

Written evidence from Dr. Blake Lawrinson, University of Leeds

Short bio: Dr. Blake Lawrinson was awarded his PhD from the School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds. His thesis examined the changes and continuities in the UK's commitment to human protection from mass violence and atrocity crimes between 1997 and 2020. He is a member of the European Centre for the Responsibility to Protect at the University of Leeds (2021-2022) and has researched widely on the UK's foreign policy on human protection, including atrocity prevention, responsibility to protect, protection of civilians, and the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative.

Executive Summary

This submission aims to address the following topic outlined by the Committee: 'How the UK Government's approach to atrocity prevention interacts with other government policies and areas of work, such as the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) approach to conflict prevention, the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative'. The submission shows how the UK government is committed to a range of human protection norms and agendas in its foreign policy. It defines human protection as broadly encompassing conflict prevention, responsibility to protect, atrocity prevention, protection of civilians, Women, Peace and Security, and preventing sexual violence in conflict. It suggests that there could be greater connections established between these human protection norms and agendas as part of the FCDO's approach to preventing conflict and instability, and as part of the Government's broader commitment to acting as a 'force for good in the world'.

1. 'A force for good in the world': Human rights and atrocity prevention in UK foreign policy

1.1. The government's publication of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy in March 2021 outlined a 'renewed commitment to the UK as a force for good in the world', with one of its pillars being the defence of human rights.¹ Broadly defined, the protection of domestic and international human rights includes not only atrocity prevention, but a range of other domestic and international norms and approaches to human protection from mass violence and atrocity crimes that are also part of the UK's foreign policy, such as conflict prevention, the protection of civilians (PoC), responsibility to protect (R2P), the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (WPS), and the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI). All these human protection norms and approaches contribute to the UK's overarching commitment to the defence of domestic and international human rights and centre primarily on the notion of prevention.

1.2. Atrocity prevention is referenced only once in the Integrated Review, 'To establish a more integrated approach to government work on conflict and instability, placing greater emphasis on addressing the drivers of conflict (such as grievances, political marginalisation and criminal economies), atrocity prevention and strengthening

¹ HM Government. 2021. Global Britain in a competitive age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. p.14

fragile countries' resilience to external interference'.² However, this reference to atrocity prevention is significant in drawing attention to the need for a more 'integrated approach' to the UK's broader efforts to prevent conflict and instability. This integrated approach on addressing conflict and instability could also extend to understanding the interaction between atrocity prevention and other similar, and in some cases overlapping, protection norms and agendas, such as the R2P, PoC, PSVI, and WPS. The following submission details how the UK government's policy on atrocity prevention therefore interacts with these other policies and agendas on human protection.

2. Atrocity and conflict prevention

2.1. The UK government has been an active supporter of conflict prevention in its foreign policy, while a specific approach to atrocity prevention was outlined in the publication of the (former) Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) policy paper on the UK's approach to preventing mass atrocities in 2019.³ The paper outlines the role of the FCO on atrocity prevention alongside other important aspects such as recognising the importance of early warning of conflict and atrocities, the role of diplomacy, and development and programmes as one element of addressing the root causes of conflict and instability, which includes The Joint Analysis of Conflict and Instability (JACS).⁴

2.2. Whilst there is a clear focus on conflict, and thus the relationship between conflict and atrocity prevention, it is equally important for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) not to just interpret the two as the same approach. Conflict prevention is a broad area encompassing a range of possible tools and approaches while atrocity prevention involves a specific focus on atrocity crimes, whilst not all instances of mass violence and atrocity crimes are in situations of an active armed conflict.⁵ As such, the FCDO may recognise the value of a joined-up approach to atrocity and conflict prevention, but it is important to also be aware of the application of atrocity prevention, especially beyond armed conflicts.⁶ This in turn requires a careful assessment of the root causes of violence and instability and

² HM Government. 2021. Global Britain in a competitive age. p.79.

³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office. 2019. Policy paper UK approach to preventing mass atrocities, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-approach-to-preventing-mass-atrocities/uk-approach-to-preventing-mass-atrocities>

⁴ FCO. 2019. Policy paper UK approach to preventing mass atrocities; Stabilisation Unit. 2017. Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) Guidance Note, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-analysis-of-conflict-and-stability-jacs-guidance-note>

⁵ Department for International Development, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence. 2020. Policy paper UK Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-paper-on-the-approach-to-protection-of-civilians-in-armed-conflict/uk-approach-to-protection-of-civilians-in-armed-conflict>; Ralph, Jason. 2020. The UK and Atrocity Prevention. ECR2P Fresh Perspectives Blog, <https://ecr2p.leeds.ac.uk/the-uk-and-atrocity-prevention/>

⁶ DFID, FCO, MoD. 2020. Policy paper UK Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

drawing on early warning mechanisms to identify possible atrocity crimes and aiming to act before these occur.

3. Atrocity prevention, the responsibility to protect, and the protection of civilians

3.1. In a similar manner to atrocity prevention, the R2P operates in both conflict and non-conflict settings, and through its focus on addressing the four crimes of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing,⁷ is particularly compatible with the UK's policy on atrocity prevention. The UK government is an advocate of the R2P⁸ and has contributed important funds to the UN office on the R2P.⁹ The prevention of mass atrocity crimes is at the heart of the R2P framework, particularly its 'pillar one' focus of states protecting their own population from atrocity crimes and 'pillar two' on assistance and capacity building in order to help a state build its capacity to protect its population from atrocity crimes.¹⁰ The relationship between atrocity prevention and the first two pillars of the R2P is an important one for the UK's own understanding and recognition of how different human protection norms and agendas work together. For example, if the FCDO conducts a joint analysis of a situation by drawing on its cross-departmental focus it can identify early warnings of atrocity crimes, remind actors of their pillar one responsibility to protect their population from atrocity crimes, and work towards preparing and providing forms of consensual assistance and capacity building support under pillar two, which in turn is focused on preventing atrocity crimes. Whilst only a brief example of what is a complex analysis to identify atrocity crimes, it captures how atrocity prevention interacts with the UK's existing support for the R2P.

3.2. Alongside the R2P is the interaction between the government's approach to atrocity prevention and its policy on the PoC.¹¹ In August 2020, the UK published its policy

⁷ United Nations. 2005. 60/1. 2005 World Summit Outcome, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_60_1.pdf, Paragraphs 138-139.

⁸ FCO. 2013. UK fully committed to implementing the Responsibility to Protect, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/uk-fully-committed-to-implementing-the-responsibility-to-protect>; HM Government. 2018. Global Britain: The Responsibility to Protect and Humanitarian Intervention: Government response to the Committee's Twelfth Report, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmfa/1719/171902.htm>

⁹ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. 2021. Human Rights and Democracy: 2020 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office report, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-rights-and-democracy-report-2020/human-rights-and-democracy-2020-foreign-commonwealth-development-office-report>

¹⁰ UN. 2005. 60/1. 2005 World Summit Outcome, Paragraphs 138-139; United Nations. 2009. Implementing the Responsibility to Protect: Report of the Secretary-General, https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/SG_reportA_63_677_en.pdf; United Nations. 2014. Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention, https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/about-us/Doc3_Framework%20of%20Analysis%20for%20Atrocity%20Crimes_EN.pdf

¹¹ DFID, FCO, MoD. 2020. Policy paper UK Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. 2020. Policy paper UK Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-paper-on-the-approach-to-protection-of-civilians-in-armed-conflict/uk-approach-to-protection-of-civilians-in-armed-conflict>

paper which detailed the UK's approach to the PoC based on a cross-departmental collaboration between the former Department for International Development (DFID), FCO, and the Ministry of Defence (MoD). The policy paper draws direct links between the PoC, R2P and atrocity prevention with reference to the UK's use of tools, such as early warning mechanisms, development programmes, and defence.¹² Again, however, the policy paper acknowledges that 'atrocity prevention is integrated into the UK's overall approach to conflict prevention',¹³ but in a similar manner to the interaction between atrocity prevention and the PoC, it is important that the FCDO does not simply conflate these different human protection agendas as being the same thing without recognising the situations beyond armed conflict in which mass atrocity crimes may occur. The FCDO's understanding and recognition of the interaction between atrocity prevention and its policies on the PoC and R2P is an important one, but the next stage could involve identifying and building a specific framework to analyse the risk of atrocity crimes beyond armed conflict, which includes drawing on JACS to identify whether there is the potential for an onset of conflict and/or atrocity crimes.

4. Atrocity prevention, Women, Peace and Security, and the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative

4.1. The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda is an integral part of UK policy on human rights, and this includes its approach to atrocity prevention. As outlined in the UK's PoC strategy, the 'UK is committed to putting women and girls at the centre of all our efforts to prevent and resolve conflict, to promote peace and stability'.¹⁴ Further evidence of this commitment is the launch of the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, 2018-2022, with the FCDO and the MoD being responsible for its implementation.¹⁵ Whilst the WPS agenda is referenced in the UK's policy paper on atrocity prevention, there are no clear linkages made specifically with its policy on atrocity prevention, which also applies to the UK National Action Plan.¹⁶ The interaction between atrocity prevention and WPS may therefore draw on important research on the relationship between the R2P and WPS¹⁷

¹² DFID, FCO, MoD. 2020. Policy paper UK Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. 2020. Policy paper UK Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

¹³ DFID, FCO, MoD. 2020. Policy paper UK Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. 2020. Policy paper UK Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

¹⁴ DFID, FCO, MoD. 2020. Policy paper UK Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. 2020. Policy paper UK Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

¹⁵ HM Government. 2021. UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2018-2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2022, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/978646/UK_National_Action_Plan_on_Women__Peace_and_Security_2018_to_2022_annual_report_to_Parliament_December_2020.pdf

¹⁶ Foreign and Commonwealth Office. 2019. Policy paper UK approach to preventing mass atrocities, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-approach-to-preventing-mass-atrocities/uk-approach-to-preventing-mass-atrocities>

¹⁷ Davies, Sara E and Teitt, Sarah. 2012. Engendering the Responsibility to Protect: Women and the Prevention of Mass Atrocities, *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 4(2), pp. 198-222; Hewitt, Sarah.

, as well as gender¹⁸, which has identified important areas in which these protection approaches may be mutually reinforcing. Moving forward, it is important for the FCDO to provide further clarification on the relationship between its work on atrocity prevention and its policy on WPS.

- 4.2. The UK has made a significant contribution to the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI), which was co-founded by William Hague during his time as Foreign Secretary and Angelina Jolie as the Special Envoy to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.¹⁹ Between 2012 and 2014 in particular, the PSVI achieved significant normative progress under the foreign policy leadership of the UK to the point of gaining international recognition by states, which includes the G8 Declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict and United Nations (UN) Resolution 2106.²⁰ UN Security Council Resolution 1206 (2013) 'notes that sexual violence can constitute a crime against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide' both of which are atrocity crimes.²¹ This shows important linkages between the PSVI and atrocity prevention, which are founded on the same concept of prevention. It is therefore essential as part of JACS, and the FCDO's early warning mechanisms and development programmes to integrate the PSVI as part of a joint analysis on the prevention of atrocity crimes. The PSVI is also a key area of UK normative leadership on a vital international issue and so it is important for the FCDO in collaboration with other government departments to consider how it can revitalise its international leadership on the PSVI amid a gradual slowing of its normative progress in the post-2015 period.²²

2016. 'Overcoming the Gender Gap: The Possibilities of Alignment between the Responsibility to Protect and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda', *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 8(1), pp.3-28.

¹⁸ Bond, Jennifer and Sherret, Laurel. 2012. 'Mapping Gender and the Responsibility to Protect: Seeking Intersections, Finding Parallels', *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 4(2), pp.133-153; Davies, Sara E., Teitt, Sarah and Nwokora, Zim. 2014. Bridging the gap: Early warning, gender and the responsibility to protect, *Cooperation and conflict*, 50(2), pp.228-249; Stefan, Cristina G. 2021. 'Opportunity for Gendering the Responsibility to Protect Agenda at the United Nations?' *Global Studies Quarterly*, 1(3). Online First.

¹⁹ Hague William. 2012. Foreign Secretary launches new Government initiative to prevent sexual violence in conflict. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretary-launches-new-government-initiative-to-prevent-sexual-violence-in-conflict>

²⁰ FCO. 2013. News story: G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/g8-declaration-on-preventing-sexual-violence-in-conflict>; UN Security Council (2013) Resolution 2106. New York: United Nations.

²¹ UN Security Council (2013) Resolution 2106. New York: United Nations, p.2.

²² The Independent Commission on Aid Impact. 2020. The UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative. Available at: <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/The-UKs-preventing-sexual-violence-in-conflict-initiative.pdf>; Hague, William. 2020. Britain must spearhead action against sexual violence or relinquish the reins. *The Guardian*. 9 January 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jan/09/britain-must-spearhead-action-against-sexual-violence-or-relinquish-the-reins>; Hague, William. 2021. We must stop barbaric crimes against women. *The Times*. 31 May 2021, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/we-must-stop-barbaric-crimes-against-women-3rvnvh50k>.

5. Conclusion

5.1. This submission has showed how the UK's approach to atrocity prevention interacts and overlaps with several other of its important policies on human protection, which has been broadly defined according to the PoC, R2P, WPS agenda, and the PSVI. This includes examining the ways in which the UK government may enhance the relationship between these different protection agendas, while on conflict prevention and the PoC, recognising that atrocity crimes are not exclusive to armed conflict. This submission suggests that the UK's approach to these human protection agendas forms part of its broader commitment of being a force for good in the world and protecting and defending human rights in both a domestic and international setting. The mixture of UK expertise across the FCDO and MoD, as well as the specific protection agendas, provide the UK government with an important opportunity to continue and enhance its cross-departmental approach to atrocity prevention through its combination with other human protection norms and agendas such as the PSVI, WPS, R2P and PoC.

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