

Publics Around the World Say UN Has Responsibility to Protect Against Genocide

April 4, 2007

Large Numbers Open to UN Intervention in Darfur

French and Americans Ready to Contribute Troops to Darfur Peacekeeping Operation

[Full Report \(PDF\)](#)

[Questionnaire \(PDF\)](#)

[Methodology/Research Partners \(PDF\)](#)

[Transcript of 4/5/07 event at the Brookings Institution \(PDF\)](#)

[Video of the event on FORA.tv](#)

[Transcript of Steven Kull Interview with United States Holocaust Museum Committee on Conscience](#)



Publics around the world say the United Nations has the responsibility to protect people from genocide and other severe human rights abuses even if this means acting against the will of their own government, according to a multinational study.

A mother and her child at an internally displaced persons camp in Kebkabiya, North Darfur (USAID)

Large numbers are open to UN intervention in Darfur, where Arab militias linked to the Sudanese government are accused of massacring the civilian population. But many seem to be uninformed about the situation in western Sudan and declined to answer.

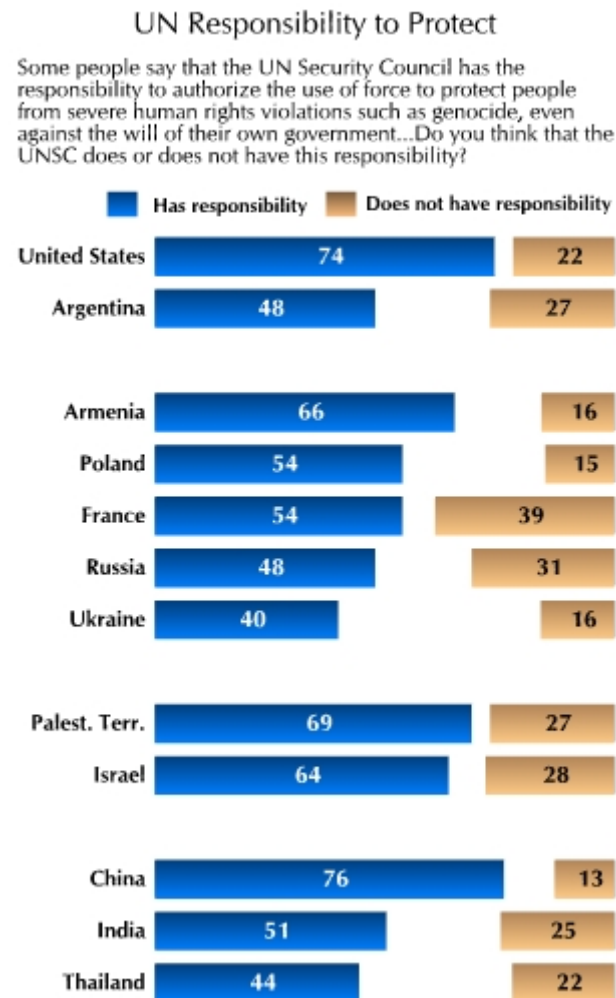
Support for action to halt genocide is consistent with the final document endorsed by the 2005 United Nations World Summit, which recognized that the world body has a “responsibility to protect” vulnerable populations from “genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity” should national authorities fail to do so.

This is the third in a series of reports based on the findings of a larger survey, analyzing attitudes on key international issues, conducted by [The Chicago Council on Global](#)

[Affairs](#) and WorldPublicOpinion.org, in cooperation with polling organizations around the world.

The study includes 18 countries—China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Russia, France, Thailand, Ukraine, Poland, Iran, Mexico, South Korea, the Philippines, Australia, Argentina, Peru, Israel and Armenia—plus the Palestinian territories. Not all questions were asked in all countries.

UN Security Council Action

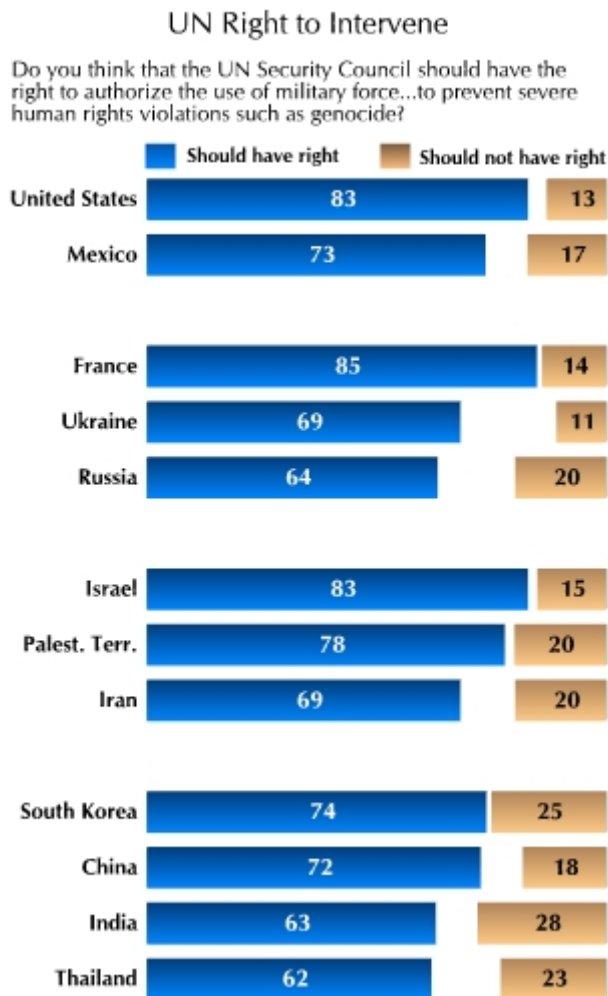


WPO/CCGA Respondents in 12 countries were asked whether the UN Security Council "has the responsibility to authorize the use of military force to protect people from severe human rights violations, such as genocide, even against the will" of the government committing such abuses. They were reminded that some say the UN Security Council does not have such a responsibility.

Nonetheless, the most common response in all 12 countries polled—a majority in eight countries and a plurality in four—is that the UN Security Council has a responsibility to authorize the use of military force in such cases.

The Chinese public shows the highest level of support for the idea that the United Nations has a responsibility to intervene (76%), followed by Americans (74%), Palestinians (69%) and Israelis (64%). The lowest levels of support are among Ukrainians (40%), Thais (44%), Russians (48%), and Argentines (48%). But the proportions in these four countries that say the UN Security Council does not have such a responsibility ranged between only 16 to 31 percent.

There is an even stronger consensus that the UN Security Council should have the “right” to authorize the use of military force in such cases. Among the 12 countries asked this question, large majorities say the Security Council should have such a right.



WPO/CCGA The highest percentages holding this view are in France (85%), Israel (83%), the United States (83%), the Palestinian territories (78%), and South Korea (74%). The lowest levels of support—in India (63%), Thailand (62%), and Russia (64%)—are still quite high. Support is also strong in China (72%). Those who disagree range between 11 percent and 28 percent.

Thus, in all 15 countries asked one or both of these questions, the most common view is that the UN Security Council has the right and/or the responsibility to authorize military action to stop severe violations of human rights.

A [2005 survey](#) of eight African countries by the international polling firm GlobeScan found similarly high levels of support for the United Nations having such authority. Majorities in seven countries and a plurality in one said the United Nations should have the right to intervene to stop human rights abuses such as genocide.

Support was strongest in Ghana (80%), Kenya (75%), Nigeria (66%), Tanzania (66%), Zimbabwe (65%), and Cameroon (64%). Angolans (55%) and South Africans (47%) showed the weakest support. Opposition to U.N. intervention was less than 20 percent in most countries, reaching its highest level in Angola (37%).

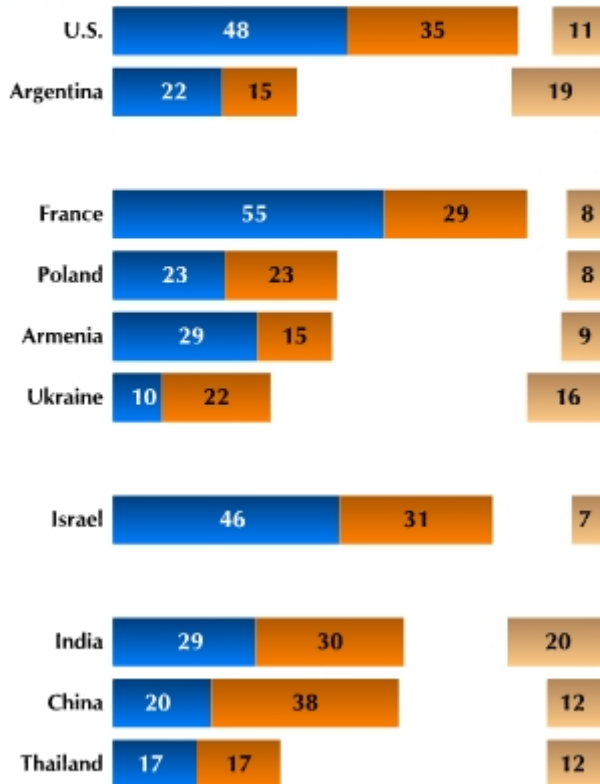
Darfur

In the 10 countries asked specifically about international intervention in Darfur, most of those who answer indicate that they are open to U.N. action to stop the killing. In all countries the most common response is that the Security Council has at least the right to authorize intervention in Darfur and many say it has the responsibility to act. In no country does more than one in five say that the Security Council does not have the right to act. However the large numbers not answering suggests many are uninformed about the conflict in Sudan.

Security Council and Darfur Intervention

Do you think that in regards to the violence that is occurring in the Darfur region of Sudan the UN Security Council:

- Has a responsibility to authorize intervention
- Has the right, but not a responsibility, to authorize intervention
- Does not have the right to authorize intervention



WPO/CCGA Support for UN action is highest in

France where 84 percent say the Security Council has either the “responsibility” to authorize intervention in Darfur (55%) or the “right” (29%) to do so. Close behind are the United States where 83 percent say the Security Council has either the “responsibility” (48%) or the “right” (35%) to intervene. Israelis (77%) are the next most likely to favor UN action with 46 percent saying it has the responsibility to act and 31 percent saying it has the right to do so.

Majorities in India and China also believe the United Nations has the responsibility and/or right to act. About six in ten Indians (59%) say the Security Council either can (30%) or should (29%) act to stop the violence in Darfur. About the same proportion of Chinese (58%) agree, including 38 percent who say it has the right and 20 percent who say it has the responsibility to do so.

In five countries, large percentages declined to answer questions about Darfur (ranging from 43 to 54%), which suggests that many are unaware of what is happening there. But among those who did respond, the percentage saying that the United Nations has the right and/or the responsibility to act far outweighs that of those who say it does not have the right: Argentina, 37 percent to 19 percent; Armenia, 44 percent to 9 percent; Poland, 46

percent to 8 percent; Thailand, 34 percent to 12 percent; Ukraine, 32 percent to 16 percent.

Respondents in seven countries were also asked whether they thought their country should contribute troops to “an international peacekeeping force to stop the killing in Darfur.” Support for contributing troops to a peacekeeping operation in Darfur is relatively low in most countries with the exception of France and the United States, the survey shows.

A very large majority of the French (84%) support contributing troops to a peacekeeping force in Darfur. Among Americans 65 percent approve the idea and just 28 percent are opposed. Thais are divided (35% favor, 37% oppose).

The other four countries lean against participating in such a force: Armenia (27% favor, 45% oppose), Israel (39% favor, 52% oppose), Poland (28% favor, 42% oppose), and Ukraine (13% favor 56% oppose).

The 2005 GlobeScan poll of eight African nations found widespread openness to the idea of multilateral military intervention in the event of a conflict “like Darfur.” Across the eight countries, an average of just 13 percent would oppose intervention in such a case. Fifty-seven percent favored some form of intervention including 30 percent who favored UN intervention, 22 percent intervention by the African Union, and 5 percent “rich countries.”

As in other regions, awareness of the situation in Darfur was fairly low among Africans. On average across all eight countries, just 36 percent said they had heard or read a great deal or a fair amount about “the conflict in the Sudan region called Darfur.”