



In 2005 the United Nations General Assembly agreed to adopt the principles of responsibility to Protect (R2P).

By doing so the individual governments promised to do their utmost to protect and prevent their populations from atrocities that can be categorized as genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity. These are the broad pillars of focus, when talking of the R2P concept and when and how to act in case of atrocities being committed. More details about what was agreed can be found in the 2005 [Summit Outcome Document](#) .

In cases where there is a need for the international community to mobilize collective action and act in accordance with the R2P, it is a criterion that any involvement in a crisis does not take place without a UN mandate to confer legitimacy. That is an important element in the concept of R2P, in part to prevent states from exploiting the R2P concept as a convenient political tool that could be used as justification for an intervention.

The concept of R2P is thus not intended to be activated every time a state seemingly fails to protect their own citizens, and should be considered by the international community only when one finds evidence of acute violence against populations. The violence should furthermore, as mentioned, be categorized as genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity.

In 2005 the UN member states agreed that the international community must activate R2P and make use of peaceful means to protect populations from massive crimes. The use of peaceful means is at any times the preferred and the intended way to use R2P. Edward Luck, special advisor to Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on R2P, said recently to the UN News Centre that the examples when R2P have been used without force are underreported comparing to when force have been applied, but nevertheless outnumber them: “If you actually look at the last

several years, we've invoked the responsibility to protect, at least on the (UN) Secretariat side eight or nine times. Only in one of those cases, with Libya, was it tied to the use of sanctions or military force."

A precise manual that explains when to activate R2P in practice does not exist, as governments agreed to discuss activation of R2P on a case-by-case basis. In a seminar in Brussels recently Edward Luck emphasized this point: "R2P is not specific. It is a principle that does not dictate any specific actions or tactics, and it should fit each individual case. Because R2P is about options, different alternatives to solutions, we have to be open to new ideas and take every case individually."

Use of force

The recent conflict in Libya, where Libyan rebels seek to overthrow Colonel Muammar Al-Qadhafi, stands out as the most striking and dramatic use of the R2P concept, with direct reference to *UN-resolution 1973* accepting use of military force.

The use of military force in accordance to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) concept is not in any way the main tool of the doctrine – force should only to be used as a last resort, if use of peaceful means prove inadequate in order to prevent atrocities from taking place. Of other tools to be considered prior to considering the use of force, include capacity building, mediation, and sanctions directed towards a country that fails to protect its population.

For more information on R2P:

<http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/files/R2Pcs%20Frequently%20Asked%20Question.pdf>

<http://globalr2p.org/pdf/FAQ.pdf>

<http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/files/Responsibility%20to%20Protect%20Powerpoint%20>

[Presentation.pdf](#)