



MEDIA RELEASE

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EMINENT INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATS – R2P HAS SAVED LIVES

U.N. Should Better Utilize The ‘Responsibility To Protect’ In The Future

According to several former high-ranking diplomats and UN officials in a just released open letter to UN Member States, this past year has seen lives saved in Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire and Libya through international efforts to uphold the responsibility to protect (R2P).

“The international community narrowly averted a disaster in Guinea. In Libya we prevented Benghazi becoming this generation’s Srebrenica. Across the world, R2P remains the best hope for people who believe that ‘Never Again’ must be more than an empty slogan,” said Gareth Evans, former Australian Foreign Minister.

Romeo Dallaire, Jan Egeland, Juan Mendez, and Gareth Evans welcomed advances made since the 2005 UN World Summit commitment to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. Reflecting on the road ahead, they noted that much work remains to be done at the conceptual, political and institutional level to fully operationalize R2P and ensure its consistent application.

“We have seen this past year that R2P is no longer an emerging norm but has become an operational reality, with governments responding in various situations to protect people from mass atrocities. Now we need to see all governments apply their responsibility to protect more consistently,” said Jan Egeland, former UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs.

All four noted, however, that there was little room for complacency.

“The international community should never again cast itself as a passive spectator to mass murder. The current atrocities in Syria and South Kordofan (Sudan) remind us that there is still much work to be done. Legitimate concerns about national sovereignty can not become an excuse for UN inaction. Syria might yet become a stain upon the conscience of the world, like Rwanda or Srebrenica. R2P is our antidote to complacency.” said Roméo Dallaire, former Force Commander of the UN Mission to Rwanda.

The four former diplomats and UN officials declared that the R2P agenda is far too important to be pursued in an *ad hoc* manner. They called upon UN member states to embrace a Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect initiative to create national focal points for R2P and establish benchmarks and goals for the next year.

“UN member states need to take R2P to the next level. The Focal Points initiative of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect is an important part of answering the enduring question of how we prevent future mass atrocity crimes,” said Juan Méndez, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture.

The eminent personalities called upon states to:

- Appoint a senior government official as a national focal point for R2P.
- Encourage all relevant UN agencies and departments to incorporate an R2P perspective into their activities.
- Use the tools available to the General Assembly to take preventive and protective action.
- Work together to develop additional goals and benchmarks for advancing R2P.

EDITORS NOTES (Not for publication):

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Roméo Dallaire, is the former Force Commander of the UN Mission to Rwanda, Canadian Senator, and patron of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

Jan Egeland, Europe Director, Human Rights Watch, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and member of the International Advisory Board, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

Juan Méndez, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, former UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, and member of the International Advisory Board, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

Gareth Evans, Co-Chair, International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, President Emeritus, International Crisis Group, former Australian Foreign Minister, and co-chair of the International Advisory Board of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect was created in February 2008 to catalyze action to move the 2005 World Summit agreement on the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity from principle into practice. See website: www.globalr2p.org/ ###