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Dear party leaders,

We are a group of civil society organisations calling on you to make a clear commitment to preventing atrocity crimes in your next manifesto.

Genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity diminish us all. Inherently unacceptable, they can also affect the UK's security and prosperity through international instability and the threat of terrorism. These crimes can be prevented and it is in the UK's national interest to do so. Evidence on mass rape, for example, shows that it is not an inevitable by-product of conflict. What is needed is a targeted strategy aimed at reducing these risks.

In 2005, UN member states endorsed the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P), which holds that every state is responsible for protecting its populations from atrocity crimes and if they cannot or will not, the international community has a duty to take action. Since then, the principle has informed policy-making and responses on the ground, from UN mediation in Kenya to the creation of a UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan.

However, action on atrocity prevention cannot be restricted to crisis response. Atrocities are not confined to conflicts; they can be indicators, triggers, causes or consequences that occur in pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict situations. Preventing them requires political will, as well as institutional capacity and capability to understand the distinct nature of these crimes and how to address them.

At present, UK strategy to prevent conflict and promote stabilisation, the Building Stability Overseas Strategy, does not mention the prevention of genocide or atrocity crimes as a goal. The UK needs a coherent cross-governmental strategy that places atrocity prevention squarely on the agenda as a goal of stabilisation and conflict prevention policies. This should start with a clear statement that preventing mass atrocities is in the national interest.

This should be an issue on which there is cross-party consensus; preventing atrocity crimes is not a party-political issue. We call on you to commit to R2P in the lead up to the 2015 general election and declare that the prevention of atrocity crimes is not only a strategic national interest but a goal that reflects the UK's humanitarian values.

Yours sincerely,



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Executive Director
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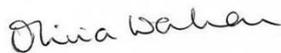
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