

The episodes in Table 1 occurred in every world region, but were more numerous and claimed more lives in Asia and Africa than elsewhere. These are the regional breakdowns:

The Americas: 5 episodes with 130,000 to 300,000 victims

Middle East and North Africa: 5 episodes with 150,000 to 240,000 victims

Europe: 6 episodes with 1 to 1.7 million victims, most of them in the USSR

Africa south of the Sahara: 19 episodes with 4 to 5 million victims

Asia: 16 episodes with 7 to 14 million victims

Estimates of victims are notoriously unreliable and even where a seemingly exact figure is given in the table it almost always reflects a midpoint between high and low estimates. Using the most conservative estimates, more than 12 million noncombatants died in these episodes.

- The Genocide Convention does not include groups of victims defined by their political positions and actions. Raphael Lemkin, a tireless advocate for passage of the Convention and responsible for coining the term, did advocate the inclusion of political groups. For political reasons, however, the final draft of the Convention omits any reference to political groups, at least to get the USSR and its allies to support the document. We cannot be blamed for using the concept of politicide, now widely used by other researchers, to identify cases with politically-defined victims. Scholars who have done case studies of recent genocides argue that the Convention's definition does not fit well any major genocide since WW II. This is not surprising because the original definition is closely tied to the Holocaust. The point can be illustrated by applying the Convention's definition to the Cambodian genocide (1975-78). Most victims of the Khmer Rouge were other Khmers—real or imagined class enemies, hence politically defined groups. The genocide victims were the small Cham minority (Muslims), Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese. The episode was a politicide not a genocide, and if we were to exclude Khmers from consideration we could not account for the vast majority of the estimated 2 to 3 million victims.