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SPECIAL REPORT

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Averting Hell on Earth

Religion and the Prevention of Genocide

About the Report

This report reflects on historic examples of the role of religious resources in supporting and mitigating the outbreak of genocide and mass atrocity. The main recommendations outline ways to counteract the use of religion to incite mass violence and to engage with religious communities in genocide prevention.

The findings in the report are drawn from a symposium held by the United States Institute of Peace's Religion and Peacemaking program in April 2008. This symposium, which brought together leading experts in the field, contributed to the work of the Genocide Prevention Task Force. Susan Hayward is a senior program officer in the Religion and Peacemaking program, which seeks to strengthen and support the unique role of religious communities in zones of conflict to engage in peacemaking.

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Summary

- History demonstrates that religion has often been a destructive social and political force propelling genocide and mass atrocity. Religion has been exploited by perpetrators of violence to legitimate and carry out pogroms and has been used to define stark communal boundaries.
- Although religion has often played a destructive role in episodes of genocide and mass atrocity, religious communities and figures have also served in key opposition roles. For example, religious leaders have sought to rally religious opposition to violence from the pulpit and have protected vulnerable people by offering sanctuary in houses of worship.
- International organizations, governments, and NGOs interested in preventing the outbreak of genocide and mass atrocity should monitor and engage with the religious sector to identify religious narratives and activities that might portend the emergence of mass violence or genocide.
- Those seeking to prevent genocide must also learn how to leverage the inherent power of the religious realm to forestall the emergence of mass violence. Some means to this end include partnering with religious institutions, organizations, and communities to strengthen religious commitment to pro-social norms; offering religious challenges to the moral legitimation of violence; and marshaling religious resources to assist in early warning and response systems.

The episodes of genocide and mass atrocity that plagued the twentieth century are notable for the role religion played—not, unfortunately, in preventing the outbreak or spread of mass violence but rather in legitimizing and propelling it. In too many instances, political actors employed religion to legitimize genocidal policies, and various social actors activated religio-ethical narratives in making the argument for the eradication of a race, religion, or population deemed inferior. Nazi Germany provides one example of the use of religious argument to strengthen the ideological infrastructure of genocide; the Balkans are another.

In other cases, religious institutions and leaders became a part of the engines of genocide, rather than serving as a barrier to its outbreak. For example, the churches in Rwanda, well positioned to witness and respond to an emerging threat, often failed to issue warnings, actively challenge the ideology of ethnic superiority, or mobilize a meaningful civil rebellion against an emerging threat. Instead, a number of Rwandan priests and nuns helped carry out the massacre. And, like the Buddhist monasteries that were taken over by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, some Rwandan churches—those central community gathering places people flock to in times of crisis seeking protection—became execution centers.

The instrumental use of religion by political leaders to legitimate genocide and the employment of religious institutional capacity to carry it out is not the only face of the relationship of religion to genocide, however. The obverse face is the power of the religious sphere to oppose state-sponsored mass atrocity, and the treatment of religion in Cambodia by the Pol Pot regime is instructive. The Khmer Rouge attempted to control and then obliterate the religious sphere, excommunicating or killing nearly all of Cambodia's Buddhist monks. The state was motivated by a communist ideological aversion to religion. But something else was likely in play, namely, political leaders' recognition that the Buddhist monastic community, the *sangha,* with its vast numbers, reach, and authority, posed a threat to the state (a phenomenon demonstrated in 2007 by the mass mobilization of monks in opposition to the ruling junta in Burma/Myanmar). Indeed, in some places and at some moments in history, the religious sector has sought to obstruct genocide and mass atrocity, if in limited ways, by mobilizing opposition and challenging attempts to bestow moral blessing on mass violence. The vital question this report seeks to answer is, how might these modest efforts have been strengthened?

Religion's Role: Preventing or Commissioning Genocide?

The global community has become committed, at least in word (if not deed), to the prevention of genocide and mass atrocity. The position of the global community was underscored by then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in an address to the 2004 Stockholm International Forum on Genocide when he said, "There can be no more important issue, and no more binding obligation, than the prevention of genocide."[1]

Elie Wiesel has noted that "one of the most troubling, if not disconcerting, aspects of the debate on genocide is that in almost every case, it could have been prevented."[2] Genocides do not transpire without carefully devised plans implemented strategically and visibly over a period of time. Analysts seeking to understand genocide have tried to determine whether there are particular recognizable cocktails of social, political, and economic dynamics in which those plans for mass atrocity and genocide are born and developed, and to clarify early indicators of emerging genocide.[3] If such could be identified, it would help those inside and outside a particular environment recognize when preventative action was urgently needed. Put another way, international community and local activists recognize that if they want to know how to stem the tide of genocide before lives are lost, it is vital first to understand what creates the conditions for mass atrocities and how genocide unfolds.

Religion is one dimension that seems to have contributed to the outbreak of genocide in the ancient and recent past by creating zero-sum identity boundaries, legitimizing genocidal political policies, and lending its institutional capacity to the organization and execution of genocide. This report on religion and genocide prevention, therefore, looks first at how religion has contributed to genocide and similar forms of mass atrocity. (It does not conclude that the means to prevent genocide lies in the suppression of the religious realm, however.) Why have some politicians worked so hard to cloak genocidal political policies in religious piety and appeals to primordial mission? Why do some state institutions, bent on

authoritarianism, strive to suppress, manipulate, or control religious authority and institutional power? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that as much as religion can impel and legitimize political pogroms, so too can it disrupt and prevent them. Perhaps states bent on genocidal destruction have learned something that peacemakers are only now rediscovering: the religious realm is powerful. Any organization intent on preventing genocide and mass atrocity that ignores this fact not only forgoes an association with a powerful ally, but also risks handing over the power of the religious realm to those with more nefarious agendas.

As much as religion can impel and legitimize political pogroms, so too can it disrupt and prevent them.

This report reviews religion's role in commissioning genocide and mass atrocity as a means of discerning how to disrupt it through programs in which governments, international organizations, and other interested activists, both religious and secular, might engage. A second goal of the report is to understand what religious resources can be mobilized not only to interdict genocide and mass atrocity but to prevent their emergence in the first place. As examples, institutional capacity can be marshaled to provide an early warning system; theological language and moral imperative can be directed to shape cultural and political norms within and between communities and states; and interreligious initiatives can be launched to strengthen social connections between communal groups, which should help prevent the easy manipulation of group differences to propel acts of mass violence in the future. In short, enrolling religious leaders, scholars, communities, ideas, and institutions in the work of preventing genocide and mass atrocity should occupy a more central position in the endeavors of governments and peacemakers, and there are specific steps that can be taken to achieve this end.

Historical Examples

Religion and Violence

Several historical examples can be adduced to illustrate how religion has propelled genocide over the millennia. Ancient history is rife with attempts to destroy particular populations based on their religous identity. In the Middle Ages, Christian powers in Europe repeatedly sought to purge non-Christians from the local population. The Peace of Augsburg in 1555, which declared that populations were to adhere to the religion of their ruling prince, led to further violent expulsions.[4] The arrival of Europeans in the Americas in the fifteenth century ushered in the mass extermination of native populations over several centuries, often with the blessing and on the order of Christian religious authorities.

In the modern era, the Holocaust provides a lasting example of religious identity marking a communal divide and serving as a warrant for genocide. In Nazi-ruled Germany, a number of German Lutheran churches provided theological support for the persecution of Jews. Prominent theologians endorsed an inherently anti-Semitic "Aryan Christianity" that sought a redemptive cleansing of Jewish influence from Christian practice and theology and portrayed Jesus as an Aryan seeking the destruction of Judaism.[5] Some Christian leaders held Jews responsible for killing Jesus, arguing further that the contemporary Jewish community was a threat to Christianity. The centrality of this theological project in German Christian life was underscored by the establishment of the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Christian Life in 1939. In the work of excluding Jews, many prominent and influential Christian theologians actively sought to marry Christianity with National Socialism, or religious ideology and ethic with nationalist political ideology and ethic. Of course, not all German Christian theologians and clergy were guilty of providing ideological, mythic, and ethical fodder to Nazism. However, a great number in Germany, and in Europe more broadly, were either sympathetic to the Nazi cause or fell silent out of fear or apathy.

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Religion can play a role in galvanizing nonreligious identity divides as well, such as those based on race or ethnicity. In Rwanda, some in the Catholic Church can be held responsible not just for contributing to the evolution of a divisive ethnic politic but, more ominously, for actively participating in carrying out the genocide. As the scholar Timothy Longman has argued, Belgian and French Christian missionaries perpetuated the colonial project of starkly defining and dividing the local population into Tutsi and Hutu.[6] The Catholic Church, by shifting its allegiance between the two groups in response to the frequently changing balance of power, then helped solidify ethical divides and mutual antagonism. During the genocide itself, some churches, centrally located community gathering places to which many Tutsis ran for refuge, became slaughterhouses. The killing was sometimes abetted by parish priests and nuns, many but not all Catholic, who have since been indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for their role in alerting militias to Tutsis seeking sanctuary in churches.

Finally, in Bosnia, the scholar Michael Sells has argued that the Serbian state drew on religio-mythic rhetoric, imagery, and ritual, reenacting in contemporary times a Serbian myth of the nation's defeat by the Ottoman Empire six centuries earlier.[7] Some Serbian bishops enthusiastically encouraged Milosovic's nationalist program, and military planning was occasionally conducted, and massacres ritualistically celebrated, in the churches. In the nationalist mythic narrative, the Serbs defined themselves as historical victims and drew heavily on martyr worship to promote their program of just retaliation for historical grievance. As history was collapsed into the present, a powerful and violent "intertwining of religion and nationalism, a confusion of history with myth, faith with vengeance, and a collective national memory densely populated with images of martyrdom and sacrifice, war and massacre" fed a seething cauldron that produced the deaths of thousands of non-Serbs.[8]

Several lessons can be drawn from these examples. First and most basic, religion was a fuel to sharpen communal identity divides that became enemy demarcation lines. Second, religion in the cases of Nazi Germany and late twentieth-century Serbia provided mythological-historical narratives that shored up a sense of exclusivity, an identity of victimhood (often reaching far back into history to embrace stories of past abuse by the target community), and a perception of threat from other communities that rationalized collective aggression against them. Religious argument was used as part of a propaganda campaign to galvanize the masses and argue morally for the eradication of an enemy. Prejudice was sanctified through religious argument, myth, and ritual practice. Finally, institutional resources—churches and theological research centers—were utilized to blend religious and political ideology into a potent cocktail.

For myriad political, economic, and religious reasons, as well as concern for personal security, high-ranking clergy partnered with high-level political elites, granting religious legitimacy to political power and programs and helping to ensure complacency or support from their followers.[9] All of this helped create the soil in which genocide took root. In fact, religion's marriage to ethno-nationalism in these examples, the scholar David Little has argued, made conflict resolution and efforts to prevent its devolution into mass violence all the more challenging: stakes were raised, passions inflamed, commitments to a cause emboldened, and ultimate justifications for violence rendered.[10] As Yehuda Bauer, a prominent analyst of genocide, has noted, when elites who are committed to eradicating a community rise to power, they will likely be able to pursue their agenda if they are not checked by a popular resistance movement and are able to psychologically capture the intelligentsia, including religious leaders and scholars.[11] Marshaling the support of society's sustainers of guiding social ideologies and repressing popular opposition gives those with power the means and warrant to undertake atrocious pogroms. An important ingredient for both, as seen in these examples, was the attaining of some degree of influence over, or support from, the powerful religious realm.

Religion and Resistance

Religion does much more than serve negatively to reinforce violence, however. In conflict environments, there are always competing religious narratives. Some religious and social actors employ religion to strengthen, directly or indirectly, the hand of those wielding the machete; others use religious resources to motivate and organize nonviolent resistance and moral opposition. As important as it is to grapple with the negative impact of religion, and particularly with how it has been used to incite violence, it is equally important to observe the constructive power of religion in historical examples in order to better understand how religion's power might be employed to protect citizens against mass atrocity.

In Germany, Serbia, and Rwanda, clergy and places of worship provided authentic refuge where inclusive and humanitarian theologies were articulated. In Germany, some clergy actively resisted the state from within, including Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others in the Confessing Church. The pastor André Trocmé in France led the village Le Chambon-sur-Lignon to resist the Nazis and the Vichy government and protect some five thousand Jews. These resistance pastors drew on religious principles to convince their followers, strengthen their resolve, address their fears, and define their movement as morally superior and necessary. In Rwanda, Muslim preachers urged their followers to protect Tutsis, and mosques opened their doors to those fleeing violence. As Islamic scholar and peace practitioner Qamar-ul Huda remarked at a United States Institute of Peace symposium on the topic of religion and genocide, Rwandan imams drew on historical memory and Islamic principles to urge followers to provide refuge to those fleeing violence. In some cases the mosque was used; in others, Muslims opened underground basements to protect themselves, Tutsis, and Hutus. Imams preached sermons reminding the congregation that Prophet Muhammad was a refugee and an orphan and, although he was severely persecuted by various forces, he did not compromise his ethical principles and religious duties. Rwandan imams also reminded Muslims of their own recent history of displacement as religious minorities in the mid-1960s when many were exiled or lost property and jobs. In this way, imams connected their contemporary experiences with sacred memories, a tactic similar to that followed by some religious leaders in Serbia and Germany in placing a religious imprimatur on the use of violence. The imams, in other words, like religious leaders who supported mass atrocity in other places, employed religious resources to generate a response to the genocide occurring in their midst, with the signal difference that their sermons recalled the past to frame constructive and protective action in the present, taking advantage of the sanctuary of their mosques.[12]

A threat to the state program, these voices of religious resistance were ignored or condemned by nationalist political and religious leaders and were insufficiently supported by the international community. Moreover, there may simply have been too few people of faith willing to mobilize in resistance. Nonetheless, the effect of these and other individuals and organizations who acted out of faith in saving thousands and providing moral challenge to destructive genocidal narratives cannot be dismissed. Indeed, they should be pointed to as laying the groundwork for what may have been an opportune base for effective resistance. These faith-based initiatives had the potential to dismantle the ideological foundation on which the architects of genocide built their projects and to reclaim moral legitimacy for nonviolence. Moreover, by leading their congregations and using their institutional resources in acts of collective resistance, the clergy ensured a greater impact of their actions and quite likely a greater degree of protection than they could have achieved by acting alone.

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Engaging Religion in the Prevention of Genocide

Despite these positive counter-examples, these historical moments demonstrate that where the state was becoming increasingly authoritarian and violent, the religious sphere, rather than serving as a check on burgeoning state power, too often provided warrant and its own incitement to violence. A question thus arises: Does the religious sphere have a legal responsibility to marshal its resources to prevent mass violence or serve as a check on increasingly authoritarian state power? And can religious leaders be held legally accountable for promoting theologies that can incite hatred and violence? In the international order, the responsibility to protect citizens ultimately lies with the state. Whether a religious ideology that motivates or justifies genocide can legally be held accountable is a gray area (illustrating the way in which the right to freedom of religious belief sometimes competes with other international standards of equality and pluralism; however, preaching that directly and unequivocally incites violence can qualify as an illegal form of "hate speech"). Certainly a *failure* of the religious sphere to protect citizens or refute destructive ideologies cannot be legally prosecuted. Nevertheless, other forms of accountability can be brought forward, including the moral and theological imperative inherent in faith traditions that commands adherents to speak out and take action against violence and injustice. This impulse toward moral action can be drawn upon and nurtured by engaging religious communities in genocide education and conflict prevention. The concept of a responsibility to protect, reframed within religious traditions, must also consider how to ensure the safety of those religious actors who speak out in condemnation of government and other pro-violence leaders.

When exclusivist religious narratives inciting violence begin proliferating, these narratives must be challenged and addressed immediately through early-response, pre-crisis engagement, and preventive diplomacy.

A lesson is at hand for those seeking to prevent genocide and mass violence. When exclusivist religious narratives inciting violence begin proliferating, these narratives must be challenged and addressed immediately through early-response, pre-crisis engagement, and preventive diplomacy. Secular forms of peacemaking, such as political pressure applied through artful diplomacy or even sanctions, are crucial to preventing the outbreak of genocide. But where religion is used to foment and justify violence, traditional secular processes should be supplemented with religious diplomatic engagement. This engagement should be to the ends of understanding the concerns of religious communities and supporting those influential religious actors who are seeking to strengthen intercommunal peaceful coexistence and to combat violence. This engagement is particularly important in an environment charged with religious fervor, and one in which people of faith interpret their reality and determine their responses in religious terms. That is to say, where religion is motivating strong moral and faith-driven compulsions toward exclusion and violence, a direct challenge should be articulated in the same language, drawing on motivating and resonant religious principles. This tactic seeks to directly transform religious dynamics and turn them from the path of promoting violence.

Myriad religious resources can be engaged in this task, including faith-based organizations providing social assistance at the front lines of emerging conflict, theologies and ethical frameworks that denounce intercommunal violence, and international religious bodies whose reach extends to local religious leadership and that are able to pressure national governments and international bodies. A robust genocide prevention policy must account for these resources and the particular leverage and contributions each brings to the table.

For organizations and governments seeking prevention, regular engagement with religious leadership must become standard practice. In recent decades, many governments and international organizations, particularly in the West, have appeared unable or unwilling to engage with the religious realm as a dedicated component of foreign policy. This abstention needs to be corrected. As demonstrated by the examples offered in this report, as well as by the events of September 11, 2001, the communal and religious violence in Iraq follow-

ing the fall of the Saddam regime, and religious mobilization in support of democracy in Burma/Myanmar, among countless other examples, religion has an impact on political and economic dynamics, which in turn influence international relations. As stated in a 2010 study on the engagement of religion in U.S. foreign policy by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, "Religion is not epiphenomal—a secondary human experience that has no bearing on political developments and that we can therefore ignore. . . . Religion—through its motivating ideas and the mobilizing powers of its institutions—is a driver of politics in its own right."[13] Failure to recognize the religious sphere as a dominant actor in the political arena and the consequent failure to take religious dynamics into account in decision-making, the writers of the study argue, have resulted in severe missteps by the U.S. government in its foreign engagements. Recent actions taken by the U.S. Department of State, USAID, and some foreign ministries in Europe demonstrate a new willingness to engage the religious sector in diplomacy and to find the means to collaborate in tackling particular issues. This development is promising.

Foreign embassies and mission offices should be encouraged to build relationships with a representative group of religious actors in conflict zones. Such associations facilitate monitoring of destructive religious ideology, and help diplomats to understand the needs, concerns, and constraints of religious communities. Moreover, through multireligious engagement, diplomats position themselves to encourage and strengthen pluralism and interreligious relationships, all while finding clergy partners for conflict prevention. These diplomatic efforts must avoid heavy handedness or manipulation of local culture or religion, which would undoubtedly spark a defensive response from local religious leaders and withdrawal of cooperation. For this reason, the focus of this diplomatic effort should be on track II engagement with religious leaders, schools, worship centers, and faith-based organizations to proactively promote religious tolerance and peace. By extending beyond traditional senior elite religious leaders based in urban centers, diplomats will avoid marginalizing women and youth who often may not be situated in traditional religious hierarchies, but play important roles in shaping prevailing religious attitudes and behaviors. Religious communities should be encouraged to study historical instances of mass atrocity and genocide. As religious communities learn more about the historical uses of religion to legitimate and spur episodes of mass atrocity and genocide, they will be better able to recognize and check religious incitement to mass violence in the present. The U.S. National Council of Churches and Genocide Watch instituted a model forum along these lines in November 2007 with a conference titled "Reflection and Responsibility: Seeking Christian Responses to Genocide." Participants discussed the complicity of Christian churches in numerous instances of mass atrocity, including the genocides in Rwanda and Germany, and religious support for the ethnic cleansing of the native population in the United States. A model of self-examination, confession, and repentance led to a collective call to action to create the faith-based Alliance to Abolish Genocide. The intent of the group is to invite other religious traditions to participate in similar reflective practices.

Religious diplomatic engagement can also be helpful for early warning and response. The institutional capacity for early warning among international organizations is still nascent. However, indigenous infrastructure and network systems, including religious leadership and institutional capacity, can be marshaled to fill this gap. Religious leaders are typically present throughout a country, and local leaders are often highly cognizant of political, economic, and social conditions in their communities. They can relay information about local conditions through their institution to central authorities, who in turn can alert international political institutions when conditions conducive to mass atrocity arise. For example, religious leaders in a rural setting in a particular country, recognizing the signs of a deteriorating situation, can send warnings to their national religious leadership in the capital city.

Religious diplomatic engagement can be helpful for early warning and response.

These leaders can in turn convey that information to local or international political leaders and diplomats, who can marshal an early response before violence breaks out. What is needed to make this early warning system operational is training for local religious leadership in monitoring and recognizing the warning signs of political and social instability that can mark the emergence of mass atrocity (additional training can give these leaders the skills to respond to these emerging threats). In addition, trust must be built and partnerships forged between religious and political leaders to create a viable mechanism for relaying information about local conditions in a manner that ensures a swift and proper response.

A framework of religious ideas, institutions, and communities is useful for organizing the general principles and conclusions about the ways in which religious resources can be mobilized in genocide prevention.

Religious ideas: Religious language, ethic, and theology can serve as an ideological challenge to destructive political and religious ideology.

- Theological synergy with international law, such as scriptural precedent for ideas about just leadership, the responsibility to protect, peace, and human rights, can be drawn upon and analyzed in attempts to promote prosocial norms and embed them in a culturally meaningful manner. This effort may spur dedication to the maintenance of these norms by religious communities as well. Especially in deeply religious societies, religious corollaries for human rights claims may resonate more deeply and broaden support for these principles.
- Through programs that promote interreligious reconciliation, religious narrative may surface that brings healing and constructive redress to historical memory and grievance. This should help stymie mutual antagonisms and ensure greater appreciation of and protection for minorities and other communal groups.
- As religious articulations and ideologies that support nonviolence and high-order tolerance as a conflict prevention technique are strengthened, exclusive and violent theologies will find less room to grow and dominate.

Religious institutions: Religion offers an alternative structure for engaging parties in conflict and responding to emerging crises, particularly when states are failing, are unwilling to respond to emerging violence, or are themselves complicit in violence.

- Centers of worship and religious leaders are often diffused throughout countries, including in isolated rural areas, and might be engaged in information gathering, monitoring, and early response.
- Religious networks provide an effective preexisting infrastructure for distributing information, holding meetings, or organizing mobilizations, as demonstrated in the U.S. civil rights movement or in the antiapartheid movement and the subsequent reconciliation process in South Africa.
- Transnational religious institutions may also serve as systems of monitoring, engagement, and lobbying, applying pressure not only to governments and international bodies to respond but also to their own local religious leaders to ensure they do not incite or actively propel violence.

Religious communities and leaders: Religious actors clearly have great influence on social and political dynamics in many parts of the world, shaping grassroots communities' attitudes and behaviors, institutions' priorities, and governmental policies.

- Religious leaders can be powerful partners in conflict prevention and in monitoring and responding to political and social dynamics potentially leading to an outbreak of violence. They have access to and influence with a large swath of grassroots communities and are

in position to mobilize these communities to put pressure on the political structure from below.

- Religious elites may have access to political elites as well, and so can become partners in (or avenues to) pressuring the political realm to abide by international law.
- Many around the world interpret and respond to political dynamics in religious terms. Understanding the interests and dynamics of religious communities through respectful engagement with religious leaders and communities will allow interested organizations a channel by which to understand and influence local dynamics to prevent the outbreak of mass atrocity.

Religion is not a necessary ingredient for genocide or mass atrocity; mass atrocity has been waged under the banner of secular ideologies. Nor should the role of religion in creating either conflict or peace be overstated. A confluence of economic, political, and social factors makes genocide possible. Religion has, however, played a crucial role in many instances. Across the globe today, religion continues to play a commanding role in ongoing conflicts that have the potential to devolve into mass atrocity. Resolving or preventing these violent conflicts and preventing outbreaks of genocide requires a multilateral approach that engages many social, political, and economic realms, of which the religious realm is one important piece.

Recommendations for Religion and Genocide Prevention

The following recommendations reflect the insights developed in this report on the monitoring of religious dynamics with the potential to drive mass violence and the engagement of religious leaders and institutions in preventing genocide and mass atrocity. These recommendations are intended primarily for governments, international organizations, NGOs, and faith-based communities and organizations.

1. **Monitor dynamics in the religious sector**. Because religious dynamics have, in some cases of genocide, been both symptoms of and contributors to emerging mass violence, those interested in preventing genocide should monitor the dynamics within the religious sector. Early warning systems should include monitoring of religious narrative in insecure environments and should take note of the emergence or proliferation of a religious narrative that reflects high levels of existential insecurity, justifies and incites violence, or promotes exclusive ideologies of victimhood that rationalize violence against another group. Religious preaching, religious education, and religious media should all be monitored.
2. **Engage religious leaders and institutions in early warning efforts**. Local religious leaders (clergy and lay) are often cognizant of local social, political, and economic dynamics and may be based in or have access to rural areas that diplomatic missions cannot easily reach or monitor. For this reason, efforts to prevent genocide and mass atrocity should explore ways to engage religious actors and institutions in early warning efforts. NGOs and faith-based groups should offer training to religious leaders in recognizing and conveying warnings of conditions conducive to the outbreak of mass violence. Embassies should invite the consultation of religious actors through an appointed religious attaché in diplomatic missions. Successful current initiatives may be used as springboards to engage religious leadership in development and democracy-building projects.
3. **Include religion experts and liaisons to local religious leadership in joint missions**. Missions undertaken to investigate or respond to mass atrocity such as diplomatic task forces, or as part of humanitarian military interventions or

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peacekeeping efforts, should include persons knowledgeable in or practitioners of the local religion.

4. **Train local religious leadership in conflict resolution and management.** To ensure an on-the-ground, immediate response to the eruption of violence, local clergy and other religious leaders (including women and youth who play leadership roles in their religious communities) should be trained in conflict resolution and management, so that they are better able to help contain violence.

5. **Promote genocide study programs in religious universities**. Experts in religious education should promote genocide study programs, thereby equipping future religious leaders with the knowledge and capacity to understand how genocide manifests, the historical role of religion in fueling or mitigating genocide, and how leaders can assist with genocide prevention in their work. Similarly, religious educational institutions should be encouraged to develop curricula that draw on religious teachings and precedent to promote positive intergroup attitudes and active engagement. Religious traditions have philosophical and theological teachings, values, and stories that correspond to individual human rights and the basic premise of human dignity. When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is examined alongside religious teachings, people of faith are in better position to own these legal proclamations within their traditions.

Dialogue between different religions helps ensure religious identity does not become a source of division justifying communal violence.

6. **Nurture pluralism by promoting active engagement between religions**. Dialogue between different religions helps ensure religious identity does not become a source of division justifying communal violence. Education on world religions should be promoted, and the ethical frameworks within them that nurture nonviolence, peace, and coexistence should be stressed. Interfaith people-to-people and clergy-to-clergy contact should be upheld as a central component of diplomatic efforts at home and abroad, targeting in particular those influential religious leaders (male and female) who help shape public opinion. Efforts to promote healing and reconciliation between and among religious communities should be supported, particularly as a means to address the historical acts of intercommunal violence.

7. **Consolidate and strengthen ongoing multilateral interreligious programs**. Programs conducted under the auspices of the United Nations and other international organizations, such as the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and the Alliance for Civilizations, provide a pathway to strengthen international norms of religious pluralism and high-order religious tolerance. Experts or a task force should be commissioned to craft a policy framework to strengthen international norms and bodies related to multireligious tolerance, freedom of worship, and active engagement by various governments and within international organizations.

8. **Ensure that places of worship retain their historical function as refugia**. Many fleeing violence turn to churches, mosques, temples, and other religious venues seeking protection. Places of worship are protected under humanitarian law during warfare (Articles 9 and 16 of the additional protocol II of the Geneva Conventions relating to the protection of victims of noninternational armed conflicts). Efforts should be strengthened to ensure that places of worship continue to offer an inviolate and legitimate refuge for those fleeing violence, and are not co-opted by armed actors.

Notes

An earlier and shorter version of this article, which is based on a presentation to the Regional Forum on the Prevention of Genocide Prevention held by the Argentine and Swiss governments in Argentina in December 2008, was published under the title "Religion and the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocity" in Politorbis Journal 47 (February 2010): 107–14. (The journal is published by the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs, Bern.) The reflections in these articles emerged from a discussion on the topic held at the United States Institute of Peace in April 2008 related to the Genocide Prevention Task Force. Bryan Hehir, Andrea Bartoli, David Little, Qamar-ul Huda, Claude d'Estree, and Joseph Montville presented at this event.

For the purpose of this report, I use the term "mass atrocity," for which genocide is the most egregious example, to reference a severe and high-impact crime of an orchestrated manner against a particular community, seeking its destruction in whole or part, and resulting in a high number of casualties.

1. Available at www.manskligarattigheter.gov.se/stockholmforum/2004/conference_2004.html (accessed February 29, 2010).
2. Elie Wiesel, foreword, in *Preventing Genocide: Practical Steps Toward Early Detection and Effective Action,* by David A. Hamburg (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008), vii.
3. David Hamburg notes that examples of group extermination have been common under the "stress of war, imperial conquest, religious fervor, social upheaval, economic freefall, state failure, or revolution." Preventing Genocide, 10.
4. Ibid., 19.
5. Susannah Heschel, "When Jesus Was an Aryan," in *In God's Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century,* ed. Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack, 79–80 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001).
6. See Timothy Longman, "Church Politics and the Genocide in Rwanda," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 31, no. 2 (May 2001): 163–86.
7. See Michael Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996).
8. Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack, introduction, in Bartov and Mack, *In God's Name,* 7.
9. For more analysis of alliances formed between religious and political elites in a manner that drives conflict, see Alexander de Juan, "A Pact with the Devil?: Elite Alliances as Bases of Violent Religious Conflict," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 31:12 (2008): 1120-1135.
10. Remarks at a symposium, "Religion and the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocity," United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C., April 2008.
11. Yehuda Bauer, "Holocaust and Genocide: Some Comparisons," in *Lessons and Legacies: The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World,* ed. Peter Hayes, 36–46 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991).
12. Qamar-ul Huda, remarks at a symposium, "Religion and the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocity," United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C., April 2008.
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