

ISRMUN 2021

C34

**Special Committee on
Peacekeeping Operations of
the United Nations**

Committee: Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations (C34)

Topic: Supporting the survivors of United Nations peacekeeper sexual exploitation and abuse

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I. Committee Background

The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34) has the purpose of managing a thorough review of all peacekeeping issues. It is the fourth committee of the General Assembly (GA). It was established by the GA resolution 2006 (XIX) on February 18th, 1965 (Peacekeeping, United Nations, 2021). There are 147 Member States in this committee who participate in affairs involving peacekeeping missions and monitoring members such as the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) (Peace Women, 2015). These missions may include all that relates to a particular conflict, including its prevention, management, and restoration to peace. Operations with various intentions are why their mandates can significantly differ. Peacekeeping projects can include electoral assistance, disarmament, and protecting human rights. Since 1948, the UN has authorized 71 peacekeeping operations and, through certain experiences, gradually saw the need to improve its organization, thus C34's creation. There are currently various priorities included in the modernization of the peacekeeping operations, for example, the Environmental strategy, the Gender Forward-Looking strategy, and the Revised Action Plan to Improve the Security of Peacekeepers (Principles and Guidelines, UN, 2008).

II. Topic Information

A. History of the Topic

Vocabulary.com defines a peacekeeper as "a person who tries to keep things peaceful, often by mediating conflicts or calming people down" (Vocabulary.com, 2021). In the United Nations sense of the word, it is one of the personnel sent to carry out the purpose of the peacekeeping missions. The tasks peacekeepers are responsible for change as mandates adapt and necessities alter (Our Peacekeepers, UN, 2021). The 12 peacekeeping operations with deployed peacekeepers currently in motion are in Kosovo, India, Pakistan, Western Sahara, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, the Republic of South Sudan, Abyei, Cyprus, Israel, Syria, and Lebanon (Where We Operate, UN, 2021).

Over the past few years, there have been numerous accusations of UN peacekeepers sexually exploiting and abusing civilians. As the American Psychological Association puts it, sexual abuse is "unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats, or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent" (American Psychological Association, 2021). Sexual abuse differs from sexual exploitation because this type of sexual abuse has the purpose of financial gain, personal benefit, sexual satisfaction, or any other non-legitimate purpose (Swarthmore College, 2021). In 2004, the first prominent surge of allegations provoked the then Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and the UN to establish a zero-tolerance policy for this type of behaviour, as well as a draft report (Al Jazeera, 2015).

Haiti is one of the places where this issue was most apparent. The UN conducted a thorough investigation of the peacekeepers situated in Haiti, which affirmed the existence of a sex ring consisting of 9 children and 134 peacekeepers (PBS NewsHour, 2017). They lured the children with food and money, the money ranging from 75 cents to 20 United States dollars. This investigation involved interviewing the children, who spoke in their native language and showing them multiple peacekeepers' pictures. The children were able to identify some of the men and many of the places the sex ring would occur. With no jurisdiction over this country, the UN presented this investigation to the Haitian government and solicited them to take action. As a result, 114 of the accused soldiers were sent back without accountability for their actions, their names were not revealed, and none of them received any punishment or jail time (PBS NewsHour, 2017). Another instance of sexual exploitation in Haiti that reports have shown is about 200 women participating in transaction sex, where peacekeepers gave women money and gifts in exchange for sex. The gifts included necessary items such as baby care items, carriers, clothes, and electronic devices. Similar accusations and accounts came from the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Al Jazeera English, 2015).

Regarding the UN's response to these allegations, the organization has attempted to modernize and re-establish the 2004 zero-tolerance draft report's ideas (Standards of Conduct, UN, 2021). The lives of survivors change permanently after being sexually abused mentally, physically, and emotionally. Victims may experience depression, flashbacks, and panic attacks. These might lead to self-harm, substance abuse, eating disorders, disassociation, and even suicide. The victim could get infected with a Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) and/or become impregnated. Moreover, most victims never receive justice for what happened to them because of a flawed and

unorganized system, which lets people get away with terrible acts such as this (RAINN, 2021).

B. Current Issues

Canada: Peacekeepers in countries like Iraq, Haiti, Mali, and Ukraine include Canadian police officers and civilians. Canada has also sent around 625 peacekeepers to Haiti since 2011 (Nosheen, CBC Radio, 2019). A study by The Globe and Mail showed that, from the list of peacekeepers that were able to be identified as participants in SEA (sexual exploitation and abuse) accusations and their nationalities, Canadians ranked seventh as the most common nationality of the 12 countries named (Dickson, The Globe and Mail, 2019). One example of an allegation made against a Canadian peacekeeper is in early 2013, a Haitian woman was allegedly sexually assaulted by a peacekeeper in a vehicle. Officials identified the man as Canadian because she managed to grab his badge as she escaped. The man had been recruited from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Still, when an investigation was opened by the UN, the man had already left without informing anyone, resulting from the unorganized justice system in place to fight these injustices (Nosheen and Culbert, CBC Radio, 2019).

South Africa: The Security Council established the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in November 1999, and the peacekeepers participating have since faced multiple sexual abuse allegations (MONUSCO, United Nations, 2021). The UN sent investigators to assess the situation and obtain DNA samples for paternity tests, which would confirm if particular peacekeepers were responsible for reported sexual abuse pregnancies (Reuters, 2018).

These investigations have produced the expulsion and criminal prosecution of dozens by their respective governments (Fleshman, United Nations Africa Renewal, 2005). The UN also implemented measures to annul such acts, including a curfew and the prohibition of unauthorized contact with regional inhabitants (Fleshman, Africa Renewal, 2005). Another instance of this was in 2014 when some human rights groups denounced French peacekeepers of sexually assaulting various children. Nevertheless, South Africa dropped most of the charges because of an absence of evidence (Anadolu Agency, 2018).

United Kingdom: The United Kingdom's (UK) government is viewed as one of the leaders fighting SEA concerning international peacekeeping settings, which may be executed by police, soldiers, and civilian personnel (ICAI, 2020). A recent report by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI), focused on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeepers, analyzes the UK's approach and recent achievements. According to this report, the UK has spent 3.8 million euros on this so far, mainly focusing on two aspects: supporting UN reforms and initiatives and training international units meant to serve as peacekeepers in the British Peace Support Team (Worley, Devex, 2020). The UK's government has also shown conviction in integrating other countries to fight this issue, raise awareness of standard behaviour, and "fund small-scale aid projects to reform the UN" (Gulland, The Telegraph, 2020). However, the UK does not focus on the victims when it comes to sexual assault opposition, unlike the UN who, in 2017, made the "rights and dignity of victims" a priority. Instead, the UK designated the problem conduct and disciplinary infraction. Despite these claims, the report found no evidence for the effectiveness of their measures, and it declared they have accomplished "limited progress" (Worley, Devex, 2020).

C. UN Action

According to Human Rights Watch, the sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers went unaddressed for decades. However, in recent years the organization has begun to finally take action (Wheeler, HRW, 2020). In 2003, the UN established its zero-tolerance policy with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse. This policy clearly outlines what constitutes sexual exploitation and abuse and the procedures related to the investigation of alleged crimes as well as possible punishments (Standards of Conduct, UN, 2021). Furthermore, in 2015, the UN started to release a list of nationalities of soldiers accused of sexual exploitation and abuse. A fund was also created to support programs for psychological care, job training and other services for victims. It was later expanded to aid children fathered by UN peacekeepers. Finally, in 2017, the organization began to place victim rights advocates within its peacekeeping missions (Wheeler, HRW, 2020).

III. Essential Questions

1. What is a peacekeeper?
2. Does your country participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations? If so, in which way?
3. What has the United Nations done to address the issue? Has it been successful? Why or why not?
4. Have peacekeepers from your country been accused of sexual exploitation and abuse? If so, how did your country address the issue?
5. What recourse to justice do victims of peacekeeper abuse have in your country?

IV. Resources

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