

**Prof. Israel W. Charny, 1931 - 2024**  
**A Tribute by Marc I. Sherman**

Professor Israel W. Charny's passing on December 13, 2024, marks the loss of a monumental figure in the field of genocide studies. His pioneering efforts over five decades not only shaped the academic discipline but also influenced global efforts to understand and prevent genocides.

Professor Charny's work has had an enduring impact on the study and awareness of genocide, and his legacy will continue to guide future scholars and activists. His contributions to the study of genocide spanned several decades and encompassed a broad range of pivotal work that has left a lasting impact on the field.

One of his most significant achievements was founding the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem, the first institution in the world dedicated to studying genocides across various peoples.

This groundbreaking initiative emerged from the First International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide, which Charny organized in Jerusalem in 1982. The conference brought together scholars from diverse backgrounds to discuss various genocides.

Despite intense pressure from the Israeli government to cancel the conference due to concerns over the participation of Armenian Genocide scholars and the delicate relations with Turkey, Charny stood firm, ensuring the event's success and marking a pivotal moment in the history of genocide studies.

Charny's advocacy for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide was another cornerstone of his work. He played a central role in raising awareness about the genocide and fighting its denial both within Israel and internationally. His efforts involved close collaboration with the Armenian community in Israel, Armenia, and the United States. This included lobbying the Israeli government to formally recognize the genocide.

Charny's efforts earned him the Armenian President's Medal in 2011 as a tribute to his lifetime of advocacy. However, the Israeli government has yet to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide and now, sadly, Charny will never see that day.

Charny also proposed the creation of a Genocide Early Warning System (GEWS), an initiative designed to monitor and respond to potential genocides. His proposal aimed to collect ongoing data on massacres and act as a global agency for the protection of human life. Although he did not have the resources to establish such an agency, his proposal laid the foundation for modern efforts to prevent genocide and provided vital insight into the mechanisms of genocide prevention.

Charny's scholarly contributions also extended to the study of Holocaust and genocide denial. As a clinical psychologist, he examined the psychological mechanisms behind

the reasons certain individuals or groups deny or downplay the severity of genocidal atrocities like the Holocaust.

Charny's work illuminated the psychology of denial, providing valuable insights into how to confront and address this issue. Charny's research continues to influence scholars, educators, and activists in their efforts to combat denial and ensure that the lessons of history are not forgotten.

Over the course of his career, Charny authored an impressive body of work that helped shape the field of genocide studies. His publications include seminal texts such as "How Can We Commit the Unthinkable: Genocide - The Human Cancer" (1982), "Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review" (1988, 1991, 1994, 1997), "Encyclopedia of Genocide" (1999), and "The Genocide Contagion: How We Commit and Confront Holocaust and Genocide" (2016).

In addition to these works, he initiated studies on the psychology of evil and the human capacity for genocidal actions, publishing books like "Fascism and Democracy in the Human Mind" (2006) and "A Democratic Mind: Psychology and Psychiatry with Fewer Meds and More Soul" (2017).

Charny was instrumental in founding the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS), along with Helen Fein, Eric Markusen, and Roger Smith. The association brought together scholars committed to the study of genocide and has since become a vital platform for research, collaboration, and advocacy.

Charny served as the association's president from 2005 to 2007, during which time he inaugurated "Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal," the official journal of the IAGS.

Through his leadership and scholarship, Charny's legacy continues to shape the global discourse on genocide prevention and the memory of past atrocities.

Charny's dedication to the study and prevention of genocide has left an indelible mark on the world. His advocacy for recognition and his development of academic and practical frameworks to address genocide have created lasting structures for both the study and prevention of such atrocities.

Through his work, Charny has ensured that the field of genocide studies will continue to grow and evolve, impacting the global effort to prevent future genocides. Although Prof. Charny has passed on, his presence will forever be felt in the genocide community. His many contributions are part of his great legacy and will continue to be studied by scholars, old and new, around the world.