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LEMKIN GENOCIDE – ABOUT THE STRUGGLE OF IDEALISM WITH REALPOLITIK

The concept of genocide has been widely adopted, penetrating from the language of international law to everyday languages of many nations. Few people know, however, that the term is a neologism invented by a Polish lawyer - professor Rafał Lemkin. His biography, full of dramatic events, was filled with activities undertaken at the international level and in the UN in order to adopt the convention on the prevention of genocide. There were very few cases in the history that a convention was adopted as a result of one person's efforts. The case of Lemkin is an exception. The activities of this eminent lawyer, who was an idealist, many times clashed with the hard cold-war *Realpolitik*. The article is an attempt to answer the questions about the effectiveness of international law and, more broadly, to indicate what aspects of Lemkin's heritage retain their relevance today.

