

Core Documents: Understanding RtoP

In 2001, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) released *The Responsibility to Protect* report, which redefined collective security by introducing a concept of shared responsibility. Since that time, other governments, international officials, academics and civil society organizations have taken up the Responsibility to Protect and contributed to its evolving meaning in the international community. Here is a review of some of these reports:

[1. ICISS, "The Responsibility to Protect "\(PDF\)](#)

The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) was formed in September 2000 under the sponsorship of the Government of Canada with the goal of developing global political consensus about how and when the international community should respond to emerging crises involving the potential for large-scale loss of life and other widespread crimes against humanity.

ICISS concluded that state sovereignty entails responsibility for the protection of the states population. The report also emphasized that there is a secondary responsibility of the international community: "where a population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it," it becomes the responsibility of the international community to intervene for protection purposes. The ICISS principles became known collectively as the Responsibility to Protect and the international community is urged support these Responsibility to Protect principles, emphasizing that prevention must be a priority. [View a Summary of the ICISS Report](#)

[2. The High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, " A More Secure World, Our Shared Responsibility "\(PDF\)](#)

Released in December 2004, this UN report by eminent persons fully embraces the Responsibility to Protect principles. The concepts of collective responses and shared responsibility are at the heart of the report, which recognized that a system of genuine collective security will require addressing the security needs of all states.

The Secretary-General commissioned this group of eminent persons to assess the most urgent global security threats and issue recommendations on meeting them, in anticipation of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and a meeting of world leaders in 2005. The report included 101 recommendations on how the world must meet the worlds security challenges collectively and comprehensively, including by embracing and implementing the Responsibility to Protect.

[3. The Secretary-General, " In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All "\(PDF\)](#)

In preparation for the 60th session of the General Assembly in 2005, the Secretary-General

was asked to report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. After consultations with governments, UN officials and input from civil society, the Secretary-General released a report with recommendations on what issues heads of state and government should address at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly and in years to come.

The three pillars of the United Nations proposed by the Secretary-General – development, security and human rights – form the backbone of his report, which includes recommendations on strengthening the architecture of the international system. In the section entitled Freedom to Live in Dignity, representing the human rights pillar, the Secretary-General recommended that states embrace the merging norm of the Responsibility to Protect.

[4. Responsibility to Protect in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document](#) On 15 September 2005, UN General Assembly Member States embraced the Responsibility to Protect in paragraph 138-139 of the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit. In the historic gathering of world leaders in New York for the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly (World Summit), heads of state and government reached consensus on the [website](#) Responsibility to Protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

[5. Secretary General Ban ki-moon's Berlin Speech](#)

On 15 July, 2008, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon delivered a speech in Berlin, Germany called “Responsible Sovereignty: International Cooperation for a Changed World”. With this speech, Ban Ki-moon offers clarity on the concept of Responsibility to Protect, a pivotal first expression from the Secretariat on what R2P is and is not, the challenges in advancing R2P and his personal commitment to turn the concept into policy.

6. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Reports on RtoP

[a\) 2009 Report: Implementing the Responsibility to Protect](#)

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon released on 12 January 2009 the first comprehensive document from the UN Secretariat on the RtoP entitled implementing the Responsibility to Protect. The report clarifies how to understand RtoP and outlines measures and actors involved in rendering the norm operational. Based on paragraph 138-139 of the World Summit, the Secretary-General suggested a three-pillar approach, namely 1) the protection responsibilities of the state, 2) international assistance and capacity building, and 3) timely and decisive response to prevent and halt genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Secretary-General recommended that the General Assembly meet to consider, based on this report, how Member States will take the 2005 World Summit commitment forward. [See our summary of the report](#)

[b\) 2010 Report: Early Warning, Assessment, and the](#)

[Responsibility to Protect](#)

On 17 July 2010, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon released his report *“Early warning, assessment, and the responsibility to protect”* in an effort to further the General Assembly’s consideration of RtoP. The Secretary General’s report highlights the gaps and capacities facing the mechanisms of early warning and assessment within the UN system

The Report clearly emphasizes the need for further development of RtoP, calling for an informal interactive dialogue to be held in the General Assembly in 2011 on the role of regional and sub-regional organizations in implementing the norm.

[See our summary of the report](#)

[c\) 2011 Report: The Role of Regional and Sub-regional arrangements in Implementing the Responsibility to Protect](#)

On 27 June, 2011, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon released his [report](#)

The role of regional and sub-regional arrangements in implementing the responsibility to protect. Taking special note of recent political events, the Secretary-General sees a natural role for regional and sub-regional arrangements in implementing RtoP as well as a strong relationship between the UN and these bodies, emphasizing that the UN Security Council and regional and sub-regional organization lend legitimacy to each other. The Secretary-General uses the three pillar approach to frame the role of regional and sub-regional organizations, and offers conclusions focusing on areas for collaboration.

[See our summary of the report.](#)

[d\) 2012 Report: Responsibility to Protect – Timely and Decisive Response](#)

20 August 2012 saw the release of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s fourth report on the Responsibility to Protect, entitled, *‘Responsibility to Protect – Timely and Decisive Response’*.¹

The Report focused on the “third pillar” of RtoP, timely and decisive response, and discussed how actors at the international, regional, national and local levels can respond to threats or occurrences of RtoP crimes and violations in a timely and decisive manner. The Report described the broad range of non-coercive and coercive tools available, and though it highlighted the significance of preventing RtoP crimes, it also clarified that where preventive measures proved insufficient and the threat to populations remained imminent, the international community has a responsibility to take collective action to protect civilians. He also discussed the interactive relationship between the three pillars of the responsibility to protect, and noted that whether or not RtoP applies to a situation is not the issue; rather how best to implement the norm should be the paramount discussion.

[See our summary of the report here](#)

[e\) 2013 Report: State Responsibility and Prevention](#)

United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon published his fifth report since 2009 on

the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP, R2P) on 5 August 2013. The report delved into issues of State Responsibility and Prevention, focusing on the responsibility of States to protect their populations by developing the necessary national capacity to build societies resilient to atrocity crimes. The report identifies six risk factors that have been evident to varying degrees in situations where atrocities were committed, as well as reflects on the range of preventive measures available to governments, featuring over 40 examples as implemented by Member States. Additionally, the Report outlines targeted measures, such as establishing early warning mechanisms or designating an atrocities prevention or RtoP focal point, to prevent atrocities.

[See our overview of the report here](#)

[f\) 2014 Report: Responsibility to Protect: International Assistance](#) In August 2014, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon released his sixth Report entitled “[Fulfilling our collective responsibility: international assistance and the Responsibility to Protect](#)” (A/68/947). The Report focuses on Pillar II: the collective responsibility of the international community to assist states in upholding their RtoP. The Report identifies different forms of assistance including encouragement, capacity building, and assisting states to protect their populations. The Report further highlights various partnerships that could enhance the implementation of RtoP. See our overview of the report [here](#)

[g\) 2015 Report: A Vital and Enduring Commitment: Implementing the Responsibility to Protect](#) See our [summary](#) of the 2015 Secretary-General report, which assessed the progression of RtoP over the past ten years, identified core challenges and opportunities for implementation, and detailed six core priorities for the international community to undertake to more effectively fulfill the norm.

[7. Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes](#) In late October 2014, the UN Office for the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect released their new Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes (which, according to the UN World Summit Outcome Document, should be considered to encompass genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.)

In addition to defining atrocity crimes and stressing the importance of prevention, the Framework describes eight common risk factors and six specific risk factors that increase the risk or susceptibility of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.

To read the full Framework of Analysis, click [here](#).

Bibliography and selected articles concerning the responsibility to protect: [click here](#)

