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**Statement in Support of the
Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2017**

As a former U.S. Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues (1997-2001), I strongly support the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2017 (the “Atrocities Prevention Act”) that is being introduced by Senator Cardin and joined by a distinguished bipartisan group of his fellow U.S. Senators. The legislation targets a glaring weakness in how the U.S. Government identifies and manages an issue that engages core national security interests and the values that underpin the United States as the global power it is and must remain. The cost of atrocities prevention always will be far less than the costs of massive military interventions to confront situations that have spiraled out of control and of rebuilding and restoring devastated societies in the aftermath of atrocity crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity, and large-scale war crimes. This is an “eyes wide open” bill that ensures the United States is not caught flat-footed when atrocities are on the horizon so that we minimize situations that confront us later with the onslaught of atrocities—and all the costs entailed with refugee flows, humanitarian needs, and military responses, and with the decades of foreign assistance required for restoration.

The Atrocities Prevention Act directs the creation of a Mass Atrocities Task Force in the State Department with periodic reporting requirements to Congress. This constitutes the minimum that should be undertaken to provide policy-makers with the information they must have to develop appropriate pre-emptive measures in the face of atrocities. Secondly, the Act would train Foreign Service Officers to recognize patterns of escalations and early warning signs of atrocity crimes and the full range of means of response. Without that training, FSOs can easily overlook or miss the indicators or precursors of atrocity crimes leading to international crises. Third, the Atrocities Prevention Act would urge the Director of National Intelligence to include in testimony to Congress a review of countries and regions at risk of atrocity crimes, including immediate risks. That is just common sense. Finally, the legislation would establish the Complex Crises Fund to provide some relevant assistance for programs and activities aimed at prevention of atrocities.

I believe that the Atrocities Prevention Act would represent Elie Wiesel’s moral commitment to ending genocide and other atrocity crimes with every means at our disposal. This Act is the very least we can do to honor his memory.


David J. Scheffer