OPERATIONALISING THE ‘THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT’ AND CONFLICT PREVENTION: DILEMMAS OF CIVILIANS PROTECTION IN ARMED CONFLICT

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Phillipa Weeks Staff Library
ANU College of Law (Bldg 5), Fellows Rd, ANU
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Please RSVP (by cob Wednesday 29 April) to E: rsvp@law.anu.edu.au
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This event is free and open to the public.

The Lecture

The responsibility to protect is a nascent, highly contentious concept. Although a restrictive understanding of the concept was agreed upon by world leaders in 2005, the perspective of conflict prevention reveals the conceptual gap in terms of its scope, stage, and strength, failing to bridge the gulf between rhetorical support for prevention and tangible commitment to international action. It is argued that this commitment gap can be bridged by exploring the basis and boundaries of the legal responsibility that encompasses the transcending nature of the responsibility to prevent and to react at the operational level. The reach of legal responsibility to protect can be defined by drawing on the existing rules of international law relating to the protection of civilians. While such an extension of the legal responsibility to protect can be appreciated as furthering the agenda of conflict prevention, the marriage of the two concepts appears to be destined to failure, causing normative, operational, and ethical dilemmas. It will be suggested that a Human Protection Council be established as an alternative ‘right authority’ in order to resolve or mitigate these dilemmas by separating the responsibility to protect civilians from the Security Council’s primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Lecturer


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