

**DURING THE LAST 100 YEARS FAR  
MORE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN KILLED  
BY THEIR OWN GOVERNMENTS  
THAN BY FOREIGN ARMIES**



# MURDEROUS GOVERNMENTS

More people have been killed in the 20th century by their own governments than by all wars combined. About 25 million soldiers died in World Wars I and II and another 12 million were killed in this century's other wars and revolutions totalling 37 million lives lost.

- Under Lenin and Stalin, the Soviet government became one of the world's greatest killers. Lenin's policies in 1921-1922 caused an estimated 4 million deaths and in 1932, Stalin ordered that the Ukraine be starved to enforce collectivisation policies and to crush Ukrainian nationalism resulting in the murder of at least 8 million Ukrainians
- Between 1917 and 1953 (the year of Stalin's death), the Soviet Union executed, in one way or another, some 40 million people and many Russian and international historians estimate the figure to be even higher
- In China, under Mao Tse Tung, 2 million dissidents or 'class enemies' were shot and another one million Tibetans and Turkestani Muslims were 'liquidated.' Between 1950 and 1975, an estimated 30 million people starved to death with another two million dying during the Cultural Revolution. This amounts to a total of some 35 million people
- Hitler and the Nazis were responsible for the deaths of 12 million civilians, half of them Jews
- An estimated two million German civilians were killed in 1945, and at least 200,000 died in concentration camps between 1945 and 1953. The Allied forces 'handed back' an estimated 2 million Soviet citizens to Stalin in 1945: half of them were shot and the rest sent to Arctic camps where many of them died
- During World War I, the Ottoman Empire murdered or starved up to 2 million Armenians, the first great genocide of the new century
- In the early 1960's, 600,000 ethnic Chinese were massacred in Indonesia by government-encouraged mobs and soldiers
- During the Marcos era in the Philippines, 75,000 Muslims were massacred by government paramilitary gangs
- In 1971, Pakistani troops killed tens of thousands of Bengalis in former East Pakistan. Indian security forces and police have massacred great numbers of tribespeople in border regions and many civilians in Kashmir and Punjab
- Between 1975 and 1979, an estimated 2 million people were killed in Cambodia during the regime of Pol Pot
- In the 1980's, Ethiopia's then Marxist regime through a series of policies including forced relocation caused the deaths of an estimated million people, often through starvation
- 1994 witnessed the slaughter of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and Hutu 'dissidents' at the hands of Rwanda's Hutu government
- Serbia's nationalist regime orchestrated the massacre of 200,000 Muslim civilians in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995.



The scale of the figures above (even if their complete accuracy is contested) has led many researchers to develop a series of concepts designed to capture and define the nature of such systematic killing. 'Democide' is the term developed by US political scientist RJ Rummel who defines democide as 'the murder of any person or people by a government, including genocide, politicide, and mass murder'. He created the term as a concept which included forms of government murder not covered by the legal definition of genocide. 'Politicide' is

the term used to describe the killing of groups of people not because of shared ethnic or communal traits (the types of groups covered by the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide) but because of their position in the power structure of a state or their political opposition to a regime and its dominant groups.

Rummel's research argues that the death toll from democide is far greater than the death toll from war. Having studied over 8,000 reports of government caused deaths, he concludes that there have been 262 million victims of democide in the last century.

According to his figures, six times as many people have died from the actions of people working for governments than have died in battle.

Another of his major findings is that liberal democracies have much less democide than authoritarian regimes and he argues that there is a relationship between political power and democide. Political mass murder grows increasingly common as political power becomes unconstrained and conversely, where power is 'diffuse, checked, and balanced', political violence is a rarity. According to Rummel:

*'The more power a regime has, the more likely people will be killed. This is a major reason for promoting freedom.'*

Numerous other researchers agree that democratic rules and democratic political structures place limits on the decisions and actions of elites around the use of repression against their fellow citizens, whereas autocratic elites are not effectively constrained. Once in place, democratic rules, structures and accountability, even limited ones, reduce the likelihood of armed conflict and effectively eliminate the risk of either politicide or genocide.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

RJ Rummel came up with the term 'Democide' in his book *Death by Government: Genocide and Mass Murder since 1900* (1997, Transaction). You can read an excerpt of the book [here](#).

<http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP2.HTM>

Genocide Watch have put together a [table](#) listing all the various genocides, politicides and other mass murders since 1945. Besides calculating the civilian death toll of each, the table also mentions each genocide/politicide's main perpetrators, and ranks them according to Gregory Stanton's [genocide measure](#).

<http://www.genocidewatch.org/aboutgenocide/genocidespoliticides.html>

<http://www.genocidewatch.org/aboutgenocide/8stagesofgenocide.html>

# UNDERSTANDING HUMAN SECURITY

The UN Commission on Human Security defines it as:

*Human security means protecting vital freedoms. It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and livelihood. To do this, it offers two general strategies: protection and empowerment. Protection shields people from dangers. Empowerment enables people to develop their potential and become full participants in decision-making.*

Report of the UN Commission on Human Security (2003)

The concept of human security as it is now understood arose from the work and agenda of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which argued that *'security has far too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory... or as protection of national interests... or as global security from the threat of nuclear holocaust... forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives.'*

In the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report, human security was broadly defined as *'freedom from fear and freedom from want' and characterised as 'safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression as well as protection from sudden and harmful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities'.*

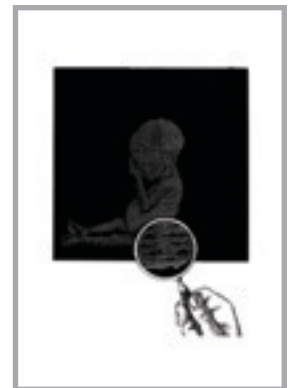
The Report argued that the idea of security needed to be changed in two fundamental ways:

- A move away from an exclusive stress on territorial security to a much greater stress on people's own security
- A move away from security through armaments and armies to security through sustainable human development

The report went on to define 7 key elements that should make up such a broader definition of human security:

- Economic security (*basic income, reasonable job security and terms of employment, a basic social safety net, reasonable housing, etc.*)
- Food security (*physical and economic access to basic food, strategies to tackle food insecurity, etc.*)
- Health security (*adequate basic nutrition, access to safe water, basic care during and immediately following pregnancy, etc.*)
- Environmental security (*strategies for water scarcity, safe sanitation, avoidance of environmental disasters, information on and programmes to tackle salinisation, overgrazing and land degradation, etc.*)
- Personal security (*protection from state threats, individuals or gangs, appropriate protection for women and for children specifically, etc.*)
- Community security (*safety within family, ethnic and/or community group, protection from negative community practices or from ethnic conflict, etc.*)
- Political security (*protection from state repression, from human rights violations, appropriate free speech, etc.*)

For many researchers and commentators the ideas of security and development are strongly interconnected.



- Human security forms an important part of people's well-being, and is therefore an objective of development
- One key objective of development is 'the enlargement of human choices'. Insecurity cuts life short and limits the use of human potential, thus affecting the realisation of this objective
- Lack of human security has negative consequences for economic growth, and therefore for human development
- Lack of security has obvious development costs. For example, in a war situation, people who join the army or flee can no longer work productively. Also, war routinely damages infrastructure and reduces the productive capacity of the economy
- Unfair or unjust development, built on gross inequalities remains a major source of conflict, which can create a vicious cycle - lack of fair and equal development often leads to conflict, which reinforces underdevelopment, etc. In contrast, positive relations are feasible with high levels of security leading to development, which further promotes security in return.

For the authors of the Human Security Report (first published in 2005) human security is a relatively new concept, but one that is now widely used to describe the complex interrelated threats associated with civil war, genocide, and the displacement of populations. They argue that the distinction between human security and the more traditional concept of national security is important. While national security focuses on the defence of the state from external attack, human security is about protecting individuals and communities from any form of political violence.

Human security and national security should be - and often are - mutually reinforcing. But secure states do not automatically mean secure peoples. Protecting citizens from foreign attacks may be a necessary condition for the security of individuals, but it is not a sufficient one. During the last 100 years far more people have been killed by their own governments than by foreign armies.

All proponents of human security agree that its primary goal is the protection of individuals. But there is little agreement over exactly what threats individuals should be protected from. Proponents of the 'narrow' concept of human security focus on violent threats to individuals, while also recognising that these threats are strongly associated with poverty, lack of adequate government capacity, accountability and democracy as well as with various forms of socio-economic and political inequality.

Proponents of the 'broad' concept of human security outlined in the UN Development Programme's 1994 Human Development Report, and the Commission on Human Security's 2003 report argue that the 'threat agenda' should be broadened to include hunger, disease, and natural disasters, because these kill far more people than war, genocide, and terrorism combined.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

The UN's Commission on Human Security published its report 'Human Security Now' in 2003. It is **available online**. Using Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 'four freedoms' as a springboard, the report looks at human security in the broadest sense of the word, with chapters on forced migration, health and education as well as conflict.

<http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/English/FinalReport.pdf>

The 2005 Human Security Report looks at human security from a conflict-based perspective. For more information on the Human Security report, have a look at these **notes**.

<http://www.humansecurityreport.info/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=28&Itemid=63>