



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

Mass Atrocities Prevention I

February 6, 2018

10:30 – 12:00 PM

2255 Rayburn House Office Building

Opening Remarks as prepared for delivery

Good morning. I would like to join my Co-Chair in welcoming you all to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission hearing on Atrocity Prevention. Thanks very much to our witnesses for joining us today to share your expertise.

Mass atrocities -- genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity – directed against civilian populations rank among the most horrific acts of intentional violence afflicting our world today. Once systematic violence breaks out against a civilian population it is very difficult to demobilize armed groups and to stabilize a situation.

We must do a better job reading the signs and predicting the circumstances that are the harbingers of potential atrocities, and work together as an international community to implement strategies designed to prevent such actions before they happen. There are clear, practical steps that can be taken that could prevent, or at least mitigate large-scale human rights violations.

The United States has sought to do this through its use of targeted sanctions, public diplomacy, economic assistance, military partnerships and training, and through programs aimed to strengthen rule of law, civil society, and inter-faith dialogue.

All of these things are important, but we must always seek to do more and to work in closer cooperation with those who share our goals and our values.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the status of the Atrocities Prevention Board, and how the United States can more effectively work to end mass atrocities in our world. Thank you.