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I. International Human Rights Day Celebrations

The emerging Responsibility to Protect norm, recognized unanimously at the General Assembly by all Member States in 2005, is an evolution of the discourse on human rights, based from the fundamental principles asserted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). On 9 December 2010, the 62nd anniversary of the signing of the UDHR was celebrated around the world on this year's theme ' human rights defenders worldwide acting to end discrimination'.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon delivered [a speech](#) in which he reminded Member States that they bear the primary responsibility to protect human rights advocates. Similarly, Navi Pillay, High Commissioner for Human Rights and [called](#)

on governments "to acknowledge that criticism is not a crime, and to release all those people who have been detained for peacefully exercising their fundamental freedoms to defend democratic principles and human rights."

Recently freed human rights defender Aung San Suu Kyi recorded a [video message](#) that was

played in Geneva on 10 December. She denounced “more subtle” forms of discrimination targeting those who fight for human rights, stressing that “without human rights there can be no such thing as genuine democratic institutions”.

In the following documents, you will also find a [joint statement](#) by the Secretary General Special Advisors for the prevention of genocide and for the responsibility to protect for the 62nd Anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Edward Luck and Francis Deng called on the UN, regional and sub-regional organizations and NGOs “to continue to work together to protect vulnerable populations from mass violence”.

Civil society groups all over the world issued statements and organized events. Notably, the ICRtoP partnered with the Human Rights Network in Uganda (HURINET) in organizing an RtoP Dialogue in Kampala, Uganda. HURINET also held multiple events under the theme “**Human Rights: The key to free and fair election**” ahead of the 2011 Presidential elections.

Moreover, we have highlighted statements from our members including [Citizens for Global Solutions](#), which focused on Sudan and the upcoming referenda, as well as a press release from [Minority Rights International Group](#) calling on international support for the protection of minority rights group defenders.

1. Human Rights week in Uganda, including national dialogue on RtoP
Human Rights Network-Uganda (HURINET), ICRtoP and partners
3-10 December

The Human Rights Network and the International Coalition for RtoP partnered to organize a national dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect entitled “Challenges and opportunities for the promotion and protection of human rights in the 21st Century”. On 6 December 2010 in Kampala, Uganda, more than 80 participants attended the conference, representing a diverse group including panellists from civil society, academia, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Ugandan Human Rights Commission and the Ugandan security sector.

This event was one the first national dialogue on RtoP, aimed at raising awareness of the norm among Ugandan civil society, government and UN actors and provides opportunities for a dialogue on the concept and promotion of the Responsibility to Protect. There were discussions on how the UN, regional organizations and the Ugandan government are involved in preventing and halting mass atrocities, and significant recommendations on how the government could improve its protection capabilities (*report by HURINET coming shortly*)

The dialogue was part of multiple events organized by Human Rights Network-Uganda (HURINET-U), Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other partners in commemoration of the international Human rights day. The events ran from 3-10th December under the national theme “*Human Rights: The key to free and fair elections*” and the international theme “*Human rights defenders who act to end discrimination*”

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See here for HURINET's site with the complete [list of events](#).

2. Special Advisers Deng and Luck on the contemporary importance of the commitment to prevent genocide and mass atrocities

United Nations

9 December 2010

On 9 December, the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Special Adviser of the Secretary General, Mr. Francis Deng, reminded states of the contemporary relevance of the Convention.

“Many of the violent conflicts that have recently erupted have their roots in long-standing grievances between ethnic, religious, national or racial groups, the groups that are protected by the Convention. Individuals, and entire groups, have been targeted based purely on their identity,” stated Mr. Deng. “While conflict is not a pre-requisite to genocide, peaceful resolution of these conflicts, and prevention of the conflicts that threaten to erupt in the coming year, is essential to ensure that they do not escalate into genocidal violence.”

At the heart of the 1948 Convention lies the commitment to protect vulnerable populations from mass violence. In the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, Member States reiterated this commitment and expanded its reach with the concept of the **responsibility to protect** populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

States bear an ongoing **responsibility to protect** vulnerable populations by preventing those four crimes and their incitement, as agreed at the 2005 World Summit and confirmed by the General Assembly and Security Council. As also agreed at the Summit, the international community has concurrent responsibilities to assist states in their protection responsibilities and to respond in a timely and decisive manner when they are manifestly failing to protect their populations. In meeting these three pillars of the Secretary-General's strategy, the United Nations recognizes that regional and sub-regional organizations are playing an increasingly important role in prevention and protection.

Mr. Edward Luck, the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General who focuses on the responsibility to protect, called the 1948 Convention “the cornerstone of the legal structure that frames the principle of the **responsibility to protect**.” He noted “the critical operational synergies between genocide prevention and the responsibility to protect” and commended the Secretary-General's efforts to establish a joint office to address the whole range of atrocity crimes. “Too often,” he commented, “lesser crimes against human dignity are allowed to escalate into full-scale genocide. Early and sustained efforts at prevention—at the individual, community, national, regional, and global levels – are essential to break this destructive chain and to build tolerant and prosperous societies.”

Both Special Advisers urged Member States, the United Nations system, regional and sub-regional organizations and civil society to continue to work together to protect vulnerable populations from mass violence. Sustained and mutually reinforcing partnership is, in their view, the key.

To provide early warning of situations where there is a risk of genocide and related crimes is the primary role of the Office of the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, which works closely with Mr. Luck, given their distinct but closely related mandates.

The Office was established in 2004 in recognition of the international community's failure to prevent or stop past genocides. It was given a threefold mandate by the Security Council: to collect and assess information on situations that might lead to genocide; to advise the Secretary-General and, through him, the Security Council and make recommendations to prevent or halt genocide; and to liaise with the UN system on preventive measures and enhance the United Nations' capacity to analyze and manage information on genocide or related crimes.

To access PDF document, [click here](#) .

3. Minority rights defenders need increased international support and protection

Minority Rights Group International

10 December 2010

Minority and indigenous human rights activists face exceptional levels of risk because they are targeted for their identity as well as for their work, Minority Rights Group International (MRG) says on International Human Rights Day. These threats range from killings, physical attacks, arrest and detention to everyday harassment and hate campaigns.

The theme of International Human Rights Day 2010 is 'Human Rights Defenders Acting to End Discrimination'. MRG says increased and targeted international attention and action is needed to ensure protection of these activists, who work in dangerous situations.

'Minority and indigenous activists are on the frontline of the fight against discrimination and often face multiple levels of threat. They are not always recognised as human rights defenders. When they are, the specific threats they face are not necessarily known,' says Carl Soderbergh, MRG's Director of Policy and Communications (...)

(...) Some of these minority rights defenders may also be working in situations of conflict, where they not only face armed violence but could also be targeted by state agents or militants because the community they represent or work for is drawn into the conflict.

Women minority and indigenous rights defenders are under added threat. They risk attacks and discrimination from both the majority society as well as from within their community, in addition to gendered cultural practices.

Many of the communities MRG works with across the world are marginalised, excluded and neglected by the state, which not only makes human rights work more dangerous but also leads to less protection for these activists (...)

Read [full statement](#)

4. On International Human Rights Day, Looking Forward to Sudan's Future

Citizens for Global Solutions

Melissa Kaplan

10 December 2010

With only a month left until Sudan's momentous January 9th referendum--in which southerners will cast their votes on whether or not to secede from the north to form their own independent state--questions are swirling about whether the referendum will happen on time, or at all, and what the aftermath might entail for the country that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently described as a "ticking time bomb." Just yesterday, it was announced by Sudanese officials that the separate referendum in the oil-producing Abyei region will not take place on January 9th after all, despite being agreed to in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended decades of war in Sudan.

Today, on International Human Rights Day--which marks the 62nd anniversary of the United

Nations General Assembly adoption of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights--the possibility of human rights violations and even a potential return to warfare between north and south Sudan following the referendum remains of great concern to Citizens for Global Solutions (...)

(...) Atul Khare, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping at the United Nations, talked about U.N. efforts in Sudan and stressed that protection of civilians in the country is a task in which everyone must be engaged at all levels. For now, the security situation in southern Sudan remains calm, he said, but tensions will rise during and after the referendum. In a worst-case scenario, Khare said that 2.8 million Sudanese might be displaced and an additional 3.2 million otherwise affected by the vote's outcome (...)

Read full [press release](#)

II. Civil society calls for the prevention of further atrocities by the LRA

1. Ghosts of Christmas Past. Protecting Civilians from the LRA

Oxfam International, Refugees International and 17 other NGOs

14 December 2010

Almost daily, a small band of rebels known as the Lord's Resistance Army, or LRA, kills, abducts and attacks people across a vast area of central Africa. The LRA has become the most deadly militia in Democratic Republic of Congo, with Christmas time over the past two years marked by appalling massacres. Since 2008, more than 400,000 people have fled their homes after the LRA rampaged across remote villages in Sudan, Central African Republic and DR Congo. Attacks came in retaliation to an ill-planned military offensive against the militia by regional armies. The African Union and US government have recently announced initiatives to address the threat posed by the LRA. Renewed attention is welcome and vitally needed, but international and regional governments must learn the lessons of the past and ensure that future efforts provide effective security for local people. Women and men must be able to tend to their fields, children go to school and families sleep in their homes free from fear.

Summary

On Christmas Eve 2008 and over the following three weeks, 865 women, men and children were savagely beaten to death and hundreds more abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in a remote corner in the north-east of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in southern Sudan. The attack was a murderous backlash in response to Operation "Lightning Thunder", a military offensive launched some 10 days before against the LRA by Uganda, DRC and southern Sudan. Less than a year later, between 14 and 17 December 2009, LRA commanders oversaw the killing of more than 300 people, again shattering communities in a remote corner of northern DRC. Today the LRA continues to attack marginalised communities in Sudan, Central African Republic (CAR), and DRC almost four times a week. The militia now operates across an area 20 times bigger than it did before the "Lightning Thunder" offensive. Since September 2008, the LRA has killed more than 2,300 people and abducted more than 3,000. It has raped women and forced abducted children to commit horrific crimes. Over 400,000 people have fled from their homes for fear of attack, 260,000 of them in DRC. New figures show that over the last two years the LRA has become the most deadly militia in DRC.¹ In southern Sudan, a further 42,400 people have fled from LRA violence this year alone – one fifth of all those displaced in 2010. In all, an estimated 87,800 southern Sudanese have fled their homes as a result of LRA attacks since late 2008.² In southeast CAR, the LRA displaced at least 20,000 people in the first three months of 2010. The acute suffering and mass population displacement the LRA has generated across international borders is undermining

stability in an already fragile region, where southern Sudan is preparing to hold a landmark referendum on secession in early 2011 (...)

Read full [Joint NGO Briefing Paper](#)

2. Open Statement on the Lord's Resistance Army
The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
14 December 2010

One year ago today, over the course of four days, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) slaughtered 300 people in Haute Uele province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The prior year, beginning on Christmas day 2008, 620 civilians were massacred over two days in this same region. Today, the people of these villages are no safer. Despite its 2005 commitment to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, the international community has still not improved its ability to protect populations from the LRA's reign of terror. Nor is it any closer to bringing the LRA commanders responsible for heinous mass atrocities perpetrated against civilians to justice. The United Nations (UN) Security Council must now prioritize working with the governments of the Great Lakes region to protect populations in the DRC, Sudan and the Central African Republic (CAR) from the LRA (...)

(...) Since 2008 the LRA has massacred more than 2,000 people and abducted over 2,500 more, the majority of them children who have been recruited to fight on behalf of the militia, often being forced to kill or maim their own relatives. Abducted women and girls often become the wives of LRA leaders, suffering repeated rapes and sexual assaults. Over 400,000 people have been displaced as a result of LRA attacks. Even worse, such attacks appear to be on the rise (...)

(...) The governments of Sudan, the DRC and the CAR bear the primary **responsibility to protect** their populations from the crimes committed by the LRA. Some of them, particularly the government of Uganda where the LRA originated, have launched numerous military campaigns in an effort to end the threat posed by the LRA. But these have proved unsuccessful and in some cases have led to retaliatory attacks against civilians. It is clear that without significant international assistance, the governments of the region are unable to address the threat posed by the LRA (...)

(...) What is now needed is for the UN, AU and governments in the region to pursue a coordinated regional strategy to tackle the problem of the LRA and end the appalling cycle of atrocities once and for all. This should include:

- Improving capacities for gathering information about LRA movements and composition, and developing a mechanism for information sharing amongst regional governments and peacekeeping missions.
- Translating this information into well targeted preventive deployments in areas at risk of LRA attacks and, combined with effective communication networks between peacekeeping and armed forces and vulnerable villages, reduced response times when attacks are reported.
- Strengthening programs to encourage the desertion of soldiers from the LRA and to assist such soldiers, many of whom are victims of LRA abductions, in leaving the group and reintegrating into their communities.

Serious, coordinated military efforts to apprehend LRA leaders and to end the threat posed by the LRA. Any such efforts must be designed in such a way as to mitigate the risk of civilian casualties including by protecting civilians from potential retaliatory attacks by LRA fighters (...)

Read full [statement](#)

III. Tenth Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 22 November 2010

On 22 November, the UN Security Council convened its bi-annual [debate](#) on the Protection of Civilians (POC) in Armed Conflict, based on the Secretary-General's 11 November report. The Council issued a [Pr](#)

[esidential Statement](#)

which called for accountability in post-conflict and war torn societies and highlighted the stocktaking of international criminal justice undertaken by the first Review Conference of the Rome Statute held in Kampala, Uganda from 31 May to 11 June 2010. It also deplored attacks targeting humanitarian personnel and calls for the inclusion of POC mandates in UN peacekeeping missions. The Security Council adopted an

[updated version](#)

of the 15 March 2002 OCHA aide memoire annexed to the Presidential Statement. According to

[UNSC Press Release](#)

, the aide memoire specifies “core objectives for providing protection and assistance to conflict-affected civilians”.

Along with 48 member states, Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Yves Daccord, Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Navi Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights participated in the debate.

The debate evolved around 3 major themes:

- The responsibility of state and non-state parties to conflict to grant humanitarian personnel safe and unlimited access to provide timely and efficient humanitarian assistance to populations living in volatile areas.
- To hold violators of human rights and international humanitarian law accountable, including through strengthened national judicial institutions or mixed courts, working in cooperation with UN Commissions of Inquiry, and the International Criminal Court when necessary.
- In the wake of the mass rapes in the DRC, Member States noted the importance of making protection of civilians a focus of DPKO strategies, especially protection of women and children in cases of mass sexual violence and child soldiers recruitment.

Six states directly referred to RtoP [in their statements](#). Italy and Ghana both welcomed ongoing debates at the GA and encouraged Member States to keep discussing and developing the norm. Argentina referred directly to RtoP as an important tool to ensure accountability while Bangladesh and the [EU](#)

[Delegation](#)

highlighted RtoP preventive component. Conversely, Sudan expressed strong opposition and concern over “attempts by some countries to utilize to serve particular political aims, such as the ongoing campaign on the so-called responsibility to protect”. Others, such as the

[US](#),

Uruguay and Slovenia indirectly referred to RtoP or its core principles either mentioning the four crimes under RtoP or country-specific situations reaching that threshold.

Additional Sources: See [our page](#) on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict and previous debates.

Read [full RtoP excerpts](#)

IV. Office of the Special Advisor holds training on Genocide Prevention

During a seminar entitled “[A Framework for Genocide Prevention](#)”, Ban Ki-moon reminded the UN members of their “global responsibility” to protect vulnerable populations from genocide, and other serious crimes. This seminar is part of the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide (OSAPG) training programme (see more

[here](#)
).

1. Secretary-General's message to Seminar on "A Framework for Genocide Prevention" [delivered by Mr. B. Lynn Pascoe, Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs]
9 December 2010

The statement read as follow:

It is a pleasure to send greetings to this seminar. I am pleased to note the participation of colleagues from both the United Nations and the non-governmental community.

The prevention of genocide is a global responsibility. We all know the principle: each state has the primary responsibility to protect its own people. However, when states require assistance, the international community must be ready to help. And when states manifestly fail to protect their populations, the international community must be ready to take action.

In order to prevent genocide, we first need to understand its causes and dynamics. We need to understand what kinds of environments may encourage genocide, and which structural and operational factors can leave a population vulnerable or, alternatively, help to protect it. We also need to understand the different kinds of measures that can be taken to prevent tensions between groups from escalating into genocidal conflicts.

Promoting such understanding is one of the main roles of the Office of my Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. The Office was established in 2004 in recognition of the international community's collective failure to prevent or stop past genocides. It was given a threefold mandate from the Security Council: to collect and assess information on situations that might lead to genocide; to advise the Secretary-General and, through him, the Security Council and make recommendations to prevent or halt genocide; and to liaise with the UN system on preventive measures and enhance the UN's capacity to analyze and manage information on genocide or related crimes.

Today's seminar is another in a series the office has been organizing on building capacity to prevent genocide. Initially aimed at UN staff in the field, the seminars now reaches out to key partners such as government officials, regional and sub-regional organizations and civil society, focusing on individuals who can help states establish structures for prevention, early warning and response. I am confident that your discussions today on approaches to understanding and responding to mass violence will generate insights and ideas that will help each of you, within your respective roles and mandates, to advance this effort. I wish you well for a productive discussion and I look forward to learning of the results. Thank you for your engagement and support.

See here for [full speech](#) .

Thanks to Stephanie Perazzone for compiling this listserv