

“Turning Promise into Practice:”^[1] The Challenges of and Next Steps for Implementing the Responsibility to Protect



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^[1] UN Secretary-General, 2008

What is the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)?

- R2P is the commitment of the international community (through the UN) to protect populations from genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing
- Key documents
 - UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/1 (October 2005)
 - UN Security Council Resolution 1674 (September 2006)

What was the rationale behind R2P, and why do we still need it?

- History of mass atrocities
- Despite successes, countless cases of international community's inability and/or unwillingness to prevent and end mass atrocities
- Ongoing cases of mass atrocities

The Challenges to Implementing R2P

- 1) Strengthening the understanding of R2P
 - Primary myths and critiques
- 2) Operationalizing it
 - Existing programs
 - Sufficient resources
 - Criteria for the coercive use of force
- 3) Building political will
 - Strong opposition to R2P, despite its adoption
 - Difficulty regarding prevention
 - Humanitarian aid vs. effectively addressing the core problems

The Next Steps for Implementing R2P

- 1) Strengthen the understanding of R2P
 - Explain what R2P is, its scope and limits
 - Toolbox of policy measures
 - Identify examples of R2P responses
- 2) Operationalize R2P
 - Common themes
 - Prevention
 - Early warning
 - Timely and decisive responses
- 3) Build political will
 - Defend from misuse
 - Raise the political costs of inaction for governments
 - Build on support from the “Global South,” incl. Rwanda

Reasons for Optimism & Action

Optimism

- UN Secretary-General supportive of R2P
- Creation last year of UN Special Adviser on R2P
- Formation of international coalition of civil society groups working to implement R2P

Action

- UN General Assembly debate on R2P and Secretary-General's report on implementing R2P
- Further research, creativity and strategies needed

Resources about R2P and Mass Atrocities

Websites

- International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP):
<http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/>
- Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P):
<http://www.globalr2p.org/>
- Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APR2P):
<http://www.r2pasiapacific.org/>
- Genocide Prevention Month (April is Genocide Prevention Month):
<http://www.genocidepreventionmonth.org/>

Readings

- Gareth Evans. *The Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and For All*.
- Samantha Power. "A Problem from Hell:" *America and the Age of Genocide*
- Responsibility to Protect-Engaging Civil Society Project. *Global Consultative Roundtables on the Responsibility to Protect: Civil Society Perspectives and Recommendations for Action*.

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