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Veto on Srebrenica Resolution Hinders Ability to Prevent Next Genocide

International community must develop and implement innovative strategies to restrain use of the veto

With today's veto of a resolution commemorating the Srebrenica genocide, the United Nations Security Council again showed its inability to function properly when the veto is used, the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) said today.

"Unfortunately, today's veto is only the most recent example of the Council failing to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes," said **Don Deya, chair of the ICRtoP**. "Whether it's a resolution on Syria, Palestine, Myanmar—or on a genocide that occurred twenty years ago—vetoes show how this outdated power cripples responses to atrocities by the Council and the world at large."

The use of the veto in situations of atrocity crimes hinders the ability to fulfill the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP, R2P), a landmark norm unanimously agreed to by States in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document. Under RtoP, States and the international community agreed that they had an obligation to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.

The resolution would have acknowledged the massacre of 8,000 civilians (mostly men and boys killed because of their identity) as genocide; called on states to prevent the future commission of genocide and reaffirmed the principle of the Responsibility to Protect in that regard; encouraged States to appoint national focal points on atrocity prevention; and welcomed the use of the UN Framework of Analysis on Atrocity Crimes as an early warning and preventive tool. Among other reasons, Russia vetoed the text on the grounds that the tragedy in Srebrenica fails to qualify as genocide, despite international judicial rulings.

"By vetoing the resolution, Russia has erected a new barrier to reconciliation and remembrance," said **William Pace of ICRtoP member World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy**. "Acknowledging the truth of what happened—and how we *let* it happen—is the only way to honor the victims, live up to our Responsibility to Protect, and prevent future genocides."

Today, the UN Security Council has again shown its divisions when it comes to fulfilling that promise to prevent atrocities; though, the ICRtoP welcomes the strong support shown by most Council members for the resolution and RtoP norm. The vote shows once again the vital need for Permanent Members of the Council to refrain from using their veto when it is facing the gravest of tasks—that of responding to situations of mass atrocities.

The international community must continue to work to develop regulations or pledges to restrain veto use. If not, populations in Syria, Darfur, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea—to name a few—will continue to pay the same price as the victims of Srebrenica.

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Background:

- In 2005, UN Member States unanimously agreed that they had a Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing in the World Summit Outcome Document. Though the primary responsibility to protect lies with the State, the international community has a responsibility to assist States in fulfilling this obligation. When a state manifestly fails to protect its population or is in fact the perpetrator of these crimes, the international community has a responsibility to take collective action in a timely and decisive manner to prevent or halt the commission of atrocity crimes. Such action must be on a case-by-case basis using a broad range of political, economic, and humanitarian measures, and—should peaceful means prove inadequate—coercive measures, including the use of force as authorized by the Security Council and in accordance with the UN Charter.
- The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect is a network of 85 civil society organizations worldwide that works to strengthen consensus for RtoP; further the understanding of the norm; push for strengthened capacities to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes; and mobilize NGOs to push for action to save lives in RtoP country-specific situations.