



# **The Responsibility to Protect: The Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty**

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# The Responsibility to Protect: The Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty

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The international community faces no more critical issue than how to protect people caught in new and large-scale humanitarian crises - humanitarian intervention has been controversial both when it has happened, as in Kosovo, and when it has failed to happen, as in Rwanda. While there is general agreement internationally that we should not stand by in the face of massive violations of human rights, respect for the sovereign rights of states maintains a central place among the principles governing relations between states. In his Millennium Report to the UN General Assembly, Secretary-General Kofi Annan challenged the international community to address the real dilemmas posed by intervention and sovereignty. The independent International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) was established by the Canadian government in September 2000 to respond to that challenge.

After a year of intense worldwide consultations and debate, the Commission now presents this path-breaking report. With its central theme of the "responsibility to protect," the report underlines the primary responsibility of sovereign states to protect their own citizens from avoidable catastrophe - from mass murder, from large scale loss of life and rape, from starvation. But when they are unwilling or unable to do so, that responsibility must be borne by the broader community of states - there must be no more Rwandas or Srebrenicas.

The Commission has also produced a companion volume, written by Thomas Weiss and Don Hubert with input from an outstanding group of international specialists. This volume represents a comprehensive, balanced and up-to-date summary of the key political, ethical, legal, and operational issues and will be of particular interest to scholars. It also contains an exhaustive, thematic bibliography.

The ICISS Report includes a CD-ROM, containing PDF versions of the report, research essays from the companion volume, and an electronic, searchable bibliography.

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