

Massacre

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A **massacre** is a specific incident which involves the violent killing of many people – and the perpetrating party is perceived as in total control of force while the victimized party is perceived as helpless or innocent. No clear-cut criteria define when a mass killing is a massacre. Public perception during and after the event, and collective assessment of how the circumstances align with given ideas of acceptable use of force, and on how a culture or nation wants to hold an event in collective memory.^[2] Massacres have often accompanied the sack of a captured city. For example, Julius Caesar's soldiers massacred the population of Avaricum regardless of age and sex.

The first recorded use in English of the word *massacre* to label an event is Marlowe's (circa 1600), *The massacre at Paris*^[3] (a reference to the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre). The word ultimately derives from Middle Low German **matskelen* meaning *to slaughter*.

Massacre is also a verb that means to kill (people or, less commonly, animals) in numbers, especially brutally and indiscriminately. The first known use for this meaning was in 1588.^[4]

The term is also used metaphorically for events that do not involve deaths, such as the Saturday Night Massacre—the dismissals and resignations of political appointees during Richard Nixon's Watergate scandal.

See also

- List of events named massacres
- Mass murder
- Disaster
- Tragedy (event)
- Genocide
- Ethnic cleansing
- Killing spree
- War crime
- Tragedy

References

1. ^ Dadrian, Vahakn N. (1999). *Warrant for Genocide: Key Elements of Turko-Armenian Conflict*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers. p. 153. ISBN 1-56000-389-8.
2. ^ Levene & Roberts 1999
3. ^ Oxford English Dictionary Massacre, n.
4. ^ Oxford English Dictionary Massacre, v.



The Chios Massacre refers to the slaughter of tens of thousands of Greeks on the island of Chios by Ottoman troops in 1822.^[1]



The El Mozote massacre, El Salvador 1981

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Further reading

- Kenz, David El. "GLOSSARY TERM: Massacre" (<http://www.massviolence.org/Massacre>). *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*. Retrieved 22 November 2013.
- Levene, Mark; Roberts, Penny, eds. (1999). *The massacre in history* (1. publ. ed.). Providence: Berghahn Book. ISBN 9781571819345.

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