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Your Excellency,

On June 22, 2007, you have an important opportunity to reiterate your country's commitment to the Responsibility to Protect, and we urge you to take it. As you may know, the United Nations Security Council will hold its semi-annual Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict on that date, the third such debate since Security Council Resolution 1674 (2006) reaffirmed the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. On June 22, we hope you will offer an intervention in which you reaffirm the critical importance of the Responsibility to Protect and suggest concrete steps for moving this idea from the theoretical to the practical realm.

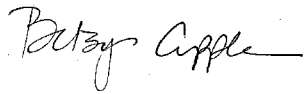
The international community has come a long way since the Secretary-General first identified the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict as an "humanitarian imperative" in April 1998 and called for the development of a "culture of protection" in his Millennium Declaration. The formal recognition of the Responsibility to Protect in the World Summit Outcome Document and SC Resolution 1674 (2006), while a positive and important step, is just the beginning. Much work still needs to be done in order to ensure that the culture of protection and the Responsibility to Protect are reflected into the concrete practice of the United Nations and its Member States. As Kofi Annan explained in one of his last statement as Secretary General, "we must give real meaning to the principle of "Responsibility to Protect...[w]e must develop the responsibility to protect into a powerful international norm that is not only quoted but put into practice, whenever and wherever it is needed".

Human Rights First believes that the Responsibility to Protect will only be operationalized if it is applied to concrete situations and practical issues. The Security Council's recent reference to the Responsibility to Protect in its

Resolution 1755 on Sudan and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Darfur Region is a positive example. The deliberate targeting of civilians, forced displacement of populations, and access and security of humanitarian workers (the main focus of the discussion at the coming Open Debate) are just such practical issues and are located at the very core of the Responsibility to Protect.

We, therefore, urge you to use the upcoming Security Council Open Debate to both restate your firm commitment to the *principle* of the Responsibility to Protect and give it *practical content* by linking it to specific conflicts of concern. We further hope that you will continue to invoke the Responsibility to Protect in situations that call for its implementation in the future.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these matters in more detail. Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you to develop this important principle.



Betsy Apple,  
Director, Crimes Against Humanity Program