

Personal security

The precarious state of security across the Middle East and North Africa are making some development experts nervous. Is security a precondition for sustained social and economic improvements? Or is development essential for security to take hold? This is precisely the question facing the international community as it plans the next generation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) when they expire in a few years' time.

While very few observers doubt the value of adding a security goal to the post-2015 development framework, disagreements persist about how such an objective might be framed and measured. Some United Nations member states are concerned about just how far the "security" agenda should go. While part of the challenge is semantic, others are political.

Key Conclusions

- Personal security is a permanent aspect of life everywhere in the world, whether one lives in a city, town, or village, and is not the preserve of just a small handful. Just one in 10 violent deaths (55,000) occurs in countries experiencing outright warfare.
- There is ample evidence that personal insecurity has negative implications for development.
- There are a number of ways to frame a personal security goal, and there is every reason to believe that a bold goal would provide decision makers with a powerful incentive to invest in violence prevention and reduction.
- Personal security is, by definition, a highly political issue touching on essential functions of the state, the nature of the social contract, and the effectiveness of service delivery, particularly security organs.
- Nevertheless, there is evidence of growing political and social engagement with the issue of personal security and safety both within and outside the UN system