

**UN Emergency Peace Service Could Save Countless Lives Vancouver Foreign
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(...) That UN human rights document - the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide - was approved by the General Assembly on December 9 1948 and came into effect in 1952 following its 20th ratification. Sadly, outbreaks of mass killings have continued to take place, as for example in Cambodia, the Balkans, Rwanda and Darfur.

Nevertheless, this Convention has become universally accepted, and the international community is slowly gathering tools for enforcement. In September 1998, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda issued the world's first conviction for genocide. In 2002 the permanent International Criminal Court was created with the power to prosecute individuals, including political or military leaders, responsible for genocide, as well as war crimes and crimes against humanity. In 2005 world leaders accepted a new doctrine, the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP). This emerging norm redefines national sovereignty, empowering the international community to intervene when states are unable or unwilling to protect their citizens from large-scale violence.

To turn this principle into effective action, peacekeeping intervention must be timely. Slow responses, often taking four to six months, allow conflicts to escalate, leaving a trail of destruction and necessitating larger more expensive efforts. The UN urgently needs its own standing United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) that could deploy quickly to trouble spots. In addition to a robust military presence, a UNEPS would include an array of civilian teams providing human rights monitoring, policing, humanitarian and disaster assistance.

"Canada could demonstrate bold leadership by challenging other countries to help establish a United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS)," says defence analyst Peter Langille. "Millions of as yet unknown innocent victims could be saved if the international community vigorously enforced the law against genocide." Fergus Watt, Executive Director of the World Federalist

Movement-Canada adds, "Canadians want to make a positive difference in the world and Canadians were the pioneers of UN peacekeeping. There would be no better follow-up than for us to champion an international Emergency Service that would protect countless vulnerable people around the world from heinous acts of violence."

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