

# The Effect of Naming And Shaming on Mass Atrocities and Closely-Related Outcomes

## Tools for Atrocity Prevention: Evidence Brief

*The 1979 Report of the President’s Commission on the Holocaust, which led to the creation of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, stated, “Only a conscious, concerted attempt to learn from past errors can prevent recurrence to any racial, religious, ethnic, or national group.”*

*The “lessons learned” project of the Museum’s Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide is one way the institution seeks to carry out the charge to identify lessons from history that can potentially contribute to saving lives by preventing future genocides and related crimes against humanity.*

*To identify these insights, we reviewed academic articles and think tank reports, and interviewed experts. We then distilled this body of policy-relevant knowledge into an accessible, practical resource.*

*Read more about our approach at: [www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/simon-skjodt-center/work/research/lessons-learned](http://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/simon-skjodt-center/work/research/lessons-learned)*

## Definition

Naming and shaming is the publicizing of “rights-based violations and their perpetrators (naming) and bring[ing] more pressure to bear on perpetrators of rights violations to change their behavior (shaming)” (Krain 2012, p. 575; Keck and Sikkink 1998).

## Connection between naming and shaming and atrocity prevention strategies

If naming and shaming imposes reputational costs on perpetrators and/or increases the expected future costs of committing atrocities, it would reduce the likelihood or severity of mass atrocities (Krain 2012; DeMeritt 2012). If naming and shaming imposes reputational and political costs that encourage perpetrators to consider exiting their positions of power, it would reduce the likelihood or severity of mass atrocities by helping facilitate a political transition.

This tool supports the following strategies:

- Dissuading potential perpetrators from committing mass atrocities
- Facilitating leadership or political transition

## Overview

Our research review includes 19 reports: 2 that address the effects of naming and shaming on mass atrocities and 17 that address the effects of naming and shaming on closely related outcomes, such as civilian killings, human rights violations, and conflict recurrence. It found the following:

- A mix of findings as to whether naming and shaming was effective in helping prevent mass atrocities or closely-related outcomes, and
- Limited evidence on which specific factors contribute to the effectiveness of naming and shaming in helping prevent mass atrocities.

## Success factors

*We list below only those factors on which we found relatively strong or moderate evidence that the factor is associated with naming and shaming being more effective at decreasing mass atrocities or closely-related outcomes. These include contextual factors, which describe the circumstances in which the tool is used but which are beyond the control of policymakers, and design factors, which describe the manner in which policymakers use the tool.*

Our research review did not find any studies that referenced the impact of specific contextual factors on the effectiveness of naming and shaming in preventing mass atrocities or closely-related outcomes.

## Design factors

DESIGN FACTOR	DESCRIPTION	STRENGTH OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE	OUTCOMES STUDIED
International organization implementer	The tool implementer is an international governmental organization.	Moderate	Human rights violations, Mass atrocities, Violence against civilians

## Case Illustrations

*Naming and shaming was used in both Guinea and Sudan to help prevent or respond to mass atrocities. Read the brief illustrations below to learn how this tool was used in these cases.*

### Guinea (2009–10)

On September 28, 2009, Guinea’s security forces opened fire on thousands of civilians congregated in a stadium in the city of Conakry who were gathered to peacefully protest the presidential candidacy of military junta leader Moussa Dadis Camara ([Amnesty 2019](#)). The incident resulted in over 150 civilian deaths, over 1,500 injured, the rape of over 40 women, and mass detention and torture of civilians ([Amnesty 2010](#)). US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton named and shamed the junta’s actions stating, “It was criminality of the greatest degree, and those who committed such acts should not be given any reason to expect that they will escape justice,” and US deputy assistant secretary of state William Fitzgerald directed the blame for the massacre to the president, openly stating, “Mr. President, whether you like it or not, it’s tied to you. You are responsible for Sept. 28. The buck stops with you” ([Nossiter 2009](#)). The naming and shaming effort was enhanced as France, international NGOs, and the UN Secretary-General additionally publicly condemned Camara, and sanctions were imposed on the junta by the European Union, the African Union (AU), and the Economic Community of West African States ([Campbell 2009](#)). The International Criminal Court (ICC) additionally opened an investigation into the crimes, as Guinea was a signatory to the Rome Statute ([MacFarquhar 2009](#)). In December 2009, Camara was injured in an assassination attempt and left the country to recover in Morocco. He then moved to Burkina Faso, paving the way for democratic elections in Guinea in 2010, and has been denied re-entry to Guinea by the new government ever since ([BBC 2015](#)).

### Sudan (2003–present)

In 2003, violence erupted in the Darfur region of western Sudan after two rebel groups, the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudan Liberation Army, took up arms against Sudan’s Arab-led government citing “Khartoum’s neglect and political marginalization of the region” ([Faris 2007](#)). Sudan’s President Omar al-Bashir responded with a brutal counterinsurgency led by a government-backed Arab militia, the Janjaweed, and “as of spring 2020, over 480,000 people have been killed and more than 2.8 million people are displaced” ([World Without Genocide](#)). In 2004 numerous senior US officials, including then-Secretary of State Colin Powell and members of Congress, openly declared the situation in Darfur genocide ([Hamilton 2011](#)). That same year the United States was additionally the first and only UN Security Council member to call the atrocities genocide, playing a pivotal role in drawing international attention to

the atrocities, and catalyzing the citizen-led “Save Darfur” movement ([HRW 2005](#)). In addition to the genocide declaration, senior US officials publicly condemned the atrocities and called out al-Bashir for his personal responsibility on many occasions (e.g., [White House 2007](#), [US Department of State 2009](#)). Naming and shaming efforts were accompanied by numerous other actions that sought to end the atrocities, including mediation, ICC investigations, US sanctions, and a joint UN-AU peacekeeping operation. Despite the persistence of US and international efforts to end the atrocities in Darfur, violence continues, albeit at lower levels, and al-Bashir remained in power until 2019.

## Selected informational resources on US government use of naming and shaming

### *US executive branch public statements:*

- Example of presidential statement:
  - [President’s Statement on Violence in Darfur, Sudan \(2004\)](#)
- Example of press release:
  - [Joint Statement on Xinjiang \(2021\)](#)
- Example of statement by the spokesperson at daily briefing:
  - [US Department of State Daily Press Briefing \(1994\)](#)

### *Congressional resolutions and statements:*

- Example of resolution:
  - [S.Res. 684 on Cameroon](#)
- Example of floor statement:
  - [Senator Leahy on atrocities in Tigray](#)
- Example of committee hearing:
  - [Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on the Rohingya crisis](#)
- Example of press release:
  - [Meeks, McCaul Issue Joint Statement on the Conflict and Humanitarian Crisis in Ethiopia’s Tigray Region](#)

### *Multilateral institution resolutions and statements:*

- UN Security Council:
  - Example of resolution: [Resolution 1970 \(2011\) on Libya](#)
  - Example of presidential statement: [Security Council Press Statement on Acts of Terrorism in Lake Chad Basin Region](#)

- UN Human Rights Council
  - Example of resolution: [Resolution 46/23 on the Situation of Human Rights in South Sudan](#)
  - Example of special session: [29th special session of the Human Rights Council on the human rights implications of the crisis in Myanmar](#)
  - Example of Universal Periodic Review: [Advance questions to the Syrian Arab Republic](#)

**The Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide**

of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum works to prevent genocide and related crimes against humanity. The Simon-Skjodt Center is dedicated to stimulating timely global action to prevent genocide and to catalyze an international response when it occurs. Our goal is to make the prevention of genocide a core foreign policy priority for leaders around the world through a multi-pronged program of research, education, and public outreach. We work to equip decision makers, starting with officials in the United States but also extending to other governments, with the knowledge, tools, and institutional support required to prevent—or, if necessary, halt—genocide and related crimes against humanity.



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