



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

# PREVENTION

PREVENTION NEWSLETTER

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## MISSION

The USIP's Center for Conflict Management (CCM) designs and manages the Institute's efforts to *prevent* the initial outbreak of violent conflict, *resolve* ongoing conflicts, and *stabilize* areas emerging from conflict. The Center also conducts research, identifies best practices, and develops new tools for conflict prevention, management, and resolution.

## CALENDAR

**March:** Roll-out of the interagency Atrocities Prevention Board.

**March 7:** USIP-Nixon Foundation conference "The Week That Changed the World". The conference will celebrate the 40th anniversary of President Nixon's historic trip to China and explore the future of U.S.-China relations.

**March 26–27:** South Korea hosts the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit.

**April:** Genocide Prevention Month

**April 15 2012:** North Korea celebrates the 100th anniversary of Kim Il-sung's birth, which is the central event in the process of unveiling North Korea as "a strong and prosperous nation" in 2012.

## PUBLICATIONS

- "Making Sense of the U.N. Impasse on Syria" *USIP On the Issues* by Abiodun Williams, 10 February 2012.
- "Reforming the Security Sector in Tunisia and Libya" *USIP On the Issues* by Bob Perito, 7 February 2012.
- "Protecting Civilians from Mass Atrocities: Meeting the Challenge of R2P Rejectionism" Article in the *Global Responsibility to Protect Journal* by Jonas Claes, February 2012.
- "Assessing the Impact of Israeli-Iranian Tensions" *USIP On the Issues* by Daniel Brumberg, 14 February 2012.

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## Dear Colleagues,

There is growing frustration about the inability of the international community to formulate an effective multilateral response to the ongoing atrocities being committed in Bashar al-Assad's Syria. These conscience-shocking events illustrate the political challenges that continue to hamper multilateral efforts to prevent atrocities and implement the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). R2P represents a commitment to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It puts the primary responsibility for protection on the state in question, but also assigns responsibility to the international community to provide assistance, if necessary, from peaceful diplomatic and humanitarian measures up to the use of force sanctioned by the U.N. Security Council. Since the Responsibility to Protect was unanimously endorsed by heads of state and government at the 2005 U.N. World Summit, political consensus on the principle's utility has continued to grow. So it seems paradoxical that the Security Council remains unable to respond effectively to the brutal crimes being committed in Syria.

It is important to distinguish the strong normative consensus on atrocity prevention from the application of the R2P principle in response to specific cases. The February 4 vetoes by China and Russia on the Western-Arab draft Security Council resolution on the situation in Syria do not halt the advance of the R2P principle as a norm in international affairs, but they do illustrate the challenges in applying the most coercive and controversial tools within the R2P toolbox. Less coercive R2P tools have been applied in Syria, with mixed results. They include the Arab League Monitoring Mission, European Union sanctions, informal support for the Syrian opposition and condemnations by the U.N. Human Rights Council, the General Assembly and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The use of coercion against a sovereign yet repressive state will remain controversial, particularly if the geostrategic interests of powerful states do not align with moral imperatives. However, there is increasing recognition that sovereignty implies responsibilities, particularly to protect civilian populations. The pressure on President Assad and his guardians in the Security Council will continue to mount as the casualties increase.

Abiodun Williams

Senior Vice President

Center for Conflict Management

## SPOTLIGHT

# U.S.-Pakistan Relations

“Despite the fact that mutual mistrust is probably at an all time high, there is no appetite to allow the relationship to rupture.”

The year 2011 saw a progressive deterioration in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. The year was marked by multiple crises, culminating in the NATO airstrike on a Pakistani border security outpost that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers. In response to this attack, Pakistan shut down NATO supply routes, demanded that the U.S. vacate its Shamsi airbase within 15 days, boycotted the December 5 international Bonn conference on Afghanistan, and initiated a parliamentary committee review to “reset” the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. Coming out of the review, Pakistan is poised to take a nationalistic position on its ties with the U.S. as it demands a new set of conditions which would essentially downgrade the relationship and make it more transactional. However, despite the fact that mutual mistrust is probably at an all time high, there is no appetite to allow the relationship to rupture. The need for Pakistan to avoid becoming internationally isolated due to a total rupture in its relations with Washington is well understood. In Washington too, while the perception about Pakistan is acutely negative, its importance in an Afghan peace settlement and for long-term stability in the region dictates that ties must be mended.



USIP's Abiodun Williams during talks with the Speaker of the Meshrano Jirga (i.e., the Afghan Senate), Fazal Hadi Muslimyar.  
Source: USIP.

Undoubtedly, what holds this relationship together at the moment is Afghanistan. The U.S. seems to have achieved a preliminary breakthrough in opening reconciliation talks with the Taliban and the move is believed to have tacit Pakistani support. While the recent acrimony between the U.S. and Pakistan will not make it easy for the two to work through their difficulties, the next few months are likely to see quiet efforts by both parties to further the reconciliation agenda. It is sure to be a bumpy and unpredictable journey but one that ultimately both sides want to see mature. Pakistan's internal dynamics are also likely to impact the U.S. ability to work with Islamabad over the coming year. Domestically, while the number of terrorist attacks has declined over the past few months, Pakistan still remains home to a host of Islamist militant outfits that continue to threaten the state and citizens alike. Unfortunately, the country's attention is constantly diverted to its perpetual political turmoil, and to its flailing economy, which most predict will only get worse over the year. This has infused tremendous uncertainty into the system and seems to be giving militant outfits space and time to regroup. Perhaps the only silver lining here is the marked improvement during the past year in Indo-Pak relations, although this progress remains fragile and reversible.

USIP's Pakistan program continues to undertake policy-relevant analysis that contributes to greater understanding of conflict and peace dynamics in Pakistan in general, and the U.S.-Pakistan relationship in particular, as well as programmatic work to help support initiatives that promote tolerance and help prevent and mitigate violent extremism and conflict. In an effort to facilitate dialogue and debate, the program has continued to host various public and private discussions. Most recently, USIP hosted Pakistan's new Ambassador to the U.S., Sherry Rehman for her first public speaking engagement in Washington.



# OVER THE HORIZON— HIGHLIGHTS

## Political Transitions amid Economic Turmoil in North Africa

In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice party won a clear mandate in Egypt's parliamentary elections. While the new Parliament remains subordinate to the ruling military council, the latter has pledged to relinquish power by the end of June 2012. However, many protesters continue to push for an earlier surrender of authority, and protests have been marked by violence and a high numbers of fatalities. Meanwhile, tensions between the United States and Egypt are on the rise with the Egyptian judiciary handing down indictments of 16 Americans who work for human rights and democracy-oriented organizations that operate in the country. The move has appeared to call into question the future of U.S. aid to Egypt at a time when the country finds itself mired in a deep financial crisis.

Libya too finds itself struggling to manage a challenging economic situation. The government is trying to manage unmet expectations on the Libyan street that prosperity would inevitably follow Qaddafi's demise, amid a worsening security situation marked by the prominence and proliferation of separate militia groups. However, elections in Libya are planned for the spring or early summer of 2012. The hope is that this will help confer some legitimacy on a clear authoritative body. In Tunisia, Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali announced that the interim government intends to hold presidential elections in the country in 18 months. As with Egypt and Libya, Tunisia finds itself managing a political transition against the backdrop of a rapidly deteriorating economic situation.

## North Korea's New Leadership

On December 30, Kim Jong-eun was formally appointed as the "Supreme Commander" of North Korea following his father's death on December 17. While on the surface it appears that the post-Kim Jong-il power consolidation process is proceeding smoothly, larger questions linger about the sustainability of the Kim family regime. Growing reports of blackouts in Pyongyang and large Chinese shipments of food and oil assistance highlight the North Korean state's structural weaknesses and potential early fracturing under the surface.

Complicating the situation is a divergence of policy positions regarding North Korea. While Beijing warns other countries – notably South Korea and the United States – not to provoke North Korea under its new leadership, Seoul and Washington have been signaling to Pyongyang a reaffirmation of previous statements of deterrence against future DPRK provocations. Given its advanced nuclear weapons development activities, the prospects of sudden instability in North Korea is of particular concern to Seoul and Washington.

## The Nuclear Question in Iran

Tensions between Iran and the international community regarding the Islamic Republic's nuclear enrichment activities dramatically intensified during the first two months of 2012. As the United States and the European Union both committed to advancing draconian financial sanctions that are meant to undermine if not cripple Iran's oil industry, Iranian leaders may conclude that their most determined adversaries are bent on a strategy of eco-

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*A Monitor of the Arab League meeting with religious leaders in Syria.*

*Source: Voice of America.*



conomic warfare directed at regime change. The assassination of a young Iranian scientist in Tehran on January 11, followed by the February 13 attacks on Israeli diplomats in India and Georgia—events that Israeli diplomats accuse Iran of masterminding—have accentuated the growing contours of international conflict provoked by Iran’s determination to sustain its nuclear enrichment activities. Iran’s plans to relocate much of this activity to its facilities at Fordo greatly alarmed the U.S. and Israel. Israel’s political leaders claim that these plans may create a “zone of immunity” for Iran’s nuclear program, and thus suggested that the use of force is an option that may have to be used in the coming months. It is notable that these claims have been rejected by many of Israel’s most credible security officials, and have been disputed by U.S. leaders as well. Thus, while the Obama administration continues to insist that it is taking “no option off the table,” the prospects for the use of force against Iran by Israel and the U.S. remain limited, at least for now. The fundamental problem the administration faces is that even the “punishing sanctions” that the U.S. and its European allies are now advancing do not have a great chance of success. Even as Iran feels the economic pinch at home, and even as its main regional state ally Syria faces massive internal political (and most recently military) opposition, Iran’s leaders appear defiant on the nuclear question. The exit from this current impasse is hard to imagine.



Source: DipNOTE.

## Israel-Palestine Peace Process

January had ushered in a series of Jordanian-mediated low-level talks between Israelis and Palestinians, but no breakthroughs were apparent. The President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, has indicated his view that these talks have run their course, unless Israel puts forth a better starting point for border negotiations. However, it is unclear whether Israel would continue to negotiate with the Palestinians in light of a February deal between Fatah and Hamas to form a Palestinian unity government of which Abbas would serve as Prime Minister. The Israeli government characterized the deal as an abandonment of the peace process given that Hamas continues to openly reject negotiations with Israel and that country’s right to exist. Meanwhile, the Israeli Administration seems primarily focused on the threat posed by Iran and its nuclear capabilities, and there is speculation that Israel could choose a military strike option on Iran in the next few months. This has touched off an intense debate between U.S. and Israeli officials about how close Iran actually is to producing a bomb.

## Institutionalizing U.S. Atrocity Prevention Efforts

In the past two years the prevention of mass atrocities was elevated to a U.S. policy priority following policy commitments and support formulated in the 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, the 2010 U.S. National Security Strategy, and a 2011 Senate State Authorization bill (S. Con. Res. 71). Last summer, U.S. President Obama issued a Presidential Study Directive on Mass Atrocities (PSD-10), declaring the prevention of genocide and other mass atrocities a national priority of U.S. policy and a core moral responsibility of the country. In 2012 some of these rhetorical commitments may be translated into institutional reality. PSD-10 established a new standing interagency Atrocities Prevention Board, a promising step to strengthen the U.S. institutional capacity and coordinate the U.S. response to situations where mass atrocities and genocide are imminent or ongoing. The internal review process for this new Board has been completed, and a high-level roll-out should take place soon.

## WORKING GROUPS

- The **Korea Working Group (KWG)** briefed Congressional staffers on USIP's Track 1.5 work on post-Kim Jong-il changes in North Korea and implications for stability in Northeast Asia. On January 27, the KWG convened a closed briefing for Glyn Davies (U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy) and Clifford Hart (U.S. Special Envoy for the Six-Party Talks) on developments in Sino-DPRK relations during the early phase of the new leadership structure in Pyongyang and unintended consequences for U.S. policy towards North Korea.
- The **Lebanon Working Group (LWG)** hosted a discussion addressing the impact on Lebanon of rising tensions between the West and Iran, as well as how Iran's response to Syria's deepening crisis could resonate in Lebanon. Discussants were Ellen Laipson, President and CEO of the Stimson Center and Aram Nerguizian, Visiting Fellow and Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.
- On February 2, the **Working Group on the Responsibility to Protect** hosted a research team from the University of Queensland, Australia, for a sub-group meeting on "Working with Local Strengths: Implementing R2P Pillar II". The next Working Group session on "International Challenges to R2P Implementation" will take place on March 9th.
- The **Yemen Working Group** hosted Dr. Jamal Benomar, U.N. Special Envoy to Yemen, on January 5 for a discussion on the unfolding transitional period in Yemen and the challenges ahead for reform and stability in the country.



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