

# ICRtoP

**To: Heads of State and Government on the Occasion of the High Level Ministerial Meetings  
On “Framing the Veto in the Event of Mass Atrocities” and  
“Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against  
genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes”  
30 September and 1 October 2015**

Over the past few years, the United Nations Security Council, due to the veto power wielded irresponsibly by some of its members, has been unable to respond adequately to the greatest humanitarian tragedy of our generation—the crisis in Syria. Despite the international community’s repeated vows to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes, the UN organ primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security has failed to take consistent action to help staunch the ongoing crimes against humanity and war crimes. The incomprehensible statistics of 210,000 dead, 3.9 million refugee count, and 6.5 million internally displaced show the high price that Syrians—and the region at large—have paid for such inaction.

Four vetoes used over the span of three years on *one* crisis cannot be dismissed as an unfortunate but ultimately unsolvable difference of political opinion between Council members. Furthermore, the *threat* of the use of the veto has been equally as obstructive in responding to atrocity crimes, as it curtails even discussing taking action to protect populations. The lack of decisive response when facing atrocities in Syria, Palestine, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, among others, all too clearly shows that the Security Council is unable to discharge its responsibility to maintain international peace and security when the veto is used. Nor can the Council effectively uphold its Responsibility to Protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, a norm agreed upon by all governments in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document.

In this regard, the **International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP)**, the only global civil society network working to prevent and respond to atrocities, welcomes the leadership of the governments of France and Mexico in the development of the political declaration on a voluntary restraint on the use of the veto. The ICRtoP also endorses the ACT Group’s initiative, the “Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes”. The ICRtoP’s global membership urges all governments to support these complementary initiatives and assert that irresponsibly blocking Security Council action to prevent or respond to atrocity crimes will no longer be tolerated.

As we commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations and the ten-year anniversary of the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect, we must act on these new ideas to revitalize the work of the UN so that it can better uphold its obligations to protect populations from atrocities. **The ICRtoP’s global network has been at the forefront of advocating for all members of the Security Council to not obstruct unified action when confronted with a situation that puts civilians at risk of such crimes, and remains ready to assist governments in realizing this objective.**