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## **Kigali Principles for Peacekeeping: Protecting Civilians becoming a priority.**

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### **The Kigali Principles**

On December 14<sup>th</sup>, the US Institute of Peace held an event with two impressive panels on [\*Implementing the 'Kigali Principles' for Peacekeeping. How to Carry Out the New Best Practices for Protecting Civilians?\*](#)

The question mark on the end of this long but explanatory title was answered with two words. **Political Will**. Without *political will*, in the US and the other UN member nations, protecting the lives of civilians will remain a low priority (if a priority at all) for UN Peacekeeping forces.

["The Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians"](#) is an impressive list of principles pledged by "the top 30 troop and police contributing countries, the top ten financial contributing countries and other stakeholders" May 2015 in Kigali, Rwanda. The US was among them.

Approximately 95% of UN Peacekeeping missions are 'mandated' to protect civilians but that is not their top priority. Deterring all-out war is. Protecting civilians appears to be an afterthought, if a thought at all, in at least 5%.

This represents the fatal flaw of the UN itself. The "We the People..." in the UN Preamble, was good marketing at its creation, but in essence, the UN is about the protection of national sovereignty.

Protecting the *self-evident truths* stressed in the US Declaration of Independence as *universal truths* is not in the UN charter. The UN does have the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (a greatly expanded US Bill of Rights). But, both the UN creators and the US Founding Fathers failed to incorporate the fundamental principle, that all people “are created equal ...[and] endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights” including “liberty and the pursuit of happiness” as an enforceable ideal in their new systems and structures. Lack of enforceability in the US Constitution led to a Civil War that cost more American lives than both World Wars combined, with painful, sometimes lethal consequences continuing today.

The failure to put the protection of innocent lives and their most fundamental rights as the primary protocol globally (not just in peacekeeping) but in all US and UN efforts, only exacerbates many of the national security threats humanity faces today. Threats that many Americans are now starting to consider: pandemics, climate induced weather disruptions, war, terrorism, refugees/immigration, WMD proliferation, cyber threats, and economic instability.

It’s understandable that the topic of *preventing conflict/genocide* didn’t come up during this US Institute of Peace event. Or, the ongoing mass murder loss of civilians Syria. They covered these topics before. But in the context of the UN system it is the Security Council that permanently and undemocratically retains a supreme veto power over any such humanitarian imperatives. And that, in this writer’s view, is the greatest flaw in the 18 otherwise admirable and extremely practical Kigali Principles. Relying on Security Council cooperation is tantamount to the UN allowing mass murder.

Like the equally admirable and extremely practical Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Kigali Principles suffer from four other indisputable factors:

1. A lack of an existing, well trained and equipped UN Rapid Deployment force with the top priority and comprehensive capability to protect civilian lives. The principles call for it, but this need has existed for decades.
2. A lack of adequate resources to fund such a vital UN structure (or prevent conflict before it starts) is the same as #1.
3. A lack of understanding by US policy makers and the general public that protecting human freedom and security globally (global justice) is vital to protecting our own national security and our cherished freedoms. And last,
4. The lack of *political will* to overcome the first three factors.

## 435 Campaign

There are things each of us can do about that fourth factor. Michael Moore recently announced his [5-point plan of action](#), the [435 Campaign](#) is already in action on three of his five. This *435 Campaign* intends to empower citizens like you with tools that are helpful in educating your policy makers to act in line with fundamental principles that *we the people* of the world agree on: that *all people* are created equal and endowed with inalienable rights, to “life, liberty” and “justice for all”.

Most Americans think voting is their greatest citizen responsibility. Wrong. It feels good but it’s the least powerful action for changing public policy. Educating elected officials between elections may be

the most powerful. Politicians are rarely leaders. They're followers. They follow the sentiments of *we the people*. Unfortunately, most US citizens have ignored their policy makers and have allowed corporate lobbyists to monopolize their attention.

Senator Paul Simon (as a US Representative) said, "If there were just ten people in every Congressional District who really pushed on the issue of hunger, we could literally change the world." My experience as an activist in the 1980s on world hunger issues with RESULTS (a grassroots lobby once considered "pound for pound" the "most effective lobby in Washington") showed me that Congressman Simon was wrong. It might only take five people. And world hunger was both a symptom and a cause of many threats we see today.

President Carter's 1980 Presidential Commission on World Hunger summarized its bipartisan report by asserting that unless we ended the worst aspects of hunger and poverty soon, the world would eventually see more wars, revolutions, refugees, terrorism, pandemics and environmental problems. Nearly every other commission, scientific study, or national security report since then has mirrored that warning. A warning we continue to ignore at our own peril. The President Elect used the fear of these global forces to draw voters. If Trump fails to listen then those voters will soon realize that independent policies cannot stop interdependent global forces.

**If you consider yourself as a crew member on spaceship Earth instead of a passenger, you can participate in a [435 campaign](#) that is focused on getting our own ship of state in order.** Our US Representatives in all 435 Congressional Districts are the heart of *we the people* in this nation. And, they/we are the greatest force for countering any Administration initiatives inconsistent with the fundamental principles of *life, liberty and justice for all*. Meeting with them (or their key staff people) in your local Congressional District or on Capitol Hill, generating media, and developing a friendly working relationship with them can be the most powerful action you can take in creating political will for a more free, just and secure world. If you want more information about getting involved with this US Global Justice Corp, send your questions to [chuck\[at\]igc\[dot\]org](mailto:chuck[at]igc[dot]org).

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I give a special thanks to Joseph Carson, a MAHB member who first introduced me to this group as well as the profoundly useful engineering concept of applying fundamental principles when designing important systems and structures. **Governments must change. Can we?**

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*MAHB-UTS Blogs are a venture of the Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere. Questions should be directed to [joan@mahbonline.org](mailto:joan@mahbonline.org)*

MAHB Blog: <http://mahb.stanford.edu/blog/kigali-principles-peacekeeping/>