian Federation and the Ukrainian SSR. As a result, the data presented above is approximate. De Waal, *Black Garden*, p. 285. Conversation with Gagik Yeganyan, Head of Migration Agency of the Armenian Territorial Administration Ministry, 26 August 2009; Christoph H. Benedikter, *Brennpunkt Berg-Karabach*, p. 82.

after, Azerbaijan and Armenia declared their independence. Nagorno-Karabakh answered the Azerbaijani Declaration of Independence with the proclamation of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, which, according to the Soviet law, was already legal at that time. A referendum, in which 82 percent of the electorate voted (with boycott by Azerbaijani residents), ended with more than 99 per cent approval.<sup>6</sup> On 21 December 1991, the Alma-Ata declaration sealed the end of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

As a result, Armenia and Azerbaijan were recognised as sovereign states under international law, while Nagorno-Karabakh was denied international recognition. The international community of states here followed the usual practice of recognising, in the event of the state collapse, those territorial units which had formed the disintegrated state. The aim of this approach is generally to avoid further fragmentation of the successor states. Faced with the tremendous potential for destabilisation that resulted from the collapse of the Soviet Union, this was not an entirely unwise approach. Such an approach was meant to prevent various republics and their subcategories (such as autonomous regions, etc.) from overlapping each other with territorial demands. However, the fact that many of the internal Soviet borders were controversial and doubtful had not been taken into account. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, it was a demarcation line established by Stalin, that in 1991/92 has turned into an internationally recognised state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, while Nagorno-Karabakh in theory become a part of Azerbaijan.

As an independent republic, Azerbaijan continued its Karabakh policy exactly on the course that the Soviet Azerbaijani leadership had taken. Namely,

6 Christoph H. Benedikter, *Brennpunkt Berg-Karabach*, p. 86.

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Nagorno-Karabakh should be “recovered”, “liberating” Azerbaijani settlements still existing in the former autonomous region. If the skirmishes were initially carried out with an improvised device, from the hunting rifle to the self-made hand-grenade, it quickly became professional. Soon, both sides used heavy weapons from the stocks of the disintegrating Soviet army, and the operating teams were often taken over too. The weakened Yeltsin’s Russia pursued an ambiguous course at the beginning, which was also due to the fact that there were competing or not fully controllable structures in the crumbling state apparatus. When the new Azerbaijani President, Eltchibey, representative of the Nationalist and Pan-Turanism People’s Front, forced the withdrawal of the Russian troops still deployed in the country, Moscow projected a more pro-Armenian course. The supply of Karabakh and Armenia with war materials intensified. In parallel, Russia used its leading role as a peace mediator in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to put Baku under pressure. The return of Russian (peace) troops was the strategic goal; this, however, has yet to be achieved.

On the battlefield the Armenian side had already accomplished many facts before the Russian swing. The Karabakh defence army, reinforced by volunteers from the Diaspora, and the Army of the Republic of Armenia fought effectively and were highly motivated, while Azerbaijan was unable to convert its superiority in human resources and materiel into victories. The activities of Turkish military advisers and volunteers on the side of Azerbaijan took place in a non-decisive dimension. Power struggles within the elites, partly incompetent military leadership, corruption and, as a result, the often low operational readiness of the troops made Azerbaijan play a losing game. When, in 1993-94, the winter offensive of the next president, Haidar Aliyev, also failed, the exhausted war parties

under Russian leadership agreed on a ceasefire. Between 9 May and 11 May 1994 the ministers of defence of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh signed the ceasefire.<sup>7</sup> Azerbaijan agreed on the deployment of 1,800 Russian soldiers on the ceasefire line, but managed to prevent the implementation of this measure later.

In the end, about 25,000 people were dead or missing on all three sides.<sup>8</sup> Azerbaijan had not only failed to regain Nagorno-Karabakh, but had lost another seven districts around Karabakh. The over 40,000 Azerbaijanis of Nagorno-Karabakh and at least 500,000 inhabitants of the lost districts had been expelled. Including the now de facto State of Karabakh, Azerbaijan had lost 13.4 per cent (11,722 square km) of its territory.<sup>9</sup> While the fighting continued, the OSCE had launched a mediation initiative of several states, which as an OSCE Minsk Group is still trying to reach a conflict settlement. France, Russia and the USA are the co-chairs of the Minsk Group.

### The Burden of the Lost War

Since the 1994 ceasefire, Azerbaijan’s foreign and security policy priority has been the full revision of the results of the Karabakh war. As a result, Azerbaijan pursues a four-pronged strategy:

**1. Direct negotiations:** Under the institutional umbrella of the OSCE, Azerbaijan is leading direct talks with Armenia at the highest level. Nagorno-Karabakh, still recognised as a war party and co-signer of the ceasefire in 1994, has not been accepted by Baku as a negotiating partner since the end of the

7 Ibid, p. 97.

8 Ibid, pp. 99-103.

9 International Crisis Group (ICG), Nagorno-Karabakh: Viewing the Conflict from the Ground (Europe Report 166, September 2005). Tbilisi/Brussels, 2005, p. 1. The regular assertions of Azerbaijani politicians, diplomats, journalists, etc., who estimate the loss of 20 percent of their former territory, do not correspond to the facts.

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1990s. After phases in which an agreement on the future of Nagorno-Karabakh appeared possible, the ever-less frequent meetings of the Presidents Yilham Aliyev and Serzh Sargsyan have not progressed in recent years. In essence, the conflict solution failed on exactly the same point as the war had been kindled 25 years ago: the question about the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan demands the return of Karabakh under the control of Azerbaijan, which is not an option for Armenia and Karabakh. What they offer under the principle “Land against Peace” is the return of a large part of the seven districts around Karabakh with the simultaneous recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan. Baku’s announcements to grant a “returned” Karabakh a far-reaching autonomy is distrusted in Yerevan and Stepanakert. In view of the way in which the authoritarian Aliyev regime treats its own people,<sup>10</sup> and in the mirror of the anti-Armenian rhetoric of this regime, the lack of confidence on the part of the Armenian side is understandable.

**2. International pressure:** At the international level, for example within the framework of the UN and the OSCE, as well as in its bilateral relations, Baku seeks to build up pressure on Armenia and Karabakh through diplomatic means and through lobbying. Azerbaijan argues persistently with the principle of territorial integrity, which from the perspective of already existing states practically always has priority over all other principles of international law, such as the right for self-determination. At the UN General Assembly, Azerbaijan reached a conviction of Armenia in 2008, which was called upon to withdraw its troops from the occupied areas of Azerbaijan and not to assist in the occupation of Azerbaijani territory. The latter referred to the close alliance

<sup>10</sup> In all international rankings assessing democracy standards, press freedom, respect for human rights, and so forth, Azerbaijan ranks between states like Iran and Saudi Arabia.

of Armenia with Nagorno-Karabakh, which is not recognised as a state internationally, which therefore does not exist in the formalist logic of the international law and which is consequently not mentioned in the resolution. The notion that the sole existence of Nagorno-Karabakh would constitute an occupation of Azerbaijani territory is, however, not shared by the majority of the UN member states in such an undifferentiated way as the decision seems to testify. 100 states abstained, 7 states, including the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, voted against, 46 UN members did not participate and only 39 voted for the resolution.<sup>11</sup> The European Union (EU) also decided to share the position of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group. Since this and other similar victories (for example, in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference) do not immediately bring Azerbaijan forward, more rigorous means are being worked on the recovery of Nagorno-Karabakh.

**3. Armament and war threats:** Azerbaijan has consistently built up its military capabilities since the 2000s, based on the abundant revenues from oil and gas production. Since 2007, Baku reported military budgets that were higher than the total budgets of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh combined.<sup>12</sup> For 2014, expenditures amount to about US\$3.6 billion, further increases were planned, but could not be realised to the extent expected in 2015/16 due to low oil and gas prices.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> GA/10693, 14 March 2008, General Assembly Plenary, General Assembly adopts resolution reaffirming territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, demanding withdrawal of all Armenian forces, online at: <http://www.un.org/press/en/2008/ga10693.doc.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Christoph H. Benedikter, Brennpunkt Berg-Karabach, p. 133.

<sup>13</sup> Idem, Eingefrorener Konflikt um Berg-Karabach 2016. In; Sicher. Und Morgen? Sicherheitspolitische Jahresvorschau 2016. (Frozen Conflict around Nagorno-Karabakh in 2016. In: Safe. And tomorrow? Security Policy Prospect 2016. Wien: Bundesministerium fuer Landesverteidigung, 2016, (Vienna: Austrian Federal Ministry of Defence, 2016), p. 181. Hereafter cited as Christoph H. Benedikter, Eingefrorener Konflikt um Berg-Kara-

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Nevertheless, the defence spending of Armenia, excluding Nagorno-Karabakh, stands currently at between US\$600 and US\$800 million,<sup>14</sup> and as such has been clearly exceeded by Azerbaijan.

For a long time observers estimated the fighting power of Azerbaijani forces as less than those of their Armenian adversaries. A further complication for the Azerbaijani side is that in the combat case the Karabakh Armenian and Armenian forces act along the “Line of Contact” from a very favourable defensive position. For this reason it appeared unlikely for more than two decades that Azerbaijan would take at risk to launch a large-scale attack. And indeed, Azerbaijan limited itself to sniper fire and smaller commando actions, which nevertheless cost a dozen of deaths on both sides every year. The less progress that was made at the negotiating table, the more frequently the skirmishes occurred. As of 2013/14, Baku was becoming more and more unconcerned with solving the issue of Karabakh by military means. The various war threats are meant for the world community in addition to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as for here the powers represented in the Minsk Group. In order to prevent a war around Karabakh, these powers are meant to put pressure on Armenia and Karabakh to yield to the demands of Baku in essential points.

In fact, a war in the South Caucasus would be a worrying scenario: A Russian intervention, overt or covert, is to be expected, although it is not clear how far Russia would go to support Armenia. Azerbaijan may also be under pressure to accept Russian (peace) troops on its territory. This would again be difficult for Turkey, Azerbaijan’s strategic partner, to accept. Turkish counter-actions could

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14 Eugene Kogan, “The Armenian Military and the Russian-Armenian Relations,” in Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, Expert Opinion, no. 47/2015, p. 9. Hereafter cited as Eugene Kogan, “The Armenian Military and the Russian-Armenian Relations.”

also call Iran into the theatre of war. How the US would react in the event of a possible escalation remains a subject of many speculations. In the case of a full-fledged war for Nagorno-Karabakh, the imponderables would be great. The Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group powers and the other regional powers have every interest in avoiding such developments because they are tied to the local wars in Syria, Iraq and so forth at the moment.

After Azerbaijan’s threats of war were not taken seriously, it rattled its sabres even louder. In the summer of 2015 the intensity of combat on the LoC reached a new climax. For the first time, Armenian territory also fell under artillery fire.<sup>15</sup> At the beginning of April 2016 Azerbaijan finally launched a limited Blitzkrieg against Nagorno-Karabakh. For the first time it was about the permanent occupation of positions, whereby an Azerbaijani operational plan, which fell into the hands of the Karabakh side, led to the conclusion that the offensive was originally aimed at the conquest of Stepanakert. Although the Karabakh Defence Forces were surprised by the well planned and effectively implemented operations,<sup>16</sup> the Azerbaijanis were largely repulsed by a Nagorno-Karabakh counter-attack during the second and the third day of the war. However, two strategically important positions remained in Azerbaijani hands.<sup>17</sup> In particular Russian and US pressure on the war parties stopped the fighting on the fourth day, while, according to informed sources, it was especially at the urging of the US, that no Russian

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15 Christoph H. Benedikter, *Eingefrorener Konflikt um Berg-Karabach* 2016, p. 180.

16 Eugene Kogan, “The Recent flare up in Nagorno-Karabakh: Azerbaijani impatience, Armenian perseverance and the International Community complacency” in Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, Expert Opinion, no. 68/2016, p. 6.

17 Masis Ingilizian, *Azerbaijan’s incremental increase of the Nagorno Karabaghs Frontline*. 12 April 2016, online at: <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/rest-of-world/2016/04/12/detailing-azerbajians-incremental-increase-in-nagorno-karabaghs-frontline/>

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(peace) troops were advancing to the LoC. The losses of Azerbaijani are estimated to be between 400 and 500, while those of the Karabakh army, whose soldiers fought in a self-sacrificing manner, are estimated to be about 150.

**4. Mental mobilisation and fabrication of history:** For about 10 years, the Azerbaijani regime has been preparing its own population more and more for the possibility of a military solution to the Karabakh conflict.<sup>18</sup> To this end, the nation was formally committed to the fact that Nagorno-Karabakh would be one of the “historic Azerbaijani lands”<sup>19</sup> or the “native lands,”<sup>20</sup> so that a moral right of Azerbaijanis to Nagorno-Karabakh would derive, as it were, from history. Of course, such statements ignore with some aplomb a variety of obvious historical facts: for instance, today’s Nagorno-Karabakh, when it fell to Azerbaijan in 1921, had a 95 per cent Armenian population, and Nagorno-Karabakh is covered with medieval Armenian churches and monasteries and their remains.

But present-day Azerbaijan may not even be satisfied with Nagorno-Karabakh: Again and again, the current Azerbaijani head of state raises claims to the parts or the whole territory of the Republic of Armenia. This can then sound like the following: “... once again I want to note that in the future Azerbaijanis should return all the historic land. Our historical lands are not limited to Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding regions. If we look at the statistics” of the “XIX century, we can see

*that the area populated by the Azerbaijanis are very extensive. Present Armenia is, in fact, the historical land of Azerbaijan. Therefore, in the future we will return to our historic land. Let young people and children know it. We must live, we live, and we will live with this idea.*”<sup>21</sup> Or like this: “*The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan must be restored in full, the state flag of Azerbaijan must be raised in Shusha and Khankandi (Stepanakert — the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh) and in the future Azerbaijanis must live on all of their historical lands. Our historical lands are the Iravan (=Yerevan) khanate, Goycha, Zangezour mahals. One day we will also live there. I believe in it and I am sure of it. In order to reach this, each of us must take efforts, each of us must make this holy day closer with his deeds.*”<sup>22</sup> Here, history is used as a sort of stone quarry, from which individual factual fragments are selected and combined into a fictitious building.

Of course, such notions of “historical lands” have not sprung from the President’s imagination, but have been produced for decades at the historical faculties of the Azerbaijani universities and at the Academy of Sciences. Every individual who has been in the territory of present-day Azerbaijan — and parts of today’s Armenia — in the last 1,000 years, whether Oghuz Turk, Turkmen, Azeri, Persian or Mongol, is declared retrospectively to be Azerbaijani.<sup>23</sup> Naturally all these people could not know about their Azerbaijani identity, because the idea of the existence of an Azerbaijani nation

18 See for example: Collection of War Threat Statements by President Ilham Aliyev and other Azerbaijani officials. Excerpts from Azerbaijani and International News Reports January 2010 until now. European Friends of Armenia, 44 pages, online at: <http://www.eufoa.org/uploads/AliyevWarThreats.pdf>.

19 For instance, President Aliyev, 19 March 2015, online at: [http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/26910370.html?utm\\_source=dlvr.it&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/26910370.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter).

20 For example, President Aliyev’s Twitter account, 7 August 2014, online at: <https://twitter.com/presidentaz>.

21 President Aliyev, 22 January 2014, online at: <http://en.apa.az/news/205928>.

22 President Aliyev, 19 September 2013, online at: <http://www.news.az/articles/official/82721>.

23 Here are some works translated into English or French, which testify to this delightfully anti-historical approach. Kamala Imramly, War against Azerbaijan: Targeting Cultural Heritage. Baku, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007; Aziz Alakbari, Les Monuments d’Azerbaïdjan Ouest. Baku, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Nourlan Editions, 2007. Tale Heydarov, Taleh Bagiyav, Azerbaijan: 100 Questions Answered. Baku, The European Azerbaijani Society, 2008.

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appeared first at the end of the 19th century. The project of the construction of a national history, which occurred in Europe in the 19th century, is occurring in the South Caucasus in the 21st century — and in its extremist form. With no understanding of irony, the Azerbaijani side frequently calls its Armenian adversaries “fascists”.

Let us briefly get to the historical facts: In today’s Armenia, including Karabakh, an Armenian settlement was already established in pre-Christian era. This can be proven by archaeological and historiographical evidence. Before the end of the 16th century, the Armenians who lived there constituted the majority of the population, although Turkic tribes and others penetrated their settlements from the Middle Ages onwards and also settled there.<sup>24</sup> The eventual Ottoman and the Persian supremacy in the region favoured this process. After up to 250,000 Armenians were deported under Shah Abbas at the beginning of 17th century, Persians, Turkic people (Azeris) and Kurds formed the majority of population.<sup>25</sup> The gradual Russian conquest of the South Caucasus from about 1800 onwards brought about a reversal of the demographic situation. The establishment of a Christian-Armenian majority population was a strategic goal of Russian policy in the first half of the 19th century. Incentives for immigration from the Ottoman Empire and from Persia were created and in fact attracted many Armenians who had been discriminated against in those empires. On the eve of the First World War the ethnic Armenians had a slight majority in the territory of today’s Armenia, while the Azeris (today Azerbaijani) constituted a similar majority in the territory of the current

Azerbaijan. There were many mixed settlements, which were then fiercely contested when the Russian Empire collapsed in 1917. For many regions in present-day Armenia and Azerbaijan these mixed settlements remained intact until the large population exchange of 1988, which had been triggered by the Karabakh conflict.

The focal point of the Azerbaijani falsification of history is to consider only that comparatively short phase in the 17th and 18th century, when the Muslim population, as a result of violent decimation and deportation of the Armenians, was more numerous than the remaining Armenians. A second fiction is the so-called “Albanian thesis,” which — so to speak, to be sure — denies the Armenians, especially Karabakh-Armenians, to be Armenians.<sup>26</sup> According to the thesis, they are, in truth, the Caucasus Albanians, an ethnic group that had partly merged with the invading Turk population and was partly absorbed by the Armenians. From this perspective Nagorno-Karabakh would not be an old Armenian settlement area, but at best Albanian, which is less tragic because the Albanians were declared one of the forefathers of the modern Azerbaijani nation. This idea, however, still did not prevent the Azerbaijani military forces from trying to destroy all allegedly even Albanian churches and monasteries in Karabakh when the possibility was offered.

As absurd and artificial as Azerbaijani historiography may appear to a Western viewer, in Azerbaijan it becomes an historical fact and the legitimisation of all claims against Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. The population is now convinced of the historical and moral legitimacy of their own demands. Surveys regularly show that an overwhelming majority sees the recovery of Karabakh as the most important national goal. Moreover, these surveys show that a majority of

24 Christoph H. Benedikter, Brennpunkt Berg-Karabach, p. 16.

25 George A. Bournoutian, Eastern Armenia from the Seventeenth Century to the Russian Annexation, in: *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times. Vol. II. Foreign Dominion to Statehood: The Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, (ed.) Richard G. Hovannisian. Macmillan. Bloomsberg. 1997, p. 96 f.

26 Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden*, pp. 152-154.

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Azeris believe that after Azerbaijan regains the territory, the Armenians of Karabakh should not be given any autonomy,<sup>27</sup> since their entire existence in Karabakh has been proved “in truth,” and also “scientifically”, to be illegitimate.

Precisely here the point is reached where the Azerbaijani regime has already become a prisoner of its own propaganda success. After the population was so intensely fixated on the complete recovery of Nagorno-Karabakh, it is almost impossible for Aliyev and his elites to compromise with Armenia and Karabakh, even if they wish to do so. The recovery of “only” the districts around Karabakh would be viewed as a defeat by the Azeri population, which could even lead to the beginning of the end of the regime. After all, two presidents had been overthrown during the Karabakh war for lack of military success. Aliyev, on the other hand, remains in power as a result of repression, the distribution of oil and gas money, and anti-Armenian mobilisation. Nevertheless, according to political observers, at the outbreak of the Arab Spring Aliyev was the only ruler in the post-Soviet area who was endangered, because the conditions in Azerbaijan seemed similar to those in Tunisia.

### **The Burden of Victory**

Armenia and Karabakh are confronting the threat posed by Azerbaijan with mirroring measures, “though they have not engaged in the creation of the same adventurous theories of history. Thus Armenia modernized the armed forces as far as

27 Uwe Halbach and Franziska Smolnik, *Der Streit um Berg-Karabach. Spezifische Merkmale und die Konfliktparteien* (The dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. Specific characteristics and the conflict parties). Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2013, p. 17; Uwe Halbach, *Der Konflikt um Bergkarabach – Besonderheiten und Akteure* (Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh – Special Features and Actors), in: Erich Reiter (ed.), *Der Krieg um Bergkarabach. Krisen- und Konfliktmanagement in der Kaukasus-Region* (The Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Crisis and conflict management in the Caucasus region). Wien, Köln, Weimar: Boehlau Verlag, 2009, p. 30.

possible, so that the country’s military expenditure in 2014 amounted to up to 19 per cent of the de facto common budget. On an international level, the Republic of Armenia argues in favour of Nagorno-Karabakh with reference to the international law of self-determination, which, in the case of Karabakh, is much stronger than even the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Through its attack on Karabakh in 1991/92 and its current attitude, Baku had forfeited the claim to the inviolability of borders. Karabakh itself, as a state that is not recognised under international law, hardly is present on an international level, but paradoxically it is the entity with the highest democratic standards in the region.

In order to balance the Azerbaijani threat, Armenia was forced to move more and more into Russia’s orbit. Co-operation within the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) has been intensified, the service agreement on the Russian military base in Gyumri has been extended until 2044, the Association Agreement with the EU has not been signed and instead Armenia joined the Eurasian Economic Union. The Armenian elites are bitterly aware of the creeping loss of sovereignty, but they have no alternative.

### **Outlook: Genocide or Compromise?**

The success of the Karabakh army in the four-day war makes a total defeat unlikely in the near future. Nevertheless, the situation for Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in the medium to long-term appears quite dangerous. Armenia suffers from low birth rates and a steady out-migration, because large sections of the population are tired of rampant corruption and lack of economic prospects. The real population of the Republic of Armenia is estimated to be only 2 million and that of Nagorno-Karabakh at about 120,000. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, has about 9.4 million inhabitants. There are close political and military ties to the Russian military, but it is not certain whether Russian troops

## GENOCIDE AS CONFLICT RESOLUTION?

would be active in Karabakh, and if so, with what purpose. It is not entirely to be ruled out that in the future Russia could make a deal with Azerbaijan on the Karabakh issue, where Russia agrees to stay neutral in case of an Azerbaijani conquest and in return Azerbaijan accepts Russian troops on its territory. Likewise, a sudden, if only briefly effective, collapse of the Russian position in the South Caucasus is not entirely improbable. In the 20th century this was the case in 1917 and again in 1990/91.

What then would be the consequence of a successful Azerbaijani Blitzkrieg? A look at the practice since 1988/89 leads to a disturbing conclusion. The minority, the subordinate group had been completely expelled. Ethnically pure entities had emerged. Apart from the victims (from both sides) of the population exchange between 1988 and 1990, in Azerbaijan there are over 500,000 people who were displaced as a result of the Armenian victories from the districts around Karabakh. Part of this refugee population, and in particular their descendants, are the bearers of revenge fantasies in Azerbaijani society. If one continues to consider the comprehensive anti-Armenian propaganda throughout Azerbaijan, then it is possible to say that a decisive military defeat of the Armenian side is likely to result in the extinction of Armenian culture and Armenian life in Nagorno-Karabakh. Enough statements from the Azerbaijani state leaders suggest this more or less directly. At the same time, the political action of the Aliyev regime leaves no room for a compromise solution, which could in principle provide for the return of several occupied Azerbaijani districts in exchange for the independence of a possibly smaller Karabakh state. In any case, it would be a good thing if the Karabakh Army were not the only factor that stands between the precarious situation and an imminent genocide.

It would be beyond the scope of this article to point out the strategic options of the USA regarding

the Karabakh issue in all their necessary details. But generally it should be stated that Washington lost much of its influence in the South Caucasus under the Obama presidency. As a result Baku has orientated its policy towards Ankara and Moscow; for Armenia and Karabakh, the Kremlin is the one and only place where relevant decisions are made.

To reconstruct its former importance Washington will have to step into the conflict settlement process much more actively. A combination of pressure and incentives (diplomatic, political, economic) should be exerted on the conflicting parties. At the same time the interests of Russia, Turkey and Iran have to be taken into consideration. The aim of US engagement could be a negotiated agreement based on compromise, which brings back to Azerbaijan the districts around Nagorno-Karabakh (or at least most of them) and ensures the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh. A settlement like this can only be negotiated and implemented in a long-term perspective; in the short and medium term the positions of the parties involved in the conflict are too contradictory. Moreover, Russia is interested in the preservation of the conflict, albeit in its “frozen” version, because this keeps Armenia, and also Azerbaijan, in a dependent relationship with Moscow. Until a true resolution of the conflict is achievable, it is important to preserve the status quo, which should be the basis for a gradual detente and a transformation of the conflict’s central incongruity. Therefore the US should be prepared to impede a further military escalation by all means and this preparedness should also be demonstrated towards the parties involved.

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# REVIEW OF JAMES WALLER, *CONFRONTING EVIL: ENGAGING OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PREVENT GENOCIDE*

BY ROGER W. SMITH

*Roger W. Smith*  
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The psychologist James Waller, whose previous book *Becoming Evil* focused on how ordinary persons can turn into genocidal killers, has in his new book taken on the ambitious task of creating a world essentially free from genocide. He argues throughout that genocide is a crime committed by humans and it can be prevented by humans. What is needed is for individuals to become aware of the horrors of genocide, expand their sense of compassion and regard for fellow humans, and then, self-mobilized through conscience, assume responsibility for prevention of genocide, speaking out as they are able to against genocide, the crime that is unlike all others. In this he follows a well-trodden path, but one to date, that has not prevented genocide. His approach, moreover, is one that is atomistic in that there is no emphasis on, or even discussion of, social mobilization, in which organization is primary and individuals contribute through group effort. What he does add, however, and it is the heart of the book, is an enlarged concept of prevention, one that refers to prevention before, during, and after genocide.

Prevention before the outbreak of genocide attempts to create the conditions in the state and society that will make genocide less likely. Prevention during genocide attempts to slow, mitigate, and eliminate the violence. And prevention after genocide is an attempt to rebuild the society in such a way that future genocides will not take place. Prevention is not a single event, it is a process and one that requires a variety of strategies to deal with the past, present, and future of genocide. And Waller elaborates these strategies at length, attempting to show that there are numerous concrete steps

that can be taken to prevent or reduce genocidal violence at each step of the way.

But before Waller turns to the strategies of prevention, he devotes the first 100 pages of the book to the background of a growing awareness of a unique crime rooted in extermination, with universal potential, and one that has claimed the lives of many millions of persons since the beginning of the twentieth century alone. Here he describes the efforts that Raphael Lemkin made to have the international community recognize the crime that he called “genocide,” and then provides an excellent analysis of the law of genocide as embodied in the UN Convention, ratified in 1948 and in effect in 1951. This section could hardly be better: for those already acquainted with the document and the various interpretations, it will serve as a refresher course; for those coming to it for the first time, it will provide much of the necessary background to what follows. Even here, though, there is a criticism to be made: the author tends to list (not discuss) treaties, laws, and organizations that relate to genocide, apparently to show that there has been significant growth in awareness of the “great crime.” Yet obviously not enough since the point of the book is to bring the public to a recognition of the evil that Waller depicts and through that to an aroused conscience that will lead the individual to speak out against genocide and in that way help create the “political will” necessary to prevent genocide. And Waller admits that the Genocide Convention does not seem to have prevented any genocides; indeed, that there have been more genocides since the Convention went into effect than before it became international law. And one does have to wonder if the moral approach that Waller and others before him see as the way to produce change has been

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effective. The assumption is that the conscientious individual will voice his or her opinion and that will put pressure on the decision makers to intervene (not necessarily militarily, but to do something). But it has not worked: certainly not with Darfur, where there were millions of people in different countries speaking out, where the policy makers called what was taking place in Darfur genocide, but then nothing happened. As the US Secretary of State said: we recognize it as genocide but that does not require any action from us. And here we already begin to see a major problem with Waller's book: he completely omits the vital center, namely politics, with the exception of sporadic comments on the Security Council.

The author turns to the strategies that will help to avoid or mitigate violence in the society, systematically outlining the steps he thinks will be most effective in each case (before, during, after genocide). With regard to preventing genocide before it begins, he puts major emphasis on "early warning systems" that he suggests are 80-90 percent accurate. The problem, though, is that there is a gap between early warning and early action. He laments that but has only a few comments on why that happens: officials see uncertainty about the facts, bureaucrats are adverse to risks, and so on. Here he leaves out politics and thus has no explanation of why it is so difficult to go from citizens' opinions to action from decision makers. Samantha Power did try to explain how it all works, but there is nothing of that here. Still, there are some reasonable suggestions of how to buffer the state from increasing violence. There are many specific strategies that he provides, but these are organized under the headings of those relating to Governance, Conflict History, Economic Conditions, and Social Fragmentation. This will require a long term effort, perhaps generations, and should come when possible from within the

society rather than being imposed from the outside. But the proposals end up looking like the image of a Scandinavian democracy, and we know that is not going to happen. Another problem here is that even morally aware citizens tend to have short-term views about commitments, not to say costs. And that nation building, which is necessary here, is now much out of favor with just about everyone. And finally, we are not dealing with just one country that is on the verge of genocide: Waller senses that many are.

But suppose genocide does take place, are there any suggestions as to how, to use Waller's term, the "behavior" of the perpetrators can be changed? Waller believes the answer is "yes." He writes, "Even in the depths of genocide ... we still have a surprising range of preventive response tools at our disposal." Here he outlines both cooperative and coercive responses under the headings of Political, Economic, Legal and Military. If the proposals for long term prevention were generally reasonable, those he now gives are often far from it. Here are a few examples, and remember this is within an ongoing genocide: on the punitive side, impose sporting and cultural boycotts on the perpetrators; on the incentive side, increase economic aid; offer amnesty and immunity; provide military training and equipment; lift sanctions; encourage new funding and investment; and provide trade incentives such as "tariff reductions, favorable taxation treatments, direct purchases, favored status, subsidies to exports or imports, providing export or import licenses, guaranteeing investments, sponsoring membership in a regional economic organization, or offering access to technology."

Despite the offer of incentives, Waller is aware that sometimes military intervention may be necessary. This should always be a last resort, and its costs can be quite high: "To the civilians it is meant to

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protect, military intervention can inflame hostilities and put them at greater risk by further destabilizing the state in which they reside. To a perpetrator regime it is meant to defeat, military intervention can rouse sympathy among bystander nations and lead perpetrators to blame the victims for the costs they are now suffering. To an international order predicated on state sovereignty, military intervention can raise the abusive threat of powerful states meddling in the affairs of those less powerful. To the intervening forces, military intervention can lead to massive expense equipment loss, and casualties — often in a country or region with no apparent national interests.”

Quite so and the author wants to avoid such intervention to the extent possible. He states that military intervention raises three questions: when to intervene, how to intervene, and who should intervene? These are important questions all linked to the realm of politics and why it becomes difficult to create “political will,” something that he alludes to throughout, while having no explanation of why moral appeals fall short. Yet he devotes only four pages to the questions he states are crucial. On the whole, Waller’s approach is to distance the military issue from other forms of intervention against the killing of civilians because of their group identity. But he misses the many reasons that it is so difficult to generate the will to intervene, even such reasons as are regularly cited by those in the State Department, whether as excuses or genuine concerns, as to why intervention is not taking place: the facts are unclear, intervention would not work, it would be counter-productive, it would jeopardize other important goals. Grappling with the way politics works where issues of genocide are involved is important both for understanding why the ethical alone is not sufficient in “confronting evil” and how strategies that seek humanitarian intervention can be made more effective.

Genocides may end, but their aftermaths are horrendous and cry out for enormous efforts by the international community to provide for refugees, rebuild the physical infrastructure of the society, provide security, revive the economy, restore agricultural production, and remove, in some cases, land mines and unexploded artillery shells. When Waller turns to the need for prevention after genocide has ended, with the exception of security, he ignores these issues and focuses on the repair of social bonds that he believes necessary to prevent the recurrence in that society. In his estimation, crucial to the repair and rebuilding of trust are justice, truth, and memory. His discussions of these are insightful and important, yet by bypassing the tasks mentioned earlier, he foregoes an important strategy to create the political will he sees as necessary to prevent genocide. It’s an argument rooted in prudence: that the costs of dealing with the aftermath of genocide are greater than that of preventing genocide in the first place. Here morality and realpolitik join hands.

Rebuilding a society on the basis of justice, truth, and memory is difficult, perhaps impossible, and it will, Waller asserts, take at least a generation before trust and reconciliation come to fruition. Truth itself in divided societies, and in the aftermath of mass atrocities, is plural. Waller states it well: “Aside from the control of territory during a conflict, nothing is fought over as much as the control of history after a conflict.” Victims, perpetrators, bystanders all will have different interpretations of what took place, why, and who was responsible. Truth commissions may help to bring out some of the facts, but there is little evidence that such commissions lead to closure, social healing, justice, or reconciliation, or that they, by themselves, will deter future atrocities.

If there is any chance for the society to move

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forward and remove that which led to genocide in the past, it rests on a system of justice, the latter understood in a broad way, including three elements. The first of these is what I call “Reconstructive Justice,” something that Waller mentions briefly and refers to it as “Institutional Reform” that is related to physical security. The judiciary, police, intelligence services, the military, and laws will all need to be transformed, as will the constitution. The removal from position of power of those involved in the initiation and carrying out of the atrocities would also be necessary. A constitution that would offer greater rights protection must also be enacted, containing checks and balances and other safeguards against the concentration of power in a few hands.

Another form of justice is “Retributive,” which prosecutes and punishes those guilty of crimes associated with the genocide. Punishment is not likely to deter atrocities, but the fact that those who have caused death and mass destruction are being held accountable can increase trust in the judicial system and in the new regime.

Then there is “Restorative Justice,” which the author says, aims to “repair the social harm caused by mass atrocity.” Here he puts the emphasis on the role of reparations — material, symbolic, and psychosocial. Material reparations include the return of property to its owner; in this form it is what others call “restitution.” But material reparations also include compensation for suffering inflicted by the perpetrator, and in some instances, economic and educational benefits. Symbolic reparations take many forms: apologies, national days of remembrance, monuments, museums, and joint commemorations held by victim and perpetrator groups. Psychosocial reparations take place on both an individual and collective level, with therapeutic, rehabilitative, and legal services

for individuals, and for the community, creation of museums, cultural programs, and public investment in education, housing, and the like.

But do reparations lead to reconciliation? Waller is not sure. On the one hand, he thinks that “the pursuit of reparations ... give voice to survivors and may offer them a sense of dignity, recognition, and belongingness that can help a postgenocide society move from intergroup conflict to intergroup peace.” On the other hand, he recognizes that reparations can simply antagonize: “Perpetrators, and bystanders, may believe that amends have been made and the memory of the offense can be closed. Survivors may believe that ‘reparations of any sort do not provide an adequate moral response to their suffering. They may see it as ... an attempt by the state to wash its hands of further responsibility.’”

Overall, the author has trouble making the case for memory, reparations, truth, even retribution as providing grounds for optimism about the prevention of genocide. He gives less than robust support to all of them, often citing evidence that undercuts even that.

Memory is not history, and with time, it is not even recollection of personal experience. It is, Waller indicates, a representation of history, a social construction that serves present purposes. It, like truth, is plural, and expressive not of reality, but of one’s ethnic identity or socialization. He doesn’t discuss denial of genocide, yet that generates major distortions of truth and memory, and perpetuates the gulf between groups. Though Waller speaks over and over again of the necessity of a “fair interpretation and transmission of history” of the group conflict and the genocide, he never suggests how this can be done.

So what does help change the potential for genocide and other atrocities in a postgenocide

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society? They are, I believe, the institutional, constitutional, and personnel changes that were summarized under the heading of “Reconstructive Justice.” And the prerequisite for that to take place is for the rebuilding of the infrastructure, economy, and the provision of security. This does not require intervention, but rather assistance. That may make it more acceptable to both the society itself and to those at home who can view the assistance, not as entanglement in the affairs of others, but as a humanitarian act. Even would-be perpetrators could be restrained by a rights based constitution, checks and balances, and other elements of a revamped set of governmental institutions. Institutions, properly designed, function as substitutes for virtue.

In the end, Waller’s book is more about failure than prevention. In fact, his work inadvertently raises the dark, yet fundamental question that hovers over us: Can genocide, given existing conditions, be prevented? And what can we anticipate in an era of scarcity and mass migration as global climate change continues?

# HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE SCHOLARS ON THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION: A SHORT LIST OF ARTICLES

COMPILED BY ADRIENNE PARVIN

*Compiled by Adrienne Parvin, Master of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Studies Program, Stockton University*

**Christopher R. Browning, “Lessons from Hitler’s Rise,” *The New York Review of Books*, 20 April 2017**

(<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2017/04/20/lessons-from-hitlers-rise/>)

“When the original German edition of Volker Ullrich’s new biography, *Hitler: Ascent 1889–1939*, was published in 2013, the current political situation in the United States was not remotely conceivable...In early 2017 it is impossible for an American to read the newly published English translation of this book outside the shadow cast by our new president. To begin [Browning] would stipulate emphatically that Trump is not Hitler and the American Republic in the early twenty-first century is not Weimar. There are many stark differences between both the men and the historical conditions in which they ascended to power. Nonetheless there are sufficient areas of similarity in some regards to make the book chilling and insightful reading about not just the past but also the present.”

**Richard Evans (Interview with Isaac Chotiner), “Too Close for Comfort: How much do the early days of the Trump administration look like the Third Reich?” *Slate*, 10 February 2017**

([http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/interrogation/2017/02/historian\\_richard\\_evans\\_says\\_trump\\_s\\_america\\_isn\\_t\\_exactly\\_like\\_the\\_third.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/interrogation/2017/02/historian_richard_evans_says_trump_s_america_isn_t_exactly_like_the_third.html))

“When you look at President Trump’s statements, I’m afraid you do see echoes, and they are very alarming. For example, the stigmatization of minorities. First of all, the Trump White House failed to mention the Jews in its statement on Holocaust Remembrance Day. And that is very worrying because the Nazi Holocaust of the Jews was not just a genocide; it had a special quality, because Hitler and the Nazis regarded the Jews as an existential threat to Germany. They used hyperbolic and exaggerated language about Jews. If the Jews were not killed, the Nazis said, they would destroy Germany completely, whereas other groups that the Nazis stigmatized, discriminated against, and indeed murdered, like the handicapped, were only to be gotten out of the way. If you look at the language the Trump team has been using about Islamic extremist jihadis, it is exactly the same: They are an existential threat to America. They will defeat, dominate, and destroy America. That is a very extreme kind of language and a very disturbing echo.”

**Phillippe Sands, *East West Street*, Knopf, 2016**

(<http://www.signature-reads.com/2017/06/short-road-travel-ban-genocide/?ref=BEBF7DBE6741>)

“The legality of the Executive Order, in its revised form, as a matter of U.S. constitutional law, is heading to the Supreme Court. As I have explained above, the issues it raises – targeting people not because of what they may have done, or might do, but simply because of who they are – raises profoundly important concerns as a matter of international law.

“Such concerns were brought to the fore by the United States back in 1945. It played a leading

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role in giving the world the Nuremberg Charter and the idea of human rights for all, and in taking steps to protect all individuals and all groups, with the invention of ‘crimes against humanity’ and ‘genocide.’

“As the travel ban is debated and its legality assessed, let us not forget from whence we have come, and to where such steps might lead, not just in the U.S. but around the world.”

**Timothy Snyder (interview with Steven Rosenfeld), “If We Don’t Act Now, Fascism Will Be on Our Doorstep, Says Yale Historian,” *AlterNet*, 13 March 2017**

(<http://www.alternet.org/activism/if-we-dont-act-now-fascism-will-be-our-doorstep-says-yale-historian>)

“The point of the book [*On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*] is [that] we are facing a real crisis and a real moment of choice. The possibilities are much darker than Americans are used to considering. But at the same time, what we can do is much more important than we realize. The regime will only change if the gamble of the people in the White House is right: that many of us despise many others of us and that most of us are indifferent. If it turns out that there are emotions and values that are more numerous and more vibrant than indifference and hatred, things are going to be okay. That depends on us. That depends on us making certain realizations. It depends on us acting fast. In that sense it’s a test, not just collectively. Maybe there’s no such thing as a collective test. But it is a test for us individually.”

**James Waller, *It Can Happen Here: Assessing the Risk of Genocide in the US*, Center for Development of International Law, 24 February 2017**

(<http://cdilaw.org/il-newswire/2017/3/20/it-can-happen-here-assessing-the-risk-of-genocide-in-the-us-dr-james-waller-keene-state-college>)

“Could a long, slow attrition of civil and human rights bring our country again to the point where genocide — at home or abroad — stands justified as sound political, social, national, and economic strategy? If so, could we recognize the warning signs in that process and have the collective resolve to resist and mitigate them? The purpose of this paper is to offer a sober real-time analysis of those warning signs and assess the degree of risk for genocide in the US. Using a comprehensive and data driven set of risk factors that help us understand the preconditions for a genocidal society, this paper focuses on the proximate and immediate pressure of risk factors related to governance and social fragmentation as impacted by, and reflected in, the emergence of a new presidential administration in the US. This paper argues that recent political transitions in governance, combined with an escalation in long-term social fragmentation trends, have increased our risk for genocide in the US.”

## ASIA/IRAQ — HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH REPORT: CHRISTIAN VILLAGES LOOTED AND BURNED IN THE NINEVEH PLAIN BY ANTI-JIHADIST MILITIAS

Qaraqosh (Agenzia Fides) — “Spontaneous” armed militias and paramilitary groups involved in the fight against the jihadists of the self-proclaimed Islamic state (Daesh) are responsible for looting, destruction and burning of entire neighborhoods in at least four villages in adjacent areas in Mosul, acts committed after the cities had been abandoned by the militia of the Caliphate. This is the scenario that emerges from a detailed report by Human Rights Watch (HRW).

Thanks to the reports of many eyewitnesses, and also making use of satellite photos of the affected areas, the international organization committed in the defense of human rights was able to verify that armed groups and militias of “popular self-protection” forces, that now claim their role in the campaign of “liberation” from the jihadist occupation, looted and devastated entire neighborhoods of the city recently taken from the control of Daesh. The looting and devastation apparently took place between November 2016 and February 2017, with no apparent justification from a military point of view. According to Human Rights Watch among the groups identified as responsible for looting and destruction, it appears that also the popular mobilization forces known as Hashd al-Sha’abi are involved, units that were formed largely to combat ISIS, and are under the direct command of Prime Minister al-Abadi.

To the southwest of Mosul, Human Rights Watch documented looting and extensive demolition of buildings in three villages using explosives, heavy machinery, and fire. In the village of Ashwa it seems that also the largest mosque was destroyed for no reason. The representatives of Hashd al-Sha’abi responded to the allegations by Human Rights Watch, talking about booby-trapped by ISIS which then caused the destruction of houses and public

buildings after their retreat. But several eyewitness reports collected by Human Rights Watch appear to contradict that version.

Among the looted cities there is also the village of Qaraqosh, which before falling into the hands of the jihadists was inhabited entirely by Christians, and the Christian-Sunnis of al-Khidir. The HRW report also indicates the protection Unit of the Nineveh Plain — formed in part by Assyrian Christians — among military groups of self-protection, responsible of the control of such villages after they were abandoned by jihadists. Witnesses confirmed that they had found their houses looted or destroyed in February.

About 60 thousand local Christians fled from Qaraqosh and other villages in the Nineveh Plain in the night between 6 and 7 August 2014, when the Kurdish Peshmerga army had suddenly withdrawn before the advancing of the militias of the self-proclaimed Islamic State.

(c) Agenzia Fides 2017

Read the full report here:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/16/iraq-looting-destruction-forces-fighting-isis>

# CHRISTIANS IN IRAQ: A NEW REPORT

BY ADRIENNE PARVIN

*By Adrienne Parvin*

On March 6, 2017, ten political parties representing the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian minorities in Iraq submitted a 6-page report, entitled “Nineveh Plain: Administration, Security — A New Norm in the Post-ISIS Period,” to several parties, including Iraqi and Kurdish government authorities, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and the international community. The report listed a series of appeals to these bodies, which were made in order to address the dire political situation of these minority groups since the start of the Iraq War in 2003 and to demand that the Iraqi and Kurdish governments implement changes in order to create the conditions for a secure, stable and confident community in the future.

In the report, which comes at a time when the reconstruction of the Nineveh plain is one of the central issues in the debates about post-ISIS Iraq, Christian representatives urged the government to recognize the proposed Nineveh Plain province as a “green zone,” referring to the secured area in Baghdad that goes by the same name. The Nineveh “green zone” would remain politically and militarily neutral, allowing the minority groups that have historically inhabited the province to administer the area on their own. Furthermore, the appeal urges the Iraqi government to take responsibility for the war-ravaged areas, demanding that the government take charge of reconstructing and rehabilitating the areas that have been damaged by fighting and that it provides returning inhabitants with fair compensation so that they may restart their lives with dignity.

The appeal addresses the devastating impact that over a decade of conflict has had on the culture and identity of Christian minority groups. The demands include actions that would move Iraq toward greater national and religious pluralism with the

understanding that these minority groups would no longer have to fight simply to be recognized as being both a historical and a contemporary component of the region. In addition to a slowing the domination of Christian cultural life by Iraqi majority groups, the representatives have demanded an end to the encroachment on living space that has become more of a threat since ISIS’s attacks, which virtually emptied the Nineveh Plain of its Christian populations. This “demographic warfare” is particularly alarming in light of the fact that this issue has been recognized in multiple government channels, though as of yet no solution has been attempted.

The representatives also have addressed the systematic targeting that the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian groups have faced with the aim of permanently forcing these groups out of their homelands. Moreover, in light of the practices of the terrorist organization ISIS, which has ravaged the area since June 2014, the representatives have urged the Iraqi government to recognize the systematic targeting of the Chaldean, Syriac and Assyrian (Christian) peoples as genocide, and to take responsibility for intervening to address the harms caused by this crime. The plea extends to the United Nations to issue a resolution to aid the minorities in the Nineveh Plain region, and to allow the UNAMI to oversee the security and rehabilitative efforts of the Iraqi government until the situation is stable enough to allow the government to do so on its own.

While the United Nations issued a formal declaration in June 2016 that ISIS has committed genocide against the Ezidis, it has issued no official statement regarding the terrorist organization’s actions against other religious minorities, including Christian groups, as constituting genocide. While Muslim populations have undoubtedly also faced terrorization by ISIS in the area, the crisis has

## CHRISTIANS IN IRAQ: A NEW REPORT

dramatically impacted the Christian populations. Of an estimated 1.4 million Christians in Iraq in 2003, there remain only an estimated 200,000, and almost all of them are displaced in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in northern Iraq/Kurdistan. Fear inspired by extremist groups, in addition to declining birthrates, have dealt a near fatal blow to the existence of these groups within communities they have inhabited for centuries.

The appeal has come at a critical time during the battle against ISIS in Iraq, particularly in the area of the Nineveh Plain and the city of Mosul. Fighting has now opened up on multiple fronts surrounding the major ISIS stronghold of Mosul and many different militia groups with varying religious, ethnic and foreign affiliations occupy the area. Progress in defeating ISIS has been slow, resulting in serious health concerns for the civilians who are now trapped in the area. According to the UN, though an estimated 419,000 have fled western Mosul, hundreds of thousands of people still remain captive and are now caught in the crossfire

between the Iraqi army and ISIS. In addition to the thousands wounded or killed as a result of the fighting, malnutrition and starvation are beginning to pose a threat to civilians who are trapped within the fighting. The fear is that small minority groups like the Christians, Ezidis and Kakais may get lost in the immensity of recent suffering and displacement.

Beyond merely addressing the damage that has been incurred as a direct result of the fighting, the appeals made on behalf of the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian ethnicity are meant to ensure the development of a stable, inclusive society that might allow these groups and others to regenerate and renew their vital presence in their homeland.

A full text of the report can be found here: [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/9bc553\\_5e0be31b2c0943f9b6647098e48a2ebd.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/9bc553_5e0be31b2c0943f9b6647098e48a2ebd.pdf)

## **OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE COUNCIL TO END THE HUMAN CRISIS OF ROHINGYAS IN MYANMAR**

*On December 29, 2016 over a dozen Nobel laureates and several world leaders in business, politics and culture signed an open letter to the Security Council urging it to prioritize the mass atrocities being perpetrated by the Myanmar Army against the Rohingya peoples in Rakhine State. The full text of the open letter as well as a full list of signatories follows. It can also be viewed at: <https://www.facebook.com/YunusCentre/?fref=nf>*

Dear President and Members of the Security Council,

As you are aware, a human tragedy amounting to ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity is unfolding in Myanmar.

Over the past two months, a military offensive by the Myanmar Army in Rakhine State has led to the killing of hundreds of Rohingya people. Over 30,000 people have been displaced. Houses have been burned, women raped, many civilians arbitrarily arrested, and children killed. Crucially, access for humanitarian aid organisations has been almost completely denied, creating an appalling humanitarian crisis in an area already extremely poor. Thousands have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh, only to be sent back. Some international experts have warned of the potential for genocide. It has all the hallmarks of recent past tragedies - Rwanda, Darfur, Bosnia, Kosovo.

The head of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the Bangladesh side of the border, John McKissick, has accused Myanmar's government of ethnic cleansing. The UN's Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar Yanghee Lee has condemned the restricted access to Rakhine State as "unacceptable."

The Rohingyas are among the world's most persecuted minorities, who for decades have been subjected to a campaign of marginalisation and dehumanisation. In 1982, their rights to citizenship were removed, and they were rendered stateless, despite living in the country for generations. They have endured severe restrictions on movement, marriage, education and religious freedom. Yet despite the claims by government and military, and many in society, that they are in fact illegal Bengali immigrants who have crossed the border, Bangladesh does not recognise them either.

Their plight intensified dramatically in 2012 when two severe outbreaks of violence resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands and a new apartheid between Rohingya Muslims and their Rakhine Buddhist neighbours. Since then they have existed in ever more dire conditions.

This latest crisis was sparked by an attack on Myanmar border police posts on 9 October, in which nine Myanmar police officers were killed. The truth about who carried out the attack, how and why, is yet to be established, but the Myanmar military accuse a group of Rohingyas. Even if that is true, the military's response has been grossly disproportionate. It would be one thing to round up suspects, interrogate them and put them on trial. It is quite another to unleash helicopter gunships on thousands of ordinary civilians and to rape women and throw babies into a fire.

## **OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE COUNCIL TO END THE HUMAN CRISIS OF ROHINGYAS IN MYANMAR**

According to one Rohingya interviewed by Amnesty International, “they shot at people who were fleeing. They surrounded the village and started going from house to house. They were verbally abusing the people. They were threatening to rape the women.”

Another witness described how her two sons were arbitrarily arrested: “It was early in the morning, the military surrounded our house, while some came in and forced me and my children to go outside. They tied my two sons up. They tied their hands behind their backs, and they were beaten badly. The military kicked them in the chest. I saw it myself. I was crying so loudly. When I cried, they [the military] pointed a gun at me. My children were begging the military not to hit them. They were beaten for around 30 minutes before being taken away”. She has not seen them since.

Despite repeated appeals to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi we are frustrated that she has not taken any initiative to ensure full and equal citizenship rights of the Rohingyas. Daw Suu Kyi is the leader and is the one with the primary responsibility to lead, and lead with courage, humanity and compassion. We urge the United Nations to do everything possible to encourage the Government of Myanmar to lift all restrictions on humanitarian aid, so that people receive emergency assistance. Access for journalists and human rights monitors should also be permitted, and an independent, international inquiry to establish the truth about the current situation should be established.

Furthermore, we urge the members of UN Security Council to put this crisis on Security Council’s agenda as a matter of urgency, and to call upon the Secretary-General to visit Myanmar in the coming weeks as a priority. If the current Secretary-General is able to do so, we would urge him to go; if not, we encourage the new Secretary-General to make it one of his first tasks after he takes office in January.

It is time for the international community as a whole to speak out much more strongly. After Rwanda, world leaders said “never again”. If we fail to take action, people may starve to death if they are not killed with bullets, and we may end up being the passive observers of crimes against humanity which will lead us once again to wring our hands belatedly and say “never again” all over again.

Sincerely,

Professor Muhammad Yunus, 2006 Nobel Peace Laureate; José Ramos-Horta, 1996 Nobel Peace Laureate; Máiread Maguire, 1976 Nobel Peace Laureate; Betty Williams, 1976 Nobel Peace Laureate; Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 1984 Nobel Peace Laureate; Oscar Arias, 1987 Nobel Peace Laureate; Jody Williams, 1997 Nobel Peace Laureate; Shirin Ebadi, 2003 Nobel Peace Laureate; Tawakkol Karman, 2011 Nobel Peace Laureate; Leymah Gbowee, 2011 Nobel Peace Laureate; Malala Yousafzai, 2014 Nobel Peace Laureate; Sir Richard J. Roberts, 1993 Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine; Elizabeth Blackburn, 2009 Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine; Emma Bonino, Former Italian Foreign minister; Arianna Huffington, Founder and Editor, The Huffington Post; Sir Richard Branson, Business Leader and Philanthropist; Paul Polman, Business Leader; Mo Ibrahim, Entrepreneur and Philanthropist; Richard Curtis, SDG Advocate, Film Director; Alaa Murabit, SDG Advocate, Voice of Libyan Women; Jochen Zeitz, Business Leader and Philanthropist; Kerry Kennedy, Human Rights Activist; Romano Prodi, Former Italian Prime Minister

# HOW THE WORLD'S NEWEST COUNTRY WENT AWRY: SOUTH SUDAN'S WAR, FAMINE, AND POTENTIAL GENOCIDE

BY JOHN PRENDERGAST

*By John Prendergast*

*Mar 21, 2017*

*Enough Project*

War has been hell for South Sudan's people, but it has been very lucrative for the country's leaders and commercial collaborators, South Sudan's war profiteers. South Sudan has been torn apart by three wars in the last 60 years. Two and a half to three million people have perished as a result of these wars. This legacy has finally caught up to the world's newest country, as the United Nations declared a full-blown famine in February 2017, a rare declaration that the U.N. hadn't made for any part of the world since 2011, and multiple U.N. officials have asserted that South Sudan stands on the brink of genocide.

As the former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. said in one of her last addresses to the Security Council, "The people within the UN system whose job it is to sound the alarm have sounded it. History is going to show what each of us did, where each of us stood, when the sirens were blaring..."

The patterns of governance and causes of conflict in South Sudan today have not really changed much since Sudan's independence in 1956, at which time South Sudan was still part of the larger nation of Sudan, as South Sudan only became its own independent state in 2011. The history of conflict and mass atrocities in Sudan and South Sudan is driven in large part by unchecked greed, manifesting itself primarily in the accumulation of wealth and power by the country's leaders. Ethnicity has been used as the main mobilizer for organized violence, which has resulted in genocidal violence in Darfur and the Nuba Mountains in Sudan, and in parts of South Sudan even during the North-South

War. The ultimate prize is control of a kleptocratic, winner-take-all state with institutions that have been hijacked by government officials and their commercial collaborators for the purposes of self-enrichment and brutal repression of dissent.

Corruption isn't an anomaly within the system; it is the system itself, the very purpose of the state.

In 2013, the two main competing kleptocratic factions of South Sudan's ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) that had unified for the purposes of securing the independence of the country in 2011 had another falling-out, plunging the country back into war, mass hunger, and the brink of state collapse. There has been total impunity for the resource theft, child soldier recruitment, abductions, mass rape, bombing of civilian targets, and the obstruction of humanitarian aid.

Real full report here: [http://enoughproject.org/files/SouthSudanAwry\\_March2017\\_EnoughProject.pdf](http://enoughproject.org/files/SouthSudanAwry_March2017_EnoughProject.pdf)

## 2017 RAPHAEL LEMKIN BOOK AWARD

**The ISG is pleased to announce that Benjamin Madley's *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe* (Yale, 2016) is the winner of the 2017 Raphael Lemkin Book Award.**

The biennial award is for the best nonfiction work that focuses on explanations of genocide, crimes against humanity, state mass killings and gross violations of human rights, and strategies to prevent such crimes and violations. The award committee chose 'An American Genocide' for its meticulous and exhaustive research, theoretical sophistication, and focus on bringing to light an important case of genocide that has received little attention in research and broader public discourse. The ISG will hold a public talk by Professor Madley and award ceremony on October 17, 2017 at Cardozo Law School, New York City. Details will be posted on the ISG website.

The outstanding list of 2017 finalists for the Lemkin Award included:

- Max Bergholz, 'Violence as a Generative Force: Identity, Nationalism and Memory in a Balkan Community' (Cornell, 2016)
- Alexander L. Hinton, 'Man or Monster? The Trial of a Khmer Rouge Torturer' (Duke, 2016)
- Scott Straus, 'Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa' (Cornell, 2015)
- Ronald Grigor Suny, 'They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else: A History of the Armenian Genocide' (Princeton, 2015)
- Andrew Woolford, 'This Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide, and Redress in Canada and the United States' (Nebraska, 2015).

## CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND CFPs

### **Justice and the Prevention of Genocide — CFP Deadline: 31 October 2017**

The editors of GSP invite submissions of articles for an upcoming special issue of the journal on the theme of Justice and the Prevention of Genocide. This special issue follows the IAGS2017 conference theme and revisits the two core components of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: justice for acts for genocide and prevention of future genocides. **Submissions must be received by 31 October**

**2017 for full consideration.** Publication will be in 2018. Submissions must be submitted online through the GSP website at <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/gsp/> and must adhere to the GSP submission guidelines available on the website. Please see the full call for papers for more details. If you have any questions, please direct them to Dr. Melanie O'Brien, guest editor for the special issue at [mobrien@genocidescholars.org](mailto:mobrien@genocidescholars.org).

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### **Call for Proposals: Public Health, Mental Health, & Mass Atrocity Prevention**

A joint project of the Benjamin B. Ferencz Human Rights and Atrocity Prevention Clinic Cardozo Law Institute in Holocaust and Human Rights and the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR)

The focus of this joint project is on the role of public and mental health in mass atrocity prevention (that is, large scale and deliberate attacks on civilians, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide). This multi-year initiative will begin to build a body of knowledge, culminating in an edited volume, on how public and mental health policies and practices (that is, actions meant to protect and promote the health of entire societies, and that employ multidisciplinary interventions to address the underlying causes of health and disease) can aid in lowering recidivism of past abuses and the

prevention of mass atrocity.

We welcome abstract submissions that can address the role of public and mental health policies and practices in the prevention of mass atrocity -- including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. We are particularly interested in submissions that address mass atrocity prevention through the framework of primary (pre-conflict), secondary (mid-conflict), and/or tertiary (post-conflict) settings.

**The deadline for abstract submissions is Monday, October 16th.**

See the full details and information on how to apply at: <https://cardozo.yu.edu/programs-centers/human-rights-initiatives/cardozo-law-institute-holocaust-and-human-rights/news-and>

## SAVE OUR SPECIES: PAY YOUR ISG DUES

The Institute for the Study of Genocide exists to promote and disseminate scholarship and policy analyzes on the causes, consequences, and prevention of genocide. It is maintained by members' contributions and grants. The Newsletter is sent to all members of the ISG semiannually. Members will also receive working papers, annual meetings and conference notices, and voting rights at the annual meeting. Memberships are due annually. If you last paid dues in 2016, please rejoin for 2017 today. If you have received a complimentary copy of the Newsletter, please join us to be sure that you continue receiving copies. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Make out checks drawn on U.S. banks or international money orders in U.S. dollars to the Institute for the Study of Genocide and return with the form below or a photocopy of this form to:

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\*The *ISG Newsletter* is published twice a year.

## ISG PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

All orders must be PREPAID with a check drawn on a U.S. bank made out to the Institute for the Study of Genocide. Please e-mail first to confirm availability of publication (e-mail [feinhelen@comcast.net](mailto:feinhelen@comcast.net)) and other information unless there is other ordering information for particular publications.

### *Darfur: Genocide Before Our Eyes*

ed. Joyce Apsel. Institute for the Study of Genocide, 3rd ed., 2007. \$20 in the U.S., \$25 in other countries by Global Priority Mail. Essays by Joyce Apsel on "Teaching About Darfur through the perspective of genocide and human rights"; Jerry Fowler, "The Evolution of Conflict and Genocide in Sudan,"; Eric Markusen and Samuel Totten, "Investigating allegations of genocide in Darfur"; Eric Reeves, "Darfur: Genocide before Our Eyes,"; Gregory Stanton, "Twelve Ways to Deny a Genocide"; and Jennifer Leaning, "The Human Impact of War in Darfur." Also contains four maps, glossary, webography of sources on Sudan and the test of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. To order, first contact Joyce Apsel, [jaa5@nyu.edu](mailto:jaa5@nyu.edu)

### *The Prevention of Genocide: Rwanda and Yugoslavia Reconsidered*

(Institute for the Study of Genocide, 1994)

\$25 US / \$30 International (Prepaid, international money orders, U.S. Dollars only)

*Ever Again?: Evaluating the United Nations Genocide Convention On its 50th Anniversary.* (1998) Essays by noted scholars, journalist and lawyers. \$15 US / \$20 International

### *Teaching About Genocide: An Interdisciplinary Guidebook with Syllabi for College and University Teachers*

New Edition 2002, eds. Joyce Apsel and Helen Fein. Published for the Institute for the Study of Genocide in cooperation with the American Sociological Association. Syllabi by 22 noted teachers (in anthropology, history, international affairs, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, law, religion, sociology) on the Armenian genocide; the Holocaust; genocide and Holocaust; genocide; genocide, human rights and international affairs; essays by the editors; and selected internet websites on genocide. Cost for mailing in the US is \$18 for members of ISG, IAGS and ASA and \$22 for all others; add \$3 for Canada and Mexico and \$6 for other countries. To order, send check in US dollars drawn on a US bank or by credit card (American Express, MasterCard or Visa) to American Sociological Association: by mail (1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005-4701); telephone (202 383 9005, ext. 318), by fax (202 638 0882) or web ([www.asanet.org](http://www.asanet.org)).