

**Fact Sheet: The Obama Administration's Comprehensive Efforts
to Prevent Mass Atrocities Over the Past Year**

One year ago, President Obama announced a comprehensive Administration strategy to prevent atrocities. He underscored that “preventing mass atrocities and genocide is a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States of America,” and he approved the recommendations of a comprehensive interagency review of the U.S. Government’s capabilities, under Presidential Study Directive-10, including the establishment of the Atrocities Prevention Board.

In the intervening year, the United States has invested in prevention efforts all around the world—from central Africa, where a multipronged regional strategy has seriously degraded the capability of the Lord’s Resistance Army; to Burma, where the U.S. Government is playing an important ongoing role in supporting efforts to address violence and protect vulnerable communities; to Kenya, where long-term U.S. investments in constitutional reform, peace-building, and civic education helped the Kenyan people conduct peaceful and credible elections and avoid the violence that marred the 2007 polls. Tragically, there are also situations where in the past year civilians have suffered a marked increase in violence—such as in Syria, where the regime’s brutality has led to more than 70,000 deaths and displaced upwards of five and a half million people. These situations underscore the critical importance of acting preventatively before violence is at full blaze. As Secretary Clinton said in a speech at the Holocaust Museum last year, we must act “before the wood is stacked or the match is struck.”

Just as we will continue our efforts to bring an end to the violent conflict in Syria—by strengthening the moderate opposition, blocking the Assad regime’s access to the cash and weapons it uses to wage its war against the Syrian people, facilitating a political transition to end Assad’s rule, providing humanitarian assistance, and laying the groundwork for accountability—we will continue our broader efforts over the coming year to prevent and respond to future such situations. In so doing, we will build upon the efforts of the past year, which include:

- **Establishing the Atrocities Prevention Board to coordinate and prioritize atrocity prevention.**
 - The Board includes senior representatives of the Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, Justice (DOJ), and Homeland Security (DHS), the Joint Staff, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Office of the Vice President and the National Security Staff.
 - The Board identifies and addresses emerging atrocity threats, by scanning the horizon for critical developments, assessing the risk of mass atrocities in particular situations, and supplementing existing efforts, or catalyzing new efforts, to ensure that atrocity threats receive adequate and timely attention.
 - The Board also coordinates the development of new policies and tools, including many listed below, to enhance the capacity of the United States to effectively prevent and respond to atrocities.

- **Strengthening early warning to ensure timely attention by policymakers.**
 - The intelligence community is finalizing the first-ever National Intelligence Estimate on the Global Risks of Mass Atrocities and Prospects for International Response, which will provide a rigorous analytical framework for anticipating and preparing for mass atrocities over the coming years.
 - Agencies represented on the Board have all taken steps, including through dedicated “alert channels,” to help ensure that information related to atrocities and atrocity threats is appropriately collected, elevated, and disseminated within the U.S. Government.
- **Employing financial sanctions, export controls and travel bans to isolate, inhibit and weaken those who enable or perpetrate atrocities.**
 - The Department of the Treasury has dedicated staff to focus on sanctions designations based on human rights abuses and atrocities. It is also developing guidance and training for United States Government staff to improve collection and transmission of information to facilitate human rights- and atrocities-related designations.
 - Over the past twelve months, the Department of the Treasury has issued 21 designations on the grounds of human rights abuses and atrocities. These have included Iran’s Cyber Police, for its role in curtailing free expression and arresting “netizens,” including a blogger who died after alleged torture while in police custody; and the M23, an armed rebel group in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for recruiting and using child soldiers, among other grounds. Over this period, the Department of the Treasury has also designated or identified as blocked 41 individuals and entities in connection with Syria; many of these, such as the Iran-supported militia group Jaysh al-Sha’bi, have assisted the regime in its escalation of violence against the Syrian people.
 - The United States supported the successful negotiation, at the United Nations, of a strong, enforceable, and effective Arms Trade Treaty, which will prohibit States Parties from authorizing the transfer of conventional arms covered by the Treaty when they know they will be used in the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity, or enumerated war crimes.
 - The State Department is identifying persons who have committed serious violations of human rights or international humanitarian law so as to be able to prevent such persons from receiving visas to enter the United States, acting under Presidential Proclamation 8697 and other legal authorities.
- **Surging specialized skills and expertise to assess and respond to atrocity threats and situations.**
 - To expand the pool of appropriate civilian expertise, the State Department has taken steps to better identify atrocity-prevention skills within the U.S. Government and

- develop partnerships with outside organizations such as the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Justice Rapid Response, and the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative.
- In Kenya, the State Department and USAID surged civilian experts to help conduct local peace-building activities well in advance of the recent election, support election preparations and voter education, and then work with leaders across the country to mitigate any potential election-related violence. In Burma, USAID's civilian experts have helped to develop programs on national reconciliation designed to build bridges across communities and mitigate the risk of violence against vulnerable populations. On Syria, the State Department and USAID have deployed experts to support targeted projects that lay the foundation for accountability and a democratic transition that protects the rights of all Syrian people, such as building a cross-sectarian network of civilian activists by training local leaders and activists, including women and minorities.
 - In central Africa, U.S. forces and civilian experts continue to advise and assist regional partners to counter the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), building on our comprehensive strategy, which also includes protecting civilians, encouraging defections, and providing humanitarian assistance. These efforts reportedly led to a two-thirds decrease last year in the number of civilians killed by the LRA.
- **Denying impunity to those who commit atrocities, at home...**
 - DOJ and DHS have done extensive outreach to immigrant communities, and established a tip line and email address for anonymous reporting, to identify leads on human rights abusers present in the United States.
 - Over the past year, DOJ and DHS worked together to successfully prosecute a number of individuals who participated in atrocities overseas. For example, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Boston secured a conviction of a Rwandan national for unlawfully procuring U.S. citizenship; during the Rwandan genocide, she reportedly helped identify Tutsis who were separated and then killed. The same office also prosecuted a Salvadoran national who reportedly ordered his troops to commit torture, arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killings and disappearances; the defendant pled guilty to three counts of immigration fraud and three counts of perjury.
 - Over the past year, DHS also removed from the United States a number of perpetrators of atrocities, including a former Bosnian-Serb police commander wanted for participation in the 1995 genocide at Srebrenica; a former Salvadoran military officer, accused by the United Nations of ordering the execution of men, women and children; and a former Liberian militia leader, who reportedly recruited and used child soldiers.

- **... And abroad.**
 - The President signed bipartisan legislation to enhance our ability to offer financial rewards for information that helps to bring to justice certain perpetrators of atrocities who have been indicted by international tribunals. Acting on this new authority, the State Department recently designated Joseph Kony and other senior leaders of the Lord's Resistance Army, as well as Sylvestre Mudacumura from the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, for rewards of up to \$5 million.
 - The United States has championed accountability for those who commit atrocities. The United States facilitated the voluntary surrender of Bosco Ntaganda to the International Criminal Court, where he faces charges for war crimes and crimes against humanity; and committed to support Senegal's efforts to prosecute former President Hissène Habré of Chad for alleged crimes, including torture and extrajudicial killings, through hybrid Senegal-African Union chambers.
 - The United States has vigorously supported local efforts to promote accountability and combat impunity. In Peru, the State Department is funding a local NGO that in December exhumed the remains of more than 100 people in the Los Cabitos military base, linking the Peruvian military to grave human rights violations in the 1980s; and in Guatemala, USAID is funding a program that supports the collection of evidence, including through exhumations, which has been used to establish patterns of violations in court proceedings. In the DRC, the State Department is funding a program that has trained 45 Congolese police officers and more than 50 judges on techniques for investigating gender-based violence. In Syria, the United States has strongly promoted accountability efforts, supporting organizations that are collecting and reviewing evidence to establish criminal responsibility and that are leading efforts to help the organized opposition begin the process of developing Syrian-led accountability mechanisms.
- **Investing in innovation to develop new approaches to atrocity prevention.**
 - USAID launched a technology challenge (thetechchallenge.org), in partnership with Humanity United, to identify innovative technology in the service of atrocity prevention. The first round focused on safely documenting evidence and addressing third-party enablers. The recently-launched second round focuses on improving secure communications for at-risk communities, collecting information from hard-to-access areas, and identifying community-level risk factors for violence.
- **Sharing the global burden, by strengthening multilateral institutions...**
 - The United States is working to build the capacity of the United Nations for atrocity prevention by advocating for and materially supporting increased whole-of-UN crisis planning and response; deepening our partnership with the Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide; urging all UN field missions to enhance their early warning capacity; and contributing funding to UN preventive diplomacy.

- The United States joined the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect at the United Nations and the Group of Friends of Mediation, which promotes the use of mediation in conflict prevention.
- Over the past year, the United States co-sponsored the resolution at the UN Human Rights Council to establish a Commission of Inquiry (COI) to investigate the widespread human rights abuses in North Korea and helped to renew the COI for Syria. The United States also helped to appoint or renew Special Rapporteurs or Independent Experts to carry out investigations in Burma, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Iran, and Sudan. In March, the United States co-sponsored a resolution on genocide prevention at the UN Human Rights Council, which expanded the focus on atrocity prevention for the Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- The United States recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the African Union to consolidate our partnership. The United States will be holding technical discussions to strengthen our joint capabilities on conflict prevention, among other issues that will benefit civilian populations vulnerable to the threat of violence and atrocities.
- **... And bolstering international peacekeeping capabilities.**
 - Through the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), the United States provided training and equipment last year to support the deployment of more than 16,000 peacekeepers to seven UN and regional peacekeeping operations. The United States has also worked to enhance troop contributing countries' capacity to deploy medical, engineering, logistics, and other critical enabling units, helping missions to execute their mandated tasks, including protecting civilians.
 - The United States also focused on strengthening the protection of civilians in peacekeeping. As Chair of the G8 last year, the United States galvanized joint commitments on the development of doctrine, training, and mission planning on the protection of civilians. The United States has supported the United Nations in developing best practices, guidance, and training resources on the protection of civilians in peacekeeping missions. Through GPOI, the United States has also continued to integrate the protection of civilians and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence into bilateral training for troops deploying to UN missions.
 - The United States has worked with the UN Security Council to strengthen the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC for combating armed groups that are perpetrating atrocities, including sexual violence in conflict; to enhance the ability of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the UN Support Office for AMISOM to combat al-Shabaab and provide security and stability in Somalia; and to support the new peacekeeping mission in Mali that will undertake stabilization efforts, help prevent reprisal attacks, and assist national and international efforts to bring perpetrators to justice.

- **Strengthening military planning to ensure military readiness when the need arises.**
 - The Department of Defense has recognized the importance of mass atrocity prevention and response in the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, and has integrated mass atrocity response operations into general departmental plans and planning guidance. Geographic Combatant Commands have incorporated mass atrocity prevention and response concepts into their steady-state planning as well as planning for specific contingencies.
 - In August 2012, the Department of Defense published, for the first time, formal doctrine on mass atrocity response operations, as an appendix to its Joint Publication on Peacekeeping Operations.

- **Promoting training and learning to ensure the U.S. Government is effectively using all the tools at its disposal.**
 - USAID has trained its humanitarian first-responders on civilian protection; the State Department has provided training on atrocity prevention in multilateral policy; and Department of Defense components – including AFRICOM, EUCOM, U.S. Army’s III Corps and the National Defense University – have hosted tabletop and warfighter exercises on mass atrocity situations.
 - The State Department and USAID are each working to ensure that their officers receive dedicated atrocity-prevention training before or shortly after deploying to countries at risk for mass atrocities – as Secretary Clinton declared last year. DHS and DOJ are also each developing specialized training to provide to their staff deployed to at-risk countries. The Department of Defense is developing specialized training on atrocity prevention and response that will be made available online to all its components.
 - The State Department and USAID are developing robust “toolkits” to provide guidance for staff confronting atrocity threats. DHS is preparing a “handbook” providing Immigration and Customs Enforcement field officers with guidance and recommendations for conducting investigations on human rights violations.