

# Enablers of Mass Atrocities

## What does it mean to “enable” mass atrocities?

Mass atrocities are organized crimes whose perpetrators need money, weapons, transportation, and other means to commit widespread and systematic violence against civilians. A country, commercial entity, or individual enables mass atrocities when it provides resources, goods, services, or other practical support to the perpetrator, and when this support is a critical ingredient in the commission of the atrocities.

### Examples:

■ Countries such as China, Russia, and Chad have provided arms and ammunition to the government forces and rebel groups committing atrocities against civilians in **Darfur, Sudan**.



■ Commercial dealers in the United Arab Emirates and other countries are the source of trucks that are turned into militarized vehicles and used to wage attacks against civilians across large desert areas in **Darfur, Sudan**.

■ In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, commercial actors involved with the extraction and trade of minerals such as coltan, gold, and tungsten from mines controlled by armed groups help to generate revenues for the perpetrators of mass atrocities against civilians.

■ In **Burma**, the country’s military rulers derive massive export earnings from their gem mines, which help to finance their brutal repression of that country’s citizens.

In these and other cases, enablers can also include many other actors, such as air cargo carriers and shipping companies that transport goods to the perpetrators; banks that handle or manage the perpetrators’ assets; telecommunications companies whose goods and services are used to coordinate attacks; and individuals or networks that provide financing or act as brokers to the perpetrators.



## Why is it important to confront the enablers of mass atrocities?

History has shown that perpetrators are seldom able to carry out mass atrocities on their own but instead depend on third-party enablers for the means to carry out these crimes.

Identifying enablers and curbing their activities can restrict or choke off the perpetrators’ access to money, weapons, transportation, and other critical materials or services.

By targeting the enablers, it becomes more difficult and expensive for perpetrators to carry out atrocities, which can change their behavior and contribute to halting violence against civilians.

Policy makers seeking practical approaches to prevent or halt atrocities can find new levers by taking on the enablers of atrocities in addition to the direct perpetrators.



## How can the U.S. and other countries confront the enablers of mass atrocities?

■ By gathering intelligence on enablers in atrocity situations, policy makers can get a full picture of what’s happening on the ground and a wider range of options for taking action.

■ By shining a light on the problematic role of enablers, policy makers can spur some countries and companies to take new steps to avoid contributing to atrocities.

■ By supporting efforts by weak states and by regional organizations to strengthen their law enforcement capacity, policy makers can help them tackle the enablers of atrocities.

■ By applying the range of existing tools used to address other transnational threats—such as terrorist financing and drug-trafficking—and by enforcing targeted sanctions, policy makers can effectively take action to interdict the enablers of atrocities. 