

**The Relationship between the Responsibility to Protect and the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict**      Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect    9 May 2011      [Introduction](#)

In recent years the United Nations Security Council has held an open debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (POC) twice yearly. Following the Council's reaffirmation of the World Summit agreement on the responsibility to protect populations from four specific crimes: genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity (abbreviated as R2P) in Resolution 1674 (2006) and 1894 (2009) on POC, discussion of R2P has been an important component of these debates. This is reflected in government statements, presentations by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and in the Secretary-General's report on POC where he in 2007 referred to the agreement on R2P as a "cardinal achievement."

Yet sensitivities around the inclusion of R2P within the protection of civilians' agenda remain. There are concerns that POC is being needlessly politicized by the introduction of R2P into the Council's work and resolutions on the protection of civilians, as those who seek to roll back the 2005 endorsement of R2P raise questions about the protection of civilians in the attempt to challenge hard-won consensus reached on both issues. Misconceptions about POC and R2P abound with some now, in the wake of the strong international response to impending atrocities in Libya and Cote d'Ivoire, erroneously equating both POC and R2P as solely about military intervention and regime change. This brief seeks to provide clarity on the relationship between R2P, a norm relating to the prevention of mass atrocity crimes, and the POC agenda, a framework enhancing the protection of civilian populations from the effects of armed conflict.

See  
[full policy brief](#)