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MILITARY INTERVENTION IN HUMAN RIGHTS CRISES: RESPONSES AND DILEMMAS FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

1. This paper is based on a sampling of published positions and personal opinions of a variety of players in the human rights movement. This movement includes all those working for human rights, of which the “pure” human rights organizations are but a tiny subset. Given such breadth, this sampling cannot claim to be either exhaustive or statistically representative—at best it will help to identify the questions we should be asking. I am grateful to all those who shared their thinking with me via e-mail correspondence and interviews.
2. I believe this broader “movement” approach should remind us of the interactive implications of our positions. The movement’s moral integrity and political power to mobilize do not reside with any small subset of this mosaic of organizations, but are influenced and exercised by all of them—in harmony, or cacophony. Although we may focus on some of the formal positions of a few organizations who are perceived as the global “leaders” of this movement, this complexity must be kept in mind. All these groups are affected by the public’s perception of the movement’s positions on this issue.
3. The topic of this paper is but a small subset of a greater debate: What do we do about human rights crises? How do we prevent them? When we fail to prevent them, how do we turn them around, stop them, or at least minimize the damage to human life? The answers to these questions are rarely, if ever, military, and the responsibilities do not lie only among states. The military intervention focus tends to skew the discourse, distracting us from this more important broader debate. Military force is the powerful state’s self-serving response to a problem, and in the history of intervention false intentions, manipulated fiascoes and disastrous failures far outnumber humanitarian achievements.
4. Perhaps if we had more confidence, more strength, more creativity and more unity among peace-loving international civil society groups, we would be seeking out our own solutions rather than only turning to states for answers. If the human rights movement put as much energy into trying to develop solutions as it puts into naming the problems, we might perceive more choices available. So, although the bulk of this essay will focus on the question of deadly force, the final section—arguably the most important—challenges human rights organizations to take on a greater leadership role in the search for alternatives.
5. On the issue of military force¹, the human rights movement has its own internal challenge, distinct from the debate among states. The crucial dilemma for us should not be *sovereignty*, but rather *killing for human rights*. How we approach it goes to the heart of our perceptions of identity and mission. This dilemma takes us into an exploration of beliefs on means and ends, nonviolence and ‘just war,’ short-term fixes and long-term consequences.
6. Such analysis demands a careful discussion of the gnarly multiple layers that comprise the concept of “legitimate war.” This concept has been carefully developed by philosophers and lawyers, including many recent treatments of “humanitarian war.”

¹ The phrase “humanitarian intervention,” is inadequate, inaccurate, confusing and tendentious. It ought to be avoided. *Humanitarian* gives states moral credit for motives they don’t have. Human rights organizations should avoid affirming such propaganda. Limiting the term *intervention* to state military action belittles the inspiring variety of effective, non-violent, interventionary tactics and strategies that have been developed by NGOs and governments alike in the face of humanitarian and human rights problems all over the world, covering everything from relief work to conflict resolution to much more. The human rights movement itself has been intervening in the affairs of states since its inception. The states who don’t like us are the first to say so! The political power and reach of these words far exceeds what lawyers, politicians and soldiers can make of them. As humanitarian or human rights activists, we should not give them up so easily.

7. “Legitimate criteria” for war-making are generally divided into 5 areas: A) *Just cause*, which in this context refers human rights catastrophes surpassing some articulated threshold. B) *Right authority*, referring to the global credibility of those ordering intervention, and accountable for its consequences, C) *Right intentions*, referring to legitimate humanitarian motivations for intervention, as opposed to ulterior strategic, economic or territorial aims. D) *Last Resort* (or *necessity*), meaning that all reasonably possible and timely un-armed alternatives have been tried and exhausted, and E) *Proportionality*, referring to an intervention’s chances of success such that the good achieved outweighs both the harm being prevented and the harm done by the intervention itself.
8. Human rights organizations’ positions must be scrutinized in each area, but must also take on other concerns. Simply going along with the selectivity and double-standards of international state action has associated costs. The accusation that the human rights discourse has been co-opted in the service of US/Western hegemony must be dealt with. Finally, once an intervention is launched, the consequent civilian damage cannot be dismissed by merely citing international humanitarian law.
9. Careful consideration of intervention should consider in an integrated fashion a complex array of options. One such breakdown might be:
 - forcible “offensive” military intervention
 - forcible “protective” military intervention
 - coercive non-military intervention
 - non-forcible military intervention
 - non-coercive non-military governmental intervention
 - transnational and non-governmental intervention²
10. If human rights groups are developing criteria, these criteria should be textured to respond to different situations with different levels of forceful or nonforceful intervention (see figure 1). Thresholds, costs and benefits will be different depending on the type of intervention and the specific methods used. Intervention is not a simple on/off switch, and the distinctions have grave consequences for human rights groups offering their approval. It is always going to be more unsettling and risky to advocate offensive killing than to advocate defensive protection or non-forceful intervention.
11. In considering such an array, several pitfalls should be avoided. Firstly, different kinds of interventions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Secondly, there is no continuum of effectiveness associated with this list: It cannot be assumed that as you move up from (f) to (a) towards greater coercion, force and offense, that you will logically be approaching a more effective solution to a humanitarian crisis.³ On the other hand, one type of intervention can easily escalate into a different type, in a process NGOs may have little power to influence.
12. I will start with a brief survey of the recent history which has prompted this debate, followed by a necessarily incomplete summary of some of the formal positions taken by several organizations and leading activists. I will then take the separate components of the debate and try to assess some of the implications of human rights organization positions, or lack thereof. In some cases, I suggest ideas that might build towards greater coherence. In others, I have none.

² This breakdown borrows from Ramsbotham and Woodhouse, [Humanitarian Intervention in Contemporary Conflict: A Reconceptualization](#).

³ Omaar and De Waal, for instance, wrote regarding Somalia: “military intervention doesn’t make the job of fighting famine any easier, it just makes it different.” In, Alex de Waal and Rakiya Omaar, “Can Military Intervention Be ‘Humanitarian,’” in [Middle East Report: Humanitarian Intervention and North-South Politics in the 90’s](#). Issue 187-188, June, 1994

13. I believe that the human rights discourse is clearest on “just cause,” although the concept of *threshold* is not sufficiently articulated. In all other areas, despite some sophisticated internal debates, the public human rights discourse is diffuse and incomplete. At times it is deliberately oversimplified under the driving emotional pressure of ongoing catastrophes. Such oversimplification may help spur popular approval or state action in an immediate crisis, but it has damaging consequences for the long-term development of a credible and effective international human rights regime.

FROM COLD WAR TO NEW WORLD ORDER?

14. The end of the Cold War can largely be credited with opening up this debate. Cold War superpower interventions, despite their rhetoric, were never viewed as fundamentally “humanitarian” in their intent, and were nearly always damaging in their impact. Human rights groups generally avoided support or condemnation. Even in cases where an interventionary impact was apparently dramatically positive, such as India’s intervention into West Pakistan in 1971, Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia in 1979, or Tanzania’s overthrow of Idi Amin in Uganda in 1979, human rights groups avoided comment, certainly offering no advance encouragement.
15. In the 1990s a rapid reassessment took place in the human rights community. Conflicts appeared to be taking on a different character. A historically unprecedented consensus on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) opened up the possibility of international interventions supposedly free of geo-political motivation. It ought to be remembered, though, that the first “post-Cold War” intervention touted by the United States as “humanitarian” was the December 1989 invasion of Panama. Despite this reminder of ongoing superpower cynicism, within a few short years, human rights groups were calling for so-called “humanitarian interventions” in Liberia, Iraq, former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Rwanda and Haiti. Consent-based UN military operations were supported in several other conflicts as well.
16. The heyday of intervention was short-lived. The Somalia debacle brought a reversal in US policy, and the Bosnia fiascoes destroyed the UN’s credibility, resulting in a respite on interventionary action for most of the rest of the 1990s.
17. Perhaps the most influential intervention for the human rights movement was the one which *didn’t happen* in April and May 1994 in Rwanda.⁴ The advance warning, the evidence of genocidal intentions and the scale of the massacres left no doubt as to the moral and legal demand for action. The speed at which the genocide progressed did not appear to leave any room for diplomatic or negotiated solutions. The UN peacekeeping force—UNAMIR—was already there, with UN authority and legitimacy. And, most importantly, UNAMIR Force Commander Major-General Romeo Dallaire and others have persuasively argued that successful intervention was possible with only a small force of 5000 trained soldiers. This combination of events and the potential “solution” met most any reasonable analysis of just cause, threshold of atrocity, right authority, right intention, and last resort. And when one considers the hundreds of thousands of victims compared with the 5000 soldiers Dallaire wanted to put at risk, primarily in the capacity of protecting civilians, the “more good than harm” argument is about as convincing as one could ask for.
18. From a human rights perspective, it was the perfect intervention. The fact that it never happened makes it’s projected success a matter of supposition. As an untested model, it is untarnished by the messy and unexpected complications that weigh down real interventions. But a starkly real genocide unfolded, and Dallaire’s was the only coherent option on the table. Not surprisingly,

⁴ The subsequent French-led *Operation Turquoise* is a different matter entirely, which will be discussed later.

activists and organizations previously opposed to intervention began to severely question their positions.⁵

19. By contrast, NATO's 1999 war against Yugoslavia has had the opposite impact. Some groups supported the action in advance. But the legitimacy of NATO's authority and intentions were suspect, the Kosovo Liberation Army's provocative strategy was morally corrupt, and post-war anti-Serb ethnic cleansing under UNMIK extremely troubling. Above all, NATO's failure to protect civilians on the ground caused many activists to start to rethink their willingness to support such action.

FORMAL POSITIONS

20. Very few organizations have taken clear policy positions on these interventions. For some the issue it is simply not high on their agenda. Some have reached no internal consensus. Many human rights groups are focused on very specific subset of human rights or regional and national questions, and are not faced with a need to take a position. Some are working directly in the field of conflict zones, and carefully avoid political statements that might put their field staff or contacts at risk. For these and other reasons, there is a fairly overwhelming silence on the issue. It should be kept in mind that the public positions described here represent a small (but extremely influential) minority.
21. The Cold War in some ways still dominates the landscape. Formal human rights groups maintain very strict concepts of neutrality which developed in that era. Peace groups and anti-imperialist groups in the west remain skeptical of *any* US involvement in intervention. Some extend that skepticism to the UN. The discourse in non-communist civil society in the former Soviet bloc is also sometimes skewed by dependence on funding and political support from the US or other NATO states.
22. Some organizations have an explicit position of neither encouraging nor discouraging intervention. Some human rights organizations will encourage some interventions, but take no position on others. Peace and anti-interventionist organizations will condemn some interventions, and remain silent on others. Interestingly, there are few if any voices in the movement who span the whole spectrum by openly condemning some interventions while legitimizing others.
23. The few human rights NGOs who have a truly global reach and mandate are under pressure to articulate a clear position. They cannot easily evade the issue, given that they are looked to for leadership on nearly all human rights questions, for all regions and conflicts. The positions of the two largest: Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, are, for the purposes of this paper, conveniently disparate and illustrative for discussion.

Amnesty International

24. Amnesty International (AI) position is straightforward: "We do not call for military action, nor do we oppose it, but we do campaign on how such interventions should be conducted." Nevertheless, a formal internal debate initiated after Rwanda has sought to reconcile a range of internal opinions on the question.

⁵ For many groups this transition or debate had already been underway as a result of the Bosnia war.

25. AI is a grassroots and membership-based organization, founded to work for political prisoners and activists who had not used or advocated violence. This “nonviolence” commitment is seen as a major organizational strength, attracting supporters and aiding perceived legitimacy in the international community. Some activists feel that with careful criteria, AI could advocate the protective use of force without contradicting this commitment. But it would not be easy. AI is not pacifist, but the membership has a strong pacifist component, and consensus on using violence would be unlikely. The non-position is also consistent with “neutrality,”-- AI is thus protecting itself from the appearance of taking sides or being manipulated by any given state.
26. Amnesty International’s Secretary-General, Pierre Sané, argues that human rights groups should be extremely suspicious of the motives of governments.⁶ According to Sané, the selectivity of international actions proves that powerful states are not motivated by universal values. Their arms industry proves they are not motivated by a desire for peace, and their inhumane immigration/refugee policies prove they have little respect for human rights. Finally, he points to both Somalia and Kosovo to question whether the strategy of military intervention is even practically effective.
27. Despite this passionate argument, the limitations of the AI “non-position” are self-evident. AI activists have pointed out that in some cases the actions AI demands of states, such as the protection of civilians or the arrest of war criminals, may not be possible without armed intervention. Others question the validity of proposing objectives for international action without venturing an opinion on implementation. Some fear that neutrality on this question undermines the organization’s credibility, especially in a case like Rwanda.

Human Rights Watch

28. Human Rights Watch (HRW), in contrast, has a clearly articulated position in favor of the use of military force under certain conditions. HRW policy limits consideration of force to situations where it would be the only reasonable measure that can prevent or stop the crime of genocide or the comparable mass killing of non-combatants; and when other non-military measures have been tried without success or they cannot be reasonably expected to put a stop to the genocide under the circumstances. HRW insists that the deployment of any such military force must be consistent with international law, and the implementation must strictly conform to international humanitarian law
29. According to Executive Director Ken Roth, HRW in practice has advocated military intervention in four instances: northern Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda. For instance, under the leadership of Rwanda expert Alison DesForges, HRW was the leading voice in Washington lobbying efforts calling for the reinforcement and mandate expansion of UNAMIR. In Bosnia, HRW criticized President Clinton in 1993 for threatening air-strikes without following through.⁷ After the fall of Srebrenica, HRW joined others in calling explicitly for airstrikes against Serb positions.
30. HRW took no position on NATO’s attacks on Yugoslavia over Kosovo, largely because prior to the bombing, diplomatic initiatives were still deemed to be a legitimate hope. Once the bombing was already underway, HRW felt no need to pass judgment, but it did monitor both sides’ conformity with International Humanitarian Law.

⁶ Amnesty International Annual Report 2000, Foreword by Pierre Sané. <http://www.amnesty.org>.

⁷ “Rights group assails Clinton for 'empty' policy on Bosnia,” Bob Deans, Atlanta Journal and Constitution, December 9, 1993 Page A18.

31. As Director, Roth has the final word on the organization's intervention stances on a case by case basis. In an article recently published by the Carnegie Council, he writes, "Because military force necessarily entails a risk to life, it should not be deployed lightly. However, some things are worth fighting for, including, at the very least, stopping the slaughter of large numbers of innocent civilians." With respect to "more good than harm," he suggests that fighting Russia over Chechnya would fail this criteria. Another case that would fail would be "the use of military force in a territory where it would trigger accelerated or broader killing that the intervener is unable or willing to prevent."⁸ Though Roth does not make an explicit reference, the latter comment suggests that the 1999 bombing of Kosovo and Yugoslavia would also fail this criteria.

Physicians for Human Rights

32. The US-based Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) joined Human Rights Watch and others in calling for NATO action in Bosnia after Srebrenica. In 1998, testifying before a Congressional Committee about Rwanda, PHR called for a "Genocide Prevention and Response" policy initiative. The proposal included the repeal of Presidential Decision Directive 25,⁹ a call for increased US/UN collaboration, sharing of early-warning intelligence, stopping the flow of weapons to perpetrators, and jamming the airwaves of anti-minority broadcasts inciting violence. To stop genocide in progress, it demanded substantial support for the UN, including the development of a standing rapid reaction interventionary force.
33. PHR advocated "decisive" military intervention in Kosovo as early as August, 1998. In a January 22, 1999, letter to President Clinton after the massacre at Racak, PHR called for the immediate introduction of ground forces to protect civilians. It also called simultaneously for a dramatic increase in the KVM civilian monitoring presence. In the same letter, PHR cautioned that "a bombing campaign alone might open Kosovar civilians and international humanitarian workers to reprisals." One week after bombing began, as the exodus of Kosovars accelerated with numerous reports of killings, PHR again called for a ground force, this time "*to stop genocide.*" Six weeks later, PHR issued a letter critical of the civilian impact of the bombing, but fell short of calling for it to stop.

Other Groups

34. HRW and PHR were joined by dozens of other organizations after the fall of Srebrenica. According to the Washington Post,

"Nothing else has worked," said a joint statement issued by the coalition's 27 organizations, most of which had not previously supported military means to protect Bosnian Muslims against Serb aggression. "Force must be used to stop genocide, not simply to retreat from it. American leadership, in particular, is required," it said. Among the signatories were the American Jewish Committee, the American Nurses Association, Human Rights Watch, the Anti-Defamation League, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Refugees International, World Vision and Physicians for Human Rights...

"There's been sort of this malaise and exasperation," said Stacey Burdett of the Anti-Defamation League, explaining why the organization believed there was a need for such a statement. "The worst-case scenario has happened. What do we do now?"

⁸ Ken Roth, "The Choices for the International Human Rights Movement," Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs.

⁹ PDD 25, issued *during* the Rwanda genocide, formalized the reversal of US policy after Somalia, setting a series of paralyzing constraints on any and all US participation in UN or other peacekeeping activities.

The group called on President Clinton and the Western allies to protect the remaining U.N.-established safe areas with the same plan for robust bombing of Serbs that was recently adopted for one enclave, Gorazde.¹⁰

35. In a contrasting case, Dimitrina Petrova, director of the European Roma Rights Center, argues that during the Kosovo war the human rights community failed in its mission to protect human life by not calling for a *halt* to bombing. She does not condemn the decision to intervene, on the contrary, she states that on March 24, 1999, “the international human rights community had a reason to celebrate victory.” Petrova does not specify how a bombing campaign could have been expected in advance to protect human life. But once it became clear that it was failing to do this, she argues, the human rights community had a fundamental responsibility to demand its cessation. Instead, human rights groups were silent.
36. Looking beyond explicit “human rights” organizations, Helsinki Citizens Association (HCA) international chair Mary Kaldor was advocating for ground troops in Kosovo long before the intervention began, and once bombing was underway urged that the bombing be supplemented by a ground invasion. Not all HCA chapters agreed. The Turkish HCA, for instance, called for an immediate halt to the bombing and a restarting of negotiations. Kaldor has also written on the need for the development of “new” kinds of military training and capacities in order to effectively carry out the civilian protection role that humanitarian intervention demands.
37. In the peace movement, dozens of organizations issued statements opposing armed interventions over the course of the decade. Pacifist groups like the War Resisters International or the International Fellowship of Reconciliation argued against military tactics altogether, and supported a variety of small-scale peacemaking and ethnic reconciliation efforts in the Balkans during the 1990s. Lacking an immediate proposal to confront ongoing massacres, such groups tend to emphasize the importance of earlier nonviolent intervention, and the damaging consequences of military action. The 1999 NATO bombing of Yugoslavia was the most controversial, and was condemned for both its motives and impact by literally hundreds of peace groups in different countries. The International Peace Bureau, representing nearly 200 such groups, cautioned that a ground force would also lead to unacceptable bloodshed. Project Ploughshares, of the Canadian Council of Churches argued in detail that the NATO bombing could not be justified within Christian just war philosophy.
38. However, even organizations with explicit nonviolent or pacifist commitments have been challenged by recent human rights crises. Christian Peacemaker Teams, (CPT) for instance, is an activist project based in the historic North American peace churches (Mennonite, Brethren and Quakers) which sent volunteers to live with threatened Haitians during the post-coup d’etat military terror. CPT is firmly pacifist and outspoken critical of US imperialism and military violence the world over. But as the 1994 US/UN invasion of approached, CPT volunteer Kathleen Kern wrote from Jeremie, Haiti, about the doubts, fears and hopes of Haitians as they waited,

Haitians aren’t sure of US motives for invading their country. They remember that the U.S. occupied Haiti for twenty years and trained the military that has promoted their misery for decades... they really don’t know what to expect... Must they fear U.S. and Haitian troops alike? Once the invaders come, will they stay? And finally, what are they waiting for?

Our questions as CPT members are different. How do we respond as nonviolent activists when desperate people see an invasion as their only hope? How do we deal with our own feelings that tell us that any change would be for the better?¹¹

¹⁰ “Coalition Calls for Action in Bosnia; Groups Want More Allied Military Force Used 'to Stop Genocide.’” Dana Priest, Washington Post p. A14, August 1, 1995.

39. All these different positions (and many more) are as much a reflection of individual and organizational identity as they are a result of situation analysis. The combination of the moral demand to protect life, the frustration with limited alternatives and apparent paradox of killing to save life will always lead different organizations and individuals with equally unassailable moral values, intentions, motivations and analysis to reach opposite answers.
40. The range also reflects the variety of roles in the movement. One NGO is lobbying in Brussels or Washington or in dialogue with military policy-makers, another has volunteers living with vulnerable displaced people in a war zone, and a third is trying to organize local church discussion groups. One NGO is made up of US doctors, another is part of the Sierra Leone civil society. The terms of the discourse will be different for each. They will have valid differences in priorities and criteria, and they will not land in the same place.
41. Consequently, the debate will never go away. But the movement will be strengthened if there is mutual respect and improved dialogue among these different identities.

DISCUSSION

Nonviolence or Just War?

42. What makes military action unique is not mortal danger, but killing. After all, nonviolent human rights action, if politically effective, has always been mortally dangerous for the advocates on the ground, even involving some risk of reprisals against innocent civilians. The movement has plenty enough martyrs to attest to this. But killing—this is something we are only doing if we choose the military option. The oft-heard sound bite that “Some things are worth fighting and dying for,” is true, but this is not the human rights dilemma. The question is, what is worth killing for?
43. The just war approach insists that the paramount goal of protecting as much human life as possible allows for—even demands—an ends justifies the means analysis. Dimitrina Petrova argues, “If one’s most important value is human life, a certain behavior is expected. One must kill if, by killing, one directly saves more lives than one destroys... If we agree that life is the basic value, then we must agree that... five lives are more precious than one.” This is the essence of the moral argument for *proportionality*, which we’ll discuss subsequently. Despite the subjectivity and uncertainty of such a calculation, there is a broad segment of the movement who feel quite strongly that there are situations where there is enough certainty about potential outcomes to validate taking this moral risk.
44. The nonviolent or pacifist position does not accept the simple body count. It places very heavy weight on the immeasurable uncertainty of predicted outcomes. The killing *might* help someone, but it *will* hurt someone. The proposed good is doubtful, while the harm is absolutely certain. Therefore one refuses to kill as a matter of principle, and by extension, one does not encourage others to kill either. This position also ascribes value beyond the physical loss of life. It values the moral impact on the perpetrator of the act of killing. It values the broader and long-term social impact of the prevalence of killing and violence, beyond the mere number of victims. A short-term counting of “lives saved” is not only impossible, but would not effectively measure the costs and benefits of the choice.
45. The nonviolent perspective cannot be equated with “doing nothing” and it is by no means anti-interventionist. The committed pacifist will intervene, risk death and even die to protect others.

¹¹ “Haiti: Waiting for Invasion,” Kathleen Kern. September 7, 1994. Christian Peacemaker Team web page: [Http://www.prairienet.org/cpt/archives/1994/september](http://www.prairienet.org/cpt/archives/1994/september).

S/he just resists *killing*. This perspective demands a perpetual search for nonviolent alternative actions.

46. Looking at the broader forces working for human rights, there are dozens of influential national and international nonviolent organizations, peace organizations, movements from pacifist churches and others who firmly adhere to this thinking, and who have historically and will continue to play an important role in furthering respect for human rights internationally. Many human rights activists and some human rights organizations also accept this line of principled approach to the intervention question—in particular to the question of encouraging offensive killing—whether they define themselves as pacifists or not. Some insist that a commitment to the deeper spirit of the UN Declaration does not allow them to advocate a military campaign in which the rights (to life) of some civilians will inevitably be violated, regardless of the net impact calculation.
47. Neither position can be disproved empirically. We can never prove in advance that a given military intervention will have a net beneficial effect, nor can we prove that it will always fail. In fact, given the intangibles and philosophical differences, it is unlikely we could even find a consensus on the parameters by which these net effects could be projected or measured.

Criteria for Legitimacy

48. Let us look closer now at the “just intervention” positions of human rights organizations, within the framework of the classic criteria for judging the legitimacy of military action.

Right authority

49. There is broad acceptance of the global legal authority of the UN Security Council in this respect, though some debate continues as to the legality of interventions *not* authorized by the UNSC. Interestingly, the human rights community has not put much emphasis on this matter, and tends to focus on *what happens* rather than *who does it*. Many have argued that the UNSC’s irresponsible inaction or neutrality (Bosnia) or veto paralysis (Rwanda, Kosovo) demand that other parties assume the authority necessary to get the job done. HRW policy, for instance, insists that intervention “must be consistent with international law,” but Ken Roth has subsequently written that UNSC authorization is not necessary. “There are times when international law, particularly in its current, formative stage, may be insufficient to protect core human rights values.” Dimitrina Petrova echoed this after Kosovo, “discussion of legality of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, though important for the future of the international human rights regime, is not, and should not have been decisive...Concern for human rights should not be hampered by fetishization of written law.”¹²
50. This view, though, leaves a vacuum of accountability. Who provides authoritative legitimacy to these non-UN interventions? The human rights movement? Or the states themselves, with all their mixed bag of motives? Looking back at an earlier unauthorized intervention: ECOWAS/ECOMOG in Liberia, Liberian civil society activists have pointed out that despite a broad recognition that “something” had to be done to address the Liberian security needs, the lack of any legitimate process of accountability for addressing abuses and crimes carried out by the intervening forces themselves was a serious problem.

¹² “The Kosovo War and the Human Rights Community,” Dimitrina Petrova.

51. Right Authority *is* important for the future of the international human rights regime. The issue is not the “fetishization” of written law, but a real concern over the countless future victims who would be protected by a stronger and more globally credible human rights regime. Justifying unauthorized aggression signifies a pessimistic lack of faith in that future, and weakens the credibility of all international claims over individual states. Non-UN interventions are *always* going to be carried out by strong states against weaker ones, and in supporting them a human rights group casts its lot with the stronger. In pursuit of short-term answers to immediate crimes-in-progress, this process promotes a perpetual ad-hoc-ness. International action remains a spontaneous matter a gathering together “coalition of the willing” with any mixed bag of ulterior motives that will work to bring them along.
52. The Independent International Commission on Kosovo proposed a resolution to this dilemma. The Commission called for a series of reforms to the UN and UNSC which would make it more difficult for it to shirk its humanitarian responsibility for these crises.¹³ It simultaneously called for the development of globally recognized criteria which could justify a non-UN intervention in cases where UNSC fails in that mission. In other words, to credibly respond to the needs of both present and future victims, a short-term allowance for unauthorized intervention must at the very least be accompanied by a long-term campaign for a legitimate and practically capable “right authority.” Human rights organizations should not be engaging in the one process without the other.

Right Intentions

53. The classic argument is that the intervening states should not have ulterior non-humanitarian motives, strategic goals of a non-humanitarian character, or territorial or economic designs on the target state. Pierre Sané devotes most of his Annual Report introduction to criticizing the ulterior motives of states. But this condition has been downplayed by those calling for intervention, since it would rule out a “humanitarian” label in arguably every case. Human Rights Watch policy makes no reference to it. Ken Roth argues that as long as humanitarian concerns are significant, among other motives, that’s enough.
54. Some activists de-cry the double-standards and selectivity of international action.¹⁴ Pierre Sané points out, for instance: why sanction Libya or Iraq but not Israel? Intervene in Kosovo but not Rwanda? Protect Kurds in Iraq but not in Turkey? Roth on the other hand argues that this selectivity is an unpleasant fact of life, but it doesn’t relieve us of the responsibility to promote effective action where we can.
55. The dilemma remains, pitting the demand for short-term results against the building of a globally credible human rights regime. UN-based action escapes some of the concerns regarding intention, but only if future UN reforms give it the resources to act independently, and prevent individual states from either dominating or paralyzing the process.

¹³ Kosovo Report, pp 190-197. These reforms would include insertions of direct references to human rights in Charter Articles 1, 24 and 39, which would redefine the UNSC primary responsibility as “the maintenance of international peace and security and respect for fundamental human rights.” The Commission also calls for softer interpretative declarations and General Assembly Resolutions to the same effect. Finally, it recommended expansion of the UNSC permanent membership, and a judicious adjustment of the current veto system to prevent paralysis.

¹⁴ This selectivity is related to state interests (or lack thereof), and thus intention. A second type of selectivity is connected to the unwillingness to confront great powers (such as Russia over Chechnya). This type bridges both the intention and proportionality criteria.

Just Cause

56. Human rights groups seem united in referring to “genocide and/or mass killing” as the threshold of just cause for armed intervention. But just how much is “mass” and what constitutes genocide? There might be movement-wide consensus about such a threshold after Srebrenica or by April of 1994 in Rwanda. On the other hand, Rakiya Omaar and Alex de Waal have argued that humanitarian organizations were greatly exaggerating the crisis in Somalia when military intervention was being considered. The Kosovo case is particularly troubling, when some groups and politicians were applying the term “genocide” after the January 1999 Racak massacre. But Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) forces were carrying out military counter-insurgency strategy not different in principle from that of dozens of other states facing popularly-supported but terrorist rebellions. Meanwhile the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was deliberately (and successfully) *trying to provoke civilian killings* in order to force NATO engagement. Despite massive displacement, only about 1000 people had been killed in an entire year of fighting, including KLA combatants.¹⁵ This is terrible, but is it genocide? Later calls, after mass expulsions began and the pace of killing increased, may have had a slightly better claim to the term, although the numbers killed by April 6, when Physicians for Human Rights first used the term, were still relatively low. More troubling here, though, is the problem of causality and accountability: PHR itself had predicted the killings and expulsions in advance as *reprisals*. It was now arguing that the Genocide convention demanded a NATO ground invasion to protect victims from reprisals against NATO own bombs.
57. The numbers do matter. Exaggeration should be carefully avoided. In addition, human rights organizations need to work together to articulate clearer thresholds for the application of such terms as “mass killing” or “genocide.” The international community of states will never accept the interventionary demands of the Genocide Convention if the threshold is too low.
58. We also need to clearly distinguish between “ongoing” and “predicted” genocides or mass killing. Some human rights groups say that military action is legitimate in order to “prevent” such killings, but does this mean that offensive military killing can be embarked upon before such killing has passed some required threshold? Perhaps yes, since early action arguably has the greatest chance of success and might save the most lives. But there is a great risk of overconfidence in our predictive abilities. “Preventive intervention” causing its own casualties has a dubious claim to either legality or morality. If human rights groups can justify killing on such predictions, states too will have more credibility in defending any number of foul interventions under the cover of “what might have happened.”

Last Resort

59. Everyone seems to agree military action should be a last resort after all possible non-military options have been attempted in good faith, or used only when the killing is unfolding at such a speed that slower methods would not address the crisis. But when does the moment of “last resort” arrive? This debate is in every case context-specific and extremely subjective.
60. In northern Iraq, far from using diplomacy to avert a crisis, President Bush actively provoked it by encouraging the Kurds to rebel. Rather merely extending the Gulf War triumph against Iraq, a non-military response to the immediate refugee crisis would have been the insistence that Turkey open its borders. The US would not do this. In Somalia, some NGO groups were working internally advocating quiet diplomacy and inter-clan conflict resolution efforts, and feared that an excessive military presence would damage this work. Former Africa Watch director Alex De

¹⁵ Kosovo Report, International Independent Commission on Kosovo, 2000.

Waal pointed out that Western news media had ignored successes in negotiating truces and getting food supplies to starving Somalis by using local traders. "Wouldn't it make more sense to go back to this successful, low-cost formula than use this extremely expensive and risky [military] formula?" he said.¹⁶

61. In the Balkans wars, non-military intervention and diplomacy were bungled so badly that one can hardly claim they were attempted in good faith or achieved their potential. Last resort arguments for Kosovo in March 1999 were especially dubious, since the situation on the ground in early 1999 with the KVM presence was not worse, and arguably better, than it had been the previous summer. The imposed deadline/bombing ultimatum approach was a NATO negotiation choice, but not the only one available. A case could have been made for an increased monitoring presence and revived negotiation process—and many peace groups were making this case. The primary motivation for immediate action after Rambouillet was not the humanitarian plight of the Kosovars but NATO's need to credibly live up to its own threats when negotiations had failed. Many NGO groups—but not human rights groups—were questioning that this was “last resort.”
62. The explicit human rights organizations do not define conflict resolution and negotiation as part of their mandate or expertise, yet clearly a deeper understanding of the complexities of conflict resolution possibilities is necessary before a judgment can be passed that the moment of “last resort,” has arrived.

Proportionality and Chances of Success

63. The intervention must not cause more damage than it is trying to undo. And it must not fail. This is the most complex and controversial of all conditions. It presumes a capacity to project in advance the outcomes of different kinds of interventions or non-intervention. These outcome projections must in some way be quantified and measured up against each other. And we can't settle for considering only the “most likely” outcomes of different choices. A careful advance calculation of proportionality demands that we consider the full range of possible scenarios resulting from each choice, from the optimistic to the most pessimistic. Each scenario will have a related cost/benefit calculation. These must in turn be weighted according to the probability of their occurrence and added together to evaluate the outcome of a given decision path.
64. Considering the uncertainties intangibles of complex conflicts, such calculation boggles the mind. But its worth remembering that in other fields of social endeavor, economists do these complex cost/benefit calculations all the time. In politics, policy-makers and advocates alike tend to trust their guts. They avoid precision and invariably fall into the trap of overestimating the probability of the supposedly “most likely” outcome. Pre-existing stereotypes or misprojected prior experience usually leads over-optimistic projections of the impact of favored choices.
65. More precise calculation may seem impossible, but it is absolutely necessary. If human rights organizations lack these skills, they should be developing them. If the human rights movement is offering its stamp of legitimacy to an armed action it should be carrying out its own calculations, and not simply accepting assessments—or propaganda—that emanate from the strategy centers of intervening states. The human rights movements requires an objectivity independent of states, and it has different parameters, which must emphasize civilian damage above all other political or strategic measurements of impact.

¹⁶ “Rights Group Fires Opponent of U.N. Intervention,” by Jay Mathews. Washington Post, December 4, 1992, Final Edition p. A24.

66. Consider Kosovo: NATO launched a bombing campaign which, with much-lauded precision, left 500 civilians dead, though with a few more errors that number might easily have been 5000. The FRY response to the bombing killed 10,000 Kosovars. Though some have argued that these deaths were an ex-post-facto proof of just cause, there is also a reasonable likelihood that the FRY would have lacked the internal political justification and catalyst necessary to have carried out such a campaign if NATO had not launched a war, and this would put those deaths on the other side of the proportionality scale. In addition, the post-war regime facilitated the revenge killings of hundreds of Serbs, and a counter-cleansing process which displaced the entire Serbian Kosovar population. Also in the calculation must be figured somehow the long term damage done to US-Russian, Europe-Russian and US-Chinese relations, which has human consequences over the long-term. All of this, in retrospect, must be measured up against 1000 pre-bombing deaths and massive displacement. But almost no one effectively predicted any of it.
67. With or without expertise, human rights groups proposing intervention are necessarily proposing explicit military strategy. Military intervention is only legitimate if a) it works, b) it does more good than harm, and c) It conforms to international humanitarian law. Some military strategies and tactics will satisfy all three criteria, others may not. If the human rights organization that proposes “legitimate” military action does not have particular strategies in mind, it can not possibly make an advance claim of proportionality.
68. On the other hand, whatever tactics a human rights group proposes, its political approval may nevertheless be used to justify different strategies altogether. The human rights pressure to intervene in Kosovo built popular and policy-maker approval for a bombing campaign, even though the NGOs were mostly calling for ground troops. When it started, with dramatically disastrous consequences on the ground, the same groups found themselves either decrying the bombing, or standing by in silence.
69. Notably, human rights organizations are usually pretty uncomfortable with proportionality arguments in other settings. Death penalty advocates persistently argue that the good outweighs the harm. So do states who are quelling dissent on the grounds of maintaining internal stability. In these and other cases, the classic human rights response is usually to stand steadfastly for the principle of the right, rather than sacrifice that principle in the quagmire of cost/benefit calculations.
70. Of these five criteria for legitimacy, the mainstream human rights organizations offer the international community expertise in only one: Just Cause. These organizations’ specialty is alerting the international community when unacceptable thresholds of atrocity are being approached or passed. A lack of conflict resolution expertise limits the validity and depth of their judgments on *last resort*. The lack of military expertise and predictive skills, not to mention a tendency to ignore longer-term or indirect consequences weakens their arguments for *proportionality*. Some human rights organizations might have the “legal” expertise to judge *authority* and *intention*, but concerns about neutrality often hinder their willingness and ability to do so critically. And the focus on immediate results, as mentioned, has tended to under-emphasize these two criteria.
71. This leaves *just cause*. And if that’s all, it is difficult to distinguish a measured call to intervene from a anguished cry of “Do something! Anything!”

Military factors: decision-making and escalation

72. Once political forces coalesce and military action is launched, a great unknown is entered. War is supremely uncertain, but the uncertainty is skewed: outcomes in terms of civilian impact are

never “better” than predictions. This is one reason projections of “what might have been” in Rwanda should not be embraced so wholeheartedly. On the other hand, once war begins, civilian influence over military decisions is extremely constrained if not altogether impossible. For the military, losing is not acceptable, retreat is only palatable if it is a tactical step to be followed by subsequent offensive, and the most available responsive strategy to unexpected setbacks is escalation.¹⁷ Difficult as it may be for human rights concerns to influence a policy to intervene, they have even less influence over military policy once a war is underway.

73. Human rights groups that don't take these risks into account might find themselves in very uncomfortable positions. In Somalia, for instance, a call for humanitarian protection of convoys and aid brought in one intervention. The subsequent US escalation into an offensive man-hunt was eventually disastrous, resulting in military casualties, an embarrassing retreat, but most importantly in the deaths of untold thousands of Somali civilians.
74. Any escalation alters the proportionality calculation. Groups who have legitimized an intervention must stand ever vigilant and willing to rescind that legitimacy when proportionality is in doubt. But such a reversal is extremely unlikely in practice, because it would be seen as politically supporting the originally abusive party, not to mention admitting a grievous error. Inertia and silence can drag human rights groups down a path of legitimizing an increasingly damaging process, as Dimitrina Petrova argues occurred during the Kosovo war.

Victims, neutrality and humanitarian law

75. Human rights organizations claim neutrality with respect to sides in a war, and also claim to stand up for the rights of all civilians. But there is a disturbing discrepancy in the language chosen in cases of intervention. Victims of genocide or oppression are presented in heavily-laden, emotionally evocative and highly personal language that advocates have perfected to stir the public conscience. Civilian victims of interventionary force, on the other hand, are merely “noncombatants,” “unintentional losses” or “collateral damage.” This dry language of international humanitarian law is defended on the grounds of neutrality, but it also serves to effectively buffer moral concerns about these civilian victims.
76. The result is not neutral. The humanity of one population is emphasized, while that of the other is hidden. The discrepancy encourages the dehumanization of one side, thus facilitating their victimization. This process is exacerbated by what human rights organizations do *not* say. Seldom in the course of the Balkans wars, for instance, did human rights organizations adequately confront the demonizing language applied to Serbs throughout the Western political discourse. Likewise, human rights groups, convinced of the evil of the Iraqi regime, lagged years behind peace organizations in calling attention to the human rights catastrophe of the sanctions.
77. Civilians have been the primary targets and victims of all modern wars. Given the increasingly catastrophic shift of the proportion of civilian to combatant deaths, the development and enforcement of humanitarian law has simply not kept pace. If, as Ken Roth and others claim regarding the strictures of UNSC authority, current international law is insufficient to protect core human rights values, the inadequacy of the laws of war should be far more obvious. Based on civilian impact, human rights organizations have sometimes argued for the abolition of particular weapons. By extension, as the civilian toll from “legal” weapons mounts ever higher, they might question why their mandate and neutrality restrictions do not allow them to advocate the abolition of war altogether. Why not? If one can pass judgement on a country's systematically

¹⁷ The US retreat out of Somalia was quite an exceptional case. Had there been a greater perceived national interest, a much worse scenario was conceivable: the Marines might still be there fighting the population.

oppressive policies or its ethnic cleansing ideology for their human rights impact, why not judge its decisions to start and execute war?

78. If a human rights organization is adding its moral weight to a call to make war, it has an even an even deeper obligation to honestly and evenly comprehend the moral cost of *all* the victims. Recalling the extremely cynical general assessment of intervening states' intentions outlined above, it would overly romantic to assume that an intervention will avoid the civilian targeting that characterizes every other war. Amnesty International expressed concern during the Kosovo war, for instance, that key NATO states (US, France and Turkey) are not even signatories of the additional Geneva protocols.
79. From a moral, though extra-legal, perspective, if a war is launched without legitimacy, then every single death, legal or illegal, civilian or combatant, is an unjust death. The claim of neutrality and the voluntarily-accepted straightjacket of international humanitarian law once war is underway paralyzes human rights organizations from taking stands opposed to interventions or wars that are not humanitarian. This puts some human rights organizations in a perversely hawkish position: they can demand states to make war, but they will not demand that they stop.

Secondary impacts

80. The "impact" measurement of a proposed intervention must include both immediate and long-term effects. External military intervention or control can tend to disempower civil societies, weaken social fabrics and lessen the possibilities of longer-term resolution of structural conflicts—the Somalia intervention is heavily criticized in this respect. Alex de Waal and Rakiya Omaar argued after Somalia that military intervention doesn't address the strategic context of a disaster. You cannot simultaneously do battle and nurture civil initiatives.¹⁸ Intervention tends at best to freeze a situation, but seldom resolves it.
81. Impacts also extend to global society. Ramesh Thakur of the United Nations University in Tokyo suggests, for instance, that NATO's unauthorized action against Yugoslavia created a strong sense of global insecurity in other regions. Russia and China were not the only ones who felt threatened. In India, the intervention added fuel to arguments in favor of national nuclear weapons development.¹⁹ This concern over NATO's intentions and lack of accountability has been echoed in other parts of the world as well.

US Hegemony and the Human Rights stamp of approval

82. Is the world really as changed since the Cold War as is being assumed in this debate? Should the human rights movement really be trusting superpower-dominated alliances to carry out "humanitarian" missions? US policy-makers consider the intervention debate to be purely a matter of US foreign policy, saying in effect, "We do all the heavy lifting. Serious intervention means NATO, thus means the US. Whether intervention is feasible is entirely up to us." When an intervention does happen, such as in Haiti or Kosovo, the US tries to reap all possible "moral" benefit, using the intervention to build the legitimacy of its hegemonic role in the world.
83. Dimitrina Petrova has written, "We are witnessing a gradual usurpation of human rights culture by the dominant powers, and its turning into an apology for the global status quo, in the interests of these very powers." She points to the docile dependence of the entire Eastern European civil

¹⁸ Alex de Waal and Rakiya Omaar, "Can Military Intervention Be 'Humanitarian,'" in Middle East Report: Humanitarian Intervention and North-South Politics in the 90's. Issue 187-188, June, 1994.

¹⁹ Ramesh Thakur, public address at Princeton University, March, 2000.

society on Western, and specifically US, funding and political support. Alex de Waal points out that the outside world can now see little difference between the U.S. government line and that of U.S. human rights activists in the 1990s.

84. When a human rights organization approves a US-dominated military action in Kosovo, Haiti or elsewhere, this stamp of approval is indirectly “marketed” to justify US foreign policy in general, including its global imposition of free-market ideological practices, its massive weapons industry, or its support for abusive regimes such as Turkey and Colombia. It is a case of strange bedfellows, since with whatever good for human rights some US efforts may be doing, by dint of its global power and capitalist ideology it is the biggest promoter of human rights abuse in the world. When human rights organizations turn a blind eye to such hegemonic connections their integrity and credibility is diminished.

ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES

85. This is a challenging set of problems for those groups willing to encourage military intervention in human rights crises. In fact, some argue that the risks to the movement’s integrity are too great. In essence, to encourage war is to encourage human rights abuse, aligning oneself behind the cynical motives of those states willing to join the campaign. If moral integrity is the human rights movement’s prime currency, promoting military solutions risks devaluing that currency, and encouraging more cynical forces to manipulate that same integrity for their own purposes.
86. But it is reasonable to ask those who oppose the use of force, “What alternative do you offer the victims?” Pierre Sané argues that prevention is always possible. This argument is not only unprovable. It is also insufficient, because un-prevented crises will continue to arise. We can hope they become less frequent, but we can’t ignore their victims’ call.
87. One answer is to sadly accept the limits of our capacity. Sané thus writes, “Standing apart from the clamor for armed action is difficult in the face of immediate suffering—it means acknowledging our own painful limitations.” This is not essentially different from the plight of those who support intervention, but for practical reasons have nothing to offer the Chechens. After all, even if we accept in principle the *possible* legitimacy of military action, there are few situations where the conditions will be met. No one is claiming military intervention is a panacea for all crises.
88. If promoting military intervention is immoral, unpalatable or unworkable, and standing by and doing nothing equally unacceptable, then the resolution of the dilemma is to search for and develop practical alternatives. Unfortunately, discussion of non-violent tactics is usually limited to state-based diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions. And human rights groups have a tendency towards cynicism that hinders strategic thinking and tactical experimentation. Much more is possible.
89. The human rights movement is unrecognizably bigger than a few decades ago. With hard work on our part, this growth will continue. And we are a small part of a global civil society undergoing similar growth. We should not limit our thinking and planning about future alternatives to that which appears practically possible now. On the contrary, we should be setting targets of what should be possible, and taking the steps necessary to make it happen. It will require new skills, and new institutions. Human rights organizations have an obligation to play a leadership role in that process. But we need to engage in a more active “inter-movement” dialogue with organizations less hindered by mandate limitations than the human rights groups. There is a huge amount of experimentation and development in process in the search for effective crisis intervention and conflict resolution.

90. Dozens of NGOs are exploring community-based conflict resolution techniques in situations of ethnic tension. Others are developing professional skills of high-level peace negotiations, sometimes effectively facilitating dialogues among combatant groups long before states or the UN can get their act together (or even when their act is together, they often cannot overcome the suspicions of the parties). Research and testing is developing the theory and practice of 'smart sanctions' which try to maximize political impact with a minimum of civilian costs.. We have seen only the tip of the potential iceberg. The globalization process which has so dramatically strengthened the civil society role in world affairs is just getting underway. Effective intervention in crisis will not always depend on states. The possibilities are endless.
91. Consider, for instance, the untapped potential of the simplest of tools: the presence of civilian monitors on the ground in a crisis. The UN has shown repeatedly in a broad array of conflicts that a significant civilian monitoring presence has a marked impact on human rights behavior. Even in a deteriorating war, the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission protected civilians prior to the NATO bombing.
92. NGOs have already been in the monitoring and protection business for a long time. They have greater independence of action than state or inter-governmental efforts and more ability to maneuver around state concerns over sovereignty. They have people willing to take great risks, even the mortal risk that the military option relegates only to soldiers. They have people experienced in sharing their humanity and building close links with vulnerable populations. And they have fewer of the cynical strings attached to state-based efforts. As a result, NGOs can nearly always gain earlier access, respond more promptly and creatively to early warnings, and build greater trust in the field.
93. Mary Kaldor has argued that an expanded international presence in Kosovo throughout the 1990s, from the moment that human rights organizations began signaling early warnings, would have altered the course of events there. Imagine if we could have provided such a presence. Even when war began in early 1998, imagine the potential of an independent NGO force of hundreds or even thousands of trained human rights monitors ready deployed into such a crisis situation – or before it degenerates to a crisis stage. The war would not have been the same.
94. When the US was carrying out a proxy war against rural Nicaraguan villages in the 1980s, the solidarity and peace movements did not settle for lobbying to change US policy. They sent thousands of US and European volunteers to live with the vulnerable population, and then brought them back home to actively campaign and educate people and policy-makers in Western nations. NGOs like Peace Brigades International have been sending volunteer monitors into the riskiest of situations to accompany threatened activists and populations for nearly two decades. The Cry for Justice coalition sent dozens of people to live in threatened rural Haitian villages during the coup years. The International Federation for East Timor, a network of solidarity organizations, sent over a hundred volunteers to supplement the August 1999 UN referendum monitoring effort.
95. Since the 1999 Hague Peace Conference, a new initiative is being explored, the "Global Nonviolent Peace Force." Its goal is to implement this tactic on a grand scale, aiming within 10 years is to have a corps of 2000 active members trained in monitoring, accompaniment, conflict resolution and other peacemaking skills, willing to take personal risks without the use of violence, and ready for deployment into conflict areas, "to prevent death and protect human rights, thus creating the space for local groups to struggle nonviolently, enter into dialogue, and seek peaceful resolution."²⁰

²⁰ David Hartsough and Mel Duncan, "A Draft Proposal for a Global Nonviolent Peace Force," December 1, 2000. [Http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org).

96. Naïve? Rash? Doomed to failure? Perhaps all of the above. But all the successful NGO efforts mentioned above were initially discounted by the cynics. A creative search for better tactics will not get off the ground if we can't stand a small dose of ridicule. If only a small portion of the experiments prove fruitful, it would be worth it.
97. It is too easy to dismiss such hopes as impractical. Or to retreat into the mandate of merely doing that which we already do well. The point is that human rights organizations should be involved in these explorations. And if the solutions being dreamed up now are not the right ones, we should be contributing to the search for others. Human rights organizations have a unique experience with conflict and human rights dynamics, and have a powerful capacity to mobilize and inform. Their potential far exceeds the limited task of naming the problems. Perhaps it is high time for human rights organizations to put more effort into the development of real problem-solving tactics that they themselves can implement. And perhaps it is time to start loosening up some of the mandate and neutrality concerns that have prevented human rights organizations from capitalizing on the growing possibilities of mounting powerful joint efforts with other civil society forces.
98. Think again of the intervention that never happened in Rwanda. But this time imagine 20,000 nonviolent NGO volunteers with the resources, political clout and courage to fan out among the threatened population. Human Rights Watch has documented that throughout Rwanda, the killers were listening carefully, and asking what the international community thought of their actions.²¹ Suppose they opened their door to the inquiring faces of a team of monitors with a real-time satellite-broadcasting video-cameras, sent there precisely to answer their question? Of course such a mission might be stopped or thwarted in any number of ways. They might get killed. And they might stop a genocide. They could hardly do worse than any state did in 1994.

²¹ Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, 1999. P. 26. "After France insisted that Rwanda avoid further international criticism, Radio RTLM immediately broadcast the news that the French were ready with further aid, but on the condition that there be 'no more cadavers visible on the roads' and that people 'no longer kill... while others stand around and laugh.'" After the U.S. communicated its disapproval, Rwandan authorities cared enough to send order down to the hills that killings should be brought under control and removed out of sight. At a communal council meeting... the burgomaster warned local leaders that satellites passing over head could track continued violence and that such displays would make re-establishment of good relations with the US impossible."

APPENDIX 1: ABBREVIATIONS USED

AI: Amnesty International
CPT: Christian Peace Teams
ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States
ECOMOG: ECOWAS Monitoring Group
FRY: Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
HCA: Helsinki Citizens Association
HRW: Human Rights Watch
KLA: Kosovo Liberation Army
KVM: Kosovo Verification Mission
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO: Non-governmental organization
OSCE: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PHR: Physicians for Human Rights
UNAMIR: United Nations Mission in Rwanda
UNSC: United Nations Security Council

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