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UK Civil Society Mass Atrocity Prevention Working Group  
c/o Protection Approaches  
Floor 2, Ilford House  
133-135 Oxford Street  
London  
W1D 2HY



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

Minister of State

13 February 2019

*Dear Members of the Working Group*

Thank you for your letter of 10 December to the Foreign Secretary about the Foreign Affairs Committee's (FAC) report 'Global Britain: The Responsibility to Protect and Humanitarian Intervention' and recommendation that the UK should produce an atrocity prevention strategy. I am replying as Minister of State responsible for human rights policy and matters relating to the UN and conflict prevention.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) leads on policy aspects of Atrocity Prevention, and our Director Multilateral Policy is the UK's Focal Point for the Responsibility to Protect. I also have Ministerial oversight of our Mass Atrocity Prevention policy. The FCO works very closely with the Department for International Development (DFID) on programmatic aspects of Atrocity Prevention, and with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) on the security/defence angles.

The UK has a number of priority areas, which contribute to inclusive and stable environments. This includes Women, Peace and Security, Girls' Education, Children & Armed Conflict, the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, Modern Slavery, Freedom of Religion or Belief, and one that the Foreign Secretary mentioned in his recent speech at the Policy Exchange 'Freedom of the Media'. Given the maturity of our work on Atrocity Prevention (AP), we do not believe it makes sense to divert finite resources away from these initiatives to a new strategy at this time. A new strategy would be more appropriate for a new, untested policy initiative, which had not yet fully developed. We have moved beyond that stage and AP is now firmly embedded in the day-to-day work across our internationally facing Departments.

Atrocities can occur in and around armed conflict, and often the best way to prevent atrocities can be to prevent conflict, and the recurrence of atrocities in countries that have previously suffered atrocities or conflict. The best course of action is to try to mitigate possible atrocities by integrating AP into the UK's overall approach to conflict prevention (CP). Her Majesty's Government activity includes:

- **Early warning mechanisms** that highlight an increased risk of mass atrocities occurring. The UK's approach starts with early warning, using various tools such as the Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) mechanism, used to underpin the National Security Council Strategies. The JACS was introduced by the Building Stability Overseas Strategy in 2011 as a tool to strengthen cross-government approaches to tackling overseas conflict and instability and to identify the situation-specific interventions that will be most likely to succeed in helping to prevent conflict and build stability.

With the help of these and other tools, including our global network of embassies and strong international partnerships, the UK is able to identify countries and regions at risk of instability and conflict where mass atrocities might occur.

- **Diplomatic engagement** plays a crucial role in helping to prevent atrocities and conflict through field visits, shuttle diplomacy and the use of international fora. FCO geographical teams take the lead and work closely with DFID and other Government departments to decide how best to respond to developments on the ground.

We will use diplomacy to highlight our concerns, bilaterally with the country concerned, multilaterally through the EU, United Nations (UN), likeminded groups and others. There is the opportunity to use our influence in the UN Security Council, General Assembly and Human Rights Council; monitoring missions; confidence-building measures and facilitation, including election monitoring; mediation, and assistance with the implementation of peace agreements; Universal Periodic Review; and more coercive measures, such as sanctions (diplomatic, travel bans, asset freezes, arms embargoes, and commodity interdiction).

- The UK's substantial **development budget** is a key component of the Government's effort to reduce conflict and build stability overseas. More than 50% of DFID's budget is spent in fragile and conflict affected states. The work that we support seeks to address the root causes of conflict and drivers of instability through tackling corruption, promoting good governance, improving access to security and justice and inclusive economic development. DFID is about to allocate up to £5 million towards strengthening civil society capacity to predict identity-based violence, including mass atrocities.
- **Defence tools** as set out in the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) 2015. We also have the ability to use these tools, including the armed forces, to strengthen the rules-based international order including through conflict prevention and capacity building, support to humanitarian assistance and disaster response, and conducting operations to restore peace and stability.
- A cross-government **Conflict, Stability and Security Fund** harnesses resources and expertise from across 12 government departments to deliver security, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and stability activity to help countries become safer and more secure. The recently published 2017/18 Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) Annual Report (available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conflict-stability-and-security-fund-annual-report-2017-to-2018>) includes many examples of where its projects are having an impact.

*Yours Sincerely*

*Tariq Ahmad*

**LORD (TARIQ) AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON**

Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN

Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict

Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief