

ICRtoP Releases Summary and Educational Tools on 2016 UNGA Dialogue on RtoP

On 6 September 2016, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) held its eighth annual informal, interactive dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP, R2P) at the United Nations headquarters in New York. The dialogue followed the August release of the UN Secretary-General's (UNSG) eighth, and final, report on RtoP entitled, "[Mobilizing collective action: The next decade and the responsibility to protect](#)"

68 Member States and one regional organization delivered statements on behalf of 95 governments. [The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect](#), represented by Mr. Gus Miclat of the [Initiatives for International Dialogue](#), as well as three ICRtoP members – [The Global Centre for R2P](#),

[The Asia-Pacific Centre for R2P](#), and [The Canadian Centre for R2P](#)

– delivered interventions. Over the course of the dialogue, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to RtoP and supported the Secretary-General's vision for mobilizing collective action. In doing so, Member States supported a variety of initiatives to overcome current barriers to implementation. Echoing past dialogues, but with increased support, 37 Member States as well as the European Union (EU), collectively representing 59 States, spoke of the need for veto restraint. This concern manifested itself through support of either/both of the complimentary initiatives led by the governments of France and Mexico, and the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT). Many States as well as the Group of Friends of RtoP (GoF) and EU also proposed ways in which the UNGA could support RtoP in the coming decade, calling for a new UNGA resolution on RtoP and/or the formalization of the dialogue on the UNGA agenda. Emphasizing the title of the report, 11 Member States and the GoF called for the next UNSG to prioritize RtoP, with many others highlighting the need to further mainstream the norm. Finally, many Member States made note of the changing landscape of the past-decade, citing the rise of non-state actors in the commission of mass atrocity crimes as well as the continued disregard for international law, with many calling for ensuring accountability for perpetrators and more support for the International Criminal Court.

The ICRtoP has produced a number of educational materials about the UNSG report

and UNGA dialogue, including a summary of both the 2016 report and dialogue, an infographic highlighting the major themes raised in the meeting, and an updated page on the UN and RtoP, which includes information on all UNGA dialogues.

View the ICRtoP's summary of the UNSG report [here](#) .

View the ICRtoP's summary of the UNGA dialogue [here](#) .

View the ICRtoP's infographic highlighting key themes [here](#) .

View the ICRtoP's UN and RtoP page [here](#) .

To read interventions delivered at the UNGA dialogue, visit [here](#) .

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Burma/Myanmar:

Aung San Suu Kyi made visits to leaders of the United Kingdom and United States this week, including a meeting with British Prime Minister, Theresa May on Tuesday, and US President, Barack Obama, on Wednesday. In her [meeting](#) with PM May, the two discussed British support for the people of Burma, with the Prime Minister expressing concern of the commission of human rights abuses by Myanmar's military. After her meeting with President Obama, which [marked](#) her first visit to the country since her party's electoral victory, the US President

[announced](#)

that he is prepared to lift American sanctions on Burma due to the further democratization of the country in past months. However, a senior US official said that some sanctions would remain in place, such as an arms ban, "in order to ensure that the military remains a partner in the democratic transition." Human rights organizations have

[urged](#)

the US to maintain such military sanctions until the military and its allies respect human rights and democratic norms.

Burundi:

It was [reported](#) on Thursday that a former army officer and his family were killed as a result of a grenade attack, with local residents stating that the attack may have resulted from the former officer's links to the government.

Democratic Republic of Congo:

Late last week, the DRC [released](#) eight pro-democracy activists and 170 other prisoners, some of which were found guilty of "insurrection, acts of war and political offences," according to the ministerial release order signed by the country's justice minister. The government's release of the prisoners was in response to opposition parties' demands as a pre-condition for their participation in the dialogue taking place in the capital. However, on Monday, opposition parties [walked](#)

out of the talks after the government proposed that local elections should occur before presidential elections, claiming that their stance on the order in which elections will be held is non-negotiable. A government spokesman said that such an act is only a negotiating tactic and that the dialogue is not over.

The UN mission in the DRC, MONUSCO, reportedly [rescued](#) another 268 people from a national forest in the country's northeast. Riek Machar, South Sudan's main opposition leader fled South Sudan into the DRC after fierce fighting in Juba and over 750 of his supporters have followed him across the border. Officials are concerned over the stability of the region with the arrival of Machar and his supporters as the DRC government currently has limited control over its restive border regions and heavily depends on MONUSCO for security assistance. South Sudan has accused MONUSCO of supporting Machar in the conflict and have condemned the UN mission's actions.

Gaza/West Bank:

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [posted](#) a video late last week that claims Palestinians want to “ethnically cleanse” the West Bank of Jews, and that Jews would be banned from living in a future Palestinian state. Palestinians have denied these claims and US officials have condemned the Prime Minister’s accusations. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also expressed that he was disturbed by the PM’s statement that opposition to the Israeli settlements is “tantamount to ethnic cleansing.”

On Thursday, the Israeli air force [carried out](#) strikes on three Hamas locations within the Gaza Strip after a rocket was fired into Israel on Wednesday. Later that day, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon referenced the attacks, [warning](#) that leaders on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict “do not serve the cause of peace.”

Iraq:

As the Iraqi military [prepares](#) for an offensive on Mosul, ISIL’s defacto capital in the country, the US has announced it will provide up to \$181 million in humanitarian aid to assist with the expected consequences of the military action. The United Nations anticipates that up to one million people will flee their homes as a result of the offensive, which is expected to launch as soon as next month.

The US also [announced](#) that Iraqi forces, with the support of the US-led Coalition, have retaken almost half of the land previously held by ISIL.

Libya:

The British Foreign Affairs Committee [released](#) its report on Wednesday following an investigation into the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya. The report found that the launch of the military intervention was based on "inaccurate intelligence" and "erroneous assumptions." Furthermore, the report asserts that the British government, under then-Prime Minister David Cameron, "failed to identify that the threat to civilians was overstated and that the rebels included a significant Islamist element," which contributed to the political and economic collapse, inter-militia and inter-tribal (warfare), humanitarian and migrant crises, widespread human rights violations and the growth of ISIL in North Africa."

On Tuesday, Martin Kobler, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Libya, [warned](#) that although political space has opened up in the country, political divisions among the parties to the conflict are worsening. He added, "Today more than ever, strong action is needed to convince Libyan stakeholders to build institutions that are open, participatory and able to address the needs of all of its citizens."

Mali:

Unidentified gunmen [killed](#) three soldiers and injured two others late last week in an ambush near the town of Boni in the Mopti region of central Mali.

South Sudan:

The Sentry released a groundbreaking [report](#) following its investigation into the networks led by President Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar, in which the organization found a link "between systemic corruption and violent conflict, including the mass atrocities committed during the civil war." The report's findings indicate that those in power and leading these networks have amassed tremendous wealth as a result of rampant corruption, with officials financially benefiting from the continuation of the war and humanitarian crises that have erupted as a result.

The government of South Sudan has [responded](#) to the release of this report by threatening legal action against the organization, with the presidential spokesman stating that there will be steps taken to sue The Sentry. Action has also been [taken](#)

against national newspaper, the Nation Mirror, allegedly for having published information on the report. The prominent paper has since been shut down, with no indication on how long this will last and causing increased concern for media freedom in the country.

Mercy Corps has [stated](#) that, unless humanitarian support is drastically and urgently increased, an estimated 40,000 people will be at risk of dying in Unity State from starvation that has been fuelled in part by the ongoing conflict in the country. In addition to those at risk of death, an estimated 4.8 million are directly impacted by the hunger crisis.

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council [held](#) consultations on Wednesday to discuss the status of the Regional Protection Force, with Member States expressing

[concern](#) over recent statements made by members of the South Sudanese government that went against commitments to the force. The Council met with President Kiir while in South Sudan earlier this month, and agreed to a joint statement that expressed acceptance of the force. Some governments stated at the 14 September UNSC meeting that if this commitment is not upheld then the Council must consider stronger measures, such as an arms embargo. The same day, it was

[reported](#) that President Kiir stated that the UN was working to support his rivals as UN actors assisted in the transportation of Riek Machar to receive medical care, and thus the organization was “not part of the solution.”

On Thursday, the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan [expressed](#) its concern for the state of human rights in the country, including harassment and intimidation of civil society and journalists, and the commission of sexual violence against civilians.

Sudan/Darfur:

Sudanese President Omer al-Bashir is [set](#) to visit Shattaya, a locality in which 150 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have reportedly recently returned to their homes.

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) has [reported](#) 298 new Sudanese arrivals last month in South Sudan, bringing the year’s total to 9,291 so far. Around 90 percent of the arrivals were women and children.

Syria:

On Monday, a nationwide ceasefire [brokered](#) by the United States and Russia took effect in Syria at 7.p.m. local time. This is the second such attempt by the global powers this year. The ceasefire is an attempt to allow badly needed humanitarian aid to reach previously cut off populations and, if the ceasefire holds, the US and Russia plan to begin coordinating efforts targeting the Islamic State (ISIL) and Jabhat Fateh Al-Sham, formerly called Jabhat al-Nusra, who are not included in the truce. Prior to the ceasefire, neither the Syrian government forces nor any of the rebel groups had formally declared to respect the agreement, but representatives from both sides indicated that they would. However, at the deadline for the cessation of hostilities, the government said it would respect the ceasefire, but maintain the right to defend itself from attack.

Only a few hours before the ceasefire took effect, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad [made](#) a public appearance at a mosque in Daraya, a suburb of Damascus which was recently recovered from rebels after a four-year siege. While there, he promised that the government would take the land back from “terrorists” and rebuild Syria.

On Tuesday, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, lauded the “significant drop in violence” in the 24 hours following the start of the ceasefire. He said, “Sources on the ground, which do matter, including inside Aleppo city, said the situation has dramatically improved with no air strikes.” The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also reported that it had not received any reports of any combatants or civilians killed by fighting within any of areas the regions where the ceasefire is in effect.

By Wednesday, even with the successful holding of the ceasefire, no humanitarian aid had been [delivered](#) to Aleppo due to a lack of security guarantees. The UN attempted to negotiate for the safety of 20 aid trucks and their drivers. Mr. Mistura said, “There is always in these cases attempts to politicize humanitarian aid. So the government has been putting some conditions which I will not elaborate on and the opposition—at the receiving end in eastern Aleppo—have been putting some conditions.” He added that the deliveries would only be made when those conditions were met. By late Wednesday night, the US and Russia [announced](#) a 48 hour extension of the ceasefire, as UN officials continued to negotiate for the security of the aid convoys. However, within less than 24 hours, US and Russian officials [accused](#) their counterparts of violating the ceasefire agreement. Nonetheless, reports of relative calm continued from Aleppo and other areas covered by the truce, while aid convoys remained halted at the Turkish border on Thursday, continuing to await security guarantees.

Yemen:

The UN's Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen [declared](#) that he "remains deeply disturbed by the unrelenting attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure" in the country, this statement coming after a Saudi-led coalition [st](#)

[rike](#)

on a well killed 30 civilians last Saturday. It was said that the attack occurred after the machinery being used by workers drilling for water was mistaken for a rocket launcher. In addition to those civilians being killed by direct fire,

[photos](#)

have shown the horrific impact the war has had on children as 1.5 million are facing malnutrition according to UNICEF.

What else is new?:

Dr. James Waller, Academic Programs Director for the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation will hold an event on Thursday, 29 September in New York City to promote his newest book, entitled *Confronting Evil: Engaging in our Responsibility to Prevent Genocide*. The event will take place in room 1302 of the International Affairs Building at Columbia University from 12-2pm. If you would like to attend, please send a short RSVP to jack.mayerhofer@auschwitzinstitute.org to confirm your attendance.

The Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies will be holding a conference entitled, "Assaulting Cultural Heritage: ISIS's Fight to Destroy Diversity in Iraq and Syria" on 26 September. To learn more about the event, including how to register, click [here](#) .