Two thousand five hundred Armenian women burned to death, six million Jews fell to their knees, and thousands of Rwandan children were orphaned, abducted, and/or abandoned (Past Genocides and Mass). Yet the consequences for these monstrous, genocidal atrocities were far from suitable. It seems that within the last century, a vicious cycle has evolved. A cycle so discursively inhumane it blinds people from the veracious essence of justice. Unfortunately, more often than not people tend to perceive justice in an “eye for an eye” manner. They conceptualize justice as an adequate punishment for those who committed a crime. However, in accordance with leader of the Indian independence movement, Mahatma Gandhi, “an eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.” In other words, true justice cannot be achieved by striving to reach equity through vengeance. It cannot be achieved by punishing a few individuals for their inhumane crimes against humanity, for doing so is no better is than adding fuel to an ongoing fire. In lieu, real justice is based on good morals. It is based on altruism of citizen to citizen, leader to leader, and nation to nation. But most importantly, true justice is based upon preventing injustice from happening in the first place. Thus, it is beyond the bounds of possibility to fully achieve justice after genocide.

Alas, though obtaining sheer justice after genocide is evidently insurmountable, many individuals persist to stand their ground, arguing that such justice is indeed, and has always been, attainable through the court of law. Deluded by a dubious definition of justice, these individuals fail to look past justice’s judicial implication; forgetting that its bona fide root is housed in each of their hearts. They are unable to fathom the fact that, in reality, courts and judicial proceedings are nothing but rigid systems for “correcting injustice” (Wall). Simply correcting injustice, however, is “a million miles away from true Justice” (Wall). It does not atone former misdoings nor prevent subsequent atrocities from ensuing. Instead, judicial justice merely utilizes the law to chastise criminals and redress victims, burying heinous truths of inhumane actions in the
To begin with, it is essential to allude to the first modern genocide, which has finally been dubbed the Armenian Genocide just this past decade. This ruthless enormity began in the midst of WWI, when the Turkish government fixed their efforts on the eradication of all Armenians living in Turkey (Yeghern). Under the leadership of Ismail Enver, Mehmet Talaat, and Ahmed Jemal, the Young Turks (more formally known as the Committee of Union and Progress or C.U.P.) began to target innocent Armenians; ravaging their homes and deporting a myriad of happy families. Within no time, the Young Turks managed to slaughter and burn down entire Armenian villages, leaving behind nothing but the foul smell of burning flesh and silent screams of terror and pain. Those fortunate enough to survive were coercively converted to the Islamic religion, compelled to death marches, and left to die of malnourishment and disease (Yeghern). Howbeit, before the end of WWI, the genuine law so many individuals speak of today, was used as “a tool of genocide” (Jennifer 82). Instead of charging culprits for their inhumane actions, it empowered them, allowing them to legally pursue their barbaric crimes. As a result, within roughly 8 years (1915-1923) an estimated 1.5 million Armenians abandoned the face of the Earth. Thereupon, Ottoman courts and organizations set up to recoup for the appalling aftermath of the Armenian genocide. With regards to the offenders, the 1919 Ottoman Courts-Martial, convicted a number of Young Turks to life in prison and gave a few Turkish leaders the death sentence in absentia (Jennifer 90). In addition to judicial rectification, philanthropic organizations raised money in order to provide Armenian survivors with a sufficient portion of food and suitable shelter for the time being, as well as to help care for thousands of orphaned children (Yeghern). Still, the aforementioned reparations were far from delivering even a slight fragment of justice to Armenian survivors. Frankly, these reparations solely helped cease deliberate analysis of the Armenian Genocide, putting the beast to sleep, as if it had never waken. After all, even the greatest mastermind of all, Adolf Hitler pointed out, “Who today still speaks of the massacre of the Armenians?”

Also worth mentioning are the legendary Nuremberg Trials of 1945-1946. Established after the systematic killing and mass murder of millions of Jews and else virtuous civilians by the
Nazi party, under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, the Nuremberg Trials were the first in history to utilize judicial justice that would “bear against those who had offended the conscience of humanity by committing acts of military aggression and other crimes” (Rice 96). In other words, the Nuremberg Trials were the first to officially condemn cold-blooded participants for their inhumane actions, as a form of atonement for fortunate victims that survived. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the Nuremberg hearings were brought before the International Military Tribunal where governing procedures were set forth and criminal charges were drawn up on four counts: Common Plan or Conspiracy, Crimes Against Peace, War Crimes, and Crimes Against Humanity (Rice 18). Accordingly, twenty-four major Nazi war criminals were accused of a crime on one or more counts. Of those twenty-four men, twenty-one were tried before the IMT, excluding three of the “evilest war criminals of all time” - Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, and Joseph Goebbels - all of whom took their lives to avoid persecution (Rice 22). In regards to the remaining Nazi convicts, three were found to be not guilty and thus acquitted, twelve were sentenced to death by hanging, and six were sent to prison, three of which would remain there for the rest of their lives (Rice 88). Yet despite this sincere attempt to bequeath justice to victims of the Holocaust, the death of a mere twenty-four men will never in a billion years compensate for the millions of precious lives lost throughout the course of the Holocaust. The death of twenty-four men will not console those who wake in the middle of the night, haunted by horrific flashbacks of their past. The death of twenty-four men cannot, by any means, be considered a delivery of justice after genocide.

Still and all, whether one scrutinizes the Khmer Rouge trials of the Cambodian Genocide, the Gacaca Court tribunals of the Rwandan Genocide, or the *Bosnia and Herzegovina v Serbia and Montenegro* proceeding of the Bosnian Genocide, a single, undeniable message becomes evident: securing justice after genocide is unimaginable. By all means, judges can condemn perpetrators and grant reparations, but they cannot breathe new life into the millions of innocent lives lost to inhumane cruelty. They can strive to shun past hardships, but the brutal, macabre scenes will remain in the minds of survivors for eternity. Most importantly, judges can certainly restore property and restrain criminals, “but they cannot change people's hearts to love each other again” (Wall). Furthermore, it cannot be forgotten that each and every genocide, whether official or never heard of, has contributed to an eternal worldwide wound that cannot be healed. Though reparations can treat the symptoms of loss and mend shattered lives, they cannot heal the
eternal agony of a people. Despite all endeavors to repair repercussions of evil, an everlasting scar will remain forevermore.

For this reason, individuals must also remember that “above the law is the welfare of the nation” (Morawiecki). Therefore, instead of rushing to achieve judicial justice, the international community must learn that is far more beneficial and just to prevent genocides from arising in the first place, rather than quietly cleaning up the remains of their aftermath. In order to do so, we, as a whole, cannot simply leave an individual country alone to sort itself out. On the contrary, we must become better at identifying places where genocides might emerge, and affirm that we care about stopping them as an international community. But above all, we cannot, under any circumstance, turn away from the source of the problem. Instead, we must use our resources to resolve it. Only then will a new possibility emerge; a possibility that will allow the approach of an iota of true justice after genocide.

Works Cited


   <http://www.wall.org/~aron/blog/true-justice/>.