

## Interview with Naomi Kikoler (Global Centre for R2P) - A

### Responsibility to Prevent

Reuters 27 March 2013 *When does a*

*'Responsibility to Protect' kick in? Could Canada lead the way in developing a global approach to atrocity prevention? OpenCanada talked to Naomi Kikoler, Director of Policy & Advocacy with the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, on the need for Canada to help clarify when and what kind of intervention is required by the international community to prevent mass atrocities.*

**You've called prevention "the least understood dimension of R2P." Can you explain why that is?**

There's a lot of attention that's placed on the use of force – it is the most controversial aspect of the doctrine. Many think that the use of force is what's most needed to prevent and protect populations against mass atrocity crime. But there's more to it than that. At this particular moment, we have a real opportunity to move R2P forward by strengthening the international architecture for prevention. Right now, there's no prevention agenda and no proximate prevention tools. We don't have a sense of what will compel the international community to act when there is a risk of genocide. We aren't investing the financial resources, the time, or the political capital to better understand what prevention should require states to do. At this moment, we have 25 countries that have made R2P a domestic priority – President Obama has said that the prevention of mass atrocities is a national priority for him. We need to build on this because there is a real need for the international community to start engaging at a much earlier stage of these crises rather than waiting until the last minute to implement a Band-Aid approach.

### **Why isn't this prevention-focused agenda moving forward faster?**

Prevention rarely gets onto anyone's political agenda – it's only once there's been a massive failure (a Rwanda or a Srebrenica) that there's remorse, which, at least in the short-term, fuels greater interest in prevention. Most of the at-risk populations are located in remote parts of the world or areas where we have few national interests. Syria is not the norm. Prioritizing prevention is hard because resources are limited. Right now, there isn't a compelling narrative as to why states should prioritize prevention-related issues, such as judicial capacity-building, in remote areas. The financial and technical investment required to work with a state to refine its constitution and strengthen the rule of law is significant.

### **Is the Brazilian RWP proposal a helpful development?**

It was very important for R2P at the moment it was put forward. I think the Brazilians wanted to have an impact on the larger debate around use of force. I don't look at it as being strictly an R2P issue – RWP speaks to a variety of issues – and they put it forward for a variety of reasons. They wanted to say "we aren't comfortable with intervention in any way and we need to make that clear. We need to say that the use of force must be an absolute last resort." But saying that acknowledges, if only implicitly, that there is a role for force in some cases. I feel, and I can't be certain, that there was a sense of frustration that the P3 and western states were

behaving in a way that reminded the Brazilians and others of past interventions where the motives of those involved were less than pure. Having said that, their contribution was very constructive. They continue to engage with states from around the world to define what RWP and to show a strong desire to be a partner in the concept's normative development. (...)

**Read**

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