



## R2P – A Short History

Source: [www.unric.org](http://www.unric.org)

The notion of protecting human lives and preventing large scale massacres goes back a long way. In 1864 the International Red Cross was established and through the years many other organizations have been established to help the downtrodden and people being abused. After World War II the UN resolution 260 of 9 December 1948 adopted the convention on the *Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* as a direct response to the horror of the Holocaust. The Wars in Indochina in the 1960s and 70s was also a turning point in many ways. Young people all over the world witnessed on their TV screen the atrocities that happen during a war, and the first televised famine in Biafra help spur further commitment to humanitarian work.

The modern turning point for the notion of “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) came out of the Rwanda experience. “Rwanda in 1994, the genocide, was a very important piece of this,” Edward Luck, the special advisor to the UN Secretary General on R2P told UN News Centre recently. He traces the story back to World War II: “Before that, there were the killing fields in Cambodia, after Rwanda there was the slaughter in the forests of Srebrenica. There was a whole series of such scars on the 20<sup>th</sup> century, going really all the way back to the Holocaust, which created a terrible stain on human history: mass violence targeted against one part of the population or another,” Luck explained.

Speaking at a seminar in Brussels recently, Kiyoo Akasaka, the UN Secretary General for Communication and Public Information, said that the idea of R2P is not new with respect to states securing their people, but new in that the international community can intervene to protect civilians.

After the NATO intervention in the former Yugoslavia in 1999 there was a lot of debate on the legality of the intervention and so two years after, in 2001, the idea of R2P was first voiced, as a reaction to former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s initiative. In late 2001 the Canadian government created the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), that released its report *Responsibility to Protect* which advocated that state sovereignty is a responsibility, and that the international community could, as a last resort use military intervention to prevent “mass atrocities”. The African Union (AU) later endorsed the idea and put in its founding charter of 2005 that the “protection of human and peoples rights” would be a principle objective of the AU and that the Union had the right “to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.”

At the World Summit in 2005 the member states included R2P in the Outcome Document. The next year, in April 2006, the UN Security Council formalized their support of the R2P by reaffirming the provisions of the paragraphs from the World Summit document. Finally the UN



Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon released a report the same year, *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect*, which argued for the implementation for R2P and its arguments were subsequently discussed at the 2009 UN General Assembly, resulting in Resolution (A/RES/63/308) which acknowledges the debate and Ban Ki-moon's report and proposes the General Assembly to continue its consideration of R2P.

The international community now has a tool that could prevent further mass atrocities, as Edward Luck puts it: "Breaking that cycle of violence is something that everyone has talked about for years and years, but now it's an effort to have a comprehensive systematic program to try to do something about it. It's not easy, but it's well worth trying."

Facts: Definition of the Responsibility to Protect

- The State carries the primary responsibility for the protection of populations from mass atrocities such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.
- The international community has a responsibility to assist States in fulfilling this responsibility.
- The international community should use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means to protect populations from these crimes. If a State fails to protect its populations or is in fact the perpetrator of crimes, the international community must be prepared to take stronger measures, including the collective use of force through the UN Security Council.

**Please read the following article:**

<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/the-responsibility-to-protect-background-briefing.pdf>

General Discussion Questions:

R2P as it was introduced in the ICISS report covers a broad range of activities from root cause prevention to post-intervention rebuilding. For the purposes of this discussion, however, we would like to focus on three discrete ways in which R2P can be taken forward by NGOs:

1. Advancing advocacy of the responsibility to protect principles

- How do we describe the R2P commitment? The view of R2P as a continuum of actions ranging from assisting host governments to addressing internal situations, to application of pressure through sanctions and moral suasion, to military intervention was a crucial element for acceptance of R2P. Do we agree on an understanding of R2P as a continuum of action?
- Measures currently being taken and those that are needed for awareness raising and enhancing acceptance of R2P principles among policy makers and the general public.
- Identification of additional government and non-governmental allies.



- Strategies for advocacy in capitals to allay concerns and build support, particularly within NAM and G-77.
2. How to operationalize R2P
- What different UN agencies and other bodies can be expected to be engaged in R2P situations? Human Rights Council, OCHCR, Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, DPKO, others?
  - Should these or other UN entities be tasked with “referring” R2P situations to the Security Council when other measures to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing are not or would not be successful? If so, which bodies?
  - Directly engaging the Security Council: how could we move the Council toward becoming seized of situations involving the security of the people rather than that of states? Should the council invoke “R2P” language in its resolutions as a basis for its actions, including reference to UNSC Resolution 1674?
  - How should R2P relate to efforts on protection of civilians more broadly?
3. How to apply R2P to existing/outbreaking crises?
- Can indicators be developed to assess when a situation is at a different stage requiring corresponding action from the UN, including, as a last resort, enforcement measures?
  - Which situations should we focus on as cases in which R2P is applicable? Darfur, northern Uganda, Syria, Zimbabwe?
  - How should we proceed?

After reading the previous information on R2P and having a general discussion, your instructor will assign you in to groups of 4 for a mini-debate. You will be given time to prepare in pairs (one pair pro and one pair con). This is an opportunity for you to have an exchange using your formal Academic English.

Time schedule:

Opening PRO – 1m

Closing CON – 1m

Opening CON – 1m

Closing PRO – 1m

Cross fire – 10m