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Humanitarian Intervention: An Examination of the United Nations' Role in the Modern Age of Civil Conflicts

Lisa Leila Jama

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Jama: Humanitarian Intervention: An Examination of the United Nations'
**HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION: AN EXAMINATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS' ROLE IN THE MODERN AGE OF CIVIL
CONFLICTS**

*Lisa Leila Jama**

“By securing pluralism within States, we ensure peace between States. By protecting the human rights of one individual, we promote the peace of all humanity.”¹

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I. INTRODUCTION

With the aftertaste of World War II fresh in its mouth, the newly formed United Nations (U.N.) drafted its Charter to provide some degree of trust and security within the international community.² The ultimate goal was to prevent another world war.³ However, the modern-day threat

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1. Kofi Annan, *Address to the UNESCO Ceremony Marking the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Paris, December 1998 SG/SM/6825.

2. See U.N. CHARTER pmbl. The first sentence of the Preamble begins, “We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind . . .” and continues with a pledge “to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security . . .” *Id.*; see also Rajendra Ramlogan, *Towards a New Vision of World Security: The United Nations Security Council and the Lessons of Somalia*, 16 HOUS. J. INT’L L. 213, 224 n.66 (1993) (noting that similar events inspired the creation of the League of Nations which was replaced by the United Nations when it failed to prevent World War II, the ultimate breach of international peace and security).

3. See A. Peter Mutharika, *The Role of the United Nations Security Council in African Peace Management: Some Proposals*, 17 MICH J. INT’LL. 537, 537 (1996); see generally James W. Houck, *The Command and Control of United Nations Forces in the Era of “Peace Enforcement,”* 4 DUKE J. COMP. & INT’L L. 1 (1993).

to international peace comes in the form of internal disputes rather than the cross-border conflicts envisioned by the Framers.⁴

With increasing entry into the domestic arena, it appears that the U.N. may be spreading itself too thin.⁵ Numerous civil conflicts are currently gripping the international community, making it unrealistic that the U.N. will have either the mandate or the resources to deal with them all.⁶ The U.N. must develop a clear and consistent set of criteria to evaluate successfully the appropriateness of initiating and terminating interventions. Otherwise its continued existence, as an impartial voice of the international community, will be short-lived. It is this writer's intention to demonstrate that the Security Council has taken an inconsistent stand *vis-à-vis* determinations for intervention into a state's domestic disputes. This comment will attempt to define a set of criteria that the Council⁷ can use in assessing the value of U.N. intervention when a State is involved in an internal dispute. New civil conflicts are breaking out almost daily, raising complex questions that cannot be answered merely by utilizing outdated guidelines that fail to consider modern issues.

This comment will explore the emerging arena of international intervention in the context of humanitarian law. Part II of this comment will explain the legal basis for U.N. intervention. Part III will use the situation in Somalia to illustrate the complexities of humanitarian intervention. Part IV will discuss suggestions for new criteria to be used for intervention when intra-state conflicts arise. This comment concludes with predictions for the future of humanitarian intervention in civil disputes.

4. See Mutharika, *supra* note 3, at 538 (pointing out the almost unanimous agreement in support of redefining the goals of the U.N. Council to better reflect the changing dimensions of threats to global peace).

5. See Ravi Mahalingam, *The Compatibility of the Principle of Nonintervention with the Right of Humanitarian Intervention*, 1 UCLA J. INT'L L. & FOREIGN AFF. 221, 252 (1996).

6. See Shibley Telhami, *Is a Standing United Nations Army Possible? Or Desirable?*, 28 CORNELL INT'L L.J. 673, 674 (1995); see also John Seaman, *The International System of Humanitarian Relief in the "New World Order,"* in THE POLITICS OF HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION 1, 1-2 (John Harriss ed., 1995) (noting that records show there have been seventy-nine intra-state wars between 1989 and 1992 and during that same time period, only three cross-boundary wars).

7. See T. Weiss et al., *The United Nations and Changing World Politics*, in INTERNATIONAL LAW 1223, 1223-24 (Barry Carter & Phillip R. Trimble eds., 1999). The Security Council (Council) is the U.N. body with the power to make binding resolutions on the settlement of disputes. This powerful U.N. body can compel U.N. Members to join together to restore international peace and security. See *id.* The Council can use its discretion to decide what is an international threat and what is merely an internal dispute. See *id.*

II. THE LEGAL BASIS FOR INTERVENTION

When the U.N. Security Council is alerted to the existence of a threat to international peace, it must take action to eliminate that threat or risk international war.⁸ Global peace relies on nonintervention and mutual respect for state sovereignty.⁹ Thus, U.N. military intervention is usually used only as a last resort in restoring world peace because it tramples on these correlative rights. Even so, members of the U.N. have strongly opposed any limitation on their sovereignty, so that the United Nation's use of military intervention, one of the most significant intrusions on a State's territorial integrity, continues to be controversial.

Although the concept of intervention remains suspect among the international community, it has been approved in limited circumstances. For example, a state's right to use force to defend itself from attack on its "territorial integrity" or "political independence"¹⁰ is a justifiable limitation of absolute sovereignty. In addition, the Security Council may authorize force¹¹ to impede anything it views as a "threat to peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression."¹² In other words, a state that has breached its agreement as a signatory to the U.N. Charter by invading another state's domestic jurisdiction forfeits its right as a sovereign to be free from U.N. intervention.¹³

Despite a consensus among the international community that a state's breach of the peace warrants intervention, states have disagreed over which acts constitute a breach. The Charter's language is intentionally vague and ambiguous to allow the Security Council broad discretion in making the determination that a threat to or breach of the peace exists.¹⁴

8. See Earl Sullivan, *The United Nations: Dealing with Threats to the Peace in the Post-Cold War Era*, in *MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY AND THE UNITED NATIONS TODAY* 44, 44 (James P. Muldoon Jr. et al. eds., 1999); see also U.N. CHARTER art. 39. This article states in full, "the Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security." *Id.*

9. See FERNANDO R. TESÓN, *HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION: AN INQUIRY INTO LAW AND MORALITY* 127-30 (1950). The interpretations of this article of the Charter vary and Tesón writes that "it is a distortion to argue that humanitarian intervention is prohibited by article 2(4)." *Id.* at 131.

10. See U.N. CHARTER art. 2, para. 4.

11. See U.N. CHARTER art. 42.

12. U.N. CHARTER art. 39.

13. See U.N. CHARTER art. 51. Note that when a state gives its consent for outside intervention, the intervention is not a violation of the U.N. charter and self-defense is not justified. See *id.* A state violates the U.N. Charter provisions if it does not get the target state's consent or approval from the Council before it interferes in a state's domestic jurisdiction. See *id.*

14. See L. Henkin, *Use of Force: Law and U.S. Policy: Right v. Might*, in *INTERNATIONAL* Published by UF Law Scholarship Repository, 1999

While there is little debate that an armed dispute between two or more states qualifies as an international threat, frequently the situation is more complex where only one side is involved, and an international dispute is not as easily distinguishable from a domestic dispute. For instance, what happens when a state is engaged in civil war? The U.N. Charter expressly prohibits intervention in "matters essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of a State," yet the Security Council has authorized intervention in civil conflicts when human rights were at stake.¹⁵

Since neither revolution nor civil war is prohibited by international law,¹⁶ the international community may not intervene for these reasons alone. However, states may argue intervention is warranted based on the assumption that even internal insurrection will eventually threaten world peace. These arguments supporting U.N. intervention because of the international effects of civil wars come in two forms. First, the existence of egregious human rights violations commonly associated with civil wars precludes international peace and security.¹⁷ Second, neighboring countries may be burdened with masses of refugees fleeing the warring state thereby causing international instability.¹⁸ These arguments broadly construe the language of the Charter to authorize intervention for almost any type of conflict, even if it involves the human rights of individuals. Furthermore, most states only argue for intervention when it would not result in the placement of troops on their own soil.

A target state's consent may provide the nexus from internal dispute to intervention.¹⁹ When consent is given, the U.N. action is not characterized by the term "intervention" because intervention denotes unwanted interference rather than approval from the target state.²⁰ However, consent is not always freely given, and the Security Council must decide on an ad hoc basis whether the need for intervention outweighs respect for state sovereignty.

LAW 1166, 1167-73 (Barry Carter & Phillip R. Trimble eds., 1999) (explaining that the use of force has been expressly condemned by almost every State, *but listing* some exceptions to nonintervention such as self-defense, humanitarian intervention, and restoring self-determination after colonial rule, that have received varying support from the international community).

15. Mahalingam, *supra* note 5, at 245.

16. One of the contributing factors to the U.N.'s slow reaction to the genocide in Rwanda was the U.N. Charter's lack of guidelines for dealing in civil conflicts. See Kimberly D. Barnes, *International Law, The United Nations, and Intervention in Civil Conflicts*, 19 SUFFOLK TRANSNAT'L L. REV. 117, 144 (1995); see also Mutharika, *supra* note 3, at 562 (reasoning that intervention requires infringing upon Article 2(7) of the U.N. Charter to save "failed" or "failing" States such as Somalia and Rwanda).

17. See Martin Griffiths et al., *Sovereignty and Suffering, in THE POLITICS OF HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION* 33, 37 (John Harriss ed., 1995).

18. See Kumar Rupesinghe, *Civil Wars, Civil Peace* 50 (PLUTO PRESS 1998).

19. See Griffiths et al., *supra* note 17, at 40.

20. See *id.*

As a result of this stalemate among U.N. members when the target state withholds its consent, the Security Council has been reluctant to expand its interpretation of "threats" to international peace to allow intervention in a state's domestic affairs for purely humanitarian reasons.²¹ This reluctance is evidenced by the Security Council's attempt to focus attention on the significant impact disputes, seemingly domestic in nature, may have on the stability of surrounding states.²² Thus, it seems that intervention is less controversial when it has even minimal impact on the international community than when it only affects those within the state. Nonetheless, the Security Council increasingly has become involved with crises that have no clear impact on surrounding states.²³

As the section that follows will detail, the intervention in Somalia is a prime example of an intra-state humanitarian crisis with only minimal effect on neighboring regions.²⁴ Therefore, the Security Council's authorization of intervention in Somalia may have set a precedent for future Security Council resolutions authorizing intervention in civil disputes. This is a critical time for the Security Council to define its position regarding the presumption of nonintervention in a state's internal affairs.²⁵ The Security Council has the power to make new law by interpreting Article 2(4) broadly, or adhering to traditional concepts of threats to international peace and security that limit U.N. intervention. Much has been written about the actions taken in compliance with, Security Council decisions; however, noticeably absent from the literature is the actual criteria the Security Council utilizes in making its determinations.²⁶

21. *But see* Thomas G. Weiss, *Rekindling Hope in UN Humanitarian Intervention*, in *LEARNING FROM SOMALIA: THE LESSONS OF ARMED HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION* 207, 209 (Walter Clarke & Jeffery Herbst eds., 1997) (arguing that the Council continues to expand its definition of "threat" to international peace "to cover virtually any subject").

22. *See* INTERNATIONAL LAW 1179 (Barry Carter & Phillip R. Trimble eds., 1999). *But see* Ruth E. Gordon, *Humanitarian Intervention by the United Nations: Iraq, Somalia, and Haiti*, 31 *TEX. INT'L L.J.* 43, 48 (stating that the concept of international peace and security must be expanded because, in reality, there are internal conflicts within states that do not effect neighboring states in any significant way).

23. *See* Gordon, *supra* note 22, at 51 (explaining the possibility of international ramifications did exist but was not the Council's primary concern).

24. *See id.*

25. *See* Ramlogan, *supra* note 2, at 224-25.

26. The United States, as a permanent member of the Council, determines whether the U.N. should intervene by answering the following questions. The first question asks whether the situation is a threat to international peace and security, *see* Colonel James P. Terry, *The Criteria For Intervention: An Evaluation of U.S. Military Policy in U.N. Operations*, 31 *TEX. INT'L L.J.* 101, 104 (1996), but does not address how the United States determines whether a threat exists. *But see* Patricia Y. Reyhan, *Genocidal Violence in Burundi: Should International Law Prohibit Domestic Humanitarian Intervention*, 60 *ALB. L. REV.* 771, 787 (1997) (describing methods for evaluating

III. SOMALIA: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

The U.N. intervention in Somalia is significant because it marks the first time in U.N. history that the Security Council authorized the use of force for exclusively humanitarian reasons.²⁷ However, the precedential value of this intervention may be limited by the uniqueness of the Somali situation.²⁸ In order to proceed with the analysis of U.N. norms regarding humanitarian intervention, the specific facts of the Somalia situation must be explained.

The current crisis in Somalia began in 1989, when the United States cut off its substantial economic support to the country rendering the government incapable of providing much assistance for its citizens.²⁹ Without the financial assistance upon which Somalia was dependent, President Siad Barre's power was greatly diminished and he was ousted from office in 1991 by clan-based opposition groups.³⁰ Both the lack of U.S. financial support and the battle for presidential power created an environment of chaos, hopelessness, and hatred.³¹ The resources Somalia did scrape together were used to fuel the political struggle instead of distributing food to the Somali population at-large.³² One year after Barre's ouster, the country had been destroyed by widespread famine and tribal warfare leaving thousands of people dead.³³

humanitarian intervention, specifically when genocide is at issue, in three categories: substantive, procedural, and preferential).

27. See Ramlogan, *supra* note 2, at 245; see also Hugo Slim & Emma Visman, *Evacuation, Intervention and Retaliation: United Nations Humanitarian Operations in Somalia, 1991-1993*, in *THE POLITICS OF HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION* 145 (John Harriss ed. 1995) (describing Somalia as "a laboratory for the new world order" where policy-makers can "invent new models of conflict resolution, peace enforcement, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding").

28. See Ion Lewis & James Mayall, *Somalia*, in *THE NEW INTERVENTIONISM 1991-1994: UNITED NATIONS EXPERIENCE IN CAMBODIA, FORMER YUGOSLAVIA AND SOMALIA* 94, 109 (James Mayall ed., 1996).

29. See Mike Blakely, *Somalia*, in *THE COST OF CONFLICT: PREVENTION AND CURE IN THE GLOBAL ARENA* 75, 76 (Michael E. Brown & Richard N. Rosecrance eds., 1999) (noting that only two years prior to its withdrawal of financial assistance, the U.S. had donated \$100 million in economic aid to Somalia).

30. *Id.* at 79.

31. See *id.* at 106 (explaining the division along clan lines which quickly led to a "bloodbath" that left over 14,000 people dead in 1992).

32. See *id.* at 76-77. The author suggest that "[b]y simply continuing the relatively small amount of aid and changing its character from military support to sustainable economic development aid, the international community could have at least maintained the status quo and averted a humanitarian and financial disaster." U.S aid to Somalia averaged \$20-\$50 million dollars per year — a mere pittance by Western standards. See *id.* at 76.

33. See *id.* at 80. Other signs of destruction included the Somali government's failure to provide electricity, fuel, sanitation, medical supplies, and plant equipment. See *id.*

Despite the humanitarian crisis in Somalia, the U.N. did not intervene immediately.³⁴ Instead, it demanded that warring clans come to a peaceful settlement in order to receive U.N. humanitarian assistance for the Somali people.³⁵ Unfortunately, the method and goals of the intervention were poorly planned.³⁶ The international community deemed Somalia "do-able"³⁷ and thus, did not spend much time formulating a plan or trying to understand the complexities of a land without a central government where dozens of tribes were fighting for recognition from foreign nations.³⁸ The absence of a functioning government in Somalia enabled the Security Council to circumvent traditional legal boundaries associated with State sovereignty.³⁹ In response to the crisis, the Security Council authorized U.N. troops to diffuse the clan warfare and aid food distribution.⁴⁰ Thus, U.N. troops were deployed in the midst of an age-old war⁴¹ with orders to maintain a nonexistent peace.⁴²

Today, despite earlier U.N. intervention the situation in Somalia is similar to its conditions in 1992.⁴³ Human rights abuses continue to pervade Somali life.⁴⁴ Curiously, the Security Council has not considered intervention as an option for diffusing the current warfare in Somalia,

34. See Slim & Visman, *supra* note 27, at 154; see also Lewis & Mayall, *supra* note 28, at 108.

35. See Slim & Visman, *supra* note 27, at 154.

36. See IOAN LEWIS, *Making History in Somalia: Humanitarian Intervention in a Stateless Society* 16 (1993).

37. See Slim & Visman, *supra* note 27, at 157.

38. See *id.* at 147, 155.

39. See Gordon, *supra* note 22, at 50.

40. See Slim & Visman, *supra* note 27, at 155-56. The U.S. led this U.N. mission and took the liberty of calling it "Operation Restore Hope," in an effort to reflect favorably on President George Bush before he left office. See *id.*

41. See Lewis & Mayall, *supra* note 28, at 101. Even before European colonization, the Somali people separated themselves according to tribal lineage and fought each other for land and water. See *id.* This Bedouin Arab maxim captures the essence of the Somali ideology: "Myself against my brother; my brother and I against my cousins; my cousins and I against the world." *Id.*

42. See John Drysdale, *Foreign Military Intervention in Somalia*, in *LEARNING FROM SOMALIA: THE LESSONS OF ARMED HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION* 118, 126-27 (Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst eds., 1997). Although force was authorized to restore a "secure environment" by U.N. Security Council Resolution 794, the military action was labeled a "peacemaking intervention." See *id.* at 127; see also UNSCR 794 (Dec. 3, 1992) (declaring the situation in Somalia "intolerable" and authorizing U.N. troops to use force if necessary to "create a secure environment").

43. See Amnesty Int'l Ann. Rep., 1999. Despite their failure to "create a secure environment," U.N. forces withdrew in 1994, leaving Somalia just as it had been before their arrival, if not worse with the addition of two more years of destruction and fighting; see also Nii Lante Wallace-Bruce, *Taiwan and Somalia: International Legal Curiosities*, 22 *QUEEN'S L.J.* 453, 478 (1997) (predicting that the status of Somalia will lead the way to being the first State to lose its statehood due to its continuous failure to establish a central government).

44. See Amnesty, *supra* note 43.

despite the pleas of world leaders.⁴⁵ The U.N.'s involvement in Somalia raises many significant questions. First, can sovereignty be overlooked when the target state lacks a central government? Second, should all human rights violations constitute a threat to international peace and security? Third, will the Security Council limit future humanitarian intervention to the uniqueness of the Somalia situation? Finally, why would the same crisis that was worthy of international attention in 1992 be ignored today? The Security Council must answer the questions its involvement in Somalia has raised.

IV. A MODERN APPROACH TO INTERVENTION

The monumental question regarding humanitarian intervention is whether the abuse of human rights mandates or permits U.N. involvement.⁴⁶ If the Charter mandates intervention when human rights are at stake, the term "human right" must be carefully defined in order to determine when a violation has occurred. Under this approach, intervention will be compulsory when one of the enumerated rights are violated.⁴⁷ However, this compulsory system has the potential for disaster if states are motivated to act based on their own self-interest⁴⁸ rather than

45. Press Release, *Security Council Hears Speakers on Secretary General's 1998 Report on Africa*, SC/6736 (Sept. 30, 1999) (expressing concern for the U.N.'s lackluster response to conflicts in Africa).

46. The concept of human rights denotes a certain level of moral obligation. The international community has finally recognized the significance of these rights. In fact, anticipatory breaches of human rights are being considered as calls for intervention. See Yogesh K. Tyagi, *The Concept of Humanitarian Intervention Revisited*, 16 MICH. J. INT'L L. 883, 886-87 (1995).

47. Based on this premise, for example, the United States' use of the death penalty as a form of punishment could qualify as a violation of human rights warranting U.N. intervention because other states have condemned this practice. However, a problem arises with this concept when one considers the reality of the U.N. structure and operation. Because the U.S. is a permanent member of the Council, it has veto power with respect to any proposed Council action. Thus, it would likely veto any proposal for U.N. intervention in the United States. Similarly, the other four countries with veto power, France, Great Britain, China, and Russia would likely veto any proposal for U.N. intervention in their own territory. See U.N. CHARTER art. 23, paras. 1-2; see also Mutharika, *supra* note 3, at 555 (commenting that it is unlikely the Council would relinquish any of its power by spreading the veto power among a larger representation of U.N. Members, as has been proposed). However, the concept of universal human rights might make states morally bound to intervene regardless of Council approval. Thus, the United States' veto of a proposal for U.N. intervention in its domestic jurisdiction would be meaningless if states were morally obligated to end the death penalty practice.

48. Ideally, Member States participating in an intervention via U.N. forces receive full support from their citizens who will eagerly offer their services to save victims of human rights abuses and risk their lives in the process. In reality, it is unlikely any state would be willing to risk its own people solely to improve the lives of another state's citizens. States may view intervention in different ways. For example, "conflict minimalists" are goal oriented and value sovereignty and nonintervention above human rights. See Byron F. Burmester, *On Humanitarian Intervention: The*

any altruistic concern for humanity.⁴⁹

Alternatively, if the Security Council's regulation of human rights abuses is discretionary rather than compulsory, a hierarchy of violations must be established.⁵⁰ There are numerous human rights and not all violations warrant the use of force by U.N. outsiders.⁵¹ Therefore, it is imperative that there exist a clearly defined method for distinguishing between crises that require the use of U.N. collective force and crises that would be best served by other international organizations such as UNICEF.⁵² This consistency is the only way future violations will be deterred and peace will be achieved.

IV. CONCLUSION

Recent crises in East Timor,⁵³ Chechnya,⁵⁴ and Pakistan⁵⁵ illustrate the need for a system of clear, definitive criteria to address a variety of situations across the globe. The U.N.'s haphazard approach to intervention has jeopardized its future as a credible organization. Thus far, the U.N. has not been extremely successful in its endeavors, as the current state of Somalia indicates. This failure may be due to unrealistic goals, undefined priorities, and an inconsistent method of determining when intervention is

New World Order and Wars to Preserve Human Rights, 1994 UTAHL. REV. 269, 280. "Conditiona-
lists" view humanitarian intervention as a right, while "realists" see it as a moral obligation. See
id.

49. See *id.*; see also Telhami, *supra* note 6, at 677-78 (recognizing that the United States intervenes in locations where it has interests to protect and not just everywhere human rights are being violated).

50. See Nikolai Krylov, *Humanitarian Intervention: Pros and Cons*, 17 LOY. L.A. INT'L & COMP. L.J. 365, 391 (1995).

51. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights lists the right not to be hungry as a universal human right. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* 993 U.N.T.S. 3, (1966) art. 11, para. 2.

52. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund ("UNICEF") was described as one of the two "most indisputably effective and important instruments of direct assistance . . . [t]heir achievements alone would support the claim that, with all its institutional constraints, the United Nations has managed to play an important role in the defense of human rights." Tom J. Farer, *The United Nations and Human Rights: More Than a Whimper, Less Than a Roar*, in HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE WORLD COMMUNITY: ISSUES AND ACTION 194, 197-98 (Richard Pierre Claude & Burns H. Weston eds., 1989).

53. See Seth Mydans, *Peacekeepers in East Timor Kill 3 Gunmen in a Firefight*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 17, 1999, at A1 (using a recent attack on U.N. troops in East Timor to illustrate the dangers of peacekeeping).

54. See Carlotta Gall, *Fighting Intensifies as Chechens Resist Russian Advance*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 11, 1999, at A1 (speculating that the violent conflict with Russian troops in Chechnya is far from over).

55. See Tim Weiner, *Pakistan Military Completes Seizure of Government*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 15, 1999, at A1 (describing the Pakistani army's non-violent government takeover and the United States' disapproval).

necessary to uphold the principles of the U.N. Charter. The U.N. tends to intervene, assuming that it can solve conflicts, despite a lack of clear and concise understanding of the complexities that have characterized civil conflicts.

Humanitarian intervention has expanded the scope of collective intervention, and in a sense, destroyed the ultimate goal of avoiding war at all costs. Although famine, disease and other humanitarian concerns threaten international peace, the use of force, for these reasons, is unwarranted. It is not this writer's intention to advocate the abandonment of people in need. However, feeding them a mouth full of false hopes is also unacceptable. The international community, as a whole, needs something in which to believe, whether it be the certainty that aggressors are punished for crimes against humanity or populations are saved from the brutality of not having basic needs met. The nations that carry the burden of safeguarding the world must also have clear, reasonable guidelines with which to work so they do not feel overwhelmed in their task.

While the statement by Secretary General Kofi Annan quoted in the beginning of this comment is what the U.N. should aspire to do, it may be impractical to send U.N. troops every time a human right is violated. The U.N. simply lacks the resources to rescue all people all of the time. A more realistic goal such as swift response to the most egregious human rights violations and punishment of those who abuse these rights should be considered. The U.N. must set out priorities in this area before it loses all credibility as an organization capable of protecting the peace. When states begin to lose faith in the system, they will no longer adhere to the rules on which the system is based. Without a universal system holding states together for a common goal, the result will be similar to the anarchical state and clan warfare that characterizes Somalia today. Except here, there will be no one to intervene. The world is in a state of emergency.