

Reconciling R2P with IDP Protection Brooking-Bern Project on Internal Displacement Roberta Cohen
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Introduction:

The concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) developed in large measure from efforts to design an international system to protect internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The explosion of civil wars emanating from and following the Cold War brought into view millions of persons inside their own countries who were uprooted from their homes and in need of international protection and assistance. Many has little or not access to food, medicine or shelter and were vulnerable to assault, sexual violence, and all manner of human rights abuse.

When first counted in 1982, 1.2 million IDPs could be found in 11 countries; by 1995, the number has surged to [more than] 20 million.

The international system, however, set up after the Second World War, focused almost exclusively on refugees - persons who fled across borders to escape persecution. The 1951 Refugee Convention and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provided international protection to people who were outside their countries of origin and deprived of the protection of their own governments. As UNICEF's Executive Director observed, 'The world has established a minimum safety net for refguees,' but 'This is not yet the case with respect to internally displaced populations.' (...)

Concepts of human security, sovereignty as responsibility and the Responsibility to Protect developed in large measure in response to the need of IDPs and other affected civilians for protection from the gross violations of human rights perpetrated in civil wars and internal strife.

This articles examines the origins of R2P from the perspective of IDP protection and identifies the problems that arise in applying the concept to displaced persons. It then offers suggestions for reconciling R2P with IDPs so that the concept may benefit displaced persons, as was intended. (...) [**Read full report**](#)