

Genocide Prevention Task Force Delivers Blueprint for U.S. Government to Prevent Genocide and Mass Atrocities

Genocide Prevention Task Force

8 December 2008

The Genocide Prevention Task Force was launched on November 13, 2007 and released its report to the public on December 8, 2008. It was jointly convened by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the American Academy of Diplomacy, and the U.S. Institute of Peace. It was funded by private foundations. Its goals were: (1) To spotlight genocide prevention as a national priority; and; (2) To develop practical policy recommendations to enhance the capacity of the U.S. government to respond to emerging threats of genocide and mass atrocities.

Executive Summary:

The Genocide Prevention Task Force today released its final report on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The report makes the case for why genocide and mass atrocities threaten core American values and national interests, and how the U.S. government can prevent these crimes in the future.

Jointly convened by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, The American Academy of Diplomacy, and the United States Institute of Peace, the Task Force began its work last November with the goal of generating concrete recommendations to enhance the U.S. governments capacity to recognize and respond to emerging threats of genocide and mass atrocities.

The world agrees that genocide is unacceptable and yet genocide and mass killings continue, said Madeleine K. Albright, former Secretary of State and Co-Chair of the Genocide Prevention Task Force. We believe that preventing genocide is possible, and that striving to do so is imperative both for our national interests and our leadership position in the world.

This report provides a blueprint that can enable the United States to take preventive action, along with international partners, to forestall the specter of future cases of genocide and mass atrocities, said William S. Cohen, former Secretary of Defense and Co-Chair of the Genocide Prevention Task Force. There is a choice for U.S. policymakers between doing nothing and large-scale military intervention. We hope this report will help us utilize those options.

Other Members of the Genocide Prevention Task Force include: John Danforth, Thomas Daschle, Stuart Eizenstat, Michael Gerson, Dan Glickman, Jack Kemp, Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, Thomas R. Pickering, Vin Weber, Anthony Zinni, and Julia Taft who passed away earlier this year.

The report, which is entitled Preventing Genocide: A Blueprint for U.S. Policymakers, asserts that genocide is preventable, and that making progress toward doing so begins with leadership and political will. The report provides 34 recommendations, starting with the need for high-level attention, standing institutional mechanisms, and strong international partnerships to respond to potential genocidal situations when they arise; it lays out a comprehensive approach, recommending improved early warning mechanisms, early action to prevent crises, timely

diplomatic responses to emerging crises, greater preparedness to employ military options, and action to strengthen global norms and institutions.

They are keenly aware that the incoming president's agenda will be massive and daunting from day one, Secretaries Albright and Cohen noted. Preventing genocide and mass atrocities is not an idealistic add-on to our core foreign policy agenda. It is a moral and strategic imperative. The Task Force calls for the development of a new government-wide policy on genocide prevention, which would include the following specific actions designed to better equip the U.S. government to prevent genocide and mass atrocities:

- Having the president himself demonstrate that preventing genocide is a national priority, for example by an early executive order, and continuing public statements on genocide prevention.

- Creating an interagency Atrocities Prevention Committee at the National Security Council to analyze threats of genocide and mass atrocities and consider appropriate preventive action.

- Making warning of genocide or mass atrocities an automatic trigger of policy review.

- Developing military guidance on genocide prevention and response and incorporating it into doctrine and training.

- Preparing interagency genocide prevention and response plans for high-risk situations.

- Investing \$250 million in new funds for crisis prevention and response, with a portion of this available for urgent activities to prevent or halt emerging genocidal crises.

- Launching a major diplomatic initiative to create an international network for information-sharing and coordinated action to prevent genocide and mass atrocities.

- Providing assistance to build capacity of international partners including the UN and regional organizations to prevent genocide and mass atrocities.

The report concludes that the core challenge for American leaders is to persuade others in the U.S. government, across the United States, and around the world, that preventing genocide is more than just a humanitarian aspiration, but a national and global imperative.

More information:

Chapter 6, entitled International Action: Strengthening Norms and Institution, includes a section on advancing normatively and operationally the **Responsibility to Protect**, described as the potentially most important normative advance in relation to the threat of mass atrocities since the 1948 adoption of the Genocide Convention:

http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/taskforce/html_report/chapter6.php

To download the full report: <http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/taskforce/>