

What Kind of Peace is there to keep in Congo?

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*The following interview is with Alan Doss, the Secretary General's Special Representative in the DRC. He was formally the director of peacekeeping operations in Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone.*

**[Time] How do you explain the attacks on U.N. compounds in Goma?**

[Doss]: It's a combination of things. There is a huge amount of genuine frustration. Then there's the recent outbreak of fresh hostilities. Sometimes the popular frustration is manipulated by political forces to advance their own agenda. The problem is simply practical. There are 10 million people in North and South Kivu, and we have less than 10,000 soldiers there. ()

Congo is the size of Western Europe, without roads. That's the scale of the problem. We cannot be everywhere all of the time. It's not indifference; far from it. We are there as part of a peace process that has collapsed. That's been made worse by the FARDC. It's a very difficult situation to manage. It's not indifference or unwillingness or inability. It's trying to be everywhere at the same time. I think it's also important to remember that the **responsibility to protect** is first and foremost a national responsibility. Armed groups who perpetrate violence need to be held to account. Look at what happened at Kiwanja [on Nov. 5, more than 50 people in that village were massacred in two waves, first by Mai Mai guerrillas, then by opposing soldiers from rebel Tutsi leader Laurent Nkunda's forces.] These are war crimes.

**But people living in the area say they just don't see MONUC, that MONUC is almost an irrelevance in their lives.**

() I would be less than honest if I said we can guarantee the protection of every civilian. We were brought in as a peacekeeping force, and we have now had to take on some dimensions of peace enforcement. Self-protection is part of the soldiers' motivation and that's the right of every armed force. But [MONUC forces] don't just hunker down in their bases. They are out on patrol. Even so, if something bad is happening in a house a kilometer away, we cannot really prevent that.()

**The Responsibility to Protect [or R2P, a concept of humanitarian intervention] was only adopted by the U.N. in 2005. How much is MONUC feeling its way here? Is MONUC an experiment?**

**R2P** is a huge step forward ... But the question remains: How do we actually do it? We have come up against the sharp end of **R2P**. We can claim that responsibility, but actually doing that in North Kivu, with a collapsing army, a resurgence of ethnic groups well, that raises fundamental questions. When we make these statements, we have to be careful that we have the means to match our mandate.

Is peacekeeping a stopgap solution rather than a long term one? If so, does that mean peacekeeping can never have great moments of achievement?

There are a number of peacekeeping missions. We try to be a help to the process of national

political accommodation. We can never substitute for that, however; only bolster the forces taking part and help stabilize the nation. We assist the national process, but we do not replace it. We're not NATO. We're not an army of occupation. We're not a colonial army. We're never going to take on points of responsibility that a national power can do. That's our strength, but it also requires you to think: What can we expect of a peacekeeping force?

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