

ADDRESSING THE PREPAREDNESS OF INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS AND MILITARY ACTORS TO HALT MASS ATROCITIES AGAINST CIVILIANS

The Stimson Center's *Future of Peace Operations* program launched a new initiative in fall of 2007 to help translate growing aspirations for protecting civilians from mass violence into concrete, effective and sustainable action. In 2005, nations at the UN World Summit embraced the idea that countries have a "responsibility to protect" civilians from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Yet fundamental gaps remain between the international community's ambitions to prevent such violence and its ability to respond effectively to halt mass atrocities. Contrary to widespread perception, civilian protection has not been a traditional task for peacekeeping forces or most militaries. Nations and multinational organizations still need to translate ambitions into plans and tools (including guidance, doctrine, training, leadership skills, etc.) and prepare their political and military leaders for such missions.

This project is looking at what can be done to close that gap, strengthen the capacity to respond, and move to a world where nations embrace—and carry out—their responsibility to protect. Stimson will build on its previous research, publications and outreach since 2004 looking at the gaps in preparedness of peacekeepers or military forces to prevent or halt mass violence against civilians.

Stimson will work to strengthen recognition by political and military leaders of the need to address physical protection in future missions; to look at existing strategies for peacekeeping and military missions for operations with mandates to protect civilians; and to support more effective action by organizations that can field such missions. The project will seek to create a network of experts and practitioners engaged within multinational organizations, primarily the United Nations, the African Union and Economic Community of West African States, as well as within NATO and the European Union, to address this question and support their development of capacities. Stimson will also collaborate with experts and practitioners to identify strategies that have worked—or failed—to better understand the options and strategies applicable to such operations, part of improving existing tools to better prepare for missions to halt genocide and atrocities.

Project activities include:

- Consultations with key nations and actors in the United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS, and other multinational organizations;
- Hosting a series of roundtables in Washington, DC;
- Developing a field study to a UN mission where civilians face the threat of mass atrocities;
- Helping sponsor a workshop to develop new operational strategies for responding to mass atrocities; and
- Analyzing challenges and reporting on progress in addressing international preparation for such missions.

The program welcomes inquiries, comments, and collaboration. For more information on this project or previous work in this field, please contact: Stimson Senior Associate Victoria Holt (vholt@stimson.org, 202.478.3431) or Research Analyst Joshua Smith (jsmith@stimson.org, 202.478.3427) of the Future of Peace Operations program.