

Gareth Evans
6 October 2008

A new principle underlying the defence of peoples from atrocity won acceptance from the international community in the mid-2000s. It needs to be both reaffirmed and clarified. ()

The continuing case of Darfur () is an agonising example of a clear-cut **R2P** case (with the government of Sudan unable or unwilling to halt atrocity crimes) - but one where the international response has so far been very ineffective.

The problem has not been the unwillingness to send in an invasion force (which would almost certainly make the situation much worse in both Darfur and south Sudan), but to deploy an effective voluntary protective force, and to apply overwhelming pressure on Khartoum. Darfur does not show, as some claim, that **R2P** is dead or irrelevant - only that there are some real-world cases where applying it is extremely difficult. ()

All these issues are going to be debated again soon in the UN general assembly. If the world is not to slip back into the terrible old habits of cynicism and indifference toward mass- atrocity crimes, it is crucial that like-minded governments and key civil-society organisations campaign hard to hold and consolidate the gains that have been won. The embrace of the responsibility-to-protect norm has, for the first time in human history, made it thinkable that we will never again have to say "never again". It would be a tragedy if that huge step forward for human rights were now to be eroded.

Source: www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5714