After witnessing the untold suffering of humankind and the holocaust of the second world war, the United Nations was established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Soon after its establishment, the **General Assembly adopted the historic convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide**, commonly known as Genocide Convention in 1948. Despite the international community's resounding 'no' to genocides, the shadow of mass atrocity crimes continues to loom large in different parts of the world. There are still far too many inequities, injustices and multipliers of risks for us to remain complacent about our ability to contain the horrors and atrocities lurking around the corner. **The recent events in the Gaza Strip, Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and Rakhine State in Myanmar are some of the most horrifying tragedies we have seen unfolding before our eyes.**

**Let me shed some light on our genocide happened in 1971.**

Bangladesh experienced an extreme form of genocide during our War of Liberation in 1971. The Pakistani military regime felt morally and politically challenged by the overwhelming electoral victory won by the Bengali nationalists under the leadership of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and, in response, opted for genocidal attack on the Bengali people in order to preserve their stranglehold on power. **What we understand from our genocide, it was the ideological foundation- the conviction of the then West Pakistan leadership that Bangladeshis were an inferior and almost subhuman race, which is evidential**
from their actions and formal statements. General Niazi, the last Governor and Chief of Eastern Command of Pakistan Army to the then East Pakistan, which is Bangladesh now put it like “a low-lying land of low, lying people”.

When the British left the Indian Subcontinent in 1947, East and West Pakistan, separated by two thousand kilometers, only had religion in common. The West Pakistan started marginalizing Bangladeshis from its rights in every aspect from the very beginning. First, they denied to recognize our language and subsequently denying other rights. In 1970 general election, Bangladesh Awami League, the political party led by our Father of the Nation won the absolute majority, but they were denied to form the government. Rather, Pakistan regime unleashed their military on their own citizens in Bangladesh. On the night of 25 March in 1971, they started mass killing of our unarmed civilians. As evidential from different international media reports, they killed several thousands targeted civilians in that night. This incident led our father of the nation to declare our independence in the very next day. During the nine-month long occupation, three million Bengali civilians perished in the black hole of genocide, more than two hundred thousand women were raped and more than ten million people were forced to take refuge in neighboring India and thirty to forty million people were internally displaced. A small minority of ideologically motivated local collaborators and auxiliary forces participated and abetted in committing these mass atrocity crimes.

Professor Dr. Adam Jones from British Columbia University in his research work on our genocide divided this mass killing into three categories, which are-

a. Gendercide: targeting Bengali men and boys
b. Politicide: the attempt to eliminate all actual and potential supporters of our main stream political parties
c. Eliticide: targeting the intellectuals and academics, cultural figures, media workers.

This eliticide was so planned that, only couple of days before their surrender, they killed more than thousand of our renowned professors, doctors, journalists, writers, cultural activists to destroy the nation.

Their killing fulfills the all five acts of genocide mentioned in Article Two of the Genocide Convention.
Gregory H. Stanton a research Professor of George Mason University, Virginia and best known for his work in the area of genocide studies mentioned genocide has eight stages or operational processes and each state reinforces the others. The last stage is denial, which was not different in our case as well.

Aftermath of independence:
Justice seeking is, of course, an important element of the wider shaping of memory and memorialization in the aftermath of genocide. Soon after the independence in 1971, our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman started this work besides the reconstruction and rebuilding of a war-ravaged country. In 1973, The International Crimes Tribunal Act was enacted to try the perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Sadly, the father of the nation was brutally assassinated with 18 members of his family in 1975, in following months other national level leaders were killed. This had been the major setback in our rebuilding process of the nation and ensuring justice for the victims.

Prosecuting the perpetrators
In March 2010, the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina ratified the Rome Statue and voluntarily subjected ourselves to the International Criminal Court. In the same month, the government established the International Crimes Tribunal, Bangladesh (ICT-BD) to end the culture of impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of 1971 genocide, uphold the rule of law and bring justice to the victims and their families traumatized by their experience. In the meantime, we had gathered lessons from the work done by the International Tribunals for Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, among others. Our Tribunal has been established in pursuance of the principle of complementarity recognized by the Rome Statute. So far, the Tribunal has given 35 verdicts. This was a result for our nation’s long quest for justice.

You would be happy to know that, our National Parliament on 11 March 2017 unanimously adopted a resolution to remember March 25 as the ‘National Genocide Day’. Remembrance is intrinsically related to rendering justice to victims and reconciliation. Remembering the victims of genocide and the crimes committed in the past would definitely contribute to our understanding of the present and guide our actions in the future. Our national observance
complements the UN decision to observe 09 December as the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime.

**Genocide experience guides our domestic and foreign policy and actions**

We are grateful that the people of Bangladesh had never allowed the horrific crimes of 1971 to escape their collective memory, even in an environment of impunity. The painful memories had been passed on from generation to generation. **The tribulations suffered by our refugees in 1971 have guided us to play hosts for decades to those fleeing from fear and persecution from Myanmar's Rakhine State, including nearly 700,000 Rohingya who have entered our territory since August 2017.** We are now closely working with the UN and other partners to help address the root causes of this crisis in Myanmar, and facilitate the voluntary return of the Rohingya in safety and dignity. The international community must not allow this atrocity happening at this twenty-first century. They have certain role to play. I believe, Mr. Moderator, your organization Global Center for R2P is working relentlessly to mobilize necessary political will to stop this crisis. **Further, our long, arduous struggle with the war-ravaged country has inspired us to contribute to the UN Peacekeeping Operations in different parts of the world in lead numbers and in UN Peacebuilding efforts.**

**Conclusion**

Before concluding, I would like to quote from former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold, who said *‘UN was not created to take the humankind to the heaven, rather it was created to save the humankind from the hell’*. Here lies the responsibility of this global community. Which is complemented by another quote from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, which says *‘Far from being consigned to history, genocide and its ilk remain a serious threat. Not just vigilance but a willingness to act are as important today as ever.’*

We strongly believe that the messages of prevention, prosecution and memorialization of genocides need to be resonated through all regions and continents of the World. As part of its foreign policy pursuits, Bangladesh would remain invested in doing its part in the world stage to drive home the message of *‘never again’* in relation to genocides and other mass atrocity crimes. I thank you.