

Statement on the death of Edward C. Luck (1948-2021)

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect mourns the loss of Edward C. Luck and expresses our sincere condolences to his wife, Dana, his family and to all those who were honored to count him as a friend.

Dr. Luck was a global ambassador for the “responsibility to protect” principle and for human rights. He devoted his professional life to understanding how the United Nations and its various bodies, particularly the Security Council, could fulfill the UN Charter’s promise of an institution that would maintain international peace and security, reaffirm faith in universal rights, and ensure respect for international law.

As the UN Secretary-General’s first Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) from 2008-2012, Dr. Luck was instrumental in the development of R2P and in building early consensus among member states. One of Ed’s enduring legacies to mass atrocity prevention is the articulation of the three pillars approach to R2P in the Secretary-General’s 2009, conceptualizing how R2P could be meaningfully implemented. More than a decade later, the three pillars remain essential to how the UN and all its member states understand R2P, clarifying who has a responsibility to prevent atrocities and what that responsibility entails.

Gareth Evans, Chair of the Global Centre’s International Advisory Board, said, “No one did more than Ed Luck to advance the dream of making R2P a reality. With his passing we have lost a giant contributor to the cause of human rights, decency and dignity.”

The Global Centre had the privilege of working closely with Dr. Luck since our founding in 2008, first in his capacity as Special Adviser, then later as a trusted confidant to our staff and an expert voice on the operationalization of R2P. We were honored when he agreed to join our International Advisory Board and admired his continued efforts to shape how the international community, and individuals, understood what it meant to protect populations and prevent atrocities in the 21st century. Until the time of his death, Dr. Luck was still writing and working on issues related to R2P, including on clarifying the connection between attacks on cultural heritage and the persecution of vulnerable populations.

Executive Director, Dr. Simon Adams, said, “Ed Luck was a friend, a mentor and an indefatigable ally in the global struggle against atrocity crimes. Ed not only stood on the right side of history when it mattered the most, he continued to inspire others to uphold human rights and embrace our individual and collective responsibility to protect. He will be sorely missed.”