Security Council Open Debates on the Protection of Civilians

Semi-annual open debates of the Security Council on the protection of civilians around the world and the Security Councils response to these crises have become a regular follow-up to the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict resolutions. Some governments hope that these regular briefings, high-lighting situations where civilians are in danger around the world and giving Member States the opportunity to make statements on the Security Councils role in protecting civilians, will be a new mechanism to spur better and earlier responses to these crises. A few governments have noted **Security Council Resolution 1612** on Children in Armed Conflict as a possible model.

First Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians: 28 June 2006
The Security Council held its first open debate on the protection of civilians following the inclusion of RtoP in Security Council Resolution 1674 on 28 June 2006. Many governments positively reacted to the RtoP reference in 1674. Some governments commented on the connection between the Security Council taking concrete actions in accordance with the Protection of Civilians resolutions and the realization of the commitment to the Responsibility to Protect. **Click here for more information**   about the 28 June 2006 open debate on the Protection of Civilians, including links to Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egelands briefing before the Security Council and what governments said at the debate.

For excerpted government statements referencing RtoP at the first open debate, **click here** .

Second Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians
The second debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict took place on 4 December 2006. Mr. Jan Egeland reminded member states of their pledge to accept the responsibility to protect civilian populations. He remarked that this pledge is still far away from being translated into predictable and adequate action to provide for the protection of threatened communities. He insisted that the responsibility to protect must be de-politicized, that it must become a truly shared interest and must then translate into joint action by all members of the Council and the UN.

For excerpted government statements referencing RtoP at the second open debate, please **click here**
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Third Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians
The third debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict took place on 22 June 2007. Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator briefed the Security Council, referring to the responsibility to protect in his opening and closing comments.

Apart from China, who continued to express reservations with RtoP, governments continued to be overwhelmingly positive in expressing their support for the Responsibility to Protect and urging the Security Council to consider ways to operationalize RtoP. Of the twenty-eight nations that made statements at the Open Debate, twenty-three referred to the principle of the

esponsibility to protect. Countries expressing support for RtoP in their statements included: the UK, Panama, Italy, Congo, Slovakia, Ghana, Belgium, Japan, Argentina, Germany on behalf of the European Union and associated States, Nigeria, Canada, Liechtenstein, Korea and Rwanda.

This Open Debate indicates the Security Councils continued commitment to operationalizing the principle of he responsibility to protect in order to promote the protection of civilians from the most heinous of crimes in armed conflict.

For excerpted government statements referencing RtoP at the third Open Debate **click here** .

For the full Security Council transcript of the third Open Debate **click here** .

Fourth Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians
The fourth debate on the protection of civilians took place on 20 November 2007. RtoP was one of its central themes, as touched on by Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon in his opening remarks to the Security Council. The Secretary-General started the debate by saying that UN member states need to move the RtoP concept from word to deed. He also called for a working group on the protection of civilians in conflict, the goal of which is to make the consideration of protection of civilians more systematic and timely, by giving members a special forum for in depth examination and discussion of protection issues facing the international community. The Secretary-General hopes this will lead to more decisive action by the UNSC and which will lead to practical improvements on the ground.

After that opening statement, Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes presented the report of the Secretary-General, which highlighted the problems that still remain for the protection of civilians. Almost every member of the UNSC made a statement mentioning RtoP, and a large portion of non-SC members also referenced RtoP in their statements. Most of these statements were positive, echoing the Secretary-Generals ideas, although some states cautioned that the RtoP still needed to be discussed, in the capacity of the UNGA, however, and not the UNSC. Member states also embraced the idea of a new working group on the protection of civilians, and vowed their commitment to the establishment of such a group.

For excerpted government statements referencing RtoP at the fourth Open Debate **click here**

For the full Security Council transcript of the fourth Open Debate **click here** Resumption: **click here**

For further analysis of the debate, visit the **Security Council Report website** . For a timeline of UN activities on the protection of civilians agenda, including earlier reports and resolutions, visit the **OCHA website**
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Fifth Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians

The fifth open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict was held on 27 May 2008. The delegates in the Security Council Chamber condemned all violations of international law and reaffirmed the inalienable responsibility of sovereign states and the international community to protect their populations. In the course of the meeting, many governments supported the development of RtoP as agreed from the 2005 World Summit. John Sawers, President of the Security Council, re-emphasized on behalf of the Council "the responsibility of States to comply with their relevant obligations to end impunity and to prosecute those responsible for war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international humanitarian law (...)."

To access excerpts of statements on RtoP at the fifth open debate, please view the **following document**
. compiled by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

Sixth Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians: 14 January 2009
On 14 January 2009, the Security Council held the Sixth Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians. The President of the Security Council, Frances Ambassador Jean Maurice-Ripert, re-affirmed the need for states to respect all relevant international law, including international humanitarian law, human rights law, and refugee law to enhance protection of civilians in armed conflict.

The connection between the protection of civilians in armed conflict and R2P was noted by many states. Out of the 50 member states that spoke at the debates, 19 mentioned RtoP, and 17 did so positively. Only Sudan and China expressed opposing views, arguing the necessity of respecting sovereignty and allowing international action solely with content of the state in question.

To see **excerpted statements** of R2P related comments in government statements, please see the following compiled by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

Member States also noted the unique role that the Security Council has to play in invoking RtoP, and highlighted it as a mechanism for timely and dynamic action. Countries envisioned the incorporation of RtoP into the Security Councils agenda through good office missions, support for the ICC and international criminal tribunals, and the Peacebuilding Commission. Promotion of peace and justice through preventative aspects of RtoP were emphasized, as well as the need to reconcile sovereignty and RtoP internally within the General Assembly. Many States spoke of the need for a common conceptual understanding and agreed strategy on how to implement RtoP principles. In that regard, states expressed that they were looking forward to the **report** of Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on implementing the Responsibility to Protect, released 12 January 2009.

For the full Security Council transcript of the sixth Open Debate **click here**