

Written Evidence from Protection Approaches (CSE0017)

PROTECTION APPROACHES SUBMISSION OF EVIDENCE

Executive Summary:

1. This submission addresses a number of the questions set out by the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy in its National Security Capability Review: A Changing Security Environment, namely the erosion of the international rules-based order and pushback from other countries at the United Nations (UN) against concepts such as the 'responsibility to protect, human rights norms, the rights of women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people'¹ as reported in the First Annual Report 2016 on National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015.
2. Identity-based violence is a global and complex challenge, encompassing violent extremism, terrorism, and mass atrocities. Despite the breadth and grievousness of mass atrocities, the United Kingdom, unlike the United States and many other states around the world, does not have a national strategy or mechanism on atrocity prediction, prevention, or response.²
3. In addition to their appalling human costs, mass atrocities force people from their homes, increase the risk of terrorism, and perpetuate global instability. These crimes also affect Britain's own security and prosperity. Around the world the incidence of mass atrocities is growing and yet these crimes can often be prevented and their root causes interrupted. It is clearly in the UK's national and international interest to do so.
4. This submission presents first the importance of understanding mass atrocity prevention as a matter of national security and of national interest and secondly the case of Burma/Myanmar³ as an exemplary but by no means unique example of the inconsistent, sometimes directly contradictory, policies and commitments of the UK Government that result from the absence of a cross-Whitehall atrocity prevention strategy
5. As the UK prepares to withdraw from the European Union, and will therefore undertake to review and replicate the process of applying and upholding sanctions in domestic process, this question is urgent not only for those concerned with the UK's contribution to protecting lives from the gravest crimes but also its international reputation outside of the EU as a responsible global leader

About Protection Approaches

6. Protection Approaches is the only organisation in the UK that works specifically to assist the UK in better predicting and preventing identity-based mass violence, particularly mass atrocity crimes (genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and war crimes). Protection Approaches is registered charity in England and Wales, charity number 1171433.
7. This submission has been prepared by Dr. Kate Ferguson, Director of Research & Policy and Managing Director of Protection Approaches. Dr. Ferguson is an experienced analyst in the fields of atrocity prevention, violent extremism, and civilian protection. She is a member of the Centre for Science & Policy's Network for Evidence and Expertise at the University of Cambridge and the British Academy Network on the Responsibility to Protect. She is Editor of Refugee History and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of East Anglia where she lectures on human rights. She has a PhD from UEA on the dynamics of modern mass violence, and an M.Phil in Russian and East European Studies from the University of Oxford.

Rationale

8. This submission has been prepared in response to recommendations made by both the International Development and Foreign Affairs Select Committees that Her Majesty's Government prioritise its approach to mass atrocity prevention.⁴ It is a response also to growing vocal support for the UK to translate its international commitments and obligations towards the world's most vulnerable into national

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575378/national_security_strategy_strategic_defence_security_review_annual_report_2016.pdf

² <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/foreign-affairs-committee/violence-in-rakhine-state/written/71864.pdf>

³ Hereafter Myanmar

⁴ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcaff/435/435.pdf> / <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/504/504.pdf>

policy.⁵ Finally, the recommendations set out below are made in the context of the 2017 UN Secretary General's report 'Implementing the Responsibility to Protect: Accountability for Prevention', which calls upon states to strengthen their contribution to and accountability for atrocity prevention worldwide.⁶

9. The absence of a cross-Government mechanism tasked with viewing UK decision-making through what is sometimes called an atrocity prevention 'lens' has resulted in policies that have at times been inconsistent - or in direct contradiction to- the UK's development policy and its stated national and international commitments to human rights.⁷ In addition to the contribution a weak or incoherent contribution to the prevention of mass atrocities has on the ground, such an approach can be seen to impact the costs upon the public purse and Treasury, the UK's reputation abroad, and the legitimacy of a) human rights norms and b) the rules based International system more broadly.
10. A truly global and responsible Britain will need to address such discrepancies. This inquiry provides an important opportunity to apply scrutiny to the manner in which the UK seeks to do and promote British business around the world.
11. The global challenge of identity-based violence, including mass atrocities and violent extremism, poses one of the greatest threats to global stability and security –and not only in the short term.⁸ The majority of today's refugees are fleeing situations of mass atrocity,⁹ identity politics are deepening worldwide, and the incidence of mass atrocities has been increasing since 2012.¹⁰ It is likely that the risk of atrocities worldwide will continue to rise, that the levels of human displacement will continue to worsen, and that crises of local and global social cohesion will deteriorate unless root causes of these challenges are addressed. Moreover, as the consequences of climate change continue to force people from their homes, identity-based violence, including mass atrocities, will likely become a common feature of resource-based conflicts.¹¹
12. In 2005 the UK and all other UN member states committed to uphold the Responsibility to Protect civilians from atrocity crimes. This is a commitment that this and all UK governments since 2005 have firmly reiterated. The UK's commitment to the Responsibility to Protect Protocol was renewed in the National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review in 2015 through to 2025. The UK prides itself on being a flag bearer of the norm and as a champion of global human rights.
13. However, without an explicit policy commitment, articulated strategy, or mechanism within Government, the responsibilities for predicting, raising warning, and responding to atrocity crises have too often fallen between the gaps of foreign affairs and international development. Unlike the United States and other like-minded states, the UK does not address mass atrocities as a issue of national and global security, nor their prevention as a matter of national interest. As a result, the UK's contribution to meeting the global challenge is limited.
14. While there is no single panacea, integrating atrocity prevention in to national, regional and non-Governmental decision making contributes to the more effective collection and collation of information and aides timely, non-violent action.
15. Forecasting and monitoring potential situations of exclusion and identity-based violence requires specific indicators that are frequently not integrated into Government conflict prevention horizon scanning and risk analysis. This has meant that emerging situations have been 'missed' or that early warning signs not prioritised by existing conflict prevention or broader foreign and development strategies. Integrating indicators relating to identity, belonging, grievance, rumour, hate speech and incitement, and of social cohesion would greatly enhance Government's capacity to assess both its national overseas interests and threats to global human security. At the very least, this would place the UK Government in a more informed position from which to develop a response to early warnings and assess whether the context could benefit from UK assistance.

⁵ RUSI outcome document; CH summary; UNA Global Britain Report; PQs/ letters; APPG events

⁶ [http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/2017%20UNSG%20report%20on%20RtoP%20-%20Implementing%20the%20Responsibility%20to%20Protect%20-%20Accountability%20for%20Prevention\(1\).pdf](http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/2017%20UNSG%20report%20on%20RtoP%20-%20Implementing%20the%20Responsibility%20to%20Protect%20-%20Accountability%20for%20Prevention(1).pdf)

⁷ Alex Bellamy, <https://www.stanleyfoundation.org/articles.cfm?id=770>

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<http://nebula.wsimg.com/474933405a5f1c98073148cb5d46d805?AccessKeyId=9136D1A332A73825C5C6&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>

⁹ <http://refugeehistory.org/blog/2017/7/10/responsibilities-towards-refugees-fleeing-atrocities-a-failure-to-learn-lessons-from-srebrenica>

¹⁰ <http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/SG%20Report%202016-%20Mobilizing%20collective%20action-%20the%20next%20decade%20of%20the%20responsibility%20to%20protect.pdf>

¹¹ Climate change and genocide; environmental violence in the 21st century, Jurgen Zimmer

16. Mass atrocities are often predictable. Almost all cases of identity-based mass violence are preceded by ample evidence of escalating identity-politics, increased indices of identity-based violence, unchecked hate speech, and increased presence of state, pseudo-state, or non-state armed groups.¹² **Any mechanism or office situated in Government charged with viewing UK policy challenges through a framework of atrocity prevention would be able to respond to warning signs and initiated processes of sharing information, scrutinising policy, and communicating with other relevant stakeholders in the UK.**

Mass Atrocity Prevention Instead of Conflict Prevention

17. Existing research demonstrates a well established relationship between armed conflict and mass atrocities, and conflict prevention is therefore an essential part of the atrocity prevention agenda. As such, there are a wide range of common prevention measures that can be utilised to serve either goal, with particular overlap when it comes to longer term 'upstream' prevention targeted at underlying risk factors. However, these commonalities should not obscure the frequent divergence between the two approaches, with atrocity prevention as a distinct policy agenda requiring its own tailored analytical focus.
18. Conflict prevention measures may consequently hinder or undermine atrocity prevention efforts. As well as shifting the focus away from protection against atrocity crimes, the process of negotiating an end to armed conflict often incentivises groups to attack 'soft' civilian targets in order to strengthen their negotiating position. So while it is frequently assumed that traditional conflict prevention approaches adequately encompass atrocity prevention, the diverging and occasionally competing aims of these two agendas instead requires the insertion of an atrocity prevention 'lens' into existing policy frameworks. Without such an adjustment, the identification of specific atrocity risks, dynamics, and response measures will not be fully achievable or effective.
19. Longer term atrocity prevention requires a more holistic strategy that seeks to strengthen social cohesion and build trust between state and citizen. Supporting inclusive measures and guarding against the exclusion or marginalisation of identity groups in political, public, social and economic life inhibits many of the processes that can lead to identity-based violence. Likewise, forecasting and monitoring potential situations of rising identity-based violence or atrocities requires specific indicators that are frequently not integrated into conflict prevention horizon scanning processes. This means that emerging crises are sometimes 'missed' or that early warning signs not prioritised by existing conflict prevention or broader international development strategies.

Mass atrocity prevention as National Security Issue and of National Interest to the UK

20. The consequences of mass atrocity crimes are far reaching and long lasting. Their human cost is catastrophic, their economic impact endures for generations and leaves a global footprint.
21. When mass atrocities occur the country(ies) affected become unstable, frequently impacting neighbouring states and the wider region. An increase in the illegal arms trade, human trafficking, terrorism related incidents and radicalisation are common in the extended aftermath of a mass atrocity event. The spread of infectious diseases and other health issues are exacerbated during and in the wake of atrocities. National economies and security are affected for generations.¹³
22. In addition to the UK Government's treaty-bound obligation to contribute to the prevention of genocide and its stated commitment to uphold the 2005 responsibility to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes, the prevention of these particular manifestations of acute, identity-based violence should be viewed as a matter of UK national interest.
23. The global challenge of identity-based violence, including mass atrocities and violent extremism, poses one of the greatest threats to global stability and security –and not only in the short term.¹⁴ The majority of today's refugees are fleeing situations of mass atrocity,¹⁵ identity politics are deepening world wide, and the incidence of mass atrocities has been increasing since 2012.¹⁶ It is likely that the risk of atrocities

¹² <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Preventing-mass-atrocities.pdf>

¹³ The economic impact of genocides, other mass atrocities, and their Prevention, Charles Anderton and Jurgen Brauer, OUP, 2016

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<http://nebula.wsimg.com/474933405a5f1c98073148cb5d46d805?AccessKeyId=9136D1A332A73825C5C6&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>

¹⁵ <http://refugeehistory.org/blog/2017/7/10/responsibilities-towards-refugees-fleeing-atrocities-a-failure-to-learn-lessons-from-srebrenica>

¹⁶ <http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/SG%20Report%202016-%20Mobilizing%20collective%20action-%20the%20next%20decade%20of%20the%20responsibility%20to%20protect.pdf>

worldwide will continue to rise, that the levels of human displacement will continue to worsen, and that crises of local and global social cohesion will deteriorate unless root causes of these challenges are addressed. Moreover, as the consequences of climate change continue to force people from their homes, identity-based violence, including mass atrocities, will likely become a common feature of resource-based conflicts.¹⁷

24. National security concerns arise too from the perception of the UK's role in and response to mass atrocity situations. This can be seen in analysis of UK's Syria policy where 'the failure to prevent mass atrocity radicalises opinion in ways that may have a direct bearing on UK national security'¹⁸.
25. The absence of a clearly articulated strategy has led at times to incoherent policies. This was recently highlighted by the Foreign Affairs and International Development Select Committee inquiries into UK engagement in Myanmar.¹⁹ This discrepancy is most apparent in the UK's bilateral trade relations with certain states and regimes conducting or threatening to perpetrate the gravest human rights violations, namely mass atrocity crimes (genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and war crimes.) These relationships stand in contradiction to the UK's stated commitment to uphold its responsibility to protect populations from these crimes, contribute to global insecurity, undermine the efforts of the rules based international order, and tarnish the UK's international reputation.
26. The United States of America adopted a whole-of-government mechanism in 2012 with the creation of the Atrocities Prevention Board (APB) after the Genocide Prevention Task Force produced a report that stated the importance of recognising mass atrocity prevention as a national security issue.²⁰ Canada undertook a similar policy report in 2009.²¹ Other states in Europe, Africa, and Latin America have adopted national strategies on atrocity prevention. While the US model may not match the needs and Government structure of the UK, there are important lessons to learn in adopting a mass atrocity prevention mechanism at the national and domestic level to consolidate international commitment to UN protocols such as the responsibility to protect and international human rights norms.
27. In acknowledging the prevention of mass atrocities as a distinct priority and a matter of national interest affecting international and national security and global stability, the UK communicate a clear message to will be able to have increased communication and alerts prior to potential mass atrocity events breaking out which will benefit the UK in making key and critical decisions in regards to responding due to its moral and international commitments and responsibilities.
28. In repositioning how it views mass atrocity prevention the UK will strengthen its response to potential mass atrocity events; by enhancing its national capacities to predict, prevent, mitigate, and respond to the root causes and warning signs of such crises the UK will place itself in a better position to both enhance its contribution to the protection of populations around the world, and its protection its national interests abroad

Myanmar as a case study

29. The ongoing violence against Rohingya in Myanmar has rightly prompted outcry from the British Government, Parliament and across civil society. It has also rightly prompted scrutiny of the Government's recent engagement with Myanmar.
30. In Myanmar, the UK government pursued (and continues to support) a 3-part policy of democracy promotion, supporting an inclusive economy and of traditional development. This approach was pursued as three separate strands rather than as political strategy and did not integrate an atrocity prevention component into decision making or risk assessment. This approach contributed to the UK's ineffective response to warnings about identity-based violence and mass atrocity crimes.
31. Had what is sometimes called an 'atrocity prevention lens' been applied to UK decision making in Myanmar, particularly decisions relating to the development of bilateral trade relations and its international development strategy, the UK Government would at the very least have been better informed and therefore better placed to make decisions regarding its contribution to the effective protection of Rohingya and other marginalised communities in Myanmar

¹⁷ Climate change and genocide; environmental violence in the 21st century, Jurgen Zimmer

¹⁸ <https://www.una.org.uk/sites/default/files/UNA-UK%20Policy%20briefing%202%20-%20Professor%20Jason%20Ralph%20-%20Mainstreaming%20R2P%20in%20UK%20strategy.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcaff/435/435.pdf> / <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/504/504.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20081124-genocide-prevention-report.pdf>

²¹ <http://www.thesimonsfoundation.ca/sites/default/files/W21%20Dialogue%20Report%20Vancouver.pdf>

32. For at least half a decade, Myanmar has appeared at the top of numerous lists warning that the Rohingya are the population most at risk of *genocide* in the world. However, the UK continued to prioritise UK-Myanmar business relations while failing to respond to the urgent warning signs of genocide and other forms of identity-based violence.
33. Are there any countries or regimes in the world that the UK would not trade with? Are there any human rights violations committed by a state that would preclude the UK from promoting bilateral business relations? The answer is patently yes, as can be seen from the UK's commitment to international sanctions. However what processes exist in UK decision making that assess if and where these red lines may lie in a country and determine what actions should be taken by the UK Government should those red lines be crossed?
34. Did and to what extent the UK's focal point for the responsibility to protect, who sits within the FCO multilateral directorate, raise these concerns with colleagues across FCO, DfID, Cabinet, DIT, and other relevant department? Would a clearly articulated policy, strategy, or mechanism have aided the office of the focal point?

Recommendations regarding the National Security Capability review:

35. **Acknowledge the prevention of identity-based violence and mass atrocities as a distinct global challenge and a national priority**
36. **Integrate atrocity prediction and prevention horizon scanning or risk analysis into existing national security decision-making processes across Whitehall**

Recommendations to Government:

37. **If a mechanism tasked with viewing situated UK decision making and risk assessment through the lens of how this country could better predict and prevent mass atrocities was integrated into Government decision making, these inconsistencies, which damage UK reputations abroad and undermine the collective effort to prevent these grievous crimes, could be mitigated. Articulating a strategy on predicting and preventing identity-based violence, including mass atrocities, would:**
 - 37.1. Address the prevention of mass atrocities as a core national security interest and a core national moral responsibility
 - 37.2. identify gaps in Government policy and decision making regarding situations of concern or countries related to atrocity prevention response
 - 37.3. Incorporate lessons learned from past UK and other efforts to predict and respond to mass atrocities
 - 37.4. mitigate threats to national and global security by addressing root causes of insecurity and instability by enhancing national capacity to predict and increase contributions to the more effective prevention of mass atrocities; and address longterm conditions that lead to identity-based divisions which can result in violent extremism and atrocities
 - 37.5. enhance national capacity to identify, prevent, address, respond to the drivers of atrocity crimes
 - 37.6. by improving the use and implementation of foreign assistance to respond early, effectively, and when required—urgently in order to address warning signs and risk *before* the point of violence is reached
 - 37.7. by improving HMG analysis and assessment of risks, initiate cross-Whitehall communications promote a whole of Government approach to the prevention of mass atrocities and coordinate inter-departmental engagement
 - 37.8. conduct outreach, including consultations, with national and international civil society and like-minded stakeholders
 - 37.9. by strengthening diplomatic response and the use of foreign assistance to support transitional justice measures, including criminal accountability for past atrocity crimes
38. **Create a cabinet portfolio, special advisor, and/or joint unit with a mandate to raise early warning signs and make recommendations for action would aid cross-government communication on areas of concern**
39. **We urge that the committee, Cabinet Office, and Government engage with the UK Working Group on Atrocity Prevention, coordinated by Protection Approaches.**