

As the world sits on its hands The Denver Post, Opinion 11B Ved Nanda 18 March 2011

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Moammar Khadafy's forces are pounding Libya's rebels with aerial bombardment and ground forces are moving toward the rebel stronghold of Benghazi, where rebels had just a few days ago set up Libya's "National Transitional Council."

After weeks of prolonged inaction by the international community, the U.N. Security Council finally adopted a resolution to impose a no-fly zone over Libya and has authorized "all necessary measures" to protect civilians under threat of attacks from Khadafy's fighters. (...)

(...)The international community has regrettably followed the same Rwandan script as murderous Khadafy loyalists torture and brutally kill all those, primarily civilians, who oppose his most repressive regime. When the U.N. finally acted on Rwanda, it was too late, and that may be the case in Libya, as well.

What an irony it would be if we were to repeat the horrible mistake made in Rwanda — no timely action to prevent killing and torture, this time by Khadafy's mercenaries and loyalists. It is especially tragic because for the last several years, the United Nations has been preaching a new gospel, the "

Responsibility to protect

," which says that if a government is unwilling or unable to protect its people, the responsibility to do so devolves upon the international community, with the use of force.

Under new international human rights norms, violators can no longer act with impunity. Slobodan Milosevic learned this the hard way, as he died in custody while on trial before the Yugoslavia War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague. Sudan's president, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, faces an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court for his brutality in Darfur, also at The Hague, and Charles Taylor, former president of Liberia, is currently on trial for "crimes against humanity" in Sierra Leone. Now the Security Council has referred the Libya case to the ICC, as well. (...)

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