

# **Building National Architectures for the Prevention of Mass Atrocities and Genocide**

## **The Potential of Social Media and New Technologies to Inhibit and Prevent Atrocities**

- a) What are the challenges today of building national architectures?
- Technology is a collection of evolving tools and a source of opportunity. It is neither a universal remedy nor effective without the active help of people. Social media and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) are double-edged swords that can help prevent atrocities, but also fuel a conflict.
  - Contemporary atrocities are often facilitated through social media.
  - Counteracting abusive social media is often outside the control of governments and its technology lies with shareholder-oriented companies. Therefore, no government actively seeks to counter-balance hate speech, unless companies are monopolized.
  - Vocal minority and silent majority: A lot of people do in fact do not post on social media platforms because they are disgusted by the comments. What we see tends to be a small number of angry voices. How can the silent majority be mobilized?
- b) What have we learned about building national architectures?
- National architectures today do not adequately take into account the crucial role of social media and ICT.
  - The problem needs to be identified and the technology required to solve it will be developed; not the other way around.
  - Misinformation is often spread and may lead to escalation of conflicts. People are often well-informed about events on the local level (village) and on the national level (through radio and TV). What is lacking is information about events in the next village and the connectivity to it.
  - People often do not take action to verify if information is true or not. Platforms such as Wiki-Rumours (the "Una Hakika" information service) by the Sentinel project counter rumours with facts and verified information and therefore provide a basis for better information.
  - Atrocity mitigation through SMS-subscription: Notify villagers and security forces of imminent threat.

- Deterrence through documentation: footage of atrocities is available all around the world.
- Many technologies are already available but there is a lack of information sharing (tools, actors, etc.) among GAAMAC network.
- People need to see opposing views on social media platforms.

c) What could be the contribution of GAAMAC to address these challenges?

- Develop best practice guides how to use the benefits of social media and ICT to prevent atrocities.
- Develop best practice guides / strategies to create or maximize the complementary between the international standards and domestic jurisdiction.
- Further develop standards for regulating hate speeches on social media vs. freedom of speech.
- Develop policy options / guidelines on how to establish multilateral understanding among governments and social media companies, in addition to bilateral agreements.
- Provide an overview of what technologies / projects / organizations exist that use technology to prevent atrocities. Such a web-based overview will help governments identify potential partners.
- Help verify information through the GAAMAC network / crowdsourcing in order to counter misinformation.
- Support technologies such as the "Eyewitness" App" (adds metadata to pictures and ensures chain of custody for pictures). Fund / supply other technology for specific contexts.
- Establish infrastructure on the GAAMAC website that allows a two-way communication between states / NGO / think tanks etc. Also facilitate the sharing of information through the website.
- Could GAAMAC establish focal points that monitor hate speech?
- Is there an advocacy role for GAAMAC? Should GAAMAC lobby surveillance companies and/or regimes? Should GAAMAC teach how to counteract tracking and surveillance? Can GAAMAC help to protect refugees from surveillance from their state of origin?

d) Other specific and very relevant issue to be recorded?

- The fastest-growing technology markets are in developing / fragile contexts.
- How are states reacting to mobilization through social media? States often overreact to "negative open empowerment". In the

year 2000, only 7 countries censored the internet. In 2016, over 90 countries limit access to certain information.