

Myanmar: Responsibility to Protect and the Prevention of Election Violence

Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

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The Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APR2P) joins the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) and other concerned stakeholders in calling upon the government of Myanmar to ensure that the forthcoming general elections are free, fair, transparent, and peaceful. The prevention of election violence is essential if the people of Myanmar and the international community are to accept the results as credible and legitimate. Preventing election violence is part of the Myanmar government's primary responsibility to protect populations from communal violence leading to atrocity crimes. The Centre welcomes and commends the progress made by the government of Myanmar. Myanmar has supported the principle of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) following its adoption in 2005 in the UN General Assembly. It participated in the 2009 and 2014 interactive dialogues of the General Assembly on R2P where it recognized the importance of the principle and upheld the primary responsibility of states in preventing the four atrocity crimes—genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Given that no state or society is immune from atrocity crimes, it is important for governments to recognize the risk factors that will enable them to prevent them from happening. In his 2013 report on "Responsibility to Protect: State Responsibility and Prevention," the UN Secretary General pointed out that countries that are at risk of genocide and other forms of mass atrocities usually have "a history of discrimination or other human rights violations against members of a particular group or population, often on the basis of its ethnic, racial or religious background."¹ For example, political discrimination is manifested through "denial of such basic political rights as participation and representation, and freedom of expression, opinion, and association." Social discrimination involves "measures such as denial of citizenship or right to profess a religion or belief, compulsory identification and limitation on basic rights such as marriage and education that target members of a community."

The Secretary-General underscored that discrimination and its persistence brings discord between groups, creates divisions in society and serves as material cause and justification for group violence, and often carried out through violence and human rights violations.

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