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**I. ICRtoP introduces new series on blog spotlighting the work of Coalition Members: first post on the World Federation of UN Associations** *We are delighted to introduce to you a new Spotlight series on the [ICRtoP blog](#), where you will be able to learn more about Coalition members and their ongoing activities and initiatives to advance the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP, R2P) norm.*

[Spotlight on the World Federation for the United Nations Associations](#)

[The World Federation for the United Nations Associations](#) (WFUNA), an ICRtoP member since 2009, launched its [Responsibility to Protect Program](#) in 2011. ICRtoP spoke with Laura Spano, RtoP Program Officer at WFUNA, who provided some insight into the goals of and challenges associated with WFUNA’s work on the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP).

WFUNA strives to deepen the understanding of the RtoP norm and highlight its potential as a guide for national policy amongst NGOs around the world. WFUNA’s RtoP program provides this increased awareness to mobilize civil society to advocate for their national leaders to operationalize the norm. As Spano told us, “*The main goal of the program is to mobilize and push for the political will to prevent and act in the face of mass atrocities.*” (...)

To this end, WFUNA conducts

[capacity-building trainings](#)

for NGOs in these regions, in partnership with national UNAs and others, including, on occasion, the ICRtoP. These trainings provide a comprehensive background on RtoP and on the role of actors in implementing the norm and expand on how civil society can continue raising awareness and engage in effective advocacy. WFUNA also maintains an online platform to facilitate collaboration across regions as well as the exchange of expertise and best practices from outreach, advocacy and teaching activities. “

*Working with UNAs allows WFUNA’s programs to generate a more nuanced national understanding of the norm as the UNAs have a good understanding of domestic policy gaps and where progress is needed,”*

said Spano

In addition, partnering with national UNAs, which often already have well-established networks of civil society actors in the country, streamlines the dissemination of information on RtoP and hence increases awareness of the norm. “

*Ideally, once we run our initial training,”*

Spano stated,

*“the UNA has enough knowledge to take the norm forward in a national context with the assistance and support of WFUNA.”*

(...) Another key component of the RtoP program in 2011 and 2012 was the

[Dag Hammarskjöld Symposium Series](#)

, which provided a regional forum to engage key stakeholders in the RtoP debate. Participants looked specifically at the tension between state sovereignty, the role of intervention, and the implications for the RtoP norm. The Series reached four continents with conferences in

[Kenya](#)

in June 2011,

[China](#)

in December 2011,

[Venezuela](#)

in February 2012 and

[India](#)

in October 2012.

During our conversation with Ms. Spano, she discussed the impact of the crisis situations in

[Libya](#)

and

[Syria](#)

on global opinion towards the norm, saying that WFUNA saw an increase in debate on the implementation of measures to respond to RtoP crimes, and a resulting “

*divergence in ideas and understandings of the norm from conference participants*

.” Consequently, WFUNA’s work shifted, as appropriate, from its initial, primary focus on

awareness-raising to narrower discussions to clarify misconceptions and assess the challenges

associated with implementation. (...)

See  
[full post](#)

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II

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## Syria: Violence against civilians continues as UN reports over 60,000 dead

*The twenty-two month-long crisis, which is becoming progressively [sectarian](#), continues to worsen as fatalities increase. On 2 January 2013, [analysis](#) conducted by data specialists on behalf of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, [reported](#) that 59,648 individuals were reported killed in Syria between 15 March 2011 and 30 November 2012. Though three quarters of this number are thought to be men, the figure has not been categorized into civilian and soldier casualties. However, analysts [suggest](#) the actual figure may well be much higher when accounting for non-registered deaths.*

*Meanwhile, on 7 January, it was reported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs that [600,000](#) registered Syrian refugees have spilled over into neighboring [Jordan](#), [Lebanon](#) and [Turkey](#) since the start of hostilities. The [winter](#) months saw conditions for internally displaced persons within Syria and refugees become increasingly fatal. In addition, the World Food Programme [announced](#) that much needed food packages could not reach over 1 million people in Syria in December 2012. Indeed UN Food Relief [stated](#)*

that those requiring humanitarian assistance within Syria rose from 1 million in March 2012 to 4 million in December 2012.

Attacks on the civilian population by government forces have continued over the last month as stand-offs between armed rebel and government forces in and around

[Damascus](#)

have escalated, with the former gaining

[more control](#)

of the capital. On 21 December 2012, Adama Dieng, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide,

[warned](#)

of the increasing risk of sectarian violence in Syria, especially on the part of the government, stating that, "the Government of Syria is manifestly failing to protect its populations. The international community must act on the commitment made by all Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity." Just days later, a crowd of over 1000 at a bakery in

[Halfaya](#)

was bombed, and at the start of January

MSF reported heavy

[attacks](#)

on civilians in Idlib. Reports of detention and torture by both government and rebel forces have also surfaced in areas such as

[Barzeh](#)

,

[Daraa](#)

and

[Damascus](#)

during the last month.□

## 1. Responsibility to Object

David Kaye

Foreign Policy

11 January 2013

In Syria, the new year begins without change. President Bashar al-Assad continues to attack Syrian citizens on a vast scale, targeting civilians and rebels indiscriminately, and making use of summary executions and torture. Meanwhile, anti-government factions commit human rights violations of their own, according to the United Nations and various human rights organizations. The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights recently estimated the number of dead at more

than 60,000; Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N. and Arab League peace envoy, warns that the civil war could claim another 100,000 lives in 2013.

But if the situation in Syria looks increasingly grave, one thing could and should change. The U.N. Security Council -- so far unable to agree on measures to try to end the war -- should find a way to deter war crimes and crimes against humanity by all parties to the conflict. Its current silence encourages all Syrians, especially the perpetrators of such crimes

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to believe that nobody will be held accountable for these abuses. The Security Council should therefore adopt a three-pronged strategy to insert some measure of accountability and restraint into the war, even while a political settlement remains out of reach.

First, the Security Council should impose financial, travel, and diplomatic sanctions on individuals on both sides of the conflict who commit serious violations of human rights or international humanitarian law. (...)

Second, the Security Council should refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC) -- as it did Sudan in 2005 and Libya in 2011. An ICC referral has long seemed out of reach because of opposition from critical Security Council members, but that may be changing. Russian officials, for instance, increasingly see Assad as a butcher and understand the risks to the thousands of Russian nationals living in Syria. (...)

To facilitate success, the Security Council should take two steps it failed to do in previous cases. Because a Syria investigation would likely stretch ICC resources beyond capacity, the Security Council should take a leading role in helping fund a serious, sustained process. Likewise, the Security Council should promise up front that it will stand behind the results of the ICC investigation, obligating all governments to provide the court with the necessary logistical and political support. This should not involve a commitment to use military force to make arrests, but political and logistical support, as well as a sanctions process, would put a meaningful squeeze on those alleged responsible for the worst crimes.

Third, the Security Council should support a framework to encourage Syrians from all ethnic, national, and religious backgrounds to begin discussions about long-term justice and rule of law in the country. The ICC is a blunt and limited instrument, designed to hold senior political and military leaders accountable for their actions. But many thousands more have been and are involved in the violence; they too need to be reminded of their obligations of humane behavior in war.

A Syrian national effort, with U.N. support and encouragement, could begin to map out a plan for seeking justice in the long-term. Such an effort should include discussion of criminal process

at local and national levels; truth and reconciliation programs; reparations for those thousands who lost loved ones, homes, and livelihoods; and rebuilding of the institutions of law and governance. (...)

None of these efforts is a substitute for real efforts to end the war. But they would amount to a powerful statement in favor of norms against war crimes and crimes against humanity -- warning both the regime and the opposition that they will be held accountable for their actions. Such measures would also offer a longer-term framework for restraining abuses in the future. If even at the margins, a strategy against the most serious crimes could temper abuses and possibly save lives. Failure to take action, moreover, undermines the international community's commitment to seeking justice for massive crimes and upholding the **responsibility to protect**. (...)

**Read**  
[full article](#)

## 2. **Protection of minorities must take priority in Syria transition**

Amnesty International

10 January 2013

Any future transitional government in Syria should make the protection of minority groups its top priority, Amnesty International said today as an international conference in the UK planning for the Syrian government's possible collapse drew to a close.

Opposition leaders and worldwide Syria experts holding private talks in Sussex for a second day were urged to put human rights at the heart of all planning about the future of the country.

Minority groups including Alawite Muslims, the community of the al-Assad family, are facing an increased risk of human rights abuses by armed opposition forces.

"When the conflict eventually ends, a huge task will face those in power and it is vital that whoever is in charge puts human rights at the core of their policies and reforms," said Ann Harrison, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Deputy Director. (...)

There has been a recent rise in sectarian violence in Syria, particularly by those opposed to President Bashar al-Assad. Among those targeted have been Alawite, Druze and Shi'a Muslims, along with Christians.

"Urgent action is needed to stop sectarian attacks and to ensure that the legacy of repression does not shape the future," said Harrison.

"Impunity for crimes under international law must not be allowed to fester and tarnish the prospects for a new Syria where the rights of all are fully respected." (...)

"Countries hosting refugees from Syria should not forcibly return them until the security and human rights situation there has improved enough to allow for safe, dignified and sustainable return," said Harrison. (...)

The Syrian and international figures discussing the country's future have also been urged to commit to combating discrimination and violence, particularly against women, should they be in power in the future.

"We have seen all too often in recent years how women's rights fall to the bottom of the agenda under transitional governments -- something the post-conflict authorities in Syria must prevent," said Harrison. (...)

**Read [full article](#) . 3. Statement of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide on the situation in Syria** United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

20 December 2012

Mr. Adama Dieng, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, warned today of the increasing risk of sectarian violence in Syria.

"I am deeply concerned that entire communities risk paying the price for crimes committed by the Syrian Government," said Mr. Dieng. As the situation in Syria deteriorates further, there is a growing risk that civilian communities, including Alawite and other minorities perceived to be associated with the Government, its security forces, militias and allies could be subject to large scale reprisal attacks.

"I urge all parties to the conflict to adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law, which prohibits the targeting of individuals or groups based on religious or ethnic identity as well as attacks against civilians not taking direct part in hostilities."

"I also call on all actors to condemn hate speech that could constitute incitement to violence against communities based on their religious affiliation," stated Mr. Dieng. "Reprisal attacks, hate speech and incitement to violence against a particular community have, in the past, been precursors to serious and massive violations of human rights and international humanitarian

law.”

“I urge armed opposition forces to protect and respect the rights of all individuals in their custody, as well as civilians residing in territory under their control, without discrimination,” stated Mr. Dieng.

“The Government of Syria is manifestly failing to protect its populations. The international community must act on the commitment made by all Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, including their incitement,” said Mr. Dieng.

“I also reiterate the calls of the international community for the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court and stress the importance of taking steps now to facilitate future transitional justice processes in Syria to reduce the risk of retribution, promote reconciliation and provide all communities with a sense of justice and dignity.” (...)

**Read**  
[full statement](#)

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### **III. Civil society work on country cases**

#### **1. Ending the cycle of abuse in Congo**

Human Rights Watch

2 January 2013

*Ida Sawyer is a Human Rights Watch researcher based in Democratic Republic of Congo for the last five years.*

If leaders of the M23 rebels are allowed to reintegrate into the Congolese army, the message will be clear: rape, pillage and murder will go unpunished.

On Nov. 19, armed men from a rebel group called the M23 were looking for a prominent civil society leader in a village outside Goma, a provincial capital in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. He'd been in hiding for several weeks after receiving text messages threatening him for

his public denunciations of M23 abuses. When the rebels didn't find him, they shot his colleague, killing him.

The next day, the M23 — fighters who had integrated into the Congolese army in 2009 but mutinied earlier this year — took control of Goma. Ten days later, most of the M23 fighters began withdrawing, and local residents started telling Human Rights Watch about the abuses that these rebels had committed in many parts of the city and neighboring villages: killings, rapes, looting and other violence. The rebels targeted perceived opponents, including activists, government officials and their family members. Many of those people went into hiding after receiving personal threats. (...)

I've heard countless stories like these while documenting the M23's crimes, revealing a reality that stands in stark contrast to the image M23 leaders seek to promote, with declarations proclaiming their movement to be orderly, disciplined and respectful of human rights, and with grand visions for a "reformed" Congo.

Some foreign commentators appear to have been taken in by the M23's pronouncements, arguing that the M23 is a suitable force to provide the political framework for a new, independent state. Or they shift all the blame onto the abusive Congolese government, which is certainly a big part of the problem, but that factor cannot justify rebel atrocities against the population of eastern Congo.

These atrocities are not a recent development. Since M23's rebellion began eight months ago, Human Rights Watch has documented widespread war crimes by M23 fighters, including summary executions, rapes and recruitment of children.

M23 abuses should surprise no one, given that the group's leaders are responsible for some of Congo's worst crimes over the last 16 years. One of its leaders, Bosco Ntaganda, is sought on arrest warrants from the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity in 2002 and 2003. He and four other senior M23 leaders are on a United Nations sanctions list.

From its inception, the M23 has received significant support from neighboring Rwanda. (...)

After M23 rebels took control of Goma in November, the Congolese government agreed to negotiate. The rebels officially withdrew from Goma on Dec. 1, and both sides sent delegations to Kampala, Uganda, a week later to begin talks. The talks did not get off to a good start, and have been suspended until early January. Meanwhile, the area around Goma has seen a build-up of military forces, suggesting fighting may flare up again soon.

Depending on the progress of talks, there is a risk that history will repeat itself and rebel commanders responsible for the worst abuses may be integrated into the army again.

Arresting the worst abusers would send an important message to the Congolese army, which has its own history of serious abuses, and to the various rebel groups in Congo that murder, rape and pillage will be punished.

At the international level, a window of opportunity is closing to help end the cycle of abuses in eastern Congo. Key players — including the United Nations Security Council, the African Union, the United States and Britain — should publicly press Rwanda to stop support for M23 and insist that M23 commanders implicated in war crimes be arrested and prosecuted, and they should assist efforts toward that end. They should also sanction Rwandan military officials, who have been identified by the U.N. as supporters of the M23 and who may be complicit in war crimes. Finally, they should urge Congolese President Joseph Kabila to carry through with commitments on justice and other much-needed reforms, including an overhaul of the country's corrupt and abusive security forces. (...)

**Read**

[full article](#)

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## **2. Electoral Violence in Kenya**

Joel Barkan

Council on Foreign Relations

January 2013

Kenya is at risk of repeating the violence that marred its 2007 presidential election, during which 1,133 died and nearly 600,000 were displaced from their homes. Political order in Kenya nearly collapsed.

Ending the crisis required two months of negotiations mediated by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and supported by the United States and its partners. The negotiations resulted in a power-sharing agreement between the two adversaries in the election, President Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga. (...)

Kenya's next elections, to be held on March 4 and April 11, 2013, are arguably the most important and complex since the country's return to multiparty politics two decades ago. If the elections are largely peaceful and viewed as "free and fair," they will bring Kenya's new constitution, adopted in 2010, fully into force and advance the country's progress toward becoming a modern democratic state. Conversely, if the elections are marred by widespread violence and perceived as illegitimate by the Kenyan public, they are likely to plunge the country into a renewed period of political instability and set back Kenya's democratic advance. A breakdown in the electoral process will also do serious harm to Kenya's economy, which has been performing well in recent years. (...)

Since Kenya is the "anchor state" of East Africa, a prolonged political and economic crisis will also harm neighboring countries. In particular, two major U.S. foreign policy goals in the region preventing Somalia from becoming a safe haven for terrorists and nurturing peace between Sudan and South Sudan—could be compromised. The United States, therefore, should work expeditiously with all parties concerned to ensure that the forthcoming elections are peaceful, free, and fair. (...)

The United States should impress upon Nairobi the importance of taking steps to prevent significant and widespread election violence. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to Nairobi in August 2012 was a positive first step. (...)

The United States and others may have limited leverage over Kenya's domestic politics, but they are not without options that would significantly improve the prospects for acceptable elections and help avert a major crisis. However, with little more than two months before the elections, Washington must intensify its engagement or forsake its opportunity to make a difference.

**Read**  
[full report](#)

### **3. Mali: Outside the Spotlight, Displaced People in Urgent Need of Assistance**

Andrea Lari and Alice Thomas

Refugees International

13 December 2012

Since hard-line Islamist groups took control of northern Mali earlier this year, regional and international attention has focused on plans for an African-led military force to drive out the insurgents. But this focus has distracted from the unmet and growing needs of displaced Malians, the majority of whom have fled to the country's south. (...)

The eruption of violence in Mali has had significant humanitarian impacts. Civilians in the north have been subjected to wide-spread human rights abuses, including killings, targeted executions, mutilations, rape and other forms of violence against women, and recruitment of child soldiers. In addition, approximately 400,000 people have been forced to flee and are now displaced either internally or as refugees in neighboring countries. (...)

### Displaced People in the South Receive Limited Assistance

Humanitarian needs in northern Mali are extremely difficult to ascertain and remain of the utmost concern. However, more than half of the country's internally displaced persons (IDPs) are now residing in the south and are easily accessible. They require urgent attention. (...)

More broadly, the weak IDP response in Mali reflects a deeper, systemic dilemma facing UNHCR and donors. Since the onset of the Mali crisis, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres has repeatedly called on donors to increase their support for Malians displaced by the crisis, a request that RI has echoed. Yet this has not been accompanied by effective UNHCR leadership within Mali or a strong emphasis on IDP protection. It is true that funding for the humanitarian response and the Protection Cluster has been insufficient. Nonetheless, UNHCR, as the Protection Cluster lead agency, has failed

*both*

to provide the leadership and staff necessary to call attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of more than 200,000 Malian IDPs,

*and*

to provide direct assistance to them in its role as provider of last resort. (...)

**A Slow Humanitarian Response to an Escalating Crisis** Mali is now facing three growing and interconnected emergencies: a food crisis, armed conflict, and the political crisis precipitated by the coup. This presents serious operational challenges for aid agencies. (...) The lack of coordination and differences in approach between humanitarian agencies and development actors also continues to pose problems. For example, there is evidence that development staff in some agencies are not aware of, or do not participate in, relevant cluster meetings.

These shortcomings must be addressed immediately in order to effectively address current humanitarian needs and prevent the situation from deteriorating. (...)

**Read**

[full report](#)

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#### **IV. Publications on RtoP and mass atrocities prevention**

##### **1. The Canadian Centre for R2P presents alongside Ed Luck at the 127<sup>th</sup>**

##### **IPU Assembly**

Canadian Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

1 January 2013

On 23 October 2012, Tina Park [former co-chairperson of the Canadian Centre on the Responsibility to Protect] represented the CCR2P as a speaker at the 127th IPU Assembly in Québec City. Tina's presentation remarked on the role of national parliaments in implementing R2P, notably recommending the establishment of national R2P Focal Points.

The interactive panel,

*Enforcing the Responsibility to Protect: The Role of Parliament in Safeguarding Civilians' Lives*, was moderated by Mr. S.H. Chowdury (President of the IPU's First Standing Committee) and included two parliamentarian co-rapporteurs, Mr. L. Ramatlakane (South Africa) and Mr. S. Janquin (France). Non-parliamentary experts included Dr. Edward Luck (former Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect) and Ms. Tina Park of the CCR2P. Mr. Laurence Marzal represented the IPU. (...)

The IPU is the international organization of Parliaments established in 1889. The Union serves as the focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and co-operation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy.

**Read the**

[full post](#)

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See an unofficial

[transcript](#)

of the panel prepared by the CCR2P and Ms. Park's

[presentation](#)

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Read the IPU Assembly event

[program](#)

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## 2. The Responsibility to Protect in a Time of Uncertainty

Rachel Gerber

Article taken from "After the Spring – Prospects for the Arab World in 2013"

A publication from UNA – UK

14 December 2012

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othing short of a "new social contract" was the end to which the United Nations Secretary

General encouraged Yemen's national dialogue conference at the launch of its formal preparatory process in July 2012. (...)

This focus on resetting the social contract is the common thread that runs through transition and resistance across the region, and that ties these unfolding dynamics so tightly to the political principle known as the '

**Responsibility to Protect**

' (

**R2P**

). (...) These responsibilities are concurrent and continuous – and are as critical to Arab Spring countries transitioning to a new order as to those still battling with the old. (...)

**R2P**

encourages all regimes, new and old, to develop the capacity to protect populations from atrocity violence. Arab Spring crackdowns have proven a vivid reminder that protection capacity is not met with arms and soldiers to defend against external threats. To build it, states must proactively configure their core institutions (security, justice, political and economic) to mitigate atrocity risks and provide a solid buffer between the people and elites who may find their

interests best served through mass violence. (...)

For these regimes, and others under stress in the region,

**R2P**

insists that the international community remains closely engaged in transitional efforts and provides appropriate assistance to help them build the capacity to guarantee their populations against atrocity violence. With the region's strategic interests and geopolitical tripwires, international attention is a given.

**R2P's**

challenge (and imperative) is to ensure that atrocity-prevention focused objectives remain a central focus in balancing the complex issues, interests and actors vested in the Arab Spring's ultimate outcome.

To this end, many international actors remain engaged across the region. The United Nations

Support Mission in Libya has shepherded an encouraging election and focused closely on key elements of security and justice sector reform to diffuse atrocity flashpoints: demobilising brigades that still supplement local police forces, training justice officials to process backlogged cases of sub-Saharan Africans falsely accused of mercenary support for the former regime, and so on. Yet many important capacity deficits remain outside UN purview. For

**R2P**

to prove successful in Libya, these deficits – particularly resource management – must also attract support, with external oil interests kept secondary to effective state management and equitable systems of revenue distribution. (...)

(...) Geopolitics and strategic posturing have frustrated all efforts to facilitate a political settlement in Syria, as Lebanon straddles a particularly shaky precipice awaiting its fate. (...) As a political principle,

**R2P**

has never been blind to the realities of power politics and strategic interest; its obligations persist in spite of them. The degree to which state and international actors continue to strive for protection against these obstacles will come to define not only what

**R2P**

means for the Arab Spring, but also what the Arab Spring will ultimately mean for

**R2P**

. (...)

See

[full publication](#)

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### **3. “Timely and Decisive Response”: Summary of the Informal Interactive Dialogue of the UN General Assembly on the Responsibility to Protect held on 5 September 2012**

Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

December 2012

(...) On 5 September 2012, fifty-eight member states, one regional organization and two civil society organizations participated in the fourth United Nations (UN) informal interactive dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) held in the UN General Assembly (UNGA). The dialogue on “timely and decisive response” marked an important turning point in member states’ discussions on R2P. For the first time in an interactive dialogue the majority of states focused their contributions on how best to operationalize R2P, rather than debate its status or whether it should be implemented.

This shift stems in part from the UN Security Council’s (UNSC) 2011 invocation of R2P in resolutions mandating Chapter VII missions to protect civilians from mass atrocities in Libya and Côte d’Ivoire. This experience has made the implementation of R2P and its most controversial aspect, the use of force as a coercive tool of last resort, more than an abstraction. Libya, Cote d’Ivoire and the plight of civilians in Syria today was at the fore of many states’ comments as they reflected upon the challenges arising from the operationalization of R2P. The dialogue confirmed that there has been no diminution of the norm and that, as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted in his opening address, “R2P’s time has come.”

There was widespread acceptance that the international community must move towards outlining tangible steps that states can take at the domestic, regional and international level to uphold R2P. Many states outlined the efforts they are taking to uphold R2P domestically, including through the appointment of a senior-level government official to serve as a national R2P Focal Point.

The 2012 dialogue saw an increase in the number and diversity of states participating. When compared with opposition to R2P in 2005 or 2009, the 2012 dialogue saw only two states, Cuba and Venezuela, remaining as outright opponents of the norm. A number of states did, however, voice constructive concerns about how best to implement and advance R2P. For example, states stressed that R2P must be applied in a consistent manner to avoid allegations of double standards, and points of disagreement remained regarding the sequencing of the three pillars and how and when to resort to the use of force. (...)

**Read**

[full summary](#)

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#### **4. Minimizing the impact of illicit small arms and diverted weapons transfers in the commission of atrocity crimes, human rights violations and other violence**

Hector Guerra and Robert Zuber

Taken from “Applying a Disarmament Lens to Gender, Human Rights, Development, Security, Education, and Communication: Six Essays”

A publication from the UN Office on Disarmament Affairs

November 2012

*Hector Guerra coordinates the International Action Network on Small Arms, and Dr. Robert Zuber directs Global Action to Prevent War.*

(...) Over the past decade the international community has taken steps to tackle the problem of illicit weapons. Most important among them are the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA), the related United Nations Firearms Protocol (2005) and the International Tracing Instrument (2005). More recently we and other NGOs participated in preparations for formal negotiations (Summer 2012) on an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). (...)

Backed by a series of disarmament, humanitarian and human rights treaties and structures that help ensure transparency and compliance, these agreements and activities represent important platforms from which to address threats to human security ranging from atrocity crimes to school and community violence. Specifically, these agreements address the threat posed by illicit arms, both their proliferation and illegal use: Too many arms are in the wrong hands, and lives, limbs and livelihoods are being needlessly lost. (...)

(...)While a few States are hindering efforts to control illicit weapons and fulfil our responsibility to protect civilian populations from abuse, the majority of United Nations Member States favour robust and comprehensive instruments to prevent the spread of illicit arms, including small arms, light weapons and ammunition, arms that most States recognize can fuel mass atrocities or otherwise contribute to human suffering in our communities. (...)

Illicit Weapons, Atrocity Crime Prevention and our  
**Responsibility to Protect**

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(...) Urgency regarding that agenda escalated in 2005 when the World Summit unanimously endorsed (with greater and lesser levels of enthusiasm) the “

### **Responsibility to Protect**

” (

### **RtoP**

) norm. (...)

It seems clear that the illicit trade in conventional weapons and the ammunition that fuels them greatly complicate efforts to build State capacity and otherwise help governments fulfil their primary protective responsibilities with respect to their civilian populations. Fragile States facing threats to their control from non-State actors with access to plentiful weapons will be hard pressed—even when protection is a stated priority—to provide security for their populations in ways that fully respect human rights and reduce rather than exacerbate the threat of mass atrocities. So long as illicit arms inflame conditions that are beyond full government control, internal conflicts with grave implications will continue to flare and any effort to protect civilians, whether atrocity crimes are present or not, will be severely compromised. (...)

While

### **RtoP**

represents a limited frame of reference on civilian protection as it is focused solely on mass atrocities, both this norm and the general notion of international responsibility for the protection of civilians (once a controversial matter inside and outside of the peacekeeping community) are now accepted by virtually all States, including those taking part in the influential “C-34” Peacekeeping Group. Of course, not all of these States are rigorously drawing connections between the presence of large quantities of illicit arms and the increased likelihood of intra-State violence and even the commission of mass atrocities; nor are they always drawing connections between the ubiquitous presence of weapons and the preponderance of gender-based and school-based violence. But we believe these connections have great merit, and as such there is ample cause for civil society and government policymakers worldwide to both discuss and address linkages forthrightly. (...)

As international civil society insists that States do more to protect civilian populations, including and especially from mass atrocities, it must collectively take more responsibility as well. There are many things that governments, civil society organizations and other stakeholders can do more of together

- Explore local and regional linkages between the presence of illicit arms and the threat of mass violence or severe abuses of human rights. (...)
- Assist States, especially fragile States, to guarantee the security of existing weapons stockpiles (or remove them altogether), and help ensure marking, tracing and record keeping of

arms that is cost effective and sufficiently interactive with the highest international standards in this area. (...)

- Assist States in promoting citizen disarmament, especially in post-conflict situations or where the propensity of unregulated, unlicensed weapons threatens education, participation, health and related options within communities.
- Assist States in implementing important responsibilities stemming from the illicit arms trade—including providing victims’ assistance and “flagging” potentially diverted transfers. (...)

**Read the**  
[full report](#)

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*Thanks to Inara Khan for compiling this listserv.*