

**GLOBAL CENTRE
FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY
TO PROTECT**



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Your Excellency,

The UN was formed in the aftermath of the Holocaust and a devastating world war. However, not since 1945 have so many people been displaced by war and conflict – almost 60 million. Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed so far this year as mass atrocities continue to be perpetrated in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Sudan, Central African Republic and elsewhere. The impact on women and children has been especially egregious.

At a time of crisis, the UN Security Council often appears paralyzed. In particular, on four occasions since October 2011 the veto has been exercised by two of the Security Council's permanent members, Russia and China, to protect the government of the Syrian Arab Republic from resolutions meant to address crimes against humanity and war crimes committed against the Syrian people. That conflict is now over four years old and has consumed over 220,000 lives. Urgent measures have still not been taken to protect civilians from mass atrocities and to confront the perpetrators, regardless of position or affiliation.

Those vetoes undermined the legitimacy of the Security Council, shielded perpetrators from accountability and cost lives.

We believe that the Security Council's failure to take effective action on the crisis in Syria is a betrayal of the pledge made by the international community in the World Summit Outcome Document – a commitment reaffirmed by the Security Council itself – to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, to protect populations whose own states manifestly fail to protect them from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Russia and China are not alone. All Permanent Members of the Security Council have, at one time or another, misused and abused their veto prerogative. This is contrary to the purposes and principles of the UN.

There has been growing momentum across the world – from both governments and civil society – calling upon all Members of the Council to agree on a collective commitment not to vote against credible action to prevent mass atrocities.

This is the context in which we welcome the initiative of France and Mexico in calling upon the Permanent Members of the Security Council to agree on voluntary veto restraint in mass atrocity situations. We also welcome the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group's Code of

Conduct, which calls upon all members of the Security Council (both permanent and elected) to not vote against any credible draft resolution intended to prevent or halt mass atrocities.

As we look towards the 70th anniversary of the UN on 24 October, we acknowledge that the UN's relevance and success in our century will be measured, in no small part, by its ability to protect civilians from mass atrocity crimes. We therefore call on all UN member states to sign and support both the French/Mexican initiative and the ACT group's Code of Conduct.

Yours sincerely,



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