



PEACE & PROTECTION

Churches, peace and protection

Protecting civilians in armed conflict and refugees fleeing the violence has always been a central concern of the churches. But after the disastrous military interventions in Iraq and the equally disastrous lack of intervention during the Rwandan genocide in 1994, churches around the world struggled with the question of whether force should be used to protect human life.

In the late 1990s, the World Council of Churches began developing an ethical ecumenical approach to the question. Then in 2001, a ground-breaking new framework was put forward by the Canadian Government hosted *International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*. First, it asserted that all states have a responsibility to protect and if they are unwilling or unable to do so, then the responsibility to protect falls on the international community. Second, it put forward strict criteria to prevent unjust interventions or interventions likely to do more harm than good. Third, it argued that states not only have a responsibility to react when atrocities are occurring (with diplomacy, sanctions and failing other measures, military action), but they have a responsibility to rebuild after such atrocities, and more importantly still, a responsibility to prevent atrocities, rather than just react when its too late.

In April 2005, the World Council of Churches held a historic consultation on the responsibility to protect and in 2006, at the WCC's World Assembly in Brazil over 300 church delegates from around the world endorsed a resolution on the responsibility to protect civilians in armed conflict.

Then in September 2005 and April 2006, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and the UN Security Council adopted resolutions stating that every nation has a responsibility to protect its citizens from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and that when they are unwilling or unable to do so then the responsibility to protect falls on the international community.

Now there is no excuse for inaction! There is an international agreement on what responsibilities states' have, and when the international community should intervene to ensure the protection of vulnerable people.

R2P, refugees and displaced people

Atrocities such as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity are the main cause of refugee flight and internal



The chances of my life are in your hand; take me out of the hands of my haters, and of those who go after me. Psalms 31:15

displacement. Addressing the root causes of displacement by preventing conflict, reacting when atrocities are occurring and rebuilding afterwards, is therefore vital to ensuring that those who have fled their homes internally can find protection, and that refugees who have fled to another country can eventually return to safety.

Refugees & Displaced People: The facts

Fact: Refugees and internally displaced people are the product of state and international community failure to prevent, react and effectively rebuild after conflict.

Fact: Protracted refugee situations usually result in refugees being warehoused because there is no solution for them.

Fact: 7.1 mil of the world's 12 mil refugees have been 'warehoused' (confined to remote refugee camps or segregated settlements or living in urban slums for 10 years or more with little hope of a permanent solution and few rights such as the right to work and education and to move freely).

Fact: The average length of time a refugee spends in a refugee camp has increased from 9 to 17 years over the past decade.

Fact: Only 1-2% of the world's refugees are resettled in another country each year. Australia takes 6,000 refugees and 7,000 humanitarian entrants each year (mostly family reunion entrants).



A World of Uprooted People

Uprooted Refugees and Asylum Seekers 11.5 Million

Internally Displaced Persons 25 Million

Refugees "Warehoused" for 10 years or more 7 Million

Which states are unwilling or unable to protect their own civilians?

Sudan: Over 70,000 people have been killed in Darfur. One million civilians have fled their homes and 200,000 have fled into neighboring Chad (see our website for details). The Government continues to evade international community pressure to stem the violence and reign-in its Janjaweed militia.

Burma (Myanmar): Burma's military regime has clearly demonstrated that it is unwilling to protect its own citizens. 150,000 Burmese refugees have fled to Thailand's refugee camps and nearly 1 million have fled their homes to become displaced inside Burma.

The Occupied Palestinian Territories: That the people of Palestine have continued to suffer serious harm for over 60 years is failure of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the International community's responsibility to protect.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Since 1998, over 4 million people have died (more than a dozen times the number who perished in the boxing day Tsunami). 2 million people have fled their homes and are internally displaced.

Zimbabwe: President Mugabe's ruling Zanu PF party has shown that it is unwilling and unable to adequately protect Zimbabwe's civilians. Economic mismanagement has led to such chronic inflation and disastrous instability that people are starving in the streets and millions are fleeing the country.

What is Australia Doing?

Australia early-on established its ownership in building the foundations of the R2P norm. Former foreign minister Gareth Evans co-chaired the groundbreaking report *Responsibility to Protect* in 2001, providing the intellectual and diplomatic firepower to develop this international norm. Then, in 2005 Australia played an instrumental role in shaping the General Assembly document that led to the international adoption of R2P.

Through refugee resettlement and disaster relief - such as its support for the UN's Emergency Response Fund - and its response to conflict in East Timor, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, Australia has also played an important leadership role in responding to humanitarian protection concerns around the globe.

Australia must now expand its leadership, by making R2P the standard by which Australian assistance and intervention is

implemented, and using its diplomatic relationships with regional countries like China and Burma to encourage R2P.

Partnering with the global community to improve global stability, to prevent and help nations recover from conflict, and to protect people from the worst atrocities is in the interest of Australian security in both regional, and global, contexts.

As a mid-range international power, Australia has been a strong proponent for the creation of a rules-based system of international order - rather than an ad hoc response to each new emerging crisis - and R2P is a vital step in developing those norms. In addition, it is in Australia's interest to strengthen countries vulnerable to mass atrocities, since states that cannot or will not stop internal mass atrocity crimes are states that cannot or will not stop terrorism, weapons proliferation, trafficking in people and drugs, the spread of health pandemics and other risks to Australia's national security.

Australia's international reputation will be significantly enhanced if we not only maintain our country's principled general commitment to R2P, but also recognize the strategic and moral benefits of ensuring that the importance of R2P is more widely understood domestically, and play a leadership role internationally in preventing mass atrocities by making the concept not just rhetorically but operationally effective.

Ultimately, we must support R2P simply because it is the right thing to do: our common humanity demands that the world never again sees another Holocaust, Cambodia, Rwanda, or Bosnia. This question cuts to the core of who we are as nations, as individuals, and as members of the global Christian community.

Want to get involved?

Christian World Service works to expand the recognition and use of R2P in and outside of Australia. We work regionally, encouraging the inclusion of R2P in the Charter of the Association of South East Asian Nations, and internationally, supporting the advancement of R2P at the UN, and bringing international attention to situations of grave human suffering. You can help by raising awareness of R2P in your church or work community, by writing to your member of parliament or to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, or by giving to CWS.

Need more resources?

Christian World Service has R2P and refugee resources online, including electronic copies of this kit, power point presentations, and short films. You will also find news, education material, action ideas and worship resources. See: www.ncca.org.au/cws

Want to know more about the anti-warehousing campaign? See the 2006 RMS Education Kit.