Robert Schütte
President, Genocide Alert

Was the UN-mandated, NATO-led operation in Libya a step forward or a setback for the norm? What implications - positive and/or negative - does the Libya operation carry for RtoP moving forward?

The intervention in Libya was an important step forward for the RtoP. It has higlighted that the international community is indeed capable of living up to its responsibilities if the necessary political will can be mobilized. Moreover, the intervention has shown that successful mass atrocity response operations are feasible.

However, the intervention has also revealed open questions and conceptual gaps. If the responsibility to protect is to thrive, the international community will not only have to answer the questions of whether, but also how to intervene. To date, there is a painful lack of consensus and understanding about how an effective protection of civilian populations should look like, and which means are legitimate to that end.

Through an RtoP lens, what lessons can be learned from Libya for future cases where international action - whether non-coercive or coercive - is necessary to protect civilians?

The Libya intervention has revealed that there are not enough suitable RtoP-instruments in the international community's toolbox.

If the Security Council has put sanctions in place but is not willing to mandate any full-fledged intervention to stop mass atrocities, what options are left on the table? We need to find new and innovative ways to fill this gap.

A good way could be the use of satellite imagery to document atrocities and hold perpetrators to account by collecting evidence admissible for an ICC indictment. The Satellite Sentinel Project at Harvard Humanitarian Initiative is an impressive example of how this sort of innovative activism looks like in practice.

Any other thoughts or comments?

As for Germany, it was a big disappointment that Berlin did abstain in its vote on UNSC resolution 1973. It is remarkable that this step was met by overwhelming

criticism from the side of national media outlets and foreign policy experts across all parties in the Bundestag. Eight months into the decission, most policy makers do - on the record and off the record - admit that the abstention was a failure and that Berlin should at least have politically supported the intervention. Interest into the RtoP has significantly surged, and discussions about Germany's responsibility to support the prevention of mass atrocities have become more prominent since.