



Committee on International Justice and Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

June 5, 2017

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 support for the Senate Bill 1158, the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2017 (GAPA) and for appropriations to implement conflict management and mitigation programs. Throughout its history, the Church has promoted justice reconciliation between perpetrators and victims of conflict, and integral human development as ways to promote long-term social cohesion and peace. 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 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 structures to prevent and punish acts of genocide and atrocities.

These bipartisan actions to protect life and express solidarity with people in conflict were given new life with the bipartisan Genocide Prevention Task Force Report that led to the creation of the Atrocities Prevention Board (APB). We believe that the APB represents an effective configuration of existing Administration agencies and programs that has prioritized and improved collaboration, analysis and information sharing among all of the agencies 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 crises such as those in the Central African Republic and Burundi. USCCB and the local Church in these countries have collaborated with our government to address these crises. Although both countries still struggle to build 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 and expect will have long-term positive impacts. 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

June 5, 2017

Page 2

We particularly affirm the high profile roles and authorities that the APB has assigned to the State Department and USAID, including the use of the Complex Crises Fund (CCF). Intelligence services and the Defense Department need to contribute to the analysis and designation of countries of threat, but the primary role of implementing actions and programs on the ground to prevent conflict has been delegated to State and USAID. This increased attention to prevention and the greater role granted to diplomacy and development assistance are welcome adjustments to the U.S. capacity to manage and mitigate conflict in the world.

It will be important to make sure that the APB and the CCF can continue their work in the future. The Senate's bipartisan leadership on the prevention of atrocities and genocide as expressed in 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 2017 Congress cut all funding (FY 2016 was \$27 million) to the State Department 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 \$122.8 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 a leadership role in building a more peaceful and secure world.

I urge you to pass the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2017, S. 1158, and pledge the support of our Committee toward this end.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Oscar Cantú". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "O" and a distinct "C" and "A" at the end.

Most Reverent Oscar Cantú
Bishop of Las Cruces
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace

Cc: Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee