



Parliamentarians for Global Action
Parlamentarios para la Acción Global
Action Mondiale des Parlementaires
برلمانيون من أجل التحرك العالمي

Intervention of Dip. Minou Tavaréz Mirabal (Dominican Rep.), President of PGA

Dear Rep. Jim McGovern,
Dear Friends and Colleagues:

It is a great honour for Parliamentarians for Global Action to cooperate today with the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, the American Bar Association, the Washington Working Group on the ICC, the Washington College of Law of American University and the Deputy Prosecutor of the ICC on this very special briefing.

While the Organization of American States will meet this afternoon here in Washington to discuss ways and means through which the OAS could cooperate with the ICC in The Hague and on the field, in Syria and Iraq the victims of shocking mass-atrocity crimes continue to die, be tortured, raped, enslaved and arbitrarily imprisoned.

The failure of the International Community to stop massacres and similar atrocities occurring in Syria since the uprising of 2011 against the dictatorship, and the increasing level of violence perpetrated by the Assad regime against its own peoples, has brought about **a situation of total despair and lack of trust in the future** that allowed **the most extreme, violent and totalitarian group, ISIS/ISIL/‘Daesh’**, to emerge and acquire support and power.

When Russia vetoed the UN Security Council resolution referring the Syrian situation to the ICC, in May 2014, ISIS had *not yet* invaded Iraq and occupied its second city, Mosul. At that time, ISIS had *not yet* embarked on **a systematic campaign to enslave and destroy the Yazidi populations** living in Northern Iraq, which has been consistently denounced by PGA Member Ms. Vian Dakhil (only Yazidi Congresswoman in Iraq) as **genocide**.

The lack of action in the Security Council created a **total-impunity zone** that appears to have invited all regional actors to play the dirtiest possible game in the Syrian terrain.

Saudi Arabia’s war on certain Shia fractions, Iran’s war against certain Sunni groups, Russia’s war against any opposition to the Assad regime, Turkey’s new war against Kurdish groups: All these powers have started fighting separate and distinct conflicts in Syria, the populations of which have suffered from the worst armed conflict on the planet since the 1994 civil war and genocide in Rwanda. At least **4 million Syrians registered themselves as refugees** in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, but the UN has produced figures as high as **10 million displaced persons** from the areas of the armed conflict. And **250,000 women, men, girls, boys and children**

have died in this war, according to the most prudent estimates. They all have a name. They all have human dignity to be upheld. The situation is unbearable.

As the largest global parliamentary network promoting justice, human rights and the Rule of Law, PGA is launching this year a new *Campaign to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism*. One of the key elements of this Campaign – strongly demanded by our MPs in Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon – is to put an end to impunity for the mass atrocity crimes perpetrated by ISIS leaders and any other individuals in Syria and Iraq, as well as in Libya, where the ICC can exercise its jurisdiction in light of UN Security Council Resolution 1970 (2011).

But why is ending the impunity *status quo* important and relevant in Syria and Iraq?

In order to adequately address the enormously complex challenges posed to humanity by these conflicts, one must answer also other preliminary questions: **What are the causes of this mass-atrocity ‘disease’?** Do we have a diagnosis of what is ISIS? As ISIS is an enemy of humankind, what has worked and what has not worked so far to counter it and prevent its expansion?

First of all, we have made and continue to make a major mistake when we classify this threat as **“terrorism”**. Terrorism exists in various forms and is certainly a very serious crime, but ISIS is far more dangerous than any other terrorist group. Its ideology and plan is to create a ‘Caliphate’ to unite all Muslim-majority countries under one flag, from Morocco to Indonesia, and to impose a distorted vision of religion that takes inspiration from the most extreme version of Salafism, a sect of Sunni-majority Islam that has *not* been adequately condemned by the mainstream of tolerant and devout Muslims. The extremism of ISIS is coupled with an **inhumane violence** levelled against anyone who does not align and follow the totalitarian rule of its leader, Mr. Al Baghdadi (an Iraqi by birth).

Second: This type of widespread and systematic violence is not typical of terrorist organizations, which are normally not able to conquer territory and impose any form of *de facto* governance. Instead, **this systematic criminal policy characterizes the worst totalitarian ideologies of the past-century, Nazi-Fascism *in primis*** and certain absolutist versions of **totalitarian Communism** as the one perpetrated by the regime of Pol Pot in the “killing-fields” of Cambodia, which executed almost 2 million dissenters, non-aligned citizens and members of any type of diverse religious or minority group.

Third: While the terrorist threat of ISIS exists and can victimize hundreds in many regions of the world, *from Paris to Tunis to San Bernardino California*, it cannot be compared with **the mass-victimization of hundreds of thousands in conflict zones** of Syria and Iraq, as well as, albeit to a lesser extent, Libya and Northern Lebanon. The emergence of a policy of systematic enslavement and the trade

in young women and girls from minority-groups, like the Yazidis, is a reminder of the fact that barbarism is still a scourge of the 21st century.

Fourth: Is killing the leaders and fighters, including the foreign fighters, a solution to the problem? Notwithstanding the important progress obtained by the US-led Coalition of States of “Operation Inherent Resolve”, especially in areas in which the use of Air-Strikes has effectively supported the liberation of peoples and villages on the ground carried out by Kurdish forces (in Northern Iraq and Syria) and by the regular army of Iraq (even though less rapidly and less ‘cleanly’ than forecasted), the impact of current strategies and operations appear still insufficient. In fact, when leaders of ISIS or other groups are killed through air-power but territory is not regained, surviving elements are quickly volunteering to replace them, and their perceived “martyrdom” at the hands of an ‘invisible’ enemy is used by **aggressive recruiters** to augment the enrollment into ISIS ranks.

In other terms: Killing and bombing these enemies of humankind does not, in and of itself, bring about the results that the Alliance of States of “Inherent Resolve” is trying to achieve as early as possible. What is missing?

No one can offer easy solutions to extremely complicated and longstanding problems. Yet, one must persevere in studying, devising, implementing and following-up to policies aimed at:

- (i) denouncing the anti-Islamic nature of the self-described Islamic state,
- (ii) isolating the masters of hate and death who are behind the criminal policies and doctrines of ISIS,
- (iii) counter-messaging wherever possible the enormous volume of propaganda that ISIS is capable to disseminate among the educated and the non-educated, the privileged and the discriminated, the rich and the poor, in the Middle East, North Africa, the Sahel and East Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.

The *PGA Campaign to Counter and Prevent Violent Extremism* will do its best to be part of this strong and unequivocal educational effort to address and eliminate the theoretical and practical bases of violent extremism, especially by targeting and working with Lawmakers from all regions of the world, especially the MENA region.

Yet, it is our profound belief that nothing will do better to achieve these 3 goals than a **public trial**, conducted in the manner through which our Societies can **impose civilization against barbarism, the Rule of Law over criminality**, and ultimately **justice over injustice-violence-and-revenge**. A trial for the leaders of the criminal plan that brought about the rise, existence and daily functioning of “Daesh”: This must be one of the objectives of our policies against violent extremists. Not just the use of drones to eliminate its leaders, as surviving ISIS Members are going to use their death to perpetuate a vision of life based on ‘ultimate sacrifice’ in the battle-field as a modality to open the doors of a mythicized ‘heaven’. In fact, **the worst punishment for a violent extremist who has a totally distorted vision of Islam is to be “kept alive”, be brought to justice, face his countless victims**

(all with a name and a surname), **and be ultimately adjudicated on the basis of charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.**

One of the ways to move out of the spiral of violence, retaliation and death, is to impose a vision of justice, truth, punishment, correction and life. The complexities of this endeavor may entail many problems, and may be very difficult to carry out, but if we would use the same strength and determination that brought to an end the Nazi-Fascist regimes and to the celebration of the Nuremberg Trials, I am confident that we, and civilization, will prevail.