

The Danger of a Nuclear, Genocidal and Rights-Violating Iran: The Responsibility to Prevent Petition **Irwin Cotler 09 December 2009** On the 61st anniversary of the Genocide Convention (December 9th) Professor Irwin Cotler, MP and former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada released an international petition on “The Danger of a Nuclear, Genocidal and Rights-Violating Iran: The Responsibility to Prevent Petition”. The Petition has been endorsed by over 60 leading international law scholars, experts on genocide, and survivors, including: Nobel Peace Laureate Elie Wiesel; Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour, Former Swedish Deputy Prime Minister and expert on genocide Per Ahlmark; Darfur survivor and Sudanese Member of Parliament Salih Mahmoud Osman; and a host of leading Iranian human rights scholars.

Executive Summary

This Responsibility to Prevent Petition, based on the responsibility to prevent and the responsibility to protect in international law, calls upon States in the international community to heed their obligation to stop genocide before it occurs.

In the case of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s Iran, this threat of genocide is real. Today, in Ahmadinejad's Iran, one finds the toxic convergence of the advocacy of the most horrific of crimes, namely genocide, embedded in the most virulent of hatreds. It is dramatized by the parading in the streets of Tehran of a missile draped in the words “Wipe Israel off the map” while the assembled thousands are exhorted to chants of “Death to Israel”.

The incitement to genocide committed in Ahmadinejad’s Iran is not only the prelude to a preventable tragedy; it is a crime in itself under international law.

The Responsibility to Prevent Petition begins with an examination of the evidence demonstrating the threat posed by a genocidal and nuclear Iran. By exploring the precursors and precipitators of genocide gleaned from the atrocities in Rwanda, the Balkans and Darfur, the Petition is framed by two lessons in history: first, the danger of state-sanctioned incitement; and second, the danger of indifference and inaction. While the first danger has already manifested itself, this Petition seeks to address the second danger by compelling the international community to action.

The Responsibility to Prevent Petition ends with a call for international actors to pursue the recourses available to them under international law. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Security Council, the International Court of Justice, State Parties to the Genocide Convention – and others – are all provided with tangible and practical steps that can be taken, to prevent genocide before it is too late.

Only action pursuant to the preventative purposes of the Genocide Convention and pursuant to the more recently-recognized responsibility to protect principle can stop a genocide before it occurs. Only action that comes before the killing will save the would-be victims of a genocide and let them know they have not been forgotten. Only this sort of action will give meaning to the Genocide Convention and the Charter of the United Nations, will end a culture of impunity wherein calls to genocide are offered as rhetorical anthems, and will draw a line in the sand stating: The international community – including all State Parties to these Conventions and the United Nations – will not indulge, acquiesce or, however inadvertently, become complicit by inaction or indifference, in genocide.

Read the full [Petition](#)