

**Remarks by the President at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** The White House  
April 2012 23

(...) "Never again" is a challenge to nations. It's a bitter truth -- too often, the world has failed to prevent the killing of innocents on a massive scale. And we are haunted by the atrocities that we did not stop and the lives we did not save.

Three years ago today, I joined many of you for a ceremony of remembrance at the U.S. Capitol. And I said that we had to do "everything we can to prevent and end atrocities." And so I want to report back to some of you today to let you know that as President I've done my utmost to back up those words with deeds. Last year, in the first-ever presidential directive on this challenge, I made it clear that "preventing mass atrocities and genocide is a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States of America."

That does not mean that we intervene militarily every time there's an injustice in the world. We cannot and should not. It does mean we possess many tools -- diplomatic and political, and economic and financial, and intelligence and law enforcement and our moral suasion -- and using these tools over the past three years, I believe -- I know -- that we have saved countless lives. (...)

We've stepped up our efforts (...) We're doing more to protect women and girls from the horror of wartime sexual violence. With the arrest of fugitives like Ratko Mladic, charged with ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, the world sent a message to war criminals everywhere: We will not relent in bringing you to justice. Be on notice. And for the first time, we explicitly barred entry into the United States of those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Now we're doing something more. We're making sure that the United States government has the structures, the mechanisms to better prevent and respond to mass atrocities. So I created the first-ever White House position dedicated to this task. It's why I created a new Atrocities Prevention Board, to bring together senior officials from across our government to focus on this critical mission. This is not an afterthought. This is not a sideline in our foreign policy. The board will convene for the first time today, at the White House. And I'm pleased that one of its first acts will be to meet with some of your organizations -- citizens and activists who are partners in this work, who have been carrying this torch.

Going forward, we'll strengthen our tools across the board, and we'll create new ones. The intelligence community will prepare, for example, the first-ever National Intelligence Estimate on the risk of mass atrocities and genocide. We're going to institutionalize the focus on this issue. Across government, "alert channels" will ensure that information about unfolding crises -- and dissenting opinions -- quickly reach decision-makers, including me.

Our Treasury Department will work to more quickly deploy its financial tools to block the flow of money to abusive regimes. Our military will take additional steps to incorporate the prevention of atrocities into its doctrine and its planning. And the State Department will increase its ability to surge our diplomats and experts in a crisis. USAID will invite people and high-tech

companies to help create new technologies to quickly expose violations of human rights. And we'll work with other nations so the burden is better shared -- because this is a global responsibility.

In short, we need to be doing everything we can to prevent and respond to these kinds of atrocities -- because national sovereignty is never a license to slaughter your people. (...)

We recognize that, even as we do all we can, we cannot control every event. And when innocents suffer, it tears at our conscience. (...) (...) Indeed, today we're taking another step. I've signed an executive order that authorizes new sanctions against the Syrian government and Iran and those that abet them for using technologies to monitor and track and target citizens for violence. These technologies should not empower -- these technologies should be in place to empower citizens, not to repress them. And it's one more step that we can take toward the day that we know will come -- the end of the Assad regime that has brutalized the Syrian people -- and allow the Syrian people to chart their own destiny.

Even with all the efforts I've described today, even with everything that hopefully we have learned, even with the incredible power of museums like this one, even with everything that we do to try to teach our children about our own responsibilities, we know that our work will never be done. There will be conflicts that are not easily resolved. There will be senseless deaths that aren't prevented. There will be stories of pain and hardship that test our hopes and try our conscience. And in such moments it can be hard to imagine a more just world.

It can be tempting to throw up our hands and resign ourselves to man's endless capacity for cruelty. It's tempting sometimes to believe that there is nothing we can do. And all of us have those doubts. All of us have those moments -- perhaps especially those who work most ardently in these fields. (...)

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