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# What Congress Can Do to Prevent Global Mass Atrocities

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Recognizing, preventing, and responding to mass atrocities is a priority for U.S. national security and a moral responsibility. Mass atrocities fuel conflict, generate uncontrolled migration, and empower violent extremism, all of which threaten global U.S. security interests. The 2019 Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act mandates annual reports by the White House to Congress. Accordingly, the administration will be required to report on government-led atrocity prevention efforts to Congress in mid-2025. This presents a unique opportunity for Congress to reinforce mass atrocity prevention efforts, hold the White House to its legal obligations, and exercise oversight on implementing agencies, including by asking them to account for how any relevant action taken reinforces international peace and American security.

## Potential Avenues for Congressional Engagement

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**Strengthen atrocity prevention legislation** by expanding the Elie Wiesel Act, other relevant statutes, and country-specific legislation, which can be extremely powerful in mandating the deployment of atrocity prevention tools. The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act and the Burma Act, for example, have successfully promoted accountability for mass atrocities and support for civilians in harm's way.

**Pass a formal authorization for appropriation for atrocity prevention programming** and ensure—through the appropriations process—that sufficient funds are readily available to deliver on atrocity prevention in all thirty of the most at-risk countries designated in the Global Fragility Act 2025 Biennial Progress Report to Congress.

**Strengthen the coordination of a whole-of-government approach,** currently under the responsibility of the White House-led Atrocity Early Warning Task Force, by mandating the White House to reinstate the intelligence interagency working group, increase the frequency of interagency meetings on atrocity prevention, appoint an atrocity prevention senior director to the National Security Council, appoint a competent new U.S. ambassador for global criminal justice and ensure that the functional and operational responsibilities of its office are protected, and appoint atrocity prevention advisers in regional bureaus at the State Department.

**Ensure that budget cuts and reform of federal executive agencies do not hinder U.S.** ability to deliver on legally required atrocity prevention commitments. Lawmakers may leverage the 2025 Department of State Authorization Act to codify this work, and exercise oversight over the dismantling, resizing, reprioritizations, reassignments, and cuts initiated by the White House across the State Department and all federal agencies with responsibilities for atrocity prevention.

**Prioritize atrocity prevention in regular hearings and briefings,** including considering integrating atrocity prevention into confirmation hearings for appointees to question their objectives and priorities on the matter.

### **An Example of Success: Advocating for Uyghurs in Xinjiang**

According to the 2020 Elie Wiesel Congressional Report, the Trump administration used diplomatic engagements and worked through both bilateral and multilateral channels to reaffirm U.S. commitments to atrocity prevention, support Uyghur victims, and publicly denounce perpetrators. The United States raised the issue of human rights abuses against Uyghurs in Xinjiang, China, at several UN Security Council meetings and high-level events during the UN General Assembly. The United States signed joint statements with partner countries condemning the situation in Xinjiang and elevated voices of Uyghur survivors and family testimonies at White House-led events. The Department of State honored Uyghur survivors with awards to bring international attention to repression in China and supported documentation efforts. The United States also imposed Global Magnitsky sanctions on Chinese Communist Party officials for their role in Xinjiang and passed legislation such as the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act.

In the same manner, the first Trump administration successfully leveraged international diplomatic forums and accountability efforts to advance human rights beyond Xinjiang, implementing relevant strategies to address human rights crises in Myanmar, Iraq, South Sudan, Syria, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, among others.

## Opportunities for Country-Specific Atrocity Prevention Engagement

### Ukraine

Continue to support mechanisms seeking to hold perpetrators of war crimes and other atrocities accountable. This includes reinstating U.S. accountability initiatives monitoring and investigating war crimes (including against vulnerable civilians such as children and victims of sexual and gender-based violence), sustaining support to the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group and other initiatives aimed to further strengthen Ukraine's domestic authorities, sustaining law enforcement and judicial cooperation with European jurisdictions and regional mechanisms (including Eurojust), and considering avenues to engage with the special aggression tribunal being established by the Council of Europe.

### Syria

Support reconstruction, documentation, the search for missing persons, transitional justice processes, and international crimes accountability as part of Syria's political transition. Ensure that adequate funding and full cooperation with relevant international mandates and civil society initiatives is forthcoming and sustained.

### Northern Iraq

A resurgent Islamic State continues to threaten stability in the region, while returning foreign terrorist fighters pose a national security threat to the U.S. homeland and to European and other allies. Sustaining law enforcement cooperation with like-minded partners (particularly European jurisdictions carrying out proceedings against former Islamic State members), and with UN investigative / accountability mechanisms, remains imperative to minimize risks associated with the return of foreign terrorist fighters, including those still detained in northern Iraq.

### Myanmar

Continue to support international accountability mechanisms to build prosecution-ready files that preserve evidence to help bring perpetrators to justice.

### Afghanistan

Ensure the protection of vulnerable populations, including Afghan civilians, ethnic minorities, and refugees, and strongly advocate for the protection of the right of Afghan women in accordance with the Women Peace and Security Act.

### Sudan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, and other countries in Africa

Sustain early warning and civilian protection efforts (including for victims of conflict-related sexual violence, other war crimes and as relevant genocide), deter and degrade perpetrators of atrocities (including through appropriate sanctions, arms embargoes, visa bans, and law enforcement operations), and support justice and accountability efforts (both regionally and domestically as relevant) to ensure that perpetrators are apprehended and brought to justice.

### Haiti, Venezuela, and other countries in Central/South America

Ensure proper arrangements to secure and stabilize borders (including the United States' southern border and other cross-country borders within the region), protect civilians at risk, and engage in within-country measures that preserve the human rights and dignity of refugees and internally displaced persons.



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