



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The conclusions and recommendations reached in this report emanate from the fundamental reality that genocide and mass atrocities threaten American values and interests.

Despite past efforts to prevent and halt systematic episodes of massacres, forced displacements, and mass rapes, such atrocities have persisted in our era. In the last century, tens of millions of people lost their lives in episodes of mass killings. People of conscience rightly demand: “never again.” There is no doubt that genocide and mass atrocities exact a horrific human toll. They constitute a direct assault on universal human values, including, most fundamentally, the right to life.

Genocide and mass atrocities also threaten core U.S. national interests.

They feed on and fuel other threats in weak and corrupt states, with dangerous spillover effects that know no boundaries. If the United States does not engage early in preventing these crimes, we inevitably bear greater costs—in feeding millions of refugees and trying to manage long-lasting regional crises.

In addition, U.S. credibility and leadership are compromised when we fail to work with international partners to prevent genocide and mass atrocities.

We conclude in this report that **preventing genocide is an achievable goal.** Genocide is not the inevitable result of “ancient hatreds” or irrational lead-

ers. It requires planning and is carried out systematically. There are ways to recognize its signs and symptoms, and viable options to prevent it at every turn if we are committed and prepared. Preventing genocide is a goal that can be achieved with the right organizational structures, strategies, and partnerships—in short, with the right blueprint.

A Blueprint for Action: Beginning with Leadership and Political Will

The report provides a number of concrete steps that the U.S. government can take to confront genocide and mass atrocities before they occur. At the same time, we recognize that making progress toward preventing genocide requires leadership and political will.

The case for preventing genocide and mass atrocities must be made from the president on down—ideally at the beginning of a new administration. History has shown that prevention is possible with sufficient interest and attention from the highest ranks of our government. But high-level attention has been extremely difficult to mobilize and sustain. The absence of an overarching policy framework or a standing interagency process has further inhibited action and contributed to a sense of futility among some policymakers.

We urge America’s 44th president to demonstrate at the outset that preventing genocide and mass atrocities is a national priority. A new administration should develop and promulgate a government-wide policy to this end. We recommend a new standing interagency mechanism for analysis of threats and coordination of appropriate preventive action as part of a comprehensive policy framework for genocide prevention. Achieving this goal will require the president to muster political will that has too often been lacking in the past.

We are keenly aware that the incoming president’s agenda will be overfull from day one. Preventing genocide and mass atrocities need not be seen as an add-on to the core foreign policy domain. The means and ends of genocide prevention dovetail with other U.S. priorities, providing a rare and important opportunity for progress.

Assigning Resources to Match Priorities

The Genocide Prevention Task Force recommends **increased and more flexible funding** for the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities. Congress should invest \$250 million—less than a dollar for every American each year—in new funds for crisis prevention and response. The availability of a portion of the new funds (\$50 million) for rapid allocation in support of urgent activities to prevent or halt emerging crises is a key element of this recommendation.

A Comprehensive Strategy

What makes this report different from other examinations of the subject is that we present a comprehensive policy approach designed to ensure an effective response to genocide that is not held hostage to arguments over resources, intelligence, geography, sovereignty, or legal definition. To prevent genocide, our government must draw on a wide array of analytical, diplomatic, economic, legal, and military instruments and engage a variety of partners. The United States has many tools at its disposal, a wide range of options between the extremes of doing nothing and sending in the Marines.

Early Warning: Assessing Risks and Triggering Action

The first step toward prevention is building a reliable process for assessing risks and generating early warning of potential atrocities. We recommend that the director of national intelligence initiate the preparation of a national intelligence estimate on worldwide risks of genocide and mass atrocities, and that the results be included in annual testimony to Congress on threats to U.S. national security. **Acute warning of potential genocide or mass atrocities must be made an “automatic trigger” of policy review.**

Early Prevention: Engaging before the Crisis

Efforts to prevent genocide should begin well before a crisis has erupted. **With international partners, we must engage leaders, develop institutions, and strengthen civil society within high-risk countries.** Doing so will reduce capacities and motivations for mass violence while increasing social and

institutional safeguards. Funding for crisis prevention in countries at risk should be expanded through a new genocide prevention initiative funded through existing foreign assistance mechanisms.

Preventive Diplomacy: Halting and Reversing Escalation

Even when signs of preparation for genocide are apparent, there are opportunities to alter leaders' decisions, interrupt their plans, and halt and reverse escalation toward mass atrocities. **We recommend the creation of a new high-level interagency body—an Atrocities Prevention Committee—dedicated to responding to such threats.** It would improve our crisis response system and better equip us to mount coherent and timely strategies for preventive diplomacy. This new committee should prepare interagency genocide prevention and response plans for high-risk situations.

Employing Military Options

U.S. leaders must consider how to leverage all instruments of national power to prevent and halt genocide and mass atrocities, including military assets. Military options are especially relevant when opportunities for prevention have been lost, but they can also play an important role in deterring and suppressing violence. **We recommend that genocide prevention and response be incorporated into national policy guidance and planning for the military and into defense doctrine and training.** The United States should redouble its support for international partners such as the United Nations and the African Union to build their capacities to deploy effective military responses to mass atrocities.

International Action: Strengthening Norms and Institutions

The United States should be a leader in preventing genocide and mass atrocities, but we cannot succeed alone. America has an interest in promoting strong global norms against genocide so that sovereignty cannot be used as a shield. We must also make international and regional institutions more effective vehicles for preventing mass atrocities. **We recommend that the United States launch a diplomatic initiative to create an international network for information sharing and coordinated action to prevent genocide.**