



Library Note

The 'Responsibility to Protect' and the Application of this International Norm by the UK and the UN 16 July 2015

On 16 July 2015, the House of Lords is scheduled to debate the following motion:

[...] that this House takes note of the 'Responsibility to Protect' and the application of this international norm by the United Kingdom and the United Nations.

The 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P/RtoP) is a relatively recent and still-evolving international security and human rights concept in international relations that, as mentioned in a United Nations (UN) University [essay](#) on the subject, addresses the failure of states—whether unable or unwilling—to protect their populations from mass atrocities. The concept, which was introduced as a legal notion by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001, was endorsed unanimously by UN member states four years later, in 2005. The R2P doctrine states that populations should be protected from four mass atrocity crimes (genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, though these are not defined) and is conventionally understood to consist of three aspects, or 'pillars'. These were outlined in a 2009 report by the UN Secretary-General and have been summarised in a UN [background briefing](#) on the concept as follows:

- The State carries the primary responsibility for protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, and their incitement.
- The international community has a responsibility to encourage and assist States in fulfilling this responsibility.
- The international community has a responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other means to protect populations from these crimes. If a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take collective action to protect populations, in accordance with the UN Charter.

Information presented in this Note has been compiled to provide background reading for Members ahead of the debate. It provides background information on the development of R2P and surveys instances in which the concept has been either invoked or considered by the UN Security Council. It does not address the linked issues of humanitarian intervention and state building, but summarises challenges to the concept and the position of the UK Government on the doctrine.

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I. Background

It has been argued that the development of R2P has reset the traditional meaning of state sovereignty.¹ From the early beginnings of the concept of sovereignty—discussions around the subject of which are generally thought to have begun with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648—it has been in tension with the growing framework of international laws, conventions, treaties and agreements that have set limits on the sovereignty of individual states.² R2P overcomes traditional ideas of the absolute sovereignty of states by allowing state actors to intervene in situations in other states in order to prevent or stop actions which, in the past, have been allowed to take place because of the lack of a legal norm permitting intervention. The concept was formulated to shift the focus from the rights of states to intervene for reasons of humanitarian intervention towards the rights of victims of mass atrocities to survive.³

I.1 UN Charter

The norm of non-intervention in the affairs of other states was expressed in Article 2(7) of the UN Charter, signed in June 1945:

Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII.⁴

This article acts as the base for defending sovereignty within the UN system. However, as has been noted by former Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, “because the UN is in the business of trying to manage issues that cut across borders, it is constantly faced with tensions between [this] sovereignty clause and the necessity of forging international agreements requiring collective action that challenge the spirit of Article 2(7)”.⁵ He continued:

The UN Charter was fashioned in response to interstate wars and therefore was silent on the issue of civil conflicts. The outbreak of internal violence against vulnerable people, very often by the governments themselves, increasingly became the main challenge faced by the UN and one that was poorly handled if at all. While UN peacekeepers may have been present, their inability to protect people was severely limited due to the influence of the Charter.

Following the atrocities committed in Rwanda and Srebrenica in the 1990s, the international community began to debate how to react effectively when gross violations of human rights were being perpetrated. The central question facing the international community following

¹ L Axworthy, ‘RtoP and the Evolution of State Sovereignty’, in J Genser et al (eds), *The Responsibility to Protect: The Promise of Stopping Mass Atrocities in Our Time*, 2012, p 5.

² *ibid.*

³ United Nations University, ‘[The Responsibility to Protect](#)’, 5 April 2011.

⁴ United Nations, ‘[Charter of the United Nations](#)’, accessed 7 July 2015. For further information on the United Nations, see House of Lords Library, [The United Nations](#), 16 June 2015, LLN 2015/0015.

⁵ L Axworthy, ‘RtoP and the Evolution of State Sovereignty’, in J Genser et al (eds), *The Responsibility to Protect: The Promise of Stopping Mass Atrocities in Our Time*, 2012, p 6.

these events was whether states had unconditional sovereignty over their affairs or whether the international community had the right to intervene in a country for humanitarian purposes.⁶

1.2 Speeches by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (1998–2000)

Between 1998 and 2000, the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan made a number of speeches on the subject of the sovereignty of states and on human rights. On 26 June 1998, he gave the annual Ditchley Foundation Lecture at Ditchley Park in Oxfordshire. In his speech, Kofi Annan stressed that the UN Charter “protects the sovereignty of peoples”.⁷ He continued: “It was never meant as a licence for governments to trample on human rights and human dignity. Sovereignty implies responsibility, not just power”.

On 20 September 1999, Kofi Annan made a keynote address to the UN General Assembly in which he advocated a new understanding of sovereignty. He did so after reviewing the concept following the intervention in Kosovo, a conflict which he termed a tragedy.⁸ In particular—citing events in Sierra Leone, Sudan, Angola, the Balkans, Cambodia, Afghanistan, East Timor and Rwanda—Kofi Annan called for the Security Council and the UN as a whole to “forge unity behind the principle that massive and systematic violations of human rights—wherever they may take place—should not be allowed to stand”.⁹

At the end of March 2000, Kofi Annan published [We The Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century](#), which became known as the Millennium Report.¹⁰ In it, he challenged UN member states to answer the following question:

[...] if humanitarian intervention is indeed an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica—to gross and systematic violations of human rights that offend every precept of our common humanity?¹¹

He continued:

We confront a real dilemma. Few would disagree that both the defence of humanity and the defence of sovereignty are principles that must be supported. Alas, that does not tell us which principle should prevail when they are in conflict.

Humanitarian intervention is a sensitive issue, fraught with political difficulty and not susceptible to easy answers. But surely no legal principle—not even sovereignty—can ever shield crimes against humanity. Where such crimes occur and peaceful attempts to

⁶ United Nations, [Background Note: The Responsibility to Protect](#), March 2014, p 1. Former Australian Foreign Minister, and “prime mover behind the concept” of R2P, Gareth Evans has stated that these divisions “came to a head in the 1990s with the debate about ‘humanitarian intervention’, with the global North often rallying to the cry of the ‘right to intervene’, but the global South reluctant to accept the idea that the big powers had any right to throw their weight around”. Chatham House, [‘Gareth Evans on ‘Responsibility to Protect’ after Libya’](#), *The World Today*, October and November 2012, p 31.

⁷ United Nations, [‘Press Release: Secretary-General Reflects on ‘Intervention’ in Thirty-Fifth Annual Ditchley Foundation Lecture’](#), 26 June 1998.

⁸ I Winkelmann, [‘Responsibility to Protect’](#) (updated October 2010), in *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, accessed 7 July 2015. See also United Nations, [‘Press Release: Secretary-General Presents His Annual Report to General Assembly’](#), 20 September 1999.

⁹ United Nations, [‘Press Release: Secretary-General Presents His Annual Report to General Assembly’](#), 20 September 1999.

¹⁰ United Nations, [We The Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century](#), March 2000.

¹¹ *ibid*, p 48.

halt them have been exhausted, the Security Council has a moral duty to act on behalf of the international community. The fact that we cannot protect people everywhere is no reason for doing nothing when we can. Armed intervention must always remain the option of last resort, but in the face of mass murder it is an option that cannot be relinquished.¹²

1.3 International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001)

The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) responded to Kofi Annan's challenge of how to "respond to a Rwanda [or] a Srebrenica" by developing the concept of R2P.¹³ The Commission was established by the then Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy on 14 September 2000 and was co-chaired by Gareth Evans, a former Australian Foreign Minister, and Muhamed Sahnoun, an Algerian and UN diplomat. The Commission included ten more commissioners drawn from around the world.¹⁴

The ICISS published its report, [The Responsibility to Protect](#), in December 2001. The report recommended that sovereignty not only gave a state the right to control its affairs, but also conferred responsibility for protecting the people within its borders. The report proposed that when a state fails in its duty to protect its people—either through lack of willingness or lack of ability—the broader international community should take on its responsibilities to protect the people concerned.¹⁵

The report defined R2P as follows:

The 'responsibility to protect' implies above all else a responsibility to react to situations of compelling need for human protection. When preventive measures fail to resolve or contain the situation and when a state is unable or unwilling to redress the situation, then interventionary measures by other members of the broader community of states may be required. These coercive measures may include political, economic or judicial measures, and in extreme cases—but only extreme cases—they may also include military action. As a matter of first principles, in the case of reaction just as with prevention, less intrusive and coercive measures should always be considered before more coercive and intrusive ones are applied.¹⁶

The report considered, among other issues, when military intervention should be used, in what situations this would apply, what safeguards should exist against abuse and who should authorise action.¹⁷ It named the UN Security Council as the most appropriate body to authorise military action (because it possesses the primary, though not the sole or exclusive,

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ This work built on that of Francis Deng and his Brookings Institution colleagues' notion of "sovereignty as responsibility", set out in the 1990s. J Genser and I Cotler, *The Responsibility to Protect: The Promise of Stopping Mass Atrocities in Our Time*, 2012, p xix.

¹⁴ I Winkelmann, '[Responsibility to Protect](#)' (updated October 2010), in *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, accessed 7 July 2015.

¹⁵ United Nations, [Background Note: The Responsibility to Protect](#), March 2014, p 1.

¹⁶ International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, [The Responsibility to Protect](#), December 2001, p 29.

¹⁷ House of Commons Library, [Conditions for Using Force in Humanitarian Intervention](#), 29 August 2013, SN06716, pp 3–4.

responsibility for peace and security matters under the UN Charter), and stated that its authorisation should be sought in all cases.¹⁸

1.4 Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2004)

In December 2003, following the invasion of Iraq, the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan created the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. The Panel published its report, [A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility](#), in December 2004. The report endorsed the emerging norm of R2P. It stated that there was a “collective international responsibility to protect, exercisable by the Security Council authorizing military intervention as a last resort, in the event of genocide and other large-scale killing, ethnic cleansing or serious violations of international humanitarian law which sovereign Governments have proved powerless or unwilling to prevent.”¹⁹

The Panel praised the criteria developed by ICISS and proposed five specific criteria that it said would legitimise the authorisation of the use of force by the UN Security Council in cases where mass atrocity crimes were anticipated to take place or had taken place. It stated that the following five criteria should be addressed by the Security Council when authorising or endorsing the use of military force.²⁰ These five criteria were as follows:

1. The seriousness of the threat. Is the threatened harm to State or human security of a kind, and sufficiently clear and serious, to justify prima facie the use of military force? In the case of internal threats, does it involve genocide and other large-scale killing, ethnic cleansing, or serious violations of international humanitarian law, actual or imminently apprehended?
2. Proper purpose. Is it clear that the primary purpose of the proposed military action is to halt or avert the threat in question, whatever other purposes or motives may be involved?
3. Last resort. Has every non-military option for meeting the threat in question been explored, with reasonable grounds for believing that other measures will not succeed?
4. Proportional means. Are the scale, duration and intensity of the proposed military action the minimum necessary to meet the threat in question?
5. Balance of consequences. Is there a reasonable chance of the military action being successful in meeting the threat in question, with the consequences of action not likely to be worse than the consequences of inaction?²¹

The report also called for these five criteria for authorising the use of force to be embodied in declaratory resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly.²²

¹⁸ I Winkelmann, ‘[Responsibility to Protect](#)’ (updated October 2010), in *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, accessed 7 July 2015; and International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, [The Responsibility to Protect](#), December 2001, p 49.

¹⁹ United Nations High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, [A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility](#), 2004, p 66.

²⁰ *ibid*, p 67.

²¹ I Winkelmann, ‘[Responsibility to Protect](#)’ (updated October 2010), in *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, accessed 7 July 2015.

²² United Nations High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, [A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility](#), 2004, p 67.

1.5 Report: In Larger Freedom (2005)

In March 2005, the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan published a report for the General Assembly ahead of the UN World Summit scheduled to be held later that year. In the report, [In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All](#), he endorsed the principle of R2P as set out in the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change report:

While I am well aware of the sensitivities involved in this issue, I strongly agree with this approach. I believe that we must embrace the responsibility to protect, and, when necessary, we must act on it.²³

Mr Annan agreed with the proposed criteria of the High-level Panel and suggested that they be applied for the authorisation of the use of force in general.²⁴ In addition, he recommended that the Security Council “adopt a resolution setting out these principles and expressing its intention to be guided by them when deciding whether to authorise or mandate the use of force”.²⁵

1.6 UN World Summit (2005)

In September 2005, at the UN World Summit, heads of state and government of UN member states unanimously endorsed the concept of R2P as set out in the summit outcome document:

Responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity

Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means. We accept that responsibility and will act in accordance with it. The international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability.

The international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In this context, we are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We stress the need for the General Assembly to continue consideration of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and its implications, bearing in mind the principles of the Charter and international law. We also intend to commit ourselves, as necessary and appropriate, to helping States build capacity to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing

²³ United Nations, [In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All](#), 21 March 2005, p 35.

²⁴ United Nations, [Background Note: The Responsibility to Protect](#), March 2014, p 2.

²⁵ United Nations, [In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All](#), 21 March 2005, p 58.

and crimes against humanity and to assisting those which are under stress before crises and conflicts break out.²⁶

In summary, the concept of R2P as set out in the outcome document consisted of the following:

- states have a responsibility to protect their own citizens from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity;
- the international community has a duty to help states fulfil this responsibility; and
- if a state manifestly fails to protect its citizens from these crimes, the international community should take action, with the ultimate step being military force.²⁷

However, the outcome document was not clear on the use of military force without Security Council approval. The wording in the outcome document left it unclear whether the UN is the only actor that can exercise R2P or whether it is simply the preferred actor.²⁸

1.7 Report: Implementing the Responsibility to Protect (2009)

In January 2009, the current UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon published a report based on the 2005 World Summit outcome document. The report, [Implementing the Responsibility to Protect](#), intended to develop the UN's role in the implementation of the R2P concept and outlined a 'three-pillar strategy', based on the three aspects listed above, for advancing the R2P doctrine.²⁹ The report stated:

The strategy stresses the value of prevention and, when it fails, of early and flexible response tailored to the specific circumstances of each case. There is no set sequence to be followed from one pillar to another, nor is it assumed that one is more important than another. Like any other edifice, the structure of the responsibility to protect relies on the equal size, strength and viability of each of its supporting pillars.³⁰

1.8 Annual Reports (2010–present)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's most recent report on R2P, the sixth report, published in 2014, outlined the ways in which national, regional and international actors could assist states in fulfilling their responsibility to protect populations from the four mass atrocity crimes and identified approaches and principles that, in his view, should guide efforts to assist states in the fulfilment of their protection responsibilities. It also considered the various factors that could contribute to the responsibility to assist.³¹

²⁶ United Nations, [2005 World Summit Outcome](#), 15 September 2005, p 31 (see paras 1.38–1.39).

²⁷ House of Commons Library, [Conditions for Using Force in Humanitarian Intervention](#), 29 August 2013, SN06716, p 3.

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ *ibid.*, p 6.

³⁰ United Nations, [Implementing the Responsibility to Protect](#), 12 January 2009, p 2.

³¹ United Nations, [Fulfilling Our Collective Responsibility: International Assistance and the Responsibility to Protect](#), 11 July 2014; and [Amid Multiple Crises, 'Responsibility to Protect' More Urgent Than Ever](#), 8 September 2014.

Other reports by the UN Secretary-General on the subject of R2P include:

- **Early Warning, Assessment and the Responsibility to Protect (2010)**

Published in July 2010, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's report [Early Warning, Assessment and the Responsibility to Protect](#) identified gaps and proposed ways to improve the UN's ability to use early warnings more effectively. These included seeking information from field operations, and improving early, flexible and balanced responses, where there appeared to be a risk of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or ethnic cleansing.³²

- **The Role of Regional and Sub-regional Arrangements in Implementing the Responsibility to Protect (2011)**

Published in June 2011, this report by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon emphasized the need for global-regional collaboration to help implement R2P.³³ The report has been summarised in a UN background briefing as follows:

The report identified gaps and proposed ways for the UN to strengthen its cooperation and draw on information from regional and sub-regional arrangements to identify signs of danger and undertake or support timely and effective preventative action at the sub-regional, regional, or global level. While emphasizing that the responsibility to protect is universal and each region "must move forward", the report acknowledged that "each region will operationalize the principle at its own pace and in its own way".³⁴

- **Timely and Decisive Response (2012)**

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's fourth report on R2P examined the idea of a "timely and decisive response" when a state failed to protect its people, including the range of tools and partner organisations available to assist in achieving such a response. It also considered the close connection between prevention and response.³⁵

- **State Responsibility and Prevention (2013)**

The Secretary-General's fifth report on R2P focused on prevention and aimed to provide analysis and strategies that could help states fulfil their responsibilities to protect populations from the four mass atrocity crimes outlined in the R2P concept.³⁶

³² United Nations, [Background Note: The Responsibility to Protect](#), March 2014, p 4.

³³ United Nations, [The Role of Regional and Sub-regional Arrangements in Implementing the Responsibility to Protect](#), 28 June 2011.

³⁴ United Nations, [Background Note: The Responsibility to Protect](#), March 2014, p 4.

³⁵ *ibid.* See also United Nations, [Responsibility to Protect: Timely and Decisive Response](#), 25 July 2012; and '[Remarks to General Assembly Informal Interactive Dialogue on "The Responsibility to Protect: Timely and Decisive Response"](#)', 2 September 2012.

³⁶ United Nations, [Background Note: The Responsibility to Protect](#), March 2014, p 4. See also United Nations, [Responsibility to Protect: State Responsibility and Prevention](#), 9 July 2013; and '[International Community Must Remain Committed to 'Responsibility to Protect' Principle](#)', 11 September 2013.

2. Responsibility to Protect: In Practice

The UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council have passed a number of resolutions which have referred to R2P. In addition, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, together with UN Special Advisers on R2P and genocide charged with keeping R2P under review, has issued statements calling for compliance with the concept in a number of states, including Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Yemen and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.³⁷ A selection of instances in which the UN Security Council has passed resolutions referring to R2P and specific states, since the 2005 UN World Summit, are surveyed below.³⁸

2.1 Sudan

The UN Security Council officially referenced R2P for the first time in Resolution 1674, passed in April 2006, which referred to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The Security Council cited this resolution when it passed Resolution 1706, in August 2006, authorising the deployment of UN peacekeeping troops in the Darfur region of Sudan.³⁹

2.2 Burma/Myanmar

In September 2006, the UN Security Council held a meeting on the situation in Burma/Myanmar, and, in January 2007, proposed a resolution which called on the Burmese/Myanmar Government to “cease military attacks against civilians in ethnic minority regions and in particular to put an end to the associated human rights and humanitarian law violations against persons belonging to ethnic nationalities”.⁴⁰ China and Russia both used their Security Council veto to block this US and UK-sponsored resolution, claiming that Burma/Myanmar was not a threat to international peace and security.⁴¹

2.3 Sri Lanka

On 13 May 2009, shortly before the end of a conflict in Sri Lanka, the Security Council released a press statement expressing grave concern over the humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka and calling for “urgent action by all parties to ensure the safety of civilians”.⁴²

2.4 Kyrgyzstan

On 15 June 2010, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay reported “indiscriminate killing and rape [...] taking place in Kyrgyzstan on the basis on ethnicity”. She

³⁷ United Nations, [Responsibility to Protect Faces Urgent Test 'Here and Now', Secretary-General Tells General Assembly, Stressing Immense Human Cost of Failure in Syria](#), 5 September 2012.

³⁸ This list is by no means exhaustive. For case studies on Darfur (Sudan), Burma (Myanmar), Kenya, Sri Lanka, Democratic Republic of Congo and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), see J Genser et al (eds), *The Responsibility to Protect: The Promise of Stopping Mass Atrocities in Our Time*, 2012. For further information on a number of cases, see International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, ‘[Crises](#)’, accessed 8 July 2015.

³⁹ United Nations, [Background Note: The Responsibility to Protect](#), March 2014, p 2; [Resolution 1674 \(2006\)](#), 28 April 2006; and [Resolution 1706 \(2006\)](#), 31 August 2006.

⁴⁰ United Nations, ‘[Security Council Fails to Adopt Draft Resolution on Myanmar, Owing to Negative Votes by China, Russian Federation](#)’, 12 January 2007.

⁴¹ International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, ‘[The Crisis in Burma](#)’, accessed 8 July 2015.

⁴² International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, ‘[Crisis in Sri Lanka](#)’, accessed 8 July 2015; and United Nations, ‘[Security Council Press Statement on Sri Lanka](#)’, 13 May 2009.

noted that the inter-ethnic violence seemed to be “orchestrated, targeted, and well-planned”.⁴³ The same day, the Security Council met and issued a statement condemning the violence, calling for “calm, a return of the rule of law and order and a peaceful resolution of differences”.⁴⁴

2.5 Libya

UN Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973, passed in February and March 2011 respectively, both specifically invoked R2P. The first resolution, passed unanimously, deplored the “gross and systematic violation of human rights” by the regime of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi and condemned that regime’s attacks on Libyan civilians. The resolution recalled the “Libyan authorities’ responsibility to protect its population”, and applied targeted sanctions and other measures.⁴⁵ It also referred the situation in Libya to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. The second resolution, passed with no dissenting voices, demanded that the Libyan regime immediately establish a “cease-fire and a complete end to violence and all attacks against, and abuses of, civilians” (which it considered may amount to crimes against humanity) and that the Libyan authorities “comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law and take all measures to protect civilians and meet their basic needs, and to ensure the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian assistance”.⁴⁶ In this second resolution, the Security Council authorised member states to take “all necessary measures” to protect civilians under threat of attack in the country, while at the same time “excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory”.⁴⁷ A few days later, NATO forces, including those of the UK, began strikes on Libyan regime positions.

2.6 Côte d’Ivoire

On March 2011, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1975, which condemned the “serious abuses and violations of international law in Côte d’Ivoire, including humanitarian, human rights and refugee law”, reaffirmed the “primary responsibility of each State to protect civilians” and reiterated that “parties to armed conflicts bear the primary responsibility to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of civilians and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian assistance and the safety of humanitarian personnel”.⁴⁸ The resolution cited the “primary responsibility of each State to protect civilians”, called for the immediate transfer of power from former President Laurent Gbagbo to President Ouattara, the victor in the elections held late in 2010, and reaffirmed that the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) could use “all necessary means to protect life and property”.⁴⁹ UNOCI began a military operation to prevent further atrocities on 4 April 2011. In November 2011, former President Gbagbo was transferred to the International Criminal Court, charged with

⁴³ International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, ‘[Crisis in Kyrgyzstan](#)’, accessed 8 July 2015.

⁴⁴ International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, ‘[Crisis in Kyrgyzstan](#)’, accessed 8 July 2015; and Human Rights Watch, ‘[Where is the Justice? Interethnic Violence in Southern Kyrgyzstan and its Aftermath](#)’, 16 August 2010.

⁴⁵ United Nations, [Background Note: The Responsibility to Protect](#), March 2014, p 2; and [Resolution 1970 \(2011\)](#), 26 February 2011.

⁴⁶ United Nations, [Resolution 1973 \(2011\)](#), 17 March 2011.

⁴⁷ United Nations, [Background Note: The Responsibility to Protect](#), March 2014, p 2; and [Resolution 1973 \(2011\)](#), 17 March 2011.

⁴⁸ United Nations, ‘[Security Council Demands End to Violence in Cote d’Ivoire, Imposing Sanctions Against Former President and Urging Him to ‘Step Aside’, in Resolution 1975](#)’, 30 March 2011.

⁴⁹ United Nations, [Background Note: The Responsibility to Protect](#), March 2014, p 2.

crimes against humanity as an indirect perpetrator in atrocities committed during the period following the disputed election.⁵⁰

2.7 South Sudan

On 8 July 2011, the UN Security Council, in Resolution 1996, established a UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).⁵¹ This mission was charged with “advising and assisting the Government of the Republic of South Sudan, including military and police at national and local levels as appropriate, in fulfilling its responsibility to protect civilians, in compliance with international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law”.⁵² On 24 December 2013, the Security Council passed Resolution 2132, nearly doubling the troop size of UNMISS to 14,000.⁵³ On 25 November 2014, the Security Council voted unanimously on Resolution 2187 to renew the mission’s mandate and authorised UNMISS to use all necessary means to protect civilians, monitor and investigate human rights, and support humanitarian assistance efforts.⁵⁴

2.8 Yemen

The UN Security Council, on 21 October 2011, passed Resolution 2014, in which it explicitly recalled the “Yemeni Government’s primary responsibility to protect its population”.⁵⁵ The resolution condemned the “human rights violations by the Yemeni authorities, such as the excessive use of force against peaceful protestors” and urged an “inclusive and Yemeni-led political process” for the transition of power “that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people for change”.⁵⁶

2.9 Syria

The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, a global network of civil society organisations dedicated to advancing R2P, has summarised the crisis in Syria in the context of R2P.⁵⁷ In summary, the civil war in Syria can be traced to protests in 2011 which called for the release of political prisoners. The UN Human Rights Council established an independent International Commission of Inquiry in September 2011 to investigate alleged human rights violations by the Syrian Government of President Bashar al-Assad. The Commission has since produced a number of reports and has concluded that al-Assad’s government, the Shabiha (groups of armed militia loyal to the Syrian Government) and anti-government groups have all committed crimes against humanity and war crimes.

In August 2013, Prime Minister David Cameron tabled a motion to authorise UK military action in Syria to deter the use of chemical weapons by the al-Assad government. The Government issued a legal position on intervention in Syria, in which it argued that humanitarian intervention

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ United Nations, [Background Note: The Responsibility to Protect](#), March 2014, p 2.

⁵² United Nations, [Resolution 1996 \(2011\)](#), 8 July 2011.

⁵³ International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, [‘The Crisis in South Sudan’](#), accessed 8 July 2015.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ United Nations, [Resolution 2014 \(2011\)](#), 21 October 2011.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, [‘The Crisis in Syria’](#), accessed 8 July 2015.

in Syria without the authorisation of the UN Security Council was permitted under international law if three conditions were met:

- there is convincing evidence, generally accepted by the international community as a whole, of extreme humanitarian distress on a large scale, requiring immediate and urgent relief;
- it must be objectively clear that there is no practicable alternative to the use of force if lives are to be saved; and
- the proposed use of force must be necessary and proportionate to the aim of relief of humanitarian need and must be strictly limited in time and scope to this aim (ie the minimum necessary to achieve that end and for no other purpose).⁵⁸

The Government argued that all three criteria had been met, but the motion was defeated in the House of Commons on division, by 285 to 272.⁵⁹ During the debate on the motion in the House of Commons, Ed Miliband, the then Leader of the Opposition, stated: “We will not support a Government motion that was briefed this morning as setting out an in-principle decision to take military action. That would be the wrong thing to do, and on that basis we will oppose the motion”.⁶⁰ Speaking after the debate, Mr Miliband said: “People are deeply concerned about the chemical weapons attacks in Syria, but they want us to learn the lessons of Iraq [...] They don’t want a rush to war. They want things done in the right way, working with the international community”. He said that the UK “doesn’t need reckless and impulsive leadership, it needs calm and measured leadership” on the issue.⁶¹

In February 2014, the Security Council reached agreement over how to respond to the crisis and unanimously passed Resolution 2139 to ensure access for humanitarian aid in Syria, urging all parties to lift sieges of populated areas, and condemning the use of barrel bombs and terrorist acts.⁶²

In July 2014, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2165, which reaffirmed the “primary responsibility of the Syrian authorities to protect the population in Syria”, reiterated that “parties to armed conflict bear the primary responsibility to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of civilians”, and recalled its demand that “all parties to armed conflict comply fully with the obligations applicable to them under international law related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict”.⁶³ The resolution was renewed in December 2014.⁶⁴

It has been argued that the passing of Security Council resolutions that allow humanitarian aid to be delivered across the Syrian border demonstrates that the international community deems

⁵⁸ Prime Minister’s Office, [Chemical Weapon Use by Syrian Regime—UK Government Legal Position](#), 29 August 2013. See also Prime Minister’s Office, [Chemical Weapon Use by Syrian Regime: UK Government Legal Position](#), 29 August 2013. For further information, see House of Commons Library, [Conditions for Using Force in Humanitarian Intervention](#), 29 August 2013, SN06716.

⁵⁹ HC Hansard, 29 August 2013, [col 1551](#); and BBC News, [Syria Crisis: Cameron Loses Commons Vote on Syria Action](#), 30 August 2013.

⁶⁰ HC Hansard, 29 August 2013, [col 1447](#).

⁶¹ BBC News, [Syria Crisis: Cameron Loses Commons Vote on Syria Action](#), 30 August 2013.

⁶² International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, [The Crisis in Syria](#), accessed 8 July 2015; and United Nations, [Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution 2139 \(2014\) to Ease Aid Delivery to Syrians, Provide Relief from ‘Chilling Darkness’](#), 22 February 2014.

⁶³ United Nations, [With Millions of Syrians in Need, Security Council Adopts Resolution 2165 \(2014\) Directing Relief Delivery through More Border Crossings, across Conflict Lines](#), 14 July 2014.

⁶⁴ International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, [The Crisis in Syria](#), accessed 8 July 2015.

humanitarian concerns to be more important than complaints by the Syrian authorities that such action amounts to an invasion of Syria's sovereignty.⁶⁵

In addition to the Security Council, both the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have strongly condemned human rights violations in Syria and have demanded that the Syrian Government immediately cease all violence and protect its people.⁶⁶ In addition, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has recommended referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court and has urged the Security Council to assume its responsibility to protect the population of Syria.⁶⁷

2.10 Central African Republic

Following violence in the Central African Republic, the UN Security Council, on 10 October 2013, unanimously passed Resolution 2121, in which it underscored the "primary responsibility of the Central African authorities to protect the population, as well as to ensure the security and unity in its territory, and stresses their obligation to ensure respect for international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law".⁶⁸ The resolution also expressed the readiness of the Security Council to "consider appropriate measures as necessary against those who take action that undermines the peace, stability and security, including those who violate transitional agreements, impede the transitional process and fuel violence".⁶⁹

2.11 North Korea

In 2013, the UN Human Rights Council created a Commission of Inquiry to investigate allegations of human rights violation in North Korea.⁷⁰ The Commission's report stated:

The fact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [North Korea] [...] has for decades pursued policies involving crimes that shock the conscience of humanity raises questions about the inadequacy of the response of the international community [...] The international community must accept its responsibility to protect the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from crimes against humanity, because the Government of the DPRK has manifestly failed to do so.⁷¹

The report urged that North Korea be referred to the International Criminal Court.

On 17 April 2014, the Security Council convened a special session to consider the findings of the Commission of Inquiry's report.⁷² China and Russia abstained from the meeting. It has been noted that European Union countries, including the UK, have supported the Commission of Inquiry's recommendation that the Security Council refer North Korea to the ICC.⁷³

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ United Nations, [Background Note: The Responsibility to Protect](#), March 2014, p 2.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ United Nations, [Security Council Expresses Readiness to Consider 'Appropriate Measures' against Those Fuelling Violence in Central African Republic](#), 10 October 2013.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, [Crisis in North Korea](#), accessed 8 July 2015.

⁷¹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, [North Korea: UN Commission Documents Wide-ranging and Ongoing Crimes Against Humanity, Urges Referral to ICC](#), 17 February 2014.

⁷² International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, [Crisis in North Korea](#), accessed 8 July 2015.

⁷³ *ibid.*

In response to a written question on the subject of human rights in North Korea, the previous Government stated, on 20 January 2015:

We remain deeply concerned by the UN Commission of Inquiry's findings of widespread and systematic state sanctioned human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). We have seen no evidence to suggest the human rights situation has improved since the Commission published its report in February 2014.

On 22 December, following a request by the UK and others, the UN Security Council formally recognised the human rights situation in the DPRK as a potential threat to international peace and security and held a first discussion of this new agenda item. During this meeting the UK repeated its serious concern at the human rights situation in the DPRK and its belief that if the DPRK will not hold human rights violators to account, then the international community must be ready to do so.

We also reiterated that the DPRK authorities bear primary responsibility for protecting human rights in DPRK and expressed our regret that the DPRK had withdrawn the offers of engagement made ahead of the UN General Assembly Third Committee resolution in November 2014.⁷⁴

3. Challenges Relating to the Responsibility to Protect

It has been noted that the “biggest challenge with R2P is implementing it, as the UN Secretary-General recognised in his 2009 report, *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect*”.⁷⁵

A key challenge for the R2P concept has been the discord that has emerged regarding the third pillar: the use of coercive force to protect civilians. This has been summarised in a UN Association UK briefing as follows:

Although this is only one of many different policies in this Pillar, it receives much attention, and is most commonly misunderstood to equate to “humanitarian intervention”. The legitimate use of military force has a number of limitations: it must have a just cause, which means that a state has to be manifestly failing to uphold its responsibility to protect civilians from mass atrocity crimes in order for the use of force to be justified; it must be properly authorised by the Security Council; it should only be used once all available non-violent options have been exhausted; incur as little violence as possible; do more good than harm; and have a reasonable chance of success.

It is difficult, however, for the United Nations Security Council to agree on these limitations in practice—at what point have all non-violent options been considered? If military action is sanctioned, what are the parameters that will define when and how force may be used? There is no formula to predict the horrors of genocide, which means that a response cannot simply be a list of things to do: it must be tailored to each individual case.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ House of Commons, written question: North Korea, 20 January 2015, [221042](#).

⁷⁵ House of Commons Library, [Intervention in Syria](#), 27 August 2013, SN06714, p 9. For a detailed discussion of three challenges relating to the concept—conceptual, institutional and political—see G Evans, ‘Lessons and Challenges’, in J Genser et al (eds), *The Responsibility to Protect: The Promise of Stopping Mass Atrocities in Our Time*, 2012, pp 375–91.

⁷⁶ United Nations Association—UK, [‘R2P: In Detail’](#), accessed 8 July 2015.

It has been observed that the international consensus on R2P has declined following the mandate on Libya given to the international community by the Security Council. As to why this is the case, former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, who co-chaired the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, stated, in an interview with Chatham House's *The World Today*:

From the high point of that agreement [on action in Libya] there has been a rapid descent [in consensus], with the Security Council remaining paralysed over Syria, even though it was clear from mid-2011 onwards that the situation was worse, and deteriorating faster, than had been the case for Libya.

Part of the reason is a very different geopolitical environment: complex internal sectarian divisions with potentially explosive regional implications; anxiety about the democratic credentials of many of those in opposition; no Arab League unanimity in favour of tough action; a long Russian commitment to the Assad regime; and strong Syrian armed forces with a credible air-defence system, meaning that any intervention would be difficult and bloody.

But there's more to it than that. Consensus *has* collapsed amid recrimination about how the NATO-led implementation of the Security Council's Libya mandate 'to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack' was carried out. The BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), all of whom were sitting on the Security Council last year, have been very angry with the US, Britain and France over their management of that intervention, and that has infected their willingness to support even much less robust measures.⁷⁷

In Gareth Evans' opinion, the complaints of the BRICS states were "not about the initial military response, but what came shortly after, when it became clear that the US, Britain and France were set on regime change". He continued:

Their argument is that the intervening powers rejected ceasefire offers that may have been serious, attacked fleeing troops that posed no immediate risk to civilians, targeted locations that had no obvious military significance (such as the compound in which Gaddafi relatives were killed) and supported the rebel side in what rapidly became a civil war, ignoring the explicit arms embargo in the process.⁷⁸

However, he then stated that the "United States, Britain and France have some answers. If civilians were to be protected house-to-house in areas such as Tripoli under Gaddafi's direct control, they say, that could only be achieved by overturning his whole regime".⁷⁹ In response to the question of whether he was convinced by these arguments, Evans responded:

These arguments all have force, but the US, Britain and France resisted debate on them in the Security Council, and other Council members were never given sufficient information to enable them to be evaluated. Maybe not all the BRICS are to be believed when they say that, if better process been followed, more common ground could have been achieved. But they can be when they say they feel bruised by the dismissiveness of

⁷⁷ Chatham House, '[Gareth Evans on 'Responsibility to Protect' after Libya](#)', *The World Today*, October and November 2012, p 31.

⁷⁸ *ibid*, p 32.

⁷⁹ *ibid*.

the US, Britain and France during the Libyan campaign—and that those bruises will have to heal before any consensus can be expected on tough responses to future situations.⁸⁰

Gareth Evans suggested that consensus could be improved by way of a proposal from Brazil, in which R2P would be supplemented—not replaced—“by a set of principles and procedures that it labels ‘responsibility while protecting’ (RWP)”. He continued:

The two key proposals are for a set of criteria to be fully debated before the Security Council approves any use of military force, and for some kind of enhanced monitoring and review process that would enable such mandates to be seriously debated by all Council members during their implementation.

The criteria on the table include: Last Resort—has every non-military option been fully explored and the judgement reasonably made that nothing less than military force could halt or avert the harm in question? Proportionality—are the scale, duration and intensity of the proposed action the minimum necessary to meet the threat? Balance of Consequences—will those at risk ultimately be better or worse off, and the scale of suffering greater or less?

Such criteria were proposed a decade ago by my own International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, which gave birth to the concept of R2P in 2001. They need not be straitjackets—just inherently rational guidelines. If such criteria—all setting quite high hurdles—were visible and consistently applied, it should be a lot easier to avoid the ‘slippery slope’ argument which has contributed to the Security Council paralysis on Syria, making some countries unwilling to even foreshadow non-military measures such as targeted sanctions or International Criminal Court investigation because of their concern that military coercion would be the inevitable next step if lesser measures failed.⁸¹

Evans doubted that the concern about the perceived over-reach of the Libyan mandate had set R2P back, stating that there was still “overwhelming support evident for the R2P norm” in General Assembly debates. However, he continued:

It’s true that there is a long way to go to re-establish consensus at the sharp end of the R2P response continuum: the hard cases where tough measures have to be considered. The initial response of the US, Britain and France to the Brazilian ‘RWP’ proposal was dismissive—‘they would want all these delaying and spoiling options, wouldn’t they’—but it has begun to soften, as it must. It is beginning to dawn on the Western powers that if an un-vetoed majority vote is ever going to be secured again for strong action, the issues at the heart of the backlash against the implementation of the Libyan mandate simply have to be seriously addressed.⁸²

In an interview that was published in the *Utrecht Journal of International and European Law*, Dr Simon Adams, Executive Director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect—a group which is supported by a number of foundations and countries, including the UK, and of which former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan is a patron and Gareth Evans and Muhamed

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *ibid.*

Sahnoun serve as a co-chairs on the group's international advisory board⁸³—commented on some of the challenges facing R2P.⁸⁴ On the authority of the R2P doctrine, he stated:

Essentially, R2P builds upon existing international human rights and humanitarian law; it does not seek to impose new legal obligations upon states. There are other agreed obligations, such as the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The problem of the second half of the twentieth century was not the absence of international law requiring states to protect populations—including their own—from genocide or other mass atrocity crimes. The problem was one of political will. This is the lesson of Rwanda, of Srebrenica and Cambodia. R2P has now been utilised in a number of UN Security Council resolutions, Presidential statements and so on [...]

Unfortunately, with regard to Syria we have the worst possible situation at the UN Security Council where one permanent member is a long-term ally of the Assad government. By using its veto in opposition to the majority of the Council, Russia has opposed, undermined and sabotaged every attempt to hold the Syrian government accountable for its crimes. For me, this is not a matter of the failure of R2P but rather it is compelling evidence of the need for reform of the Security Council. In particular, I support the S5 [Small Five Group—consisting of Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Switzerland] initiative for a moratorium on the permanent members using their veto to prevent Council action in a situation where mass atrocity crimes are occurring.⁸⁵

In response to the question, “What are the main challenges for the advancement of the R2P norm and its recognition?”, he added:

We have won the battle of ideas. I don't think even the boldest dictator would stand up in the United Nations and state that it is simply their sovereign right to kill their own people if they so desire. There is broad consensus amongst the UN's 193 members that preventing and responding to mass atrocities is a global responsibility. We've been through some testing times since the Libya intervention but R2P is here to stay. I think recent debates in the UN General Assembly reflect that there is recognition that for all the imperfections and weaknesses of the international system, R2P is still the best tool we have to bridge the chasm between the UN's noble aims and practical action to protect people from mass atrocities.

The challenge now—and this is what keeps me awake at night—is how to implement R2P in specific situations like Syria or Sudan and how to ensure that all the preventive, mediated and coercive elements of R2P are adequately understood and operationalised. R2P is not a military doctrine, it is primarily about prevention. So how do we utilise R2P to help protect the Rohingya in Burma/Myanmar, or to prevent a recurrence of widespread ethnic violence during the upcoming Kenyan elections, or to ensure that the peace and reconciliation process in Côte d'Ivoire is adequate[ly] resourced and supported? It is still a struggle, but to quote the UN Secretary General, 'I would far

⁸³ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, '[About Us](#)', accessed 8 July 2015.

⁸⁴ Merkourios: *Utrecht Journal of International and European Law*, '[Responsibility to Protect: Implementing a Global Norm Towards Peace and Security](#)', 2013, vol 29 no 76, pp 109–12.

⁸⁵ *ibid*, p 110.

prefer the growing pains of an idea whose time has come to sterile debates about principles that are never put into practice.⁸⁶

4. UK Government Position

The UK has been and remains a strong advocate of R2P.⁸⁷ There appears to be cross-party consensus on the validity of the concept.⁸⁸ In March 2010, the then Labour Government launched a national strategy on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (PoC). The strategy, a collaboration between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for International Development and the Ministry of Defence, set out the Government's position on military intervention to protect civilians in certain circumstances.⁸⁹ The Coalition Government published a report on the implementation of this policy.⁹⁰

It has been argued that previous governments' support for R2P is nuanced, and there has been no clear statement on whether an R2P intervention requires UN Security Council approval.⁹¹ The 2010 Labour Government policy paper outlining the strategy stated:

The UK will continue to promote a shared understanding of R2P and is committed to helping States build capacity to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and to assisting those which are under stress before crises and conflicts break out. We will encourage and help States before crises and conflicts break, and work to ensure the R2P agreement is translated into a willingness to act speedily and appropriately.

The UK will consider R2P concerns in our work across conflict, human rights and development, and will support the EU and UN to implement a cohesive approach. We are also looking for ways to improve the range of tools available to the international community before, during and after conflict to minimise the potential for mass atrocities to occur.⁹²

More recently—though during the term of the previous Government—Ambassador Peter Wilson, of the UK Mission to the UN, stated at the UN General Assembly Interactive Dialogue on Responsibility to Protect in September 2013 that the UK was “fully committed to implementing” the doctrine.⁹³ Ambassador Wilson added that “R2P should be an important governing principle of all countries' work across the conflict spectrum, as well as on human rights and development”.

⁸⁶ *ibid*, p 112.

⁸⁷ United Nations Association—UK, [Mainstreaming the Responsibility to Protect in UK Strategy: Report by Professor Jason Ralph](#), April 2014. However, this report also argues that the UK “has not always followed through on its rhetoric”, p 25.

⁸⁸ See House of Lords Question for Short Debate on the ‘UN: Responsibility to Protect’, HL *Hansard*, 30 June 2009, [cols 191–206](#).

⁸⁹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [UK Government Strategy on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict](#), March 2010.

⁹⁰ HM Government, [UK National Strategy on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 2011 Annual Report](#), 2011.

⁹¹ House of Commons Library, [Intervention in Syria](#), 27 August 2013, SN06714, p 9.

⁹² Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [UK Government Strategy on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict](#), March 2010, p 5.

⁹³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Speech, UK Fully Committed to Implementing the Responsibility to Protect](#), 11 September 2013.

Most recently, Ambassador Matthew Rycroft, of the UK Mission to the UN, made a statement at the High-level Commemorative Event on the Srebrenica Genocide on 1 July 2015. In it, he stated:

Next week the UN Security Council will consider a resolution on Srebrenica. It will commemorate the victims, show solidarity with survivors and call for reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This resolution does not seek to bring up painful divisions nor point the finger of blame. I am sure that every Security Council member who reads the text will see that it is balanced. It is a chance for the Council to reaffirm the whole international community's commitment to prevent genocide, and war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as to examine the tools at our disposal to do so.

It comes at an important time for the United Nations. This year is marked by a confluence of anniversaries; 70 years of the UN, 10 years of Responsibility to Protect, and now 20 years since Srebrenica. This is the moment for the Security Council to show, through this resolution, that we are committed to making 'never again' a reality.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ['Speech: "Next Week the World Will Pause to Mourn the Loss of Over 8,000 People, Mainly Men and Boys, Murdered in the Srebrenica Genocide"', 1 July 2015.](#)