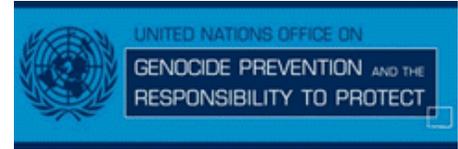


**GLOBAL CENTRE
FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY
TO PROTECT**



UPHOLDING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT: THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN PREVENTING ATROCITY CRIMES

UNITED NATIONS, 14 September 2016 - The Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations (UN) and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect will convene a high-level event on *“Upholding the Responsibility to Protect: The Role of Religious Leaders in Preventing Atrocity Crimes”* on Tuesday 20 September at 3:00pm-4:30pm in Conference Room 2, United Nations Headquarters. The event will be held on the margins of the opening of the 71st session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

From the Holocaust to Srebrenica, the international community has witnessed how religious intolerance has been utilized to incite hatred, resulting in the commission of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Religious leaders can assist States to uphold their Responsibility to Protect in many ways, including by disseminating messages of tolerance and reconciliation that help to prevent incitement to violence, heal divided societies and foster social cohesion and resilience to atrocity crimes.

In the Central African Republic, the eruption of conflict in 2012 spiraled into a situation where atrocity crimes were committed against civilians on the basis of their religious identity. Recognizing the importance of post-conflict reconciliation in the country, in November 2015 His Holiness Pope Francis travelled to the Central African Republic on a mission of peace. During his visit, Pope Francis met with both Christian and Muslim communities and delivered messages of tolerance, which contributed to the largely peaceful elections in 2015-2016.

“The Responsibility to Protect is principally about the duty of national governments and the international community to protect people from the threats of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. But governments cannot fulfill those duties alone,” said Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations. *“Religious leaders are important catalysts in motivating governments and the international community to fulfill their duties and in persuading parties in conflict toward the actions that restore, sustain and build peace.”*

The objective of this meeting is to have an open and constructive discussion about the action that religious leaders and organizations can take to prevent atrocity crimes, as well as ways to build inclusive and peaceful societies. Dr. Simon Adams, Executive Director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, noted: *“With 65 million human beings displaced by war and conflict, religious leaders are often in the front line helping to ease tensions and help bridge divided communities.”*

Keynote speeches will be delivered by religious leaders from Christian, Islamic, Jewish and other religious communities. Mr. Adama Dieng, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, will provide an overview of the Fez Plan of Action - a strategy developed by religious leaders to encourage them to play an active role in preventing atrocity crimes, in particular by

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preventing incitement to violence that could lead to these crimes. *“At this time, when the world is facing complex challenges in its efforts to protect populations, Governments and all leading actors in society should take action to counter prejudice, hostility, and the spread of misinformation that can be used to incite violence. Religious leaders have a special responsibility, given the respect in which they are held and their influence over their followers.”* Special Adviser Dieng stated.

What: Upholding the Responsibility to Protect: The Role of Religious Leaders in Preventing Atrocity Crimes

When: Tuesday 20 September, 3:00 – 4:30 pm EST

Where: Conference Room 2, UN Headquarters, New York

Registration: To RSVP please visit

holyseemission.org/RSVPseptember20[\[holyseemission.org\]](http://holyseemission.org)

About the Responsibility to Protect

The Responsibility to Protect - known as R2P - is an international principle that seeks to ensure that the international community never again fails to halt atrocity crimes, by which we mean genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. R2P was unanimously adopted in 2005 at the United Nations World Summit, the largest gathering of Heads of State and Government in history.

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