

Taking Iran's Incitement to Genocide Seriously

**Testimony before the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of
the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International
Development of the Parliament of Canada**

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel was the first world leader to recognize the connection between Iran's uranium enrichment, its testing of long distance missiles, and the genocidal statements of its president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. A day after declaring that Israel "should be wiped off the map" on October 25, 2005, he incited students to scream "death to Israel," at a government-sponsored conference called the "World without Zionism."

Chancellor Merkel declared: "A president that questions Israel's right to exist [and] denies the Holocaust, cannot expect to receive any tolerance from Germany. We have learned our history." Will Chancellor Merkel's warnings of the parallels between Iran's actions today and Nazi Germany's first steps towards genocide in the 1930's prod the world into effective deterrent action?

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On 28 October, 2005, the UN Security Council condemned the words of the Iranian president. While the Security Council only issued a press statement - the weakest form of expression - it was still a diplomatic defeat for Iran.² Despite numerous U.N. Resolutions since, Iran continues to develop nuclear weapons, and its leadership has not changed its apocalyptic views.

On 1 February 2006, The International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) passed a resolution (See Appendixⁱ) noting that Iran's actions, including Ahmadinejad's statements, are early warning signs of genocide. These signs include open expressions of an exclusionary ideology characterized by hate speech, an authoritarian government that represses dissent, the organization of fanatical militias, such as the Revolutionary Guards, and a sustained record of support for terror attacks against Jews around the world. In December 2005, President Ahmadinejad added to the list the denial of a past genocide, the Holocaust. The U.N. Security Council and Secretary-General condemned his statements.³

Indifference to incitement and inaction by the outside world, most notably the United Nations itself, are other warning signs - as we have

² "Uno verurteilt Irans Attacken gegen Israel," *NZZ Online*, 29 October 2005 [German].

³ "The members of the Security Council reaffirm the rights and obligations of the state of Israel as a full and long-standing member of the United Nations, and reaffirm that, under the United Nations Charter, all members have undertaken to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state." U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan was "shocked" to see the remarks attributed to Ahmadinejad. Annan urged U.N. member nations "to combat such denial, and to educate their populations about the well-established historical facts of the Holocaust, in which one-third of the Jewish people were murdered, along with countless members of other minorities." The secretary-general had previously criticized Ahmadinejad when he said Israel should be "wiped off the map." CNN 10 December 2005.

seen in the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, Darfur and elsewhere in the world.

The development of a covert nuclear weapons program and long-range missiles by a state whose leader declares genocidal intent states the case for urgent deterrent actions. As we address the Iranian threat, it is helpful to recall that genocide was the most deadly crime against humanity in the 20th century, resulting in some 250 million preventable deaths: more than from all wars combined.

The Genocidal Process

Genocide is not an accident. It develops in a predictable process. I have analyzed most of the genocides in recent history and have discovered a predictable pattern. I call the process the Eight Stages of Genocide. (See Appendix 2.)ⁱⁱ Every one of the first six stages has already happened in Iran.

Historians have established that governmental incitement and use of hate language is a recognized predictor, initiator, promoter and catalyst of genocide. The direct and public incitements to genocide by Iran's President are not only openly stated declarations of aggressive intent, but are in violation of Art. 2 (4) of the UN Charter, of the Genocide Convention, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Articles 6 and 25 (3)(e).

President Ahmadinejad's attempted "clarification" that he merely advocates the "transfer" of Jews in Israel to German and Austrian provinces is itself advocacy of forced deportation, another crime

against humanity, and is contradicted by his own actions and long-term Iranian policy, including terror attacks on Jews outside Israel, such as the bombing of a synagogue in Buenos Aires, the arming of Hezbollah and Hamas, and advocacy of murder of Jews everywhere by Iranian financed media such as Palestinian television. Palestinian Authority television carried a Friday sermon calling for the butchering of all Jews everywhere.⁴

Iran could soon be an independent nuclear power, possessing advanced missile delivery systems. Iran has never renounced its aggressive and genocidal aims against the Jews of the State of Israel and elsewhere, which are longstanding policy. In 2000, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told Muslim worshippers in Teheran, referring to Israel: "We have repeatedly said that this cancerous tumor of a state should be removed from the region."⁵

The unprecedented threat of nuclear genocide necessitates an urgent response because, aside from the clear warning signs we have indicated, an actual apocalyptic nuclear attack could occur without further warning sufficient to engage in preventative action. Israel is a small country that can be reached within minutes by Iranian ballistic missiles. It is densely populated, and home to the largest number of Holocaust survivors in the world. Time is of the essence and delay could be catastrophic.

⁴ Manfred Gerstenfeld, "The 21st Century Total War against Israel and the Jews: Part One," *Post-Holocaust & Anti-Semitism*, No. 38, 1 November 2005.

⁵ "Iran Leader Urges Destruction of 'Cancerous' Israel," CNN, 15 December 2000.

The Responsibility to Protect

The ethical principle that needs to guide international action to prevent all genocidal threats is that human life is the most fundamental human right, because without life there are no other human rights. Canada has been the most important leader in creating a newly emerging norm of international law. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty sponsored by the Canadian government defined what is now called “the Responsibility to Protect,” which was affirmed in the Millennium Summit Outcome of 2005. It is based on the principle that the international obligation to protect human life and well-being overrides the sovereignty claims of any government whose actions demonstrate genocidal intent.

The Precautionary Principle

Because the dangers of inaction could be catastrophic, we repeat the calls of Genocide Watch, the Hebrew University Genocide and Violence Prevention Program's petition, and the International Association for Genocide Scholars call for the application of the Precautionary Principle, a powerful tool for decision making in public health, for prevention of this and all other genocidal threats. This principle states that when there is uncertainty concerning the risk from a situation with potentially catastrophic effects upon human health and safety, the risks of inaction far outweigh those of preventive action.

The Precautionary Principle - which British Foreign Minister Jack Straw has already applied to this case - shifts the burden of proof from those warning of a risk of catastrophic event to those denying this risk. Preventive action, of course, means the obligatory imposition of effective sanctions to prevent Iranian development of nuclear weapons, and includes immediate and continuous IAEA inspections of all Iranian nuclear facilities, as well as confiscation of all technology, equipment, and nuclear material that could be used by Iran to manufacture nuclear weapons.

Because the obligation to protect life and safety overrides state sovereignty, Iran's genocidal declarations and actions undermine its claims to responsibly utilize its nuclear material for peaceful means.

All this, however, is insufficient. Historians have recognized that genocide results from the conscious choices of elites and occurs when there is indifference of outsiders to early warning signs, particularly hate language that serves to catalyze genocidal actions.

Accordingly the UN Security Council should follow the landmark precedent of its referral of Sudanese leaders to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and refer Mr. Ahmadinejad, to the ICC for indictment for incitement to commit genocide. Canada, as a state-party to the Genocide Convention, should also take a case against Iran to the International Court of Justice for violation of that convention through its incitement.

Those convicted for incitement to commit genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and sentenced to prison terms up to life imprisonment included Rwanda's former prime minister, a historian, a newspaper editor, a minister of information, and a journalist. Ahmedinijad, Khomeini and other specific perpetrators must be stopped. Economic sanctions which would target the Iranian people collectively should be rejected. Iran has a glorious past and culture, which this president definitely does not represent.

It is time for the UN to go from commemorating past genocides, such as the Holocaust and Rwanda, to stopping current genocides such as is now raging in Darfur Sudan, and deterring and preventing future ones.

Indicting President Ahmadinejad for incitement to commit genocide would send a clear non-violent message to Iran's authoritarian leaders to back down from pursuing a genocidal ideology. It would be a major step towards deterring others planning future Bosnias, Kosovos, Rwandas and Darfurs. Chancellor Merkel has reminded us of the consequences of the world's ineffectual response to Hitler in the 1930's.

The world now has to choose between indifference and deterrence, not only to "save Israel," but to save itself. Consider these two chilling facts:

- 1. Iran is the only country since Nazi Germany that has openly expressed its genocidal intent to wipe another nation off the map while pursuing a program to develop nuclear weapons. Few believed that Hitler was serious about his genocidal intentions until Nazis carried out the Holocaust. The Iranian President denies that the Holocaust even happened.**

- 2. The country most likely to be black-mailed by an Iran with nuclear weapons is Israel. Suppose that Iran demands that Israel pull back to its 1967 borders and allow all Palestinians to return to their pre-1948 homes? Israel says “Nuts!” Iran then repeats its threat to “wipe Israel off the map,” arms its missiles, and supports Hezbollah terrorist infiltration into Israel. Would Israel launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike on Iran knowing that Iran’s nuclear retaliation would result in Israel’s self-destruction?**

Iran’s nuclear weapons program must be stopped. NATO’s nuclear shield should explicitly be invoked to protect Israel. Canada should use its full legal and diplomatic force to prevent this genocide in the making.

APPENDIX 1

ⁱ Resolution of the International Association of Genocide Scholars Condemning Iranian President Ahmadinejad's Statements Calling for the Destruction of Israel and Denying the Historical Reality of the Holocaust

1 February 2006

We, the leadership and membership of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, a world-wide professional association of experts on genocide, express profound alarm at statements made by the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, calling for Israel to be "wiped off the map" and inciting students to scream "death to the Jews" at a government sponsored conference on 26 October 2005.

On 14 December 2005, President Ahmadinejad publicly denied the Holocaust and declared it a "myth" created by Europeans to justify creation of a Jewish state in the heart of the Islamic world. The International Association of Genocide Scholars repudiates Holocaust denial, which denies the reality of one of the most indisputably proven crimes in human history.

Since President Ahmadinejad took office, inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency have been denied access to inspect Iranian nuclear development facilities, and Iran has openly re-started enrichment of uranium that could be used for nuclear weapons. Iran has missiles that could carry nuclear warheads to destroy Israel.

Iran's president has thus not only called for the destruction of a national and religious group, the Jews of Israel, but has authorized creation of the weapons to carry out his genocidal intent. Iran does not yet have such weapons, but is likely to develop them in the near future unless its nuclear weapons program is stopped.

Direct and public expression of genocidal intent by a national leader coupled with a clear and present danger that genocidal acts will be committed is incitement to genocide. The risk of genocide against Israel is not yet imminent, but once Iran has nuclear weapons, it will be.

Early warning signs of genocide include open expressions of an exclusionary ideology (hate speech), denial of past genocide (Holocaust denial), authoritarian government that represses dissent (arrest of Iranian moderates), organization of fanatical militias (Revolutionary Guards) and construction of weapons of mass destruction (the Iranian nuclear weapons program.) All of these early warning signs of genocide are evident in Iran today.

We therefore call upon the United Nations Security Council to determine that there is a threat to international peace, and to take the following actions under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter:

- 1. Refer Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of Iran, to the International Criminal Court for indictment for direct and public incitement to commit genocide.**
- 2. Direct the International Atomic Energy Agency to demand immediate IAEA inspections of all Iranian nuclear facilities, cessation of enrichment of uranium, and confiscation of all equipment that could be used to manufacture nuclear weapons.**

Association Internationale des études de génocide (IAGS)/International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) –version française

Résolution condamnant l'appel au génocide par Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, le président d'Iran, et la négation de la réalité historique de l'Holocauste.

Appel a la prevention du development des armes nucleaires iraniennes.

Nous, les exécutifs et membres de l'Association internationale des études de génocide, une association professionnelle globale pour l'étude et la prévention de génocide, voudrions exprimer notre profonde alarme sur les déclarations agressives publiques faites par le président d'Iran, M. Ahmadinejad, appelant à "effacer Israël de la carte" et incitant à la conférence gouvernementale les étudiants à crier "Mort aux juifs"! (26 oct 2005)

Le 14 décembre 2005, le Président Ahmadinejad a publiquement nié la réalité de l'Holocauste, et a déclaré que c'était un "mythe" créé par les Européens pour justifier la création d'un état juif au cœur du monde arabe. L'association internationale des études et prévention de génocide répudie l'acte de nier l'Holocauste.

Depuis l'avènement du président Ahmadinejad, les inspecteurs de l'agence internationale de l'énergie atomique ont été empêchés d'inspecter les facilités nucléaires importantes. L'Iran a recommencé son programme de développer la capacité iranienne à enrichir l'uranium au degré suffisant aux armes atomiques. L'Iran possède des missiles capables de porter les bombes atomiques et à détruire Israël.

Le président iranien n'a pas alors seulement fait appel à la destruction d'un groupe national et religieux, les juifs d'Israël, mais a autorisé la création de matériaux essentiels à bâtir les armes capables d'accomplir son objectif génocidaire. L'Iran n'a pas encore produit la bombe atomique, mais peut la développer sous peu, sinon son programme nucléaire ne sera pas défait.

Les précurseurs de précaution qu'un génocide se prépare incluent les expressions ouvertes d'une idéologie exclusionnaire (mots de haine), nier les génocides passés (nier l'Holocauste), un gouvernement autoritaire est répressif (emprisonnement des modérés iraniens), l'organisation des milices fanatiques (Gardes Révolutionnaires), et les programmes à développer les armes de destruction de masse (le programme atomique iranien). Il se trouve chacun de ces précurseurs en Iran aujourd'hui.

L'expression publique et directe de l'intention génocidaire par un chef d'état ensemble avec un danger présent et clair que ces actes seront commis est incitement au génocide. Le risque de génocide contre Israël n'est pas encore immédiat, mais au moment où l'Iran aurait produit les armes atomiques, le danger sera immédiat. Quand l'intention génocidaire est exprimée ouvertement, et les moyens à commettre le génocide se préparent, le principe précautionnaire demande la preuve d'innocence sur des génocidaires. L'action préventive urgente doit être prise. Nous appelons au Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies à déterminer que le programme nucléaire l'Iran menace la paix globale, et à prendre les actions diplomatiques et économiques sous le chapitre VII de la Charte des Nations unies.

The 8 Stages of Genocide

By Dr. Gregory H. Stanton

Genocide is a process that develops in eight stages that are predictable but not inexorable. At each stage, preventive measures can stop it. It is not a linear process, but the stages are in logical order. The later stages must be preceded by the earlier stages, though earlier stages continue to operate throughout the process.

The eight stages of genocide are:

Classification, Symbolization, Dehumanization, Organization, Polarization, Preparation, Extermination, Denial.

CLASSIFICATION: All cultures have categories to distinguish people into “us and them” by ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality: German and Jew, Hutu and Tutsi. Bipolar societies that lack mixed categories, such as Rwanda and Burundi, are the most likely to have genocide. The main preventive measure at this early stage is to develop universalistic institutions that transcend ethnic or racial divisions, that actively promote tolerance and understanding, and that promote classifications that transcend the divisions. The Catholic church could have played this role in Rwanda, had it not been riven by the same ethnic cleavages as Rwandan society. Promotion of a common language in countries like Tanzania has also promoted transcendent national identity. This search for common ground is vital to early prevention of genocide.

SYMBOLIZATION: We give names or other symbols to the classifications. We name people “Jews” or “Gypsies”, or distinguish them by colors or dress; and apply them to members of groups. Classification and symbolization are universally human and do not necessarily result in genocide unless they lead to the next stage, dehumanization. When combined with hatred, symbols may be forced upon unwilling members of pariah groups: the yellow star for Jews under Nazi rule, the blue scarf for people from the Eastern Zone in Khmer Rouge Cambodia. To combat symbolization, hate symbols can be legally forbidden (swastikas) as can hate speech. Group marking like gang clothing or tribal scarring can be outlawed, as well. The problem is that legal limitations will fail if unsupported by popular cultural enforcement. Though Hutu and Tutsi were forbidden words in Burundi until the 1980’s, code-words replaced them. If widely supported, however, denial of symbolization can be powerful, as it was in Bulgaria, when many Bulgarians refused to distribute the yellow star, depriving it of its significance as a Nazi symbol for Jews.

DEHUMANIZATION: One group denies the humanity of the other group. Members of it are equated with animals, vermin, insects or diseases. Dehumanization overcomes the normal human revulsion against murder. At this stage, hate propaganda in print and on hate radios is used to vilify the victim group. In combating this dehumanization, incitement to genocide should not be confused with protected speech. Genocidal societies lack constitutional protection for countervailing speech, and should be treated differently than in democracies. Hate radio stations should be shut down, and hate propaganda banned. Hate crimes and atrocities should be promptly punished.

ORGANIZATION: Genocide is always organized, usually by the state, though sometimes informally (Hindu mobs led by local RSS militants) or by terrorist groups. Special army units or militias are often trained

and armed. Plans are made for genocidal killings. To combat this stage, membership in these militias should be outlawed. Their leaders should be denied visas for foreign travel. The U.N. should impose arms embargoes on governments and citizens of countries involved in genocidal massacres, and create commissions to investigate violations, as was done in post-genocide Rwanda.

POLARIZATION: Extremists drive the groups apart. Hate groups broadcast polarizing propaganda. Laws may forbid intermarriage or social interaction. Extremist terrorism targets moderates, intimidating and silencing the center. Prevention may mean security protection for moderate leaders or assistance to human rights groups. Assets of extremists may be seized, and visas for international travel denied to them. Coups d'état by extremists should be opposed by international sanctions.

PREPARATION: Victims are identified and separated out because of their ethnic or religious identity. Death lists are drawn up. Members of victim groups are forced to wear identifying symbols. They are often segregated into ghettos, forced into concentration camps, or confined to a famine-struck region and starved. At this stage, a Genocide Alert must be called. If the political will of the U.S. Government, NATO, and the U.N. Security Council can be mobilized, armed international intervention should be prepared, or heavy assistance to the victim group in preparing for its self-defense. Otherwise, at least humanitarian assistance should be organized by the U.N. and private relief groups for the inevitable tide of refugees to come.

EXTERMINATION begins, and quickly becomes the mass killing legally called "genocide." It is "extermination" to the killers because they do not believe their victims to be fully human. When it is sponsored by the state, the armed forces often work with militias to do the killing. Sometimes the genocide results in revenge killings by groups against each other, creating the downward whirlpool-like cycle of bilateral genocide (as in Burundi). At this stage, only rapid and overwhelming armed intervention can stop genocide. Real safe areas or refugee escape corridors should be established with heavily armed international protection. (Insecure "safe" areas are worse than none at all.) A multilateral force authorized by the U.N., should intervene. It is time to recognize that the international law of humanitarian intervention transcends the narrow interests of individual nation states. If NATO nations will not send troops, they should provide the airlift, equipment, and financial means necessary for regional states to intervene with U.N. authorization.

DENIAL is the eighth stage that always follows a genocide. It is among the surest indicators of further genocidal massacres. The perpetrators of genocide dig up the mass graves, burn the bodies, try to cover up the evidence and intimidate the witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and often blame what happened on the victims. They block investigations of the crimes, and continue to govern until driven from power by force, when they flee into exile. There they remain with impunity, like Pol Pot or Idi Amin, unless they are captured and a tribunal is established to try them. The response to denial is punishment by an international tribunal or national courts. There the evidence can be heard, and the perpetrators punished. Tribunals like the Yugoslav or Rwanda Tribunals, or a mixed domestic /international tribunal to try the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, or an International Criminal Court may not deter the worst genocidal killers. But with the political will to arrest and prosecute them, some may be brought to justice.