

RtoP WEEKLY

INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

▣ ICRtoP releases new educational tool exploring RtoP's regional relevance in Africa



The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) serves as a key resource to increase understanding of the Responsibility to Protect amongst civil society, government and regional organization actors, the UN, and the general public. Our vast range of educational

tools has been used by diverse audiences throughout the world and has had a direct impact on strengthening the global awareness of RtoP.

To contribute towards this goal of strengthening awareness of and action on atrocity prevention, the ICRtoP has released a new educational tool exploring the regional relevance of the norm: The Responsibility to Protect in Africa.

This document provides an overview of RtoP's relevance to the region in focus, exploring the efforts made by regional organizations, and discussing relevant country situations. The educational tool also provides examples of the contributions made by civil society to advance the norm. The ICRtoP has also released additional region specific tools focusing the [Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\)](#)

and the

[Asia-Pacific Region](#)

. The ICRtoP will release new educational tools on the Americas and Europe soon.

To view the latest infographic on the Responsibility to Protect in Africa, please click [here](#) .

To view all of ICRtoP's educational tools, please click [here](#) .

Catch up on developments in...

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Burundi:

On 18 April, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, [expressed](#) concern about the recent increase in forced disappearances in Burundi, allegedly conducted by government-affiliated militias such as the Imbonerakure. He also [condemned](#)

the Imbonerakure militia's chants calling upon members to impregnate women and kill members of the opposition, which the group had performed at several rallies across the country recently. The High Commissioner

[noted](#)

that calls to violence such as these confirm previous accounts of oppression at the hands of government-affiliated groups.

That same day, the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) [announced](#) plans to send a large amount of food aid to Burundi in an attempt to resolve an imminent humanitarian crisis there. The current political instability has negatively affected food production within the country since 2015.

Central African Republic:

On 13 April, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) [reported](#) that its teams had witnessed brutal and systematic acts of violence targeting civilians in the several weeks prior, including summary executions and mutilation. In the same report, MSF stated that recent fracturing and infighting amongst the parties previously involved in the 2014-15 conflict has enhanced the current wave of violence.

A new investigation by an independent Swedish film team [revealed](#) that several survivors of sexual abuse at the hands of French UN peacekeepers within the Central African Republic had received no assistance from the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), despite being promised support. Many of the victims, including one who was allegedly impregnated at 14 by one of the soldiers, have expressed frustration with the UN for providing them with neither support nor justice since the incidents occurred in 2015.

Ugandan troops have begun officially [withdrawing](#) from CAR, claiming their mission to pursue Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been accomplished, although Kony remains active. The LRA and its leader were well-known for their brutality and practice of kidnapping children to become fighters and sex slaves, a punishable war crime.

Democratic Republic of Congo:

In a video report released on 17 April, a BBC team [found](#) evidence of mass graves in DRC, where armed forces have been accused of indiscriminate killings against civilians. Additionally, UN investigators have [found](#) 17 new mass graves and have called upon DRC's government to conduct investigations into the civilian deaths, which were allegedly performed by government troops. There have also been reports of government forces raping women and children while going into private homes in search of militia members. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein called upon the DRC government to launch a formal investigation, insisting that the International Criminal Court would conduct its own independent investigation should the DRC government fail to do so.

Iraq:

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Lise Grande, [stated](#) that the scale of displacement in the country has already stretched relief efforts to their “operational capacity,” as more than 493,000 people have [fled](#) the fighting in Mosul. According to estimates, at least 500,000 civilians still remain trapped in ISIL-controlled areas in western Mosul, including about 400,000 in the densely populated Old City.

Iraqi forces have [accused](#) the Islamic State (ISIL) of using chemical weapons during the fight for the city this past week. However, Iraqi officials gave no details about the kind of poison gas allegedly used by the terrorist group and affirmed that injuries were minor. So far, the Islamic State has not responded to the charges.

On 20 April, the Iraqi Joint Operations Command coordinating the fight against ISIL in Mosul [declared](#) that Iraqi forces had completed the liberation of the al-Thawra and Nasr neighborhoods, which are located near the western Old City. Additionally, Read Shakir Jawdat, the head of Iraq’s federal police, gave an official statement that Iraqi forces had killed a senior ISIL operative who had apparently been in charge of chemical weapons for the group.

Libya:

On 17 April, UN Secretary-General António Guterres [asserted](#) that Libya is at risk of devolving back into conflict and instability due to increasing military escalation and ongoing political stalemate in the country. Fighting has continued to plague the eastern oil crescent and security in the country remains uncertain, only adding to the tension. Guterres noted that the Islamic State (ISIL) no longer controls territory in Libya, but militants with ties to the group have been sighted and are allegedly targeting members of the international community found within Libya.

Mali:

The recently formed alliance of jihadist groups in Mali, Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen, has [continued](#) its spate of attacks on the Malian army, French forces, and UN personnel. On 17 April, a vehicle belonging to the UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was [struck](#) by an improvised landmine, leaving two peacekeepers and one civilian wounded. The group has claimed responsibility for this attack as well as another on MINUSMA in the Kidal region.

Similarly, from January to March 2017, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) [recorded](#) 28 cases of humanitarian access constraints in Mali, primarily occurring in the north of the country. Over two-thirds of the incidents involved attacks on humanitarian personnel, equipment, or infrastructure.

OCHA has [predicted](#) that 1 in 5 Malians, or 3.8 million people, will be food insecure and will require assistance in the country's lean season, which falls between June and August this year. The total includes an additional one million people from last year. The food insecurity threat is reportedly worsened by the continued displacement of civilians, with over 45,000 [displaced](#) since 2012.

Nigeria:

Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) has [reported](#) that the northern Nigerian town of Rann is the center of a critical humanitarian crisis. MSF teams in the area noted a critical lack of water, unsanitary conditions, and almost no access to medical care. One MSF staffer remarked that "falling sick in Rann is almost a death sentence."

14 April [marked](#) the third anniversary of the kidnapping of the 276 Chibok Girls. Despite government claims of negotiations and other efforts to return the girls, roughly 200 still remain missing along with numerous other victims of Boko Haram kidnappings. The defence minister has [stated](#) that it could take years for the military to locate and free the remaining captives.

Insufficient funding for food relief in Nigeria may [lead](#) to the most populous country in Africa becoming the source of another large scale refugee crisis, according to the country's chief humanitarian coordinator. Nigeria is one of four countries, along with Yemen, Somalia, and South Sudan, that have been [noted](#) by the UN as being part of the largest humanitarian crisis in the organization's history. In total, there are a combined 20 million in need of humanitarian aid in the region. In February, the UN [sought](#) a combined \$4.4 billion by the end of March to deliver urgently needed aid to the four countries, but has so far [received](#) only 15 percent of the necessary funding. The funding gap has [left](#) the UN World Food Program's (WFP) operation in Nigeria facing an impending shut-down of services.

Nigeria was [reelected](#) as chair of the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping for the 45th time. Nigeria has held the position since 1972.

South Sudan:

A United Nations official has [called](#) for the enhanced protection of civilians in South Sudan after fighting between the government and opposition forces in Raga, Waat, and Wunkur led to an increased level of violence against citizens in those regions. Additionally, the UN peacekeeping mission in the country (UNMISS) has reported that the number of displaced citizens arriving at UN compounds has reached a total of 38,746. Finally, a release by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stated that many humanitarian workers in South Sudan have had to relocate as a result of violent attacks against them. OCHA [reported](#) on 18 April that South Sudan has become an extremely dangerous place for aid workers due to violence, disease, and famine. 82 aid workers have been killed there in total - nine in the past month alone.

Moustapha Soumaré, the acting Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, has [called](#) for the cessation of hostilities in South Sudan, stressing the need for a political solution of the conflict. In a joint statement on 17 April, six South Sudanese political opposition groups [urged](#) the international community to acknowledge that a genocide is occurring in the country and to hold the government of President Salva Kiir accountable for its alleged war crimes.

Arjan Hehenkamp, the General Director of the Medecins sans Frontieres, [stated](#) on 17 April that the UN is not holding to its protection of civilians (POC) mandate when it is aiding only those residing in designated POC sites. Hehenkamp insisted that the UN needs to extend its protection to civilians outside of POC sites, which currently only hold about 200,000 civilians in need of assistance.

[Sudan:](#)

The Popular Defense Forces (PDF) militia [raided](#) a civilian market in West Kordofan on Tuesday under the pretext of enforcing permit regulations. The government militia allegedly confiscated large amounts of goods, food stuffs, and at least 15,000 US dollars worth of cash from local citizens.

The National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), the government's primary security apparatus, [banned](#) without reason an event that was to be held at El Ahfad University for Women against the oppression of women. The No to Oppression of Women Initiative, the group organizing the event, [said](#) this week that over 45,000 women had complaints filed against them under the Public Order Act and that 15,000 were subjected to flogging as a result last year. The activists allege that the laws are “naturally discriminatory against women” and are used arbitrarily by Sudanese security forces.

The presence of explosive remnants of war (ERW) in Darfur continues to be a major threat to civilians, particularly children. Last Wednesday, two young brothers, ages seven and eleven, were reportedly [killed](#) instantly when they came across and unexploded grenade while herding

goats. Elsewhere in Darfur, the UNAMID's Ordnance Disposal Office (ODO) [deployed](#)

a team to conduct a general explosive hazard assessment near a small town, resulting in the identification and disposal of 33 explosive devices, including a 250kg bomb.

The head of the Darfur Civil Society Platform [insisted](#) that government statements asserting that the security situation in Darfur has improved are false, instead alleging that the region is controlled by militias who act with impunity.

The government and security structure of North Darfur [implemented](#) new plans to resolve the security problem and rampant banditry in the region on Wednesday. The emergency measures seem to target both criminal elements and abuse by government forces banning, among other things, the presence of armed vehicles inside cities and markets.

Syria:

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights [reported](#) on Sunday that a suicide bomber attacked an evacuation convoy in Syria on 15 April. The convoy was carrying citizens fleeing from the towns of Fua and Kefraya, two pro-government villages, and the attack resulted in 126 deaths, including 68 children. As of now, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack. On 18 April, Rupert Colville, the spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

[said](#) the attack could amount to war crime and should be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

On Wednesday 19 April, the evacuation of civilians from Foua and Kefraya and the two opposition-held towns of Zabadani and Madaya finally [resumed](#) after being disrupted by the suicide attack. The evacuations were agreed to by the Syrian government, as President Bashar al-Assad insists that evacuating civilians from the main rebel-held areas is the best way to end the conflict. However, the deal, currently at the first stage, has been repeatedly delayed.

Also on Wednesday, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) [confirmed](#) that the deadly nerve agent sarin was used in the chemical attack in the village of Khan Sheikhoun, in northern Syria, which killed 86 civilians.

Russia [aims](#) to hold talks with the United States and the United Nations before the Geneva talks resume next week, in an effort to renew the Syrian peace process. Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov said on Monday that the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, has agreed to attend, while US officials still have to confirm their participation.

Yemen:

The International Crisis Group (ICG) has [joined](#) many other groups and agencies calling on both sides of the conflict to take action to protect food security in Yemen and to avoid any actions that would affect the ability of Hodeidah to function as a key port of entry. The special briefing, titled “*Instruments of Pain: Conflicts and Famine in Yemen*”, [emphasized](#) that the imminent famine in Yemen is not a result of natural disaster but of man-made catastrophe and conscious action. In an interview [given](#) Sunday, a high-ranking spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition’s forces in Yemen claimed that the coalition’s primary concerns are for the protection of civilians.

In a joint [report](#), Save the Children and the Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict have [called](#) on the UN to place Saudi Arabia back on the list of those responsible for grave violations of children’s rights in conflict. Saudi Arabia, which was originally on the list for a short period in 2016, is [accused](#) by the groups of doing immense harm to the civilian population of Yemen, in particularly children, by bombing and damaging medical facilities and infrastructure. In a separate civil society report, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has [called](#) on the Houthi forces to cease their use of landmines in the conflict. Landmines were broadly banned by the international community two decades ago for their indiscriminate effect on civilian populations and were banned by Yemen in particular in 1998. However, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines’ (ICBL) “Landmine Monitor” initiative estimated that 988 people were wounded or killed by landmines and other explosive remnants of war in Yemen in 2015.

In other developments, there are concerns that small communities of Jews who have [remained](#) in Yemen, especially in the Houthi held capital of Sa’ana, may have been victims of ethnic cleansing on the part of the Houthi rebels.

[What else is new?](#)

In the Spring 2017 edition of *Courier*, ICRtoP member Stanley Foundation [discussed](#) how The Gambia could be taken as an example of multilateral action and of the Responsibility to Protect norm being used to prevent atrocities and avert conflict. According to the article, The Gambia showcases hope for other countries and the prevention of conflict.