# Genocide, apartheid, colonialism. . .

Terry Glavin - The Real Story / Substack - 2026-10-30

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Genocide, apartheid, colonialism. . .

. . . words should mean what they're meant to mean.

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A dictionary of terms and their meanings in international law

Genocide is one of the gravest crimes humanity has encoded in law. Its occurrence should be determined by law and by evidence, not by the preference of Canadian politicians for a convenient moral vocabulary.

In 2019, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accepted the conclusion of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls that found a genocide had occurred, and by implication was still occurring, in Canada. In 2022, Canada's House of Commons unanimously declared the country's residential-school system to have constituted genocide.

No trials. No judicial findings. No serious parliamentary scrutiny.

The commission of genocide cannot be determined by rewriting the meaning of established terms in law, or by rewriting the definition of words in the dictionary. That modest hypothesis serves as the basis of an analysis I was honoured to contribute to the effort by the International Legal Forum to reclaim the meaning of terms that have been globally misused, hijacked and systematically weaponized.

This redefinition of words and the reconstitution of their legal meanings is commonly put to the purpose of maligning certain countries, most notably Australia, Canada, Israel, the United Kingdom, the United States and Ukraine. But especially Israel. The ILF has set out to address this phenomenon by remembering and reclaiming the foundational principles of law "to confront extremism and the antisemitism that signals it."

That's the background to the ILF's Dictionary of Terms. It's a work in progress. I'm taking a break from the usual Real Story content today to draw some attention to it.

I was honoured to be asked to contribute the ILF effort alongside Irwin Cotler, Canada's former justice minister and now International Chair of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, Natan Sharansky, a "refusenik" who spent nine years in a Soviet prison before going on to a lifetime of human rights activism, Cornell Law School adjunct professor and Macdonald-Laurier Institute senior fellow Brian L. Cox, Retired British Army colonel Richard Kemp, and several others.

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The focus of my contribution to the Dictionary of Terms is the shoddy misapplication of the term "genocide" to describe Canada's complex historical, cultural and constitutional relationship with Indigenous peoples - by Canada's own leading politicians.

## What genocide is, and what it isn't

The Genocide section of the Dictionary of Terms sets out its definition international law, in Article II of the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and goes on to cite the evidence-based examples of the Holocaust, the Rwandan Genocide of 1994 and the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923.

The Dictionary then turns to the hijacking of the term genocide by a deliberate blurring of the lines between accusation and legal fact, which diminishes codified international law by failing to establish, among other things, the threshold of intent. "Furthermore, this politicized use of the term genocide across the globe has not only minimized the experiences of genocide survivors but has also taken vital resources and attention away from substantiated genocides."

Three cases studies are examined: Amnesty International's misrepresentations and the deficiency of its claims in 2024 with respect to Israel's military operations in Gaza, the several omissions and disregard of contrary evidence by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, also in the matter of Gaza, in 2025, and the deeply politicized misapplication of the term "genocide" by Canada's own government to characterize the experience of the country's Indigenous peoples.

The Canadian case is marked by a downhill trajectory that begins with the term "cultural genocide," introduced in Canada by the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission to describe the impact of decades of federal law and policy upon the Indigenous Peoples of Canada as embodied in the system of Indian residential schools.

Along the way, the TRC's qualifier "cultural" has disappeared. And with it, an important legal distinction was jettisoned. Under the Genocide Convention, genocide is not a synonym for racism, abuse, forced assimilation, or historical injustice. It requires specific acts committed with the intent to destroy a group, in whole or in part. That threshold is supposed to be difficult to meet.

Here's a brief description of my contribution to the ILF dictionary, in video.

## The abuse of language by journalism and by politicians

The trajectory of the term's misuse and hijacking in Canada has evolved through Prime Minister Trudeau's 2019 MMIWG declaration and the 2022 House of Commons resolution to absurd extremes, enlivened by a series of dramatically misreported and sensationalized claims of alleged "discoveries" of graves in 2021 at the locations of residential schools across Canada.

See especially The Year of the Graves, When Narrative Replaces Facts and The Poisoned Chalice of Reconciliation.

In Canada, the objective assessment of historical facts has given way to enforced conformity with unchallengable claims and predetermined political conclusions about residential schools that are protected by taboo and by the threat of being prosecuted as the equivalent of a Holocaust denier. The hijacking of the term "genocide" in Canada persists in an ongoing Parliamentary effort to amend the Holocaust denial section of the Criminal Code in order to outlaw dissenting views about the residential schools' legacy.

My contribution to the dictionary's Genocide section does not rest on a dismissal of the "cultural genocide" thesis and does not set out to sanitize or downplay the harmful legacy of residential schools. Generations of children were removed from their families by policy and law and confined in conditions routinely characterized by neglect, disease and horrific abuse. Indigenous languages and cultural practices were routinely subjected to suppression.

However, "genocide" must be established by facts, discerned by evidentiary rigour, confirmed close examination and judged according to principles of law - not by substituting the pursuit of truth with an adherence to political fashion. Settled historic facts should not be occluded by conformity with political or ideological declarations. A finding of genocide cannot rely on false distinctions between "Indigenous truth" and "settler-colonial" truth.

I'll be back here on Sunday. I've spent a great deal of time this week following the threads from Monday's Real Story: American plutocracy, Canadian hypocrisy. It never ends, let me tell you.