

UPF-UK Ruth Barnett, Genocide - Before and After

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T.S. Eliot, (in *Four Quartets*) said that humanity cannot bear too much reality. Humanity certainly cannot face the reality of genocide

Why am I interested in Genocide? As a child who escaped the Holocaust by coming to England at age four on the *KT*, I live with 1.5 million children murdered by the Nazis because they were not rescued. How many brilliant musicians, scientists, leaders of all kinds have we lost in my generation. One of those 1.5 million children might have made much better use of the chance of rescue than I ever can. So I do what I can to raise awareness of the truth about genocide.

Genocide does not just happen we allow it to happen. We do not have to, but we do, again and again. Why? We know that genocide is totally unacceptable, yet we accept it. Why accept the unacceptable? We don't have to. There is much that each and every one of us can do – at the very least stand up and declare it unacceptable, and others will be energised to stand up and support you.



Before the mass killing there is mass indifference: the signs of an emerging genocide are very clear but too many people ignore them until too late. We cannot imagine we didn't see it coming. Ignorance, including willful ignorance blinds people to the reality. Besides the 10 stages outlined by Greg Stanton, there is usually a pernicious ideology that signals an emerging genocide. This is usually based on the myth of a superior race that must be purified by exorcising the impurities by death – the Ottoman Turkification of its empire, the Nazi racial theory of a pure Aryan master-race are just two examples. Currently, we are not taking seriously enough *Dawa* - the pernicious ideology of Alqaida, Daesh and Boko Haram. Indifference meant we did not intervene early enough to prevent violence escalating out of control. Only understanding their culture and tackling it with counter-culture will succeed – bombing is failing.

After the mass slaughter there is massive denial: little if any justice is achieved, which increases impunity for more genocide and trauma in the survivors – and there are always enough survivors to tell us exactly what happened. We cannot imagine we didn't know.

Indifference and denial are the real issues that we should be worried about but we tend to focus more on racism and radicalisation and bombing the living daylights out of whoever we decide are enemies. Through indifference and denial, we forget that we are all members of the one human race. We don't realise that those on the receiving end of indifference and denial are suffering, frustrated and increasingly angry and violent.



We don't raise our young to think for themselves; we feed them fantasies and fake news and even downright lies. We don't raise them to know how to calculate risks and make effective decisions and take responsibility for them; we bring them up instead on tick boxes and blaming someone else if things go wrong. We have a responsibility-averse society that encourages self-interest at the cost of indifference to others and denial of basic truths.

Modern technology gives us easier quicker access to history than ever before. Without knowing where we have come from, we can't know where we are now or how to manage the future. Denial of past genocide keeps denial going. Particularly, denial that the Ottoman Genocide contributed to the inevitability of the Holocaust means little understanding of where we are today with preventing genocide.

A hopeful sign is that the attempt to bring justice after the Holocaust – the Nuremberg Trials – led to some real progress: the creation of two new crimes on the international statute book: Crimes Against Humanity and Genocide, and also to Universal Human Rights. More recently, the UN has been working on R2P – responsibility to protect. There is now a large quantity of information, reports and guidelines about R2P on the internet. Indifference and denial seem to be holding up people taking this seriously. In my opinion it is, as yet, focused on leaders and governments. Change is not likely to come from the top. It has to come from the bottom – by every individual taking responsibility for R2P - to protect those in need of protection in their locality.

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