

Transforming “never again” into a safer tomorrow

Calling for UK leadership on a new roadmap for atrocity prevention

Mass atrocities are happening today in every region of the world. Yet genocide and crimes against humanity are never inevitable and can often be prevented. As we remember those who perished in the Holocaust and all victims of mass atrocity crimes, we must transform our shared desire for a world free from such violence into resolute actions.

The International Development Select Committee’s 2022 report *From Srebrenica to a safer tomorrow: Preventing future mass atrocities around the world* provides a concrete and practical roadmap for how the UK can show global leadership in preventing genocide and crimes against humanity.

On Holocaust Memorial Day we reflect upon that egregious period of European history and the many atrocity crimes that have been committed across the world in the years since.

On this day, we rightly honour the Jewish, Roma, Sinti, LGBTQI+, Black, disabled and political communities who were persecuted by the Nazis and their allies. It is a day when we re-commit ourselves to building a future free from identity-based persecution, whether here in the UK or around the world.

The Holocaust was unique, as all atrocities are, but we must learn from and be attuned to the parallels of discrimination in the modern dynamics of genocide and crimes against humanity.

Atrocity crimes are not a thing of the past. Genocide has not been relegated to history.

Far from living up to our commitment of ‘Never Again’, repeated failure to confront mass atrocities has helped usher in an age of impunity. The past decade has seen devastating persecution and violence the world over including Ukraine, China, Ethiopia, Syria and Myanmar.

- Since February 2022, the OSCE has documenting mounting evidence of mass deportations, extra-judicial killings, attacks on civilian infrastructure including hospitals and schools, and sexual violence by Russian forces in Ukraine. These patterns of violence continue in Mariupol, Irpin, Bucha, Kherson and most recently, Dnipro
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina – the site of Europe’s most recent genocide – we see the renewed weaponization by political leaders of hate speech and polarisation
- In China, millions of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities remain in forced labour camps
- From Ethiopia to Syria, Afghanistan to Myanmar we see widespread and organised use of targeted violence against people because of an aspect of their identity

The UK and His Majesty’s Government have a responsibility to help prevent these conscience-shocking crimes.

Protection Approaches and the 25+ NGOs in the UK Atrocity Prevention Working Group have long called on His Majesty’s Government to move from strong words to effective action. Since 2017 the Foreign Affairs and International Development Committees have made repeated demands for a whole-of-government approach and dedicated atrocity prevention strategy. Time and again the absence of an atrocity prevention strategy has left the UK woefully unprepared in their policy responses to prevent genocide and crimes against humanity, missing vital opportunities to de-escalate violence, respond effectively and save lives in Myanmar, Syria, Xinjiang, and Ethiopia.

A chance for global British leadership: A new roadmap for atrocity prevention

The International Development Select Committee's 2022 report *From Srebrenica to a safer tomorrow: Preventing future mass atrocities around the world* provides a concrete and practical roadmap for how the UK can better respond to and prevent identity-based violence and atrocity crimes

Last week the Government's response to the report was published by the Committee and in it there is much to welcome. It marks a significant step the direction of a new, more considered and more cost-effective approach to violence prevention. However, in her statement to Parliament on 19th January, the Committee Chair regretted the Government's rejection of the report's central recommendation for a cross-departmental atrocity prevention strategy.

"Without a strategy, I am concerned about how the government will measure whether its efforts stack up and deliver real change for those at risk. I fear that, once again, individuals and communities will fall through the cracks of UK policy. They are the ones who will pay the ultimate price.

A new model requires a plan that extends to the whole of government. It requires dedicated budget lines, whether within the sanctions team, in key embassies, or within the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. It requires mandatory training for ambassadors so that there is no chance that they are left without support in their hour of need. Most of all, this emerging model needs political leadership."

Sarah Champion MP, Chair, International Development Committee

The lessons of the Holocaust teach us that the prevention of mass atrocity crimes and identity-based violence must be consciously centred in and deliberately integrated across the domestic and foreign policies of all states that aspire to contribute to a world that is safer, fairer and more stable.

A national strategy would make the most of existing UK levers that too often go unused, such as prosecuting in our domestic courts genocide suspects living in the UK and safeguarding our banking system from the profits of slave labour and ethnic cleansing. Such a strategy would ensure that our asylum and immigration policies properly protect those fleeing atrocities and seeking sanctuary.

We therefore ask parliamentarians this Holocaust Memorial Day to call on HMG to embrace the International Development Committee's recommendations on how the UK and likeminded states can do better to prevent atrocities, genocide and crimes against humanity, including:

- Making a **whole-of-government commitment** to use all its tools and levers to help prevent genocide and crimes against humanity
- Creating **dedicated budget lines** to adequately resource prevention efforts across departments and teams, whether in the sanctions team, to support key Embassies, or within the Conflict Stability and Security Fund
- Ensuring all **Embassies and Posts receive atrocity prevention training** and priority countries receive specialist support, training and adequate resources
- Establishing a **national strategy on the prevention of mass atrocities.**

The prevention of identity-based discrimination, violence and atrocity is a collective responsibility that begins at home but must extend around the world. We must all be vigilant in the face of persecution and its precursors and embed the shared commitment to prevent identity-based violence in policy across Government – or we will inevitably fail to uphold our promises to learn the lessons of the past and build a safer, fairer future.