

Bosnian Genocide



Date: 1992-1995

Perpetrators: Army of Republika Sprska (Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina), Scorpions (Paramilitary)

Motive: In April 1992, the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina declared its independence from Yugoslavia after years of growing nationalism that intensified with the political rise of Slobodan Milosevic, who stoked discontent between Bosnian Serbians and their Croatian, Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) and Albanian neighbors. In Bosnia, Muslims represented the largest population group; Bosnian Serbs wanted to be a Serbian-dominant state in the Balkans. They formed a paramilitary group, the Army of Republika Sprska, which they declared to be the “Greater Serbia” separatists long envisioned.

Campaign: In May 1992, Bosnian Serb forces launched a bombardment of Bosnia’s capital, Sarajevo. They attacked Bosniak-dominated towns in eastern Bosnia, forcibly expelling Bosniak civilians from the region in a brutal process later identified as “ethnic cleansing.” Ethnic cleansing differs from genocide in that its primary goal is the expulsion of a group of people from a geographical area and not the actual physical destruction of that group, even though the same methods—including murder, rape, torture and forcible displacement—may be used. Serb forces were in control of nearly three-quarters of Bosnia by the end of 1993. By the summer of 1995, three towns in eastern Bosnia—Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde—remained under control of the Bosnian government. The United Nations (U.N.) declared these enclaves “safe havens” to be protected by international peacekeeping forces. On July 11, Bosnian Serb forces advanced on Srebrenica, overwhelming peacekeepers stationed there. Serbian forces separated the Bosniak civilians, putting the women and girls on buses and sending them to Serb-held territory. Some of the women were assaulted, while the men and boys who remained behind were killed immediately or bussed to mass killing sites. Estimates of Bosniaks killed by Serb forces at Srebrenica range from around 7,000 to 8,000.

International Response: The U.N. refused to intervene in the conflict in Bosnia in 1993, but a campaign spearheaded by its High Commissioner for Refugees provided humanitarian aid to its many displaced, malnourished and injured victims. The international community began to respond more forcefully to the ongoing conflict in August 1995, after the Serbs refused to comply with U.N. ultimatums. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) joined efforts with Bosnian and Croatian military offensives against Bosnian Serb positions. With Serbia’s economy crippled by U.N. trade sanctions and its military forces under assault in Bosnia, Milosevic agreed to enter negotiations that October. Peace talks in Dayton, Ohio in November 1995 resulted in the division of Bosnia between a Croat-Bosniak federation and a Serb republic. Though the international community did little to prevent the systematic atrocities committed against Bosniaks and Croats in Bosnia while they were occurring, it did actively seek justice against those who committed them. The U.N. Security Council created the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to prosecute the Bosnian Serb military commander, General Ratko Mladic and others indicted for genocide and other crimes against humanity. Slobodan Milosevic was brought before the tribunal in 2002 on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes; he served as his own defense lawyer and died in his prison cell in 2006 before the conclusion of his trial. In 2007, the International Court of Justice called the massacre at Srebrenica a genocide, but stopped short of assigning blame for the genocide itself.

Cambodian Genocide



Date: 1975-1979

Perpetrators: The Khmer Rouge, led by dictator Pol Pot

Motive: The Khmer Rouge guerrilla movement was founded in 1960. The movement's leader, Pol Pot, was educated in France and was an admirer of Mao Zedong's Chinese communism. Pol Pot envisioned the creation of a new Cambodia deconstructed to a primitive "Year Zero," where all citizens would participate in rural work projects and Western innovations would be destroyed. To achieve the "ideal" communist model, the Khmer Rouge believed that all Cambodians had to work as laborers on collective farms; anyone who opposed this system would be eliminated. This list of potential opposition included intellectuals, professionals, monks, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and ethnic Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai citizens of Cambodia.

Campaign: Under the threat of death, Cambodians were forced from their homes to the countryside. The ill, disabled, old, and young incapable of making the journey to collectivized farms and labor camps were killed on the spot. People who refused to leave were killed, along with any who appeared to oppose the new regime. All political and civil rights of citizens were abolished. Cambodians who survived the purges and marches became unpaid laborers who worked on minimum rations for endless hours. They were forced to live in public communes, similar to military barracks, with constant food shortages and rampant diseases. Virtual slave labor, starvation, injury, and illness caused many Cambodians to become incapable of performing physical work, and they were considered by the Khmer Rouge as an "expense" to the system and killed. These conditions of genocide continued for three years until Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1978 and ousted the Khmer Rouge government in 1979. In the early 1990s, mass graves were uncovered throughout Cambodia. They held hundreds of skeletal remains from Khmer Rouge execution grounds, known as killing fields. On July 25, 1983, the "Research Committee on Pol Pot's Genocidal Regime" issued its final report, including data that showed that 3,314,768 people, an estimated 25% of the population, lost their lives in Pol Pot's regime

International Response: While the Khmer Rouge was gaining power, the U.S. government was concerned with Cambodia solely in relation to the effect on the Vietnam War. Cambodia was in ruins when the Vietnamese took control in 1979. The economy failed under Pol Pot, and all professionals, engineers, technicians, and planners who could potentially reorganize Cambodia had been killed in the genocide. In 1991, a peace agreement was finally reached, and Buddhism was reinstated as the official religion. The nation's first democratic elections were held in 1993. Bringing the perpetrators to justice has proven to be a difficult task. Many suspected perpetrators were killed in the military struggle with Vietnam or eliminated as internal threats to the Khmer Rouge itself. In 1997, Pol Pot was arrested by Khmer Rouge members; a "mock" trial was staged, and Pol Pot was found guilty. He died of natural causes in 1998. The last members of the Khmer Rouge were officially disbanded in 1999.

Mayan Genocide



Date: 1982-1984

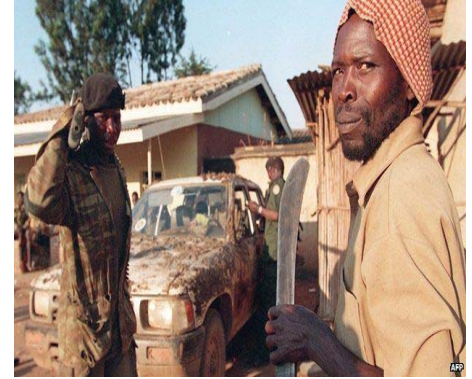
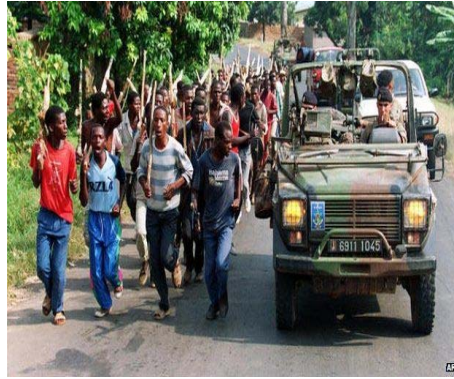
Perpetrators: Guatemalan Army, especially under dictator Efraín Ríos Montt, and local militias

Motive: In the 1970s, the Maya began participating in protests against the repressive government, demanding greater equality and inclusion of the Mayan language and culture. In 1980, the Guatemalan army instituted "Operation Sofia," which aimed at ending insurgent guerrilla warfare by destroying the civilian base in which they hid. This program specifically targeted the Mayan population, who were believed to be supporting the guerilla movement. The Guatemalan military viewed the Maya – traditionally seen as subhuman – as siding with the insurgency and began a campaign of wholesale killings and disappearances of Mayan peasants.

Campaign: The army destroyed 626 villages, killed or forced the disappearances of more than 200,000 people and displaced an additional 1.5 million, while more than 150,000 were driven to seek refuge in Mexico. Forced disappearance policies included secretly arresting or abducting people, who were often killed and buried in unmarked graves. In addition, the government instituted a scorched earth policy, destroying and burning buildings and crops, slaughtering livestock, fouling water supplies and violating sacred places and cultural symbols. Many of these actions were undertaken by the army, specifically through special units known as the Kaibiles, in addition to private death squads, who often acted on the advice of the army. The U.S. government often supported the repressive regimes as a part of its anti-Communist policies during the Cold War. The violence faced by the Mayan people peaked between 1978 and 1986. Catholic priests and nuns also often faced violence as they supported the rights of the Mayan people.

International Response: In 1986 civilian rule and a new constitution were set up, but the army held on to its power. Peace talks were set up by the UN in 1991, suspended in 1993, and resumed in 1994 under a new democratic government. A peace agreement was finally signed in 1996. Part of the peace agreement was the setting up of The Historical Clarification Commission (CEH), an investigation into the atrocities of the civil war. The army was unable to provide its records for the period 1981-1983; but three commissioners travelled through the country and collected 9,000 witness statements, protected by a UN confidentiality agreement. Their report, entitled 'Guatemala: Memory of Silence', presented evidence that clearly revealed a governmental policy of genocide carried out against the Mayan Indians. In June 2001, a legal action on behalf of 12 Mayan communities succeeded in bringing a charge of genocide against Efraín Ríos Montt who had seized power in 1982; his policies were issued during the height of the genocide's brutality. In 2013, his trial for the genocide of at least 1,771 members of the Maya began. On May 10, 2013, Ríos Montt was convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity. He was sentenced to 80 years in prison (50 for genocide and 30 years for crimes against humanity). He is the first former head of state to be convicted of genocide by a court in his own country.

Rwandan Genocide



Date: April to July 1994

Perpetrators: Members of the Hutu ethnic majority, Hutu Power government of Rwanda murdered

Motive: About 85% of Rwandans are Hutu, but the Tutsi minority has long dominated the country. In 1959, the Hutus overthrew the Tutsi monarchy; tens of thousands of Tutsis fled to neighboring countries, including Uganda. A group of Tutsi exiles formed a rebel group, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which invaded Rwanda in 1990 and fought until a 1993 peace deal was agreed. On the night of 6 April 1994 a plane carrying Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana was shot down, killing everyone on board. Hutu extremists blamed the RPF and immediately started a well-organized campaign of slaughter. The RPF said the plane had been shot down by Hutus to provide an excuse for the genocide.

Campaign: Begun by extreme Hutu nationalists in the capital of Kigali, the genocide spread throughout the country with staggering speed and brutality, as ordinary citizens were incited by local officials and the Hutu Power government to take up arms against their neighbors. Lists of government opponents were handed out to militias who went and killed them, along with all of their families. Hutu extremists set up radio stations and newspapers which broadcast hate propaganda, urging people to "weed out the cockroaches", meaning kill the Tutsis. The names of those to be killed were read out on radio. At the time, a person's identification card had their ethnic group listed on it. Militias set up roadblocks where Tutsis were slaughtered, often with machetes, which most Rwandans kept around the house. Even priests and nuns have been convicted of killing people, including some who sought shelter in churches. Neighbors killed neighbors; some husbands even killed their Tutsi wives, saying they would be executed if they refused. Begun by extreme Hutu nationalists in the capital of Kigali, the genocide spread throughout the country with staggering speed and brutality, as ordinary citizens were incited by local officials and the Hutu Power government to take up arms against their neighbors. By the time the Tutsi-led Rwandese Patriotic Front gained control of the country through a military offensive in early July, As many as 800,000 people, mostly of the Tutsi minority, were dead and many more displaced from their homes.

International Response: The United Nations and Belgium had forces in Rwanda but the UN mission was not given a mandate to stop the killing, and they left after 10 Belgian soldiers were killed. The United States was determined not to get involved in another African conflict after American soldiers had been killed in Somalia in 1993. The French, who were allies of the Hutu government, sent a force to set up a supposedly safe zone but were accused of not doing enough to stop the slaughter in that area. Rwanda's current president has accused France of taking part in the massacres - a charge denied by the French. Almost two million people have been tried in local courts for their role in the genocide, while the ring-leaders were tried at the United Nations. It is now illegal to talk about ethnicity in Rwanda - the government says this is to prevent more bloodshed, but some say it prevents true reconciliation and is just putting a lid on tensions, which will only boil over again in the future.

Darfur Genocide



Date: February 23, 2003 – Ongoing/Current

Perpetrators: Janjaweed militias, Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), & Sudan Liberation Army (SLM)

Motive: The crisis and ongoing conflict in Sudan's Western Darfur Region have developed from several separate events. The first is a civil war that occurred between the Khartoum national governments and two rebel groups in Darfur: the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudan Liberation Army. Civil war has existed between the northern and southern regions of Sudan for more than a decade. The second is a civil war that has occurred between the Christians, the animists, and the Arabs that have dominated the government since the country's independence from the United Kingdom in 1956. The northern region, centered on the capital of Khartoum, is predominantly made up of Muslims who are ethnically Arab, while groups of Christians and animists live in the south. The Khartoum government under General Omar al-Bashir wished to create a more Islamic-based government that was opposed by the southern groups and led to civil war. Finally, the ethnic conflict in Darfur has been persistent. It is home to six million people and several dozen tribes. The region is split into two: those who claim black 'African' descent and those who claim 'Arab' descent.

Campaign: Initially, the rebel groups formed in February 2003 due to Darfur's "political and economic marginalization by Khartoum". However, in April of 2003, when the rebel groups attacked the military airfield and kidnapped an air force general, the government launched a counterattack. In response, the Khartoum government armed militia forces to eliminate the rebellion, resulting in mass violence against the citizens in Darfur. The Janjaweed systematically destroy Darfurians by burning villages, looting economic resources, polluting water sources, and torturing civilians. Attacks on Darfuri villages commonly begin with Sudanese Air Force bombings. Air campaigns are often followed by Janjaweed militia raids. All remaining village men, women, and children are either murdered or forced to flee. Looting, burning food stocks, enslaving and raping women and children, and stealing livestock are common. Dead bodies are tossed in wells to contaminate water supplies and entire villages are burned to the ground. Violence has continued into 2016; according to Amnesty International, the government has used chemical weapons against civilians. Over 480,000 people have been killed, 2.8 million people are displaced, and more than 4.7 million Darfuris rely on humanitarian aid.

International Response: In 2004, the United States government recognized these actions as genocide under the United Nations (UN) Genocide Convention. In March 2009, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir for directing a campaign of mass killing, rape and pillage against civilians in Darfur; however, the Sudanese government has refused to turn him in. On July 9, 2011, South Sudan became the world's newest country. While this is a major step toward ending the violence in Sudan, civilians across Sudan remain at risk. Systematic violence against the people of Darfur, as well as in the disputed Abyei area and Southern Kordofan, continues on a new political landscape altered by the independence of South Sudan.