

APPG Meeting on Atrocity Prevention

Global Britain: UK's role in Atrocity Prevention Post Brexit 11th September 2017

Comments by the Co-Chairs

Alison McGovern MP

- Atrocity Prevention should be one of the key questions of this sitting Parliament
- It is at risk of not receiving the attention it deserves due to Brexit
- It is important to build on the positive legacy of Jo Cox, and think critically about the 'cost of doing nothing': the political and economic cost of intervening is rising and prevention should be prioritised

Tom Tugendhat MP

- As the crisis in Myanmar is worsening, the language of inaction and the legacy of Jo Cox becomes louder by the day
- There is a burden on us to act; a moral responsibility that comes with interest in global issues, to do something about preventing crisis
- Hopefully we can concentrate not just on the past, but also on the future in our evaluation of preventative policy making

Briefing by the panellists

Role Models in Atrocity Prevention: Lessons from the Obama Atrocity Prevention Board

Sarah Brockmeier, Global Peace Policy Institute, Berlin. *Sarah has researched and written extensively on US and German foreign policy on mass atrocity prevention, also providing training to German Armed Forces Personnel.*

Jo Cox said 2 years ago: "We should put the protection of civilians at the centre of our foreign policy, not sit on the side lines while hundreds of thousands more are killed and millions flee..."

- Protecting civilians is a specific goal and should be at the centre of UK foreign policy.
- The moment to prevent the next Syria or South Sudan is **now**.
- The earlier we act, the more policy tools we have in our potential toolkit.

Lessons Learned from the Obama Administration:

1. Importance of high-level political leadership:

- President Obama's issued a Presidential Directive in August 2011 declaring atrocity prevention "a core national security interest and core moral responsibility of the United States."
- Atrocity Prevention was integrated as a priority in the US National Security Strategy and all other key strategic documents since 2009, including State Department and Pentagon.
- Increased attention and specific early interventions probably prevented atrocities in Burundi, Kenya, Myanmar or Jonglei state in South Sudan
- **Yazidi Case Study – Sinjar Mountains Iraq 2014:** US airstrikes and humanitarian air drops specifically to safeguard civilians

2. Institutionalising upstream prevention: creating the Atrocity Prevention Board (APB)

- The APB consists of all relevant departments, including of the State Department, Defense, Treasury, Justice, and Homeland Security, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, USAID, the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the CIA, and the Office of the Vice President.
- **Atrocity Prevention Board was to apply atrocity prevention lens in conflict prevention and stabilisation:**
 - Pay attention to cases that were not as high up on the policy agenda;
 - Identify countries at risk early – before mass atrocities begin;
 - Trigger changes in US policy to act preventively;

- Study and review laws, regulations and practices – e.g., in applying sanctions – to make them more effective at preventing atrocities.
 - **Some small instances of success we can point to: e.g.** inter-ethnic violence in S. Sudan's Jonglei state, 2013. APB identified risks and early intervention too place.
3. **Broadening the toolkit beyond “do we send troops?”: Five tools UK could similarly use:**
1. Develop training tools for staff to recognize early warning signs & adjust programming;
 2. Develop sophisticated and court-proof visa bans and sanctions;
 3. Use existing national and int'l criminal prosecution mechanisms more effectively;
 4. Operationalize the protection of civilians in peacekeeping and increase contributions to peacekeeping and strengthen UN peacekeeping with the targeted, high-value contributions that only Western nations can provide.
 5. Create conceptual fundamentals, simulation games and training exercises for military operational scenarios aimed at protecting civilians from mass atrocities.

Opportunities for a UK Atrocity Prevention Centre

Naomi Kikoler, Simon Skjodt Centre for Prevention of Genocide at US Holocaust Memorial Museum. *Naomi leads the Centre's policy engagement with the US administration, State Department, Congress, and UN.*

- We have an opportunity through the new Westminster based UK Holocaust Memorial & Learning Centre to develop a role for the UK in *atrocity prevention*: “What should Never Again mean?”
- The cost of inaction becomes prohibitive if we wait too long. It is prohibitive from a political, economic and human lives point of view – sending troops carries a great weight. Atrocity prevention can and must start early before violence escalates.
- If we do not act “we will be talking about ISIS 2.0 in the next five or ten years”
- The Simon Skjodt Centre carries out the mandate of the [Committee on Conscience](#), and as such is like being the “moral voice of conscience for the United States”
- The US Genocide Prevention Centre's focus:
 - Research
 - Early Warning Project, publicly accessible for NGOs and used by EU, FCO
 - Early Warning Fellows recommending policy options upstream. Countries like Bangladesh, Mali, etc. where there is potential for atrocities and early engagement could be helpful. Most Fellows are former government officials. E.g
 - All work is bi-partisan; board is bi-partisan.
- Aims include: advising States, institutions and NGOs; documentation of atrocities, and the identification of preventative measures
- The new US administration lacks direction, “we are lacking global leadership” and global leadership must come **from this side of the Atlantic**
- Nonetheless, APB was institutionalised and has taken root. Procedural changes were needed
- FCO, DFID could also look at atrocity prevention as distinct from conflict prevention.
- UK has global reach and reforms and could make meaningful impact:
 - Train British forces, police, DFID, FCO and intelligence staff. UK civil servants have a reach that few countries have
 - Procedural changes can make a difference: chains of responsibility, agenda items, routine meetings can institutionalise upstream thinking (move away from crisis mode);
 - Institution could be almost a government think tank
- How to design changes? Created an Atrocity Prevention Task Force that did research leading to a [Report](#). Its recommendations led to the creation of the Atrocity Prevention Board.

Some key facts about US Genocide Prevention Centre:

US Genocide Prevention Centre has a 3.5m USD annual budget. While USHMM is a public institution and receives congressional funding, the Prevention Centre that it houses is privately funded, allowing it more independence to advise and speak out. It has a staff of 15 as well as fellows working their behalf.

As put by Ellie Wiesel when USHMM was founded:

“a memorial unresponsive to the future would violate memory of the past”.