

Forum	First General Assembly
Issue	Addressing the human rights abuses of United Nations peacekeepers
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Introduction

The United Nations (UN) peacekeepers' efforts play a vital role in reducing conflict and enhancing peace and security worldwide. Furthermore, the UN benefits from several strengths that support its mission. These include its legitimacy, the shared responsibility among member states, and its capacity to deploy troops and police forces globally ("What Is Peacekeeping"). As a result, these forces can collaborate effectively with civilian peacekeepers to carry out various tasks assigned by the UN Security Council and the General Assembly.



Figure 1 A picture of the U.N. peacekeepers

However, as President of the General Assembly Mogens Lykketoft mentioned, "One terrible act can wipe out a thousand noble sacrifices," stressing that some peacekeepers are not fulfilling their responsibilities but are instead committing sexual exploitation and abuse, which are deplorable and shameful (United Nations Press). Currently, there are approximately 125,000 UN peacekeepers deployed in some of the world's most troubled areas, addressing the ongoing issue of sexual abuse and exploitation (ANNA). Furthermore, nearly a third of alleged sexual abuse involves minors under 18 (ANNA). There is an ongoing debate about whether UN peacekeepers are causing more harm than good and failing to fulfill their role in providing peace.

Despite the harsh reality faced by many countries, clear solutions to mitigate this issue and support the victims remain elusive. The UN must enhance its provision of long-term psychological assistance to survivors of rape and sexual abuse, including children born to women in the country as a result of sexual abuse from UN peacekeepers. The UN has established a stricter process for deploying troops and police, and some countries, such as South Africa, have sought to hold local court-martial to improve justice by increasing access

to witnesses and evidence. There must be a more stringent global framework for addressing and supporting victims of human rights abuses committed by UN peacekeepers rather than simply covering them up.

Definition of Key Terms

Exploitation

Exploitation is the act of using someone or something to get something unfairly for your advantage. The UN peacekeepers are sexually exploiting the women in countries that are going through war as they have unequal power dynamics and can give what the women desire, food and money.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is the act of making someone take part in sexual activities against their wishes or without their agreement. A lot of women in countries with harsh conditions due to ongoing war have been sexually abused as they have less power.

Tolerance

Tolerance is the willingness to accept behavior and beliefs that differ from yours, although you might not agree with or approve of them. In this context, a lot of victims are being tolerant of sexual exploitation and abuse. Also, the policy called “zero-tolerance”, which is introduced as one of the solutions for this issue, is a policy of giving the most severe punishment possible to all the people who have committed sexual exploitation and abuse.

Impunity

Impunity is the freedom from punishment or the unpleasant result of something that has already happened. In this context, the UN peacekeepers are consistently threatening the victims in the country with impunity as most of them are not punished for their unfair acts.

History

The history of the human rights abuses of United Nations peacekeepers has been a prolonged, unsolved problem of the United Nations. Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of minors during UN peacekeeping placements emerged in the 1990s. Since then, there have been several allegations against UN-mandated military forces, UN police, and civilian and humanitarian personnel (Child Rights International Network).

Key Incidents

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Global Human Rights and International Operations noticed over 150 allegations of sexual misconduct by personnel of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Democratic Republic of the Congo (Women's Congressional Policy Institute). These allegations were mostly sexual abuse of minors in exchange for food or small sums of money.

Central African Republic

The UN has investigated new allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation by UN peacekeepers in the Central African Republic (UN News). The UN Special Representative in the Central African Republic has emphasized “zero-tolerance” for such misconduct in order to prevent future incidents. The UN has conducted joint patrols with local security forces, had conversations with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and collaborated with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to provide medical and psychosocial care to victims.

Major Parties Involved

United Nations (UN)

As the United Nations oversees the UN peacekeepers, the UN establishes different policies on sexual abuse and exploitation such as the “zero-tolerance policy.” They are also crucial for providing support to the victims such as a Trust Fund that helps to provide physical, mental, and legal assistance to victims. It does this by collaborating with NGOs such as UNICEF and Save the Children. Their role is very influential as they set the rules for the UN peacekeepers and they have the power to prevent or mitigate this issue of misconduct.

Troop-Contributing Countries (TCCs)

As Troop-Contributing Countries (TCCs) are in charge of investigating their troops for any misconduct, they have to ensure that their troops' acts align with the UN's standards. TCCs have a big role in fostering and training the troops; therefore, it is crucial for them to educate their troops regarding human rights and the UN's standards to prevent any misconduct such as sexual exploitation and abuse. TCCs that successfully deploy their troops while adhering to strict laws can serve as exemplars for other countries that struggle to do so. This approach also enhances the credibility of UN peacekeepers. As they

concentrate on their mission of protecting civilians in conflict zones, they will be more effective in achieving their goals rather than misusing their authority.

Timeline

The abuse of human rights by UN peacekeepers has persisted for a long time and continues to occur worldwide. The main events that happened are included in the following timeline:

Date	Description of Event
1992-1995	Bosnia War: Sexual exploitation and abuse by UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) personnel.
1993-1994	Cambodia: United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC)'s sexual abuse.
2004	Democratic Republic of the Congo: UN peacekeepers from Belgium, Morocco, and other nations' sexual abuse.
2004-2007	Haiti: United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) soldiers, mainly those from Uruguay's sexual abuse.
2014	Central African Republic: Allegations arose that French peacekeepers from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)'s sexual abuse, particularly for minors.
2015	South Sudan: United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)'s sexual abuse brought issues of accountability of the situation.
2015-2016	Central African Republic: Burundian and Cameroonian forces at United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)'s sexual abuse.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Providing support to the victims

In 2007, the General Assembly constructed the Comprehensive Strategy for Assisting Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Associated UN peacekeepers (United Nations, 2017). It includes detailed ways to support the victims and children who were born from sexual abuse and encourages collaboration among Non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Establishing trust fund

In 2016, the Secretary-General established the Trust Fund for Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse to solve the issue of lacking enough services and improve the accessibility of the service (United Nations, 2017). It supports not only the direct victims but also their children and aims to lessen the service gaps.

Zero-tolerance policy

The zero-tolerance policy is giving the most severe punishment to the people who breaks the rule. In this context, the UN has conducted a strict 'zero-tolerance' policy on sexual exploitation and abuse by the UN peacekeepers. This policy proved effective by reducing the number of reported cases of sexual exploitation and abuse from 357 in 2006 to just 51 in 2014 and 54 in 2015 (United Nations, 2015).

Possible Solutions

Standardized manual response

Investigation delays in cases of sexual abuse and exploitation can weaken evidence, jeopardize due process rights, undermine accountability, and foster a culture of impunity (United Nations Press). Therefore, it is vital to implement a standardized manual response that all United Nations member states adhere to in order to investigate sexual exploitation more effectively and swiftly. This manual response could, for instance, mandate reporting within 24 hours, ensure the separation of the victim from the UN peacekeeper involved, and require that trials occur within three weeks.

Conveying accurate information and raising awareness

Considering the fact that most of the sexual abuse and exploitations conducted by the UN peacekeepers are in countries that are currently at war, issues remains unreported. However, to support the victims and raise awareness among global citizens, issues should be reported or raised on different platforms such as news, social media, magazines, and more. Also, while providing the information to the public, it would be crucial to ensure that it spreads accurate and unbiased information.

Appendix

<https://press.un.org/en/2016/qa11810.doc.htm>: This website is useful as it provides basic information about the issue, possible solutions, and different nation's perspectives on this issue as well.

<https://apnews.com/general-news-4395ca505b8a40499ec078784d164d2c?>: This website is effective in improving the understanding of this issue and presents the severity of the issue.

https://operationalsupport.un.org/sites/default/files/pkm_sea-1-pager_vf_0.pdf: This report clearly shows what efforts the UN is putting in to solve the issue of human rights violations by the UN peacekeepers and contains statistics of how much it was successful.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/11/un-peacekeeping-has-sexual-abuse-problem?.com>: This also shows the efforts the UN has put in solving this issue but also addresses that it needs to be further improved.

<https://www.shrmonitor.org/assets/uploads/2022/06/Human-Rights-Violations-by-UN-Peacekeepers-Uddin.pdf>: This report is a detailed comprehensive report about human rights violations done by the UN peacekeepers. It includes the history and discusses the policy implication as well.

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/fresh-allegations-sexual-abuse-made-against-un-peacekeepers-central-african-republic?.com>: This is especially focusing on the sexual abuse made by the UN peacekeepers in the Central African Republic.

<https://press.un.org/en/2015/sqsm17081.doc.htm>: This focuses on raising awareness and Trust Fund to solve the issue.

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