



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Humanity

Published On: 24-11-2024

Context:

The **Sixth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** approved a resolution to convene a **United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Humanity**. This step marks a significant move toward creating a **global treaty** dedicated to addressing **crimes against humanity**.

Key Aspects of the Resolution

- **Sixth Committee's Role:** The **Sixth Committee** is the primary forum within the UNGA for discussing legal matters. This resolution will pave the way for international negotiations to establish a treaty specifically targeting crimes against humanity.
- **Definition of Crimes Against Humanity:** As defined by the **Rome Statute**, crimes against humanity include **acts such as murder, rape, torture, apartheid, deportation, and persecution**, committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population according to a state or organizational policy.

Need for a Treaty on Crimes Against Humanity

- **Absence of a Dedicated International Treaty:** Although international humanitarian laws, like the **Geneva Conventions** (which address the laws of war), have been established, they **do not adequately address crimes that occur in non-armed conflict situations**. A treaty dedicated to crimes against humanity would fill this gap.
- **Comprehensive Legal Framework:** The treaty would **provide a global framework** for prosecuting such crimes. It would offer new legal avenues for victims and enable countries to integrate these crimes into their **national legal systems**.
- **Global Cooperation:** The treaty could enhance **international cooperation** among states, facilitating actions like mutual legal assistance, joint investigations, and prosecutions to combat impunity for crimes against humanity.

Existing Legal Mechanisms

- **International Humanitarian Laws:**
- **Geneva Conventions (1949):** Protect civilians and combatants during armed conflicts.
- **Biological Weapons Convention (1972):** Prohibits the development and use of biological weapons.
- **Chemical Weapons Convention (1993):** Bans the use of chemical weapons.
- **Rome Statute (1998):** Established the **International Criminal Court (ICC)** and codified crimes against humanity.

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These instruments have laid the foundation for international efforts to prevent and punish crimes, but they do not fully cover all the crimes against humanity that can occur in non-conflict situations.

India's Role

In the context of India, **Article 51** of its Constitution directs the state to **promote international peace and security** and to **respect international law and treaty obligations**. The adoption of a treaty on crimes against humanity aligns with India's commitment to supporting global justice and could strengthen India's own legal mechanisms for addressing such crimes.

This move by the UNGA represents a crucial step toward global accountability and justice, offering a comprehensive framework to combat the impunity for crimes against humanity.