

SPOTLIGHT ON R2P



“Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Atrocity Prevention in the Asia Pacific” Bangkok 2018

Executive Summary

With Chulalongkorn University, The Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect hosted the 2018 high level meeting on Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Atrocity Prevention in the Asia Pacific at the Siam Anantara, Bangkok, Thailand on the 23rd of August 2018.

The meeting provided an opportunity for leaders, experts, and practitioners in the field of atrocity prevention to share insights on the progress made and the challenges still to be confronted, and to chart a course for the future by devising practical steps forward for strengthening regional cooperation in the Asia Pacific region. The meeting learned about the growth of the Asia Pacific Partnership for Atrocity Prevention and foundation of the Asia Pacific Youth Network for Atrocity Prevention. It also identified several key priorities, including :

1. Governments should appoint a senior official as national R2P focal point.
2. Governments should be strongly encouraged to sign, ratify, and implement relevant instruments of international law.
3. R2P and atrocity prevention must be mainstreamed into ASEAN as proposed by the High Level Advisory Panel on R2P in Southeast Asia chaired by Dr. Surin Pitsuwan
4. The establishment of an accountability framework for atrocity crimes.
5. A concerted and sustained effort to promote human rights awareness and understanding through education.

Official Welcome

Pro Vice Chancellor, Professor Tim Dunne, expressed his gratitude to DFAT on behalf of the University for the funding and the guidance they continue to provide. He also recognised the quality and commitment of the APCR2P centre staff, acknowledging particularly Professor Alex Bellamy for his expertise. Professor Dunne noted that the quality of this partnership is key to the centre thriving for the next ten years, and continuing the central role it plays in building a 'coalition of the concerned' across the region. Professor Dunne argued that the resilience of the 'coalition of the concerned' is being tested by crises in the region (i.e. China, Myanmar, North Korea), and we are yet to see how far regional cooperation can develop an effective response to current and future 'atrocities spirals'. To that end, the discussions at this meeting were an opportunity to plan concrete steps to put the recommendations of the CS-CAP study group into effect.



Morning Keynote Address

Professor the Hon Gareth Evans keynote presentation **The Responsibility to Protect :Where to now?** is available on the APR2P website https://r2pasiapacific.org/files/2288/speech_r2P_where_tonow_gareth-evans.pdf



Session One: The Asia Pacific Partnership for Atrocity Prevention

During this session, the work of the Asia Pacific Partnership for Atrocity Prevention (APPAP) was outlined in order to deepen engagement and identify windows of opportunity.

First, the APPAP working group on 'Awareness Raising' presented its work and recommendations moving forward. The group spoke of engaging diverse stakeholders (e.g. media and faith-based organisations) through regional dialogue. They also raised the need for domestic champions to push for the creation of national action plans. It was also noted that ASEAN's adoption of a 'declaration of a culture of prevention' presented an opportunity to engage with existing regional mechanisms to push for implementation.

The APPAP working group on 'Gender and Atrocity Prevention' then spoke of its work and recommendations moving forward. Its three priority areas were introduced: research (e.g. a review of gender-based entry points and challenges in the literature), capacity building (e.g. developing specific training packages), and strategic advocacy. This group also looked to existing regional mechanisms such as ASEAN to increase stakeholder engagement, and noted that ASEAN had signed a joint statement on promoting 'Women, Peace and Security', which presents an important opportunity to engage.

A major theme of this panel was the 'people-to-people' aspect of R2P. To close the session, the Habibie centre presented its work on Cerita, which is a locally based program aimed at preventing hate speech and incitement. Through storytelling, young people are brought together and instilled with the principles of R2P and atrocity prevention; a clear example of effectively localising atrocity prevention.

Session Two: Building National Capacity for Atrocity Prevention: National Focal Points

During this session, national focal points were discussed with the pur-

pose of raising awareness of the role of national focal points, to encourage regional cooperation, and to encourage others to advocate for national focal points in their country. Four countries reflected on their experiences including Cambodia, Australia, Timor Leste, and Mexico.

First, Ambassador Pou Sothirak spoke as national focal point for Cambodia. He reflected on how his country is dealing with past atrocity, the current challenges it faces, and how Cambodia is in the unique position to push forward R2P in the region. Ambassador Sothirak spoke of seeking justice for the 1.7 million victims of atrocity crime in Cambodia (1975-78), and how being badly affected by mass atrocity has led to achievements in atrocity prevention. For example, it was highlighted that Cambodia is the only member of ASEAN to sign and ratify the Rome treaty. Its work on genocide education was highlighted as a key achievement, with genocide included in the curriculum taught throughout Cambodia, with the support of the Ministry of Education. The 'Network of Friends of R2P', and this non-state actor's approach to R2P, which calls for strengthening in the region, was also highlighted as a key achievement. In light of its unique experience with atrocity crime, Ambassador Southirak stated that Cambodia can take the bold step of leading R2P mainstreaming in ASEAN. He also suggested that Cambodia can play a leading role in ASEAN as a hub for education in atrocity prevention and R2P.

On behalf of Australia's focal point, Gregory Andrews, Dr Catherine Hesse-Swain then spoke about Australia's strong support for the implementation of R2P, highlighting work done on pillar two through advocacy and capacity building in the Asia Pacific region. This has been achieved by 'amplifying the message' through strong strategic partnerships, built both regionally and globally (e.g. the APR2P). Dr Hesse-Swain reflected on the lessons learnt after Australia's term on the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council, particularly of the importance of using these mechanisms to engage Member States and drive change. The priorities for Australia's focal

point were identified as ensuring domestic capacity to identify and respond to risk (including raising awareness of R2P across government within Australia), supporting other countries to build atrocity prevention capacity, and continuing to take every opportunity to advocate for the human rights and fundamental protections of the rules-based international order.

Next, his Joaquin Amaral spoke on behalf of the national focal point for Timor Leste. He reaffirmed that strengthening regional cooperation is key to R2P's implementation. He reflected on the challenges Timor Leste faced during and after the restoration of independence, and how critical the international support they received was. It was noted that Timor Leste has a strong commitment to preventing and protecting populations from the four mass atrocity crimes, evidence of which was provided by recent achievements, including reconciliation efforts being established to resolve past issues, and membership of the ICC. Mr Amaral stated that Timor Leste continues to promote R2P as a tool for the prevention of atrocity, and has shown a strong commitment to work with stakeholders nationally and internationally.

Finally, Ms Mariana Salazar Albornoz spoke as national focal point for Mexico. She shared experiences of the work recently starting on atrocity prevention at a regional and national level in Latin America. She spoke of the 'Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention', which has 18 regional members and focuses on exchanging best practice, as well as training public servants on genocide and mass atrocity prevention. Ms Albornoz stated that the network has also successfully implemented mass atrocity prevention education in Latin America, through school curricula. In detailing the lessons learnt and best practices of the network, Ms Albornoz expressed a hope that they might assist the Asia Pacific region to appoint more focal points, and to become more active in the area of R2P.

Session Three: A Regional Youth Network for Atrocity Prevention

During this session, the ideas and statement of commitment developed at the youth summit were shared. Three youth delegates—Vierna Tasya Wensatama (Indonesia), Raksmei Him (Cambodia), and Wike Devi Arianti (Indonesia)—read the statement of commitment together. This statement was the major output of the Bangkok Youth Summit on Atrocity Prevention. It outlined the commitment the group made to its principles and future objectives. The session was moderated by Dr Maria Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza, who affirmed the untapped resource of youth contribution to atrocity prevention, and called on the audience to be inspired by the energy of the youth leaders.



STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT BY THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE 2018 YOUTH SUMMIT ON THE PREVENTION OF ATROCITY CRIMES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

Determined to build a future for our region that is free from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity based on the principles of international solidarity, gender equality, non-discrimination, inclusivity, and respect for diversity;

Affirming the need to fully implement international human rights and international humanitarian law, the Responsibility to Protect as endorsed at the 2005 World Summit, and UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on Youth, Peace, and Security that recognise youth as partners of peace and agents of prevention, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution;

Urging all stakeholders to support effective preventive action, including more efficient responses to emerging crises and ongoing atrocity situations, and the establishment of mechanisms for early warning and early response at the local, national, and regional level;

Recognising the need for greater education, awareness raising, and capacity building about human rights protection, risk assessment frameworks for atrocity crimes, cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue, preventive diplomacy, and local peacebuilding;

Recognising also the importance of investing in youth education and employment opportunities, and supporting young people in peer learning and cooperation to realize our shared vision of a peaceful region free from atrocity crimes;

Bearing in mind the need for meaningful and sustainable youth participation in atrocity prevention in the Asia Pacific;

We are committed to:

- Supporting the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect in the Asia Pacific region.
- Establishing youth focal points in each country in the Asia Pacific to advocate specifically for the protection of young people and their full participation in atrocity prevention, including through:
 - the dissemination of information and advice to relevant government bodies;
 - the development of innovative ways to engage with parliamentarians and other national stakeholders;
 - raising awareness about R2P;
 - advocating for accountability and an end to impunity for atrocity crimes; and
 - surveying, within the next 12 months, national capacities and networks that already exist to support atrocity prevention, and reporting our findings to the group.
- Establishing a regional network of youth leaders for R2P. Its activities will include:
 - Convening an annual meeting;
 - Establishing social media platforms;
 - Exchanging and disseminating information about atrocity prevention;
 - Establishing partnerships with relevant organizations, including the Asia Pacific Centre for R2P, the Asia Pacific Partnership for Atrocity Prevention, and the Global Centre for R2P;
 - Identifying and engaging with other mechanisms and groups to advance our goals, including the ASEAN Youth Forum and ASEAN People Forum;
 - Providing mutual support;
 - Empowering youth to participate in atrocity prevention!

Afternoon Keynote Address and Roundtable Discussion

Following Dr Noeleen Heyzer's keynote address, a roundtable discussion was held on the subjects of why it is important to strengthen regional cooperation for atrocity prevention, and how it might be achieved.

A number of common proposals were tabled by the panel. The first was the need to develop early warning systems with analytical capacity. The panel suggested that regional leaders should encourage the creation of focal points in many more countries in the region, and encourage all states to ratify the Rome Statue and all key human rights treaties. Implementing the accountability framework for atrocity prevention was also suggested as key. Again, the need to integrate the core ideas of atrocity prevention and R2P into the frameworks and mechanisms of ASEAN was seen as crucial. Sustained training and education on human rights and atrocity prevention at the local and regional levels was also called for, especially within civil society and the security sector. The panel called for regional organisations such as APPAP to work more closely with the Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institution Forum, as well as a more diverse range of actors (such as the media and faith-based organisations) to garner unity and resolve.

Session Four: Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Atrocity Prevention, Key Priorities

During this session, key priorities for strengthening regional cooperation for atrocity prevention were identified.

Many specific recommendations for enhancing regional cooperation were tabled. For example, command responsibility was identified as important for regional cooperation as it attaches moral responsibility to the head of state. Providing mandatory human rights education was also suggested as a key step in creating an 'atrocity intolerant gen-

eration'. Encouraging all key human rights treaties and the Rome Statue to be ratified across the region was also identified as key to creating a baseline for regional cooperation, as it was pointed out that only three UN treaties are common to all states in the Asia Pacific. It was recommended that programming to raise awareness of atrocity crimes should seek diverse audiences (e.g. intra and inter-youth, inter-religious, and inter-cultural), and should also localise (i.e. to seek to 'catch its catchment') instead of only speaking to those who are 'already converted'. Finally, it was suggested that a regional framework of consequences could be developed, as well as a regionally based centre for monitoring atrocity risk.

The idea that the Asia Pacific region is too diverse to create consensus on atrocity prevention was challenged through the examples of the success of the African Union and the Organisation of American States, which contain far more member states than the Asia Pacific. The panel called for a sense of urgency to be built around atrocity prevention in the region to combat emerging challenges and past failures.

Session Five: Next Steps for Atrocity Prevention

During this session, practical next steps to strengthen regional cooperation for atrocity prevention were identified.

Again, the need for education in the region was reiterated. The establishment of 'The Documentation Centre of Cambodia' was suggested as a regional hub for learning and training in the region. This would include learning through case studies of past atrocities, as well as teaching on theory and methodology. Drawing on the 'people-to-people' R2P theme that has run throughout the meetings, the proposed centre would also operate as a 'train the trainer' centre, so that the knowledge could be reproduced locally. It was envisaged that this would be similar to the Habibie Centre's highly successful Cerita program. The importance of education in the region was reiterated through reflection on

the notion that if the youth are not equipped with the knowledge of human rights, the tragic history of the region could be repeated.

A key point raised by the panel was the need to separate 'the honourable from the doable'. The need to work with what already exists and 'not reinvent the wheel' was affirmed. The panel recognised that there are many possibilities and pathways to work within the existing mechanisms of ASEAN, but there is a crucial need to recognise that there is a limit to what the organisation can do. This was discussed in relation to the crisis in Myanmar, on which there has been work done by ASEAN, but where the political leadership needed to drive real change has not been present. The panel reflected that this needs to come from states willing to push the agenda; quiet diplomacy has made progress, but strong national leadership is now required.

Closing Remarks

The closing remarks were a call to action by the participants in the room. It was discussed that ten years ago it was thought that R2P was not relevant to the region, but that the crisis in Myanmar shows how the region failed badly, and that there is an urgent need to learn from this failure and ensure that it is not repeated.

Five practical steps forward were suggested as outcomes of the meeting. The first was to support the initiatives that were discussed (e.g. launch of the youth focal points). The second was to grow and deepen APPAP so it can apply crucial pressure. The third was to identify and support community-based organisations in practical ways. The fourth was to encourage all states in the region to sign onto the basic instruments of international law. The fifth and final was to urge all states in the region to appoint a national focal point for R2P and to advocate for regional action.



The APR2P Centre acknowledges the drafting of this Spotlight by meeting rapporteur University of Queensland RHD Student Ms Josie Hornung.

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