



THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN Peacekeeping Troops toward Refugees

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I. Background of issue

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by the United Nations (UN) peacekeepers have, with massive regret, been an incessant issue ever since the establishment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950 (UNHCR, n.d.). Despite demonstrating fluctuations, allegations against UN staff have not yet reduced sufficiently. In fact, it was as high as 113 in 2019, within which the victims were mostly females (84%), with few males (6%) and unknown gender (9.9%) (the United Nations, 2021). Indeed, even today, SEA by the UN staff is a complex issue to be tackled with, as it involves numerous aspects such as poverty, famine, conflict, stigma, barriers to contraception and abortion, prostitution, lack of accountability of military members, lack of confidentiality assurance in reporting, as well as vulnerability of women (Kapila, 2021). This further emphasizes the urgency of fathoming this issue, since SEA not only breaches the core principles of peacekeeping, but it also is adversely affecting the lives of countless refugees.

II. Country's stance and status quo

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan joined the UN on 30th September 1947 and subsequently sent its first contribution to peacekeeping missions in 1960 to Congo. As of today, Pakistan has made great contributions by sending over 200,000 Blue Beret troops across 46 UN missions in efforts to restore political peace and provide socio-economic assistance to other countries (Shah, 2020). As a major contributor of peacekeeping troops, Pakistan has realized the importance of battling SEA and thus has long supported the zero-tolerance policy on sexual misconduct. Moreover, Pakistan has signed 'the voluntary compact on the elimination of sexual exploitation and abuse', in addition to its benefactions for the UN Trust Fund for victim support (Khalid, 2021). However, like most other countries, Pakistani troops could not completely avoid SEA allegations. Accusations of sexual abuse have been made in Haiti against three police officers in 2012 (Afp, 2012) and two soldiers in the following months, who subsequently receive a year of imprisonment by the government (Singh, 2016), and in Congo at 2017 by a 14-year-old girl (Krista Larson & Paisley Dodds, 2017). Thus, Pakistan currently is still in struggle along with the rest of the world in taking up arms against SEA by the UN troops.

III. Past and current joint international efforts

It was not until a series of allegations made globally known in 2004 that the first joint exclusive analysis of SEA conducted by the UN personnel was established, disclosed in the 2005 Zeid Report, also termed as ‘A Comprehensive Strategy to Eliminate Future Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (A/59/710)’ (the United Nations, n.d.). Further developments followed, including the initiation of misconduct tracking system (MTS) in July 2008 by the Department of Field Support’s conduct and discipline unit, the report and toolkit instituted in May 2018 by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), SEA training, publicization of country origins of perpetrators since 2015, and Conduct and Discipline Team (CDT) socializations as prevention measures, the reinforcement of two categories of indictable misconduct, the recruitment of females in peacekeeping operations, and the establishment of the ‘Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse’(the United Nations, n.d.). However, as proven by the yet towering number of allegations, these efforts have not been sufficient.

IV. Potential solution and goals

Realizing the severity of this issue, Pakistan invites all Member States to join hand in hand in our combat against SEA by the UN peacekeeping troops. Building on the root of SEA, Pakistan thus proposes the following framework:

Phase 1: Early interventions – the ‘START’ framework, which encompasses of the following key proposals:

1. Spreading awareness of the severe and lasting consequences of sexual exploitation on the victims to every prospective peacekeeping troops, in order to reinforce morality;
2. Terminating the service of troops accused with SEA and providing appropriate discipline;
3. Achieve the eradication of prostitution by supporting humanitarian aids to refugees as well as providing more opportunities for employment through formal and informal education;
4. Reach the disadvantaged refugees through secure and confidential reporting system and strengthened evidence-based protocols;
5. Together with all Member States, cooperate to ensure psychological, medical, and humanitarian support for victims of SEA as well as the strengthening of funds.

These actions are to be completed within a timeline of at most 6 months in order to achieve adequate protection of refugees against SEA.

Phase 2: Stabilized phase – establishment of continual combat against SEA

During this phase, continual input from victims and advocates should be openly received by all Member States in efforts to ceaselessly improve response and solutions against SEA by the

peacekeeping troops. Recruitment of support from other non-governmental organizations are also welcome to ensure greater reach-out to refugees.

Lastly, as a Pakistani proverb says, '*mehnat kamyabi ki kunji hai*', through hard work, we can make our success in eradicating SEA a reality. Let us incorporate this meaning into our efforts together in order to create a better world especially for refugees, together.

VI. References

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