IMUN 2025 Research Report

General Assembly Issue #2: The question of ensuring criminal accountability in UN peacekeeping missions.

United Nations Peacekeeping Missions (UNPM) are missions that attempt to provide stability in crisis zones. Peacekeepers, also known as Blue Helmets "protect civilians, actively prevent conflict, reduce violence, strengthen security and empower national authorities to assume these responsibilities (United Nations)." These missions are recognized as one of the "most important tools" used by the United Nations (UN). These operations are authorized by the UN Security Council with the United States, China, and Japan being the biggest contributors of funding, and Bangladesh, Nepal, and India, being the biggest contributors of personnel ("What Is"). Blue Helmets attempt the de-escalation in situations of disaster, while also helping countries reintegrate and avoid recidivism by monitoring elections, restoring the rule of law, and helping reintegrate fighters into society (United Nations, "UN Peacekeeping").

Even though the core of these missions is global peace and security, UNPM must respect the sovereignty of countries. If the host country denies an action of the UNPM, they cannot infringe on sovereignty (BWC Admin, "UN, Explained"). However, in specific cases, UNPM may prioritize UN frameworks, rather than the countries' (BWC Admin, "The Language"). The UN's framework is outlined by Chapters VI and VII of the UN Charter. Chapter VI requires peaceful negotiation of conflict, with the consent of the host government, mandating diplomacy. Chapter VII indicates that UNPM, with the consent of the UNSC, can "address threats to peace" with armed forces (United Nations, "Chapter VII"). These missions are most seen in extreme crisis areas, where protecting civilians and upkeeping the Human Rights Declaration is of utmost importance (BWC Admin, "The Language").

Moreover, there have been various accusations of UN Peacekeepers committing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), normally with minors of age. Though the UN can interfere by investigation these allegations, peacekeeper accountability is up to the country that sends troops. This results in rare cases of

prosecution or even media coverage (Wheeler). The lack of accountability taken by Member States should be one of the main focuses of debate.

According to the United Nations, in 2023, there were 758 allegations of SEA received, with 384 of them being related to UN staff, and the remaining partners not under UN authority ("Sexual Exploitation"). Two UNPM made up 82% of the 102 allegations, Congo with 44 and the Central African Republic with 40. Of the 143 identified victims, 28 were children. It was recognized that the UN has had issues with allegations of child rape for years, mostly in these countries, but amongst others (*Seventy-Eighth*). Sexual misconduct was also reported in South Sudan, Lebanon, Haiti, Columbia, and Afghanistan. In 2024, allegations of SEA by UNPM were at 100, with 65 of these involving raped mothers seeking child support (AP).

These numbers increased substantially compared to previous years because victims of SEA, of prior years, reported them in these recent years, rather than when they had occurred ("Report of"). As missions closed, more victims reported these findings which could have been an indication of their reluctancy to do it while their alleged abuser was in their country (*Seventy-Eighth*).

To combat this situation, António Guterres, UN Secretary General, has implemented many forms of resistance. These include policies which detail the roles and responsibilities in field missions while highlighting the responsibilities of Heads of Mission, senior managers, and commanders. It was also outlined what the role of UN personnel in reporting misconduct to officials is, while giving consequences to those who do not. A resolution, A/RES/62/63, adopted by the General Assembly addressed the extent of Member States to cover criminal misconduct of UN officials. The exchange of information between Member States and the UN was encouraged, in order to facilitate investigations, and process with the appropriate prosecution of individuals. In addition, the Secretary General has requested Member States to review if existing national legislation allowed for extraterritorial jurisdiction of Blue Helmets ("Accountability").

Further implementations, adopted by those like the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), include the thorough screening of future employees by using systems like the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, ClearCheck, and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) (“Report of the Secretary-General”) .

The Secretary General has placed an emphasis on the enhancing of training programmes on protection from SEA, including the mandatory e-course for all Secretariat personnel. This also includes the reinforcement training package for commanders. It provides targeted training for them regarding conduct and discipline, with ta focus on the prohibition of SEA (“Report of the Secretary-General”).

Debate should focus on defining the scope of accountability where delegates discuss who should be held accountable for cases of SEA, along with determining what this accountability entails. Moreover, by determining what factors led to the failures of missions, delegates should collectively work on what can be implemented by all Member States. Delegates are reminded that peacekeepers are often granted immunity in their own countries, finding an international mechanism for investigation and prosecution is extremely relevant.

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