

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

HUMANITARIAN CRISES IN 2013:  
ASSESSING THE GLOBAL RESPONSE

Washington, D.C.

Thursday, January 9, 2014

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. FERRIS: Okay, everyone. Good morning. My name is Beth Ferris from Brookings. I'm a senior fellow here and co-director of the Brookings LSE Project on Internal Displacement. I'd like to welcome all of you here, and also those who are watching via webcast. I apologize in advance for my hoarseness. Like most of Washington, I'm recovering from a cold. Anyway.

At this session, we're going to be looking at assessing humanitarian response, looking back at the crises of 2013. It was a terrible year for humanitarian crises, between Syria and the Central African Republic, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, South Sudan toward the end of the year. And these crises came on top of an already long list of ongoing humanitarian emergencies. Most have fallen off the front pages but, you know, Darfur is still there and there are still difficulties in Democratic Republic of Congo and perhaps 100 other places. So it was a tough year for humanitarians and we've got a distinguished panel today to talk about this.

This session is being jointly organized with Médecins San Frontières or Doctors without Borders. They're the same organization, and we're glad to have Sophie with us representing MSF. MSF, of course, has been an NGO with years of experience working in some of the most difficult conflict situations in the world, and so we're honored that we're doing this together.

What we're going to do is I'm going to briefly introduce the panelists and then turn to them to have a discussion. Then we'll have a little conversation among ourselves with any questions that emerge before turning it over to questions and answers.

We'll begin with Antoine Gérard on my far left, who is the deputy director of Coordination and Response Division at the UN Office for the Coordination of

Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). He has a long history of humanitarian work in lots of different countries. You've seen their complete bios in the package you have. He's worked with MSF before joining OCHA in various countries, such as Sudan, Yemen, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

We'll then turn to Sophie Delaunay, who is the executive director of Médecins San Frontières here in the U.S. She, too, has worked a lot in the field, as well as at headquarters in France and the U.S.

Then we'll look at the role of the International Committee for the Red Cross with François Stamm, who is the head of the regional delegation for the U.S. and Canada here in Washington. You look at the countries where he's worked, and indeed, if you add up all the countries where these people have worked, it's quite impressive. François has worked in Geneva and U.S., as well as Cambodia, Philippines, Zambia, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and Macedonia.

And finally, we'll turn for a human rights perspective to Iain Levine, who is deputy executive director for Program, Human Rights Watch, and has been a keen observer of humanitarian crises and human rights violations around the world for many years.

So we're glad you're here, and we're particularly happy to welcome all of you to Brookings to talk about these important issues and look forward to hearing your insights about how we did as an international community in 2013.

Antoine, over to you.

MR. GÉRARD: Thank you, Beth. And indeed, 2013 has been pretty challenging. It was a real test of the global humanitarian system. And unfortunately, there is no indication that 2014 is going to be any different.

The past year was marked by the international community's massive

effort to ease the suffering in war-torn Syria and typhoon-hit Philippines, two types of crises in a very different scope. And of course, it made sectarian fighting in both Central African Republic and South Sudan. So there are those four contexts that I would like to come back to now.

In Central African Republic, we're witnessing a complete collapse of state authority and inability to lead a national political process accepted by all parties. The humanitarian community remains deeply concerned that the civilian population is bearing the brunt of violence and being victims of internal communal tension. So concerns are being expressed regarding the capacity of international forces on the ground to stabilize the situation and provide the adequate protection to the Central African people. Even with additional international support, MSF's ability to stabilize the situation in CAR is doubtful at best. Member states are deliberating at the United Nations. The next, including if and when to transform MSF into a UN peacekeeping operation, and it is important that security and political stability are the core functions of this new center set up to avoid the confusion with the humanitarian agenda. So in absence of agreement in CAR regarding the future of the country, the humanitarian community has been mobilized to support creative ways to operate in the country. And then we have faced serious challenges particularly around security and logistics.

The humanitarian response has not kept pace, and we recognize that, with the rapid deterioration of the situation on the ground, it has not met the needs of all. Many people, including the most vulnerable, continue to hide in the forest and in the remote areas with extreme poor sanitary conditions and without access to basic services and clean water.

So in order to better mobilize the international community and to contribute to the context analysis, a better overview of what is done by humanitarian

actors operating in CAR is needed to make a compelling case to member states and also to make a case to the African regional organizations to increase their support for humanitarian action. It is important that we keep the world's attention on CAR, particularly on the people's needs for assistance and protection. And this could be done through a constructive advocacy and information strategy.

Let me turn to Syria, because 2013 continued to be a challenging year for Syria. In the course of the year, the conflict was in the rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation. People in need of assistance inside Syria more than doubled from 4 million at the beginning of the year to 9.3 million today. In absence of agreement regarding the future of the country, the humanitarian community has been mobilized to support creative ways to operate in Syria and also engage the key member states of the region and the Security Council to deliver against their obligations and responsibilities to alleviate the suffering.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October of last year, the UN Security Council endorsed a presidential statement to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria. The statement called on parties to respect their obligation to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure and to abide by the rules of international humanitarian and human rights. In order to assist the implementation of this presidential statement of the United Nation Council, in November 2013, the emergency relief coordinator, Valerie Amos, established a high-level group on humanitarian challenges in Syria aimed at fostering and maximizing cooperation among countries with influence over parties to the Syria conflict to enable and improve humanitarian response on the ground. Since the presidential statement was adopted, the number of interagency cross-lines within the country -- cross-line convoys have increased.

But we continue to fall short. Both sides continue to restrict distribution

of medicines and surgical supplies on the basis that it can be used to treat combatants. However, fighting continues in densely populated areas with little regard for the lives of civilians. Indiscriminate shelling is on the rise and all parties of the conflict are still targeting civilian infrastructure.

It is important here to highlight the critical role played by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers to bring the necessary assistance to communities and to multiply the efforts of humanitarian actors. Despite best efforts, regrettably, the humanitarian response remains severely insufficient compared to the growing needs. For instance, there are still 2.5 million people trapped in hard-to-reach and besieged areas who remain largely without assistance. Challenges to the response include insecurity, access constraints, administrative hurdles, and funding shortfalls. Ongoing fighting, aerial bombardment, kidnapping of humanitarian workers, carjacking and strikes are common features of the operational environment. Only a political solution will ultimately alleviate the desperate and deepening suffering faced by the Syrian civilians.

Let me turn to South Sudan now. Over 200,000 people are currently internally displaced in South Sudan due to the last 15 December event, and this number could easily increase if cessation of ongoing hostilities is not reached. Heavy fighting between pro-government and opposition forces continue, especially in the Unity, Upper Nile and Jonglei states. It is expected that despite the beginning of talks, the parties will remain focused on making military gains.

There is a potential of civil unrest in every state. A political agreement may not lead to an immediate cessation of hostilities in South Sudan, as the violence has increasingly been along ethnic lines. There is a large group of youth thought to have revenge rather than a political agenda. Challenges include restriction of movement of effective population as a result of targeted violence, attacks on humanitarian workers,

looting of humanitarian supplies, and misuse of humanitarian assets and potentially politicization of assistance. The country is facing a major profound crisis and a complete readjustment of the modality of the humanitarian response would need to be made in order to operate in this new environment.

After those three emergency crises, let me turn to the Philippines, which was also a big event of 2013. Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda in the Philippines was among the strongest storms in recorded history. This disaster has seen the largest response to a sudden onset humanitarian emergency since the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan flood in 2010. The initial response is not really considered to have been a success in meeting the most acute needs, like food, water, house, but some remains still significant in many storm-affected areas and the response is uneven. Significant gaps remain. The provision of shelter in early recovery, that needs to be addressed as a matter of priority. Mid- and long-term plans have been presented by the government for addressing these priorities.

So from those four contexts, I would like to draw a couple of conclusion points, and for sure for discussion. The humanitarian community is facing intense challenges in its honed response in various contexts. As you can see from CAR, South Sudan, and Syria, the operation has to be adjusted to this particular environment. And we have to make rapidly -- to take into consideration the local and national reality in the context. But for sure, also, the regional and international dynamic. Local actors in the population have long been recognized as the contributor as well to the response in the immediate aftermath of an emergency when international partners often provide the expertise to integrate these efforts into a larger national and international response.

Recent years have seen communities, governments, regional organizations, and civil societies transferring their capacity to respond to emergencies

and to contribute somehow to the overall humanitarian assistance. Strengthening the links between all these different actors -- international, regional, and national aid providers -- and establishing adequate partnerships will therefore be essential to keeping pace with the growing needs and numbers of vulnerable people. But I think a larger network of actors and aid responders will offer new perspectives, experiences, capacities, and contribution to the international response effort and to a better humanitarian analysis shared with the political decision makers.

This global approach brings obviously new challenges, including aligning these new partners to the humanitarian response towards the same commitment to the fundamental principles of humanity, solidarity, and impartiality. Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you very much, Antoine, for giving that overview of four mega crises that we saw in 2013. I was struck by your comments -- they have not met the needs, sadly insufficient, important gaps in response. I think as we look further at this we can deepen that analysis.

Turning now to Sophie from MSF. Welcome.

MS. DELAUNAY: Thank you. And I will certainly concur with Antoine to say that there is still space for improvement in our response to humanitarian crises. It is true that 2013 had been marked by significant crises and MSF, as other organizations, had to expand its response to Central African Republic, to South Sudan. We are largely deployed inside Syria and in the neighboring countries, and we also intervened in the Philippines following the disaster caused by the typhoon.

All these crises, as well as other humanitarian ones like the DRC, are certainly different in nature and they are different in their own complexity. They have their own challenges but they certainly have in common that the performance of the humanitarian response can be questioned in all of them. And in recent years, MSF



teams have been increasingly frustrated and concerned by the effectiveness and the performance of the global aid system, including MSF performance. We're part of the system. We completely acknowledge it, specifically in the response to emergencies, either because there was in some circumstances a lack of actors or that the response was coming too late or that the response was inadequate compared to the needs that we were facing.

So in order to objectivize this concern, we have conducted an analysis of recent major emergencies, and the case study was based on the North Kivu emergency in 2012, the South Sudan refugee crisis in later 2011, and the response to the refugee arrival in Jordan in July 2012. And what I'd like to do is share those preliminary findings with you based on this case study but not spend too much time on these specific countries because they are 2011 and 2012, and maybe try to correlate these findings with some of the most recent developments that we have witnessed in Central African Republic, in South Sudan, and Syria.

So what have we found from a more granular look at these emergencies? And I have to say that this analysis that we've conducted was based on our own experience but also on the analysis of external evaluations that had been made by other actors present on the ground. So what we found, and I will start with a positive note, is that clearly humanitarian assistance in these circumstances have saved lives, particularly when people were in immediate danger. And it's important to distinguish this aspect because when you think of Jordan in 2012, people were not in immediate danger. People were arriving in good health, but it was easy to anticipate that if you were not prepared to assist them, their condition would deteriorate rapidly. But overall, it's clear that the aid deployment has allowed to assist thousands of people and it's fair to say that a number of displaced in most of these typical crises would not have survived without the

presence of humanitarian aid. But we do feel that this aid has been quite both insufficient and inadequate.

And I will start with insufficient. What we realize in most of the crises when we've been confronted is that the coverage is insufficient and the humanitarian sector is failing to respond adequately to the needs, and especially in hard-to-reach areas. And the obstacles are of a different nature, but the main two obstacles are the logistics. We all remember the logistical nightmare that Maban camp was in South Sudan in 2012, as well as North Kivu, and security also is a major obstacle. So, of course, it's for every organization to define the risk, the threshold for intervening, and to make its own risk analysis, but the reality is that in Syria, in Central African Republic, in South Sudan, security has been a justification for a low-income range, and sometimes, in some circumstances, even in places where there was no immediate danger. It was mostly in anticipation as was the case in South Sudan.

So the first fighting that we have is that actually coverage depends very much on how easy it is to reach the people. So the easier it is, the best we do, and when it's not easy, well, we're not doing such a good job

The second -- but even when we operate in accessible areas, when we manage to create our space of work, sometimes our response is inadequate. And we've experienced this in a number of places. I think that Maban, again, in Sudan, is certainly the most striking example where we could have performed much better. It was a place where there was quite a significant presence, but the medical, the health outcomes were the worst actually. So we haven't done such a good job, including for MSF, we were a bit too late in some very basic interventions in water and sanitation, and in most of the countries where we intervened, there is a very uneven reaction to the needs. In some places you may have a distribution of food in a few days following the emergency, and in

others it can wait for weeks, even months, as was the case in Central African Republic recently where it took months before there was even an evaluation of the need. That prompted our open letter to the United Nations.

So once we've found that we could be performing better, it's also important to try to understand the reasons for this dysfunctioning. We have observed two main phenomenons. One is related to the United Nations system and the other one is related to their own capacities of NGOs, including MSF to perform better. So when it comes to the UN system, we realize that when a major problem is identified in a response, most of the time the UN agency is a central factor to this problem, which is very consistent with the fact that the UN has a central role to play in the response. So, of course, if the UN is not functioning totally properly, it is going to be a major obstacle to the overall ability of the system to function.

And I will give maybe three areas where we think that these limitations materialize. One is we have observed some difficulties to mobilize the right leadership, the right skills. There are clusters that function better than others, and if you look at North Kivu and South Sudan and Jordan, the three countries in the crises we looked at, the leadership was actually very good in Jordan at the time we operated, but it was very weak in South Sudan and CAR.

Another aspect is that there seems to be a confusion in the roles of UN agencies that lead to severe difficulties in taking the appropriate strategy decision-making. And to give the most striking example, UNHCR is expected to be a leader, a coordinator, a donor, and an implementer. Not only is it an impossible task to fulfill, but also it is potentially creating civil conflicts of interest because if NGOs are coordinated by an agency funded by that same agency, their ability to challenge this agency to alert to try to assess the needs differently or to challenge the system is very limited. So we see a

problem there.

The third materialization of the UN limitation, which in my view is the most problematic at this stage, especially when we think of Syria and Lebanon today, is that in most of the refugee crises that we've experienced in recent years, this is the registration status as opposed to the needs that is the main determinant for assistance. So you're not assisting people because they are in need; you are assisting people because they are registered as refugees. And it's a big problem in terms of this leaves thousands of people without assistance and without protection, and I'm not going to elaborate on protection because I think that Iain will do it much more eloquently than me. But it also creates additional vulnerabilities for the populations that are excluded from the aid system and the assistance. So this is the limitations that we see in the current UN structure.

Now, on the side of NGOs, there are also some very clear obstacles and challenges that we are facing. The most important one is that we all find it extremely difficult to switch gears from development or rooting projects to emergency response, and it's also difficult for MSF because we also have long-term presence and every heavy hospitals to manage in most of the places where there are recurring emergencies. And this has to do with a genuine capacity issue. There is a lack of expertise in terms of responding to the needs and the less reactive you are in an emergency, the less equipped you will be in the next emergency to react. You really need -- this is something that you need to maintain and nurture within the organization. It also has to do with the structure of the organization themselves and the fact that existing projects are cannibalizing almost most of the resources, and unless you have a specific -- you have set aside a specific mechanism to respond to emergencies with independent funding, with skilled people, with a very quick capacity of response, you're not going to be good at

the emergency.

And I would like to take a more concrete example of MSF in this because it's better to start by being a bit self-critical, and we're certainly not immune to these challenges, although a great portion of our operations -- it's about more than one-third of our resources and operations are exclusively devoted to emergencies. Even with that, we have found that we were losing some of the fundamentals. In Ida camp, for example, in South Sudan in 2012, we adopted a wait-and-see approach to water and sanitation. We thought that by taking care of the medical aspect of things we would maintain a good health situation, and in fact, it proved to be wrong. And we would have certainly avoided a number of cases if we had taken care of the water at the beginning and not waited for other actors to step in. And these are fundamentals of refugee health, actually, that we, ourselves, were -- Antoine and I, when we started in MSF, we were learning these basics and fundamentals, and we tend to forget them.

Similarly, we have difficulties to adapt in less classical displacements. We faced tremendous challenges. I remember in Peshawar in Pakistan in 2009, trying to approach and assist the population who didn't want to go in the camps. I thought that we would learn a lot of lessons from these experiences, but actually, we haven't been able to implement these lessons or even to cope with the needs in Lebanon, for example. So urban settings are really a challenge to assist displaced populations.

So to finish all this is to say that in our view, there is nothing inevitable about good emergency response. And the fact that the United Nations -- and we believe it's a little bit thanks to our pressure recently -- the fact that the UN has been much more visible, reactive in Central African Republic and South Sudan in the past few days, for us it's a sign that it shows that it's possible to mobilize the right skills and to -- and the right leadership for emergencies and to do a better job.

So, of course, I also concur with Antoine that the Philippines was certainly a success story, but I think it served my point, actually, my point. When it's easier, when you don't have major security issues, when the logistics can be solved in a couple of days, when you have a well-organized leadership and a mobilized community, then the humanitarian community is able to do a good job. But if you don't have all these good conditions, then it's not as effective as we would like it to be.

So just to finish my remark, I'd like to reiterate that it's true the world is changing. It's true we still have a lot to learn. There is a lot of space for innovation, for partnership, for connectivity. Yes. But in this world that is changing, we certainly need to adapt, but we also need to improve our core function, and not to forget our core function, which is about delivery. Delivering aid. Being on the ground with our two feet on the ground and acting. And I think that this is the only way that we can improve our ability to respond to emergencies, keeping in mind that our role is first and foremost to save lives, to alleviate suffering, through direct action.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you very much, Sophie, and also for your self-critical and open attitude that I think leads to a lot of questions.

But let's turn now to ICRC and François.

MR. STAMM: Thank you, Beth, and thank you, Brookings and MSF for hosting this event. I'd just like to take this opportunity to state my strong and longstanding admiration for MSF and your work. Sometimes we are lonely where we work, but usually we always have MSF next to us and that's always a comfort.

Looking back at the crisis in 2013, obviously for us, Syria stands out very, very big, for two main reasons. First, is because of the size of the problem. I think everyone in this room is familiar with the extent of the destruction of the suffering and the needs. It is one of the most violent crises in recent memory. It also has a dangerous

regional dimension, and as was said previously, and we can only concur, many of the needs are simply not met. It stands out also because in our view of shocking and widespread lack of respect for the most basic norms of law of armed conflict and human rights. This has, of course, dire consequences for the civilians who are the victims of indiscriminate attacks and shellings, but also for wounded fighters, for instance, who although of course, yes, they are fighters, they are a legitimate targets in a fight, in a war, but once wounded, they are entitled to medical treatment and this is not happening.

It also makes our work, the work of humanitarian organizations, extremely difficult. Just as an illustration, we have 32 staff of the Syria Red Crescent Society who have been killed in the line of duty since the beginning of the conflict. We currently have three ICRC staff kidnapped, detained since October, so it is a very difficult environment to work in.

We can provide some assistance. It is our largest operation in 2013. It remains our largest operation in 2014, so it means that yes, there are things we can do, especially in the provision of water and food. We can do cross-line operations with difficulties. Just to explain the situation in Syria, you have these sometimes debates between cross-lines and cross-border operations. The ICRC has taken the option to work out of Damascus. We have been present in Damascus for many years, and then from Damascus to try to cross the lines and bring assistance into the areas controlled by the opposition. And this is very difficult. Syria remains very bureaucratic. There is also resistance at the government level to give the green light -- the necessary green lights to go into those areas. It can be done but it is always a struggle.

The other option, of course, that some other organizations have adopted, is to move into Syria from Turkey and then to be operational in those areas controlled by the opposition, but that would deny you a presence in Damascus and the areas

controlled by the regime. So it's either/or. You cannot have both options. It is good that organizations choose both models so needs are covered, but as I said, many needs are simply not covered because of their size.

Now, food/water, this is okay, but I'd like to focus on what is not good, and primarily, it's medical assistance. There is a shocking notion entrenched in Syria which came as a surprise to us that somehow your wounded enemy does not deserve medical treatment, and this is against, of course, the most basic norms, very ancient norms regarding armed conflicts. But it seems to be the case that -- the rational being, of course, once you fix them up they will come up and fight us back again. So it's very difficult to get the necessary authorization to move with medical assistance across the lines. And besieged areas have been mentioned by Antoine. You have many people that don't have access to medical assistance because we don't get the necessary authorization and other organizations don't get that authorization either into those besieged areas.

The impact of the lack of possibility to bring medical assistance has an important knock-on effect because the health system of the country has all but collapsed in many areas, so people suffering from chronic disease also don't get or can't afford the treatment. The mortality rate has shot up really, not only for people that are already wounded by the conflict but also ordinary citizens. So this is really an important tragedy which is currently without an answer.

The ICRC is not only active in the field but also politically. We try and mobilize states so that humanitarian access is improved with three main topics. We'd like to have access to detainees. This is also something, a big disappointment for the ICRC. The ICRC normally always visits persons deprived of freedom because of a conflict. We do this in many different countries. For instance, in Iraq, we do visit 30,000 prisoners in



Iraq detained by various branches of the government. In Syria it is zero, and you have thousands of persons who are currently being detained in relation to the conflict, so we are still working very hard with the government and with the opposition to get the necessary clearance support to conduct those visits. We also want improved freedom for the movement of medical assistance and access to besieged areas. So these are the three main topics that we are pushing. We are pushing politically mobilizing countries who we hope have influence, meaning that if we want to influence the government in Damascus, we would rather go and talk in Moscow and Tehran than in Washington. So we think that those countries have a better access and are listened to more carefully by the regime when it comes to these issues.

Just a word on Geneva, too. We, of course, welcome a diplomatic process that would result in a durable peace. Only a durable political sentiment can resolve the crisis in Syria. We just hope that the right of the Syrians to access humanitarian aid will not be forgotten in this process.

A few words on the other crises that have been mentioned -- Central African Republic, South Sudan -- maybe just to mention them together. They are big crises. They came out over the course of last year, the second half of last year. Just to mention that before those crises, those two countries were at the bottom of most development indexes, which means that, of course, the civilians living their life in those countries was already very difficult, and now the violence, of course, only adds suffering on the population.

The ICRC was present in those two countries. In CAR since 2007, in Juba since 1980, so a long-time presence. So we are now in the process of upgrading our response, our presence. The challenges in those two countries are different from those in Syria where, as I mentioned, it's sometimes of a political nature. It is more of a

logistical nature. It's bringing the staff. It's providing the response. But I would say -- I would personally describe those two crises -- CAR and South Sudan -- as more conventional than what we see in Syria, which was really a big issue in 2013 and will be also next year.

A word also on the hurricane because it created -- on the typhoon, sorry, in the Philippines. It created a movement response. When I say "movement," it is the Red Cross and Red Crescent movements. As you know, each country has a national Red Cross or Red Crescent society, so the movement has also, I think, rather well reacted to this natural disaster with the lead of the Philippines Red Cross, but many, many national Red Cross-Red Crescent societies, including the American Red Cross, the Canadian Red Cross, have sent expertise, hospital staff, but also more symbolically, money. The American Red Cross, for instance, has collected a lot of money from the American public that has been sent to the crisis to respond.

I'd just like to say a word on Iraq because Iraq is not going well at all. It's interesting to see how, for instance, South Sudan has almost sucked the oxygen out of CAR and now Iraq is sucking the oxygen out of South Sudan. There is only so much space available for the attention of the media and the public for crises, and now we happen to have many crises going on simultaneously. As you said, Darfur is still bad. Yemen is still bad. And now Syria is, of course, very, very bad. But now we tend to speak more about Iraq. But just Iraq 2013, the whole of 2013 has been very, very bad in Iraq, not only the last two weeks of the year. There were, I think, 12 weeks of 2013 where you had more persons killed in Iraq than in Syria. And now when we work in Iraq, we still can do a lot of things, especially in terms of visits to prisoners, but we see things in terms of fragmentation, in terms of risk of kidnapping, in terms of difficulties of moving around security risk that remind us of the time of 2004, 2005. There are some possible

some links also with Syria. So we see Iraq also for this year, 2014, as a very big challenge. It is one of our biggest operations.

Now, 2013-2014, we start 2014 with our biggest ever field budget, and we know already that very soon we'll have to launch budget extensions for South Sudan and for Central African Republic, possibly for Iraq, so there is also pressure on our donors. We are very grateful that for 2013 our budget was met, was paid for. We will see how it goes this year but there is also probably a limit to what the donors can support.

I think I will stop there. Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you, François. And also, just thinking about the number of large crises and the scale, you wonder how sustainable this system is in terms of mobilizing already huge amounts of money that are clearly insufficient.

But Iain, let's turn to you for a human rights perspective on these topics.

MR. LEVINE: Thank you. Thank you, Beth. Thank you, Brookings.  
Thank you, panelists.

As I listen to your contributions and reflected on both the common values that we have, the shared values, the complementarity of our values, but very different ways of working and very different contributions, I was reminded of a conversation I had recently with my nine-year-old daughter who came up to me and said, "What is it exactly that Human Rights Watch does?" And before I had the chance to answer she said, "I know you complain and criticize a lot, but that's not really a job, is it?"

(Laughter)

MR. LEVINE: In that sort of context, a few thoughts on the humanitarian year from one who complains and criticizes a lot but doesn't actually do stuff on the ground the way you all do. And I particularly want to focus on Syria, CAR, and South

Sudan as other colleagues have, but obviously, I'm bearing in mind ongoing crises in Somalia and Afghanistan and Congo, and so many other places, as you've mentioned.

The first point I think I'd want to make, and it's not a new point but I don't think it can be overemphasized, is the fact that every one of the humanitarian crises that have been mentioned today with the exception of the typhoon in the Philippines, is essentially a humanitarian crisis that grows out of a human rights crisis that. We are seeing in all the three countries that we've particularly focused on massive breakdowns of government capacity to protect or in some cases, governments themselves being the major perpetrators of human rights and humanitarian law. We are seeing killings, executions, indiscriminate attacks against civilians on a massive scale. Forced displacement, sexual violence, attacks on health and humanitarian facilities, on workers, on schools, so on and so on and so on.

It's sobering to reflect that in Syria, the big event of the year in many ways was the chemical weapons attack and the killing of an estimated 1,200-1,300 people. It was a dreadful attack, but the number of people killed in the attack was less than 1 percent of those who have died in the war in Syria so far. And obviously, only a fraction of the number in massive humanitarian need. And I will come to that in a minute.

So for both human rights actors and humanitarian actors, these are crises that demand a response of protection and assistance, and as complementary a response of protection and assistance as is possible. And that clearly can create tensions, particularly for the operational actors who have to sometimes balance out the need for access to populations in need as against the need for advocacy on the human rights violations that are driving and in many ways creating the humanitarian need.

In South Sudan, it is clearly very early for us to assess what went wrong. We are still in the middle of a major crisis, but particularly since I spent three years

working in South Sudan in the early and mid-90s, I think it is important to reflect that this was a crisis that we should have, to some extent, at least foreseen. There has been a deepening crisis of accountability in South Sudan for a long time now, and I think it's fair to say that the international committee missed warning signs or at least did not respond to warning signs of growing tensions, and there was a failure to hold the government accountable. UNMISS the UN mission in South Sudan has over 100 human rights monitors and has done for some time, but there has been no public reporting on human rights violations, apparently because they didn't want to criticize a new government too much. But one has to ask the question would holding to account of the government through public reporting have helped in some way to deflect the political crisis that has generated today's humanitarian crisis?

The second perspective that I think we as Human Rights Watch bring when we think about today's humanitarian crises and the response to them is the fact that, and again, maybe it's an obvious point but one I think is very important to make, the denial of access to civilians in need of humanitarian assistance is a violation of international law. The deliberate attacks on health and humanitarian facilities are a deliberate violation of international law. And a failure to hold account warring parties, be it in South Sudan, CAR, or Syria, clearly exacerbates that crisis and exacerbates the ability of the humanitarian community to reach those in need. Syria is clearly the greatest crisis in that sense because what we have witnessed and colleagues have already described it very well, is a deliberate denial of access to humanitarian assistance for civilians in need, deliberate attacks on health facilities, including through barrel bombs and all sorts of other weapons, seemingly as an apparent tactical strategy of war on the part of the Syrian government. In particular, the denial of access for cross-border aid, the denial of access for aid coming particularly from Turkey, which would allow humanitarian

agencies to reach massive numbers of populations in need represents a huge violation of law and a huge exacerbation of the humanitarian crisis that my colleagues so well described.

I do just want to say one word on the violation of -- and I'm not a religious person but I do use the word deliberately -- the sanctity of the space that is required for humanitarian health workers. We have been, in recent months, seeing in countries not in humanitarian crisis but in political crisis, attacks on health workers in particular. Bahrain and Turkey are two countries I would mention where health workers who have treated demonstrators or opposition activists or those who have been wounded in clashes with police and security forces, have in some cases been sentenced, particularly in the case of Bahrain, to very long periods in jail accused of essentially complicity with opposition activists, even though, in fact, their only crime was as doctors and nurses and other health workers to treat those in need.

A third reflection I would want to make is around the concept of responsibility to respect R2P. I'm not going to explain it because I'm sure that this audience understands R2P very well. This idea of an obligation to respond to protect and assist in needs irrespective of political will -- sorry, irrespective of politics and only really commensurate with a degree of humanitarian need and objective need. And what we have witnessed, of course, in the kind of crisis that we have been talking about today, is an appalling failure to uphold R2P in an objective and a truly humanitarian sense.

Syria, again, I will come back to, is our greatest failure. When the chemical weapons were fired in Ghouta on August 21<sup>st</sup>, the world talked about a red line being crossed. It seems that a red line has not been crossed in the case of tens and hundreds of thousands and more of children, for example, who are severely malnourished because the international humanitarian community cannot access them.

The UN Security Council has failed to do its job of providing the political cover and support for the international humanitarian community to be able to provide cross-border aid into Syria in order that all civilians in need can be reached regardless of their political affiliation or the affiliation of those who control them. And this failure to generate the political momentum and the political will to unlock the biggest obstacle to reaching those in need, and there are many others, of course, and colleagues have described the generalized insecurity, the logistical difficulties and so on, but it's that failure of political will that has been so striking, particularly I think in contrast to the way the world responded to the use of chemical weapons in August of last year.

The other example of the politicization, if you like, of the concept of R2P comes when we look at the different responses to the Central African Republic and to South Sudan. The crisis in both countries is very serious. It is deeply political, deeply rooted in human rights violations, and now massive humanitarian need, much of which is unmet. By any objective looking at the data, it would seem that the conflict in CAR is worse. That we've got many more people in need of humanitarian assistance, many more displaced, seemingly many more killed. And yet, look at the different ways in which the international community has responded. Within 10, 12, 14 days of the outbreak of violence in South Sudan, the UN Security Council responded with the deployment -- or at least the decision to deploy 5,500 more peacekeepers, 423 more police, and more helicopters. Now, don't get me wrong. I am not criticizing that decision. It was a good decision. It was a speedy response to an unfolding crisis that required a swift and decisive response. But contrast that with the failure even after many, many, many more months of massive humanitarian crisis and fighting in CAR to make that kind of commitment. Why has that happened? There are political analysts I'm sure in this room who will have more nuanced answers than I will, but I would argue that part of it is

because the U.S. has a dog in this fight. It has a very strong commitment to South Sudan for lots of historical and other reasons, and the French, who are the main drivers of an international response to CAR simply don't have the same influence that the U.S. does to move the Security Council in the direction it needs to go.

I want to finish on a more positive note because I realize that between us we've been perhaps a little bit depressing. So let me try and finish on a positive note. I had a wonderful colleague. We were talking about her just before with Antoine, Allison Des Forges. She was our researcher for a long time on Central Africa, particularly Rwanda and Burundi. She was perhaps the world's greatest expert on Rwanda genocide, and she used to tell a story of how in 1994, in the middle of the genocide, she was desperately trying to convince important governments to send troops to Rwanda to help the genocide and to protect the Tutsi. And she had a meeting with Tony Lake, who was then the national security advisor for the Clinton administration and who ironically is today the head of UNICEF and as such, very involved in this crisis that we're describing. And she desperately tried to convince him to recommend the deployment of troops to halt the genocide, and she didn't succeed, and in the end, in desperation she said to him, "How do I convince you to do the right thing to halt the genocide?" And he said, "Make my phone ring off the hook."

Now, almost 20 years later the situation is no different in many ways. He wouldn't say today, "Make my phone ring off the hook." He'd probably say, you know, get on Facebook, use Twitter, flood my inbox, you know, make sure my iPad sees nothing but appeals. But basically, the principle is the same. Our ability as a humanitarian community, and I include all of us in that, our ability as a humanitarian community to mobilize the necessary political will has been enhanced by the fact that we are able now to be able to use technology and social media to tell stories, to frame narratives, to



influence thinking in a way that wasn't possible in 1994. Those of you on Twitter are probably, as I am, following effectively live tweeting of both the crisis in CAR and South Sudan. On almost a minute-by-minute basis, even on the train here this morning, Toby Lanzer, the UN humanitarian coordinator in South Sudan, is in Bentiu describing almost every half hour what he's seeing, what he's doing. We have 500,000 estimated -- I haven't counted them -- we have 500,000 videos on YouTube which in different ways are documenting the crisis in Syria, some of which are unbelievably horrific and graphic because they show torture and beheadings and all sorts of things.

We have an amazing capacity these days. In an age of citizen journalism, in an age in which almost anybody with a Smartphone and a Twitter account can become a human rights activists documenting and disseminating information about human rights abuses, international humanitarian law abuses, and abuses of humanitarian principles and humanitarian aid, we have a new ability to tell stories, to shape narratives, and to influence policymakers that we didn't have before, and that for me is a very positive take after 2013. Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you. And thank you for introducing a positive note in this somewhat somber discussion.

Before we open it up for discussion and be thinking about your questions, let me just ask you about Syria. I mean, both François and Iain talked about Syria as an exception, as different from conventional crises. Is Syria an aberration or are we going to see more Syria-like situations in terms of problems with access and the politicization and cross-border and disrespect for humanitarian norms? What do you think, perhaps Antoine and Sophie, François?

MS. DELAUNAY: Well, clearly, I don't know whether we're going to have more Syria, but what is clear is that indeed Syria is quite unique in its own way. The

scale of the destruction is quite remarkable. The regional aspect of the crisis makes it extremely challenging to navigate, to coordinate, even operationally speaking, logistically speaking. Even within a single organization. You know, from a governance standpoint it's already complicated to manage and organize and international organization, but when you have several teams in different countries, it's very, very complicated. So imagine the level of the aid system, how coordination and consistency is difficult. It's a very fragmented environment also, and what we also experience more drastically in Syria than in other countries is that we are facing a country where the health system was quite sophisticated. And so we're not dealing any more with these parasitic diseases. We don't have many malaria in Syria; right? We have to deal with the realities with cancer, and although our doctors know exactly how to treat them, our machine -- logistic machine is not suited for that. We have to review all our kits. We have to work on new protocols. We had to be prepared for a potential chemical attack by drafting very quickly some contingency plans, et cetera. So even medically speaking it's a challenge for us.

And I'd like to react to what Iain said about the visuals in Syria because actually, I agree that there is a lot of information available, but one problem that we have faced as an organization is to raise empathy about this crisis that is massively reported but for which it is very, very difficult to have a patient voice, to have a visual, simply because it's so dangerous to bring a camera inside Syria. And so these are all challenges that we face in this country and that we don't face in others.

MS. FERRIS: Thanks. Other comments on Syria? Antoine and then François?

MR. GÉRARD: Yeah, thank you. And actually, I fully agree with Sophie and other comments that it is actually a very difficult environment. What will be very needed as well is what do we learn from this process in a way to prevent, that we reach a

certain point when we're facing those challenges? And I think we've been, and Iain just highlighted this -- we've been limited in a certain number of actions that we would like to be seen taken. The leadership of the UN Security Council is one of the things that needs to be looked at in the learning of Syria.

The other things is the role, and I was very pleased that François had highlighted the essential role played by the Syrian Red Crescent because I think it is also another way of thinking the way we can implement the humanitarian assistance in a situation where we have a huge limitation of the deployment of international staff either because we have limitation by the government or limitation by security, limitation by parties, et cetera, et cetera.

And then last but not least is the legal framework that we are operating in because there is, you know, the UN Security Council can certainly implement or describe or prescribe a legal framework but also, you know, the way we were implementing the humanitarian response and we've been talking a lot about cross-border and how much cross-border could give us a chance to do better, we need to discuss that as well. How come after three years we're still struggling on this cross-border issue, particularly from Turkey to have access to northern Syria.

So I think it's very important, not only to continue to explore the different ways of bringing the assistance but prior to this, to go back to all work that we have learned and even, you know, beyond the humanitarian scene, meaning political, legal to see if we can do better to prevent it in crisis elsewhere.

MS. FERRIS: Iain, would you like to say something on Syria before we open it up?

Oh, yes, François, sorry.

MR. STAMM: Just on Syria, I certainly hope we won't have too many

more Syria -- I think we see Syria like other contexts -- convergence between what we could describe as post-911 and post-Arab Spring. You have these poles of instability. If you remember the demonstrators in the streets of Tunisia, of Cairo, of Damascus in 2011. They did not have a Bin Laden t-shirt and they just wanted -- I mean, they were demonstrating for a stronger political participation and then it evolved differently depending on the country. But we see when you have these durable poles of instability, obviously, radical groups are very adept at taking use of them. And you see now it's interesting to see the Syrian situation is very fluid as well. If you had this meeting one year ago it was rather easy -- regime bad, opposition good. Now it's much more nuanced. Some of the harshest fighting is within the opposition and you have these links between Syria and Iraq as well. So it might well spread, but it's a very complex situation and we think, yes, there's an addition of different elements that makes our work extremely difficult in Syria. The resistance of the regime to get access, this attitude towards medical care, the regional dimension that has been mentioned. So to be honest, I think it would be hard to find a more complex and difficult situation than what we have in Syria today.

MS. FERRIS: Thanks. We'll now open it up for questions on any of these various humanitarian crises.

I should mention that both ICRC and MSF have staff who have been kidnapped in Syria and therefore, you understand that questions won't be appropriate.

Yes, questions. And we'll take three or four. There are mikes here. How about one, two. We'll take these first two as you're gathering your thoughts.

MR. WILLETTS-KING: Hi. My name is Barnaby Willetts-King. I'm an independent consultant.

It's been a really interesting presentation reviewing 2013 from the point

of view of responses. A lot of reflection on the sort of continued challenges of major emergencies and instances of poor performance. I'd be very interested in the panel's reflections on what progress, if any, has been made in strengthening the international humanitarian system, particularly highlighting areas where the IASC transformative agenda has made tangible impact on the ground. Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: Great. And we'll turn to OCHA for that in a minute, but we'll have a question here.

If you could, please, like the former speaker did, identify yourselves.

MR. ENGMAN: Thank you. Mark Engman, U.S. Fund for UNICEF, primarily for our colleagues at OCHA and MSF, but invite the others.

You mentioned protection as opposed to security. I just wonder if you could delve into that topic a little bit further. There's a perception that it's harder to get funding and resources for protection -- you know, education, child-friendly spaces, dealing with gender-based violence, those types of things -- than it is for food, water, medicines. And it's one of the reasons why UNICEF, UNHCR and others launched the No Lost Generation Campaign this week in Syria, to try to get donors to really focus on those particular issues. So I'd just appreciate you getting into that topic a little bit. Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you very much.

Another question before we turn to the panelists? We'll take this young woman here and then we'll have responses.

AMANDA: Hi. My name is Amanda. I'm a recent graduate from the Josef Korbel School of International Studies and International Human Rights.

In an effort to hear a bit about the DRC and Kivu region, I was wondering if any member of the panel has seen a difference in their ability to administer aid since

the deployment of the Intervention Brigade. And if so, if you think that we will see more of these and how, specifically from Iain's point of view, from Human Rights Watch, how a peacekeeping addition that has the mandate "shoot to kill" will kind of affect that in the future. Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: Okay. Three very good and diverse questions on the transformative agenda, protection in terms of its relationship to security and other humanitarian assistance, and DRC and the Intervention Brigade.

Who would like to jump in? Yes, Sophie.

MS. DELAUNAY: Maybe I take the protection, although I think it's not an area of expertise all by myself, but I'd like to clarify what I meant by protection and using security and not protection and vice versa.

I think that for security, it's really an operational issue that we face in all our programs, including for patients and populations that are benefitting from the assistance. Protection is an issue -- is an even greater issue. We have found you may have a perfect system in place and you may reach so-called good standards of humanitarian practice and assistance, but at the same time you may assist populations that are besides very much abused or not under any form of legal protection. So this is a concern we have specifically for the population that is not registered and therefore, who does not fall into any of these categories.

MS. FERRIS: Okay. François.

MR. STAMM: You raised the interesting issue of the donors' attitude towards which program would they fund and the earmarking. For us it is, and I think for all of us the earmarking is a big challenge. And of course, we try to have as little or as loose as possible an earmarking. But when we devise a response, a humanitarian response in a given context, there will be always a strong protection element, assistance,

dissemination of (inaudible) and we try to sell the package. And I think to be honest I don't have the impression that we have various aspects, various programs that are more better funded than others. Either the whole thing makes sense or it doesn't. And we will try to resist an earmarking down to the level of the program. A number of countries, including the U.S., are very generous in their very loose earmarking -- it is for Africa. And it allows us also to fund crises in totally forgotten -- I mean, who would pay specifically for a prison visit in Madagascar who happened to save hundreds of lives literally because people are dying of hunger there. And it is because of these very loosely earmarked funding we can afford to pay for these activities.

MS. FERRIS: Antoine, has the transformative agenda made a difference on the ground?

MR. GÉRARD: Yeah, I mean, your point on something that has been launched about three years ago, and the first question was really to have we done better and particularly now endured what we call the transformative agenda, highlighting a certain number of issues and to bring the proper leadership that actually Sophie and others were actually commenting on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the leadership of the humanitarian coordinator, including not only the UN but also, of course, I mean, those who are actually associated to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee as the NGO consortium and the family of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent movement.

I think it's very important to see that for the last two or three years we have been actually looking at do we have the right leadership in certain countries? And to be honest, as you know, the humanitarian leadership is actually still very much related to the UN leadership and the resident coordinator system. So there is a lot of emphasis on our relations with UNDP and to the UN Development Group to make sure that, you know, the leadership is the right one, up to the point, and Valerie Amos as the Under-

Secretary General but also as the emergency relief coordinator leading the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has actually pushed the UN colleagues to review whether we have the right leadership in certain crises, to change it, to make it stronger, and to have the right person at the right time. And this is one of the issues of the transformative agenda. The coordination issue is even -- and do we have -- and it was one of the questions, do we have the right system? I think it's also something that we're looking at, not only the coordination with those that would be working, I mean, working with for the last 20 years or more, but also the coordination with a certain number of actors who do come and in some of the crises actually contribute to the assistance. Maybe we may not label this humanitarian assistance, but nevertheless, they are actually contributing to the assistance. And we've seen this in Somalia, with even the Organization of Islamic Cooperation had actually appointed a new manager and coordinator for the OIC to function in Somalia to coordinate the organization's effort to respond to the assistance in Somalia. So I think coordination is even beyond the usual coordination. We're looking at coordination in a more realistic way.

And the last component of the transformative agenda -- and you will find actually more on this on our website -- is the accountability to the affected population. We do feel that we neglected this for the last 20 years of operation of the coordination system, of the IC, that it is a domain that we feel is more important, particularly the time that we do have a lot of new tools. And Iain was referring to this. How much the communities receiving assistance are also commenting on the assistance that they are actually receiving. I mean, many times I remember you arrive in the meeting -- when I was in Sudan and Darfur -- when you have a consultation with the IDPs, immediately what you say is actually tweeted to the political leaders of the IDPs in Paris or wherever, and they receive a response, "Do say this." So it's very interesting because I think it's not



any more a local consultation nor a national consultation; it's becoming a regional and international consultation to address a local problem. And so that also contributes to the complexity of the response. Hence, the engagement with the communities where the affected population is key to have a very transparent relationship of what we're trying to achieve.

So the transformative agenda is trying to address those. In a more broader way of reflecting on do we have the right system, and I'm sure most of you have heard the commitment to organize the word you mentioned, "summit," exactly in that perspective of thinking whether we have the right system to respond to the humanitarian crisis. So it's quite broad. I think transformative agenda is one of the steps, and I'm happy to discuss more on this later on. But just to say that the technology, the awareness of how humanitarian assistance should be delivered by particularly the affected population needs to be taken onboard. And a comment on Twitter could be constructive but could be very destructive to the humanitarian assistance. So this is also things that we need to look at.

MS. FERRIS: Thanks.

Iain, do you want to talk about DRC and Intervention Brigade?

MR. LEVINE: And maybe just a word on the first question, too.

Twenty-nine years ago today I got on a plane from London to Khartoum. It was my first humanitarian job. I was working -- I was sent to work in a refugee camp on the Sudan-Ethiopia border, which at that point was the biggest humanitarian crisis of the day. So I'm feeling nostalgic. I'm also feeling positive because I do think that when I reflect back over those years and having worked within and very closely with the International Humanitarian System, it has developed massively in many, many, many positive ways. The professionalism, the standards, the coordination, the structure. There

is much yet to be done and we've heard some very critical and self-critical reflections today, but I think it's been a hugely important step forward. And one, I think, important development in 2013 I do want to flag because I think it will continue to be extremely important for the evolution of humanitarian work, particularly in the context of kind of complex emergencies and human rights crises that become humanitarian crises has been the work that has come about as a result of the reflections on the failure of the UN system to deal with the Sri Lanka crisis, the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka. And the UN I think has gone through an important period of reflection on its failure to address -- to protect the civilians who are caught up at the end of that conflict. Tens of thousands of people were killed. The international response was extremely poor. And I think that the initiative that Ban Ki-moon has recently launched to really strengthen the way in which the system responds, not just through the humanitarian mechanisms but also politically and through human rights and other mechanisms to ensure greater coherence with rights at the center and protection at the center is extremely important.

On the Intervention Brigade, it's a very good and important question. It raises many questions about the role of peacekeepers in protecting civilians in very vulnerable situations. I mean, just a couple of reflections. I think the growing willingness of the Security Council to consider more robust mandates for peacekeepers is important, as is the growing willingness to consider the kinds of resources that allow faster and more proactive responses. The fact that as part of the UN Security Council's response to South Sudan, even very quickly after the crisis generated, it included helicopters for rapid deployment. That was very important. There has been talk of using drones in Eastern Congo as a way of monitoring troop movements that would allow the UN system to better anticipate attacks on civilians and respond to them. So there's much that is positive.

Obviously, there is enormous concern on the part of many, including

Human Rights Watch, to ensure that rules of engagement are very, very clear. To ensure that international humanitarian law and human rights are at the heart of the response. It's one thing to take aggressive measures to prevent armed men from killing civilians, but obviously, it's important that those powers not be abused and they work within a very, very clear framework, which means very careful vetting of troops. It means very clear rules of engagement. It means proper training in human rights and humanitarian law and so on. So there's lots to be optimistic about, but clearly, many, many cautions to ensure that it's handled well.

MS. FERRIS: François, did you want --

MR. STAMM: Just to add on an important point made by Antoine about the social media, it's true that one thing we have not fully integrated yet is that social media not only allow people in Washington, London, and Paris to be human rights activists, but also in Aleppo, in Bangui, and in Juba. And the beneficiaries now have a voice. And to be honest with you, have to get used to this. Twenty years ago we did a distribution, you issue a press release, you say we've been there, we've distributed this and this. And now today if you do that you have people who tweet and say, no, it's not true. I haven't seen them, et cetera.

MS. FERRIS: Right.

MR. STAMM: So these things can be misused, can be abused. Of course, they can be manipulative. But I think it's very positive and very important and it's here to stay that the beneficiaries now have clearly a voice. And this is something that is new.

MS. FERRIS: And accountability that comes from, sometimes, from social media.

Other questions? Comments?

Oh, one, two, three, four. Let's start with David. If you can introduce yourself.

MR. HOLLENBACH: My name is David Hollenbach. I'm from the Center for Human Rights at Boston College, although here in Washington for the year.

I'm interested in the issue of mobilizing public opinion and the effectiveness that it can have. You brought up, Iain, obviously, a case that has meant a lot to me -- was going back into the mid-2000s when the U.S. became quite involved in putting pressure on to bring about the comprehensive peace in South Sudan. There was a lot of pressure behind that coming from various factors here in the United States, and it made a big difference but it just went into a nosedive afterwards and the effort to follow up on it I don't think really happened the way it should have -- monitoring and accountability and the other things that were brought up about what was going on in South Sudan. And I'm wondering do you think that's because the people who were interested in South Sudan just stopped sending enough tweets to the appropriate offices or is it because of the way the government was lack of response? I'm interested in thinking more about those kinds of initiatives and how they might be more effective in the future.

Another example of a response which is obviously extremely controversial, it has to do with the use of the chemical weapons in Syria. What Barack Obama did was he threatened war. And we got a change, a policy regarding chemical weapons in Syria. I was not in favor of his particular threat but I'm very pleased with the way it worked out. I'm just wondering, again, how we look at these dynamics that might bring about some sort of greater accountability and follow through. I'm interested to hear your reflections about that.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you very much. And we had another -- who else

was over here? Okay. The one back in the back then.

MS. VISCUSI: Hi. My name is Athena Viscusi. I just returned from one year with MSF in Myanmar.

There it was a very low level crisis, not the amount of deaths or anything or chemical weapons or anything dramatic, but persistent cruel persecution of a population that had a lot of the things that you've highlighted -- balancing advocacy with the need to maintain access. I was just wondering if you could comment on what you think the role of international actors can be in preventing these kind of situations -- the treatment of ethnic minorities in Myanmar from escalating into the kind of crisis. I think there's also some other things that have been mentioned about South Sudan, the need to coddle a government that may be doing some good things but is clearly doing some things that are not so good. Human Rights Watch has done some wonderful reports on this situation but is also, I understand, holding its annual meeting in Myanmar this year. So just if you have ideas on what we can do to prevent -- there's many of these situations all over the world that have the potential to escalate into more bloodshed.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you, Athena.

We have a question over here, one, and then here.

MS. ROOSE-SNYDER: I'm Beirne Roose-Snyder from the Center for Health and Gender Equity.

We all know that a huge portion of the violence experienced by women and girls is sexual in nature, and the UN has made some great strides this year on addressing that and incorporating it in some tangible ways into how we're talking about responses to violence. What are we seeing on the ground? And are we any closer to sort of mainstreaming reproductive and sexual health responses in how women are experiencing humanitarian aid?

MS. FERRIS: Thank you very much.

And this gentleman here.

MR. LYONS: Hi. My name is Chip Lyons with the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation.

I'd like to ask the panelists about the Central African Republic and just what you see is possible next steps by the United States. Several of you commented on different elements -- lack of action by the Security Council, a number of elements. I don't need to repeat your points. But there was a, relatively speaking, quite high level visit by Ambassador Power. Is that leading to something? We have Ambassador Power and her really very strong track record around human rights issues. The person whose phone is supposed to ring off the hook is now Susan Rice instead of Tony Lake. Her own expertise and commitment to the continent, is that going to add up to something? Are you anticipating steps there? You talked about the relative influence of the United States versus France. You talked about scale of the problem in Central African Republic. Unfortunately, at least in this country, I think the problems have to get that severe before the Central African Republic rises up on a political or a media interest list, but unfortunately, those conditions have come together. So what do you anticipate, if anything? And I know none of you speak for the United States, but you have lots of contacts and plan and discuss. Do you see the United States doing something material, important, tangible for the CAR in the next number of weeks and months? Thanks.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you. Is there a final question?

Okay. Well, we've got four good questions -- how to sustain public opinion, particularly in the case of South Sudan. What's the role of international actors in preventing that ongoing persecution of ethnic minorities or preventing the escalation of that into widespread atrocities? Is there progress with sexual violence on the ground?

Has this been mainstreamed? And what can and will the U.S. do in Central African Republic?

Who would like to jump in?

Antoine.

MR. GÉRARD: Wow, it's really tough questions.

Just to start, and I think the two are related, how to better influence and also that to discuss more about what very specific member states can do on a situation like CAR. I think as you were referring to some of the campaigns around Sudan and actually I was in Sudan at the time that there were, you know, a huge campaign here, particularly Save Darfur and all the type of advocacy campaign led to come up with a very specific agenda which was to raise the profile of what's happening in Darfur. But at the same time, discoordinated with the humanitarian agenda. And I think we need to be very careful that some of the opinion, public opinion campaigns, are not actually becoming an impediment for the realization of the humanitarian agenda. And I had discussed with Save Darfur, and I was actually invited at the time to participate on some panels where we could certainly explain that this work of mobilizing is very critical. And I think you're absolutely right. Making sure that the public is better informed about the situation in very specific countries makes a difference because it's not about only a few people in capital cities that will make a difference, but it's also making sure that the public is also a pusher to mobilize the political leaders and to ask accountability against their own choice that they have made, not only for a national agenda but for an international agenda. So I think this is very important.

It's very also critical that any advocacy campaigns that are led to mobilize the political leaders are not becoming also by themselves a system of mobilization that is not any more related to the critical issues that we are witnessing on

the ground. Up to the point that in my conversation with the Sudanese government is that they were associating some of the humanitarian actors as the campaigners and it became extremely difficult to convince them that it's not because you are a U.S. organization working in Darfur that you are necessarily a U.S. organization contributing to the Save Darfur asking for regime change and the ICC and other things.

And so I'm very much for campaigning, but I would suggest that it's actually strategic insurance rather than campaigning because sometimes we lose track of what we're trying to achieve and we could actually gain another layer of complication for those who are going to be on the ground and add a security or, you know, a problem for the actors.

I thought it was extremely -- and you're absolutely right -- the fact that Ambassador Power has decided to go to CAR is extremely powerful, first, because she will come back very informed, and she could certainly have power at the Security Council to say, "I was there and I met a number of leaders and I can tell you from firsthand that it is not acceptable what is happening," et cetera. So I think it's back again mobilizing with the right information her peers is critical. Now, I can tell that the Security Council has made some decisions to look at the transfer of the (inaudible) towards the PKO mission. What is very important is that whatever would happen in the framework of this transformation is that the justification for me, it's critical that we need to address the security process inside CAR and not getting into an argumentation that we need a PKO mission in CAR because we want humanitarian assistance. I mean, humanitarian assistance has its own track. It's very important to focus on the security and we hope that the negotiation will come up with a good formula to improve the security inside CAR and that would certainly help the environment for the humanitarian organizations to operate.



But I want to insist on this point that at times the information flows so quickly. Social media can actually create platforms of discussion. Sometimes they can be extremely helpful and sometimes they can be extremely counterproductive. And I think it requires -- and it's very difficult to manage that -- it requires to make sure that those who are going to put the message up front are also in consultation with organizations who are actually delivering the assistance inside the country. In order to avoid a mismatch between the message to do certain things and then the fact that it can actually be not necessarily the solution that the humanitarians would like to see in that particular country.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you.

Other responses? François?

MR. STAMM: On sexual violence?

MS. FERRIS: Mm-hmm.

MR. STAMM: Yeah. Sexual violence is underreported. It is a very widespread problem. This year, in 2014, we have launched a specific appeal to address the consequences of sexual violence in conflict. It's also an important internal exercise. We need to brief, to sensitive, to train our own staff. This is an issue that is surrounded by many taboos in many different cultures. Victims don't come out easily, and even we discovered that our staff, these are not usually the first things you ask, the first questions you ask. People tend to stay away from these issues if they can. And now clearly the instruction to our staff is that by default this happens. It's not something that you must look -- I mean, it's -- in every situation of armed conflict today there is a notion of sexual violence. We have come up with innovative, with very a specific program, responses in places like DRC, like Colombia, and we try to look at other places. But just to answer it now, it is fully integrated but it also requires an important internal exercise in terms of

sensitization and training of our own staff. This is not an area where it's easy to go.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you. Iain.

MR. LEVINE: A couple things. To the lady who was from Burma, as we call it, thank you for raising the question. I'm really happy. I wanted to talk about them but I ran out of time, so I'm really thrilled that you raised the issue because I think it raises incredibly important questions. As you say, it's not a humanitarian crisis on the scale of Syria or Central African Republic, perhaps. But in terms of the depravity and the brutality and the fundamental discrimination that is driving this humanitarian crisis, it is extremely important, particularly at this time of transition in Burma when the international community at governmental level and also the private sector are seeking to embrace the new Burma. We have tried to both welcome the changes that have been made, and there have been some very important changes, but also to insist that a little bit more steak and a little less carrot in the international response because there are still some incredibly troubling patterns of governmental behavior. And perhaps the most egregious is the treatment of the Rohingya. The fundamental problem of refusing to grant them citizenship and then the massive discrimination, including acts of extreme violence and brutality, which in many cases now force them out of the country. And as I'm sure you know better than I with stories now in recent days of trafficking camps in Thailand where Rohingya who fled seeking refugee status are being further abused now. So extremely important to maintain the pressure on the new government, and particularly on Aung San Suu Kyi, who has not been good on this issue or strong on this issue. She is running for president in 2015 and she doesn't want to support a minority, which is extremely unpopular with the majority of Burmese.

On Central African Republic, it's an incredibly timely question. We're expecting today -- in fact, it may have happened since we started talking -- that the

president is sort of being forced out today. Very strong rumors that he would be resigning today. Enormous fears about what kind of power vacuum that will create and who would rule the country if it's in fact true that he does stand down today.

I completely agree that Ambassador Power's visit to CAR was very important. It was very important politically. It was very important symbolically. What we have not yet seen and what we want to see at Human Rights Watch is to take that visit to the next level and to get the support of the Security Council to turn the current EU-led and French peacekeeping mission into a UN one. We believe that only a UN peacekeeping operation can bring the mandate, the experience, the expertise, the professionalism to provide the security and the protection of civilians and the creation of conditions for humanitarian workers to be able to work effectively. I don't know enough about the dynamics within the U.S. government, between the UN mission and the state departments and NSC as to exactly where the debate currently is, but we're very much hoping that the pressure will continue. There's real fear, and we've all been reflecting on the limited attention span; that South Sudan has actually deflected attention away from CAR in the last couple of weeks. Understandably, South Sudan is much more on the agenda here in Washington than CAR. So it was unfortunate that around the time that Ambassador Power was going to Bangui and drawing attention to the issue, that there then was a deflection of focus to South Sudan. But we've been lobbying hard here in D.C. and trying to say great that you took the action you did on South Sudan. It's vital that the same thing happen. We're trying to make people's phones ring off the hooks and hopefully others will do it.

The gentleman from Boston College, I realize we're running out of time so I'm going to stop in one second. And maybe we can talk after. Very, very important question about mobilizing public opinion, about how one can use modern forms of media

to drive public opinion in the right way. Clearly, South Sudan has been a very important issue here in Washington. One fear is that perhaps South Sudan was so set up as the anti-Khartoum that the public attention didn't generate the right attention, didn't generate the right kind of scrutiny, and the right kind of critical support that would have been needed. And now I'm not saying it's too late but it's clearly a much more difficult time to exert that kind of scrutiny now.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you, Iain.

Sophie, would you like to add a final word?

MS. DELAUNAY: Then maybe I would link the first question and the fourth one.

When it comes to mobilizing public opinion, what we have learned actually from the HIV-AIDS fight was interesting for MSF because we realize that the reason why the first phase of this fight was so successful was that there was a convergence of different factors. There was a scientific moment with the arrival of antiretroviral treatment, there was a political opening, and there was a strong mobilization. And although the factors are different in different crises, we also see that whether it is the chemical weapon issue or Central African Republic, it's never just because you're going to mobilize that it's going to work. It's never just because there is an opening from one country. It's really this convergence that needs to happen. So the lesson for us is that we absolutely need to be extremely opportunistic and keep fighting and try to create our space and not even in the most desperate situation. We need to continue to advocate and try to move the needle. CAR is an extremely good example. I was there in 2010 for an evaluation of our programs, and it was part of the broader studies about trying to alert the international community about the health stages of CAR, and while working with ICRC on this I remember because we had alarming signals of

health. And then after my trip I went to D.C. and we had numerous meetings to try to mobilize the U.S. government and it had zero impact. We were absolutely desperate. Now, two years after, because of course we had to wait for this dramatic situation to occur, but there is clearly more funding to the Central African Republic. There is a willingness of the U.S. government to mobilize and to play a constructive role in this crisis. So the lesson for us is really as activists and as aid activists, we need to continue and try to leverage every possible opportunity to advocate for this crisis.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you very much. Thank all of you for coming. And please join me in thanking the panelists.

(Applause)

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