

Evidence in response to the International Development Committee (IDC) ‘inquiry to prevent atrocities in Bosnia and beyond’.

About

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Executive Summary

The evidence underlines the complex relationship between development and mass atrocities as it shows fragility, instability and development indicators do not correlate with atrocity risks.¹ It puts forward six key lessons learnt from analyzing thirty-seven countries that have experienced mass atrocities, or had serious concerns raised that they could take place, and Human Development Index data (1990-2020). The key findings show that the vast majority of mass atrocities occur in Medium or Low ranking countries, that mass atrocities are just as likely to occur in Middle ranked countries as Low ranked countries and that many Low ranking countries do not experience mass atrocities. The hope is that the lessons will aid the Committee as it considers *where* and *how* it should focus its efforts.

Context

1. The evidence speaks to the inquiry’s topic of ‘lessons learned in atrocity prevention from Bosnia and other contexts since the 1990s’. It specifically looks at the relationship between [under]development and mass atrocities.
2. This is important because mainstream views often assume that mass atrocities tend to occur in underdeveloped countries. This is often based on studies between civil war and underdevelopment, but civil wars and mass atrocities are different phenomenon. As Savita Pawnday highlighted in the first evidence session, not all mass atrocities occur during conflict.² Furthermore, Dr Kate Ferguson has rightly pointed out that the idea that

¹ The evidence draws on a research article which is forthcoming in *International Relations and Development*.

civil wars lead to mass atrocities fails to take in to account that mass atrocities can lead to civil wars.³ This reveals that the cause-and-effect relationship between conflict and mass atrocities is complicated.

3. On the difference between civil wars and mass atrocities can I highlight the findings of what is one of the very few studies on genocide and civil wars. Francis Stewart found that ‘countries with low per capita incomes present high risks for civil war, intermediate levels of income are most strongly associated with genocide’.⁴ This has policy implications for the recommendations she puts forth as increasing per capita income may reduce the risk of civil war but not genocide ‘where risks are highest at intermediate levels of per capita income’.⁵ As will be evidenced below, the findings here reinforce this view as the author demonstrates that Middle ranked countries (in terms of Human Development Index) are just as likely to experience mass atrocities as Low ranked countries.
4. As the Committee rightfully points out, it is important to learn lessons from Bosnia but also other cases. The evidence looks at the relationship between development and mass atrocities to enable the Committee to consider where and how they should focus their efforts. To do this, it analyses thirty-seven countries that have experienced mass atrocities, or had serious concerns raised that they could take place (between 2000 and 2020), and Human Development Index data (between 1990 and 2020).
5. Table 1 identifies thirty-seven countries that have experienced mass atrocities, or had serious concerns raised that they could take place. The list is an an aggregate of three data sources produced by organizations that specifically focus on mass atrocities, i) the International Criminal Court, ii) the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and iii) the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect.

² Savita Pawnday, House of Commons, International Development Select Committee, ‘Promoting Dialogue and Preventing Atrocities’, January 11, 2022.

³ Kate Ferguson, *Architectures of Violence: The Command Structures of Modern Mass Atrocities*. London: Hurst and Company, p. 191.

⁴ Francis Stewart. ‘The Causes of Civil War and Genocide: A Comparison’, In Lupel A and Verdeja E (eds) *Responding to Genocide: The Politics of International Action*. Boulder: CO: Lynne Rienner, 2013: 47-84, p. 70.

⁵ Francis Stewart. ‘The Causes of Civil War and Genocide: A Comparison’, In Lupel A and Verdeja E (eds) *Responding to Genocide: The Politics of International Action*. Boulder: CO: Lynne Rienner, 2013: 47-84, p. 72.

Table 1. Mass Atrocities (2000-2020).

Afghanistan (2001-on)	Libya (2011-on)
Burkina Faso (2015 -on)	Mali (2013-on)
Burundi (2015-on)	Myanmar (2017 – on)
Cameroon (2016-on)	Nicaragua (2018)
Central African Republic (2013 – on)	Nigeria(2009 – on)
China (2017-on)	Pakistan (2018)
Colombia (2002 – on, 2009 – on)	Palestine (2000 – on)
Cote d'Ivoire (2010-2011)	Philippines (2016-on)
DPRK: North Korea (2000 – on)	Somalia (2007 - on)
Democratic Republic of Congo (2000-on)	South Sudan (2013 – on)
Egypt (2013, 2019)	Sri Lanka (2009)
Eritrea (2005 – on)	Sudan (2003 -on)
Georgia (2008)	Syria (2011- on)
Guinea(2009-2010)	Uganda (2000-, 2014, 2016)
Iraq (2003- on)	Ukraine (2014)
Israel (2008, 2014, 2019)	Venezuela (2017 – on)
Kenya (2007-2008)	Yemen (2015 – on)
Kyrgyzstan (2010)	Zimbabwe (2005, 2008, 2019)
Liberia(1999-2003)	

6. When it comes to the question, ‘what are the key drivers of mass atrocities?’ these remind us that there is no easy answer. The cases reveal a diverse range of factors in terms of geographical location (three continents), actors involved (state and non-state armed groups), regime type (democracies and non-democracies), atrocities in times of ‘peace’ (such as Philippines and North Korea) and atrocities in times of ‘civil war’

(Ukraine, Sudan, and Sri Lanka). Because the focus here is on development, Table 2 drills down into the relationship between development and mass atrocities.

7. For the thirty-seven countries identified in Table 1 above, Table 2 below utilizes Human Development Index data (1990-2020) to provide each country's overall status (Low, Medium, High or Very High), index score (I), and rank for that year (R).⁶ In addition, and in order to help us understand trajectory, the table includes the 'change in HDI rank' for two time periods 2005-2010 and 2014-2019.⁷ If there is no data available, N.D. is inserted.

Table 2. Development and Mass Atrocities

Country	1990	2000	2010	2019	Change in HDI rank 2005-2010	Change in HDI rank 2014-2019
Afghanistan	Low I: 0.302	Low I: 0.350 R: N.D. ⁸	Low I: 0.472 R: 155	Low I: 0.511 R: 169	1	-5
Burkina Faso	Low I: N.D	Low I: 0.293 R:169	Low I: 0.384 R: 161	Low I: 0.452 R:182	0	3
	Low	Low	Low	Low	1	- 5

⁶ The index scores are taken from the HDI data centre (<http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/data/>) but this does not include rankings. They are taken from each individual HDI report.

⁷ The 'change in HDI rank' 2005-2010 is taken from UNDP, 2010, 148-151. The 'change in HDI rank' 2014-2019 data is taken from UNDP 2020a, 347-350. Table One above omits data for the change in HDI rank between 2010-2015 in order to prevent overlap because the 2013 and 2014 data would appear in two columns (2010-2015 and 2014-2019) without us knowing the influence of these years on the overall trend. For the cases that specifically occurred in 2009 and 2010 the analysis below includes the data 2010-2015 which is taken from UNDP 2016, 202-205.

⁸ If there is an index score but no rank this means the country in question was retrospectively given an index score but not ranked. In this case, Afghanistan is classified as an 'other' state in the HDI report of 2000 with no index score or rank given. The index score has, therefore, been included later but no rank was given.

	I: 0.299	I: 0.3 R: 171	I: 0.411 R: 166	I: 0.433 R: 185		
Cameroon	Low I: 0.448	Medium I: 0.44 R: 135	Medium I: 0.505 R: 131	Medium I: 0.563 R: 153	-2	1
Central African Republic (CAR)	Low 0.334	Low I: 0.325 R: 165	Low I: 0.365 R: 159	Low: I: 0.374 R: 188	-1	-1
China	Medium I: 0.499	Medium I: 0.588 R: 96	Medium I: 0.699 R: 89	High I: 0.761 R: 85	8	12
Colombia	High I: 0.603	Medium I: 0.666 R: 68	High I: 0.729 R: 79	High I: 0.767 R: 83	2	2
Cote d'Ivoire	Low I: 0.404	Low I: 0.421 R: 156	Low I: 0.468 R: 149	Low I: 0.538 R: 162	-4	7
North Korea	Medium I: N.D.	N.D Assume Medium	N.D Assume Medium	N.D Assume Medium	N.D	N.D
Democratic Republic of Congo	Low I: 0.369	Low I: 0.349 R: 155	Low I: 0.435 R: 168	Low I: 0.48 R: 175	0	0

(DRC)						
Egypt	Medium I: 0.548	Medium I: 0.613 R: 115	Medium I: 0.668 R: 101	High I: 0.707 R: 116	2	1
Eritrea	N.D.	Low I: 0.421 R: 157	Low I: 0.436 R: N.D.	Low I: 0.459 R: 182	N.D.	-3
Georgia	N.D.	Medium I: 0.69 R: 81	High I: 0.751 R: 74	High I: 0.812 R: 61	-3	7
Guinea	Low I: 0.278	Low I: 0.335 R: 159	Low I: 0.408 R: 156	Low I: 0.477 R: 178	-1	1
Iraq	Medium I: 0.56	Medium I: 0.595 R: N.D.	Medium I: 0.636 R: N.D.	Medium I: 0.674 R: 123	N.D.	4
Israel	High 0.801	High I: 0.861 R: 22	V High I: 0.895 R: 15	V High I: 0.919 R: 22 19	0	1
Kenya	Low I: 0.482	Medium I: 0.461 R: 134	Low I: 0.551 R: 128	Medium I: 0.601 R: 143	-1	-3
Kyrgyzstan	Medium I: 0.64	Medium I: 0.62	Medium I: 0.662	Medium I: 0.697	0	-4

		R: 102	R: 109	R: 122 120		
Liberia	Low I: N.D.	Low I: 0.435 R: N.D.	Low I: 0.455 R: 162	Low I: 0.48 R: 175	2	-3
Libya	Medium I: 0.724	Medium I: 0.78 R: 64	High I: 0.798 R: 53	High I: 0.724 R: 105	3	-4
Mali	Low I: 0.234	Low I: 0.312 R: 164	Low I: 0.408 R: 160	Low I: 0.434 R: 184	2	0
Myanmar	Medium I: 0.350	Medium I: 0.424 R: 127	Medium I: 0.523 R: 132	Medium I: 0.583 R: 147	6	3
Nicaragua	Medium I: 0.497	Medium I: 0.577 R: 118	Medium I: 0.622 R: 115	Medium I: 0.66 R: 128	-2	-3
Nigeria	Low I: N.D.	Low I: N.D. R: 148	Low I: 0.482 R: 142	Low I: 0.539 R: 161	0	-3
Pakistan	Low I: 0.402	Medium I: 0.447 R: 138	Medium I: 0.512 R: 125	Medium I: 0.557 R: 154	-2	2
Palestine	N.D.	N.D.	Medium I: 0.684	Medium I: 0.708	N.D.	-6

			R: N.D.	R: 115		
Philippines	Medium I: 0.593	Medium I: 0.632 R: 77	Medium I: 0.671 R: 97	High I: 0.718 R: 107	-2	3
Somalia	Low	N.D. Assume Low	N.D. Assume Low	N.D. Assume Low	N.D.	N.D.
South Sudan	N.D.	N.D.	Low I: 0.41 R: N.D.	Low I: 0.433 R: 185	N.D.	-3
Sri Lanka	Medium I: 0.629	Medium I: 0.691 R: 89	Medium I: 0.754 R: 91	High I: 0.782 R: 72	0	0
Sudan	Low I: 0.331	Low I: 0.403 R: 139	Low I: 0.469 R: 154	Low I: 0.51 R: 170	-2	-5
Syria	Medium I: 0.55	Medium I: 0.6 R: 108	Medium I: 0.672 R: 111	Low I: 0.567 R: 151	-3	-2
Uganda	Low 0.32	Low I: 0.404 R: 150	Low I: 0.498 R: 143	Low I: 0.544 R: 159	4	2
Ukraine	Medium I: 0.725	Medium I: 0.694	High I: 0.755	High I: 0.779	-3	-1

		R: 80	R: 69	R: 74		
Venezuela	High I: 0.644	Medium I: 0.676 R: 69	High I: 0.757 R: 75	High I: 0.711 R: 113	3	-44
Yemen	Low I: 0.401	Low I: 0.444 R: 144	Low I: 0.506 R: 133	Low I: 0.47 R: 179	8	-16
Zimbabwe	Medium I: 0.478	Medium I: 0.43 R: 128	Low I: 0.482 R: 169	Medium I: 0.571 R: 150	0	1

Lessons Learnt

1. Mass atrocities occur in *each type* of HDI country: Low, Medium, High, and Very High (albeit only one of the latter). For the year 1990, there are data for thirty-three countries.⁹ Of these, seventeen countries are ranked Low, thirteen Medium and three High. For the year 2000 there are data for thirty-two countries as Afghanistan, North Korea, Somalia, and South Sudan are missing but here we insert ‘assumed rankings’ based on their initial classification. This means that we have data for thirty-five countries in total for the year 2000. Breaking these down, there are fifteen Low ranking countries, nineteen Medium ranked countries and one High ranking country (Israel). For the year 2010, there are data for all thirty-seven countries, within which there are eighteen ranked Low, thirteen Medium, five High and one Very High. For the year 2019, there were seventeen ranked Low, ten Medium, nine High and one Very High.
2. The vast majority of atrocity crimes occur in countries that have been recognized as either Low or Medium. In 1990, thirty of the thirty-three countries we have data for were ranked Low or Medium. In 2000, thirty-four of the thirty-five countries we have

⁹ The missing data is for Eritrea, Georgia, Palestine and South Sudan.

data for were ranked Low or Medium. In 2010, thirty-one of the thirty-seven countries were ranked Low or Medium. In 2019, twenty-seven of the thirty-seven were ranked Low or Medium.

3. The lowest ranking countries (bottom twenty) do seem to be disproportionately vulnerable to atrocity crimes. Consider that in 2010 the bottom twenty of the HDI index consisted of Zimbabwe, DRC, Niger, Burundi, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Chad, Liberia, Burkina Faso, Mali, CAR, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Guinea, Afghanistan, Sudan, Malawi, Rwanda, Gambia, and Zambia.¹⁰Fifty per cent of these appear on the list of thirty-seven countries, and seven of these ten went onto experience atrocities between 2010 and 2019.
4. Medium ranked countries are responsible for their fair share of atrocities. Consider that at the turn of the century, there were nineteen Medium countries compared to fifteen Low. By 2010, there were more Low than Medium ranked countries, but this is not because these Medium countries had fallen down the rankings but in fact because five of them (Colombia, Georgia, Libya, Ukraine and Venezuela) had risen to the status of High. Accordingly, in 2010 there were actually more Medium and High-ranking countries (nineteen) than Low (eighteen).
5. If we look at all the countries ranked Very High and High, we can see that people living in the top-ranking countries have a much lower chance of experiencing atrocities. For instance, in 2010, there were 85 countries ranked High or Very High yet only Colombia, Israel, Libya, Ukraine, Venezuela went on to experience atrocities in the following decade.¹¹ Of these, only Israel was ranked Very High with the remaining four ranked 53rd to 79th in the world. That said, the data also reminds us that we should not be complacent in terms of mass atrocity prevention in so-called developed states as there have been warnings of atrocities in countries such as the Bahrain, Qatar and even the United States.

¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme 2010: 145-146.

¹¹ Georgia is excluded from this list of countries because it was ranked High in 2010 but its violence predated it.

6. It is equally important to recognize that many countries ranked Low have not experienced mass atrocity crimes in the 21st century. In the 2010 HDI report there were forty-two countries ranked Low yet only seventeen appear in the atrocity dataset. This is actually a conservative estimate because there were a further twenty-five ‘other countries or territories’ that were not categorized due to lack of data.¹² (Many of these would have undoubtedly been ranked as Low but only five appear in Table 1, Eritrea, Iraq, North Korea, Palestine, and Somalia. Evidently, the vast majority of countries ranked Low have not experienced mass atrocities in the 21st century.

Conclusion

The evidence illustrates that the relationship between mass atrocity prevention and [under]development is a complex one and more research is needed. There is no simple, linear or causal relationship between mass atrocities and [under]development which is why many governments around the world and many academics are divided over whether development strategies should be included in mass atrocity prevention. Hopefully, these research findings shed light on the complex challenge facing the Committee as it navigates the difficult task of identifying *where* and *how* mass atrocity prevention should be implemented. In closing, the recommendations are as follows,

- ❖ The Committee should not fall into the trap of assuming that mass atrocities mostly occur in underdeveloped countries for as the evidence demonstrates, Middle ranked countries are just as likely to experience atrocities as Low ranked countries and many of the latter do not experience mass atrocities.

- ❖ Whilst no country is immune to mass atrocities, it seems fair to say that High ranked countries are lower risk and unless, therefore, there is a specific case (for whatever reason) that demands a mass atrocity lens, the UK government should focus its resources on the threat posed in Medium and Low ranking countries.

¹² United Nations Development Programme 2010: 146.

- ❖ The bottom twenty countries do seem disproportionately vulnerable which suggests the UK should consider whether and how it can prioritise international assistance and mass atrocity prevention strategies to address this.