

stigmatization, and the likelihood of long-term psychological effects caused by exposure to violence. And the millions of children living in the streets and fighting in urban armed gangs far outnumber the estimated 300,000 child soldiers fighting in war zones throughout the world.

The evidence of alarming levels of violence faced by children living in some urban areas makes a compelling case for enhancing protection of these young people. But where is the international response on behalf of children facing the brunt of organized armed violence in cities supposedly at peace?

Or consider another key theme that reoccurs throughout this volume: that the aggressive, even repressive tactics employed by law enforcement officials in situations where urban security has broken down are frequently counter-productive. These harsh tactics frequently exacerbate levels of violence, harden the attitudes of communities against law enforcement, and do nothing to address the underlying causes of insecurity. Here, an internationally agreed set of standards that are directly applicable already exists.

The *Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials*, adopted by consensus at the UN in 1990, establish clear and detailed guidelines for law enforcement to ensure that the use

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of force is necessary, proportionate, and accountable within a legal system.¹⁵⁹ Although the principles are non-binding and not widely known, their application could assist in the rebuilding of failed public security

systems. The *Basic Principles* also demonstrate the potential role of international standards of conduct in promoting the rule of law and preventing human rights violations. To help address the crisis of insecurity in large urban areas around the world, the establishment of similar standards might be warranted with respect to the promotion of community-based policing and the regulation of private security companies.

Clearly these are only tentative suggestions. Much more research and analysis is needed in order to know how and where international efforts could contribute to addressing urban insecurity. One thing, however, is clear. International efforts to promote human security — to enhance the safety of people and their communities from the threat of physical violence — must respond to the real insecurities people face in their daily lives. The fact that much organized armed violence takes place outside situations defined as armed conflicts should lead to a systematic examination of whether the international normative, institutional and legal framework constructed in the 20th century to respond to the predominant form of organized armed violence of that era — international and intra-state armed conflict — can be adapted to the urban insecurity realities of the 21st century.