



Event summary & brief

15th April 2013, Houses of Parliament

“The UN’s role in genocide prevention and the Responsibility to Protect: Theory and Practice”

This document provides an overview of the discussion during the meeting, convened to address several theoretical and practical questions facing the implementation of the emerging global norm, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

Event summary: On 15 April 2013, Lord Hannay (Chair of UNA-UK APPG) chaired the panel of genocide prevention experts, who all spoke for ten minutes before the floor was opened for questions. The meeting was held in order to engage British parliamentarians with recent developments of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), some of the problems facing R2P and possible solutions. The growing emphasis of the roles parliamentarians have to play in genocide prevention and the implementation of R2P formed a major thread of the discussion.

The speakers were UN Special Advisor for Genocide Prevention Adama Dieng; Former UN Special Advisor for the Responsibility to Protect Professor Ed Luck; Executive Director, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect Dr Simon Adams; Senior Deputy Director, Will to Intervene Project, Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies Kyle Matthews.

The meeting was hosted jointly by the United Nations APPG, the APPG on the Prevention of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity, the APPG on Global Security and Non-Proliferation and the APPG on Weapons and the Protection of Civilians. It was attended by over 50 representatives from civil society organisations, NGOs, academics, researchers and members of the public. Few Members of either House were present.

Themes of discussion

- Role of national governments and parliamentarians in implementing R2P on the national level
- Institutionalising national knowledge of the full spectrum of tools, from early messaging to military intervention
- R2P successes, including the impact of Kenya, Libya and Syria

Role of national governments and parliamentarians All the panelists stressed the urgent need for national governments and parliamentarians to engage and support R2P at national levels

Ed Luck stressed the need to confront the more controversial third pillar of R2P, which defines the responsibility of the international community to take collective action in a timely and decisive manner, and address issues surrounding the use of force. Luck noted that there are many different kinds of military intervention but that current debate focuses disproportionately on the use of force without sovereign consent with damaging effect. Kyle Matthews argued that parliamentarians had a responsibility to raise public awareness and make use of their unique public pulpit as elective representatives to lead debate. Matthews added that parliamentarians can work to encourage governments to support the sector’s research institutions, academic departments and NGOs in terms of funding and research on national responses.

UK and R2P: All speakers acknowledged the contributions that the UK has made in promoting and supporting R2P. The speakers addressed the significant role and responsibility the UK has, particularly as a permanent member of the Security Council (P5), in ensuring that the norm is successfully incorporated into global and national political culture. The need for active participation by British parliamentarians to integrate R2P analysis and tools in the UK policy system was reiterated by the panel. This engagement was described by some of the panelists as not only an issue of responsibility but as a matter of national interest.

The [draft UN resolution](#) to propose the P5 refrain from using their veto power over issues of R2P was raised by Simon Adams who suggested that the international community’s capacity to protect should not be hamstrung by the political and financial interests of individual states.

Institutionalising R2P tools at national level Consensus from the panel was that there is an urgent need to “institutionalise” and “nationalise” the theoretical concepts and practical tool kit provided by R2P within existing national strategies of international development, foreign affairs and conflict prevention, and build new R2P-specific policy. The need for an atrocity-prevention lens to be incorporated into existing human rights, development and building stability overseas strategies was raised by several of the speakers as a crucial preventive measure that was practical and well as economical. All speakers expressed the need to focus on early warning mechanisms and pre-emptive preventive intervention.

Kyle Matthews discussed the importance of creating national strategies of prevention, citing the US model of the Atrocity Prevention Board. He added that governments and their departments should study international developments in prevention and support the formation of global and regional networks to help plug the information gap that exists among states’ apparatus around the world.

R2P success, failures and lessons All speakers attributed the peaceful elections in Kenya in March to the analytical lens and practical tools provided by R2P, but admitted that the existing structure of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has led to failure over Syria. All acknowledged that intervention in Libya had led some middle and emerging powers to question R2P’s mandate.

Adama Dieng expressed hopes for the future of R2P in Africa, believing that the continent will gradually continue to incorporate more preventive measures, but acknowledged that there is still a long way to go. Simon Adams reminded the audience that there are reasons to be optimistic, highlighting the fact that R2P has been invoked by the UNSC more times in the eighteen months since Libya than during the five years before, adding that there are more ‘friends of R2P’ on the current UNSC than ever before (10 out of 15 member states), which presents an opportunity.

UK G8 statement All speakers praised the UK’s recent G8 statement on combatting sexual violence in conflict. Kyle Matthews expressed hopes that the statement would lead to protection on the ground beyond the provision of humanitarian support.

Syria Adama Dieng expressed concerns about arming Syrian opposition groups and the need to contemplate what will happen when Assad falls. Pointing to the future vulnerabilities of Alawites and Christian minorities, he emphasised the urgency of impressing upon the opposition that the UN and international community are immovable on the rule of law, indictment for R2P related crimes, hate speech and atrocity adding, “from day one we must be very clear.” He called for further pressure on the UNSC but also warned that there was a need to “be fair, not to be romantic when we need to be practical.’ Lord Hannay noted that the issue of supplying arms in Syria is complicated by the fact that arms are being supplied to Assad by Iran and Russia.

Ed Luck referenced the desire of the UN Secretary General to target UN messaging towards the leaders of non-state armed groups as well as belligerent governments, using Syria as an example. Luck also warned that “we could have the perfect storm for genocide in Syria.”

Burma/Myanmar Simon Adams warned that Burma is at imminent risk and the current situation demonstrates that the development of civil society can move in a direction “for better or for worse.” He added that the government of Burma must ensure accountability and strengthen the rule of law, and that the international community must continue to engage.

The responsibility to rebuild and the Responsibility While Protecting (RWP) Ed Luck acknowledged the responsibility to protect exists before, during and after R2P related crimes are committed, but added in relation to the Brazilian-led concept of RWP, that he is wary of two parallel processes of humanitarian and non-humanitarian intervention, questioning why there should be a more stringent criteria for humanitarian intervention when there is widespread reluctance for this kind of intervention in the first place. He also emphasised need for post-conflict reconstruction through an R2P atrocity prevention lens. Simon Adams noted that in presenting RWP, Brazil was able to create debate and forge new consensus within the General Assembly after Libya.

This is a summary document. Words and content have been adapted from the contributions made by the participants. Please to not quote directly. For more information please contact Kate Ferguson at Kate.Ferguson@aegitrust.org