



Written by [Ann Shibley](#) on July 23, 2009

UN: Violate Sovereignty to “Protect” Citizens

The UN seems to be ready to move from its usual conceptual philosophy to actions concerning its pledge to undertake a “responsibility to protect” civilians from brutal governments — specifically, those scenarios that would call for UN action. Such action will be limited to the UN’s definitions of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, for now.



Citing the [Rwandan genocide as a prime example, Ban Ki-moon, the U.N.’s Secretary-General said](#), “The question before us is not whether, but how,” to enforce what has been described as a diplomatic tool and even UN doctrine, the responsibility to protect. “It is high time to turn the promise of the ‘responsibility to protect’ into practice,” he said. Adding, “Military action is a major last — not first — resort. No part of the world has a monopoly on wisdom or morality.” However, no other practical solutions were offered, other than military force by Ban.

According to the [UN’s press release](#), “Individual countries, regional organizations and partners of the United Nations must all do more to ensure the international community has a credible capacity for rapid responses to any future situations similar to previous episodes of genocide or ethnic cleansing, the top UN human rights official said today.”

Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights echoed that:

A concerted effort by States, UN partners and regional organizations will be required to develop and maintain a credible capacity for rapid responses to exceptional situations similar to those of Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

Concerted efforts by the international community at critical moments in time could prevent the escalation of violence into genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity or ethnic cleansing.

Pillay also said, “We should all undertake an honest assessment of our ability to save lives in extraordinary situations.”

But Pillay’s utopian ideal of holding the world — if by this she means humanity in general — responsible for man’s inhumanity toward man may be a bit problematic. It is the practice of many tyrannical governments to promote lawlessness and inhumanities to achieve even more controls and outright slavery of their own people. The UN, as the most corrupt and useless of all international organizations (and never able to agree on even the simplest of sanctions or even table and seating positions) often



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turns a blind eye to overwhelming lawlessness, the evils of communism, physical brutality, human bondage, torture and imprisonment when it suits them.

Nonetheless, President Obama's spokesperson Ambassador Susan Rice said the president takes the new concept seriously. At the recent Group of Eight summit in Italy, Obama said that there was no "clean formula" for when to act.

There is some opposition, from a true liberal, UN General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann. He has issued a "concept note" making clear his reservations on the subject:

Colonialism and interventionism used responsibility to protect arguments. National sovereignty in developing countries is a necessary condition for stable access to political, social and economic rights, and it took enormous sacrifices to recover this sovereignty and ensure these rights for their populations.

Immediately, the World Federalist Movement's Institute for Global Policy's executive director William Pace countered D'Escoto's views saying they were a "political misuse of the GA presidency" since they did indeed contradict the General Assembly's 2005 endorsement of the 'responsibility to protect' doctrine.

Surely, as even Ban Ki-moon has admitted, the doctrine of responsibility to protect could be misused in serious ways; in fact, it invites misuse and abuse. Managing conflicts UN-style might easily see sovereign states being interfered with by external constituencies on the smallest of excuses, with the direst of consequences, and even for profit and gains. So-called humanitarian imperatives will eventually redefine and transform the definition of sovereignty until it is no more.

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