International Relations · GS - II

Genocide is not merely an act of mass violence but a crime requiring specific intent to destroy a protected group. Explain the evolution of the concept of genocide and examine the role and limitations of international legal institutions in preventing and punishing it.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 20/11/2026	GS - II	International Relations

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Raphael Lemkin, 1948 Genocide Convention, specific intent, protected groups, Article II, ICJ, ICC, State responsibility, individual criminal liability, universal jurisdiction, Security Council, enforcement challenges, early prevention.

Model Answer

Introduction

The term genocide was coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944 to describe the systematic destruction of national and ethnic groups. The atrocities of the Second World War led to the adoption of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948.

Evolution and Legal Definition

Article II of the Convention defines genocide through specified acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. These acts include:

- Killing members of the group.
- Causing serious bodily or mental harm.
- Deliberately inflicting conditions calculated to bring about physical destruction.
- Imposing measures intended to prevent births.
- Forcibly transferring children to another group.

The defining element is specific intent, distinguishing genocide from other international crimes.

Role of International Institutions

1. **International Court of Justice:** Determines State responsibility under the Genocide Convention and can order provisional measures.
2. **International Criminal Court:** Prosecutes individuals accused of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity within its jurisdiction.
3. **United Nations:** Promotes early warning, diplomatic intervention and international cooperation to prevent atrocities.

Limitations

- **Enforcement deficit:** International judgments depend substantially on State cooperation and political will.
- **Geopolitical interests:** Security Council divisions and veto powers can obstruct collective action.
- **Jurisdictional constraints:** International courts operate within defined jurisdictional limits.
- **Prevention gap:** Political reluctance and delayed intervention can allow atrocities to escalate.

Way Forward

Strengthening early-warning mechanisms, evidence preservation, international cooperation and accountability can improve prevention and enforcement.

Conclusion

The Genocide Convention established an important legal framework against the destruction of protected groups. Its effectiveness ultimately

depends on timely prevention, impartial accountability and sustained international commitment.

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