



BOSTON COLLEGE

BOISI CENTER
FOR RELIGION AND AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE

Humanitarian Intervention and the “Responsibility to Protect”

Opening remarks by Erik Owens
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5:30- 7:00 PM

HIGGINS 300, BOSTON COLLEGE
CHESTNUT HILL, MASSACHUSETTS

What is the world to do when a particular government cannot, or will not, stop mass atrocities and human rights abuses within its borders? What if the state itself is the source of this violence? Who is responsible for ending the violence and bringing its perpetrators to justice? For the past twenty years "humanitarian intervention" has been the key concept in the post-Cold War debate over international military action to stop such violence within a state. But a new concept called "the responsibility to protect," or R2P, is gaining ground in the world community, seeking to reframe the debate on state sovereignty and the warrants for military intervention.

Formally introduced in 2001 by a Canadian government-sponsored commission, the R2P paradigm was taken up by various commissions of the United Nations in 2004, then unanimously endorsed the next year by 150 heads of state and government, meeting as the General Assembly in the UN's 60th Anniversary year. "Each individual State," the leaders stated,

has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity... We accept that responsibility and will act

in accordance with it... The international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to help to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In this context, we are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council...should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Despite this assembly's endorsement, R2P is not universally accepted as the prevailing concept of sovereignty in international relations, nor does it have the force of international law. And as we shall hear today, it has vigorous supporters and critics who draw upon a wide range of religious, historical, philosophical and pragmatic arguments.

We are fortunate to have brought together today a terrific panel of thinkers on this question, and I am delighted to introduce them in the order in which they will speak. Each is exceptionally distinguished in his field, so in the interest of time I will provide only brief introductions that leave out most of their awards and accomplishments; more complete biographical sketches are available on our web site.

David Hollenbach, SJ, is the Director of the Center for Human Rights and International Justice and the University Professor of Human Rights and International Justice at Boston College, where he is based in the department of theology. His scholarly work brings theological ethics to bear upon international politics, with a strong focus on human rights in theory and practice. His most recent books are *The Global Face of Public Faith: Politics, Human Rights, and Christian Ethics* (2003) and *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (2002); and he is the editor of two recent books on refugees: *Driven from Home: Protecting the Rights of Forced Migrants* (2010), and *Refugee Rights: Ethics Advocacy, and Africa* (2008). He teaches every other year at Hekima University in Nairobi, Kenya. His Ph.D. is from Yale University.

Mahmood Mamdani is the Herbert Lehman Professor of Government at Columbia University, where he holds appointments in anthropology, political science and the School of International and Public Affairs. He specializes in the study of African history and politics, and has written extensively on colonialism, genocide and human rights. A native of Uganda, Prof. Mamdani taught at universities in Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa before joining the Columbia faculty in 1999. Among his many books are last year's *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror* (2009) and *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War and the Roots of Terror* (2004). His Ph.D. is from Harvard University.

Alan Wolfe is the founding director of the Boisi Center and Professor of Political Science at Boston College. A widely known public intellectual and frequent contributor to the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *The New Republic* and *The Atlantic*, his scholarly work focuses on the relation of religion, politics and culture, in practice and theory. He is author of more than a dozen books, including the forthcoming *Political Evil: What It Is and How to Combat It* (2011), as well as *The Future of Liberalism* (2009), *The Transformation of American Religion* (2003), and *One Nation After All* (1999). His Ph.D. is from the University of Pennsylvania.

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Each speaker will have about 15 minutes for their remarks, followed by *very brief* responses if appropriate, and the remaining time will be available for questions and conversation with the audience. We will end at 7:00pm. So let's begin with Fr. Hollenbach.