

# DEFINITIONS OF THE 10 STAGES OF GENOCIDE

[Resources 1-3](#) | [2-2](#) | [3-3](#) | [4-1](#) | [5-1](#)

**Genocide is a process that develops in ten stages that are predictable but not impossible to stop or prevent. At each stage, preventive or responsive measures can stop it. The process is not linear. Stages may occur simultaneously, and all stages continue to operate throughout the process.**

## 1. CLASSIFICATION

All cultures have categories to distinguish people into “us and them” by ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality, and CLASSIFICATION is the process of putting people into one or more specific classes for the purposes of emphasizing a separation of people in a society. Societies that lack mixed categories or where there is extreme separation of people into classes are the most likely to have a genocide.

## 2. SYMBOLIZATION

SYMBOLIZATION is using representative names or other symbols for a classification of people to more easily identify or summarize people into that group. Group names can be positive, negative or neutral in a society, such as “Christians”, “Jews”, “Muslims”, or “Atheists”, but the SYMBOLIZATION stage emphasizes that all people in that group, called that name, are the same. SYMBOLIZATION often includes the adoption of physical indicators to distinguish a group, such as dress, custom, or religious symbols to represent members of groups.

## 3. DISCRIMINATION

DISCRIMINATION occurs as a stage when a class of people in power in a society create or use laws, customs, and/or political power to deny rights and opportunities to members of one or more other groups; this can include preventing one or more groups from having full civil rights, voting rights, or even citizenship. This practice ensures the dominant group has more power, often protected or provided by law, and legitimizes the victimization of weaker groups.

## 4. DEHUMANIZATION

DEHUMANIZATION occurs when one group denies the humanity of a target group, equating them with animals, vermin, insects, or diseases. DEHUMANIZATION is a key stage in a process that leads to genocide because it contributes to conditions that can overcome the normal human revulsion against murder: it is easier to kill a person if a person thinks of that person as a snake or a cockroach rather than as a human being.

## 5. ORGANIZATION

Genocides are always organized. ORGANIZATION occurs when plans are put in place for attacking a targeted class of people, usually by the state/government or members in that government. A government will often use a militia or paramilitary group to carry out attacks and/or genocidal killings, to provide deniability of state responsibility, though sometimes the ORGANIZATION is informal or decentralized. Often during the ORGANIZATION stage, the units who carry out killings are trained, armed, and instructed and/or inspired to carry out violence.

*These stages and definitions come directly from the work of Dr. Gregory Stanton, and have been adapted (simplified) for secondary students being introduced to the concept of genocide and historic examples of genocide and mass atrocity as part of Michigan Holocaust and Genocide Education (MHGE) lesson plans, though the original language has been retained as much as possible. The stages were first presented (as a briefing paper) at the US State Department in 1996 by Dr. Gregory Stanton, and the full, unadapted definitions, plus further information, can be found at the website GENOCIDE WATCH (<http://www.genocidewatch.org/home.html>)*

**DEFINITIONS OF THE 10 STAGES OF GENOCIDE***Resources 1-3 | 2-2 | 3-3 | 4-1 | 5-1***6. POLARIZATION**

POLARIZATION occurs when groups are driven apart in a society by extremists, propaganda, hate speech, laws (DISCRIMINATION), terrorism, and/or other means. POLARIZATION often includes identifying and silencing (through intimidation, arrest, violence, etc.) members of any group in that society that can actively or potentially work to stop a genocide, such as moderates or peacekeepers in the perpetrators' own group.

**7. PREPARATION**

PREPARATION occurs when national or perpetrator group leaders begin to take specific steps necessary to prepare a society for the beginning of the violence of a genocide. It can include using terms or euphemisms in public, such as in the media, to cloak or justify their intentions, such as "cleansing" or "purifying" a society, and/or creating fear in a society of the victim group, such as "we are in danger", or "if we don't kill them, they will kill us." It can also include arming and mobilizing perpetrators to be in position to carry out violence.

**8. PERSECUTION**

PERSECUTION occurs when victims are identified and separated, stripped wholly or in part of power, property, and free membership in a society, and are sometimes even segregated by force into separate areas, such as a ghetto, concentration camp or detention zone, or confined to a specific geographic region. Violence begins, and this can include group massacres; killings are acts of genocide because they intentionally destroy part of a group.

**9. EXTERMINATION**

EXTERMINATION is the stage of mass killing and other measures, taken by perpetrators organized into militias, paramilitary groups, and/or armed forces, to eliminate the victim group. At this stage, only rapid and overwhelming armed intervention can stop genocide.

**10. DENIAL**

DENIAL is the final stage that lasts throughout and always follows a genocide. It can include physical measures of perpetrators to cover up evidence and intimidate witnesses to genocide, legal measures to arrest and punish individuals inside a state or nation who bring attention to the genocide, and/or diplomatic measures to deny a genocide occurred in the national and global policies and politics of a state/government. DENIAL can also include working to provide proof that the charge or evidence of genocide is false, a hoax or exaggeration, or the political or economic agenda of those opposed to the perpetrators and/or state/government accused of genocide or who might make a claim against it.

**PLEASE DO NOT THROW AWAY***USED MULTIPLE DAYS*

*These stages and definitions come directly from the work of Dr. Gregory Stanton, and have been adapted (simplified) for secondary students being introduced to the concept of genocide and historic examples of genocide and mass atrocity as part of Michigan Holocaust and Genocide Education (MHGE) lesson plans, though the original language has been retained as much as possible. The stages were first presented (as a briefing paper) at the US State Department in 1996 by Dr. Gregory Stanton, and the full, unadapted definitions, plus further information, can be found at the website GENOCIDE WATCH (<http://www.genocidewatch.org/home.html>)*