



Lemkin Institute
for Genocide Prevention
and Human Security

Letter to the American People

27 March 2025

Dear People of the United States,

Many of you have reached out to the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention and Human Security to ask what you can do in the face of what appears to be an authoritarian coup against the US Constitutional order, driven and overseen by a President and a billionaire who gave the Nazi salute at the President's inauguration, and deeply infected by the genocidal thinking of many conservatives and evangelicals, targeted mainly at immigrants of color and trans people (for the time being).

We have watched these developments with dismay, and like many of you, we've had some dark days. The disturbing political developments have impacted our US-based team members in different ways depending on where they exist within the dynamics of oppression. So, we have been trying to figure out the same things as everyone else. We are with you.

We want to share what we have learned from our experiences studying, researching, and writing about genocide and working in genocide prevention. We offer the points below in the hope that they will generate discussion, direction, and action.

1. Do not give in to panic.

Fear fuels those who seek to consolidate power. While we have most certainly entered a genocidal process, its outcome is not predetermined and the emerging authoritarian and genocidal state is not yet on a sure footing. This means the American people can still alter its course. The process can still be stopped and rerouted towards a better ending. The danger is real — undocumented immigrants are already facing the full force of state violence — but there is time left to intervene, to slow and stop this process, and to save

lives. We are in a terrible situation, but let's keep our heads. We have a tiny bit of time. Let's use it decisively.

2. Keep two important numbers in mind:

32.41% Percentage of eligible voters in the USA who voted for Trump (31.35% voted for Harris, and the rest did not vote for anyone). Trump supporters are not the majority within the American population.

3.5% Minimum percentage of the population needed to engage in civil disobedience and non-violent protest to increase the likelihood of a positive outcome, such as a regime change or course correction. In the USA, this would amount to about 12 million people. It is doable!

3. Remember US history.

For many Americans, state terror is nothing new. Black people, Native people, LGBTQ+ people, Japanese-American people, and Latino people have endured systemic state violence from the founding of this nation to the present. Many have been killed — but many also survived, developing strategies of resistance that remain vital today.

Americans have always had to fight for their rights. Collective amnesia after the 1960s and 1970s obscures this reality, but rights were never simply granted — they were won through relentless pressure on those in power. What we are facing now is terrible, but not unprecedented. Slavery, Manifest Destiny, the mass internment of Japanese Americans, and Jim Crow were all periods in which the state used and institutionalized lethal force against specific communities to “protect” the country and to enforce economic power structures that enriched elites. Our time is unique but it follows a long pattern.

Right now, the destructive power of an unbridled executive is turning its sights on a broader part of the population — including white Americans, especially those of lower socioeconomic classes. Some white voters backed Trump hoping to roll back progress for people of color and LGBTQ+ communities, wrongly believing these gains came at their expense. While Trump is destroying so-called “DEI” (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts), he is also threatening the wellbeing and livelihoods of working and middle-class whites alongside people of color.

Oppression in the United States has always been racialized, but its class dimensions are now more exposed than ever. For many, the fear feels new. Remember that it can be survived. Take a lesson from Americans who have experienced this before.

4. Take all assaults on citizenship, legal status, and human rights seriously.

Autocratic states are constantly creating, or trying to create, spaces devoid of rights, such as internment camps, concentration camps, special jails, and torture chambers. These spaces are created for particular categories of people – people whom a state wishes to deprive all rights. These categories are usually based on fictions, such as the accusation that all immigrants from Mexico are rapists and criminals or that protesters against genocide in Gaza are supporters of terrorism. Anyone who falls into these spaces is unable to access any institutions that might help or protect them. Essentially their lives are in the hands of their persecutors, who can arrest, detain, expel, disappear, torture, and kill them at will.

The Trump administration has tried to dismantle *ius soli* (birthright) citizenship. It has ignored the rights enjoyed by people entering the United States to have their cases properly adjudicated. It has deprived green card holders of basic Constitutional rights, such as freedom of speech and freedom from unlawful imprisonment. It has subjected visitors, including tourist visa holders, to detention and mistreatment. These are some of the most severe violations of rights that a state can commit, as they directly assail the democratic principle of individual protection from the whims of the state.

The American people must not allow the state to extinguish individual rights by eroding the meaning of citizenship and other legal relationships to the state, including the basic rights extended to [visitors](#). Push back against all efforts by the Trump administration to erode the state's responsibility to uphold individual rights.

5. Do not make excuses for bad behavior.

Elon Musk [knows](#) that he gave the Nazi salute. President Trump should dismiss him immediately along with all other appointees and advisors with close links to global Nazi (“alt-right”) and white supremacist movements. Musk is a particularly destabilizing force that threatens even Trump's power. If Musk does not already exercise executive power over President Trump, he soon will.

President Trump knows that Musk's slashing and burning of the government will harm many of his voters by tanking the economy, destroying the protections people have at work, undermining the quality of air, water, food, medicines, and public health, taking food and education from children, taking earned social security income from the elderly, and leaving people in the lurch if they get sick. The federal agencies that Trump and Musk are targeting serve the American people as a whole. Gutting them harms the American people as a whole. Call Trump out on these issues immediately and frequently.

It is in President Trump's best interest to not lose the support of working Americans who voted for him. Unlike Musk and his unelected allies, Trump still relies on legitimacy — at least to the extent that he needs public support to maintain power. Did you vote for him? Call the White House! Call your Republican representatives. Tell them to get rid of Musk. Tell them to pursue policies that help Americans thrive and to reject hate-based

policymaking that is antithetical to the promise of the Constitution. Tell them you see through their efforts to deprive you of your rights and welfare by pointing at small minorities, such as trans and undocumented people, who are not threatening you.

6. Recognize your power.

The US has a Constitution. It is suffering severe blows. While chipping away at Americans' fundamental rights and freedoms, the current government has suggested it will continue to defy the decisions of courts.

Nevertheless, the Constitution is real and many people are defending it. Join them. Support them. Get a copy of the Constitution. Carry it everywhere. Know your rights. Know the rights of others. Use the techniques offered by the ACLU and similar organizations to defend your rights and the rights of others. Keep talking openly about the Constitution, individual rights, and the aspiration of equality for all.

7. Do not give in to cynicism.

Driven by post-Cold War US imperialism, both neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies have hollowed out the very core values that have animated struggles for civil rights and liberation since our country's founding. Freedom, liberty, democracy, human rights – all of these words have been used for increasingly instrumental ends, causing death and destruction abroad and leaving the majority of Americans in ever-worsening economic precariousness.

The people of the United States have understandably become cynical and demoralized. They are also increasingly convinced that the country cannot change for the better, that the elites should be allowed to ransack and destroy the country as it implodes in the hope that something better emerges after the fall.

Public cynicism and demoralization constrain the ability of a population to resist. They muddle thinking rather than clarifying it. They also increase social anomie, harmful individualism, and mental health crises. Such a social environment is ripe for fascist takeover. People search for concrete enemies they can target to direct their frustrations. Fascists offer up these concrete enemies – small minority populations, vulnerable populations, historically marginalized populations, political opponents – to distract from the entrenchment of state, elite, and corporate power over ordinary people.

Following the gutting of social welfare systems in the 1980s and 1990s, the US political and economic system has been built on the backs of working Americans. Americans must realize this and focus on the real enemies of the American dream, the fascist elite.

Words like freedom, liberty, and democracy still have meaning! The people who have abused these words do not own them. The Constitution still has the power to counter

elite overreach by both the Democratic and the Republican parties. The American people can reclaim these words and breathe new life into them, making them worth fighting for once again.

The United States has a leadership crisis, but the American people should not allow that to destroy the country's best values or to color their own sense of agency, purpose, and strength. The possibility for true patriotism now lies solely with the American people.

8. Look beyond borders.

Around the world, people have stood up, and are still standing up, to authoritarian rule. In Myanmar, pro-democracy activists continue to resist military dictatorship. In Thailand, youth-led protests have challenged entrenched power. In Belarus, mass demonstrations pushed back against a stolen election. Antifascists in Europe are coming out in large numbers to demonstrate against the gains of fascist parties and governments. Across the globe, people are fighting the same battle against corruption, injustice and authoritarianism and for democracy, justice and equality. We can learn from their strategies, we can build on their successes. Look outward, connect, and bring global lessons to the fight at home.

9. Push hard to have authoritarians removed. If that does not work, push to have the genocidal extremists removed.

The 3.5 percent rule, mentioned above in point 2, has shown that non-violent protests and civil disobedience have a high chance of succeeding in bringing down an unpopular government when at least 3.5 percent of people participate simultaneously and consistently. In the United States, this would amount to about 12 million people.

While Trump is ultimately responsible for what his administration is doing, the unelected billionaire Elon Musk plays a key role in the administration's overall plan. Musk offers the kinetic energy for vast destruction and supposedly apolitical cover for the President. The removal of Musk would slow things down considerably.

There are many ways to resist. You can contact your representatives daily; join organizations defending individual rights, group rights, and the Constitution; show up at protests and rallies; and most importantly, speak plainly about what is happening. The President has initiated a series of unconstitutional executive orders. He has appointed an unelected billionaire with no security clearance to lead an illegal agency that has access to Americans' private information. The unelected billionaire is staging a coup against the institutions of American democracy and defunding programs that help ordinary Americans and are paid for by ordinary Americans. These constitute deliberate acts of dismantling a democratic government.

Americans need the exact opposite of what the Trump Administration is doing. Americans need robust re-investment in ordinary people and a government that puts ordinary people at the center of policy.

Ask yourself: Who is benefiting from the new government policies of the Trump Administration? Where is your tax money going? Is it funding healthcare, education and public services or is it being funneled into the hands of the powerful? Is it going back to you – or to them?

10. Be prepared.

Depending on individual circumstances and needs, preparation will look different for everyone.

All Americans should have their documents in order, as much as that is possible. Keep them all in one place. Documents might include proof of identity, like passports, birth certificates, social security cards, driver's licenses, and written prescriptions for medications and eyeglasses (including extra medication or pair of glasses, if possible). It may be useful to order extra official copies of birth and marriage certificates from local government offices. People may also want to stash a certain amount of cash away with each paycheck if possible.

If you belong to one of the groups directly targeted by the Trump administration, be sure to think about a "Plan B." This means preparing a list of things you might do to keep yourself safe in the event that persecution intensifies. Plan B could include finding "safe spaces" that are currently not accessible to ICE and CBP. It could also include leaving the country. Trans, nonbinary, and intersex people without passports, or with passports that will soon expire or that include incorrect information, are currently facing particularly difficult issues related to international travel. However, one can usually travel to foreign destinations with an incorrect gender marker on a passport so long as one has a letter from a healthcare provider or legal representative explaining the discrepancy. The five highest ranked trans-friendly countries in the world are: Malta, Portugal, Canada, Sweden, and Bolivia.

We wish to make it clear that we believe the country is still currently in Plan A. Residents of the US can and should fight back against the extremist administration of President Trump so that nobody is coerced into leaving this country because of their identity or status. Recognizing Plan A is important, because so many people – especially those without disposable income – will be unable to leave the country if things go downhill fast.

In Plan A, staying informed and connected is crucial. Everyone should take stock of their situation and assess potential risk. Rely on trusted sources — dependable journalists, legal organizations, and community networks. Talk to people you trust. Join local groups.

Not all Americans will face the same level of threat at the same time. Those with wealth and privilege may be insulated for now, but history shows that repression expands. It has already expanded to federal workers, people involved in the movement against the genocide in Palestine, and those actively resisting our current administration. Solidarity now is our best defense.

Based on your assessment of your situation, figure out the best plan for you. Talk to others in your position and reach out to organizations that represent you. There are many groups of people whose lives are threatened by the administration. The security measures taken will vary by group. If you might need to leave the US, have an idea of where you will go and how you will get there. Reach out. Talk to people in similar circumstances.

If you determine that you are not actively threatened by the current policies, show up regularly for protests and donate to “mutual aid” groups that provide food, travel, healthcare stipends, and other necessities to people being actively persecuted. Groups currently being actively persecuted include pregnant people, trans people, and undocumented people. Many people do not have the resources to leave the country or even relocate within it. Beyond financial assistance, we must support one another. Share knowledge, offer practical help, and create spaces of safety. Those who need life-saving medical care, safe housing, or legal aid need strong, organized communities to stand with them. They need help immediately.

We do not call for fear, but for readiness.

11. Strive for unity.

The extreme divisions between people in the US present a massive challenge for the country. Americans not only find themselves divided by the two parties, but also by the divisions created by shoving people into categories, labels, and groupings. These divisions generate hate, turning neighbors into enemies. Such a political culture breeds violence. By weakening the public’s ability to resist and creating a power vacuum, division also paves the way for authoritarian rule.

The Republican and Democratic parties are to blame for this state of affairs. They’ve created a world in which zero sum contests, posturing, and ideological purity tests have replaced real efforts to govern for the people. The 2010 *Citizens United* ruling only deepened this crisis by ushering in a period of legalized political corruption. Elected officials no longer have to govern for the people because they are bankrolled by corporations and wealthy donors.

Do not fall for the divisive politicking. The goal of that is to treat Americans like fools. Do not be a fool.

A small group of billionaires are usurping the peoples' institutions. This usurpation has made Americans feel threatened. Instead of uniting and punching up, Americans have been convinced by the same billionaires to fight each other in divisive "culture wars." The ruling class needs to continuously escalate these "culture wars" to keep people divided. Their methods include hate speech, humiliation rituals, the creation of scapegoats, the enactment of hateful policies and laws, and, eventually, brutal demonstrations of state violence. Not unlike Roman Emperors' use of the Colosseum during the decline of the Roman Empire, economic and political elites in the USA intend to distract the American people with bloody theatrics while they rob them blind and leave them to rot.

Americans must unify if we are to have any chance at transforming this moment and saving Constitutional rights and freedoms. Unity does not mean agreement on everything. It does not mean capitulation to people who wish to oppress. It does not mean appeasement. Unity means actively seeking common ground. It means listening to other people's concerns. It means helping them address their concerns. Unity means figuring out ways to act together that serve everyone involved. When multiplied, small local actions build the foundation for real change.

12. Practice offensive rather than defensive thinking and strategizing.

Steve Bannon's strategy of "flooding the zone with shit" is meant to ensure that the American people are constantly *responding and reacting* to the administration rather than setting the agenda. To switch this narrative, it is important to know how a regime works. Study the people in charge. Learn about their commitments and entanglements. In the USA, read the [Project 2025 plan](#) (called *Mandate for Leadership*) – all 800+ pages of it.

Most importantly, be vigilant about two general tendencies within genocidal states: (1) they thrive on chaos – and make money in the process, and (2) they tend to self-radicalize if they do not encounter serious pushback from the population or from other governments. They ensure that any costs associated with their chaos are externalized – borne by the taxpayers, for example, or by other countries, or by people whom they do not like (who are on their erasure lists). Since they do not govern for the people, their often bizarre policies make more sense than it may initially seem. The sense of impunity and self-importance that comes with manufactured chaos tends to lead leaders towards ever-more daring and radical policies. So not only is resistance necessary to prevent dictatorship, but also it is necessary to prevent dictatorships from committing genocide.

It is crucial to recognize that there will be blowback to any resistance and to plan for that. Authoritarian states cling to power like none other. Often their leaders rely on their control of power to keep them out of prison, since they commit many crimes while in government. If resistance seems stiff and possibly successful, authoritarians often

orchestrate “false flag” emergencies – which they call terrorist attacks, insurgencies, attempted coups, and so forth. These are then used to claim emergency powers and bypass democratic institutions. The resistance must be ready to outlast the emergency. Any struggle will be a long-term commitment.

We will continue to work in solidarity with threatened peoples all over the world, including in the United States, where we are based. We have identified many red flags for genocide in the US, but we also believe there is time to pull the country back from the brink. It is up to the American people to do so. The ‘opposition party’ is taking the path of least resistance and offering virtually no guidelines for collective action and no vision for a better Republic. The people must craft this vision and write these guidelines themselves.

Americans must remember that no group can be abandoned in an effort to avoid autocracy and genocide. When a state discovers that it can persecute one group with impunity, it will use these institutions of oppression against its ever-growing list of perceived and real enemies. And it will not stop until it has penetrated all independent social spaces. In the words of Alexandre Dumas, it must be “all for one, and one for all” from here on out.

Sincerely Yours,
The Lemkin Institute Team