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*The following is excerpted from a recent speech given by General Romeo Dallaire:*

()As the head of the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, I warned New York headquarters before the 1994 genocide began that a widespread killing spree was being methodically planned. My pleas for assistance went unanswered and the eyes of the dead still haunt me today. There was no political will, no national interest compelling enough to incite governments on the Security Council to pass a resolution demanding intervention to protect hundreds of thousands of people from certain death. Furthermore, intervening would have tread on the hallowed ground of national sovereignty. In the twentieth century, the protection of national borders more often than not trumped the protection of human lives.

The twenty-first century has already seen conflict shift even farther away from the conventional battlefield, stepping lethally on the doorstep of civilian populations. The world must adapt accordingly. In a positive first move, and largely in response to the world's failures in Rwanda, all 192 nations at the 2005 U.N. World Summit signed onto a groundbreaking new doctrine called the Responsibility to Protect.

The doctrine calls on sovereign nations to protect its civilians from atrocities. It also states that the rest of the world has a responsibility to assist governments in doing so. But if a country fails to fulfill this obligation, the international community has a duty to take timely action to save lives, including, as a last resort, the deployment of peacekeepers equipped with a strong mandate to protect civilians from harm. It is time for our governments to consistently, robustly and impartially 'operationalize' the Responsibility to Protect when the need arises. Putting the world's commitment to the test in Chad is undeniably necessary.

()We all bear witness to the tragedies that unfold in our global village. We therefore also bear the responsibility to take action, whether we write to our politicians demanding they uphold their Responsibility to Protect, or we sit on the U.N. Security Council and have the power to do so ()

General Dallaires full speech is available at:

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200706041468.html>