



# UNA in Queens

P O Box 670711, Kew Gardens Hills, NY 11367

Newsletter  
United Nations Association -USA  
Queens Chapter

**March 2008**

## UNA-USA Queens Chapter Elections



UNA-USA Queens Vice-President John Tandana (right center) with President Margaret Shannon (left) addressing the members at the QMA meeting. On the background shows the various UNA-USA videos available to the Chapter for educational purposes like the PEACE vide and MDG video

The UNA-USA Queens Chapter filled three of the officers positions at the Annual Meeting held at the Queens Museum of Art on January 6, 2008. Barbara Felton was elected Recording Secretary, Frank Ross was reelected Treasurer and Noema Chaplin was reelected Corresponding Secretary. Two videos, one on Peace and the other on the Millennium Development Goals, were shown to the audience of members and friends. "Peace" shows images of blue-helmeted troops performing a variety of tasks in different corners of the world. It also includes pictures of world leaders and different views of the UN. Quotations from the writings or speeches of philosophers, writers and political leaders overlay the pictures.

"Millennium Development Goals" describes each of the eight goals and its expected outcomes. John Tandana conducted a lively discussion among the members of the audience about the MDGs following the presentation of the video. The goal that caused controversy was Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development. People disagreed on whether projects in developing countries should be funded by the U.S. through the Millennium Development Corporation.

The two videos shown are among a series prepared by Board Member Arnold Gallardo that describe the work of the UN. They are designed to educate the public and to encourage support for both the UN and

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## UNA in Queens

is a publication of the  
United Nations Association-USA Queens  
Chapter

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## President's Report

Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's UN Day message began with the statement, "The world is changing in the United Nations' favor as more people and governments understand that multilateralism is the only path in our interdependent and globalizing world. Global problems demand global solutions and going it alone is not a viable option..."

Our job as UNA-USA members is to help the people of the United States understand that concept. The only option for the U.S. is to work with the rest of the world.

We've seen some breakthroughs with the current Bush administration. By convening Arab and Israeli leaders at Annapolis, they committed the U.S. to Mideast peace negotiations. On the last day of the Bali talks, they accepted the framework for global negotiations on a pact that will succeed the Kyoto Protocol in 2012 imposing binding cuts in emissions. This approach of working with other countries to achieve desired ends needs to continue.

Change won't happen from the top. This needs to be a bottom-up movement. A critical mass of people who are educated about multilateralism will demand that their government officials take that path.

The Queens Chapter plans to help with educating the public in several ways. First, there will be a series of programs on Queens Public Television about the UN.

The videos about the UN prepared by Arnold Gallardo will be distributed to social studies teachers for use in teaching their courses.

A series of talks by UN Ambassadors will enable us to learn more about other countries and to meet our neighbors in Queens whose roots are in those countries.

Our UNA Queens website will be expanded and become a source of information and communication for web users.

In December of this year, we will celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a cornerstone of the wide-ranging body of human rights law created over the decades.

To accomplish all these activities we need your help. After all, the UN is a bottom-up organization. It was started by "We the peoples..." UNA is your organization. UNA wants to spread your belief that a strong UN is crucial to a livable world. For the Queens Chapter to succeed, all types of talents are needed.

Come to one of our meetings. All are announced to members by E-mail. Send us an E-mail. We would love to hear from you.

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UNA-USA. They are available for showing to students and other interested parties.

The meeting included a brief consideration of the advocacy activities. Shannon said that congratulations are due to those UNA-USA members who have been using the E-Action Network and participating in the Better World Campaign. Their advocacy efforts over the past year paid off when President Bush signed the Omnibus Budget Bill on December 26th. The bill provides \$1.35 billion for membership dues to more than 40 international organizations, including the UN regular budget and UN specialized agencies. Additional funds are provided for U.S. voluntary contributions to international organization.

In addition, the bill provides \$1.7 billion for UN peacekeeping missions. The bill includes a provision removing the statutory budget cap on peacekeeping dues allowing the U.S. to pay its full assessment during 2008.

Peg Shannon introduced the UNA-USA Advocacy Agenda for 2008. The themes this year are: Restoring U.S. Credibility through International Cooperation and All of

the UNA-USA Cooperating for a Stronger UN. The Chapters have been given the option of selecting the issues that they want to be the focus of their advocacy action.



Barbara Felton  
Recording Secretary



Frank Ross  
Treasurer



Noema Chaplin  
Corresponding Secretary

## Queens Chapter Mourns Death of Board Member,

**William Miller**

*A Tribute by Frank Ross*



**W**illiam F.J. Miller passed away and I will miss him. It was unexpected so it was a shock to all of us. Bill was a member of the Board of Directors.

Bill was serious about justice at home and throughout the world. He was also light-hearted and enjoyed a good time. We would laugh in conversation, talk about our children (who were the same age) and listen to each other's lives unfold.

Bill loved to travel with his wife, Sharon, and was deeply immersed in continuing education courses to expand his knowledge of subjects that were of interest to him. Bill was active in local causes and was a big supporter of Chapter programs about global issues facing the UN and the U.S. When it came to the little things that the Chapter needed, Bill came through to provide the right information to make it happen.

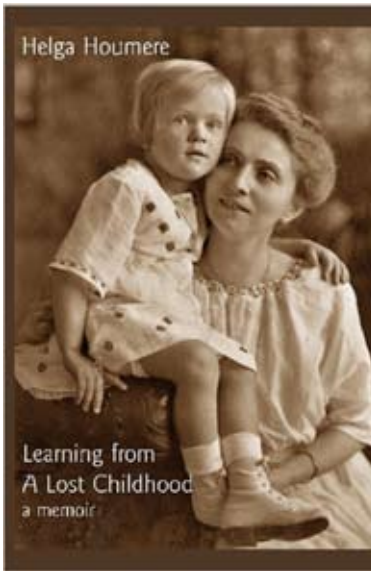
Bill was granted special qualities that touched people's lives, earning the crown of a good name.

Bill leaves his wife, Sharon, and son William Miller, Jr., of whom he thought the world of. Our heartfelt condolences to Sharon and Bill Jr.



UNA-USA Queens Vice-President John Tandana (right) presiding the Q & A (questions and answers) session during the QMA meeting.

## Helga Houmère's Memoir For Sale to Benefit Chapter



Love for children was an enduring theme in Helga Houmère's life. As a teenager in her native Germany, she earned a certificate as an accredited kindergarten teacher. World War II interfered with her plans. She was able to realize her dreams after emigrating to the U.S. in 1954 and receiving BS and MS degrees from Teachers College, Columbia University. She held jobs at day care centers and summer camps before working in the nursery school at Sarah Lawrence College. Eventually, she became the Director of the International Nursery School in Queens.

In "Learning from a Lost Childhood," Ms. Houmère describes her early life after her mother died and her father was unable to care for her. She found some refuge at her aunt's farm. By 1939, she was working in a day care center in Berlin and preparing to marry. Then the war intervened. She describes the effects of the war on civilians in moving detail from spending time in bomb shelters, having her home destroyed, scrounging for food, walking for miles when

transportation was disrupted, seeking refuge in Austria, finding any kind of work when her career path was interrupted and learning that her fiancé, a German soldier, had been killed.

The second half of the memoir describes her life in the U.S. Ms. Houmère became interested in the educational theories of John Dewey which emphasized freedom and were so different from those she learned in Germany. When she met a sponsor, an American lawyer who had been born in Germany, she was able to obtain an immigration visa. She sailed to New York on the Gripsholm.

In addition to her work as an early childhood educator, Ms. Houmère describes her summers spent at Monhegan, an island in Maine and her life with her husband, the artist Walter Houmère. In 1970 she moved to Queens where she still lives.



## UN Mourns Death of Angie Brooks-Randolph



Angie Brooks-Randolph

When Angie Brooks-Randolph died on September 9, 2007 in Houston, Texas, the UN, the Government of Liberia and the world community lost a seasoned diplomat, eminent jurist, astute lawyer and a loving, caring human being.

The highlight of Ms Brooks-Randolph's career at the UN was her election on September 16, 1969 as President of the 24th Session of the UN General Assembly, the first and only African woman to hold that prestigious position. She was a perennial member of the Liberian Delegation to the General Assembly. In 1973, she was appointed Ambassador-at-Large, Permanent Representative of Liberia to the UN and concurrently Ambassador Extraordinary of Liberia to the Republic of Cuba.

Over a period of 23 years, Ms. Brooks-Randolph held several UN administrative positions including President of the Trusteeship Council. During her tenure on the Council, several territories attained self-government or independence including the Republics of Togo and Cameroon.

She also held positions in the government of her own country, serving on the Supreme Court of Liberia, as Assistant Attorney General and as Assistant Secretary of State. Angie Brooks-Randolph's concern for the advancement of women was paramount in her life. She was V.P. of the International Federation of Women Lawyers from 1959 to 1960 and in 1964 she became President of the Federation. She also served as the V.P. of the Liberian Women's Political and Social Movement.

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Angie Elizabeth Brooks-Randolph was born August 24, 1916 in Virginia, Montserrado County, Liberia, the second of nine children. She began her early education in the Lott Carey Baptist Mission School, an institution she later headed as its Superintendent.

Ms. Brooks-Randolph earned a B.A. degree in Social Science and International Relations and later, a Bachelor of Laws degree from Shaw University, Raleigh, N.C.. She also earned a Master of Science degree in Political Science and International Relations from the University of Wisconsin. Later she received a Certificate in International Law from the University of London School of Law. She was awarded honorary doctorates from 18 universities in the U.S. and Europe.

At the age of 21, she married the late Honorable Richard A. Henries Sr., former Speaker of the House of Representatives in Liberia and had three children. Several years after that marriage ended in divorce, she married Isaac Randolph. She also reared 23 foster children.



## DPI/NGO Conference "CLIMATE CHANGE: HOW IT IMPACTS US ALL"

At their 60th Annual Conference in September 2007, the UN's Department of Public Information and NGOs added their voices and expertise to the discussion addressing future agreements about climate change.

The nearly 2000 civil society representatives from 90 countries includ-



DPI/NGO 60th Annual Conference banner shows the importance of Climate Change and how it is affecting the work of the NGOs in tackling various issues brought about by the changing climate and how that affects people's lives and how aid is distributed and planned.

ed Noema Chaplin, a Board Member of UNA-USA-Queens Chapter and a Servas delegate to the conference.

Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro stated, "The impact of climate change is grave and growing. The time has come for decisive action on a global scale." The conference which took place on the eve of several milestone events on the UN's climate change agenda produced an outcome document.

Recognizing that development cannot happen in the absence of a healthy and secure environment, it provided a tool for action calling for both individual action as well as collaborative work

Already many welcome measures are being implemented. The European Union has agreed to a 20% emission reduction target. At the Summit in Germany, the Group of Eight affirmed the ongoing UN climate change process.



Noema Chaplin (right center), Judy Kuriansky (center left), Mr. Kiyo Akasaka (right center), Juan Carlos Brandt (right)



Mr. Kiyo Akasaka Under-Secretary-General for Communication and Public Information (left center), Noema Chaplin (right center) Main representative United States Servas to the UN, Board Member UNA/USA (Queens), Board Member CCC/UN, Margo LaZro (right), Global Family, Mayors for Peace

## Chapter Co-Sponsors Film with Afghan Women

**A**fghan Women: A History of Struggle, a documentary film about the pivotal role that the women's struggle for equality has played in the country's tumultuous political history, was shown at the Queens Museum of Art on September 23rd, 2007. UNA Queens Chapter co-sponsored the film with the organization, Women for Afghan Women.

The film starts in 2003 with the drafting of the Afghan Women's Bill of Rights by women from every region of Afghanistan. Women tell stories about how they risked their lives as they continued to stand up for their rights.

The film was made by the New York-based photojournalist and documentary filmmaker, Kathleen Foster. Ms. Foster and Fahima Forgetts, a Board Member of Women for Afghan Women, participated in a question and answer period following the screening of the film. Ms. Forgetts has served as director of a literacy program in Kabul and has testified about Taliban abuses before the United Nations. Currently living in the U.S., she regularly travels to her native country to work for the empowerment of women.

The feature film was preceded by a video on CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which is the only comprehensive international treaty addressing and advancing women's rights.

The treaty was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1979 and has been ratified



UNA-USA members and the public during the screening of Afghan Women: A History of Struggle



Fahima Forgetts (Right) addresses member's questions with Kathleen Foster (right center) and Prerana Reddy

by 179 Countries. The United States is not among them. The United States stands with Syria, Iran, North Korea and Somalia as nations which have not ratified CEDAW.

The video was made by Arnold Gallardo, a Board Member of UNA-USA-Queens Chapter.

Following the video presentation, Kathleen Fraleigh, the Past President of the chapter, commented on CEDAW.



## Marking UN Day 2007



UNA-USA Queens Treasurer Frank Ross (right) addresses the members after the Sierra Leone Film showing.

UNA-USA-Queens Chapter celebrated UN Day 2007 by showing the documentary film, *Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars*, at the Queens Museum of Art on October 24th. The film demonstrates the work of the UNHCR, the UN refugee agency.

The All Stars are a diverse group of musicians who were living in a refugee camp in neighboring Guinea where thousands of their countrymen had sought refuge during a decade-long civil war. As part of UNHCR's "Go and See" program, the All Stars visited Sierra Leone and then traveled from camp to camp in Guinea reassuring their fellow countrymen that it was safe to return home.

A mix of West African, reggae and R&B music infuses the film with message-oriented songs that celebrate the human spirit and the ability of individuals to sustain hope in a world filled with rage and loss. Several people poignantly describe their suffering during the civil war.

The film was funded by celebrity supporters of the UN: Keith Richards, Sir Paul McCartney, Ice Cube and Angelina Jolie.

The Queens Chapter held a reception prior to the screening of the film.



UNA-USA Queens members at the Sierra Leone Refugee All Stars screening.



UNA-USA Queens members at the UN Day 2007 showing of the Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars Film in the background.



## (UNA – USA)

National and Regional  
Coming Events – Stay Tuned

### Members Day

Members Day at the UN will be held on Saturday, April 5th, 2008 between 1:00–5:30 pm

As has been the Queens Chapter's custom, there will be a brunch at a restaurant prior to the meeting. The place and time will be announced soon.

### Mid -Atlantic Conference

The Southern New York State Division and the New Jersey Division are planning a joint conference in New York City in April, the date and location to be announced. Four panels in plenary session are planned: International Law and Peacekeeping, Human Rights and Women's Rights, Climate Change, UN Successes.

### Council of Chapters and Divisions Annual Meeting

The CCD Meeting will be held at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace near Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C. from June 8 – 10. The UNA "Day on Capitol Hill" will be held on June 10th. Members will have a opportunity to lobby their Members of Congress, Senators and legislative staffs about UNA's advocacy agenda. Information about nearby hotels will be available in the near future.





UNA-USA Queens Chapter Vice-President John Tandana (right) and UNA members as well as UN Retirees welcomes the public at the International Potluck Supper in Queens Museum's 2nd floor.

## International Potluck Supper

To celebrate the diversity of Queens County and provide an opportunity for people of different ethnic groups to socialize with each other, UNA-USA-Queens Chapter held an International Potluck Supper at the Queens Museum of Art on August 19th. UN retirees, UNA members and friends attended and brought dishes that are staples in their native countries.

Every one enjoyed sampling foods of Filipino, Jewish, Chinese, Indonesian, Jamaican, Russian and Irish cuisine.

Following the supper, a video about the history and mission of UNA-USA was shown as well as CEDAW, the convention about women's rights. They were made by Arnold Gallardo, a Board Member of the Queens Chapter.

There were also a musical segment by Clen Summerlin singing accompanied by Leong Wong in the guitar. It was followed by a discussion about both the UN and UNA-USA activities.



UNA-USA Queens Chapter Vice-President John Tandana talks to the members and public about what the UNA-USA is about in the QMA theater.



Guitarist Leong Wong and singer Clen Summerlin entertains the members and guests with their wonderful musical arrangements..



A video about CEDAW was shown along with the UNA-USA video in the QMA theater after the dinner.



## 2008 UNA-USA Advocacy Agenda

**R**estoring U.S. Credibility through International Cooperation is the advocacy theme this year. After criticizing the UN for several years as irrelevant, the Bush administration appears to be changing its attitude. First, they nominated Zalmay Khalilzad as the U.S. Ambassador to the UN. He has been able to create an atmosphere of cooperation and good will among the delegates in the Security Council. Then, the proposed budget sent to the U.S. Congress included a request to pay the UN dues including the peacekeeping dues in full.

Although the U.S. Congress approved the 2008 budget requests, they included language authorizing the Secretary of State to withhold a portion of the U.S. voluntary contributions unless several conditions related to UN reforms are met. These unilateral efforts engender resentment among the member states and interfere with the UN's work. In addition, the U.S. habitually pays its dues a year or more late. At the end of 2007, the U.S. had \$291 million dollars in longstanding arrears. Its peacekeeping arrears are estimated to increase to \$1 billion by the end of 2008. As the U.S. votes for new and larger peacekeeping missions, these shortfalls threaten UN peacekeeping operations around the world including efforts to quell the violence in Darfur.

This year, the National Advocacy Committee polled all the chapters to determine which issues they felt would have the most impact for the advocacy agenda. Four key issues emerged: abiding by the international rule of law, supporting human

rights, constructive U.S. engagement in the UN climate change framework, and paying our fair share at the UN.

The U.S. has been reluctant to ratify international treaties in recent years despite the need for rules governing economic and security interests in an increasingly globalized world. The advocacy agenda calls on members to urge their Senators to ratify three treaties: the Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court and the Mine Ban Treaty.

As the 60th Anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approaches, members are asked to seek ratification of CEDAW, the treaty of the rights of women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The National Advocacy Committee developed an internal theme: All of UNA-USA Cooperating for a Stronger UN. The Queens Chapter plans to have members participate in the "Day on Capitol Hill" in June. We plan to educate the public as well as to lobby our Members of Congress about these issues.

### (United Nations)

## Developing International Law

**I**nternational law governs the relations between nations. It defines their legal responsibilities in their conduct with each other and with their treatment of individuals within their boundaries. It encompasses human rights, disarmament, international crime, refugees, migration, the treatment of prisoners, the use of force, and the conduct of war. It

also regulates matters that affect all nations in common such as the environment, international waters, outer space and sustainable development. World trade and the global economy depend on it.

One of the founding purposes of the United Nations as stated in the preamble of the Charter is "to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained." International law is developed through treaties. They provide the framework for conducting most international relations.

To become a party to a treaty, a nation (called a State in international parlance) must "consent to be bound" by the treaty.

Signing a treaty is the first step. It indicates the nation's intention to be bound by the treaty at a later date and it obliges the nation to refrain from acts that would defeat the purpose of the treaty. Some multilateral treaties are open for signature until a specified date; others are open indefinitely.

The second step is to give "consent to be bound" by ratification, acceptance or approval. All these terms mean that the nation is ready to become a party to a treaty.

In the U.S., the President signs the treaty and the U.S. Senate ratifies it. Many treaties are waiting for ratification by the Senate. There is also the unusual handling of the Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court. President Clinton signed the treaty, and later, President Bush "designed" it.

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There is no compulsory judicial system to deal with breaches of the provisions of a treaty. The International Court of Justice was created to provide a means by which nations can settle disputes peacefully. Before a case can go before that court, a nation must have accepted the jurisdiction of the court.

The Security Council can adopt measures to enforce its decisions regarding threats to peace and security, breaches of the peace or acts of aggression. These include sanctions or authorizing the use of force.

## Peacekeeping Vital UN Function

The Joint United Nations/ African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) formally took over from the African Union Mission in Sudan on January 1, 2008. This is the latest of the UN's peacekeeping missions and when it reaches full strength later this year, it will be the largest UN peacekeeping mission ever attempted. At the present time, it lacks sufficient numbers of blue-helmeted troops and the aviation capability that is critical to its success.

It is estimated that 200,000 people have died and that 2.5 million have been driven from their homes in almost five years of fighting in Darfur. The U.S. government has called this situation genocide. The world is aware that genocide was allowed to occur through their inaction in Rwanda a few years ago, yet the international community has failed to respond to this tragedy. Europe and the U.S. have withdrawn logistical support. European countries find their resources strained by the

NATO mission in Afghanistan. U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has said that U.S. helicopters are needed in Iraq, Afghanistan and in training. Senators Joseph Biden and Richard Lugar introduced a resolution (S. Res. 432) during the last week of January that urges the international community, including the U.S., to provide UNAMID with the resources it needs to fulfill its mandate.

The Sudanese government also is placing obstacles to full deployment by vacillating in approving the participation of non-African military units in the peacekeeping force. Time will tell whether all parties will rise to the task and provide the resources and access needed to end the violence and allow the refugees to return to their homes and livelihood.

UNAMID is the 19th UN peacekeeping mission currently in place. There are 88,000 military personnel and police and 15,000 civilians deployed from Haiti in the Caribbean, to Burundi, Ivory Coast, and other countries in Africa, to Lebanon in the Middle East and to East Timor in Asia.

The UN has no armed forces. The member states provide troops, police and equipment. As of one year ago, the top five troop-contributing countries were Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Jordan and Nepal. Each country trains its own personnel and ideally gives them some knowledge of the culture and political situation of the country where they will be deployed. There had been complaints about sexual abuse of civilians by some peacekeepers. This led to a "zero tolerance policy" and Conduct and Discipline Units were sent to the missions to raise staff awareness of the standards expected.

The UN pays the force-contributing countries who in turn pay their own troops and police. The peacekeeping operations are paid from the assessed peacekeeping dues paid by the member states. Peacekeeping has been shown to be cost-effective. In 2005-2006, the approved peacekeeping budget was \$5 billion, 0.5% of the global military spending. The budget continues to rise and is now reaching \$7.5 billion, but it is still a bargain if countries can be helped to rebuild their societies and avoid further conflict.

Peacekeeping missions generally begin after the cessation of hostilities when a cease-fire has been declared. The first UN peacekeeping mission dates back to Palestine in 1948. The soldiers first painted their helmets azure blue in 1956 in the Suez Canal zone.

Each peacekeeping mission operates under a specific mandate from the Security Council. Any UN member state, regional group or the Secretariat can ask the Security Council to draft a resolution which must be approved by the five veto-wielding permanent members calling on the UN Secretary-General to develop a detailed plan and budget for peacekeeping mission.

When the resolution passes, the Secretary-General dispatches an assessment mission to the country. After he reports back to the Council with their recommendations, a second resolution is voted on which authorizes the mission and describes its mandate. Peacekeeping missions usually are given an initial timeframe of six months to a year and they come up for renewal at the Security Council periodically. In some

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cases as in Haiti, a mission is completed, but when the peace unravels, it is renewed. In other cases such as Rwanda, the mandate is withdrawn when the conflict erupts again and cannot be controlled under the terms of the mandate. In many cases, the peacekeeping missions continue for years, even decades.

## Responsibility to Protect

Warren Hoge, UN correspondent for the New York Times, wrote a Diplomatic Memo in that newspaper on January 20, 2008 about the groundbreaking resolution on the “responsibility to protect” that was adopted by the General Assembly in 2005.

The resolution held nations responsible for shielding their citizens from mass atrocities and established the right of international forces to step in if nations did not fulfill this new “responsibility to protect.” The world could step in, but only after the nation had shown unwillingness to act itself.

The resolution was meant to break the impasse between those who believe that the outside world has the power to intercede in countries where mass atrocities are occurring and those who believe in the sovereignty of a nation, a concept recognized in the UN Charter.

The world community had to face this issue after it failed to intervene in the genocide in Rwanda. Despite calls from the UN Commander, Gen. Romeo Dallaire of Canada, the Security Council cut the number of peacekeepers to 450 and the genocide proceeded.

Secretary General Ban Ki Moon believes that the success of this new responsibility is fundamental to the future of the UN. He has created a new assistant secretary general position on the responsibility to protect.

The situation in Darfur called out for UN intervention according to this new principle. Not only was the government of Sudan not protecting its citizens, there was evidence that government forces were attacking them. However, it has proven difficult for a

peacekeeping force to enter a country where it is not wanted. Much of the delay in starting the mission was caused by the difficulty in getting President al-Bashir of Sudan to agree to the terms of the mission. After much delay and in response to worldwide backing for intervention in Darfur, the peacekeeping mission is underway.

Time will tell if the theory of the responsibility to protect can be converted to action. At least it has educated the people that sovereignty cannot be used as an excuse to allow genocide to proceed unchecked.

This month, a research and advocacy center dedicated to the responsibility to protect is being inaugurated at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies at the Graduate Center at the City University of New York.



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Queens Chapter

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