



OFFICE OF THE UN  
SPECIAL ADVISER ON THE

## PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE

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The Special Adviser acts as a catalyst to raise awareness of the causes and dynamics of genocide, to alert relevant actors where there is a risk of genocide and to advocate and mobilize for appropriate action.

### Understanding genocide

Genocide is the deliberate destruction of a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, in part or in whole.

Genocide often occurs in societies in which different national, racial, ethnic or religious groups become locked in identity-related conflicts. However, it is not the differences in identity per se that generate conflict, but rather the gross inequalities associated with those differences, in terms of access to power and resources, social services, development opportunities and the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms.

Given that no country is perfectly homogeneous, genocide is a truly global challenge. Genocide may occur in times of peace, where groups are intentionally subject to long term policies affecting their ability to exist as an identity group as well as in the context of both intra-state and inter-state conflicts.

### Preventing genocide

As stipulated in the Outcome Document of the 2005 United Nations World Summit, the duty to prevent and halt genocide and mass atrocities lies first and foremost with the State. However, the international community has a responsibility to encourage and assist States in fulfilling this responsibility, and to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other means to protect populations from these crimes. If a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take collective action to protect populations, in accordance with the UN Charter.

If the root causes of genocide revolve around inequalities between identity-groups, preventing genocide begins with ensuring that all groups within society enjoy the rights and dignity of belonging as equal citizens. Early prevention therefore becomes a challenge of good governance and equitable management of diversity. That means eliminating gross political and economic inequalities, and promoting a common sense of belonging on equal footing.

In this regard, the Special Adviser's work complements the core mission and work of the UN system as a whole. UN agencies, departments and programs contribute to preventing genocide by, inter alia, supporting equitable economic development and the fair distribution of political power; promoting tolerance and respect for ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, and the protection of human rights; providing humanitarian assistance; and interceding to ensure peace, security and stability.

### OSAPG Mandate

The Office works to strengthen the role of the United Nations in preventing genocide and other mass atrocities by:

- » **Raising awareness:** Creating knowledge and raising awareness about genocide and other mass atrocities and the Office's mandate;
- » **Alerting:** Collecting information on massive and serious violations of human rights and international

humanitarian law; acting as a mechanism of early warning to the Secretary-General;

- » **Advocacy:** Making recommendations to the Secretary-General on actions to prevent or halt genocide and other mass atrocities.

### **OSAPG Methodology: Analysis Framework**

The Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide has developed an Analysis Framework which it uses to determine whether there may be a risk of genocide in a given situation. The Office encourages other institutions and organizations to adopt this framework in their analysis of the risk of genocide.

The following eight factors cumulatively increase the risk of genocide:

- » Tense inter-group relations, including a record of discrimination and/or other human rights violations committed against a group;
- » Weak institutional capacity to prevent genocide, such as the lack of an independent judiciary, ineffective national human rights institutions, the absence of international actors capable of protecting vulnerable groups, a lack of impartial security forces and media;
- » The presence of illegal arms and armed elements;
- » Underlying political, economic, military or other motivation to target a group;
- » Circumstances that facilitate perpetration of genocide, such as a sudden or gradual strengthening of the military or security apparatus;
- » Acts that could be elements of genocide, such as such as killings, abduction and disappearances, torture, rape and sexual violence, 'ethnic cleansing' or pogroms or the deliberate deprivation of food;
- » Evidence of the 'intent to destroy in whole or in part';
- » Triggering factors, such as elections.

## **OSAPG 2010 Priority Outputs**

### **Raising awareness:**

- » Organize high-level events and public briefings on genocide prevention and the responsibility to protect; develop collaborative relations and consultations with regional organizations;
- » Conduct and disseminate case studies on management of diverse populations;
- » Conduct training seminars for UN staff and Government officials; develop a training manual on genocide prevention; contribute to UN staff induction training.

### **Alerting:**

- » Analyze situations of concern based on Office's Analysis Framework, which identifies factors that, cumulatively, could lead to genocide or mass atrocities; maintain database of information on possible precursors to genocide or other mass atrocities; implement project to define and track dangerous speech, including recommendations to prevent or limit its effect;
- » Engage the General Assembly in an informal, interactive, dialogue on early warning and assessment;
- » Provide timely advice to the Secretary-General and, as appropriate, the Security Council, on situations of concern, through advisory notes and briefings.

### **Advocacy:**

- » Advise the Secretary General on preventive action; convene Under-Secretaries-General in cases of emergency;
- » Mobilize the UN System and other key partners, taking into account the urgency of a situation; follow up to ensure response to and action on recommendations; conduct advocacy missions to countries where the involvement of the Special Adviser is considered of particular value.