4-1-2011

April Roundtable: Responsibility to Protect and Human Rights Protection in the Ivory Coast, Introduction

Claudia Fuentes

Recommended Citation

April Roundtable: Responsibility to Protect and Human Rights Protection in the Ivory Coast, Introduction

Abstract

An annotation of:

Article under review: "The Case for Intervention in the Ivory Coast" by Corinne Dufka. Foreign Policy. March 25 2011.

Keywords

Human rights, Ivory Coast, United Nations, Responsibility to protect, Humanitarian intervention

Copyright Statement / License for Reuse

Publication Statement

Responsibility to Protect and Human Rights Protection in the Ivory Coast

Article under review: "The Case for Intervention in the Ivory Coast" by Corinne Dufka. *Foreign Policy*. March 25 2011.

On 30 March 2011, the UN Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of its Charter, adopted Resolution 1975, which urged the defeated President Gbagbo to immediately step aside and declared the situation in the Ivory Coast to be a threat to international security. The resolution stated that the attacks currently taking place against the civilian population of this country could amount to crimes against humanity, and that perpetrators of such crimes must be held accountable under international law in accordance with the International Criminal Court. Against all the predictions of the international community, the UN Security Council mandated the use of "all necessary means" to protect the civilian population in the Ivory Coast, a decision that came only weeks after a similar resolution was enacted for the Libyan case. Most importantly, both resolutions referred to the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) as a justification for the international community to intervene in the face of a growing risk of massive human rights abuses. R2P finally began making its way from a principled idea—supported by the majority of states at the UN Summit in 2005—to a concrete international practice of responding to egregious violations of human rights.

In the case of the Ivory Coast, the country's situation before the UN resolution demonstrated a serious risk of mass atrocities. As the Roundtable centerpiece from Corinne Dufka at *Foreign Policy* points out: "As incendiary threats pour in from both sides, the country is on the brink of a full resumption of armed conflict. As in the past, civilians will almost certainly bear the brunt of the bloodshed." The Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect provides further evidence of the deteriorating situation in the Ivory Coast: "The ongoing post-electoral conflict between militant groups supporting the country's two rival leaders is rapidly spreading. Already more than 440 deaths have been reported and more than 90,000 people have fled the country and sought refuge in neighboring Liberia and Guinea and an additional 350,000 others are internally displaced." Other international actors including the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) also responded with efforts to resolve the crisis through mediation and diplomatic pressure.

Beyond the specificities of the human rights violations in the Ivory Coast, the two recent UNSC resolutions bring up additional questions for scholars, policymakers, and transnational advocacy networks: Why did the international community decide to react in these two particular cases and not in other cases of mass atrocities? Under which conditions is the principle of the Responsibility to Protect more likely to be utilized as a legitimate practice in international politics? Once the risk of massive human rights abuses is not at stake, what is the responsibility of the international community?

This month's Roundtable debates some of these concerns. In particular, Edzia Carvalho and Jonas Claes analyze the multiple and difficult transnational processes through which the discussion about humanitarian intervention takes place. As Claes so aptly puts it: "Those factors that affect the likeliness of a robust 'Libya-style' international response given a certain level of risk of atrocities are rarely acknowledged. The authorization of military force in response to

imminent or ongoing mass atrocities is the product of a difficult diplomatic process, subject to numerous factors unrelated to the gravity of the humanitarian crisis." Meanwhile, Devin Joshi and Brooke Ackerly engage with the broader causes that lead to international crises such as the one in the Ivory Coast. They deal with some of the alternatives available to the international community, not only for peace-building, but also for preventing massive human rights abuses and genocide from ever happening again.

Claudia Fuentes

Roundtable Editor