

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 23, 2012

**Fact Sheet: A Comprehensive Strategy and New Tools to Prevent and Respond to Atrocities**

*Preventing mass atrocities and genocide is a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States. Our security is affected when masses of civilians are slaughtered, refugees flow across borders, and murderers wreak havoc on regional stability and livelihoods. America's reputation suffers, and our ability to bring about change is constrained, when we are perceived as idle in the face of mass atrocities and genocide. Unfortunately, history has taught us that our pursuit of a world where states do not systematically slaughter civilians will not come to fruition without concerted and coordinated effort.*

-Presidential Study Directive 10, August 4, 2011

President Obama has made the prevention of atrocities a key focus of this Administration's foreign policy.

The Obama Administration has amassed an unprecedented record of actions taken to protect civilians and hold perpetrators of atrocities accountable. These include:

- Leading international efforts to bring pressure to bear on the abusive Qadhafi and Asad regimes through the formation of Groups of Friends, the imposition of extensive sanctions, support for the opposition, and support for efforts to bring perpetrators of atrocities to justice;
- Leadership in securing the passage of UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973, which authorized – in an unprecedented combination of measures – referral of the situation in Libya to the International Criminal Court, an arms embargo, a no-fly zone, comprehensive sanctions against the Qadhafi regime that preserved Libya's wealth for its people, and a mandate for the protection of civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack;
- Leadership of a successful international military effort to protect civilians in Libya;
- Spearheading the international effort to ensure a peaceful and orderly referendum and facilitate the independence of South Sudan;
- Supporting regional efforts to counter the Lord's Resistance Army and apprehend Joseph Kony, including by sending military advisers to Central Africa;

- Working with regional and international partners – including UN peacekeepers on the ground – to help protect civilians and bring about the end of a violent electoral standoff in Cote d’Ivoire;
- Helping secure the creation of commissions of inquiry to investigate alleged gross violations of human rights (in Cote d’Ivoire, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, and Syria);
- Engaging intensively to support the capture of priority figures wanted by international tribunals (including Goran Hadzic and Ratko Mladic);
- Leading efforts to combat sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) through creating the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security; launching innovative pilot programs to prevent such violence and expand access to justice for victims in Kenya, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and supporting the appointment of a dedicated special representative position on SGBV in the UN Secretariat;

President Obama also recognizes that in order to counter atrocities more effectively, the U.S. government must prioritize this effort, strengthen and expand the tools available to us, and establish a level of organization that matches our commitment. In 2010, he created the first-ever White House position dedicated to preventing and addressing war crimes and atrocities. And in August 2011, he issued Presidential Study Directive 10 (PSD-10), declaring the prevention of mass atrocities and genocide to be a “core national security interest and core moral responsibility” of the United States, ordering the creation of a whole-of-government Atrocities Prevention Board (APB), and directing the National Security Advisor to lead a comprehensive review to assess the U.S. government’s anti-atrocity capabilities, and recommend reforms that would fill identified gaps in these capabilities.

President Obama announced today that he has approved the recommendations generated by the review, and he has directed his Administration to take a range of steps to strengthen the U.S. government’s ability to foresee, prevent, and respond to genocide and mass atrocities, including:

- **The APB will help the U.S. government identify and address atrocity threats, and oversee institutional changes that will make us more nimble and effective.** Because strong organization and a whole-of-government approach is needed to counter atrocities effectively, the APB will include representatives of the Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, Justice, and Homeland Security, the Joint Staff, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Office of the Vice President--all of whom are at the Assistant Secretary level or higher and have been appointed by name by their respective Principals. The APB will meet at least monthly to oversee the development and implementation of atrocity prevention and response policy, and additionally on an ad hoc basis to deal with urgent situations as they arise. The Chair of the APB will be the NSS Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights. To ensure

senior-level visibility into the work and progress the APB is making, the Deputies will meet at least twice a year, and Principals once a year, to review the work of the APB, and the Chair will report on this work annually in a memorandum to the President. After six months of operations, the Chair (in consultation with the Board) will begin preparation of a draft Executive Order for consideration by the President that will, as appropriate, publicly set forth the structure, functions, priorities, and objectives of the Board, provide further direction for its work, and include further measures for strengthening atrocity prevention and response capabilities as identified in the course of the Board's work.

- **The intelligence community will collect and analyze information that allows us to better anticipate, understand, and counter atrocity threats:**
  - National Intelligence Estimate: The APB will monitor the National Intelligence Council's preparation of the first-ever National Intelligence Estimate on the global risk of mass atrocities and genocide.
  - Congressional Reporting: The APB will also work with the Director of National Intelligence to include information about mass atrocity threats in his annual threat assessment testimony before Congress.
  - Increased Collection and Analysis: The intelligence community will work internally and with our foreign partners to increase the overall collection, analysis, and sharing of information relating to atrocity threats and situations.
- **Our diplomats will encourage more robust multilateral efforts to prevent and respond to atrocities.** An effective atrocity prevention and response strategy – in which burdens are appropriately shared by other nations – will require cultivating deeper and broader support among our bilateral partners, as well as international and regional organizations:
  - Diplomatic Initiative: The United States will engage with countries and other stakeholders around the world to expand and deepen international commitment and capacity to prevent and respond to atrocities.
  - Peacekeeper Training: The United States will update our training programs for UN peacekeepers to focus on enhanced techniques for civilian protection, including prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.
  - UN System Capacity: The United States will work with the United Nations to strengthen UN capacity for conflict prevention and crisis management, including

through preventive diplomacy and mediation, especially when UN missions encounter escalating atrocity threats.

- Regional Capacity: The United States will also work with our partners to build the capacity of regionally-based organizations to prevent and respond to atrocities.
  
- **We will deploy new tools that the Obama Administration has developed:**
  - New Kinds of Targeted Sanctions: The President yesterday signed an Executive Order that authorizes sanctions and visa bans against those who commit or facilitate grave human rights abuses via information technology (“GHRVITY sanctions”) related to Syrian and Iranian regime brutality. This novel sanctions tool allows us to sanction not just those oppressive governments, but the companies that enable them with technology they use for oppression and the “digital guns for hire” who create or operate systems used to monitor, track, and target citizens for killing, torture, or other grave abuses.
  - Denying Entry to the United States: DHS and State will use the President’s visa ban on human rights abusers issued last August alongside other legal tools to deny perpetrators of serious violations of human rights or humanitarian law, or other atrocities, entry to the United States.
  
- **And we will add new tools and expanded capabilities to our arsenal:**
  - Civilian Surge: State and USAID will increase the ability of the United States Government to “surge” specialized expertise in civilian protection on a rapid response basis in crisis situations.
  - Lessons Learned: Departments and agencies will compile after action “lessons-learned” reports (of the sort already performed by the U.S. Armed Forces) to record key innovations, areas of success, and issues requiring future work in the area of atrocity prevention and response.
  - Awards for Innovation: USAID will, together with co-funder Humanity United, issue a “Tech Challenge for Atrocity Prevention” that will invite ideas – and award grants – for innovative technologies that strengthen the U.S. government’s capacity for early warning, prevention, and response with respect to mass atrocities. USAID will also issue a “Grand Challenge for Development” that will provide major investments – and leverage those investments with global

partners – to bring to scale innovative tools, policy initiatives, and advocacy efforts that will strengthen efforts to prevent and respond to mass atrocities.

- Financial Levers: Treasury will position itself to more quickly use its financial tools to block the flow of money to abusive regimes and will explore with international partners the use of additional financial measures for preventing and responding to atrocities.
  
- **We will make our military and civilian workforce better equipped to prevent and respond to atrocities:**
  - Military:
    - DOD will further develop operational principles (i.e., doctrine) and planning techniques specifically tailored around atrocity prevention and response. The Joint Staff has prepared an appendix on mass atrocity response operations to be included in its Joint Publication on Peace Operations. This document will help ensure that forces have the training and knowledge to succeed in atrocity prevention missions.
    - Geographic combatant commands will incorporate mass atrocity prevention and response as a priority in their planning, activities and engagements.
    - DOD will routinely organize exercises incorporating mass atrocity prevention and response scenarios to test operational concepts supporting mass atrocity prevention and response.
    - DOD will continue to develop more agile planning processes and tools so options can be developed quickly in emergency situations.
    - The faculty from the service academies will meet at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum at the end of May 2012 to discuss how to incorporate mass atrocity and genocide prevention into their curricula.
  
  - Government-wide:
    - All departments and agencies that have a role in atrocity prevention and responses have been directed to begin to develop curricula and programs to train military and civilian personnel in civilian protection and atrocity prevention.

- These departments and agencies have also been directed to create performance incentives for work contributing to atrocity prevention.
- **We will hold accountable perpetrators of mass atrocities and genocide and support others who do the same:**
  - Denying Impunity in the United States: DOJ, DHS, and State will develop proposals that would strengthen the United States Government's ability to prosecute perpetrators of atrocities found in the United States, and permit the more effective use of immigration laws and immigration fraud penalties to hold accountable perpetrators of mass atrocities.
  - Denying Impunity Abroad: The U.S. government will support national, hybrid, and international mechanisms (including, among other things, commissions of inquiry, fact finding missions, and tribunals) that seek to hold accountable perpetrators of atrocities when doing so advances U.S. interests and values, consistent with the requirements of U.S. law. State, DOJ, and DHS will develop options for assisting with witness protection measures and providing technical assistance in connection with foreign and international prosecutions. And we will continue to work with Congress to expand State's authority to make reward payments for information that leads to the arrest of foreign nationals indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide by international, hybrid, or mixed criminal tribunals.
- **And we will ensure that key decision-makers receive early warning and hear dissenting views.** To ensure that information about potential or ongoing atrocities reaches key decision makers in a timely way, departments and agencies will be required to have "alert channels" that will allow individuals to share relevant unreported information about mass atrocities with the APB – including analysis or reporting that a superior may have blocked from being disseminated – without adverse professional consequences. Comparable procedures within the National Security Staff will ensure that information about atrocity threats and situations, reaches the President.