



Press conference statement on ISIS genocide: Dr. Gregory Stanton 16 December 2015

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is the greatest threat to civilization since Nazism and Stalinist and Maoist Communism. Like those movements, ISIS has a millenarian, utopian ideology that turns mass murder into an ideological duty, and worse, a religious virtue.

Soon the State Department is likely to recognize ISIS genocide against Yazidis. It is also debating whether to call ISIS mass murder of Christians, Shi'a Muslims, Sabea-Mandean, Turkmen, and Shabaks genocide.

Why does genocide – the G-word – matter? Why not simply call ISIS crimes against Christians and others “crimes against humanity?”

The reason is that words matter. “Genocide” is a much more powerful word than “crimes against humanity,” “war crimes,” “ethnic cleansing” or “atrocities crimes.”

In 2007, three epidemiologists and I counted the number of times the words “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing” were used in The New York Times, law journals, UN press releases, and statements by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to describe four recent genocides: Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, and Darfur.

We discovered that as long as “ethnic cleansing” was used, there was no forceful action to stop it. As soon as the situations were called “Genocide,” forceful action resulted and ended the killing, except in Darfur where a UN Commission of Inquiry rejected the “genocide” word.

Genocide is defined in the Genocide Convention as “any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; preventing births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

First, you must prove intent to destroy the group in whole or in part. You can do that either through direct statements of leaders of the group. Or you can infer intent from a systematic pattern of acts that demonstrate a policy or plan to destroy the group.

Second, you must prove commission of the acts listed in the definition of genocide.

ISIS has targeted thousands of Yazidis, Christians, Shi'a Muslims, Turkmen, Shabaks and other groups for murder. Such acts of genocide are strong proof of ISIS intent to destroy, in whole or in part, these religious and ethnic groups.

ISIS leaders have openly declared their intent to kill every Yazidi male and to enslave every Yazidi female. Whole Christian villages on the Nineveh plain were eradicated. On one day 1,700 Shi'a troops were separated from their Sunni comrades and slaughtered. This is genocide in part intended to destroy religious groups.

Genocide doesn't legally require forceful response. But morally it certainly does. That is why Raphael Lemkin invented the new word, “genocide.” **“Crimes against humanity” or “ethnic cleansing” have never compelled forceful action. The word “genocide” demands forceful action to stop it.**

The US is already taking forceful action to defeat ISIS, as we should.



The US Holocaust Memorial Museum did fieldwork in just two Iraqi provinces and was misled by ISIS propaganda that if Christians will pay a *Jizya* tax, they will be left alone. **It is an ISIS lie.** The ISIS tax is so high that few can pay it. So they are beheaded or crucified if they will not renounce their faith in Jesus Christ and convert to Islam.

The two most important reasons that the State Department and the President should determine that Christians, Shi'a Muslims and groups other than Yazidis are targets of genocide are:

1. The word "genocide" more strongly justifies our broad coalition military support for Kurdish and Iraqi forces to defeat ISIS. It also justifies arming and training militias of the targeted groups for self-defense, which is always the best defense against genocide.
2. Members of such groups are much more likely to receive preferential treatment as *bonafide* refugees under the UN Convention and Protocols on the Status of Refugees, to which the US is a State-Party, and under the refugee laws of the United States.