

*This briefing was written by Dr. Caroline Bennett ([caroline.bennett@aeqitrust.org](mailto:caroline.bennett@aeqitrust.org)/[@Dr\\_C\\_Bennett](https://twitter.com/Dr_C_Bennett)). This is not an official publication of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. It has not been approved by either House or its committees.*

## **Women and Genocide – Background**

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Gender is at the heart of genocide. Men and women are targeted differently, as well as being treated differently afterwards both domestically, and internationally.

As well as being victims of genocide worldwide, women suffer statistically higher from non-killing acts of genocide and crimes against humanity; including systematic and weaponised rape, torture, enslavement, and other cruel and degrading treatment. However, this is often overlooked, or obscured. This is a global issue – in 2019 an independent inquiry concluded that the Canadian state had perpetrated a genocide of indigenous people, largely based on their ongoing abuse and neglect of indigenous women, including acts such as forced sterilisation (see [National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women Final Report](#)).

Women also face serious challenges in achieving justice. When genocide is tried, it often concentrates on mass killings, while non-killing acts are side-lined, or tried under lesser charges. However, these are often central to the intent to destroy a group.

This needs to be addressed at domestic and international level.

## **Contemporary Genocide/Crimes Against Humanity Risks against women**

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Women continue to be targeted across the globe experiencing non-killing acts of genocide and crimes against humanity. Some recent examples include:

**Muslim women in India** – recent rises in violence in India include targeted violence against Muslim women, including rape, sexual violence, and mass killing. These include calls for Muslim women to be enslaved and raped to ‘breed’ for Hindus; auctioning of Muslim women online; mass incarceration, and other violence.

*(Note: The APPG on Genocide Prevention and APPG FoRB are hosting a meeting online, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 10.30-11.15am which will discuss persecution in India, focusing on women. [Register here.](#))*

**Uyghur women in Xinjiang** – an independent tribunal in the UK determined evidence beyond doubt that the People's Republic of China committed torture, crimes against humanity and genocide. Many of these targeted women, including rape and other sexual violence, and forced sterilization. In the case of policies and conduct concerning birth control, they were satisfied beyond reasonable doubt of intended destruction of the Uyghur group, i.e. genocide. ([full report here](#); summary of findings p.56)

**Yazidi women in Iraq/Syria** – A UN human rights panel concluded that the attacks against Yazidi [constitutes genocide](#), partly conducted through attacks on women, who were seen as ‘spoils of war’, and enslaved, sold, used as sexual servants, and raped, as well as suffering other violence.

## **Genocide Prevention and women**

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International Women's Day must be a day to celebrate women and their achievements, but also to reflect on the ways to protect them. We must honour our commitment made to Never Again allow genocide, crimes against humanity, and other atrocities to occur, and use this day to learn, embed education, critical awareness, and commitment to actively prevent future genocides and atrocities.

The UK has the potential to lead the international community on genocide prevention, through its status as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, as a founding member of NATO, and a leading aid donor. This can be deepened. Crucially by:

1. Fulfilling existing obligations to the UN Genocide Convention and the UK International Criminal Court Act. With regard to women, also fulfilling existing commitment to the Beijing Declaration, as a leading member of the Gender-Based Violence Action Coalition;
2. Approaching genocide and crimes against humanity as actionable events, not just consequences of existing conflict and warfare.
3. Creating a national strategy on the prevention of genocide that includes domestic and foreign policy.
4. Embedding education on genocide and its complexity, including causes, ongoing effects, and gender dimensions, to all levels of the school curriculum.

#### **Preventative Actions include:**

- Taking non-killing acts of violence against women seriously;
- Monitoring at risk countries, and acting swiftly when risk factors are identified ([through trade, defence, foreign and domestic policies](#));
- Resourcing and taking seriously our responsibility to investigate, arrest, and try or extradite genocide suspects living at-large in the UK;
- Integrating existing commitments to international peace efforts (e.g. the UN Security Council, NATO, the International Criminal Court, the Responsibility to Protect) with domestic and foreign policy;
- Embedding atrocity-prevention, in addition to poverty relief, as a core purpose of UK Aid, with an emphasis on strengthening civil society upstream prevention initiatives;
- Ensuring UK personnel overseas are trained in recognising and reporting on early warning signs.

#### **Further Information**

[Women's Experiences of Genocide brief](#), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

[Gender and Genocide White Paper](#), Global Justice Centre.

UN Women - <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>

Women for Women International - <https://womenforwomen.org.uk/work-we-do/policy-and-advocacy>