

UK Atrocity Prevention Working Group Statement on the Integrated Review

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On 16 March the outcomes of the Integrated Review of Defence, Development and Diplomacy were published, laying out a new vision for UK international policy.

Members of the UK Atrocity Prevention Working Group warmly welcome the Government's commitment to make atrocity prevention a priority in its new strategic framework of international policy. We look forward to working with Her Majesty's Government (HMG) as this new thinking is set out and embedded across all departments. We hope the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Cabinet Office will take this opportunity to develop a clear-eyed strategy on how the UK's systems and capabilities will bring clarity and coherence to the prevention and prediction of, preparedness for, and responses to genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and war crimes.

We welcome the new approach to conflict, which seems to borrow from the principles of atrocity prevention, recognising grievances and political marginalisation as drivers of modern mass violence and understanding the need to prioritise prevention. In August, members of the UK Atrocity Prevention Working Group published its [public submission](#) to the Prime Minister's Integrated Review and argued that the prevailing approach to conflict prevention was too narrow and that 'mass atrocities are commonly grounded in a long history of grievances and discrimination' but that these propellants of instability and inequality are commonly missing from UK understandings of and approaches to conflict.

We welcome the commitment to integrate existing tools such as the new global human rights ('Magnitsky-style') sanctions regime and look forward to the UK sanctions policy becoming a flexible, creative and timely component of the UK's approach to mass atrocities.

We welcome the conceptual shift throughout the outcomes document towards a prevention-first approach to threats of all kinds, whether they are driven by climate change, socioeconomic factors, or conflict.

We welcome the commitment from the government to return to spending 0.7% of its gross national product on development and support colleagues in asking the Government to provide clarity on when the budget will be restored and how HMG is planning to realise its commitments to both long-term and immediate development, human rights, humanitarian response, conflict reduction, atrocity prevention and poverty reduction during this period of reduced resource but acute need.

Finally, we welcome the move towards a more harmonised approach to resilience at home and abroad, recognising that many global challenges are felt domestically as well as internationally and therefore require a joined up policy that recognises that trusted governance and social cohesion are things to be strengthened in all countries all of the time. However, already there are concerns that the welcome words set out in the Integrated Review are not being matched by the actions of Government. These include concerns about cuts to research funding on root causes of conflict, an inconsistent approach to the rules based global system, discrepancies in existing and future trade agreements and relationships, and suggestions from the Home Office of offshoring asylum seekers and restrictions on the application of the Modern Slavery Act that will have detrimental impact on victims of mass atrocities, identity-based violence and armed conflict. We have wider concerns about inconsistencies within the Integrated Review itself, for example in its indication to pursue a closer relationship with regimes implicated in the perpetration of mass atrocities, that pose a threat to democracy, and where risks of identity-based violence are rising.

In our public submission we called upon HMG to narrow the gaps between the commitments it has made, in the national approach to mass atrocities (2019) and on the global stage, to the prevention of mass atrocities and their practical implementation. We believe that the Integrated Review and the decision to merge the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office bring significant opportunities for the further integration of atrocity prevention across Whitehall and Britain’s embassies.

We look forward to learning more about how the new approach to conflict and commitment to place greater emphasis on atrocity prevention will be built out. Drawing on our collective experience and varied expertise working towards a world free from identity-based violence and mass atrocities, we make the following recommendations as HMG undertakes this important work:

- 1. Establish a clear-eyed strategy on atrocity prevention.** An atrocity prevention strategy, long called for by our Working Group and the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, should provide a framework to draw from, and integrate the workings of, all parts of Government whose work can contribute to decreasing the likelihood of atrocities. Such a strategy can and should be a useful tool for UK civil servants: it should neither duplicate existing work in areas such as the Protection of Civilians (PoC) or Conflict Prevention. Instead it should provide a framework, and ideally inform the development of an institutional architecture or working methodology, which will enable more focussed and effective work in the new FCDO, in embassies, and across Whitehall for the purpose of preventing atrocities.
- 2. Resource atrocity prevention.** While prevention saves both lives and money, effective implementation requires appropriate resources including establishing a much needed system of coordination and analysis – either as a unit or other internal mechanisms – making training mandatory for officials in at risk countries, establishing atrocity prevention expertise across the new directorates of the FCDO, in the Department for International Trade and in other relevant departments, and resourcing the support office of the UK Focal Point for the Responsibility to Protect.
- 3. Address inconsistencies.** A cross Government mechanism tasked with viewing UK decision-making through an atrocity prevention framework, and establishing an atrocity prevention “seat” within the new FCDO directorates, the Conflict Centre and the Situation Centre will help maximise and coordinate contributions towards effective prediction and prevention across Government and guard against inconsistencies – or contradictions to – the UK’s policy and its stated national and international commitments to human rights.

A more holistic approach could transform the UK’s approach to mass atrocities, enhance British contributions to the prevention of the world’s gravest crimes, and improve domestic and international security. Once again, we welcome the positive signals of the Integrated Review and thank the Government for taking this important step forward. The UK Atrocity Prevention Working Group stands ready to support such a transformation and looks forward to working with HMG in its new efforts to prevent mass atrocities, confront marginalisation, and build resilience – here in the UK and worldwide.

Signatories:

Burma Campaign UK



European Centre for the Responsibility to Protect



The Jo Cox Foundation

Korea Future Initiative



Protection Approaches



Protection Approaches

Rights for Peace

The Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace & Justice



United Nations Association – UK



Waging Peace