

Protecting People in Conflict

Reducing civilian casualties in conflict zones around the world

Stimson's Protecting People in Conflict program aims to reduce civilian casualties in conflict zones around the world. Our short-term aims are two-fold: first, to strengthen protection mechanisms so that those mandated to protect civilians from violence are capable and equipped to do so; and second, to prevent potential perpetrators from mobilizing and inflicting violence on civilians.

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS

Every day, around the world, civilians are threatened by warfare and violent conflict. These threats manifest in physical violence, assaults on human dignity and freedom, and threats to civilian wellbeing.

Violence against civilians has moral, legal, and strategic ramifications. Morally, the world is outraged when civilians are caught in the crossfire, targeted deliberately by conflict parties, or made victims of mass atrocities. Calls of "never again" following the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide are not mere rhetorical promises, but firm commitments by humanity to do better in the future. Legally, civilian targeting undermines the internationally-agreed-upon rules of warfare and human rights laws. Strategically, violence against civilians contributes to intractable cycles of conflict and instability – civilian casualties lead to grievance, which leads to mobilization and recruitment of the aggrieved, which leads to more violence and warfare.

DECADES OF EXPERIENCE, PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Stimson is a critical partner among a dedicated group of stakeholders working to reduce violence against civilians around the world. Policymakers in Washington and New York authorize interventions and draft laws and policies to protect civilians and address the threats posed by widescale violence against civilians. At the local level, practitioners and implementers work to protect civilians and prevent conflicts from escalating into violence.

PROJECTS

[Atrocity Prevention Study Group](#) Sharing knowledge and resources to strengthen policymakers' and practitioners' commitment and capacity to prevent atrocities

[Peacekeeping Reform](#) Bridging policy innovation and field research to improve the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping

LEADERSHIP

Victoria K. Holt
Vice President and Director



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Stimson works to bridge policy and practice. We prioritize being in the field, identifying protection challenges and innovations at the local level to better understand the reality on the ground. We then work with policymakers in governments and international organizations to develop approaches that will help practitioners overcome obstacles and maximize efforts on the ground. By combining our work at the policy level and the field level, we achieve a multiplier effect, ensuring that protection efforts are informed by evidence based, on-the-ground experience.

We are idealistic in our vision, yet pragmatic in our approach. We recognize and work within existing political realities and competing priorities to strengthen protection efforts. We reinforce existing tools to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of these efforts. We target areas of the challenge that speak to our comparative advantage as an organization, including our decades of expertise working on UN peacekeeping.

This approach has yielded a track record of influencing important policy improvements, particularly reforms to improve the protection of civilians by UN peacekeeping missions. Stimson's William J. Durch served as the research director for the groundbreaking Brahimi Report in 2000, the first comprehensive review of UN peacekeeping. In 2009, Stimson produced "Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks and Remaining Challenges," a UN-commissioned study led by Victoria Holt to review UN field missions and UN practice that revolutionized both policy and practice on the protection of civilians in UN peace operations.

Stimson has consistently contributed key ideas to peacekeeping reform initiatives, including the concept of sequenced mandates, which were incorporated into the 2015 HIPPO Report. Stimson's more recent work on host-state government consent for peacekeeping missions, local conflict management by UN peacekeepers, UN intelligence and forward-looking analysis, and prioritization and sequencing of UN mandates, led by Aditi Gorur, has been incorporated into UN policy, guidance, and field practice.

Contact

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THE STIMSON CENTER promotes international security, shared prosperity & justice through applied research and independent analysis, deep engagement, and policy innovation. More at www.Stimson.org.

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