

The Embassy
Michelle Collins
22 April 2009

The Embassy is a Canadian Foreign Policy Magazine. A piece by journalist Michelle Collins examines Canada's role in R2P and its promotion, both from the 2001 Commission to the Harper government's instructions to its representatives and Ministers to not use the terms R2P and human security, as they saw them as remnants of the previous liberal Canadian government. Ms. Collins interviewed William Pace, the Executive Director of the World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy, which serves as the Secretariat for the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, Sapna Chhatpar, Project Manager of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, and Monica Serrano, the Executive Director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. Their remarks are included below.

An internal DFAIT document alludes to the fact that the new U.S. administration's ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice, is described as a strong advocate of R2Ps expected to support advancing the doctrine into policy, and that the U.S. will likely seek to work with Canada. Standing before a packed room at the University of Ottawa in early March, former Canadian ambassador to the UN Allan Rock declared that the **Responsibility to Protect** was "at great risk" from both its opponents, and some friends. ()

But documents obtained by Embassy show that the Conservative government fully aware the Obama administration has largely embraced the idea as done an about-face on its once wilful neglect of the **Responsibility to Protect** and the Department of Foreign Affairs has instructed its overseas missions to engage with local officials on the matter, and bring them onside. () "Part of our efforts will focus on identifying countries which may be persuaded to use the debate to build support for the principle, including advocating for it to be put into practice, and tabling a resolution that will translate this responsibility into practical action for the international community and the UN. This will be done in the event that opponents of **R2P** put forth an unhelpful resolution," the letter states. ()

Recent movement on **R2P** may also have come in response to a report issued on Jan. 30 by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon exploring how to implement the 2005 resolution. The secretary-general has committed to turning the **R2P** concept into a policy during his tenure, and a General Assembly debate on doing so is expected sometime this spring. ()

Mr. Rock, who led Canada's diplomatic efforts at the UN to get **R2P** passed in 2005, has joined forces with former Liberal foreign affairs minister Lloyd Axworthy to publicly lament Canada's apparent abandonment of the doctrine. "...there will have to be a renewed sense of political leadership that seeks to reignite the commitment. Many of the earlier champions have fallen by the wayside (in particular, alas, Canada). New champions will have to emerge," Messrs. Rock and Axworthy write in the 2009 academic journal *Global Responsibility to Protect*. ()

Bill Pace, executive director of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, said that in the last two years, Ottawa's support for **R2P** was "drastically diminished." "I talked to ambassadors in Africa and Asia who told me they were under instruction not to use the term **R2P**

or 'human security' because the Harper government considered it part of the Liberal government legacy," Mr. Pace said. "The UN mission of Canada has stayed steadfast in support of

Responsibility to Protect

...some ambassadors told me. But it's probably very accurate that the current government saw this as key elements of the previous government's foreign policy, and distanced themselves from it." ()

Indeed, Canada's public endorsements of **R2P** at the UN over the past few years appear to be rather sparse. In a statement at the UN Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in December 2006, Canada's UN ambassador, John McNee, avoided using the term "**responsibility to protect**

" altogether. Instead, he welcomed the Security Council's "adoption of resolution 1674," which reaffirmed the 2005 World Summit resolution on

R2P

. At that same Security Council debate in 2007, Mr. McNee again side-stepped outright endorsement of the doctrine, stating only that "operationalizing the concept of the

Responsibility to Protect

must be the focus of further Council work."

Warren Allmand, a former Liberal MP and president of the NGO World Federalist Movement, went so far as to write a letter to then-foreign affairs minister David Emerson last year. Mr. Emerson replied in October, stating that Canada continues to be active, co-chairing the Group of Friends and providing funds to the Global Centre for **R2P** in New York. Mr. Emerson said Canada was exploring ways to consolidate support amongst UN members for the concept and "prevent backsliding" and that the government planned to work with others to "translate the principle into practical measures which can be used as a basis for action."

A General Assembly debate on **R2P** was expected in April. Last week, however, the debate was postponed another setback in the ongoing campaign to operationalize

R2P

before its detractors can tear it down. () Mr. Allmand said political support for the International Criminal Court was "lagging" until NGOs and human rights groups began lobbying all over the world. ()

This past January, the New York-based International Coalition for **R2P** launched a campaign to recruit organizations around the world to become involved. The coalition has been built out of the now-retired

R2P

Civil Society group, a project spurred by Paul Heinbecker, who was Canada's ambassador to the UN from 2000 until 2004. "We're now trying to be more strategic on who we have in this coalition and what these groups can do and we want to do it at a global level, building support in capitals around the world," said project manager Sapna Chhatpar. "We want to mobilize to

make sure governments support

R2P

in New York...and we want to use our NGO contacts and see to what extent, and how much pressure we can put on NGOs and governments."

Monica Serrano, executive director of the Global Centre on R2P, said there has been a "conceptual shift" at the UN because states no longer challenge the notion that sovereignty entails responsibility. As a result, she said, it has become increasingly difficult for states to question the core assumptions that underpin **R2P**. ()

However the real test for the doctrine's survival will be whether or not it can actually be put to use for the protection of civilians from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes or crimes against humanity. "We haven't yet confronted the question in a real case...the most important challenge is working with other like-minded countries to prepare the ground for the actual implementation of **R2P**," Mr. Rock said. "It's meaningless for someone who might be the subject of a genocide unless it's put to use, unless the Security Council is able to summon the political will to invoke it."

Source: http://www.embassymag.ca/page/view/canada_r2p_support-4-22-2009