National & Subnational Atrocity Risk Assessment Toolkit

Country or Subnational Region:

Completed By:

Date:

the auschwitz institute for the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities

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Overview

This guide provides a step-by-step toolkit for assessing the risk of atrocity, understood broadly as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, or ethnic cleansing. This could involve a country-level assessment or a subnational assessment of regions or communities. Step one involves conducting a general risk assessment of structural factors tied to the risk of atrocity, as well as possible triggering events. Step two identifies potential sources of resilience that may mitigate some of the atrocity risk factors identified in the first step. Step three includes an assessment of possible perpetrators, followed by a fourth step outlining potential victim groups. The fifth and final step involves mapping a network of stakeholders who could potentially engage on preventive policy and practice within the context.



This guide can be used at any time. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of atrocity risk assessment is that risk is always present and that *levels* of risk change. In this sense, this guide should be used regularly to assess risk and to update assessments as circumstances

change on the ground. Posts may consider conducting a first, in-depth assessment, then updating that assessment every 3-6 months, as necessary.

Note that, even in an environment where on-the-ground information is readily available, it may not be possible to fully assess the presence or absence of every risk and resilience factors described in this toolkit. Where in-house information is not available, other independent data sources, such as the following, may be useful:

- ACLED Conflict Index
- Corruption Perceptions Index
- Environmental Performance Index
- Fragile States Index
- Freedom House
- Gender Inequality Index
- Global Food Security Index
- Global Peace Index
- Human Development Index
- Positive Peace Index
- Rule of Law Index
- State Resiliency Index
- Varieties of Democracy
- Women, Peace and Security Index
- World Inequality Database

Also note that the risk and resilience factors outlined in the toolkit are those that have been found to matter most across all cases globally. That said, there may be factors that matter deeply in your context, even though they do not appear in the toolkit. Make sure to include these factors in your assessment. Local knowledge is invaluable when qualitatively assessing risk.

Finally, owing to practical realities and the ambiguity that often arises—particularly in environments with escalating risk—please note that it can be difficult to form a fully complete assessment for all five sections of this toolkit. This reality should not deter you from making as complete an assessment as possible. A partial assessment is always better than no assessment at all. When any information is unclear or unavailable based on current knowledge and resources, attempt to clarify it by using publicly available resources like those listed above or by expanding your network to access local knowledge, as feasible.

Core Definitions

This guide pertains to atrocity crimes, which are a type of crime outlined in international law. These include genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. We also consider ethnic cleansing and related violence against civilians. Throughout the guide, the term *atrocities* is used to encompass any of these categories of crimes, as they frequently occur together. Notably, each of these types of crimes can be committed by state or non-state actors, and this guide is meant to assess the risk of atrocities committed by either (or both).

The treaty that created the International Criminal Court provides the most current international legal definitions of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes (Rome Statute 1998), and we use these definitions here. Specifically, **genocide** (Article 6) involves actions committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. These actions can include killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group, as well as gender-based violence. Case law has also broadened the crimes widely considered as tools of genocide, such as rape and other forms of gender-based violence.

Crimes against humanity (Article 7) are widespread and systematic attacks directed against any civilian population, including murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, imprisonment, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, group-based persecution, enforced disappearance, apartheid, or other similar acts that cause great physical or mental suffering. These crimes can be perpetrated by states or state-like entities, and they must be committed as part of an official policy of that entity. **War crimes** (Article 8) include grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and are differentiated from genocide and crimes against humanity because they occur in the context of armed conflict. Generally, war crimes fit into three categories: attacks against protected persons (civilians, journalists, aid workers, etc.); attacks against protected property (hospitals, places of worship, cultural heritage sites, etc.); and attacks using prohibited weapons (chemical or biological weapons, cluster munitions, land mines, etc.).

Finally, **ethnic cleansing** is not formally outlined as a distinct crime in international law, but references to ethnic cleansing can be found throughout many United Nations documents, including the framework for the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). As such, while there is not a formal legal definition, policymakers and practitioners often understand ethnic cleansing as the expulsion of members of a group from a territory.

While it is not, itself, a legally defined crime, it is a phenomenon that can and has been a tool for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

While this guide focuses on atrocities holistically, there are also divergences in risk factors across types of atrocities. Most notably, war crimes occur only in the context of armed conflict, while other types of atrocities can occur in times of conflict and times of relative peace. Additionally, genocide is unique in that, by its very definition, it involves targeting specific groups of people, meaning that risk factors tied to specific groups are especially important. That said, even though crimes against humanity and war crimes do not *require* there to be an identity component to the victim group, identity often plays a role in the way these crimes are perpetrated. Furthermore, these atrocity crimes often co-occur such that this guide considers their risk holistically.

Note: For questions or feedback on this toolkit, please contact Dr. Kerry Whigham at kerry.whigham@auschwitzinstitute.org or Dr. Hollie Nyseth Nzitatira at nzitatira.1@osu.edu.

Part One: Risk Assessment using the PREVENT Framework

To get a sense of the risk of atrocity, you will begin by looking at possible risk factors (also called priming factors) in your chosen country or subnational space. Risk factors are the broader conditions and contexts that make atrocity more likely to occur. A large body of research has identified seven main categories of risk factors that impact the relative risk of atrocities. To help you keep these organized, the guide uses a heuristic called the PREVENT Risk Assessment Framework. Each of the letters in the word PREVENT refers to one of seven categories of risk. The PREVENT Framework is based on measurable qualitative and quantitative data. Because of that, it provides a template that anyone can use to assess where atrocity risks exist in their own country or another country.



Current research on risk is much stronger with respect to predicting state-led atrocities, rather than atrocities perpetrated by non-state actors. For this reason, the PREVENT Framework laid out in Part One applies especially to anticipating state-led atrocities. That said, many of

these risk factors relate to both state-led and non-state-led atrocities, so it can be a useful tool in both contexts. Parts Two through Five of the toolkit, however, apply equally to state- and non-state-led atrocities.

Because the PREVENT Framework is designed to identify atrocity risk long before atrocities occur, many of these indicators are structural in nature. That said, some of the risk factors, especially those found in the section on Threats to Those in Power and Triggers, are more proximate in nature. In this sense, structural risks are like pieces of wood piled together that, when lit, could ignite into a fire. Proximate risks are like matches that set the pile of wood alight or fuel that can be added to the stack of wood to increase the intensity of the blaze.

Prior Atrocities, Conflict, and Human Rights Abuses



By far, one of the most important factors that predicts whether a country will experience an atrocity is whether it has already experienced an atrocity. When a society has a history—especially a recent history—of atrocities, violent conflict, and/or widespread human rights violations, it has a much higher risk of atrocities. This risk operates through a variety of pathways. For instance, prior atrocities and conflict can destabilize institutions, and episodes of violence and abuse can also impact societal divisions, state capacity, and many other factors considered in this guide. Leaders can also draw upon prior violence to justify new atrocities. Prior atrocities and human rights abuses that occur with impunity may also embolden leaders to use violence again. When societies do not contend with their violent pasts in meaningful and comprehensive ways, risk often remains or may even escalate. Indeed, research suggests that many other forms of human rights violations unfold prior to atrocities, and low levels of violence against civilians–or more hidden forms of structural violence–might unfold for many years before atrocities.

Given this, consider the presence of these factors:

- ☐ Prior atrocity (e.g., prior genocide, crimes against humanity)
- ☐ Prior armed conflict (e.g., prior war involving governments, non-state actors, or international parties)
- ☐ Prior widespread human rights violations (e.g., prior repression of particular groups, apartheid and other forms of systematic discrimination)

What examples of prior atrocities, armed conflict, or widespread human rights violations exist? What segments of society were affected, and where did the violence, conflict, or abuse unfold? What impact did this have on society? Here, pay particular attention to recent prior examples, though also consider the past decades.

If prior examples of atrocity, armed conflict, or widespread human rights violations exist, is there any discourse from former perpetrators or other segments of society that they have "unfinished business" and want to "finish the job"? Or is there any sense that former targets of past violence wish to seek revenge against perpetrators? Do you see political leaders or other thought leaders using such language?

What processes of truth seeking, criminal accountability, reparations, institutional reform, or public memory has the society undertaken to address past atrocities that may help to mitigate risks associated with prior atrocities or conflict, if any? Did victim communities perceive the processes as legitimate and meaningful? How were the processes received by communities that did not directly benefit from the measures for dealing with the past or by communities associated with perpetrators? Did these processes create any resentment or backlash?

Related specifically to criminal justice and impunity, were any perpetrators of past atrocities or serious human rights violations held criminally accountable? If so, was it only low-level perpetrators, or were those who planned the atrocities also held responsible? Are any known perpetrators of atrocities currently in positions of power or influence? Are human rights violations like extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detention, or sexual violence by state or non-state actors being investigated and prosecuted, or do perpetrators of such violations typically face no consequences?

Regime Upheaval



Along with prior atrocities, another of the most significant predictors of atrocities is regime upheaval. Regime upheaval involves an abrupt change in the political community or shifts in power, often but not necessarily tied to armed conflict, revolution, or other political events. Regime upheaval creates an unstable political environment that could motivate some to resort to drastic measures. Regime upheaval can also pave the way for repressive leaders to come to power. For instance, when leaders win a civil war, they may seek to remove their enemies. Unplanned regime change can also bring particularly repressive leaders to power. Regime upheaval, such as civil war, can also provide a form of "cover" to regimes wanting to perpetrate atrocities against a targeted group. Even when armed conflict does not directly involve the regime–for example, in the case of regional outbreaks of violence–this violence can still serve as a destabilizing force. Political upheaval can also embolden non-state actors that commit atrocities. Additionally, regime upheaval can threaten political elites, though threats to elites will be considered in more detail later in this guide.

Regime upheaval can take several forms. Consider if any of the following are currently occurring or could potentially happen.

- ☐ Internal armed conflict, such as civil war or insurgency
- ☐ International armed conflict
- ☐ Revolution
- ☐ Assassinations of political leaders
- ☐ Successful coup
- ☐ Any other form of extralegal leadership change
- ☐ Regime collapse
- ☐ External intervention
- ☐ Frequent regime changes, even if they occur legally
- ☐ Other regime crises

Here, provide a brief overview of the degree of regime upheaval. In doing so, consider the magnitude of this upheaval, as well we whether instability is intensifying, as higher magnitudes of upheaval are often more predictive of atrocities:

Executive Overreach and Non-Democratic Governance



Research demonstrates that authoritarian states are more likely to perpetrate atrocities than democratic states. For instance, leaders facing few checks on their power may be more likely to target civilians. Because of this, it is important to consider the executive of the country and the types of power that it wields. You should also consider executives at the subnational level.

Changes in the type of governance–especially transitions toward or away from democracy–are important to watch. For instance, countries that are transitioning toward democracies can be volatile and may be engaged in nation-building projects that can be exclusionary. As already noted, non-state actors can also commit atrocities. These actors are often less likely to commit atrocities in highly authoritarian spaces, though they are more likely to do so in "anocracies," or states that fall somewhere between authoritarian and democratic.

It is also important to consider governance more broadly, including who holds positions of power and when there are factions or political infighting related to that power. Finally, as you consider governance, you should also assess state capacity. Strong states commit atrocities, though atrocities often occur in weak states where there is little capacity to deliver services and/or resources.

When assessing atrocity risk, there are several important factors that fall within this category. Identify and explain which of these may exist in your context:

- ☐ Lack of constraints on the executive
- ☐ Lack of free and fair elections
- ☐ Lack of an independent judiciary
- ☐ Establishment or strengthening of security forces under direct executive control (armed presidential guards, paramilitaries, etc.)
- ☐ Government censorship of the media

- ☐ High levels of factionalism (where identity plays a large role in politics and/or social divisions), including tense elite bargains or infighting within political elites
- ☐ Salient divisions in the identity of political elites (where those in power come primarily or exclusively from one group)
- ☐ Low percentage of women in parliament or other positions of leadership
- ☐ Weak state structures or lack of capacity for the state to deliver service and/or resources to all those who need it, particularly in remote areas of the country.
- ☐ Other state repression or executive overreach (describe below)

Briefly explain any signs of overreach or non-democratic governance. In doing so, consider recent changes in any of the factors as well.

Volatility in the Economy and the Environment



The economic conditions of a country can play a role in mass atrocities as well. Often, the perpetration of genocide and mass atrocities has been tied to periods of economic hardship or depression. Indeed, rapid deterioration of economic conditions is often more significant than absolute levels of poverty. When you consider these periods, however, what is especially important in this regard is people's perceptions of scarcity. Put another way, even in cases when the data do not show large economic downturns or inequalities, if groups *perceive* that they exist, it can still matter. In this sense, as you consider changes in the economy or the environment, pay close attention to how people perceive these changes. Additionally, consider whether different groups may have diverse access to resources to help them respond to perceived scarcity.

With this in mind, evaluate if any of the following risk factors exist in your context:

- ☐ Low levels of economic development
- ☐ Unexpected economic downturn
- ☐ Economic discrimination (where different identity groups have different levels of access to different resources)
- ☐ Perceptions of scarcity (either among specific groups or across the whole of society)

Discuss the economic risk factors you have identified above and explain why they may increase risk in your context.

While much more research is needed in this category, research currently suggests that environmental stressors, particularly those resulting from climate change, are elevating the risk environment in many countries. In some cases, climate change is leading to desertification. As water sources dry up, people are left to compete for the little resources available, escalating atrocity risk. Sometimes too much rain might also impact risk, as crops and infrastructure are destroyed by flooding. Ultimately, it is dramatic fluctuations in weather that fuel unpredictability and increase atrocity risk. In some cases, climate change is making some areas uninhabitable, leading to the massive displacement of populations. The demographic pressures created from this migration can often provoke identity-based divisions that put forcibly displaced populations at great risk of atrocity violence. These challenges and others are likely to continue as climate change accelerates.

Are there any phenomena related to environmental stressors in your context that may be drivers for conflict or other demographic pressures?

Exclusion and Social Fragmentation



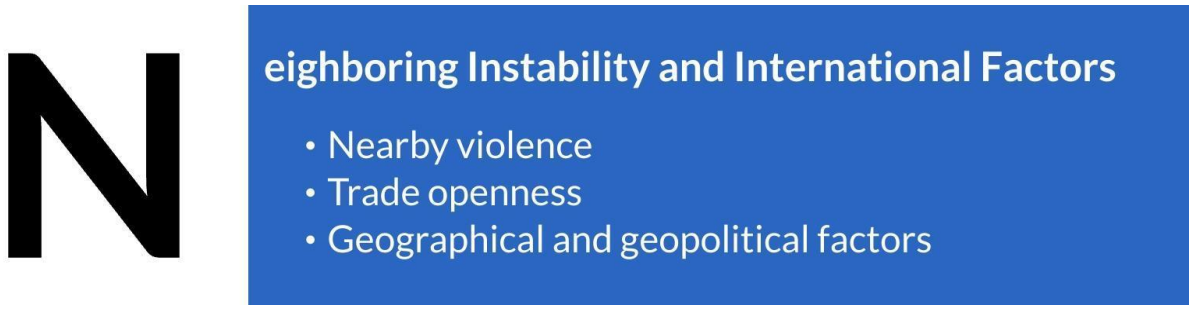
Societal-level factors, such as exclusion and social fragmentation, are also significant risk factors of atrocity. Sometimes, groups that become victims of atrocities are marginalized long beforehand. Other times, divisions and discrimination can lead to conflict, which in turn can lead to atrocities. Because of this, one of the most important risk categories is exclusion and social fragmentation.

Do any of the following risk factors related to exclusion and social fragmentation exist in the national or subnational context you are analyzing?

- ☐ Identity-based social divisions
- ☐ Exclusionary ideology and rhetoric (ideologies that cast certain segments of the population as other, different, or outside of moral obligation)
- ☐ State-led discrimination (in political, economic, social, or other realms, especially if this discrimination is widespread and/or embedded in formal policies)
- ☐ Few mechanisms for groups to respond to or counter discrimination (e.g. legal resource, ombudsperson)
- ☐ Gender inequalities
- ☐ Restrictions on religious freedom
- ☐ Increasing politicization of identities
- ☐ Proliferation of hate speech, misinformation, or disinformation on social media platforms or via other communication channels that demonizes a group
- ☐ Other forms of social fragmentation (e.g., breakdown of social trust, poor or fragmented social cohesion)

Explain which of these factors of exclusion or social fragmentation are evident:

Neighboring Instability and International Factors



No country or subnational region exists in total isolation. Each society is impacted by the challenges that other societies face, especially when those other societies are next door. Violence does not necessarily respect borders–particularly in cases where borders were drawn by colonizing powers without taking into consideration local realities. Because borders are political and often sites of contention, fighting in one country can spill over into another. Additionally, populations displaced by violence can become refugees in neighboring countries as they seek safety. Conflicts can also destabilize the economies of neighboring countries, leading to new economic risk factors. Notably, if you are undertaking a subnational analysis, you can also consider subnational borders, which are likewise frequently contested spaces.

Do any of these risks relating to international or regional factors exist in your context?

- ☐ Violence (especially armed conflict) in a neighboring country or subnational region
- ☐ Refugee flows/population displacements from a neighboring country or subnational region
- ☐ Other forms of instability in a nearby country (especially that increases perceptions of threat in your country) or subnational region
- ☐ Proxy wars or interventions
- ☐ Cross-border support for armed groups

Explain:

Interconnectedness in the international system also matters for atrocity risk. Generally, countries that are connected to other countries–typically through trade or political engagements–have lower risk of atrocities, as these international obligations can have a preventive effect. Yet, having powerful trading partners that primarily value the security and economic dimensions of the relationship can also serve as a buffer and embolden countries to commit atrocities. While interconnectedness may matter more for state-led atrocities, it can also impact the risk of non-state atrocities.

Is there any evidence of the following?

- ☐ Lack of economic connectedness to other countries or the international system (e.g., Is the country a member of the World Trade Organization? Is it generally open with respect to trade?)
- ☐ Presence of minerals, oil, or other valuable trade commodities
- ☐ Lack of political connectedness (e.g., Is the country engaged in international organizations?)
- ☐ Lack of engagement in regional or international human rights mechanisms
- ☐ Powerful allies that may overlook or excuse human rights abuses
- ☐ Presence of UN peacekeepers or similar forces
- ☐ Expulsion of international nongovernmental organizations, international media, or other actors with ties to the global polity

Explain:

Threats to Those in Power and Triggers



Threats to those in power also shape the risk of atrocities. Put simply, research shows that actors that perpetrate atrocities are often responding to threats to their power, and that they sometimes make other efforts to respond prior to turning toward atrocity. Changing power dynamics can also embolden non-state actors to commit atrocities.

Finally and relatedly, a society may have a large number of risk factors, but without a triggering event, they may never result in mass atrocity. Triggers are often unexpected events or processes that serve as a "starting pistol" for large-scale violence. Because they are unexpected, however, they are difficult to predict. Research has found, however, that often triggers are linked to threats to those in power and other changes in the balance of power, even when the atrocities are perpetrated by non-state actors.

Are any of the following things currently occurring or on the verge of occurring?

- ☐ Anti-government action, such as protests or riots
- ☐ The presence of large social movement(s) against the state (especially if that movement is violent)
- ☐ Attempted coups, especially when they have occurred in the last five years
- ☐ Attempted revolutions
- ☐ An (attempted) assassination or other prominent attack on a group's leader or important figure (including arrests and detentions)
- ☐ Upcoming elections, especially when there is the potential for a disputed election or an election deemed to be unfair
- ☐ Peace talks or negotiations to bring an end to armed conflict, given that some actors may deem the talks to be unfair or unjust (recently concluded peace agreements should still be considered, as well)
- ☐ A significant battlefield loss (for a government or a non-state actor)
- ☐ An attack on a government building or asset, or on a space that is significant for non-state actors

- ☐ Increased reports of sexual and gender-based violence
- ☐ A culturally significant attack on a group
- ☐ Rapid spread of rhetoric that blames vulnerable groups or individuals for social problems or moral decline
- ☐ Significant rumors or other misinformation
- ☐ Other factors that change power dynamics (describe below)
- ☐ Other developments that threaten leaders of states or non-state actors (describe below)
- ☐ Other perceived threats, even if an objective actor would not be threatened (describe below)

Review the answers you have checked and explain why you assess the selected answers as potential triggers in your context:

Risk Assessment Wrap-Up

Having now examined risks in all seven categories of the PREVENT Framework, reflect on the work you have done. Based on your experience in this context, which of these risk factors are the most pressing or most likely to inflame atrocities? As you consider risk, remember that some factors–namely, prior violence/atrocities/widespread human rights violations, ongoing regime upheaval, and threats to those in power–are particularly significant. For each of the seven categories of risk, evaluate how high you believe the risk to be according to the following guidance. Then add any additional notes you think are important to include:

Low: Few meaningful risk factors present.
Moderate: Noticeable and accumulating risk factors but not yet escalating.
High: Clear and escalating indicators of potential harm.
Severe: Incredibly high risks that suggest atrocities are imminent or already unfolding.

Risk Category	Low	Moderate	High	Severe
Prior Atrocities, Conflict, Human Rights Abuses				
Regime Upheaval				
Executive Overreach and Non-Democratic Governance				
Volatility in the Economy and the Environment				
Exclusion and Social Fragmentation				
Neighboring Instability and Other International Factors				
Threats to Those in Power and Triggers				

Further explanations:

Looking back at the risk assessment, detail any risk factors that you know to matter in the context, even though they do not appear directly in the PREVENT Framework for risk assessment:

Part Two: Resilience Factors

As you consider the risks of atrocity, it is important to also assess the factors that might counteract these risks. These factors are alternately referred to as resilience factors or restraining factors.



Importantly, when speaking of resilience in this context, it is crucial to emphasize resilient institutions rather than resilient individuals. The language of resilience is often used as a way to ignore or even excuse continued rights violations or trauma, particularly of victimized and marginalized groups. As Tracie L. Jackson of the Louisiana Justice Institute puts it: "Stop calling me resilient. Because every time you say, 'Oh, they're resilient,' that means you can do something else to me. I am not resilient." Resilience factors focus on making political, economic, and social institutions more resilient so that individual people do not have to be.

When assessing resilience, the absence of a risk factor is important, but it is not necessarily the same as a factor that promotes resilience in the face of increasing risk, or

that restrains actors who might otherwise commit atrocities from doing so. While there is much less empirical research regarding resilience factors, several have been identified.

Societal resilience to atrocities can be built across multiple levels. We can think of this resilience like a tree. The roots of the tree represent how a society is rooted in the international system. Societies are more resilient when they are party to international treaties and **embedded within the multilateral system**. Additionally, **powerful international allies** can serve as mediating forces that hold governments to account for their actions. Of course, not all international allies will serve as resilience factors. Some may ignore or even encourage the perpetration of atrocities. As in all things, context matters.

The trunk of the tree represents a society's national government. Within a government, **general rule of law** and the **presence of checks and balances** can increase resilience, as can **national leaders who promote notions of inclusivity**. There is also some research that suggests that **diverse, professional security forces** can serve as a resilience factor (especially when the forces integrate people from different ethnopolitical backgrounds).

Others suggest that **fiscal responsibility** is a key resilience factor (especially among countries that are dependent on natural resources). In this sense, **credible institutions** that might counter economic downturns and feelings of scarcity are vital. Relatedly, there is some evidence that the *kind* of economy a country has can serve as a form of resilience. When a country's economy is based on **conflict-sensitive resources**–that is, resources that are negatively impacted by the presence of armed conflict–it is typically less likely to experience atrocities, as it would disrupt the economic motor of the country. For example, some research shows that economies based on tourism or agriculture can be more resilient in the face of atrocity risk because they have a higher incentive to avoid active armed conflict, as it would halt the entire economy of the country. Oil and other natural resources, on the other hand, are not as sensitive to conflict.

The branches of the tree represent organized civil society, which is often the layer of society that connects communities with their government. A **strong civil society** is a vital source of resilience. Specifically, robust civil society groups that hold the government to account and advocate for human rights and social justice increase resilience, as do the presence of effective conflict resolution mechanisms. **Independent media** are important sources of resilience through their capacity to hold government officials to account for their policies and actions.

Broadly, researchers have suggested that **inclusive national identities** can serve as an important resilience factor. The inclusivity of national identities can be assessed in several ways. It might be visible in the founding narratives in a country's constitution, as well as in the rhetoric of political leaders that may counter inflammatory speech. The kinds of narratives that promote inclusivity are those that celebrate the plurality of a country and/or praise its diversity. The presence of narratives that delegitimize violence can also impact resilience, and these narratives are often propagated by political, religious, and community leaders. As such, **strong, visible leaders** who promote cohesion or condemn identity-based discrimination or persecution are critical.

Finally, the leaves of the tree represent the multiple communities of individuals that populate a country. At localized levels, **strong social cohesion** is often a buffer against atrocities, meaning that the ties that bind neighbors and communities together are of paramount importance.

Think about this tree of resilience as it relates to your context. Which of these resilience factors are present? Are there any other factors that could provide resilience in your context based on your own knowledge and experience?

International System:

- ☐ Powerful international allies who promote/value respect for human rights
- ☐ Embeddedness in the international system through treaties and other agreements

National Government:

- ☐ General respect for the rule of law
- ☐ Checks and balances on executive power
- ☐ Strong governmental leaders who promote plurality/diversity
- ☐ Diverse security sector
- ☐ General fiscal responsibility on the part of the state
- ☐ Credible institutions
- ☐ Reliance on resources that are negatively impacted by armed conflict (e.g. agriculture, tourism)

Civil Society:

- ☐ Strong civil society
- ☐ A culture of inclusivity when it comes to national identity
- ☐ Strong, visible leaders from civil society who promote plurality/diversity
- ☐ Independent media

Community:

- ☐ Strong sense of social cohesion at the local level
- ☐ Local mechanisms for conflict resolution and accountability

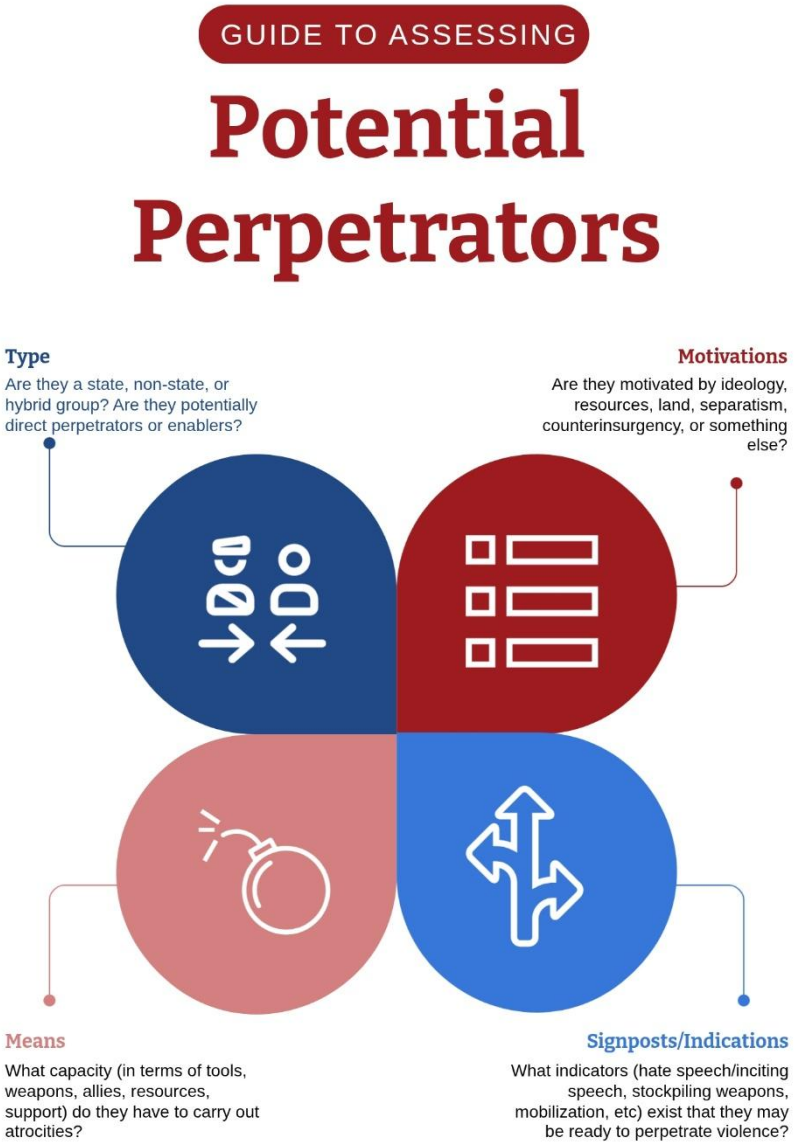
Explain why/how the factors you checked contribute to resilience:

Based on your own local knowledge, list any other factors that may contribute to resilience, even if they are not included in the list above:

Part Three: Potential Perpetrators

In the first exercise, you identified the broader risks, as well as the potential triggers present in your area of operation. Then, you identified potential resiliency factors in your context. Next, it is important to identify the main actors who could potentially carry out violence, along with the groups most likely to be targeted by that violence. While centering victims is a key principle in developing preventive policy, you will start with an analysis of potential perpetrator groups and their behavior before turning to victim groups, who would be the recipients of their unlawful actions.

There is no prototypical perpetrator of atrocities. Sometimes they are political leaders, sometimes religious leaders, and sometimes ordinary civilians. They can also be in the military, police, auxiliary forces, or other security sector personnel, as well as non-state armed groups, like paramilitaries, militias, or vigilante organizations. Political parties and other hybrid organizations and actors can also be involved in perpetration.



Some perpetrators orchestrate violence by drawing up plans and directing institutions. Rank-and-file perpetrators carry out the actual violence. Others may not be directly involved in violence but enable it by providing political or financial support.

Perpetrators often have different and complicated motivations that can vary over time. Hence, while it is especially critical to consider disagreements over power, research has shown that many other factors shape motivations to commit atrocities. These can include, for instance, career-related motivations, economic gain, and political or social status. Strategic military interests also often play a role, as well as disputes over politically or culturally significant territory. Rank-and-file perpetrators may choose to follow high-level perpetrators for an array of reasons, including obedience, peer pressure, conformity, ideology, emotions, and other factors.

Considering this, the next step is to identify the groups, institutions, or individuals who have, may develop, or may acquire 1) the motivations and 2) the means/capacity to commit atrocities. Indeed, while underlying motivations are important to consider, it is equally important to consider the means or capacity to commit atrocity. With the required *means* to access financial resources, equipment or human resources, perpetrators take advantage of *triggering events* identified in the prior exercise to implement violence. Means can involve people power–such as the capacity to recruit, train, mobilize, and/or arm groups–though it can also involve the ability to spread ideas and propaganda. Additionally, it is important to consider the availability of financial resources and support.

Identifying potential perpetrators, their motivations, and their means before you consider preventive actions increases the effectiveness of response actions that may target the perpetrators themselves. Sometimes, it is not easy to detect the motivations of perpetrators. Where this is not possible, response actions can use other methods to disrupt the perpetrator's capacity and willingness to commit atrocities.

Finally, given the difficulty in assessing motivations, it can also be useful to assess possible signposts or indications that violence may be forthcoming. This could involve, for instance, stockpiling or importing weapons, increasing use of hate media or related rhetoric, public mobilization against a particular group, the creation or deployment of new state-security structures or paramilitaries that have the capacity to commit violence, the creation of checkpoints or restrictions on movement, other signs of rapid militarization, the imposition of particularly strict security measures, and other signs of possible preparation (e.g., creation of maps, population registries or similar data, etc.). Now, fill out the following table as you reflect on the following question.

Which key actors have or might develop the motive and means to carry out large-scale and/or deliberate attacks on civilians?

Assessing Potential Perpetrator Groups

Potential Perpetrator Groups →					
1 State, Non-State, or Hybrid Is this a state actor, a non-state actor, or a group that has characteristics of both?					
2 Direct or Enabler Is the group a direct perpetrator (carrying out violence) or an enabler (providing resources to carry out violence)?					
3 Motivations What drives this group to perpetrate or enable violence? Consider: ideology (ethnic, religious, political), material gain (resources, land, looting), separatism or territorial control, counterinsurgency logic, or elimination of a perceived threat.					
4 Means What tools and capabilities does the group possess? Consider: weapons and military capacity, financing and economic resources, political allies and institutional access, propaganda infrastructure, and external state or diaspora support.					
5 Signposts & Indications What warning signs indicate this group may perpetrate violence? Look for: hate speech or inciting rhetoric, dehumanization of target groups, weapons stockpiling, troop or militia mobilization, patterns of smaller-scale violence, and coordination with other perpetrators.					

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Part Four: Potential Victims

Atrocities are perpetrated *by* people *against* people. Oftentimes—though not always—groups of people are targeted based on their identity—or who a perpetrator group perceives them to be. Assessing atrocity risk thus also involves determining who is most likely to be the victims of atrocities. Which groups are in a state of vulnerability for any number of reasons, including their identity, their location, their resources, or what they represent to a perpetrator group?



When thinking about potential victims of atrocity, consider the following:

- **Distinctness:** Is the group distinct and distinguishable by potential perpetrators? A group can be distinct because it represents an identity-based division in society when it comes to categories like race, religion, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, ability/disability, socioeconomic status, and/or political identity. A group can also be distinct because of its geographic location, the resources it controls, or the ideology it supports. These distinctions are socially constructed,

meaning the people perpetrating the violence can also create distinctions. What makes a potential victim group distinct in the eyes of potential perpetrators?

- **Marginalization:** How has the group been marginalized? Often, potential victims see a worsening situation when it comes to their human rights before they are targeted with large-scale violence. How has the potential victim group been marginalized politically, legally, economically, and/or socially? Note, however, that sometimes the most marginalized groups are not the ones targeted; sometimes, perpetrators target groups with some access to power that are framed as threats.
- **Protection:** What factors exist to protect the potential victim group? Does the group have meaningful political, legal, or other tools to mitigate the risks it faces from potential perpetrators?
- **Precedent:** Has there been past violence against this group that may repeat? Or could enduring grievances from past violence lead to this group being targeted in the present?
- **Spatial Vulnerability:** Does the group live in a space that makes it particularly vulnerable to violence? Is the group segregated away from other groups? Does it live in an isolated region, a conflict zone, a refugee or IDP camp, or close to non-state armed groups? Atrocities often occur in contested territories where control is incomplete.
- **Perceived Incentives:** What incentives would potential perpetrators have to target the group? Often, perpetrators frame victim groups as an existential threat to their own survival. Are potential perpetrators referring to the group as an existential threat? Does the group have access to land or resources that potential perpetrators may find valuable? Does the victim group espouse an ideology that potential perpetrators may want to eliminate? Note also that non-state actors have been found to target civilians to deter their collaboration with others, as well as to gain collaboration/recruits.
- **Signposts/Indications:** Has there been an increase in ad hoc violence, hate speech, dehumanizing speech, or inflammatory rhetoric against the group that may indicate large-scale violence is approaching? Think specifically about the rhetoric and actions of political or community leaders.

Complete the worksheet on the following page for each potential victim group.

Assessing Potential Victim Groups

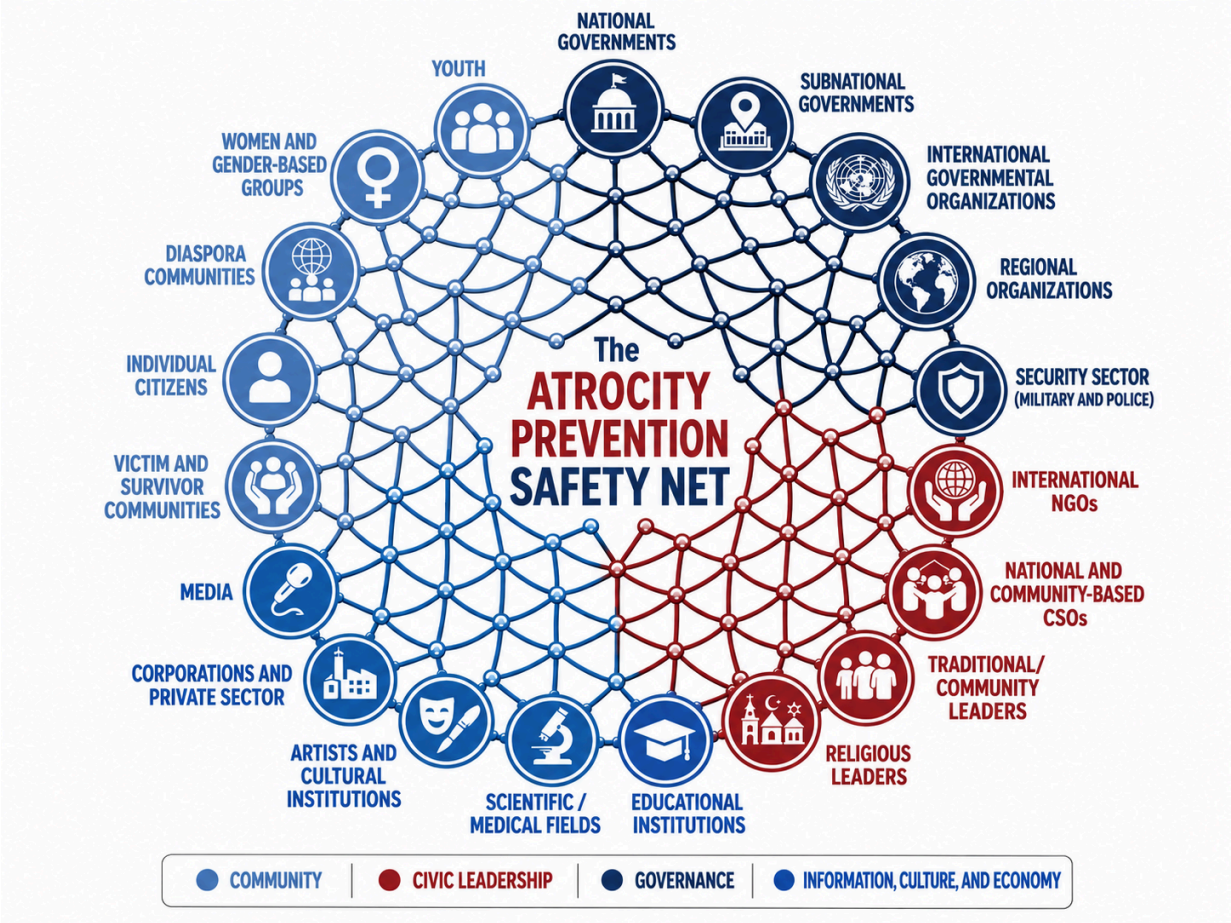
Potential Victim Groups →					
1 Distinctness What makes this group distinct in perpetrators' eyes? Consider identity, geography, ideology, and resources. Distinctions may be socially constructed or imposed.					
2 Marginalization How has the group been politically, legally, economically, or socially marginalized? Note: sometimes groups with partial access to power are targeted as threats.					
3 Protection What political, legal, or other tools protect this group? Are protections meaningful and enforced? Low protection increases risk.					
4 Precedent Has this group been targeted before? Do unresolved grievances create risk of repetition or retaliation? Were perpetrators held accountable?					
5 Spatial Vulnerability Is the group isolated, segregated, in a contested region, in refugee/IDP camps, or near non-state armed groups? Is state control incomplete where they live?					
6 Perceived Incentives What would perpetrators gain? Consider existential-threat framing, land/resources, ideology elimination, or deterring civilian collaboration with rivals.					
7 Signposts & Indications Has there been increased ad hoc violence, dehumanizing language, hate speech, inflammatory rhetoric from leaders, propaganda, or militia formation?					

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Part Five: Mapping a Prevention Stakeholder Network

As you conceptualize potential preventive policy responses, consider the full range of stakeholders you can engage in the work of prevention. Even though atrocity prevention is often discussed as the work of the multilateral system and national governments, prevention is not only the purview of states. In fact, given that atrocities are often large-scale social and political processes that impact all aspects of a society during their perpetration, it is essential to consider the way that every sector of a society can contribute to the prevention of atrocities, as well. The image below depicts some of the key actors you may consider when developing a stakeholder network, including actors relating to governance; civic leadership; information, culture, and economy; and community.



Think about each of the sectors in the table below in relation to the context you are analyzing. Within each of these sectors, there may be key actors who can play a role in the prevention of atrocities. Do not hesitate to describe other sectors/actors, as appropriate to the context. For each of these sectors, consider the following elements of prevention:

- **Key Actors:** Who are the key actors/stakeholders within this sector that could potentially play a role in atrocity prevention in your context, even if they are not currently doing so?
- **Tools/Resources:** What are the tools or resources that the actors within this sector can bring to the table when it comes to mitigating atrocity risks or responding to ongoing violence?
- **Relationships:** What relationships and partnerships exist within this sector *and/or* between this sector and other sectors that could potentially benefit the work of prevention?
- **Incentives:** What incentives do the actors in this sector have for preventing atrocities? How do they benefit from an atrocity-free environment or from efforts to reduce risk?
- **Obstacles:** What barriers may prevent the actors in this sector from using their tools, resources, or relationships toward the goal of preventing atrocities?

Mapping a Prevention Stakeholder Network

GOVERNANCE

GOVERNANCE	Key Actors	Tools / Resources	Relationships	Incentives	Obstacles
National Governments					
Subnational Governments					
International Governmental Organizations					
Regional Organizations					
Security Sector (Military and Police)					

Mapping a Prevention Stakeholder Network

CIVIC LEADERSHIP

	Key Actors	Tools / Resources	Relationships	Incentives	Obstacles
CIVIC LEADERSHIP					
International NGOs					
National and Community-Based CSOs					
Traditional / Community Leaders					
Religious Institutions					

Mapping a Prevention Stakeholder Network

INFORMATION, CULTURE, AND ECONOMY

	Key Actors	Tools / Resources	Relationships	Incentives	Obstacles
Scientific / Medical Fields					
Media					
Corporations and Private Sector					
Educational Institutions					
Artists and Cultural Institutions					

Mapping a Prevention Stakeholder Network

COMMUNITY

	Key Actors	Tools / Resources	Relationships	Incentives	Obstacles
Individual Citizens					
Diaspora Communities					
Women and Gender-based Groups					
Youth					
Victim and Survivor Communities					

Conclusion: From Assessment to Prevention

The four areas you have now assessed in Parts One through Four of this toolkit are the key to developing policies, programs, and initiatives that can contribute to atrocity prevention. Likewise, the stakeholder network you've outlined in Part Five creates a map of the various actors you can engage in crafting those policies and programs.

As you consider what actions you and your institution/organization can take, think about these assessment exercises. A preventive policy or program will contribute to prevention by engaging any or multiple actors of the prevention stakeholder network in order to do one or more of these four things based on these exercises:

(1) Mitigate one or more risk factors.
(2) Build one or more resilience factors.
(3) Influence individuals, groups, or institutions in ways that reduce their likelihood of participation in or support of atrocities.
(4) Defend potential victims and their human rights.



You may also wish to consider how to make policies gender-sensitive, which means that the policy also considers how people's needs and roles may diverge based upon gender.

In crafting policy and programmatic tools, it is essential to remember that no one policy or program can singlehandedly prevent an atrocity from occurring or stop one that is already underway. Atrocities are complex social and political problems. As such, they require complex solutions that include multiple interventions working in complementarity to accomplish these four goals of preventive action.