



## ***Committee on International Justice and Peace***

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May 6, 2016

The Honorable Bob Corker  
Chairman  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ben Cardin  
Ranking Member  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Corker and Ranking Member Cardin:

As Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write to express my support for the Senate Bill 2551, the Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2016 (GAPA) and appropriations to carry out conflict management and mitigation programs. Throughout its history, the Church has promoted justice as a way to foster peace, reconciliation between perpetrators and victims of conflict, and integral human development to promote long-term social cohesion. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis captures this vision of a peaceful society:

Nor is peace “simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day towards the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect justice among men”. In the end, a peace which is not the result of integral development will be doomed; it will always spawn new conflicts and various forms of violence. (219)

The United States, in its efforts to establish an “ordered universe,” has long recognized acts of genocide and mass atrocities as important threats to global and national security. Our country has been a leader in the prevention of such acts since 1948. Our nation was one of the very first signers of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Over the decades, Congress and successive Administrations have given bipartisan support to measures and new structures to prevent and punish acts of genocide and atrocities.

The current Administration has continued this work. In response to the bipartisan Genocide Prevention Task Force Report, President Obama issued Presidential Study Directive 10 to create the Atrocities Prevention Board (APB). We believe that the APB represents an effective configuration of existing Administration agencies and structures that has prioritized and improved collaboration, analysis and information sharing among all of the offices that would have to act in order to prevent future atrocities and crises. The APB has already shown its ability to coordinate and mobilize U.S. efforts in recent crises such as those in the Central African Republic and Burundi. USCCB and the local Church in these countries has collaborated with our government to address these crises. Although neither country has achieved a sustainable peace, the APB assessment visits and the conflict mitigation programs financed in these two countries have created voices and activities for peace that we hope will have a long-term positive impact. We appreciate the increased efforts to intervene earlier and more effectively to prevent crises from erupting into full scale violent conflict.

Letter to Senators Corker and Cardin

March 6, 2016

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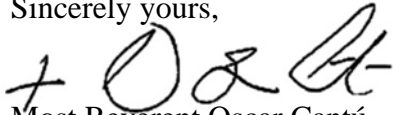
We are particularly pleased with the high profile roles and authorities that the APB has assigned to the State Department and USAID, including the use of Complex Crises Fund (CCF). It is clear that intelligence services and the Defense Department contribute to the analysis and designation of countries of threat, but that the primary role of implementing actions and programs on the ground to prevent conflict have been delegated to State and USAID. This increased attention to prevention and the greater role granted to diplomacy and assistance are welcome adjustments to the United States' capacity to manage and mitigate conflict in the world.

We believe it will be important to make sure that the APB and the CCF can continue their work into the future. We appreciate the Senate's leadership on the prevention of atrocities and genocide. This bill marks an important step toward ensuring continued Congressional leadership and oversight of this bipartisan initiative. We ask you to consolidate these successes by authorizing the APB and the CCF through this legislation.

It is also essential to increase U.S. investments in conflict prevention. In FY 2016 the State Department was allocated \$27 million for Conflict Stabilization Operations. The CCF was allocated \$30 million total with \$10 million in the base budget for USAID. The Office of Transition Initiatives received \$67 million to fund conflict prevention activities. Although this funding, along with USAID's Conflict Management and Mitigation programs, is a start, we believe that the number and severity of conflicts and potential conflicts in the world require a much larger investment if the United States is to play its leadership role in building a more peaceful and secure world.

I urge you to work for bipartisan support of the Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2016, S. 2551, and pledge the support of our Committee toward this end.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Oscar Cantú', with a stylized initial 'O' and a cross-like mark at the start.

Most Reverent Oscar Cantú

Bishop of Las Cruces

Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace

cc: Senate Foreign Relations Committee Members