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**Increased Security Crucial to Protect Peacekeepers Risking ‘Ultimate Sacrifice’, United Nations Staff Union Says, Citing 15 Killed by Deliberate Attacks in 2020**

At least 15 United Nations and associated personnel — 12 peacekeepers and three civilians — were killed in malicious attacks in the line of duty in 2020, according to the Standing Committee for the Security and Independence of the International Civil Service of the United Nations Staff Union.

Deliberate killings in 2020 bring the total death toll in the past 11 years to at least 440 United Nations and associated personnel killed from a diversity of attacks, including from improvised explosive devices, rocket and artillery fire, mortar rounds, indirect fire, landmines, grenades, suicide attacks, targeted assassinations and armed ambushes.

For the seventh year in a row, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) remained one of the worst-affected missions, with six peacekeepers killed.  However, for the first time in 2020, an equal number of fatalities (five peacekeepers and one civilian) was registered in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

Also in 2020, a peacekeeper from Indonesia serving with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) was killed in an armed ambush; a science teacher working for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Syria was killed in armed violence; and a staff driver for the World Health Organization (WHO) in Myanmar was killed in an attack while delivering COVID-19 samples.

“We learn, time and time again, of the many colleagues serving around the world, in the most dangerous places, who have made the ultimate sacrifice for the United Nations flag,” said Patricia Nemeth, President of the United Nations Staff Union.  “Even though we may not be directly affected by the wars raging around the globe, some of us may not fully comprehend the depth of sacrifice that is being made in our name.”

As a result, she continued:  “There comes a point when we have to say, ‘enough is enough’.  We don’t see any other choice but to continue calling on the United Nations and the Member States to enhance the security measures to protect the lives of our colleagues, while also increasing the resources to our civilian, military and police personnel on the front lines.  They and their families remain foremost in our hearts and their commitment to the ideals of this Organization will not be forgotten as they rest in the sacred and blessed grounds marking their devotion to humankind around the world.”

The peacekeepers killed in 2020 hailed from the following countries:  Burundi (4), Chad (3), Egypt (3), Indonesia (1) and Rwanda (1).  The civilians killed were from the Central African Republic, Myanmar and Syria.

The figures for preceding years are as follows:  2019 (28 killed); 2018 (34 killed); 2017 (71 killed); 2016 (32 killed); 2015 (51 killed); 2014 (61 killed); 2013 (58 killed); 2012 (37 killed); 2011 (35 killed); and 2010 (15 killed).

Deliberate Attacks

Following is a non-exhaustive list of deliberate attacks in 2020 which resulted in the death of peacekeepers, compiled by the United Nations Staff Union Standing Committee on the Security and Independence of the International Civil Service:

* On 6 March 2020, Thibaut le Sauveur Gbakate Dengou, a United Nations civilian security assistant serving MINUSCA, was killed in Ndélé, allegedly by Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de Centrafrique (FPRC) combatants.
* On 15 March 2020, Masudi Sinzobakira, a peacekeeper from Burundi serving with MINUSCA, was killed while United Nations peacekeepers were trying to stop an attack perpetrated by anti-Balaka elements against the mayor and a local official in Grimari, Ouaka Prefecture, in the Central African Republic.  In a separate incident on the same day, one peacekeeper from Pakistan was injured in an attack by suspected elements of the Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique (RPRC) and Parti du Rassemblement de la Nation Centrafricaine (PRNC) against a MINUSCA patrol on the Ndélé-Birao axis, in the prefecture of Bamingui-Bangoran.
* On 18 March 2020, Ali Husein Mohammad, a science teacher working with UNRWA and serving Palestine refugees, was killed following an outbreak of armed violence in Jillin in rural Dara’a, in southern Syria.
* On 20 April 2020, Pyae Sone Win Maung, a driver working for WHO, died after being wounded in an attack in Minbya Township in Rakhine state, Myanmar.  He was driving a clearly marked United Nations vehicle carrying COVID-19 samples from Sittwe to Rangoon.
* On 10 May 2020, Bahr Ahmat Amit, Mahamat Issa Ahmat and Madoubo Mahamat Abdoulaye, three peacekeepers from Chad, were killed in an improvised explosive device attack against a MINUSMA convoy near Aguelhok, Kidal region.  Four other peacekeepers were seriously injured.
* On 13 June 2020, Ahmed Mohsen and Mohammed El Amir, two peacekeepers from Egypt serving with MINUSMA, were killed in an attack against a logistics convoy near the town of Tarkint, north-east of Gao.  While the convoy stopped along the Tessalit-Gao route, it was attacked by unidentified armed individuals.
* On 22 June 2020, Rama Wahyudi, a peacekeeper from Indonesia serving with MONUSCO, was killed when a mission patrol came under fire in an attack near the town of Beni.  It is believed to have been carried out by rebel militia, the so-called Allied Democratic Forces.  Another peacekeeper was injured in the attack.
* On 13 July 2020, Eduoard Nsabiy Aremye, a peacekeeper from Rwanda serving with MINUSCA, was killed and two others were wounded in a deadly attack against their convoy in Gezde, Nana Mambéré prefecture, in the Central African Republic.  The attack was allegedly carried out by elements with the Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation (3R) armed group.
* On 15 October 2020, Islam Mahmoud Ismail, a peacekeeper from Egypt serving with MINUSMA, was killed, and another seriously injured, when an explosive device hit a mission vehicle in the Kidal region, located in northern Mali.  A second incident took place in Timbuktu, where at least one Burkinabe peacekeeper was wounded in an indirect fire attack against the mission’s integrated camp.
* On 25 December, Libere Nibigira, Patient Niyokwizera and Eric Ntunzwenimana, three peacekeepers from Burundi serving with MINUSCA, lost their lives during the second unsuccessful attempt to capture the town of Dekoa, Kémo prefecture, in the Central African Republic.  The attack, which also injured two Burundian peacekeepers, was carried out by rebel groups on the eve of national elections.  Another attack against MINUSCA took place in Bakouma, Mbomou Prefecture.

Abductions, Other Violations, Development

Following is a non-exhaustive list of abductions and other violations committed against United Nations personnel, as well as related developments, in 2020:

* On 9 January 2020, a rocket attack on a base in the town of Tessalit, in northern Mali’s Kidal region, wounded 20 people, including 18 MINUSMA peacekeepers from Chad.
* On 10 January 2020, the Secretary-General, referring to the issuance of a report by a congressional committee in Guatemala on the work of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala [created by an agreement between the United Nations and Guatemala to investigate illegal security groups and high-level corruption in the country], called on the Guatemalan authorities “to protect the rights and ensure the safety and security of former CICIG staff, as well as justice operators and human rights defenders”.
* On 27 February 2020, a French woman working for the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) was released after being kidnapped on 25 February in Port au Prince, Haiti, by a group of unknown individuals.  Her name was not released.
* On 15 July 2020, Mario Paciolla, an Italian national and a United Nations Volunteer with the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, was found dead at his home in San Vicente de Caguán.  Local authorities declared his death a suicide.  However, Italian authorities and human rights groups called for an investigation in his death.

Progress on Prosecutions

Some progress was registered in 2020 in advancing the prosecution of those responsible for the deaths of United Nations personnel.  In October, the trial of Congolese militia leader Trésor Mputu Kankonde, one of the top suspects in the 2017 murders of United Nations experts Zaida Catalan, of Sweden, and Michael Sharp, of the United States, and their interpreter Betu Tshintela, began.  Mr. Mputu was apprehended by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 29 May in Katole, in central Kasaï region.

On 29 December, Lebanon’s Permanent Military Court convicted and sentenced 76-year-old Mahmoud Bazzi to 15 years in prison for the kidnapping and killing in Lebanon in April 1980 of two Irish peacekeepers, Derek Smallhorne and John O'Mahony, who had been serving with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

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