

Call for Action

The World Federation of United Nations Associations is a global non-profit organization working for a stronger and more effective United Nations

BACKGROUND

Peace and Security is at the heart of the United Nations' values and purpose. "To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war," the UN has conducted over seventy peacekeeping missions around the world since 1948¹ often providing a singular ray of hope to vulnerable populations by providing assistance, protection, and security.

Today, while more than 95% of peacekeepers are mandated to protect civilians², Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) is occurring under the UN flag in high numbers. SEA constitutes a universally recognized crime that has devastating effects on the physical and mental health of the victims, their relatives and communities. The data made available to date by the UN³ clearly demonstrates the scope and widespread nature of SEA in UN peace operations evidencing a systemic failure of peacekeepers, as well as peacekeeping leadership.

Each and every SEA allegation and incident is an irretrievable stain on the reputation of the UN, as well as on each troop or police-contributing country, Member State, and peacekeeper. Ultimately, these acts gravely compromise the realization of the most fundamental tenants of each peacekeeping mission's mandate and therefore prevent their overall success rate.

SEA perpetrators should not be found among those precisely entrusted with bringing or maintaining peace and security. It is the responsibility of the UN, as well as each Member State, to act collectively and individually towards finally and effectively transforming the zero-tolerance policy, of which

¹ United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations data <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data-0>

² According to the UN Peacekeeping Operations Department

³ See Fact Sheet and Department of Field Support, Conduct in UN Field Missions website page: <https://conduct.unmissions.org/sea-data-introduction>

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has been a resolute advocate, into a reality by ending SEA in peace operations.

CHALLENGES

Recently, SEA incidents have received more attention in international, national and local newspapers, as well as from the UN. From the first day he took office, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has devoted his energy to restoring the public's perception of peacekeepers through high-level events, a report of special measures, and regular speeches in the Security Council and other official meetings.⁴

To this end, Mr. Guterres has appointed high-level UN officials Ms. Jane Holl Lute, as the UN Special Coordinator on Improving the UN's Response to SEA, and Ms. Jane Connors as UN Advocate for the Rights of Victims of SEA. He also created a Voluntary Compact and a Circle of Leadership calling upon Member States to demonstrate their willingness to enhance peacekeeping operations through preventing and fighting SEA. Additionally, he strengthened UN mechanisms to prevent SEA, improve response to reports, and increase assistance to plaintiffs and victims⁵.

In parallel with the above measures, several Member States have committed to putting an end to SEA, with some having been committed to this issue for a number of years.

Although, ending SEA is now an important topic in peacekeeping discussions and reform prospects, concrete improvements are slow. The number of incidents, an absence of transparency and accountability, impunity of perpetrators, limited communication and follow-up between contributing countries and the UN, and a lack of implementation of new measures, exhibit an increasingly painful and deplorable delay in meaningful change.

Vulnerable populations need a stronger, continuous and collective effort to truly end SEA in UN peace operations.

CAMPAIGN

The "Not under the United Nations Flag" campaign provides the space needed to centralize and amplify the opinions and actions of the UN, Member States, civil society organizations as well as those most acutely affected by SEA.

Through this campaign, WFUNA will mobilize key actors in the UN, Member States, civil society organizations and the larger public to strengthen and implement the existing tools for fighting SEA. We will also push for adopting new standards and mechanisms to ultimately end SEA under the UN Flag.

⁴ Report of the Secretary-General, Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: a New Approach; A/71/818.

⁵ See Fact Sheet for details.

Join the Campaign

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To that extent, the Not under the United Nations Flag campaign suggests:

- The adoption of a new resolution clarifying the SEA terminology and strengthening the UN's ability to effectively prevent and address SEA incidents.
- The adoption of a convention on the criminal accountability of UN non-uniformed personnel aiming at systematic removal of their immunity in cases of credible SEA allegations.
- The establishment of an independent unit responsible for receiving, reporting and investigating SEA allegations not under Member States' responsibility.
- The establishment of compensation mechanisms for victims of non-uniformed peacekeepers personnel.

In order to attain the above, the campaign will push the UN, lobby Member States, involve the general public and consult experts. In parallel, its suggested solutions will be amplified by the commitment of each campaign participant.

We are calling upon you to join the "Not under the United Nations Flag" campaign to help end SEA in UN peace operations.

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