

Building National Architectures for the Prevention of Mass Atrocities and Genocide

Atrocity Prevention in Special Circumstances

a) What are the challenges today of building national architectures?

- Serious human rights violations are always present before mass atrocity crimes
 - How to identify violations
 - How to incorporate violations into atrocity prevention
 - How do human rights mechanisms work with atrocity prevention to be mutually reinforcing.
- Civil demonstrations and political transitions create spaces ripe for the commission of atrocity crimes.
 - They are much more challenging when they are spontaneous.
- Simply signing and ratifying an international treaty for human rights will not prevent atrocities. There has to be action based on those treaties and the application of the treaties in order to prevent.
- It is possible for one person to cause an event to escalate.
- We know a lot about risk factors, but what do we know about prevention that works. Need more answers about successful prevention.
- Peacekeeping: the reports on peacekeeping success and local level violence are available, but the UN won't release them.
- During political transitions it is a huge challenge and possibility that new authorities do not respect past human rights and prevention architectures.
- How do you preserve what is good in past administrations while working to remove what was negative and not constructive for inclusivity and non-discrimination?

b) What have we learned about (special circumstances for) building national architectures?

- Despite special circumstances, atrocity prevention is a process and must be carried out continuously to overcome these potentially threatening circumstances.

Civil Demonstrations lessons learned:

- Civil demonstrations are normal and routine aspects of society. Risk assessments can tell you when they are “special” and might lead to atrocity violence.
- Demonstrations are trigger events – they accelerate risk and intensify the possibility that a latent problem can escalate and potentially quickly.
- Demonstrations involve large crowds of people – and groups of people are subject to crowd dynamics and they can be activated by a smaller group of people. Prevention people need to be careful about paying attention to small groups of agitators that can influence the larger group.
- Understand that if people in groups are angry or afraid, they think as a group and react out of habit. Habits of large crowds are that they will fight or flee. They will tend to fight if they are angry and flee if they are scared.
- We need to understand what happened in the past with large groups – how did authorities respond to them? That is what they will anticipate for the next time. (tear gas, force?)
- Forceful response causes immediate violence or violence to erupt afterwards. States need to avoid using violence.
- Must avoid causing a stampede. Do not crowd the crowd. This will lead to death.
- When there are crowds, bring people around who are considered neutral: health professionals, respected and unarmed (or discretely armed) police
- Since spontaneous action is much harder to control, therein lies the importance of focal points and national mechanisms who need to be monitoring activity and understanding what might occur in order to create plans based on those possibilities.

Political transitions:

- Assume the worst is going to happen – mobilize respected people and authorities in advance to project calm and control. This requires advance planning.
- Make no promises that you cannot keep and tell no easy lies.

- These need to be dealt with as escalating risk factors and don't let them become trigger events because at that stage they are much more difficult to respond to and may require peacekeepers.
- These situations need help – monitors, observers and perhaps other outside actors. But there is strength in trying to solve the problem as close to home and with actors who are nearby. Creates more ownership over the reached solutions.
- Focal points need to be able to interact with a diverse political class

Serious human rights violations:

- These are always documented in advance of mass atrocities.
- How to identify violations of human rights:
 - JBI identified 21 human rights-related risk factors for genocide. These are published and available to the atrocity prevention community. There are lessons learned for each one of them. www.jbi-humanrights.org
- States need to have national architecture for atrocity prevention – they need to regularly assess risk for atrocities and that needs to include analysis of human rights violations. The actors to involve in this process:
 - National human rights institutions- they need constructive opportunities to bring up concerns about patterns of human rights violations with the national atrocity prevention architectures.
 - Civil society organizations – they are paramount for early warning. National prevention architectures need to have a process for consulting with civil society.
 - The states need to both consult with these two groups of actors and have processes in place to react to their concerns and suggestions.
- National institutions and national civil society are incredibly important, but international and regional human rights mechanisms have very strong resources to assist states:
 - International human rights treaty bodies

Mediation and conflict resolution are paramount to prevention. We need individuals with the skills to deescalate.

- Mediators should be people with authority, who are respected, and who are perceived as neutral.
- It's also beneficial to educate groups of people on mediation and de-escalation.

Natural Disasters:

- Disasters themselves are not mass atrocities. However, they create the potential for atrocities to be committed.
- Most disasters can be anticipated, and because of this there needs to be a strong effort to make sure that public response and good are focused on responding to the areas of highest need.
- Authorities must be nimble and look for ways to intervene. There needs to be a back-up mobilization response to meet people's needs.
- Horrifying outcomes of disasters can spark outrage, and this is where atrocities may occur.
- Police ought not punish the survivors. Authorities should not punish people who are looting for food.
- Warning:
 - If there is a high death rate of children, the population will be furious
 - Blatant and visible corruption will make people furious
 - Survivors are full of grief, and responders need to help people find their loved ones and bury them appropriately.
- The highest authority in the land needs to turn to technical advisors publicly to provide answers to the public. There needs to be a sense of cohesion and compassion portrayed to the public.

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

- GAAMAC can encourage the incorporation of appropriate human rights scrutiny into atrocity prevention mechanisms.

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

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