

Acting responsibly to save Libyan civilians

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The **responsibility to protect** is the mobilizer of last resort of the world's will to act to prevent and halt mass atrocities and mitigate the effects of sovereignty as organized hypocrisy, as Stephen Krasner famously put it.

It is our normative instrument of choice to convert a shocked international conscience into timely and decisive collective action. It navigates the treacherous shoals between the Scylla of callous indifference to the plight of victims and the Charybdis of self-righteous interference in others' internal affairs.

Libya today is the place and time to redeem or renege on **R2P's** solemn pledge. The people's uprising against Libya's Col. Moammar Gadhafi is tailor-made for it. Many have already been killed and a carnage is feared. (...)

(...) All three are vibrant, even ebullient democracies. They should have been taking the lead to turn **R2P** from principle to actionable norm, providing the legal authority to deploy Western military capability on behalf of innocent victims. Instead, they were among the biggest foot-draggers (India and Brazil abstained from the Security Council vote on the no-fly resolution). Failing the test as stewards of world order, they have proven their critics right. They are not yet ready to join the top table as permanent members.

If the Security Council had dishonored the world's collective **responsibility to protect**, limited and legitimate action by NATO would still have been possible under a clear mandate from the

African Union and Arab League, backed by the Organization of Islamic Conference and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Absent that, NATO guns would have had to stay silent. The dishonor for failing to act when confronted with a mass life-threatening crisis would not have been just the West's.

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