

PART TWO

FUTURE RISKS

WHY STATES VICTIMIZE GROUPS: ASSESSING THE RISKS OF FUTURE GENOCIDES AND POLITICIDES

Overview

What is it about the state, and the victims, that makes some kinds of groups targets for elimination? As mentioned above, in some instances a politically passive communal group is singled out for attack and dispersal because it stands in the way of national expansion. In other instances governments use tit-for-tat repression in an attempt to quell politically organized groups fighting to alter power relations within a state, as has happened in Turkish, Iraqi, and Iranian Kurdistan. When state repression is met with further resistance, leaders may be provoked to return violence disproportionately. This is the strategy of politicide, in which governing authorities choose to respond to challenges by killing as many members of the group as is necessary to shatter their capacity to persist and act as a collectivity. Many individual members of the group may survive such attacks, often as international or internally displaced refugees.

The worst of all possibilities is that in which a state systematically seeks to destroy, as a matter of policy, all members of a group irrespective of their actions. "Guilt" is established not by action or association, but is assigned to all those who share the defining ascriptive characteristics. This was the Nazis' intent with respect to Jews and Roma. It also was the intent of the Hutu militiamen of the *Interahamwe* and *Impuzamugambi* who targeted all Rwandan Tutsis for extermination in April-May 1994. The same phenomena is sometimes seen in politicides, for example when death squads in Argentina, El Salvador, and elsewhere in Latin America targeted not only leftist sympathizers but their families as well - as if support for the left was the result of a flaw in the victims' genetic code.