

## Fourteenth Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 4 February 2013

On 4 February 2013 the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) held its fourteenth debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (POC), which has been a formal agenda item of the UNSC since Resolution 1265 was passed in 1999. This particular debate was presided over by the Republic of Korea, which had assumed the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February and circulated a [concept note](#) on the topic in advance of the debate. The concept note reflected on the progress made in furthering the POC as well as the remaining challenges, in particular the protection of humanitarian personnel and other non-combatants in vulnerable areas, such as teachers and hospital personnel. The unique and disproportionate burden shouldered by women and children in the context of armed conflict was also mentioned in the concept note as well as in numerous interventions delivered by member-states, such as those given by Togo and [Estonia](#). More than 70 delegations spoke. Interventions universally reaffirmed the need to protect civilians in armed conflict and the obligations of warring factions to uphold this principle, as evidenced by the statements of [Guatemala](#) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. One of the most prominent themes was the need to promote accountability and curtail impunity in the face of violations of fundamental humanitarian legal and normative requirements, of which the neutrality and safety of civilians is a core component. A number of states, including the [United Kingdom](#), [Pakistan](#) and South Africa, cited the array of legal mechanisms available to the international community in seeking to promote accountability, including the International Criminal Court and various ad hoc arrangements such as tribunals.

Journalists, medical personnel, humanitarian aid workers, teachers, refugees, women and children were the most cited examples of vulnerable populations that often experience abuses in armed conflict. The Presidential Statement that emanated from the debate advised that specific gender components be mainstreamed into peacekeeping mandates and into the broader efforts toward preventing sexual and gender-based violence from being used as tools of war, as did the intervention delivered by Morocco.

The responsibility to protect (RtoP, R2P) was referenced numerous times throughout the debate by states from every region of the world. States ranging from [Brazil](#) to the [United States](#) to Costa Rica all invoked RtoP in positive and supportive ways, while states such as [Venezuela](#) and Syria expressed criticism of the norm. Paragraph 9 of the Presidential Statement reaffirmed the commitment of the Security Council to the RtoP principles agreed to as a part of the World Summit Outcome Document in 2005 and the norm's relevance to the POC agenda. Other states that mentioned RtoP include

[Australia](#)

,

[Rwanda](#)

, Portugal,

[Germany](#)

, Croatia, and a number of others.

For a full list of relevant statements made at the debate, please visit out

[Government Statements](#)

page. To read the UN's coverage of the event,

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