

Policy Brief: The Responsibility to Protect: Towards a “Living Reality” Written by Professor Alex J. Bellamy for UNA-UK

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The United Nations Association of United Kingdom (UNA-UK), an independent grass-roots organization on the United Nations, is a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect and runs a Responsibility to Protect Programme with the mission of increasing public understanding and strengthening political support of the norm.

As part of this new program, Professor Alex J. Bellamy a Professor of International Security at Griffith University and on the research staff of the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect at the University of Queensland, has drafted “[Responsibility to Protect: Towards a ‘Living Reality’](#)”, UNA-UK’s first policy brief on the norm. The Honorable Gareth Evans has [described the report](#) as an “admirable and compelling account” of the emergence of R2P. The paper intends to be a comprehensive resource and guide for policy-makers, scholars, and practitioners, and suggests how civil society and legislators can contribute to implementing and strengthening the norm.

Agreed by Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit, the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) principle has come a long way in a short space of time. It holds the promise of a world free of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity – as all UN Member States have recognised – and urges them to fulfil their responsibility to protect all populations from these crimes.

The principle was employed by the United Nations Security Council in response to crises in Darfur, Libya, Cote d’Ivoire, Yemen, South Sudan and Mali and by the United Nations Secretary-General and his senior officials in relation to these crises and those in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Guinea, and Syria. Through RtoP, the international community has come to view emerging crises through the prisms of atrocity prevention and response – focusing on what the world can do to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Inevitably, as the principle has come into widespread diplomatic use it has aroused controversy. But international debate has shifted in the past half decade. Where once UN Member States debated the merits of RtoP itself, now they debate its implementation in difficult and complex situations. This report analyses the emergence of RtoP, clarifies the principle’s meaning and scope, and documents moves towards implementation both at the UN Headquarters and in the world’s response to emerging crises. (...)

The final part of the report identifies five critical challenges in this regard:

1. Deepening the engagement of Member States and Regional Arrangements;
2. Making prevention of the four crimes a living reality;
3. Mainstreaming RtoP goals across the UN system;
4. Learning lessons about the implementation of enforcement mandates;
5. Protecting the consensus.

It ends by suggesting ways in which governments, elected officials, and civil society groups might contribute to realising the goal of making the protection of populations from unconscionable acts of inhumanity a living reality. (...)

[Read full policy brief.](#)