

Enhancing Protection Capacity: Policy Guide to the Responsibility to Protect and the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts United Nations University, Griffith, ANU, QUT, OP Jindal Global University and the Center for Asian Integrity

November 2012

Purposes and objectives

This Policy Guide seeks to enhance the ability of policy makers and practitioners – in governments, regional and international organizations, and civil society – in strengthening their efforts to protect civilians from conflict-related grave harm and mass atrocity crimes.

The Guide clarifies and compares the twin principles of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and the Protection of Civilians (POC) in their normative, institutional and operational dimensions, distinguishes the principles' different actors and methods, and specifies the situations when the two principles converge for specific actors and organizations.

With full acknowledgement of the controversies, diversities of position and ongoing developments within these issues, the objectives of this Policy Guide are to:

inform relevant protection actors about the normative, institutional and operational scope of R2P and POC;

clarify the relationship between R2P and POC, including their points of intersection and divergence (with a specific focus on the needs of policy makers and practitioners); and

Provide practical guidance regarding when, how and by whom R2P and POC might be implemented.

Overview

Civilian populations face unprecedented threats in modern conflicts. No longer at risk merely of being caught in the crossfire, civilians have been placed in the crosshairs of combatants. Murder, assault, terror, displacement and rape are now the settled strategies of many contemporary armed actors.

Two distinct international protection principles aim to protect vulnerable peoples from mass violence: the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and the Protection of Civilians (POC) in Armed

Conflict. Yet in a theatre where a lack of coordination and shared understanding can cost lives, there remains much confusion and controversy regarding the normative, institutional and operational links between these two principles. This Summary Document clarifies the nature of the principles, their similarities and differences, and the common myths and misperceptions surrounding them.

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