
NÜRNBERG TRIAL AND ITS CONTRIBUTION IN PREVENTING FUTURE WAR CRIME

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INTRODUCTION:

Nazi leaders on trial at Nuremberg (1945–46). The International Military Tribunal (IMT) at Nuremberg marked the first time an international court prosecuted national leaders for crimes of war. Convened by the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union and France, the IMT tried major Axis officials for aggression, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and conspiracy¹. The Tribunal's solemn pronouncement that even heads of state would be held criminally responsible signalled a new era of *individual criminal accountability*². This paper traces Nuremberg's historical background, its key legal innovations, and its far-reaching influence on later international law and institutions. It also considers whether Nuremberg has deterred future atrocities and examines critiques of the Tribunals, as well as how their legacy continues to evolve today.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Author(s) & Year	Title / Source	Key Themes	Summary of Argument / Findings	Relevance to Nuremberg and War Crimes Prevention
Telford Taylor (1970)	<i>The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials</i>	Firsthand account; legal process	Provides a detailed insider view of the trials and the rationale for prosecuting top Nazi officials. Emphasizes the rule of law over victor's justice.	Establishes the trials as a legal watershed moment, influencing later tribunals and the ICC.
Gary Jonathan Bass (2000)	<i>Stay the Hand of Vengeance</i>	Political context of war	Explores the political will behind the Nuremberg Trials and	Highlights how political support is essential for

¹<https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

² <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

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		crimes tribunals	why similar efforts were absent in earlier history.	sustained war crimes prosecutions.
Robert Jackson (1945)	<i>Opening Statement at Nuremberg</i>	Individual responsibility; legal precedent	Introduces the revolutionary idea that individuals—not just states—are accountable under international law.	Lays the foundation for personal accountability, central to future deterrence strategies.
Whitney R. Harris (1999)	<i>Tyranny on Trial</i>	Trial strategy; legal innovation	Chronicles courtroom tactics and evidentiary breakthroughs. Argues that Nuremberg humanized victims and upheld justice.	Frames Nuremberg as a model of fairness, contributing to its legitimacy and deterrent effect.
Henry T. King, Jr. (1997)	<i>Nuremberg and beyond</i>	Legacy; ICC implications	Discusses how Nuremberg's legal principles led directly to the Geneva Conventions and later the Rome Statute.	Draws a line from Nuremberg to modern international courts, emphasizing institutional evolution.
Philippe Sands (2003)	<i>From Nuremberg to The Hague</i>	Continuity in legal norms	Explores how crimes against humanity and genocide were defined at Nuremberg and refined through later tribunals.	Positions Nuremberg as the starting point of a legal continuum toward global justice mechanisms.
Michael Biddiss (2006)	<i>The Nuremberg Trial and Its Legacy</i>	Cultural memory; impact	Examines how Nuremberg shaped public consciousness about accountability and moral judgment post-WWII.	Suggests the trial's symbolic value reinforces long-term deterrence through global norms.
Richard Overy (2001)	<i>Interrogations: The Nazi Elite in Allied Hands</i>	Pre-trial confessions; documentation	Analyses the gathering of evidence before the trial and its implications for justice.	Shows meticulous procedure as reinforcing legitimacy and deterring future leaders.

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Lawrence Douglas (2001)	<i>The Memory of Judgment</i>	Legal storytelling; collective memory	Argues that trials act as tools of historical narrative and moral teaching.	Supports the claim that public war crimes trials shape norms and future expectations.
Benjamin Ferencz (2009)	<i>Planethood</i>	Global justice; ICC advocacy	One of the Nuremberg prosecutors, Ferencz advocates for a permanent international court to uphold Nuremberg's principles.	Reinforces the direct legacy of Nuremberg in the establishment of the ICC.
Geoffrey Robertson (2006)	<i>Crimes Against Humanity</i>	Human rights law; enforcement	Critiques limitations in enforcement post-Nuremberg but defends its foundational significance.	Provides a balanced perspective on deterrence—highlighting both achievements and failures.
Martti Koskeniemi (2002)	<i>Between Impunity and Show Trials</i>	Critical legal theory	Critiques Nuremberg's dual role as both a legal milestone and political performance.	Encourages scrutiny of trials' actual deterrent capacity beyond symbolism.
Hirad Abtahi & Philippa Webb (2008)	<i>The ICC and the Legacy of Nuremberg</i>	ICC jurisprudence; legal influence	Explores how Nuremberg's legal definitions and trial procedures were incorporated into the Rome Statute.	Directly links Nuremberg's legal DNA to the modern architecture of war crimes prosecution.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE NUREMBERG TRIALS:

In the closing months of World War II, Allied leaders agreed to punish the crimes of Nazi Germany. At the London Conference of August 1945 the Allies signed the London Agreement, creating the International Military Tribunal³. The IMT's Charter established four punishable crimes: *Conspiracy* (to commit the other three), *Crimes Against Peace* (aggressive war), *War Crimes* (violations of the Hague Conventions), and *Crimes Against Humanity* (such as

³ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

genocide)⁴. The Charter opened with the revolutionary idea that “the supreme international crime” was aggression.⁵

From November 20, 1945 until October 1, 1946, Courtroom 600 in Nuremberg hosted the IMT’s proceedings⁶. Twelve leading Nazis (and one Nazi organization) were indicted. On October 1 the Tribunal issued a comprehensive Judgment: it held that aggressive war was illegal and that even a head of state could be tried and punished⁷. The Judgment declared that “the law is not static,” noting that leaders “must have known” that aggression and mass atrocities were prohibited, even if not previously prosecuted⁸. These proceedings – unprecedented in international law – were followed by 12 Subsequent Nuremberg Trials (1946–49) of other Nazi officials in the U.S. occupation zone. Meanwhile the victorious Allies also tried Japanese leaders at the Tokyo Tribunal (1946–48).

KEY LEGAL PRINCIPLES ESTABLISHED

The Nuremberg Tribunals codified several foundational principles of international criminal law:

- **Crimes Against Peace (Aggression):** For the first time, “planning, preparing, initiating or waging wars of aggression” was criminalized⁹. The IMT called aggressive war the “supreme international crime”¹⁰. This opened the door to later concepts of the crime of aggression under the UN Charter and, eventually, the ICC’s aggression provisions.
- **War Crimes:** Violations of the laws of war (e.g. mistreating prisoners, attacking civilians) were prosecuted based on existing Hague Conventions¹¹. The Nuremberg

⁴ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

⁵ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

⁶ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

⁷ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

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judges upheld that customary and treaty war-ruled applied even if defendants claimed they followed military necessity¹²

- **Crimes Against Humanity:** Nuremberg introduced this category to punish atrocities against civilians (genocide, murder, enslavement, etc.) committed “before or during the war”¹³. The Judgment noted these acts “usher[ed] in a new era for the legal protection of fundamental human rights”¹⁴. Notably, the Tribunal prosecuted some crimes (like mass murder of Jews) that were legal under Nazi domestic law, grounding them in higher norms of humanity¹⁵.
- **Criminal Conspiracy:** The Charter also charged defendants with conspiring to commit the above crimes¹⁶. While conspiracy was not later adopted as a standalone crime, this count allowed the Tribunal to establish the collaborative nature of Nazi atrocities.
- **Individual Accountability:** Nuremberg rejected the notion that state sovereignty or official position could excuse criminal acts. For the first time, it held *individuals* (including government and military leaders) personally liable¹⁷. The Tribunal insisted that no “prisoner of war,” even a former head of state, is exempt from punishment for aggression or crimes against humanity.¹⁸ Crucially, it declared that “superior orders” are not a full defence. As one source noted, even while considering orders as possible mitigation, the Assembly affirmed that heads of state “could be held to account” and that following orders would not excuse crimes¹⁹.
- **Command Responsibility:** Although not explicitly named in the Charter, Nuremberg firmly established that military and civilian superiors bear liability for subordinates’

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¹⁵ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

¹⁶ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

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¹⁸ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

¹⁹ [roberthjackson.org](https://www.roberthjackson.org)

crimes if they ordered, condoned or failed to prevent them. As one commentator observes, “modern international law embodies the principle” that commanders are criminally responsible for crimes committed by forces under their control.²⁰

These principles – often summarized as *the Nuremberg Principles* – represented a quantum leap in international law. They laid the groundwork for holding leaders (not just soldiers) accountable, and for defining atrocity crimes in human rights terms. As the Tribunal proclaimed, even the most powerful defendant would be judged by “the record on which history will judge us tomorrow”.²¹

INFLUENCE ON MODERN INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL LAW

Nuremberg’s innovations rapidly influenced postwar legal developments. In 1946 the United Nations International Law Commission (ILC) was charged to codify crimes against peace. By 1948–49 the UN was adopting new international instruments. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) – “*the first legal document to recognize [human] rights as binding*” – was shaped by Nuremberg’s vision of universal dignity²². Likewise, the UN **Genocide Convention** (1948) drew directly on Nuremberg. It defined genocide and its inchoate forms in terms almost identical to Nuremberg’s crimes against humanity; in fact, the Genocide Convention’s list of punishable acts was “derived directly from the Nuremberg prosecutors’ charges”²³. The Convention’s Articles I and III echo the IMT’s emphasis that genocide is an international crime all states must punish²⁴.

The first UN General Assembly (1946) unanimously affirmed the core Nuremberg principles: it declared that aggression, war crimes and crimes against humanity were punishable as international law crimes, “for which even a head of state could be held to account,” and it rejected immunity and superior orders²⁵. Inspired by Nuremberg, the Assembly promptly called

²⁰ Leslie C Green, *War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, and Command Responsibility*, (Apr. 18, 2018), <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol50/iss2/4/>.

²¹ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

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²³ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

²⁴ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

²⁵ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

for a convention to outlaw and punish genocide²⁶, which led to the 1948 Genocide Convention. Subsequently, the 1949 Geneva Conventions built on Nuremberg by enshrining grave breaches and obligating states to prosecute war criminals. Thus, Nuremberg's legacy is embedded in the fabric of international humanitarian and human rights law.²⁷

After decades of slow progress, the 1990s saw a resurgence of Nuremberg's promise. In 1993–94 the UN Security Council created ad hoc tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda (ICTY, ICTR) as it had the IMT²⁸. In 1994 the ILC completed its draft **Rome Statute**, and in 1998 states at Rome formally established the permanent **International Criminal Court (ICC)**. The ICC – whose Statute entered into force in 2002 – prosecutes genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and (since 2018) aggression²⁹. Its very statute is a testament to Nuremberg's influence: it mandates individual criminal responsibility irrespective of official capacity, mirroring Nuremberg's rejection of sovereign immunity³⁰. As one judge noted, the Rome Statute “holds a promise of putting an end to the impunity that reigns today”.³¹ In sum, Nuremberg set the architecture for modern international criminal law, which today enforces much of what the IMT first proclaimed.

INFLUENCE ON LATER TRIBUNALS AND INSTITUTIONS

Nuremberg's legacy is visible in every major tribunal since 1945. Key examples include:

- **International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY, 1993–2017):**
Established by UN Security Council Resolution, it was “the first international criminal

²⁶ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

²⁷ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

²⁸ *International Criminal Justice Since Nuremberg*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/simon-skjodt-center/work/ferencz-international-justice-initiative/transitional-justice/international-criminal-justice-since-nuremberg>.

²⁹ *International Criminal Justice Since Nuremberg*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/simon-skjodt-center/work/ferencz-international-justice-initiative/transitional-justice/international-criminal-justice-since-nuremberg>.

³⁰ *International Criminal Justice Since Nuremberg*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/simon-skjodt-center/work/ferencz-international-justice-initiative/transitional-justice/international-criminal-justice-since-nuremberg>.

<https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

³¹ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

tribunal since Nuremberg”³². The ICTY indicted over 160 high-level officials (including heads of state) from all sides of the Balkan wars³³. It reaffirmed Nuremberg’s crimes (introducing the term “ethnic cleansing”) and even held that rape and persecution were crimes against humanity.

- **International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR, 1994–2015):** Created by the UN to prosecute the 1994 genocide, it secured the first-ever international conviction for genocide (Jean-Paul Akayesu, 1998) and the first conviction of rape as a constitutive act of genocide³⁴. The ICTR’s work on command responsibility and victim rights drew on Nuremberg precedent (e.g. joint criminal enterprise theory).
- **Special Court for Sierra Leone (2002–2013):** A hybrid UN-African court that indicted former Liberian President Charles Taylor for war crimes and crimes against humanity. By pursuing a sitting head of state, it explicitly invoked Nuremberg’s principle that no leader is above the law.
- **Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (2006–):** A tribunal for Khmer Rouge atrocities; it prosecuted senior regime leaders for genocide and crimes against humanity, echoing Nuremberg’s focus on systematic state-led mass crimes.
- **International Criminal Court (2002–present):** The first permanent court; it builds directly on Nuremberg statutes. Over 120 countries have accepted its jurisdiction, and it has indicted individuals in Africa, Asia, and Europe for war crimes and crimes against humanity³⁵. (Notably, the ICC recently activated its jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, a legacy of Nuremberg’s crimes against peace).
- **Other Hybrid and National Tribunals:** Nuremberg influenced the concept of

³² *International Criminal Justice Since Nuremberg*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/simon-skjodt-center/work/ferencz-international-justice-initiative/transitional-justice/international-criminal-justice-since-nuremberg>.

³³ *International Criminal Justice Since Nuremberg*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/simon-skjodt-center/work/ferencz-international-justice-initiative/transitional-justice/international-criminal-justice-since-nuremberg>.

³⁴ *International Criminal Justice Since Nuremberg*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/simon-skjodt-center/work/ferencz-international-justice-initiative/transitional-justice/international-criminal-justice-since-nuremberg>.

³⁵ *International Criminal Justice Since Nuremberg*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/simon-skjodt-center/work/ferencz-international-justice-initiative/transitional-justice/international-criminal-justice-since-nuremberg>.

universal jurisdiction and hybrid tribunals. For example, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and trials of Yugoslav and Rwandan criminals in local courts all draw on the idea of prosecuting international crimes. Even national courts (e.g. Spanish trials for Franco-era crimes) cite Nuremberg principles.

Together, these institutions show the global reach of the Nuremberg model: high-profile international courts hold individuals accountable for mass crimes, reinforcing the norm that such crimes are not immune to justice.

Deterrent Effects of the Nuremberg Trials

One stated hope of Nuremberg was deterrence – the idea that punishing Nazi leaders would warn future would-be criminals. In practice, however, the empirical deterrent effect has been limited. Atrocities continued around the world in the decades after 1946 (e.g. Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Rwanda, the Balkans), suggesting that Nuremberg did not immediately prevent further genocides or wars³⁶. As Justice Wyzanski observed, while goals like “prevention, deterrence, [and] retribution” may justify punishment, it raised the legal question “on what theory may that action properly be taken?”³⁷. In other words, Nuremberg set moral precedents, but whether those messages actually deterred future dictators is debatable.

Some scholars argue that international tribunals impose only weak deterrents because potential war criminals may doubt, they will ever be caught³⁸. Others counter that the institutionalization of trials (ICTY, ICC) has created at least a *symbolic* deterrent and educational impact. For instance, the ICTY’s indictments and videos of evidence have been cited as raising public awareness of the gravity of war crimes, potentially discouraging some violence. Nevertheless, consensus among experts is that deterrence alone is not sufficient; factors like military capabilities and geopolitics often outweigh legal threats. In short, Nuremberg’s greatest deterrent legacy may lie not in preventing wars outright, but in establishing a world norm that mass atrocities *will* be punished, even decades later.

³⁶ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

³⁷ <https://journals.library.wustl.edu/globalstudies/article/8971/galley/25740/view/>.

³⁸ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

CRITICISMS AND LIMITATIONS

Despite its pioneering role, the Nuremberg process had significant criticisms and limits. Foremost was the charge of “*victors’ justice*.” The Charter empowered only Allied judges to hear cases, and it prosecuted **only Axis defendants**. This raised the obvious asymmetry that war crimes or atrocities by the Allies (e.g. Allied bombing of Dresden, the atomic bombings, Katyn massacre) were not at issue, while Axis crimes were tried³⁹. As one scholar notes, the IMT’s jurisdiction was “strictly limited” to Axis offenses⁴⁰. Allied leaders were never held to account by the tribunal they created – fuelling the perception that justice was one-sided. German critics also complained that the IMT’s judges and prosecutors were chosen by the victors, not neutrals, and that defendants could not appeal to any international higher court.

Legal criticisms centred on *nullum crimen sine lege*. Some defendants argued that new categories (like crimes against peace or humanity) had no prior legal definition, making the trial retroactive and illegal under traditional penal principles⁴¹. Indeed, Judge Wyzanski remarked that while deterrence is an understandable motive, it “violate[d] ancient legal principle of *nullum crimen et nulla poena sine lege* (there can be no crime or penalty without an antecedent law)”⁴². The Tribunal responded that waging aggressive war had long been outlawed by treaties and custom, so defendants “must have known” such acts were wrong⁴³. Regardless, the ex post facto critique remains a blemish on Nuremberg’s legal pedigree.

Practical limitations also emerged. Many Nazi perpetrators eluded trial due to flight, suicide, or Cold War politics. The early focus on major leaders meant lower-ranking foot soldiers escaped justice. Some of Nuremberg’s harsh sentences were later commuted or not fully carried out amid changing Allied policies. Moreover, Nuremberg itself did not immediately transform Germany or instill guilt in ordinary Germans; for decades the country was divided and silenced on war crimes until the 1960s student movements began questioning the wartime generation.

In sum, Nuremberg was a groundbreaking but imperfect experiment. It established heroic legal principles, yet those principles were applied unevenly and under unprecedented circumstances.

³⁹ <https://journals.library.wustl.edu/globalstudies/article/8971/galley/25740/view/>.

⁴⁰ <https://journals.library.wustl.edu/globalstudies/article/8971/galley/25740/view/>.

⁴¹ <https://journals.library.wustl.edu/globalstudies/article/8971/galley/25740/view/>.

⁴² <https://journals.library.wustl.edu/globalstudies/article/8971/galley/25740/view/>.

⁴³ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

The result was a legacy both lauded as a foundation of international law and criticized as a product of its victors' circumstances.⁴⁴

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND THE CONTINUING NUREMBERG LEGACY

The ideals of Nuremberg continue to evolve in the twenty-first century. Modern challenges – cyber warfare, terrorism, climate conflict – test the boundaries of atrocity law, but the core tenet remains: mass-atrocity crimes are subject to universal condemnation and prosecution. The permanent International Criminal Court has begun exercising jurisdiction over the crime of aggression (an explicitly Nuremberg-inspired count) and is exploring new fronts, such as alleged war crimes in Ukraine. National courts increasingly apply universal jurisdiction to prosecute genocide and torture, embodying Nuremberg's spirit in domestic settings.

Hybrid and special tribunals, as well as truth commissions, are blending Nuremberg's retributive justice with local reconciliation efforts. For example, new courts for crimes in Sudan or Syria echo the Nuremberg commitment to accountability. Emerging discussions even consider expanding international crimes (such as "ecocide" for environmental mass destruction) – a debate directly linked to Nuremberg's legacy of defining crimes based on conscience and humanity.

Importantly, Nuremberg's influence also persists in normative expectations. Human rights organizations invoke the phrase "no more Nuremberg's" to demand that chronic criminal leaders (from Saddam Hussein to Bashar al-Assad) face some form of justice. Educational programs and memorials (e.g. in Nuremberg itself) keep the memory of the trials alive, underscoring the promise that those who order mass killing cannot do so with impunity.

At its best, the Nuremberg tradition has shaped the modern world's abhorrence of genocide and war crimes. As one commentator noted, the Tribunals "laid the groundwork for modern international criminal law" by recognizing that no position can shield individuals from justice⁴⁵. In this way, even as international law continues to develop, it does so on the foundations laid in 1945–46. The *prausuman ius*, then, is that the Nuremberg experiment set in motion a gradual "evolutionary process" of accountability – a process that continues to

⁴⁴ <https://journals.library.wustl.edu/globalstudies/article/8971/galley/25740/view/>.

⁴⁵ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

define norms, institutions, and aspirations today⁴⁶.

CONCLUSION

Seventy-five years after Nuremberg, its trials stand as both a milestone and a cautionary tale. They marked the first triumph of law over brute power and established the concept that grave crimes are subject to international justice. This legacy has profoundly shaped subsequent tribunals and treaties, reaffirming that genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity are intolerable. At the same time, Nuremberg's mixed record reminds us that legal ideals require sustained effort: the promise that "no person or nation will be above the law"⁴⁷ must be continuously renewed through action. As the world faces new conflicts, the core lessons of Nuremberg – individual responsibility, human dignity, and the rule of law – remain as vital as ever in the struggle to prevent and punish atrocity. The Nuremberg Trials left a complex and lasting legacy in international criminal law. On one hand, Nuremberg was indeed a landmark: it broke new legal ground by holding individuals personally criminally responsible for aggression, war crimes, and the first-ever codified "crimes against humanity," regardless of rank or official orders.⁴⁸ Its Charter and judgments served as the template for all modern war-crimes tribunals. As a Washington Univ. Law Review notes, "the Nuremberg Trials helped define and establish precedence" for prosecuting atrocity crimes⁴⁹, and they "remain a critical chapter in our understanding of the necessity of establishing legal mechanisms [to] impose consequences for mass atrocities."⁵⁰ The United Nations endorsed these principles (Res. 95(I))⁵¹, and later instruments (Genocide Convention, Geneva Conventions, ICTY/ICTR/ICC Statutes) all echo Nuremberg's vocabulary and values.⁵² Today, it is widely accepted that the core Nuremberg doctrines are part of customary international law.⁵³ The deterrent effect of post-facto tribunals, including Nuremberg, remains debated: punishment may honour victims and normatively condemn evildoing, but it does not always translate into practical deterrence⁵⁴. In assessing Nuremberg's legacy, one must therefore distinguish between its normative

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⁴⁷ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

⁴⁸ *Washington University in St. Louis Open Scholarship Journals*, <http://journals.library.wustl.edu>.

Avalon Project, Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy <http://avalon.law.yale.edu>.

⁴⁹ *Washington University in St. Louis Open Scholarship Journals*, <http://journals.library.wustl.edu>.

⁵⁰ *Washington University in St. Louis Open Scholarship Journals*, <http://journals.library.wustl.edu>.

⁵¹ *United Nations*, Office of Legal Affairs <http://legal.un.org>.

⁵² *United Nations*, Office of Legal Affairs <http://legal.un.org>.

⁵³ *United Nations*, Office of Legal Affairs <http://legal.un.org>.

⁵⁴ Neve Gordon, *Opinio Juris*, *Opinio Juris* <http://opiniojuris.org>.

influence (undeniably profound) and its empirical prevention record (more modest). In sum, Nuremberg's impact lies more in setting global standards and creating accountability structures than in instantly stopping the next genocide. It affirmed the revolutionary idea that international society has the authority to punish atrocities, which over time helped bring into being permanent institutions (like the ICC) aimed at preventing impunity. The Tribunal's innovations – personal culpability, crimes against humanity, command responsibility – have become cornerstones of international criminal justice. As the literature agrees, Nuremberg “laid the groundwork” for modern tribunals and a culture of accountability.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/the-influence-of-the-nuremberg-trial-on-international-criminal-law/>.

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