



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

# The Responsibility to Protect:

## A new norm for preventing and halting mass atrocities

### Why the Responsibility to Protect is needed.

The world has failed time and again to prevent and halt mass atrocities (genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing), including the Holocaust, the genocides in Armenia, Bosnia and Rwanda and crimes against humanity in Cambodia, Kosovo, East Timor and Darfur. These failures and the unconscionable suffering and loss of millions of lives have given impetus to the call “never again.” The ongoing situations in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burma/Myanmar gave rise to the need for a new commitment from governments worldwide to act in the face of mass atrocities.

### The Responsibility to Protect is a commitment to prevent and halt mass atrocities.

Recognizing the failure to adequately respond to the most heinous crimes known to humankind, world leaders made a commitment to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity at the United Nations (UN) 2005 World Summit. This commitment, entitled the Responsibility to Protect, stipulates that:

1. The State carries the primary responsibility for the protection of populations from mass atrocities.
2. The international community has a responsibility to assist States in fulfilling this responsibility.
3. 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.

### The Responsibility to Protect guards against the misuse of military intervention.

RtoP aims to prevent the misuse or abuse of military or humanitarian intervention in three ways. First, while understanding that RtoP is a broad framework with preventive and reactive measures, military intervention can only be allowed when the State has manifestly failed to protect its populations and when peaceful means have proven to be inadequate. Second, intervention under the RtoP must specifically protect populations from *four types of mass atrocities only*. Third, as agreed to in 2005, RtoP legitimizes the use of force only if it is employed collectively through the Security Council. While governments and civil society are rightfully concerned about the misuse of military force, experience has demonstrated that the greatest danger is not that governments will intervene improperly to stop atrocities but that they will not act at all.

### The Responsibility to Protect receives support from all regions of the world.

The necessity for a collective body to intervene in circumstances of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity was first enshrined in 2000 by the African Union (AU) in its founding document, the AU Constitutive Act. In fact, RtoP principles were adopted by the AU even before being adopted by all countries at the UN in September 2005. During the 2005 World Summit negotiations, RtoP received crucial support from governments in Latin America, Asia and Africa. More recently, during the July 2009 UN General Assembly (GA) debate on RtoP, governments from every region voiced support for the norm and called for its implementation at the international, regional and national levels.

### The Responsibility to Protect now requires us to move from words to deeds.

Embracing RtoP and affirming a commitment to protect populations from the four crimes is a first essential step. Now, States must all live up to their promise. After the success of the 2009 GA debate on RtoP, we have asked governments to do the following:

1. Commit to **enhancing early-warning** within the UN and beyond.
2. Implement **national plans of action** on how to protect populations from mass atrocities.
3. Strengthen **collaboration** with international, regional and sub-regional organizations in the prevention of mass atrocities.
4. Provide **assistance** for improving the capacity to protect, including mediation efforts, capacities of regional institutions and standby or standing rapid reaction mechanisms.
5. Commit to **take timely and appropriate action** in specific situations where grave crimes and violations threaten to occur.

# The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect:

## A new NGO network dedicated to preventing and halting mass atrocities worldwide

### Who We Are

The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) is a global network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to advancing the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP or R2P) at the international, regional, sub-regional and national levels. The Coalition was formed in January 2009 by representatives of eight regional and international non-governmental organizations.

### Our Goals

ICRtoP works to achieve the following five goals:

1. Increase awareness of RtoP among governments, NGOs and the public.
2. Push for international, regional, sub-regional and national endorsements of RtoP.
3. Encourage governments, regional and sub-regional organizations and the UN to build the capacity to prevent and halt genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.
4. Help build and strengthen global support from governments for RtoP.
5. Mobilize NGOs to push for action to save lives in RtoP country-specific situations.



UN Photo/Tim Mockalla

### Our Members & Leadership

The Coalition is seeking members from a range of sectors in every region and sub-region to join efforts in advancing RtoP worldwide. The Coalition is led by a Steering Committee, whose founding members are: the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), the International Refugees Rights Initiative (IRRI), the East Africa Law Society (EALS), Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES), Initiatives for

International Dialogue (IID), Oxfam International, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy (WFM-IGP). The Secretariat of the Coalition, located in New York at WFM-IGP, acts as a catalyst for action and assists the implementation of Member initiatives on RtoP.

To see a list of all current ICRtoP members and their work on RtoP, visit [www.responsibilitytoprotect.org](http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org).

### Our Website

Our website is the most complete source of information about RtoP:

- **Background and educational materials** on RtoP at the UN and beyond
- **Recent developments** at the UN, sub-regional, regional and national levels
- Activities and reports from **civil society groups**
- Information and analyses on **RtoP country situations**
- **Academic publications** related to RtoP
- **RtoP-related events** around the world

### Join us!

To follow RtoP developments, RtoP news, events and our work around the world, join our listserv!

[www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/subscribe](http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/subscribe)

For information about how NGOs can join the Coalition,

please see [www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/join-the-coalition](http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/join-the-coalition)

### Contact Us

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