



FOREWORD: A Call to Action by the Co-Chairs

The year 2008 marks the 60th anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It is also the 20th anniversary of the ratification of this treaty by the United States. As Americans consider our country's role in the world in the years to come, we are convinced that the U.S. government can and must do more to prevent genocide, a crime that threatens not only our values, but our national interests. This report provides a blueprint that can enable the United States to take preventive action, along with international partners, to forestall the specter of future cases of genocide and mass atrocities.

The world agrees that genocide is unacceptable and yet genocide and mass killings continue. Our challenge is to match words to deeds and stop allowing the unacceptable. That task, simple on the surface, is in fact one of the most persistent puzzles of our times. We have a duty to find the answer before the vow of "never again" is once again betrayed.

In recent times, we have seen an upsurge in interest and activism at the grassroots level in the United States, galvanized by the crisis in Darfur and driven in large part by students and faith-based organizations nationwide. Preventing genocide and mass atrocities is a purpose that transcends partisan lines and demands public support at all levels of society.

We seek to honor the memory of past victims of genocide and mass atrocities by encouraging future action. We believe that preventing genocide is possible and that striving to do so is imperative, both for our national interests and for our leadership position in the world.

The fundamental goal of this report is to identify practical steps to enhance the capacity of the U.S. government to prevent and respond to genocide and mass atrocities. We recognize the limitations of time and resources as well as other constraints on policymakers, but we believe that the changes we propose are realistic and necessary to ensure that senior officials have all the information they need to act—and to act in time—when faced with the next potential genocide. We must do better.

We wish to thank all those who contributed to our process, both inside and outside the U.S. government and around the world. We are grateful to our expert group leaders, the members of their teams, the staff from the convening institutions, and the staff from our own offices. We want to express our special thanks to the conveners of this project and to our colleagues on the Genocide Prevention Task Force, whose commitment to this effort was unwavering, and whose wisdom and judgment guided our deliberations on this very difficult subject.

Madeleine K. Albright and William S. Cohen, Co-Chairs