

Domesticating RtoP and the Prevention of Atrocities

How can civil society engage with existing national initiatives?

It is often said that states' responsibility to protect (RtoP or R2P) populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing **begins "at home"**. While RtoP entails a collective agreement to prevent and halt atrocity crimes, domesticating the obligation is critical to realizing a state's adherence to RtoP. **This document provides a preliminary guide on the ways in which states have approached this responsibility since the unanimous agreement of the RtoP in 2005 as well as suggestions for how civil society can engage with such platforms, which range from government partnerships, national implementation mechanisms, and parliamentary groups committed to atrocities prevention**, among others. The background information and recommendations come from both public resources and bilateral discussions with the non-governmental organization partners of these initiatives.

R2P Focal Points Initiative

In 2010, the governments of Denmark and Ghana established the national R2P Focal Points initiative in collaboration with the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, a member of the ICRtoP. Australia and Costa Rica have subsequently joined as co-facilitators of the initiative. A national R2P Focal Point is a government official, appointed by the state, who takes on the responsibility for mainstreaming the Responsibility to Protect and mass atrocities prevention within its national government.¹ The ministerial placement and specific responsibilities of each Focal Point are determined by the national context and capacities, but together these individuals—and there are now 37 as of the time of publication—have formed a Global Network that meets annually to discuss good practices for Focal Points and strategize on how to raise awareness and capacities of governments to implement the norm. (see Annex I for a list of focal points).

At the June 2013 meeting of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points, participants agreed on the important role civil society can play in raising early warnings and providing input in identifying country-specific RtoP issues.² A key recommendation of the meeting was for R2P Focal Points to develop a positive relationship with civil society organizations. Examples of how civil society can engage with their Focal Points include:

- Invite Focal Points to attend/speak at events in order to gain a perspective on how the government is working to incorporate an atrocity prevention lens in different departments, both internally and externally.
- Organize bilateral meetings or convene civil society gatherings

1 "Our Work: R2P Focal Points." *Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect*. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Jan. 2014.

2 "Third Meeting of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points: Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect." *Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect*, 25 Oct. 2013. Web. 23 Jan. 2014.

What is the Responsibility to Protect?

At the 2005 World Summit, **governments made a historic commitment to prevent and halt genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing** (often referred to as 'mass atrocities' or 'atrocity crimes') when they **unanimously agreed to the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP, R2P)**. An emerging international norm, the Responsibility to Protect affirms that:

- The state holds the primary responsibility for protecting populations from the four crimes and violations;
- The international community is responsible for assisting states in building and strengthening their capacity to uphold their protection obligations;
- If a state is unable or unwilling to prevent atrocities, or is committing these crimes, then the international community must respond in a timely and decisive manner using a range of diplomatic, economic or humanitarian measures. Should these non-military tools be inadequate, then the international community may use force, if authorized by the United Nations (UN) Security Council in accordance with the UN Charter.

Domesticating RtoP and the Prevention of Atrocities



Third Meeting of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points on 11-12 June 2013 in Accra, Ghana. Credit: Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

with Focal Points with the aim of sharing common goals, strategies, and opportunities for cooperation.

- Ask the Focal Point to share government activities, policies, priorities, and approaches with civil society.
- Share your organizations' reports and analysis on RtoP with the Focal Point.
- Provide recommendations on how to improve the work of both the Focal Point and the government as a whole on implementation of RtoP.
- Encourage, through the Focal Point, regular reviews of Government strategies/policies on RtoP implementation.
- As many of the Focal Points are located within Foreign Ministries and focus on the prevention of mass atrocities abroad, civil society could also advocate Focal Points to conduct internal reviews of state capacity for atrocities prevention.
- Advocate for the Focal Point to engage more deeply with the Global Network of R2P Focal Points, which can serve as a way in which to share intellectual resources and operational best practices.
- If your government has not yet created a Focal Point, contact the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and relevant authorities working on areas such as conflict/atrocities prevention, protection of civilians, or human rights to discuss the possibility of appointing such an official.

*For more information on the R2P Focal Points Initiative and summaries of all relevant meetings held to date, please visit the website of ICRtoP member **The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect: www.globalR2P.org**.*

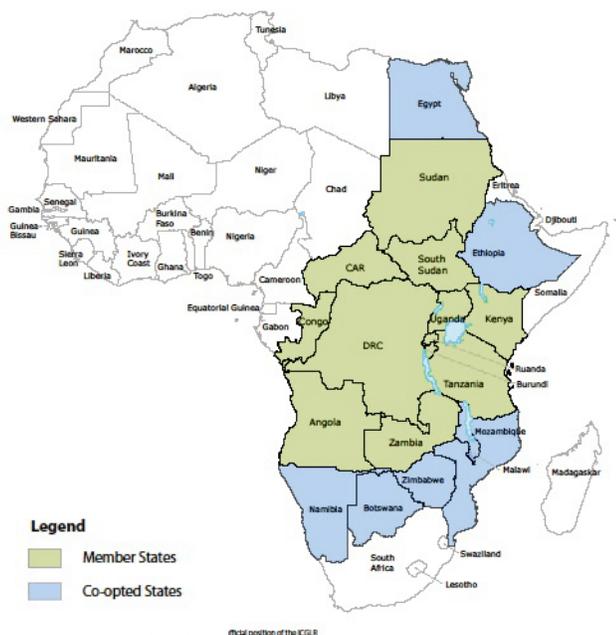
National Committees for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, War Crimes, and Crimes Against Humanity and All Forms of Discrimination of states belonging to the ICGLR

In December 2006, Heads of State belonging to the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR),³ signed the Protocol on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crimes of Genocide, War Crimes, and Crimes Against Humanity and All Forms of Discrimination in the Great Lakes Region. In 2010, a Regional Committee was established to implement the Protocol throughout the Great Lakes, with the idea that governments would domesticate the Protocol by creating corresponding national committees.⁴ These committees are intended to: facilitate national early-warning mechanisms for atrocity crimes; alert the Regional Committee when necessary and in good time, take urgent measures to prevent potential crimes; implement specific measures to effectively fight impunity for these crimes; contribute to raising awareness and education on peace and reconciliation through local and national programs; implement policies and measures to guarantee the rights of victims of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity to truth, justice and compensation, as well as their rehabilitation; incorporate gender-sensitive measures in activities; and share information and strategies for atrocity prevention with other states in the region. The UN Office on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect works closely with the National Committees both prior to and after their establishment by providing trainings, resources, and technical assistance. As of February 2014, four out of twelve ICGLR member states (Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania,

³ The twelve member states of the ICGLR are: Republic of Angola, Republic of Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of Kenya, Republic of Rwanda, Republic of South Sudan, Republic of the Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Republic of Uganda, and the Republic of Zambia

⁴ Executive Secretariat of ICGLR, and George Mason University. "ICGLR Instruments on the Prevention of the Crime of Genocide, War Crimes, Crimes Against Humanity and All Forms Of Discrimination." Gen Prev Net, 2012. Web 05 Jan. 2014

Domesticating RtoP and the Prevention of Atrocities



Map of ICGLR states (Member States in Green).

and Uganda) have established operational National Committees, with the remaining eight states at varying stages in the process of creating and operationalizing a committee.

The National Committees in existence vary widely in structure, transparency, and levels of civil society interaction. However, civil society organizations and academic institutions conducting research on the initiative (including George Mason University's Genocide Prevention Program) have suggested some measures civil society organizations can take to try and enhance engagement:

- Speak with the civil society representatives currently serving on the National Committees or those included in the ICGLR civil society forum's list, who can share information on National Committee developments, and provide insight and suggestions for increasing civil society cooperation with these bodies.
- Engage your respective National Committee in conversation on its activities, its needs, and how civil society can assist in filling Committee gaps (for example, through providing diverse sources of information on situations of concern).
- Provide training to government officials on what mass atrocity prevention entails in your organization's area of expertise.
- Engage in sensitizing the public on atrocity crimes and the national and regional mechanisms available for prevention, particularly the ICGLR regional and national committees and their partners.
- Facilitate Committee interaction with your established networks and provide a forum for discussion and dialogue directly with Committee Members.
- Further the Committee's reach by helping disseminate information on their latest project or issue of concern in need of public awareness and support.

In countries in which National Committees have yet to be created, civil society can also contact organizations working with the ICGLR civil society forum to explore ways in which to help in the process of establishing a Committee and to implement the ICGLR Protocol more broadly. Civil society can also engage their respective Ministry of Foreign Affairs to inquire about the ICGLR and the status of their National Committee's formation.

How Are Civil Society Organizations Working to Realize the Responsibility to Protect?

- Monitoring/documenting on-the-ground atrocities and sharing early warning and assessment with other actors
- Mediation, negotiation, and dispute resolution to defuse tension between communities
- Training civilian protection and physical protection personnel
- Recovery post-trauma, including supporting and assisting with peace and reconciliation processes
- Assessing RtoP indicators and analyzing past crises to provide actors with lessons learned and best practices to enhance preventive strategies

Domesticating RtoP and the Prevention of Atrocities

Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention

In 2012, 18 Latin American countries (all except Cuba) came together to create the Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention. The Network was organized under the leadership of Argentina, Brazil, and ICRtoP Member, the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR), with the support and participation of the UN Office on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect. The goals of the network are to install a genocide prevention training program within each government and to identify areas in which programs on genocide prevention can be implemented. Each country has appointed a Focal Point responsible for coordinating their government's participation in the Network. Some states' focal points have evolved into national mechanisms for the prevention of genocide, including Argentina in 2012 and Paraguay in April 2013.⁵

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Each Latin American country has implemented different initiatives to achieve the network's aim of establishing a "localized approach to genocide and mass atrocity prevention that is spearheaded by the individual member countries themselves."⁶ Over the course of the next few years, however, the Auschwitz Institute hopes that national action plans will be developed by all governments on genocide prevention; that training curriculum for all civil servants on prevention will be incorporated into national structures; and that a region-wide early warning system will be established

to prevent mass atrocities.⁷ For civil society groups looking to complement and assist their respective government's work on genocide prevention, the ICRtoP recommends sharing information and analysis with their Focal Point and inviting them to relevant meetings and events.

*For more information on the Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention, please visit the website of ICRtoP member, the **Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation: www.auschwitzinstitute.org**.*

Atrocities Prevention Board of the United States

In April 2012, U.S. President Obama created the Atrocities Prevention Board (APB), to ensure that the prevention of mass atrocities would be considered a "core national security interest and core moral responsibility of the U.S."⁸ The White House-led APB, a standing inter-agency committee, includes senior representatives of the Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, Justice, Homeland Security, the Joint Staff, USAID, CIA, National Security Council, the US Mission to the UN, and the Office of the Vice President. Within its mandate, the APB has the directive to "lead a comprehensive review to assess the U.S. government's anti-atrocity capabilities and recommend reforms that would fill identified gaps in these capabilities."⁹ Examples of such measures in the APB's first year have been a) the finalization by the intelligence community of the first-ever National Intelligence Estimate on the Global Risks of Mass Atrocities; b) the dedication of staff by the Department of the Treasury to concentrate on designating sanctions based on human rights abuses and atrocities; and c) the State Department and USAID providing training to staff so that they could better identify early warning indicators of mass atrocities.¹⁰

Nevertheless, as many observers have indicated, there is significant room for improvement for the APB, in terms of structure, funding, and outside engagement. As the APB is

⁷ "Concept Paper on the Latin America Focal Points Network." *Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation*. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Jan. 2014.

⁸ Fact Sheet: The Obama Administration's Comprehensive Efforts to Prevent Mass Atrocities Over the Past Year. 1 May 2013

⁹ Fact Sheet

¹⁰ Fact Sheet

⁵ "Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation." *Latin America Programs*. Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, n.d. Web. 13 Jan. 2014.

⁶ Auschwitz Institute.

Domesticating RtoP and the Prevention of Atrocities

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“budget neutral”, it has faced some significant operational limits. Achieving funding from Congress in an austere, budget-cutting environment, especially when the APB has yet to inform Congress of its activities, could prove challenging. In addition to neglecting to connect with Congress, the APB has also largely evaded engagement with civil society organizations, “ultimately undermining its credibility and support.”¹¹ As some commentators have noted, the lack of public awareness on the APB’s useful functions could lead to a lack of institutionalization and even dismantling with a new Presidential administration.

Civil society has much expertise and knowledge on mass atrocity prevention that the APB could utilize in its work. Drawing from recommendations made by the Centre for American Progress and the Prevention and Protection Working Group (PPWG), below are some ways in which civil society organizations can engage with the APB:

- Encourage the establishment of a permanent mechanism for civil society to participate and assist in the APB process.¹²
- Promote greater engagement by the APB with Congressional officials and the general American public, which will increase transparency, understanding, and support for the APB.
- Request a single conflict assessment framework to be used by all U.S. government agencies involved in the APB.
- Urge the APB to enhance engagement with international partners, as coordinated multilateral

action is necessary to effectively prevent atrocities.

- Advocate for the public release of the APB’s Annual Report to the President.
- As no country is immune from mass atrocities, appeal for the APB to conduct a review of the preparedness of the U.S. government to prevent, react, and respond to domestic atrocity crimes.
- Call for the APB to release an Executive Order on Atrocities Prevention that clearly iterates the overall U.S. government’s strategy for mass atrocity prevention, and outlines the clear functions of the APB in this regard.

For more information on civil society and the APB, please contact the PPWG, which is coordinated by the **Friend’s Committee on National Legislation: www.fcnl.org**.

Parliamentary Groups in the United Kingdom and Canada

Parliamentarians from the UK and Canada have formed three parliamentary groups, which are composed of members from all parties who share a common interest in genocide prevention, RtoP, or the aims and ideals of the United Nations. Currently, there are two relevant parliamentary groups in the UK (the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Genocide Prevention, APPG, administered by ICRtoP Member Aegis Trust, and the All-Party Group on the UN, administered by ICRtoP Member UNA-UK) and one parliamentary group in Canada (the Prevention of Genocide and Other Crimes against Humanity, assisted by ICRtoP member The Montreal Institute on Genocide Studies).

The APPG in the UK and the Prevention of Genocide and Other Crimes against Humanity Group in Canada both work to ensure that their respective governments do all that they can to prevent and protect civilian populations from genocide and crimes against humanity. They also seek to increase the flow of information and analysis to Parliamentarians about these crimes and their incitement and to promote understanding of the importance of long-term approaches to genocide prevention.¹³ The All-Party

¹¹ Norris, John, and Annie Malknecht. *Atrocities Prevention Board: Background, Performance, and Options*. Rep. Center for American Progress, 13 July 2013. Web. 7 Jan. 2014.

¹² Stata, Mary. “NGOs Celebrate First Year of Atrocity Prevention Board, Offer Recommendations.” Web blog post. Humanity United. N.p., 3 May 2013. Web. 9 Jan. 2014.

¹³ “All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Prevention of Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity.” *All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Prevention of Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Jan. 2014.

Domesticating RtoP and the Prevention of Atrocities

Group on the United Nations of the UK, meanwhile, raises awareness about, inter alia, peace and security, human rights, and international law among Parliamentarians, including through holding several events a year devoted to RtoP.

Creating an active, cross-party group in other countries with parliamentary systems can be an effective way to increase the engagement of the legislature in the prevention of and protection against mass atrocity crimes. These groups can also serve as mechanisms for civil society organizations to directly access key decision-makers. Forming a partnership with a member of parliament dedicated and willing to champion such causes can be a useful first step in creating a Parliamentary group. Such a partnership can also ensure enhanced activity in Parliament related to atrocity prevention through tabling debates and questions.



Session with Adama Dieng the UN Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide. Credit: Canadian All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Prevention of Genocide and Other Crimes against Humanity

*For more information on any of the Parliamentary Groups listed above, please visit the websites of **UNA-UK** (una.org.uk), **Aegis Trust** (aegistrust.org), and **Canada's Genocide Prevention Group** (preventiongenocide.org)*

New initiative: Launch of Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes (GAAMAC)

In March 2014, national focal points and governments active in genocide prevention and RtoP met in San Jose, Costa Rica to launch GAAMAC, a new platform that aims to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. At the inaugural meeting, participants convened to explore joint ways to engage in the prevention of atrocities, to share good practices and lessons learned, and to explore ways to strengthen their commitment at the national level. A joint initiative of the governments of Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Switzerland, and Tanzania, GAAMAC seeks to bring together diverse but complementary agendas on RtoP, genocide prevention, protection of civilians and transitional justice. At this first meeting, a total of 132 participants attended, including representatives from 56 states, the United Nations, regional organizations, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and experts in the prevention of mass atrocity crimes. The second meeting of GAAMAC is expected to happen in 2015.

Domesticating RtoP and the Prevention of Atrocities

Annex I: List of R2P Focal Points¹⁴

Albania	Finland	Montenegro
Argentina	France	Netherlands
Australia	Georgia	New Zealand
Austria	Germany	Poland
Belgium	Greece	Slovenia
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Ghana	Spain
Botswana	Guatemala	Sweden
Bulgaria	Hungary	Switzerland
Costa Rica	Ireland	Uruguay
Cote d'Ivoire	Italy	United Kingdom
Czech Republic	Liechtenstein	United States
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Lithuania	
Denmark	Luxembourg	

¹⁴ "Our Work: R2P Focal Points." *Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect*. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Jan. 2014.

Annex II: List of ICGLR Countries Who Have Established a National Committee for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, War Crimes, Crimes Against Humanity, and All Forms of Discrimination

Kenya	Tanzania
Rwanda	Uganda

Annex III: List of Countries Belonging to Latin America Network for the Prevention of Genocide

Argentina	Guatemala
Bolivia	Honduras
Brazil	Mexico
Chile	Nicaragua
Colombia	Panama
Costa Rica	Paraguay
Dominican Republic	Peru
Ecuador	Uruguay
El Salvador	Venezuela

ICRtoP

INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR **THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT**

The **International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect** convenes and collaborates with civil society, Member States, and regional and sub-regional organizations to strengthen normative consensus for RtoP, further the understanding of the norm, push for strengthened capacities to prevent and halt genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, and mobilize NGOs to push for action to save lives in RtoP country-specific situations.

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