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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 May 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Genocide Prevention across Africa and the Middle East

Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights takes this occasion at the 47th session of the Human Rights Council to call for the attention of the international community to the early warning signs of genocide witnessed across number of African and Middle Eastern countries, including Ethiopia, the State of Palestine, and Turkey. In the following parts, we will present three major steps that the international community should undertake to reaffirm its commitments and fulfil its Never Again promise.

While there have been some good news regarding this matter from Iraq which passed its landmark legislation addressing the Yazidi genocide¹, to the United States of America and the European Union who recognized the Armenian genocide^{2 3}, it is our belief that there are still worrying updates from Ethiopia, the State of Palestine, and Turkey that should make it to the top of the world's agenda.

The role of the United Nations human rights mechanism in recognizing atrocities

The United Nations' Human Rights Mechanisms, namely the Human Rights Council, Treaty bodies, Universal Periodic Review, and Special Procedures, enjoy a huge potential in fighting against atrocity crimes: genocide⁴, crimes against humanity⁵, war crimes⁶, and ethnic cleansing⁷. These mechanisms, as the broad consensus goes, are the most expeditious and systematic way to detect early and on-going atrocities. Several examples demonstrate this fact, from the Syrian Arab Republic, Rwanda, Myanmar and Sri Lanka⁸, where UN mechanisms have repeatedly alarmed against the very early signs of atrocities.

The recent war on Gaza is no different. Just one month after the release of Human Rights Watch 2021 report claiming that Israeli practices amount to crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution⁹, Israel has, in its latest attacks against Gaza, violated each and every aspect of international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and even customary international law. Israel's indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, have taken the lives of 248 person, including 66 children¹⁰. More than 16 thousand housing units have been reported damaged by the attack,¹¹ and not to mention the destruction of Gaza's medical facilities, which were already weak before the vicious attack.¹² In Gaza where children below the age of 14 constitute around 42 percent of the population¹³, children pay the heavy price in this war. The ceasefire may stop the killings and wounding of Palestinians and the demolition of their houses, but it simply cannot help children who experienced trauma first-hand as they are likely to suffer PTSD for generations coming.¹⁴ Against this backdrop,

¹ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/03/iraq-baghdad-yazidi-sinjar-islamic-state-genocide.html>.

² <https://www.dw.com/en/us-president-joe-biden-recognizes-armenian-genocide/a-57324601>.

³ <https://asbarez.com/202584/european-parliament-reaffirms-armenian-genocide-recognition/>.

⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>.

⁵ <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/crimes-against-humanity.shtml>.

⁶ <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crimes.shtml>.

⁷ <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/ethnic-cleansing.shtml>.

⁸ <https://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25598&LangID=E>.

⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>.

¹⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/gaza-truce-between-israel-hamas-begins-mediated-by-egypt-2021-05-20/>.

¹¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/palestinians-israelis-count-cost-11-day-fight-2021-05-20/>.

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/17/israeli-strikes-gaza-health-system-doctors-hospitals>.

¹³ [https://www.indexmundi.com/gaza_strip/demographics_profile.html#:~:text=3.64%20children%20born%20Fwoman%20\(2020%20est.\)&text=total%3A%203.2%25%20of%20population%20\(2017%20est.\)&text=total%3A%200.2%25%20of%20population%20\(2017%20est.\)](https://www.indexmundi.com/gaza_strip/demographics_profile.html#:~:text=3.64%20children%20born%20Fwoman%20(2020%20est.)&text=total%3A%203.2%25%20of%20population%20(2017%20est.)&text=total%3A%200.2%25%20of%20population%20(2017%20est.)).

¹⁴ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/israel-hamas-ceasefire-holds-gaza-s-children-trauma-remains-n1268249>.

Israel have also attempted to cut the flow of information from Gaza by targeting several news bureaus.¹⁵, denying Palestinians even the right to channel their grievances to the world.

Several UN personnel and bodies have condemned the death toll in Gaza and the Israeli violence, including UNRWA¹⁶, UN Secretary General¹⁷, UN Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Special Procedures – who called for an investigation by the International Criminal Court¹⁸. The State of Palestine have been signalling early warnings of atrocities crimes committed against them for decades, and this time Maat seizes the opportunity to urge UN human rights mechanisms to continue denouncing Israeli violence, and for UN member states to bring forth the latest attacks on Gaza during Israel's next Universal Periodic Review.

The role of civil society in peace building

Civil society can make a substantial contribution in taking action on genocide, from identifying early warnings to the national government, to alerting the international community in case the government was complicit or irresponsible. Civil society organizations play another important role which is founding, leading, and promoting peace initiatives peace initiatives, and combatting hate speech.

Many studies have proven the link between hate speech and atrocity crimes where Rwanda offer an exemplary scenario in that regard.^{19 20} Similarly, hate crimes against Armenians and Kurds in Turkey are just the tip of the iceberg.²¹ The recent US Department of State's report on the human rights situation in Turkey, highlights that anti-Armenian sentiments in Turkey have increased since the start of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in both traditional and social media.²²

Civil society organizations in Turkey have brought to the attention of the international community, the severity of hate crimes during these times. The Turkish-based Hrant Dink Foundation for example have reported an increase in hate speech against Armenians by three times than before, citing more than 1000 pieces of news in a matter of one week²³ Therefore, civil society should be empowered to work as a watchdog against politics of hatred and media-perpetuated hate speech against minorities.

The role of achieving accountability in preventing further atrocities

Achieving accountability are often viewed as a last resort when prevention efforts fail. Nevertheless, we view accountability and the fight against impunity as prevention mechanisms in themselves for potential or further atrocities. Accountability is a multipurpose objective as it serves in deterrence, reconciliation, and rehabilitation.

In Tigray, Ethiopia, the government with the aid of other regional allies like Eritrea are committing atrocities against the population with full impunity^{24 25}, despite several calls from the UN High Commissioner for Human Right for investigation²⁶. The Ethiopian government stand accused of ethnic cleansing by several world's governments, including the current US

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/unrwa-commissioner-general-visits-gaza-after-latest-violence>.

¹⁷ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/05/1092332>.

¹⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27108&LangID=E>.

¹⁹ <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/mcgil46&div=20&id=&page=>.

²⁰ <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/mcgil46&div=20&id=&page=>.

²¹ <https://mirrorspectator.com/2019/02/28/turkeys-hate-crimes-are-only-the-tip-of-the-iceberg/>.

²² <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/turkey/>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/05/15/politics/us-condemns-tigray-atrocities-cnn-investigation/index.html>.

²⁵ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/un-rights-chief-alarmed-at-abuses-in-restive-tigray/2164757>.

²⁶ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210304-un-alleges-war-crimes-in-ethiopia-s-tigray-urges-eritrea-pullout>.

administration²⁷. Many renowned expert groups have warned against the on-going atrocities in Tigray, Genocide Watch for example, has upgraded Ethiopia's genocide stage to level 9: extermination²⁸. In March 2021, and after months of denial, the Ethiopian Prime Minister have publicly acknowledged that "... atrocities have been committed in Tigray region"²⁹. In addition to that, Ethiopia's Attorney General have announced recently that 28 soldiers are on trial for killing civilians and 25 more for sexual violence and rape.³⁰ Three more soldiers have been found guilty very recently for killing civilians and 1 more soldier of rape charges.³¹ In that regard, we note that only by providing accountability and fighting impunity, atrocities in Tigray or elsewhere could be stopped and prevented.

Recommendations

- Encourage states to include in their UPR National Report a section on atrocity prevention and the responsibility to protect
 - Invest more in researching and understanding early warnings of atrocities
 - Encourage all states to recognize and protect civil society who report conflict and hate crimes from retaliation
 - Encourage states to create independent investigative bodies and bring perpetrators to justice
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²⁷ <https://www.africanews.com/2021/03/11/us-secretary-of-state-describes-violence-in-tigray-as-ethnic-cleansing-presses-for-probe/>.

²⁸ <https://www.genocidewatch.com/Ethiopia>.

²⁹ <https://apnews.com/article/ethiopia-abiy-ahmed-atrocities-committed-tigray-war-3c4a7a322b1cafb687bd1a224e69ff78>.

³⁰ <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1862616/world>.

³¹ Ibid.