



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON GENOCIDE PREVENTION AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT



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The Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect, who have distinct but complementary mandates, work together to advance national and international efforts to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as well as their incitement.

Core functions of the Office

Monitoring and risk assessment: Collecting information, primarily from within the United Nations system, and conducting assessments of situations worldwide that could lead to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, or their incitement.

Associated activities

- » Collect and assess information from United Nations and other sources;
- » Analyze developments worldwide based on the Office's Analysis Frameworks, which identify factors that increase the risk of genocide and related atrocities;
- » Maintain an internal database of information on possible precursors to genocide and related crimes.

Advising and mobilising: Alerting the Secretary-General and, through him, the Security Council, to situations where there is a risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, or crimes against humanity; recommending preventive action by the United Nations and its partners; and mobilising the United Nations system, Member States, regional and sub-regional arrangements and civil society to prevent or halt these crimes.

Associated activities

- » Advise the Secretary-General on situations of concern and consult with partners within the United Nations system on possible preventive action;
- » Issue public statements and engage in quiet diplomacy;
- » Convene key Under Secretaries-General in crisis situations, where appropriate and at the request of the Secretary-General, to discuss policy and strategy options.

Enhancing capacity: Working to build the capacity of the United Nations, Member States, regional and sub-regional organisations and civil society through training and technical assistance to strengthen prevention, early warning and response capacity.

Associated activities

- » Conduct training seminars for United Nations staff as well as representatives of government and civil society to promote greater awareness of the causes and processes of atrocity crimes; build capacities for prevention, early warning and the assessment and management of information;
- » Provide technical assistance to Member States and regional and sub-regional organizations on protecting populations from genocide and related crimes as well as on establishing early warning mechanisms;
- » Promote and contribute to the establishment of national focal points on the Responsibility to Protect;
- » Provide strategic guidance to United Nations departments, agencies, and peacekeeping and political missions on how to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and/or assist governments in doing so.

Advancing the Responsibility to Protect: Leading the further conceptual, political and institutional/operational development of the Responsibility to Protect and its implementation by the United Nations, Member States, regional and sub-regional arrangements and civil society.

Associated activities

- » Develop further political and institutional consensus on the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect

through continued consultations and engagement with Member States, civil society and the United Nations;

- » Assist the Secretary-General in the preparation of reports and statements related to the Responsibility to Protect as well as strategies for advancing the concept;
- » Encourage other inter-governmental bodies to consider ways of developing and integrating Responsibility to Protect perspectives into their work;
- » Assist the General Assembly, the Security Council and other United Nations entities in considering the Responsibility to Protect; organize and participate in high-level events on the concept;
- » Identify ways to integrate the Responsibility to Protect into the work of the United Nations system.

Raising awareness: Promoting greater understanding of the causes and dynamics of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, of the measures that could be taken to prevent them, and of the responsibility of States and the international community in this regard.

Associated activities

- » Undertake outreach missions to increase awareness and understanding of the mandate, as well as develop partnerships;
- » Organize high-level events and public briefings on genocide prevention and the Responsibility to Protect;
- » Disseminate the Office's Frameworks of Analysis on the risk of genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity as well as new research and materials relevant to the Office's mandates, including guidance on identifying and monitoring dangerous speech, as well as guidance on the responsibility of non-state actors to protect populations.

Understanding genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity

Genocide is the deliberate destruction of a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, in whole or in part. Genocide often occurs in societies in which such groups become locked in identity-related conflicts. However, it is not the differences in identity per se that generate conflict, but rather the real or perceived inequality associated with these differences in terms of access to power and resources, social services, development opportunities and the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms.

War crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity may be precursors to genocide as well as violations of international law in their own right. As defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, **war crimes** are grave violations of the laws of armed conflict. **Crimes against humanity** include murder, torture, rape, persecutions, forced displacement or other inhumane acts committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population; they can occur either within or outside the context of armed conflict. Acts of **ethnic cleansing**, the strategy to remove a civilian population of a particular ethnic or religious group from a territory, may constitute one of the other three crimes.

Stemming from both structural and dynamic factors, these atrocities are not limited to any particular country or part of the world.

Since the root causes of genocide and related crimes stem from real or perceived inequalities between groups, prevention begins with ensuring that all groups within society enjoy the rights and dignity of belonging as equal citizens. Early prevention of genocide and related atrocities therefore begins with good governance and constructive management of diversity as a means for eliminating gross political and economic inequalities between groups, and for promoting a common sense of belonging on equal footing.

The Responsibility to Protect

As stipulated in the Outcome Document of the 2005 United Nations World Summit, the responsibility to protect populations by preventing genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as well as their incitement, lies first and foremost with the State. The international community has a responsibility to assist States in fulfilling this responsibility and to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means to help protect populations from the four specified crimes and violations. Should national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations and peaceful means be inadequate, the international community has committed to take collective action in a timely and decisive manner to protect populations from these crimes, in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

The Heads of State and Government also undertook to support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capacity and to assist States under stress before crises and conflicts break out.