

What can your organization do to advance and promote the Responsibility to Protect?

Civil society, which includes non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and the media, is a critical actor for the advancement of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP, R2P), a new international security and human rights norm to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. There are numerous actions that civil society can take independently or as part of a network to promote RtoP more broadly and also prevent mass atrocities and protect populations when there is an imminent or ongoing threat:

- ❖ **Build understanding of the Responsibility to Protect by educating the public, governments, parliamentarians, media, private sector and academia**
 - **Hold a public event or closed-door training** on RtoP, [country cases](#) and [related themes](#).
 - Develop, translate and disseminate [educational materials](#) in local languages.
 - **Reference RtoP** when publishing **articles, op-eds, research and policy reports** on country cases or related themes.
 - **Speak out** in situations when RtoP is being misused or abused and **clarify** when it should be applied. **Call for actors at all levels to take action** when there is imminent risk of RtoP crimes and **hold governments accountable** in situations where populations are threatened or crimes are ongoing.
- ❖ **Advocate for the strengthening of national and regional institutions to protect populations from mass atrocities**
 - Strengthen national institutions and the capacity of your government and regional organization to protect populations by calling for: **politicians to make references to RtoP** or preventing and protecting populations from mass atrocities in statements; the **adoption of legislation** to ensure equal rights for minorities and vulnerable populations; strengthen or, if not in place, develop **domestic and regional policies and structures** to prevent mass atrocities; governments to **sign on to international human rights treaties and protocols**; the **establishment of a national focal point** on RtoP.
 - **Support and enhance domestic and regional justice systems** by monitoring the work of and providing legal support to judicial institutions.
- ❖ **Build a constituency of support for RtoP and increase NGO work on the norm**
 - **Convene or support regular dialogues with a small group of NGOs** where they can debate and discuss the latest updates on RtoP, its application to crisis situations, the response of governments and regions to normative developments, and strategize on advocacy.
 - **Join the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect** as a Member or NGO Supporter.
 - **Connect with other NGOs, academic institutions, and the general public using social media** to share news and analysis, publications, and events.
- ❖ **Conduct Research and Policy Development**
 - **Publish research and policy briefs** on various aspects of and themes related to the norm to enhance understanding of and contribute to discourse on RtoP.

Within your networks and communities, consider the following questions on how to put RtoP into practice:

- What are the main questions or concerns for your NGO and community about RtoP?
- What non-coercive measures should NGOs ask the UN, governments and regional organizations to apply? If these measures are not sufficient to protect, would your NGO consider calling for coercive action through the UN or regional organizations?

Consider raising the following questions when engaging with regional and government officials:

- Are officials aware of the commitment to RtoP made at the 2005 World Summit?
- Does the official/parliamentarian hold reservations about the RtoP doctrine?
- Is your government taking steps to incorporate the Responsibility to Protect into its policies?
- What strategies and mechanisms are in place within your government or regional organization to prevent mass atrocities?
- Does your government or regional arrangement have a mechanism to interact with civil society on these issues?

How is my organization already working to realize the Responsibility to Protect?

Promoting the Responsibility to Protect overlaps with many sectors, including: human rights; conflict prevention; governance and rule of law; peace and security; international justice; peacebuilding; humanitarian assistance; women's groups; and faith groups. Civil society is already contributing to the protection of populations through a wide range of measures and initiatives including, but not limited to:

❖ **Monitoring and documenting on-the-ground atrocities; sharing early warning and assessment with other actors**

- **Monitoring potential crises on the ground or remotely** through fact-finding initiatives and media monitoring, looking in particular for indicators of mass atrocities or incitement.
- **Alerting other actors to potential and nascent conflicts** by sharing early warning information and assessments with national, regional and international early warning mechanisms, including during vulnerable periods such as political transitions and elections.



UN Photo/Basile Zoma

❖ **Mediation, negotiation and dispute resolution to defuse tension between communities**

- **Encouraging disputing parties to negotiate** and resolve crises nonviolently.
- **Supporting, participating in, or leading efforts to mediate** or resolve conflicts.

❖ **Training civilian protection and physical protection personnel**

- **Facilitating training of civilian and military personnel** to prepare these actors for protection operations, focusing on the ability to recognize indicators of mass atrocities, minimize civilian casualties and prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence and threats to children in armed conflict.
- **Assessing RtoP indicators and analyzing past crises** to provide actors with lessons learned and best practices to enhance preventive strategies.

❖ **Recovery post-trauma, including supporting and assisting with peace and reconciliation processes**

- Independently or in coordination with other civil society, government, and intergovernmental actors, **conducting an assessment of the needs of communities** so as to develop reconstruction strategies.
- **Facilitating and assisting with post-crisis peace and development processes**, placing emphasis on the **importance of ensuring equal representation** of minority populations, women, and other vulnerable groups in reconciliation efforts.