



AP R2P

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SPOTLIGHT ON R2P

The Thirteenth Meeting of the International Association of Genocide Scholars

In July 2017, the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect co-hosted the International Association of Genocide Scholars' biennial conference with the TC Beirne School of Law with a focus on justice and the prevention of genocide. These twin themes offered an excellent platform for conference participants to discuss a broad spectrum of issues surrounding the persistence of conflict and mass atrocities around the world. With over 200 participants, the conference included international academics from a range of disciplines, representatives from government (including the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the United States State Department), and from a range of international and non-governmental organizations. The conference opened with an address by Dr. Lilla Watson, who

focused in her address on the need for colonised peoples everywhere who wish to empower themselves culturally to take advantage of modern technology in order to achieve justice based on their own terms of reference.

A keynote speech was given by Professor Alex Bellamy, the Director of the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, who argued that while the international community has made significant progress in strengthening the protection of civilians from genocide and mass atrocities, this trend has shifted since 2011, creating a new crisis. He argued that three factors had contributed to this crisis: a significant increase in deliberate attacks on civilian populations; a decline of international commitment to some of the central tenets of human protection; and the system's limited capacity to

respond effectively to the increasing burdens placed upon it. This keynote set the tone of the rest of the conference by emphasising that we must do better and our response should be built on compassion, collective action, and accountability.

A further two keynotes related the core preventative and protective aims of the Responsibility to Protect and key interests of the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. Gloria Atiba Davies, Head of the Gender and Children's Unit at the International Criminal Court (ICC), argued that the ICC remains an essential instrument to render justice and to end the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of mass atrocity crimes. William Smith, the Deputy Co-Prosecutor of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), overviewed recent cases heard at the ECCC against members of the



Khmer Rouge, which has included charges of genocide, crimes against humanity, and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

Throughout the conference, the Responsibility to Protect and the prevention of mass atrocities were at the forefront of discussions during panel sessions. A number of panels directly related to the work of the Centre, including panels on the United Nations Security Council and Mass Atrocities, several sessions on genocide prevention, and on a range of current mass atrocity situations including Myanmar. A highlight of the conference was the discussion between Professor Alex Bellamy, Dr Phil Orchard and Dr Sarah Teitt on future challenges to implementing the Responsibility to Protect.

Parallel to the conference, the Centre co-hosted 'Culture Under Attack' with the Australian Red Cross, an exhibition highlighting the impact of armed conflict on cultural heritage. This cultural event served as a reminder on the importance of continuing prevention efforts and prompted an evening of reflection and profound discussion for conference participants and exhibition attendees.

The keynote speeches and panel discussions at the International Association of Genocide Scholars' conference demonstrated the wealth and complexity of research being undertaken worldwide in the fields of mass atrocity prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. Moreover, the dialogue prompted by the conference offered an excellent occasion to look to the future and address the challenges to preventing and addressing mass atrocity crimes.



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