

Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

ICRtoP

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On 10 May 2011, the UN Security Council held the eleventh open debate on the Protection of Civilians (POC) in Armed Conflict. Over forty Member States spoke during the proceedings, with thirteen states making [direct references to RtoP](#). States, such as Uruguay, noted the “intrinsic overlap” between RtoP and POC but emphasized the importance of remaining “clear in our references to these concepts and that we take into account the singular nature of each one.” The statement of the Netherlands highlighted the need “to enhance our collective understanding of both principles, and how they are related in their implementation.” While Venezuela declared that RtoP is being manipulated by powerful countries to impose their interests, Australia emphasized that recent debates following Security Council Resolutions on Libya and Côte d’Ivoire have illustrated the importance of RtoP and “the seriousness with which governments must take their responsibilities.”

Numerous Member States emphasized the importance of ensuring that Security Council-mandated action to protect civilians fully respect the UN Charter, including state integrity and sovereignty. Several speakers also expressed the importance of justice and accountability, noting the importance of the International Criminal Court, and voiced their concern over the human rights violations in Syria and Libya. Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos condemned the attacks on civilians by government forces in Libya and Syria. She called for a ceasefire in Misrata to allow humanitarian access, and expressed alarm over the reported deployment of tanks in residential areas of Syria. Assistant Secretary-General of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ivan Šimonović, highlighted the importance of accountability for human rights violations in Libya, Syria, and Sri Lanka; while Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), spoke on the importance of civilian protection as the UN plans its role in the soon to be independent state of South Sudan.

Click

[here](#)

to view the UN News Centre’s article on the debate.

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to view the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect’s policy brief on POC and RtoP.

Please find excerpts on RtoP of Member States’ statements from the Protection of Civilians debate: [here](#)