

# Prospects & Process for Developing an Integrated Atrocity Prevention Network\*

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## **I. The Need for an Enhanced Cooperative Network**

There is at present no integrated transnational network positioned to effectively preempt or to prevent impending mass atrocities. Paraphrasing the late American General Douglas MacArthur, the world's previous failures to prevent mass atrocities can be summarized in two words – “too late.” Manifest genocidal campaigns and mass atrocities dramatically undermine human rights and dignity and threaten international order, economic and societal stability, as well as regional relations. Though many experts, academics, volunteers, and organizations have done their utmost to identify and to prevent impending atrocities, these disparate efforts have not been able to develop an integrated synergy. The Transnational Atrocity Prevention Network envisioned in this White Paper would build on existing institutional and organizational efforts and capitalize on the maturing political/legal awareness provided by the widespread discussion of the R2P doctrine. A history of atrocities within a society is one of the most empirically reliable predictors of future atrocities because social cleavages, economic inequities, and unequal legal protections represent pernicious seeds of instability between political or ethnic groups. However, there remains a significant gap between widespread awareness of the potential for atrocities in a particular region or nation and the ability to proactively direct international expertise or assistance to prevent impending atrocities.

Urgent efforts to create a Transnational Atrocity Prevention Network proceed directly from the shared premise that there is no genocidal destiny that irrevocably threatens any specific ethnic group, religion, or region of the world. The Genocide Prevention Task Force organized under the auspices of the U.S. Institute for Peace and the Holocaust Memorial Museum recognized this truism and specifically recommended a “major diplomatic initiative” with the aim of creating “a formal network dedicated to the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities.”<sup>1</sup> Previous mass

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\* NOTE: This paper was part of a follow up discussion on November 16, 2010 of the International Symposium titled “Preventing Genocide and Mass Atrocities.” It was intended to inform and initiate discussion and is not intended as a comprehensive survey or analysis of issues in, or approaches to, mass atrocity prevention and response. It also does not necessarily reflect policies of the convening or participating organizations or the views of individual participants. The inevitable errors, omissions, and oversights of this article are solely attributable to the author who gratefully acknowledges the tireless assistance of Nathan Kirschner and other experts whose perspectives have been incorporated into this working draft.

<sup>1</sup> See Recommendation 6. available at [http://www.usip.org/genocide\\_taskforce/index.html](http://www.usip.org/genocide_taskforce/index.html)

atrocities indicate that, while the immediate escalation to mass violence can be quite rapid, the precedent sequence of events is generally gradual and provides adequate warning to other governments or organizations that are positioned to prevent the developing arc of atrocity. At present, there is no shortage of models used by academics, governments, and organizations to assess the indicators of mass atrocities, but there remains a troubling gap between the identification of an impending atrocity and reliable response mechanisms. It is time for the disaggregated efforts of like-minded organizations and institutions to be harmonized into an integrated network that can intercept an impending atrocity in an effective and timely way.

## **II. Network Goals**

To be clear, an integrated transnational atrocities prevention network would not be designed to displace the efforts of governments and regional organizations. The Transnational Atrocity Prevention Network should be modeled as an integrated network of networks that can serve as a clearing house for rapidly transmitting information, mobilizing assets, and coordinating responses. No existing efforts should be artificially amputated in order to establish an integrated and organized transnational network. Quite the contrary, a genuinely effective network would augment the functions of governmental and military actors rather than appropriate those efforts. In particular, the Early Warning System developed by the Office of the Special Advisor for Genocide Prevention should be applauded and augmented by an integrated network. Phrased another way, an atrocity prevention network could fulfill a vital gap-filling role by extending the efforts of governments, helping to close the existing gaps in capacity, and leveraging its human capital to enhance the timely ossification of political will. The overarching goal should be to concretize the repeated platitudes and shared good intentions into pragmatic capabilities and network contacts. The Transnational Atrocity Prevention Network could extend preexisting educational efforts by providing policymakers with an important middle ground between armed intervention and an unseemly dismissal of impending atrocities. An effective atrocity prevention network should provide intermediate options for prompt action that serve the dual purposes of helping to mobilize governmental responses while minimizing the potential for short term atrocities. Lastly, an integrated network would be designed to dovetail with local actors to provide expertise or assistance at the time and place deemed most expedient and effective in preventing an impending atrocity.

## **III. Some Important Recent Developments**

In July 2010, the United Nations (UN) Secretary General issued a report and gave remarks relating to the themes of early warning, assessment and the responsibility to protect (R2P). The SG underlined the states parties' commitment to "support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability." To that end, the SG proposed to address existing institutional weaknesses through the establishment of a "joint office" which would coordinate the offices of the Special Advisers on Genocide Prevention and R2P. The Transnational Atrocity Prevention Network envisioned in this White Paper would function as a backdrop to these organizational efforts inside the United Nations as part of an interrelated process. The Transnational Atrocity Prevention Network could be much more nimble in its responses by operating independently of the political and bureaucratic structures in the UN system. While it could augment UN efforts and would certainly interface with UN structures or field agencies as needed, the Transnational Atrocity Prevention Network would in theory be able to locate and address the center of gravity of an impending atrocity with precisely the mixture of admonition, influence, and cultural nuance most suitable to the situation.

In August 2010, the United Nations General Assembly (GA) convened an informal dialogue on "Early warning, assessment and the responsibility to protect." Representatives of 42 member states, two regional organizations, and two civil society representatives spoke in response to the July 2010 report and remarks of the SG. A large majority of the participants underlined support for continued dialogue on R2P within the GA, and signaled general support for the SG's statement. At present, there is widespread support within governments and in non-governmental organizations for a mature R2P posture that emphasizes the protection of all people on a state's territory, not just citizens. Many delegations reaffirmed that R2P is compatible with state sovereignty, in particular because R2P's first pillar is state responsibility. As one participant put it, "sovereignty entails responsibility and the responsibility to protect the population is one of the foremost responsibilities of the state." The current R2P debates have shifted attention onto the need for monitoring and potential action to address incitement and media induced atrocities, which complements the doctrinal emphasis on developing non-military solutions. Recent interpretations of the scope and priorities for the doctrinal R2P discussions provide useful leverage for the work of a Transnational Atrocity Prevention Network, but by no means are they sufficient in themselves to achieve the shared vision of effective and timely responses to prevent atrocities. Experts indicate that there may be regional forums for further discussions on genocide prevention held in the April 2011 timeframe, which would help prepare delegations for

significant proposals during the 2011 General Assembly discussions on R2P and Genocide Prevention.

Finally, there has been significant movement towards recognition and realization of regional efforts to address atrocity prevention. The Special Adviser for R2P has previously emphasized the importance of early understanding and early constructive engagement, with the overriding objective being, “prevention, prevention, prevention.” The Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide has noted in the recent past that the current analytical framework in his office can be expanded to encompass the precursors to atrocity crimes. However, UN based efforts should be facilitated by regional actors in order to provide the responsive and adaptive ability to focus expertise or resources in the context of an impending atrocity. One of the most exciting examples of this trend was Tanzania’s experience relating to the “Pact on Stability, Security and Development” in the Great Lakes Region in Africa. At the time of this writing, the Budapest Centre for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities represents perhaps the most advanced effort to date to fill the existing capacity gap based on interdisciplinary and integrated design [and it must be said, sustained funding commitments].

#### **IV. The Hallmarks of an Effective Transnational Atrocity Prevention Network**

On November 15-16, 2010, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (the Museum) and the *Mémorial de la Shoah* (Shoah Memorial) will convene a diverse group of experts and organizational actors to discuss the formation of an integrated and international action network to prevent genocide and mass atrocities. The Symposium is being held in cooperation with the American Bar Association (ABA) Center for Human Rights, the Institute of High Studies on Justice in Paris and the United Nations Regional Information Center in Brussels. Analysis of more than 60 existing international organizations and networks indicates that the following factors represent the most significant hallmarks for the Transnational Atrocity Prevention Network to become an effective and sustainable network.

Perhaps the primary problem that the anticipated atrocity prevention architecture should be designed to address is the extant gap between effective early warning systems and the ability to translate that effective warning into influence upon state actors and state politics. Early action buttressed by governmental decision-making will be determinative in translating the ideal of

atrocities prevention into effective action. The Transnational Atrocities Prevention Network should be well placed to aid on both levels if the following design factors are embedded into its design:

*a. Apolitical Efforts*

The perception of political bias or undue external control/manipulation represents one of the most potent barriers to timely local action to prevent impending atrocities. A Transnational Network will be able to integrate the efforts of such non-political bodies as the Genocide Prevention Advisory Network (GPANet).<sup>2</sup> The Advisory Group is an informal, international network of experts on the causes, consequences, and prevention of genocide and other mass atrocities. The Group has no staff, structure, or formal links to other organizations. Its members provide risk assessments and advice to all interested parties, including the UN, individual governments, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, and any other international political grouping that designs and promotes policies aimed at preventing and mitigating mass atrocities that have or may acquire genocidal dimensions. Similarly, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience provides another useful model because its efforts involve a worldwide network of some 250 sites in 45 nations. Its efforts focus on using the power of historic places to foster public discourse and focused attention on prevention of future atrocity. The Atrocities Prevention Network should be conceived and modeled to serve the needs of human dignity and societal stability rather than the political interests of any group of elites or external actors. The apolitical nature of the Network will ideally be aided by the regional and local integration discussed below.

*b. Regionally Centered*

Regional entities provide an essential local augmentation to international awareness and provide the focal point for resources and expertise to be concentrated at the point and time they are most needed. Well-developed step-by-step Atrocities Prevention Network guidelines, both for early and proper warning about the risks of genocide and for timely responses as needed, will depend upon regional efforts in large part. In this light, it is important to note that the bottom-up, regionally-centered approach that is being implemented in South America and the Great Lakes region works best when conceived of as a double track mechanism. In other words, regional centers or responsibilities cannot completely replace the governmental channels of member

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gpanet.org/>

states. Similarly, the capacity of the Atrocity Prevention Network should operate independently within regions and across borders to buttress regional response planning without being constrained by formalized and bureaucratized channels. Ideally, there would be designated centers [such as the Budapest Centre] that can take the lead in developing, strengthening, and maintaining the regional efforts that comprise the larger Atrocities Prevention Network.

*c. Enhanced Educational Outreach*

There are a number of organizations, Memorial foundations, and other entities that have devoted significant resources to educational outreach efforts in recent years. Indeed, this strand of the Atrocities Prevention Network may provide the most readily adaptable and mature dimension of the overall architecture. Established educational activities have already assessed key actors and structures within states, developed outreach programs, and communications infrastructures designed to engage relevant actors in genocide and mass atrocity prevention. The most promising programs at present are those that work to familiarize governmental and local leaders with the legal, historical, and policy dimensions of previous atrocities. In this manner, mid-level UN and state officials are sensitized to serve as both the front line for warning the larger Network, but also as the potential front line facilitators for an organized Network mobilization of expertise, media attention, or focused prevention efforts at the local level. Existing educational efforts have formed the foundation of a victim centered appreciation for atrocities, which in turn helps to sustain the moral imperative needed to translate awareness into preventive action. Established educational institutions and organizations may well provide the needed moral authority and funding to organize and sponsor future observers and fact-finding missions which can blunt an impending crisis.

*d. Societal Penetration*

Increased integration and international cooperation in the realm of genocide and atrocity prevention may well depend on timely influence wielded at the precise point of influence. A visible network of national and community leaders and supervisory activities is critical to enhance genocide prevention strategies, however the criteria for effectiveness really translates into the ability to influence actions and decisions taken within the affected region. As noted above, the top-down, bureaucratized approach is likely to prove fatally flawed in the future. The Transnational Atrocity Prevention Network should therefore be keenly focused on developing the

cooperative infrastructure that can at once provide information, but also be perfectly placed to use information related to atrocity prevention as it becomes available and disseminated. Societal structures are not monolithic entities and effective atrocity prevention may come down to nothing more complicated than being able to leverage personal influence of like-minded local leaders. In this light, it is particularly important that Bar organizations such as the ABA and International Bar Association form a dedicated part of the Network framework. Members of the legal profession share values across cultures and legal regimes, and are often well placed to influence key political, religious, or media leaders. Similarly, civil society organizations could be very valuable in not only gathering and analyzing data, but also mobilizing needed responses. Conversely, there may be instances when the Atrocity Prevention Network can mobilize political will at the local level that provides much needed support to local civil society, educational officials, or private actors. A relevant and flexible network dedicated to atrocity prevention will of necessity involve multi-level, multi-ethnic, and multi-sectoral actors in states that are susceptible to atrocities. The ability to penetrate and influence societal structures is an important dimension for achieving the desired goal of the larger Atrocity Prevention Network with respect to increased international cooperation towards integrated, resourced, and timely preventive action.

*e. Integrated Technological Platforms*

The scholarship on genocide prevention – especially in the area of risk assessment and data gathering – has grown significantly in the recent years.<sup>3</sup> Identification of the dynamics of group polarization and group exclusion can be done in real time, and disseminated far more rapidly to a broader array of actors than ever before.<sup>4</sup> Regional reporting efforts also must be placed in the context of academic models which make it possible to construct sophisticated warning using advanced information and communications technology. For example, the ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network <sup>5</sup> provides one model, while other efforts envision dissemination of conflict data or early warning information via mobile phone networks.<sup>6</sup> In other

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<sup>3</sup> See for example the articles by Harff and Heldt published in *Politorbis* no.47, available at <http://www.eda.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edazen/doc/publi/publi2.Par.0095.File.tmp/Politorbis%2047%20-%20Genocide%20Prevention.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> See the Global Report 2009 published by the Center for Systemic Peace, available at <http://www.systemicpeace.org/>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wanep.org/wanep/>. For another recent example of leveraged technology using crowdsourcing technology to aggregate data for rapid transmission via sms, see <http://www.usahidi.com/>.

<sup>6</sup> For one especially innovative example of dissemination of conflict database via mobile phones by Uppsala University, see <http://itunes.apple.com/se/app/uppsala-conflict-database/id380077089?mt=8>.

scenarios, social networking sites have proven to be especially useful for rapid and authenticated dissemination of critical conflict information. The Atrocity Prevention Network should be positioned to provide a transparent and accessible database or single source of information in order to leverage the ever-evolving technology. This may be the most important network design element for providing information to relevant governmental and UN Actors on a timely and accurate way even in the midst of rapidly evolving situations.

## **V. PROPOSALS**

Official and Experts gathered at the November 2010 meetings will develop specific proposals for a developmental arc for the envisioned Atrocity Prevention Network. The Network architecture should build on existing capabilities and should be designed to serve as a sustainable system that can be tailored as needed to the exigencies of any impending atrocity. The Atrocity Prevention Network will provide the flexible platform for developing an integrated response that is both coordinated and timely. To that end, the following specific proposals provide useful planning steps for further consideration:

- *Develop a Mission Statement for an Integrated Network and designate specific members of a management committee to implement the decisions taken in Paris*
- *Designate or create regional focal points that are willing to accept responsibility for implementing the goals of the Atrocity Prevention Network within each area and providing an inventory of like-minded experts, institutions, organizations, and media outlets*
- *Decide upon the desired goals for integrating the Atrocity Prevention Network with existing UN and governmental mechanisms designed to monitor and provide warning of impending atrocities*
- *Delegate the responsibility for developing the needed open source technological interface to a willing organization or regional actor*
- *Empower regionally centered and focused actors to access a designated communications infrastructure to ensure that resources and expertise can flow on a timely basis to the center of gravity for atrocity prevention*

- *Approve the development of what will become an evolving list of experts, organizations, and agencies that can be rapidly called upon to address specific needs identified by those regional or local actors who are best positioned to direct such assistance to the center of gravity needed to prevent a developing atrocity.*