

Open Letter to the Governments of the World to Support the Work of Atrocity Prevention during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Governmental Partners in Prevention,

As we remember the victims of past genocides and other mass atrocities over the course of Genocide Awareness Month this April, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the world that are dedicated to the prevention of such crimes are urging you to continue supporting our shared mission during the global COVID-19 Pandemic.

This global emergency will hit the world's vulnerable and most marginalized hardest. The crisis also threatens the future of many of the very organizations that serve to prevent and protect those people from persecution and mass atrocities. As experts in the prevention of these terrible crimes we urge governments around the world to show foresight in recognizing these risks, and leadership by supporting their domestic and international NGOs to meet this unprecedented challenge together.

Our organizations are acutely aware of the destabilization and uncertainty brought about by global crises. They can have a devastating effect on societies, placing extraordinary pressure on the institutions that prevent social upheaval while exacerbating the risk factors that make atrocities and the targeting of identity groups more likely. As the virus spreads, vulnerable groups are put in greater jeopardy in all regions of the world underlining that the prevention of identity-based violence is needed everywhere and at all times. However, these processes have increasingly worse impacts in societies that are already otherwise fragile or vulnerable. In these scenarios, society-wide crises like this pandemic can serve as a trigger or as justification for mass violence.

Furthermore, these are not dynamics that function independently of one another. Just as the instability of this global pandemic elevates risk for mass violence, so too would an outbreak of mass violence have a confounding effect on our collective capacity to counter COVID-19. Likewise, integrating conflict-sensitive approaches into responses to the pandemic and its consequences will help mitigate COVID-19-related hate and identity-based violence.

Our shared responsibility of preventing genocide and other mass atrocities continues to be as essential as it has ever been.

The critical nature of government support for and participation in the work of atrocity prevention by NGOs cannot be understated. It is only with your continued funding and engagement that we may remain effective in protecting those most vulnerable in our societies from mass atrocities during this time of heightened risk.

Governments of the world can take the following actions to ensure atrocity prevention efforts not only remain robust, but may also be expanded in this period of great need:

1. Provide emergency general operating support to atrocity prevention NGOs to allow us to continue our essential work;
2. Fund programming to address risk factors for mass atrocities that are accelerated by the pandemic and its consequences;
3. Provide easy to access, quick release funds for smaller NGOs and community-led responses to elevated risk factors of identity-based violence and mass atrocities;
4. Support the types of programming that we are able to implement in the midst of the pandemic, including, but not limited to, establishing new means of communication, network building, and delivery; online education courses, research projects and technical assistance programs; innovative cross-sector programming that sees the integration of atrocity prevention into COVID-19 responses; and
5. Make flexible provision within all grants to enable atrocity prevention NGOs to accommodate the new reality of working in a period of restricted movement, high levels of staff absence, and amid a period of collective as well as individual grief.

Even with the pressing concern of a global pandemic, now is not the time for state actors to turn their attention and funding away from atrocity prevention. In fact, now is the moment to prioritize this work, placing it at the top of the policy agenda. The pandemic, with its potential to serve as a trigger for mass violence, makes atrocity prevention more urgent than ever.

We thank you for your partnership in this shared mission.

**Auschwitz Institute for the
Prevention of Genocide
and Mass Atrocities**

New York, Oświęcim,
Buenos Aires, and Kampala

Genocide Alert

Berlin

Protection Approaches

London

**Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility
to Protect** Brisbane

Atrocity Forecasting Project Canberra

Aware Girls Pakistan

Beni Peace Forum Democratic Republic of Congo

**Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity
Prevention, Binghamton University (I-
GMAP)** Binghamton, New York

**International Coalition for the
Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP)** New York

Invisible Children Washington, D.C.

The Jo Cox Foundation London

Bureau de Soutien pour la Consolidation de la Paix en RDC (BS-RDC) Democratic Republic of Congo

Burma Campaign UK London

Canadian Centre for the Responsibility to Protect Toronto

Cardozo Law Institute in Holocaust and Human Rights (CLIHHR) New York

Center for Peacebuilding Sanski Most, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Center for the Study of Democracy Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Center for the Study of Jewish History in Romania Bucharest, Romania

Centre Résolution Conflits (CRC) Democratic Republic of Congo

Citizens for Global Solutions Washington, D.C.

Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES) Buenos Aires and Panamá

Department of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Keene State College Keene, New Hampshire

The Educators' Institute for Human Rights (EIHR) Washington, D.C.

European Centre for the Responsibility to Protect Leeds

Fondation Chirezi (FOCHI) Democratic Republic of Congo

Fundación Luisa Hairabedian Buenos Aires, Argentina

Fundația Noi Orizonturi Lupeni Romania

Justice Access Point Uganda

Local Initiative for Peace and Protection Beni North Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of Congo

Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (MIGS) Montreal

National Partnership of Children and Youth in Peacebuilding (NPCYP) Democratic Republic of Congo

Nobody's Listening London

Peace Direct London

Peace Forum Africa Kampala

Peace Initiative Network Kano, Nigeria

Rights for Peace London

Roma National Council (RNV) Croatia

Society for Threatened Peoples Göttingen, Germany

Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice London

Stanley Center for Peace and Security United States

Sustainable Peace and Development Organization (SPADO) Pakistan

Syria Solidarity UK

Tattaunawa Roundtable Initiative (TRICentre) Jos, Nigeria

Union des Juristes Engagés pour les Opprimés, la Paix et le Développement (UJEOPAD RDC) Democratic Republic of Congo

Free Yezidi Foundation Amsterdam, New York,
Duhok

Waging Peace London

Fundația Danis Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Yazda Lincoln, Houston, Duhok, Baghdad, et al.

**Global Centre for the Responsibility to
Protect** New York

**World Federalist Movement – Institute for
Global Policy (WFM-IGP)** New York and The
Hague

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust United
Kingdom

**“Impreuna” Agency for Community
Development** Bucharest, Romania

If you would like to add the support of your organization to this open letter, please contact the
Auschwitz Institute (inquiries@auschwitzinstitute.org), Genocide Alert, or Protection
Approaches.