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«COUNTERACTING THE GENOCIDE OF UKRAINIANS»

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The Collection of Materials from the All-Ukrainian Scientific and Practical Conference “Counteracting the Genocide of Ukrainians” (Kyiv, May 8, 2025) provides a comprehensive analysis of urgent issues related to the genocide of the Ukrainian people committed by the Russian Federation. This 95-page publication covers a broad spectrum of topics, including the historical, legal, and socio-political dimensions of investigating the crimes of the aggressor.

The primary goal of the conference was to strengthen efforts to counter the ongoing genocide in Ukraine and to expedite the investigation and documentation of crimes committed by the Russian Federation. Participants discussed various mechanisms and strategies for resisting aggression, as well as opportunities for international cooperation in this field.

This collection serves as a valuable resource for practitioners and scholars, policymakers, and public figures committed to preserving historical truth and ensuring justice for the victims of genocide..

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THE SCIENTIFIC FRONTLINE IN RESISTING THE POLITICS OF GENOCIDE: A CASE STUDY OF MARIUPOL

Keywords: genocide, human rights, scientific and academic community, Mariupol case, resistance.

The term “genocide” formally recognized in the international law in the aftermath of the Holocaust due to Raphael Lemkin’s passionate advocacy, continues to be in the focus of attention of international community, seeking for the precise scholarly inquiry into its origins, heritages and manifestations as well as the intellectual mechanisms of its resistance. The above-mentioned notion originated from the ancient Greek word ‘genos’ (‘race’, ‘tribe’) and the Latin ‘cide’ (‘killing’), and introduced by the author to denote “the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.) currently shifts its traditional practice in its modern development. Genocide is viewed to indicate a “coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.). Rather than targeting personal attributes, its destructive actions aimed at individuals are fundamentally focused on their belonging to a specific national group.

A diverse array of centers and organizations operating worldwide (e.g., the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Center for Genocide Prevention, Simon-Skjoldt Center Research, the International Crisis, The George and Irina Schaeffer Center for the Study of Genocide, Human Rights and Conflict Prevention at The American University of Paris, Uppsala Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies (UHGS), Holocaust & Genocide Studies Program at the Gladstein Family Human Rights Institute (University of Connecticut), Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention at Binghamton University, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention, the Holodomor Research and Education Consortium (HREC), Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies, Tkuma: Ukrainian Institute for Holocaust Studies and others) share their strategic objectives and core mission of robustly opposing all forms of genocide. These entities undertake a wide spectrum of activities, ranging from early warning analysis and impactful policy advocacy to direct intervention protocols and research initiatives aimed at preventing and mitigating the genocidal threats (Bachman, 2022, p. 56). In this regard, the adequate comprehension of the multifaceted motives and devastating consequences of genocide necessitates a deep and consistent scientific analysis with various disciplines implied.

This study proceeds from the premise that education and science – the systematic pursuit of knowledge across the wide spectrum of academic disciplines including humanities, social and natural sciences – establish an indispensable frontline in the ongoing struggle against the emergence of genocidal processes and advance a shared global discourse for the prevention of mass violence worldwide. This issue is particularly relevant in the context of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war with the alarming signals of genocide acutely evident during the siege of Mariupol from February 2022. The gravity of these inhuman acts requires both immediate societal response and thorough scientific analysis. For the purpose of this article, we collected empirical evidence and critical perspectives to fully elucidate the complex interplay of factors engendering genocidal ideologies and actions. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the necessity

for the academic community to examine potential avenues for counteracting these manifestations, including the documentation of crimes, the analysis of dehumanization through the detection of factors contributing to violence, and the investigation of its consequences.

In light of the devastating nature of the politics of genocide and the imperative for scientific comprehension, we consider it highly appropriate to introduce Mariupol as a remarkable and compelling case study, particularly considering the city's devastation in February 2022 and its potential for revealing mechanisms of resistance. Acknowledged as Ukraine's "Big Capital of Culture" in 2021, Mariupol held the status of a key outpost of Ukrainian sovereignty and a symbol of "staunch Ukrainian resistance that has thwarted the kremlin's invasion plans" (BBC News, May 12, 2022) since 2014, when Ukrainian forces reclaimed the city following russia's unsuccessful attempts to occupy it.

Since the start of the russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, Mariupol became a priority target for the kremlin again. This time russian military offensives aimed to make Mariupol as the example of their brutal and destructive capabilities utilizing tactics that the EU has condemned as "major war crimes". The city was subjected to intense fire and bloodshed, with more than 90% of its infrastructure destroyed, notably the Drama Theater and maternity hospital being bombarded, and the civilians deprived of water, food, electricity, and heating. These bloody scenarios were the vivid illustration of the kremlin's cynic narrative of "liberating Donbass" by eliminating the Azov battalion, thus "denazifying" Ukraine, giving the russian-speaking Ukrainians a justification for this invasion. As Ida Sawyer, the director of the Crisis, Conflict and Arms Division at Human Rights Watch, puts it, "Mariupol stands as a testament to the cruel destruction and suffering caused by explosive weapons in cities and towns across the world," adding that "all governments should support justice for crimes committed in Ukraine and sign the international declaration condemning the use of explosive weapons in populated areas"

(Human Rights Watch, 2024). The evidence of a devastating strike on a maternity hospital on March 9th was also recorded: "The attack on the Mariupol maternity hospital raises serious concerns about possible war crimes and the targeting of civilians. This event, widely reported by international news outlets, underscored the vulnerability of the civilian population" (Human Rights Watch, 2022). In addition, Michelle Bachelet, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in her speech on 49th Session of the Human Rights Council, called the community for active actions informing that "in the besieged city of Mariupol, people are living in sheer terror. The situation is worsening by the day, with constant shelling, fighting in the streets and people struggling to survive with the bare minimum of life's necessities including food, water and medical supplies". She testified a rapid rise in civilian casualties by mid-March, asserting that "the actual figures are likely to be considerably higher than those they could verify, hampered by the intense fighting and lack of access to obtain a comprehensive picture (OHCHR, March 15, 2022).

Building upon this framework, this study now draws attention to the specific roles that academic community plays in counteracting the all forms of genocidal policies. In this regard, the case of Mariupol State University provides a truly poignant illustration of both the vulnerability of students and academic staff to the acts of violence and their potential for resilience and resistance. The tragic experiences of the University's community during the siege of Mariupol in February 2022 – enduring the absence of communication, food, water, electricity, heating in sub-zero temperatures, lack of medical aid and functioning pharmacies amidst relentless aerial and artillery bombardment that severed the city from external support – underscore the critical need for scientific inquiry into both the causes and consequences of such atrocities, as well as the role of academic community in preventing them. The University suffered the tragic loss of five members of its academic staff and six students that further highlights the human cost of this violence and the urgency of understanding how education and science can serve as a stronghold against such devastation and its destructive nature. Accordingly, on elaborating on the role of universities in counteracting genocide we make an attempt to distinguish the following aspects: 1) recording human rights violations and acts of genocide (collecting the evidence to provide

a comprehensive database, analyze the nature of atrocities using research methodologies); 2) critical investigation of deconstructing ideologies and propaganda (research analysis with various disciplines involved, in particular, sociology, history, arts, psychology, political studies, literature, linguistics, media literacy, etc. to clearly identify the mechanisms and consequences of genocide); 3) the implementation of educational curricula related to the above-mentioned issues (integrating modules/ courses to foster students' critical thinking, a profound sense of tolerance and inclusivity, empathy, human dignity, and a refutation of prejudice, thus enhancing societal resilience against genocidal ideologies); 4) project design and engagement with legal and ethical initiatives (the scholars specializing in the areas of jurisprudence and ethics can contribute to the development of international legal frameworks and ethical guidelines aimed at the prevention of genocide and the enforcement of penalties for this crime); 5) psychological assistance and support (researchers specializing in psychology and related fields provide individual post-trauma assistance to those who suffered from consequences of genocide and mass violence).

The outlined aspects have demonstrated that active and coordinated participation of the scientific community constitutes a key element in countering the politics of genocide and cultivating a more informed and resilient global community. Critical examination of the multifaceted dimensions of genocide, rendered by the tragic Mariupol case study, underscores the dominant and crucial role of universities as intellectual pillars against the vicious manifestation of genocidal politics. Functioning as pivotal hubs of critical inquiry, and centers of historical memory, they bear a deep concern and moral responsibility to actively contest the mechanisms facilitating mass atrocities.

The outlined issues signify critical avenues for further investigation, necessitating sustained scholarly attention across several key aspects. Further research should prioritize interdisciplinary studies using methodologies for evidence collection and inquiry to critically evaluate the impact of ethical and legal frameworks on the prevention and prosecution of genocide.

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