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Patterns of the Past: Determining Common Pre-Genocide Characteristic to Predict and Prevent Future Genocides

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Certain warning signs of genocide – segregation, identification symbols, dehumanization, death lists, and executioners-in-training – existed in Nazi-controlled territories prior to the extermination of the Jews. Can these signs be seen in all past genocides? And, if so, can this pattern be effectively utilized to predict and prevent future genocides? By comparing pre-genocide characteristics that warned of the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, and the Rwandan genocide, one can indeed see that these are common characteristics of a country on the verge of genocide. As Gregory H. Stanton has theorized, there are common "stages" in the genocidal process, each with distinct characteristics signaling what is to come. This can be proven by a careful examination and comparison of how the three previously listed genocides moved through Stanton's stages. Understanding this process is currently of great importance. By recognizing the early signs of past genocides, the international community can identify countries currently nearing genocide and, with enough political and public will, pursue proactive prevention before more innocent lives are lost.

Information about the Author:

Senior Kayla Nomina is a member of the International Association of Genocide Scholars and has been studying genocide for several years. She presented a different paper on the Rwandan genocide at the University of Minnesota in April. She hopes to work for a non-profit organization or a genocide museum where she can increase awareness of genocide and contribute to the effort to prevent this crime in the future.

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