



MacArthur Memorial Education Programs

Identifying War Crimes



CRIMES AGAINST PEACE:

The “planning, preparation, initiation, or waging of a declared or undeclared war of aggression, or a war in violation of international law, treaties...or participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the foregoing.”

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY:

“Murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population, before or during the war, or persecutions on political or racial grounds.”

CONVENTIONAL WAR CRIMES:

Violations of the law or customs of war. This can involve atrocities against enemy combatants, prisoners of war, or conventional crimes committed by military forces such as the destruction of civilian property.

Thinking Further:

1. Which of the three classes of war crimes listed above do you think is the most severe? Why?

2. Which of the above categories do you think the following would fit into? Why?

- Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

- The Holocaust

- Medical experiments on prisoners of war

- Execution of prisoners of war

- Rape of Nanking

- Abuse of civilians in the Philippines during the Japanese Occupation

- Bataan Death March

- Internment of Japanese Americans by the U.S. Government

3. Consider contemporary conflicts. Are types of war crimes being committed today?