



Public Reporting on Human Rights by United Nations Peace Operations: Good practices, lessons learned and challenges

**A joint study conducted by the
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),
the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA), and
the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).**

Based on case studies of the public reporting practice of United Nations peace operations in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and Iraq (UNAMI)

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Photo credits: front and back cover

Front cover, top left: Prison in Haiti. UN Photo/Victoria Hazou

Top right: Midwifery students, Afghanistan. UN Photo / Eric Canalstein.

Bottom left: Protection of civilians site, South Sudan. UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

Bottom right: Children at police station, Mali. UN Photo/ Marco Dormino

Centre: Human rights officer at work. OHCHR Photo/Jan Hessbruegge

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Back cover: United Nations flag. UN Photo / John Isaac

Foreword

Public reporting on human rights is core United Nations work. Established against the backdrop of the worst atrocities imaginable, our Organisation has a fundamental role under the United Nations Charter to prevent and respond to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. As part of this mandate, the United Nations has a crucial responsibility to bring human rights violations to the world's attention as one avenue to help end the abuses and deter others. The United Nations also publicly recognizes progress made by states in protecting rights, to incentivise further change.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs are committed to ensuring that our missions report regularly, publicly and effectively on human rights, consistent with long established policy within the United Nations. This report, which is mainly based on field research, is a joint effort between our departments to further strengthen that reporting.

The findings of the report test many of the assumptions about public human rights reporting and its impact. Public reporting on human rights by peace operations regularly addresses sensitive subjects. Despite that challenge, our findings show that public report generally does not result in sustained tangible negative impact for the mission. Instead, our research demonstrates that the work of an entire mission can benefit from public reporting, provided it is based on strategic vision, methodological rigour, and proper consultation of all stakeholders in and outside the mission. Rather than being a potentially troublesome requirement, public human rights reporting represents an opportunity not only to protect human rights in line with the mission mandate, but also to enhance the impartial standing and visibility of the mission, and advance its broader political objectives.

Building on the good practices and recommendations set out in this report, we are committed to working with senior mission leaders and our human rights components to ensure that our public reporting is strategic, timely, and effective in protecting and promoting the human rights of the people we are meant to serve.

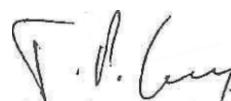
The voice of the United Nations must be firmly heard wherever and whenever human rights are at risk.



Zeid Ra'ad Al-Husseini
High Commissioner
for Human Rights



Jeffrey Feltman
Under-Secretary-General
for Political Affairs



Jean-Pierre Lacroix
Under-Secretary-General
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Executive Summary

1. The United Nations Policy on Human Rights in Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions requires all peace operations with a human rights mandate to report publicly and routinely on the human rights situation in the host country as part of the larger effort to ensure that the United Nations system takes early and effective action to protect human rights. Despite the essential function and value of public reporting, differences exist in how, and how often, peace operations report.

2. OHCHR, DPA and DPKO-DFS jointly conducted this study to identify lessons learned and good practices that can enhance the impact and regularity of public reporting by all peace operations. The study is not an assessment of the work of particular missions. It seeks to explain: (i) what value public reporting provides to missions; (ii) why some missions report more often than others; and (iii) how the positive impact of reporting can be maximised. A summary of recommendations, good practices and lessons learned is provided at the end of the study.

3. The study covers a broad range of public reporting outputs, including fully-fledged human rights reports, press statements and other publicly available human rights information produced by peace operations. The findings are primarily based on in-depth case studies of the three missions that have to date reported most frequently: the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). It also draws on the experience of other peace operations.

4. This study addresses not only human rights components, but peace operations as a whole. Good public reporting on human rights requires a mission-wide effort and the strong backing of the mission leadership. The entire mission also stands to benefit from public reporting that is done well.

The value and impact of public human rights reporting:

5. Public reporting by United Nations peace operations is essential to effectively implement a mission's human rights mandate. It serves functions beyond identifying human rights violators and pressuring them to take corrective action. In deeply polarised crisis settings, where impartial and credible information is scarce, United Nations reporting provides a transparent and objective account of human rights violations and the responsible actors and contributes to changing their behaviour for the better. Public reporting can broaden political

space for government actors that are committed to protecting human rights, particularly if reports also acknowledge the positive contributions of such actors. Furthermore, it provides other states and civil society with a platform to engage authorities in a human rights dialogue. In some instances, public reporting has helped to establish a protection dialogue with non-state armed groups found responsible for violations. Other human rights actors cannot fully replace reporting by the United Nations. National human rights commissions and non-

governmental organisations (NGOs) often lack the capacity, independence and protection against reprisals to report on the most serious concerns. International NGOs usually do not



MONUSCO's public reporting on impunity for crimes involving gross human rights violations has enhanced space for national justice authorities to prosecute higher-ranking officers. UN Photo/MONUSCO.

enjoy the same secure access to critical areas and, at the host country level, their reporting is frequently seen as less authoritative than that of the United Nations.

6. Public human rights reporting can also advance broader mission objectives. Quality public reporting that objectively addresses major concerns, regardless of the actors involved, enhances the visibility and impartial profile of a mission. Timely public reporting provides all relevant stakeholders, including missions, United Nations leadership, the Security Council, civil society and the broader United Nations membership with crucial information on conflict dynamics. It can provide early warning on future crises and atrocities and generate momentum for preventive action. Reporting can support the good offices work of the mission leadership by providing an impartial assessment of human rights-related incidents and concerns that may further divide society or even reignite conflict.

7. Depending on the context and the mission's relationship with host authorities, peace operations may occasionally be subject to political backlash, such as reprisals and suspension of cooperation, either as a result of their overall human rights or protection work or simply their presence and mandate. While there is often concern among political actors that public reporting on human rights in particular may trigger backlash, this study finds that in practice public reporting as such leads to few tangible negative consequences. Missions can effectively contain backlash by taking proactive measures such as building broad stakeholder support in advance of publishing a report, ensuring sustained dialogue with the authorities and giving them a fair chance to comment on draft reports and, in exceptional cases, releasing particularly sensitive reports in the name of the OHCHR only. In some cases, human rights components have also shown self-restraint and not published information in order not to do harm by exposing particular victims or undermining sensitive human rights reforms.

Why some peace operations report more often than others:

8. Few peace operations report routinely in line with policy requirements. Political factors may facilitate or complicate reporting to a certain extent. Some governments appreciate the value of impartial United Nations assessments of the human rights situation in helping them promote and achieve reforms. Others view any public scrutiny of their human rights record as a threat. Yet others may not like public reporting, but acquiesce to it to placate international allies. Specific demands for reporting from the Security Council, important Member States and the lead headquarters departments can help soften opposition to public reporting.



UNAMA SRSR Tadamichi Yamamoto and Human Rights Director Danielle Bell at launch of report.
Successive UNAMA SRSRs have personally launched major human rights reports. UN Photo/Fardin Waezi.

9. Internal dynamics of peace operations and the working methods of human rights components are just as important as political factors in determining how often a mission will report and what impact its reporting will have. Key factors that enable public reporting include:

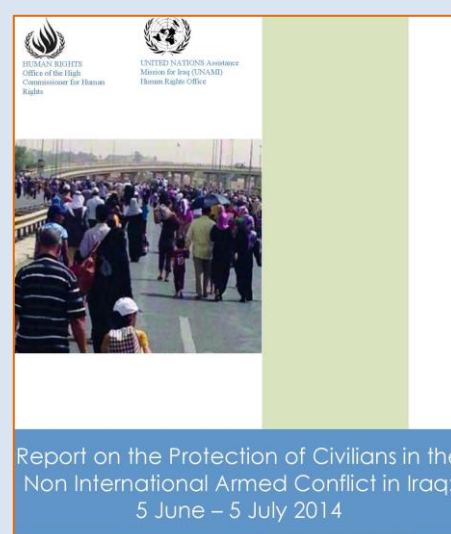
- The mission leadership supports and requires public reporting by human rights components, as one element of a broader effort of putting Human Rights Up Front. It stands by reports, even if they trigger criticism and backlash.
- The mission's human rights component focuses on a limited number of strategic priorities where positive impact can be achieved. These priorities are aligned with the mission's broader mandate, and impartially address concerns on all sides.
- The human rights component leadership prioritises public reporting and dedicates resources and talent to this task. Human rights officers rigorously adhere to OHCHR standard methodology on monitoring, documentation, sourcing, analysis and drafting.
- The mission secures support for reporting by consulting the government and other relevant stakeholders at various stages of the reporting cycle.
- The human rights component has established a reporting routine so that all relevant stakeholders expect and accept public reports as a normal element of the mission's work.

How to maximise the impact of public reporting:

10. **Move from reports to reporting:** Rapidly changing crises and conflicts call for more nimble and swift reporting by peace operations. Some missions still see public human rights reporting as the release of lengthy reports, issued once or twice a year and geared towards an expert readership. In an increasing number of peace operations, however, a modern paradigm of human rights reporting is taking shape that strategically blends comprehensive thematic reports, frequent periodic updates, flash reports on major incidents, shorter public statements and verified information promptly published through social media.

11. **Build support through consultation and a follow-up strategy:** Human rights components can build support for their reporting, and reduce resistance against it, by systematically consulting relevant stakeholders throughout the reporting cycle. Consultations with civil society and local communities on reporting priorities infuse a grassroots perspective, while engagement of political teams in the mission and at headquarters ensures that reporting takes into account broader political dynamics and sensitivities. Providing the host Government a chance to comment on forthcoming reports is not only a matter of procedural fairness, but is often the first step in sensitising authorities about identified concerns and possible solutions. Parallel to preparing their reports, peace operations need to formulate a strategy on how to systematically follow up on recommendations with the authorities and other stakeholders.

12. **Strengthen and invest in quantitative reporting:** Reports increasingly contain quantitative data, including to compare different actors and document trends over time. Quantitative data makes it harder to dismiss reports as biased or not based on evidence. Figures produced by the United Nations also enhance the news value of reports and increase media coverage. However, human rights components need considerable resources, stability in terms of staffing and geographic coverage, and methodological rigour to produce empirically sound figures. Quantitative data can complement, but must not replace solid qualitative analysis of violations and their root causes.



Faced with the rise of ISIS and related abuses, UNAMI quickly adapted its reporting approach and published protection of civilians reports at shorter intervals.

13. **Enhance remote monitoring and use of modern technology:** Access constraints are routinely invoked to challenge the credibility of human rights reports. As missions are deployed to increasingly insecure environments, human rights components use remote monitoring techniques to complement on-site visits and personal interviews with victims and witnesses. They have made advances in employing modern communication technology and social media mining for this purpose. However, the potential of other technologies such as satellite and drone imagery, crowdsourcing applications and image authentication still needs to be fully harnessed.

14. **Invest in the presentation of reports:** Little effort is invested in the presentation of reports, compared to the volume of labour that goes into the underlying monitoring and



analysis. Due to its length, dense wording and austere layout, the average report is unlikely to attract the attention of decision-makers, journalists or the broader public. United Nations reporting often fails to spark the outrage and empathy with human suffering that could give it extra momentum. Features like direct accounts from victims or audio-visual footage could enhance the emotional appeal of reports, but are rarely provided. In a number of cases, reports and statements are not made available in widely spoken local languages.

A 2016 UNAMA report, published jointly with UNICEF and OCHA, marks a departure from the austere layout used for most United Nations human rights reports.

15. **Develop and implement a public communication and dissemination strategy:** Reports will usually lead to a sustainable positive impact on the human rights situation only if civil society, international partners, United Nations entities

and local communities take note of them and lend strong support to their recommendations. Efforts to enhance the media coverage and dissemination of public reporting outputs have helped in reaching and mobilising target audiences. They need to be further systematised and better resourced. Reporting outputs should be complemented by accurate, easy-to-read summaries tailored to the informational needs of different target audiences such as diplomats or the broader public.

16. **Invest in creating national reporting capacity:** Peace operations will eventually draw down even if major human rights concerns persist. Human rights components need to invest the resources necessary to build and support national human rights monitoring and reporting capacities so that impartial reporting can continue even after the United Nations is no longer present. In this regard, it is crucial that the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) incorporate adequate human rights capacity to carry on capacity-building support after the mission leaves.

Public reporting and the future of peace operations:

17. This study invites a reflection on how to strengthen the public reporting and advocacy of peace operations generally; not just on human rights. If the size of peace operations and their armed capacity shrinks, missions will have to rely more on public advocacy. Impartial reporting by the United Nations is becoming also increasingly crucial to counter the growing use of strategic disinformation and propaganda by warring parties and their backers. Most importantly, to maintain popular support for peace operations, we must do more to reach beyond United Nations meeting rooms and touch the hearts and minds of a broader international public. As recognised by our Secretary-General, we must win back the trust of “we the peoples of the United Nations” from whom our Charter and Organisation ultimately derives its authority.



UNMISS military escort for human rights monitoring team in Jonglei, South Sudan. UN Photo / Martine Perret

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MONUSCO human rights officer visits prison in Bunia, South Kivu. UN Photo / Sylvain Liechti

I. Background and methodology

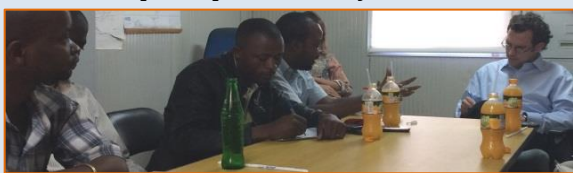
18. The United Nations Policy on Human Rights in Peace Operations and Political Missions recognises that public human rights reporting “is an essential function of peace operations and shall be routine”.¹ Reviews of the implementation of the Policy, however, have found that only some missions report regularly while others underutilise public reporting.²

19. Against this backdrop, OHCHR, DPKO-DFS and DPA decided to conduct a joint study on good practices, lessons learned and challenges of public human rights reporting by peacekeeping operations and special political missions (peace operations).³ The study seeks to provide guidance on how integrated peace operations with a human rights mandate can engage effectively in public reporting in politically sensitive contexts and challenging security environments. It also examines how public reporting can add value to the efforts of national authorities, civil society and the international community to protect human rights, and to the work of peace operations and the United Nations system as a whole.

20. The study primarily draws on case studies of the three peace operations that to date have the most extensive public reporting records: MONUSCO, UNAMA and UNAMI. The project team visited these missions and interviewed mission personnel, UNCTs as well as relevant stakeholders in the government, civil society and the diplomatic community. The authors also interviewed desk officers of DPA, DPKO and OHCHR for the concerned missions, other headquarters officials and current and former human rights directors of some other missions. Further interviews were carried out with diplomats, NGO representatives and academics. The report also draws on written inputs provided by missions,⁴ existing public reports, end of assignment reports prepared by senior staff, and academic literature. Further inputs were gathered through validation sessions involving relevant United Nations departments, agencies, funds and programmes and NGOs.



Afghan National Police provided feedback on UNAMA's reporting to the research team.
UN Photo/Jan Hessbruegge.



Congolese NGOs giving feedback. UN Photo/Sarah Copland.

21. The study focuses on publicly available reporting outputs only. It is not concerned with the United Nations' internal reporting or human rights reports that are shared only with

¹ OHCHR/DPA/DPKO-DFS, Policy on Human Rights in United Nations Peace Operations and Political Missions, para. 65.

² See OHCHR/DPA/DPKO-DFS, Joint Implementation Review on the Implementation of the Policy on Human Rights in United Nations Peace Operations and Special Political Missions (2015), para. 26. A second review, concluded in early 2017, found that the problem persists. See OHCHR/DPA/DPKO-DFS, Progress in the Implementation of the Policy on Human Rights in United Nations Peace Operations and Special Political Missions (2017), paras. 19-21.

³ The project was carried out by OHCHR Methodology, Education and Training Section, DPKO Knowledge Management and Guidance Section, and DPA Policy and Mediation Division.

⁴ In 2015 and 2016, all peace operations missions were invited to provide information on their implementation of the Policy on Human Rights in Peace Operations, including on progress, good practices and challenges in relation to the policy requirement of routinely public reporting on human rights. In 2017, an advance draft of this report was shared with all human rights components of peace operations for further input.

selected stakeholders such as the government, donors or the Security Council. The study employs a broad notion of public human rights reporting that includes public statements, press releases, updates and comprehensive human rights reports. While other mission components such as rule of law sections also issue public reports that help advance human rights-related issues, these reports were not subject of this study.

22. The study looks at the entire reporting cycle, spanning from the integration of reporting into the human rights strategy, to the gathering of relevant information, the preparation and publication of reports and subsequent advocacy and follow-up.

II. Value and impact of United Nations public human rights reporting

23. Public human rights reporting, undertaken with strategic focus, can be a powerful tool in advancing the mandate and objectives of peace operations. Essential for implementing the human rights mandate of peace operations, it can enhance the mission's overall profile and reputation and contribute to the broader political objectives of the mission and the United Nations as a whole. Oft-stated fears about backlash from public reports have rarely translated into tangible harm for the mission, its staff or third parties.

1. Constraints faced by other human rights actors that report publicly

24. In conflict and post-conflict contexts, United Nations peace operations are often the only actors that can compile and publish information on the human rights situation that is reliable, impartial and comprehensive. In many situations, there are no actors that have the capacity, impartiality and perceived legitimacy to replace quality reporting by the United Nations.

25. Although there are exceptions, fledgling national institutions and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on human rights often experience capacity constraints, including a lack of monitoring skills. Although they may be nominally independent, national human rights actors frequently face difficulties in withstanding political pressures and staying above the ethnic and religious cleavages that shape many countries where peace operations are deployed. Local NGOs interviewed for this study also highlighted that some issues, notably abuses committed by powerful security forces and armed groups, were too dangerous to cover, so that they relied on United Nations peace operations to report on them.

26. Similar security concerns were expressed by staff of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes with a protection mandate, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq. They considered that they could not publicly identify gross violations and



MONUSCO human rights investigators accompanied by military escort.
UN Photo/MONUSCO Joint Human Rights Office.

the responsible actors due to concerns for the security of their operations on the ground.

27. International human rights NGOs regularly report on countries where peace operations exist; in some cases more often than such missions. However, while international NGOs frequently maintain extensive networks of local contacts, they often lack a permanent local presence. Unlike missions, they do not have standing capacities such as aerial transport and force protection allowing them to securely and regularly access remote and dangerous areas for monitoring purposes.

28. Although effective in drawing international media attention, the reporting of international NGOs may be seen as less authoritative than United Nations reports at the host country level. Many officials and local interlocutors underscored that they considered United Nations human rights reporting to be particularly legitimate and harder to dismiss as driven by selectivity, foreign bias or a desire to generate publicity. The standing of United Nations reporting is further enhanced by the fact that its activities extend beyond advocacy and include capacity-building and other support activities.

“The human rights NGOs only come to demand change, but UNAMI is here to assist us.”

Iraqi official on why he attaches more importance to UNAMI’s reporting

2. Positive human rights impact

29. Measuring the precise impact of public human rights reporting is a perennial challenge. In crisis situations, much of United Nations human rights work involves preventing a further deterioration of the situation. Measuring this protection impact would require a conjectural future baseline that indicates how bad the situation would have become without human rights work. The contribution of United Nations human rights reporting to the protection of human rights is also difficult to measure since reports are not issued in a vacuum. Rather, impact is typically made in conjunction with advocacy, diplomatic and mediation efforts and capacity-building activities undertaken by a range of actors inside and outside the United Nations.

30. While it is therefore difficult to attribute particular improvements to specific reports, stakeholders interviewed for this study nevertheless concurred that United Nations public reporting has a positive impact, when carried out as part of a larger strategy. The public nature of reporting fulfils important functions in this regard. These extend beyond publicly identifying human rights violators and pressuring them into stopping their abuses.

Transparent and objective account of human rights concerns and responsibilities

31. United Nations public reporting can provide a transparent and objective account of human rights concerns and the underlying responsibilities. In deeply polarised crisis environments where reliable and impartial information is scarce, this can help dispel self-serving narratives and compel actors to acknowledge problems and take remedial action. For instance, UNAMA’s regular reporting on civilian casualties and the actors responsible for them has reduced the space for presenting distorted accounts of reality on all sides. The Taliban were compelled to abandon the narrative that the vast majority of casualties were attributable to



Former UNAMA Human Rights Director Georgette Gagnon meets provincial police chief. UN Photo/Fardin Waezi.

foreign forces and their government allies. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) had to acknowledge concerns related to their aerial operations and adapt their tactics. Within the Afghan government, UNAMA's public reporting and advocacy in follow-up helped raise so much concern about its contribution to civilian casualties that the government developed a comprehensive civilian casualty mitigation strategy for all its forces.

Empowering authorities committed to improving the human rights situation

32. Public reporting can empower actors within the government that are committed to improving the human rights situation, particularly if their positive actions are also publicly acknowledged in reports. MONUSCO's Joint Human Rights Office, for example, systematically



Congolese court pronounces verdict in war crimes case.
UN Photo/Barbara Matasconi.

shares credible information on new cases with the Congolese justice authorities through confidential reports. The authorities are aware that the same cases – and the government's response to them – will eventually be subject to public reporting. This provides the justice system with space to take on higher-ranked commanders who might otherwise be politically protected from prosecution. MONUSCO's public reporting also provides positive reinforcement by tracking and publicly commending the gradual increase in successful prosecutions. Reporting is part of a

larger strategy. MONUSCO also assists the justice authorities in conducting criminal investigations by providing technical expertise and logistical support, while other actors in and outside the United Nations assist the victims.

33. The public reporting process also provides civilian authorities and headquarters with information about human rights concerns that they might not receive through their internal channels. Senior military and police officials in Afghanistan indicated that UNAMA information on civilian casualty incidents allows them to uncover false casualty assessments that are sent up their own chain of command. An Afghan National Security Council (NSC) official explained that UNAMA's reporting on the torture of conflict-related detainees has helped the NSC's oversight role by providing it with valuable information on what "our security services are really up to."

Broadening human rights advocacy efforts

34. Public reporting can broaden and amplify human rights advocacy efforts, because it creates a platform for others to take up human rights concerns and equips them with the necessary information and analysis. For example, diplomats in Iraq highlighted that UNAMI's reporting on the lack of due process in death penalty cases provided them with an opening to demarche the government. They appreciated that reports provided a level of precision on the underlying legislative challenges that could not be obtained from media reports or other sources. They also highlighted that their own missions lacked the capacity to carry out the legal analysis that UNAMI's reporting provided.

35. Public reporting can be particularly effective if it is taken up by initiatives that attach tangible consequences to violations such as accountability processes, sanctions or the review of support on human rights due diligence grounds. An example is MONUSCO's reporting on a

notorious police operation,⁵ which led the U.S Government to impose financial sanctions on Kinshasa's police chief. The sanctions reportedly resulted in other Congolese police commanders becoming more receptive to United Nations advice on human rights-compliant policing due to concern about being identified in future reports that would trigger sanctions.

36. The prospect of prosecution by international tribunals also enhances the impact of reporting. A Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) interviewed for this study recounted how his interlocutors became much more attentive to the SRSG's personal follow-up advocacy on violations reported by the mission's human rights component, once the SRSG mentioned the link to ongoing investigations of the International Criminal Court. Interlocutors also pointed out that public reporting on the implementation of the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP), including on the nature of United Nations support assessed and the kinds of mitigation measures adopted, could be useful to advance implementation of that Policy while also leveraging it to improve the human rights situation.

Engaging armed groups

37. Armed groups are responsible for some of the most serious human rights abuses in many mission settings. While directly engaging them on issues such as child recruitment has been possible in some settings, physical access, security and political constraints often make it difficult for peace operations to establish a direct dialogue with armed groups. Public reporting can be an effective tool to engage armed groups. Groups that are focused on their post-conflict political future or rely on the backing of local populations, third states or diaspora groups are considered especially susceptible to changing their behaviour in response to public reporting.

38. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the *Mouvement du 23 Mars* (M23) and *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR) maintained public relations operations, which regularly issued communiques in reaction to United Nations reports of their human rights abuses. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission (MINUSCA) has effectively used public statements, disseminated through radio broadcasts, to communicate messages to armed groups. In Afghanistan, UNAMA's persistent reporting on civilian casualties caused the Taliban to make public commitments on the protection of civilians and, to some extent, change their behaviour. In Iraq, pro-government militia commanders who eye a post-ISIS political future have also proven to be sensitive to public reporting about their abuses.



In response to UNAMA's reports, the Taliban started issuing their own civilian casualty reports. Screenshot from Taliban-affiliated website.

Good practice example: Responsible public reporting to avoid feeding terrorist propaganda
 ISIS appears impervious to public reporting pressure, banking instead on the terrorising effect of publicising its atrocities. UNAMI does not provide links to ISIS propaganda videos showing particular violations, despite using such videos for corroboration. UNAMI reports describe ISIS atrocities in broad terms only, to avoid feeding into ISIS' objective of maximising terror.

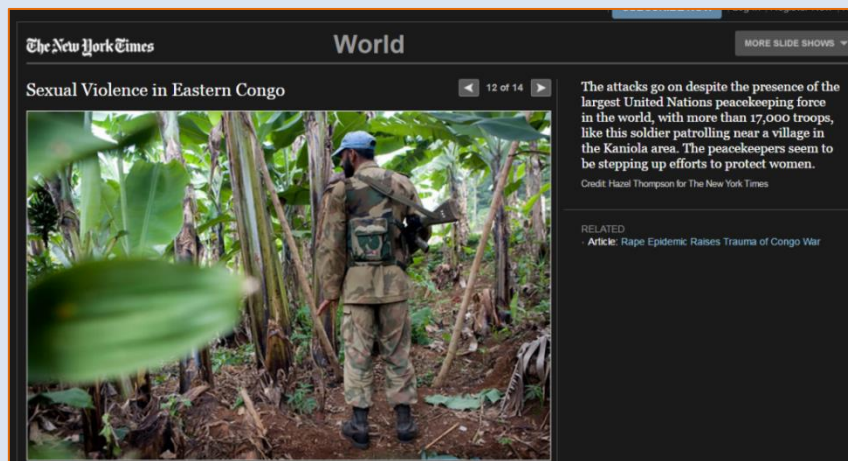
⁵ See http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/CD/LikofiReportOctober2014_en.pdf.

3. Positive impact for the mission and United Nations as a whole

39. Public reporting is sometimes seen as an unavoidable headache for a peace operation – important to advance the work of the human rights component, but a potential problem for the rest of the mission. This perspective does not take into account that public human rights reporting can advance the broader objectives of the mission and the United Nations as a whole.

Enhanced visibility and standing of the mission

40. Public reporting enhances the visibility of a mission. UNAMA officials at all levels acknowledged that the Human Rights Unit's reporting on protection of civilians had become the calling card of the mission in view of the national and international attention it draws. The public outcry generated by reporting from MONUSCO and its predecessor MONUC on sexual violence and other atrocities in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo helped sustain Security Council support for one of the United Nations' largest missions despite pressure to cut costs and the host government's demands for a drawdown.



New York Times photo series on sexual violence in Eastern Congo. Screenshot of NYtimes.com of 6 October 2007.

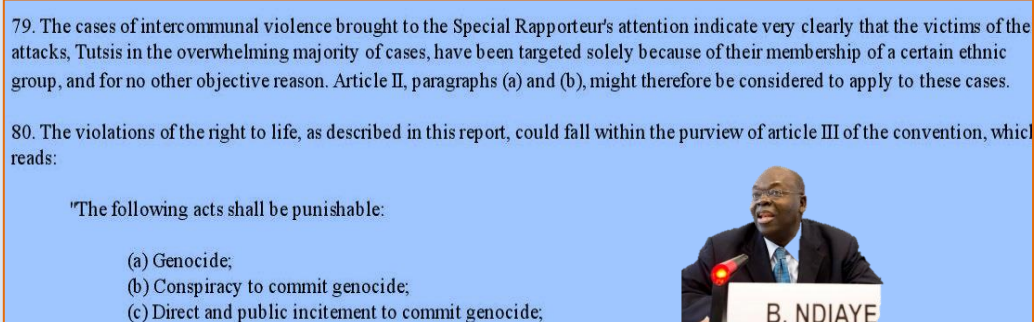
41. Public human rights reporting that documents concerns on all sides also enhances the perceived impartiality of the peace operation and augments its capacity to engage with actors on all sides, including armed groups. Various interlocutors in and outside UNAMA noted that the mission's positioning as an impartial actor was bolstered once its reporting also started to address concerns related to the conduct of hostilities by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and abuses against conflict-related detainees committed by Afghan security forces. It is worth noting that the Taliban have published statements that comment favourably on UNAMA's reporting on the torture of alleged insurgents in places of detention.

42. Reporting on abuses by non-state armed actors can enhance relations with the government because it helps reassure the authorities that the mission's overall approach is impartial and driven by a genuine desire to help protect the population. For example, UNAMI's ability to document human rights abuses in ISIS-held areas and its extensive public reporting on the group have reportedly improved the mission's standing as an honest and impartial interlocutor for the government.

43. Credible reporting can also boost the mission's legitimacy in the eyes of the local population and thereby enhance its political space, while a failure to speak out about serious abuses can undermine its local standing.

Keeping an ear to the ground and providing early warning

44. Public human rights reporting provides valuable information derived from close contact with the local population and the observation of events on the ground. UNAMA and UNAMI's reporting on civilian casualties provide insights on conflict dynamics and the situation in areas controlled by armed groups. Because reports are public, these insights not only benefit the mission but are also of use to others, including Member States. Diplomats posted to Afghanistan indicated that UNAMA's public human rights reports provided them with information relevant for their political and development work, which they could not obtain due to security-related movement restrictions and a reduced international presence outside Kabul. In Iraq, diplomats underscored that it was important for reports to be public so that they could be referenced in briefings to parliament and their governments' own public human rights reporting.



A report of the Special Rapporteur on Summary Executions Bacre Ndiaye, issued in August 1993, warned about genocide in Rwanda. UN Photo / Jean Marc Ferre.

45. The early warning potential of United Nations public human rights reporting can be traced back to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Summary Executions who warned about the risk of genocide in Rwanda ten months before it happened.⁶ Yet, a quarter century later such early warning potential remains largely untapped and underused, even though the capacity of peace operations to monitor developments on the ground has substantially grown. Public reports reveal relevant early warning information. For example, MONUSCO's monthly reporting on increasing violations of democratic space provided a clear indication of the government's determination to clamp down on opposition, media and civil society and secure a delay of the presidential elections that were meant to take place in 2016. UNAMI human rights reports published before the rise of ISIS in 2014 showed stark increases in levels of sectarian violence and discrimination that could have warned that a renewed insurgency based on sectarian extremism could gain momentum quickly.

46. The reporting of early warning signs has not necessarily resulted in the international community taking early action. Larger political factors clearly play a role in whether appropriate action is taken or not. However, the way relevant information is reported may be a contributing factor. United Nations human rights reporting is often weak in translating findings on tell-tale indicators into solid analysis and a clear early warning about an emerging crisis that may lead to conflict or atrocities. Standardised use of early warning analytical frameworks (along with a more effective [presentation](#) of reports) could help draw attention to reports that should prompt early action. However, existing tools such as the United Nations Framework of

⁶ <http://www.preventgenocide.org/prevent/UNdocs/ndiaye1993.htm>

Analysis for Atrocity Crimes⁷ do not seem to be used in mission reports. Recently, OHCHR also launched an analytical tool to support early warning about human rights violations, including those that can lead to conflict.

Assisting good offices initiatives of the mission leadership

47. Public reporting can play a role in enhancing space for good offices efforts of the mission leadership. It can help advance mediation efforts by providing an impartial account of the facts underlying disputed events. This was aptly demonstrated by a 2016 UNAMA report:⁸ Following a bombing of a political gathering attended by the Hazara ethnic minority group in July 2016, the group's political leaders alleged that elements in the Government security forces had staged the attack. UNAMA's human rights investigation established that the government was not involved and ISIS was likely responsible (consistent with ISIS' own claim of responsibility). In a carefully sequenced process, the report's findings were first presented confidentially to relevant Hazara leaders and the Government, and then published. The report helped defuse tensions that could have been highly destabilising.



UNAMA meeting with Hazara community following July 2016 bombing. UNAMA Photo.

48. In Libya, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya has published a monthly "Human Rights Report on Civilian Casualties". The mission leadership noted that these monthly notes play a positive role in containing flare-ups of violence by putting those responsible on notice that their actions are recorded.

49. In some instances, public reporting can also help in establishing channels of communication with armed groups that can then also be used for political talks. Notably, UNAMA's public reporting on civilian casualties paved the way for engaging in a protection dialogue with the Taliban on which broader dialogues on political matters could be built.

Facilitating the work of political and rule of law components

50. Public human rights reporting can facilitate the work of the political team. For example, MONUSCO's political affairs officials expressed appreciation that the MONUSCO Joint Human Rights Office investigated and reported on violations related to the democratic space, including by publishing monthly figures. They acknowledged that their own team would not have the function, expertise or capacity to carry out the necessary monitoring and documentation work. The quantitative data and analysis placed in the public domain by the human rights component has made it easier for the political team to substantiate concerns about the lack of an environment conducive to peaceful and credible elections in its own dialogue with the authorities.

⁷ See United Nations, Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes (2014), http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/framework%20of%20analysis%20for%20atrocity%20crimes_en.pdf.

⁸ See https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/23_july_suicide_attack_against_peaceful_demonstration_-_18_oct_2016.pdf.

51. It was also highlighted that public human rights reporting can assist the work of rule of law/justice and corrections sections by creating momentum to scale up justice reform efforts. This makes it even more important to ensure good cooperation, including by providing rule of law components with the opportunity to feed their technical expertise into human rights reports.



UNSMIL visiting Tobruk Prison. UN Photo/Kavanagh.

Supporting humanitarian and development work

52. Public reports issued by the human rights component can support appeals for humanitarian and development funding by providing credible information and impartial analysis. UNAMA's reporting on increasing civilian casualties caused by explosive remnants of war, for instance, was a key factor in the decision to augment United Nations Common Humanitarian Fund allocations for awareness-raising campaigns on such hazards. Civilian casualty figures published by peace operations have also been used to forecast humanitarian needs such as medical supplies. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, humanitarian and development actors have reflected MONUSCO's alarming reports about sexual violence in their funding appeals. They underscored that these reports were helpful for making their case for continued funding, not least since the overall donor interest in the country was waning.

53. Public reporting can generate momentum to tackle seemingly intractable humanitarian issues. In Iraq, the humanitarian protection dialogue with the Government during its offensive to retake cities from ISIS was bolstered by public statements from the High Commissioner for Human Rights based on UNAMI's information. In Afghanistan, forces of the United States of America (U.S.) and other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) members were unresponsive to humanitarian demands that they clear unexploded ordinances from abandoned military firing ranges. UNAMA started reporting on casualties resulting from this failure, especially among children. This created a large public echo resulting in the U.S. funding relevant clearance programmes at a cost of 250 million USD.


4. Limited political backlash and reprisals

54. Depending on the context and the host government's attitude towards the deployment of the mission, peace operations have at times experienced political backlash and criticism as a result of their actions, statements or simply their mere presence. This has manifested itself in various forms, including denunciation, diplomatic demarches, suspension of cooperation, denial of visas to human rights and protection officers and threats to staff. As a result mission leaders often hold genuine concerns that public reporting in particular may trigger severe political backlash. However, this study found that public human rights reporting itself rarely leads to tangible negative consequences. The three missions featured in the case studies have each reported on a range of politically sensitive topics for more than a decade. Their host governments have publicly criticised many reports in strong terms. Yet, this has not resulted in any sustained long-term disruption of the relationship between these missions and the host government or other governments criticised by reports. More immediate ramifications, such as

threats to staff, can be addressed through a coordinated response involving the mission leadership, as detailed below.

55. Several interlocutors noted that in the long term a government's reliance on good cooperation with the mission and the United Nations as a whole may help override any misgivings about a particular report – although in some cases the degree of hostility toward the United Nations and its protection work generally is such that the value of human rights activities including public reporting is not fully appreciated by the host authorities.

56. Transparency of the publication process was flagged as important to contain backlash. Governments were most likely to react forcefully when they were blindsided or ambushed by reports or public statements and given no reasonable opportunity to provide [comments](#). Interlocutors underscored the importance of the mission leadership standing by reports when they trigger criticism. This not only protects human rights components, but the integrity of the entire mission.



UN Photo/Manuel Elias

***“It is important to stand by the principles at all times.
You may show flexibility on the precise choice of words. But if you
compromise on the substance of your public human rights reports and
statements, you are finished.”***

Tadamichi Yamamoto,
Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan

Expulsion of human rights staff

57. In the rare instances where governments go beyond verbal criticism in response to reports, individual human rights staff are often the target. On several occasions, human rights officers have been expelled or denied visas in response to a critical report. In 2014, for instance, MONUSCO's human rights chief was declared *persona non grata* following a public report on police abuses.⁹ This has not caused MONUSCO to change its regular reporting practice.

Good practice example: Coordinated response to expulsion of human rights staff

After the MONUSCO Human Rights Director was declared *persona non grata*, the United Nations' response was strong and concerted. The SRSB advocated directly with the government to reverse the decision. When this failed, the mission publicly denounced the decision. The Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other senior officials also issued strong statements, triggering further demarches by states and NGOs. While these efforts did not result in the government reversing the decision, no human rights staff has since been expelled.

⁹ See http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/CD/LikofiReportOctober2014_en.pdf.

58. Heads of human rights components consistently highlighted the importance of receiving support from the mission leadership when human rights staff are threatened with expulsion or face other intimidation, in line also with the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front Initiative. Such support should not stop in situations if staff end up being expelled.



Threats to physical security

59. In some situations, reporting may have security implications, because it angers officials and commanders on whose cooperation the mission relies on for security. UNAMA has faced situations in which powerful local officials reacted to reports criticising their units by temporarily suspending cooperation on security matters. Relations were restored relatively quickly, however, thanks to interventions at various levels and the government's overriding political interest in ensuring the security of the United Nations.

60. Human rights components have reported cases in which state officials directly threatened staff members. National staff are the most vulnerable targets, but even senior human rights officers may face threats. In one case, after a mission publicly reported human rights violations in one province, the head of the provincial human rights field team was called to the local branch of the national security agency and threatened with a beating if the human rights component continued to "spread lies." The head of another mission's human rights component received death threats by telephone after the human rights component published a report detailing serious violations committed by the host country's security forces. In meetings with the government, the SRSG supported the human rights chief and rejected government demands to repatriate him. The chief was also assigned an armoured car and offered close protection.

Reporting as a risk and protection factor for third parties

61. Based on the information obtained for this study, missions' public reporting generally does not seem to result in reprisals against third parties. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes interviewed for the case studies have not reported any collective reprisals, even though some United Nations entities provide information used in reports on a confidential basis. The only situation found based on the case studies concerned Government-staged demonstrations that disrupted humanitarian operations in reaction to a human rights-related report issued by another United Nations agency.

62. As long as reports do not include details exposing them as sources, NGOs considered that United Nations reporting did not increase the risk of reprisals and intimidation that they already face in post-conflict settings. To the contrary, NGOs highlighted that a mission's failure to publicly report might place them more at risk if they end up being alone in speaking out about a sensitive issue.

"If we are reporting a major violation and UNAMI does not, we are seen as 'singing out of tune with the choir'. That can be very dangerous for us."

Iraqi human rights defender



Car bomb in Baghdad. UNAMI Photo.

III. Why some missions report more routinely than others

63. Few missions report routinely. United Nations policy requires human rights component to issue two periodic reports per year and at least one thematic report.¹⁰ However, between 2014 and 2016, missions with a human rights mandate and component, have on average issued 1.3 fully-fledged reports per year.¹¹ Moreover, the three missions profiled in the present study accounted for more than half of the total reporting output.

64. Several factors explain why some missions report more routinely than others. Larger political dynamics play a role but are only part of the explanation. Many other important factors are entirely within the control of the mission and its human rights component.

1. Attitude of host country and third state backers

65. The attitude of the host country facilitates or complicates public reporting. In places such as present-day Afghanistan, officials at the highest level of government seem to embrace the idea that impartial public reporting can aid their efforts to create human rights compliant governance structures. Meanwhile, other states see any scrutiny of their human rights record as a serious threat to their political agenda and vehemently oppose public reporting.

66. In some situations, the host country's support to public reporting seems to be linked to its reliance on the backing of states that are supportive of the mission's human rights work. Interlocutors in Iraq, for instance, pointed out that the host government's reliance on Western security support made it difficult for the authorities to effectively oppose public reporting.

67. Host country attitudes are not static. As discussed below, there are various ways, missions can affect them, notably by properly [consulting authorities](#) on drafts, building a [reporting routine](#), and ensuring [impartial reporting](#) on violations on all sides of a conflict.

2. Mission leadership support

68. Whether the mission leadership supports or opposes public human rights reporting is a key factor in determining how regularly and effectively a mission reports. Support for public reporting may take different forms. In MONUSCO, mission leadership has provided the Joint Human Rights Office a considerable measure of independence and separate public profile. In other missions, SRSGs have taken public ownership of major reports. In UNAMA, successive SRSGs have presented reports at press conferences and other launch events. They also conducted advocacy with high-level authorities on the findings and recommendations of reports. MINUSCA SRSG and DSRSG (P) made it a point to actively participate in the launch of their mission's first public human rights report. UNSMIL's SRSG made highly publicised visits to detention centres for migrants before and after the mission's human rights component published its report on the treatment of migrants in Libya.

¹⁰ Policy Directive - Public Reporting by Human Rights Components of United Nations Peace Operations (2008), para. D.2.1. In addition, ad hoc reports should be prepared where the situation warrants according to the Policy Directive.

¹¹ The 14 peacekeeping missions and special political missions that have a human rights mandate and a human rights component issued a total of 17 comprehensive reports in 2014, 18 in 2015 and 19 in 2016.



UNSMIL SRSR Martin Kobler visits migrant detention centre. UNSMIL Photo/Abel Kavanagh.

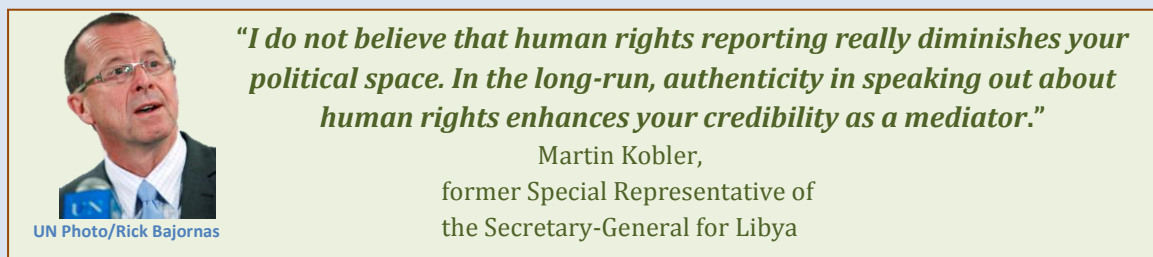
69. It makes a big difference for public reporting if mission leaders are prepared to make human rights a priority and see the strategic value of public reporting. In this respect, the importance of emphasising public human rights reporting in the induction, training and assessment of mission leaders was highlighted.

70. It is equally important for heads of human rights components to build a relationship of trust with the mission leadership. They should keep the mission leadership informed about planned reports and consult early about potential political implications. Human rights chiefs can also build trust by fully explaining the methodology to rigorously source and validate findings, and showing how reporting contributes to a broader strategy that generates positive impact. Mission leaders also highlighted the importance of not blindsiding the government and always giving it the opportunity to [comment](#) on reports before they are released.

71. Under certain circumstances, the mission leadership has assessed that the authorisation to release public reports in the mission's name should not be granted. Situations were relayed where SRSRs either refused to permit the release of a report or delayed release for a variety of reasons resulting in the report becoming obsolete. In some situations, concerns about the accuracy and quality of a report were raised. In other situations, the leadership was seriously concerned about political implications of publishing sensitive information. One mission delayed the release of a report detailing abuses by government forces and armed groups for almost a year based on the mission leadership's assessment and concern that the report could destabilise a government of national unity. In another situation, the mission leadership decided not to publicly report on certain abuses that might have put an already fragile government in an even more precarious political situation. Given that in both contexts the reports were not released at the moment considered too sensitive, it is impossible to say with any certainty whether the fears were justified and that releasing the report would have led to the anticipated negative outcomes.

72. Tensions inherent in integrated missions that combine human rights, good offices work and military functions can affect mission leadership support for public reporting. Where the mission leadership plays a pronounced role in mediation efforts, it may be inclined to hold back public reporting that accuses key interlocutors of violations out of concern that it might impact

their willingness to remain in peace talks or their attitude towards the mediator. Yet, the view was also expressed that public reporting can positively reinforce the standing of the mediator.



73. For peacekeeping missions with a protection of civilians mandate, any report that documents widespread and serious violations raises questions about whether the mission could have intervened and prevented the violations in accordance with its mandate and capacity. Tensions may also arise where local forces violated human rights in operations that received direct support from a peace operation. For instance, a MONUSCO report on mass rapes by Congolese soldiers showed that the Congolese units in question had received food rations from MONUSCO, which were provided with the intention of ensuring that the army was supplied and would not prey on local populations.¹² The events were investigated immediately after they took place and a report was prepared, but it was published only six months later due to resistance within the mission. The report helped advance the implementation of conditionality requirements for MONUSCO support required by the Security Council.

Good practice examples: Do no harm with reporting

While United Nations policy seeks to foster public reporting, there may be occasions where a mission will not publicly report documented facts, consistent with the human rights principle of not causing harm to victims or broader human rights reform efforts.

- One mission did not report on the establishment of a government committee dedicated to addressing rights concerns of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual persons so as not to trigger a backlash from reactionary segments of society against the fledgling institution.
- Another mission did not publicly report on documented patterns of sexual harassment of female police officers by their male colleagues, because this would have stigmatised police women, created security risks for them and created yet another obstacle to women participating in public functions. Instead, detailed reports were shared confidentially with the Government prompting it to take steps to address the issue.

3. Security Council mandate and headquarters support

74. Some missions have a specific reference in their mandate to publicly report on human rights. For other peace operations, the reporting requirement is an inherent aspect of the mission's human rights mandate, without being expressly mentioned. For instance, UNAMI's human rights mandate does not explicitly mention public reporting. This has caused the Government of Iraq to occasionally query whether UNAMI is mandated to issue reports. In

¹² See http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/CD/UNJHROReportMassRapesBushani_en.pdf.

practice, however, the Government does not seriously challenge UNAMI's reporting as such in view of the mission's longstanding public reporting routine.

Useful signals of support

75. While the absence of an explicit reference to public reporting in a mission's human rights mandate does not preclude reporting, interlocutors generally considered that such a reference is helpful when encountering opposition to reporting. Other political signals of support from member states, in particular Security Council members, were considered just as important. One head of human rights component, for instance, recounted that questions raised by several Security Council members about a gap in public reporting proved decisive in getting a particularly sensitive human rights report released.



Security Council extends MONUSCO mandate. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

76. Demands from senior officials in DPKO and DPA for public reporting have also proved useful in spurring the preparation and release of more reports. Interventions from these lead departments were considered to carry more weight with the mission leadership than calls for more reporting from OHCHR. Some heads of human rights components expressed concern that OHCHR weighing in on reporting may be detrimental to their relationship with the mission leadership. Some interlocutors suggested the systematic inclusion of public reporting targets into the terms of reference, compacts and performance assessments of mission leaders and heads of human rights components.

Clearance as an obstacle

77. In accordance with United Nations policy, missions' human rights reports are cleared by the Head of Mission and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.¹³ In the clearance process, the relevant lead department (DPA or DPKO) is also routinely consulted.

78. To some extent, headquarters seems to inadvertently discourage reporting by imposing overly complicated clearance procedures. Consistent feedback described clearance procedures as cumbersome, slow and ineffective, particularly on the part of OHCHR. One interviewee bluntly stated that *"clearance is such a nightmare that you think twice if you really want to publish more reports than necessary."*

79. Human rights components expressed frustration about geographic desks in OHCHR relaying multiple sets of comments that at times pointed in different directions on the same issues. Some heads of components also considered that headquarters colleagues unacquainted with the situation on the ground were second-guessing their experienced judgment or made non-consequential comments. At headquarters, concern was expressed that some human rights components were submitting draft reports for clearance that were far from publishable, which made their speedy clearance impossible.

¹³ OHCHR/DPA/DPKO-DFS Policy on Public Reporting by Human Rights Components of United Nations Peace Operations, Annex 1: Clearance Procedures.

Good practice example: Proactive role of the geographic section in the clearance process

Clearance processes are faster and more effective if the relevant OHCHR section head and desk officer take a proactive role. They should provide all involved with an early heads up about forthcoming reports and establish clear timelines for all steps of the process. Following their own review of the document, some desk officers have organised the consultation of relevant headquarters sections using document sharing applications that allow multiple users to comment simultaneously on the same draft report. This speeds up the consultation process and helps consistency as different reviewers can see the comments others have already made. At the end of the process, the geographic section should assume responsibility for consolidating all comments into a coherent set of comments.

4. Strategic priorities of the human rights component

80. Missions report more regularly and effectively if they focus on a limited number of strategic priorities that build on the Security Council mandate, even if that means their work does not cover all human rights concerns in a given situation.¹⁴ UNAMI's reporting has primarily focused on gross violations of civil and political rights. UNAMA has made human rights violations related to the ongoing conflict and women's rights the priority of its work, focusing in particular on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. MONUSCO has a long-standing focus on impunity, conflict-related sexual violence, the protection of civilians and violations related to democratic space. In all three missions studied, the strategic priorities selected align with the mission's broader focus and mandate, which makes reporting on them more acceptable to the mission leadership and governmental authorities.

It is better to focus on a few issues than spreading one's capacity too thin and not contribute to anything."

Francesco Motta, former
UNAMI Human Rights Director

Foresight

81. Human rights components that strategize successfully consider the current situation while also anticipating future challenges. Moreover, they are prepared to adjust reporting strategies as situations evolve. From January 2015, building on previous work, MONUSCO intensified its tracking and regular reporting of violations to the democratic space, anticipating that the government would intensify political repression in an effort to delay the presidential elections that were meant to take place at the end of 2016. Prior to the rise of ISIS in 2014, UNAMI's Human Rights Office ensured that it maintained a network of contacts in areas where a renewed insurgency was likely to emerge. When ISIS took control of large parts of Iraq, the human rights component was in a position to quickly shift to protection of civilians reporting that covered abuses committed by all parties to the conflict, including in ISIS controlled areas.

Impartial focus

82. Reporting will be perceived as impartial and meet greater acceptance if the selection of priorities for human rights work ensures that the major concerns on all sides of the conflict or political divide are captured. For example, MONUSCO's monthly notes on the human rights situation focus on the protection of civilians, which regularly features armed groups among the perpetrators. They also emphasise violations linked to democratic space that are more likely to involve government actors. UNAMA reports on the politically sensitive issue of security forces

¹⁴ For guidance on how to identify priorities, see OHCHR, Manual on Human Rights Monitoring, Chapter 8, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Chapter08-44pp.pdf>.

torturing alleged insurgents in detention. The mission also reports on civilian casualties, which are caused mainly by anti-government armed groups, and related human rights abuses committed by these groups.



MINUSMA Human Rights Officer meets leaders of armed group after their release from prison. UN Photo/Blagoje Grujic.

Guidance

83. Establishing clear strategic priorities that build on the Security Council mandate focuses the work of human rights officers in the field offices. It ensures that the human rights component's monitoring work as a whole generates a critical mass of raw information on a particular issue from which broader trends can be discerned. In contrast, human rights components will find it difficult to issue public reports if they allow their field offices to gather information based on self-selected priorities and then try to distil reportable material from a disparate body of information received.

Good practice example: Proactive guidance to the field on monitoring priorities

The UNAMA Human Rights Unit headquarters provides human rights field teams with detailed guidance on planned reports, their objectives and timelines, and the investigations and interviews each field team is expected to carry out. Further guidance is provided on methodology. For UNAMA's detention monitoring, for instance, field teams receive guidelines on how to interview detainees and what core information to obtain from each interview. They are advised about which categories of officials and other sources should be interviewed, with priority questions indicated for different types of sources. Detailed written guidance helps to ensure a consistent monitoring approach in spite of the significant staff turnover typical for hardship postings. In addition, it provides a basis for continuous reflection and fine tuning of methodology.

Realistic chance of impact

84. Issues should be prioritised based on whether progress or at least mitigation can be realistically achieved with the necessary [follow-up](#). For instance, rather than devoting equal attention to the entire range of discrimination faced by Afghan women, UNAMA's reporting on women's rights has focused strongly on violence against women as a viable entry point for a discussion of broader gender equality concerns. MONUSCO's reporting has focused on impunity as a continuing root cause underlying the endemic violations committed by state security forces.

At the same time, MONUSCO has prioritised support to Congolese justice authorities to address impunity. Although impunity remains a major concern, advances have been achieved in ensuring the investigation and prosecution of Congolese military commanders and armed group leaders involved in serious violations.

85. Selecting reporting priorities based on a realistic chance of achieving progress helps manage the expectations that are generated by public reporting. Local civil society groups often pin their hope on the United Nations and expect that its reporting on a particular issue will generate positive change. Where such change does not happen, civil society will be less willing to engage with human rights components and feed into their monitoring work. Reporting without outcome also affects the morale of human rights field staff to carry on the arduous monitoring work on which reports are based.

5. Rigorous information collection, sourcing and recording methodology

86. Reporting can only be sustained if the human rights component generates and retains quality information. Missions that report routinely emphasise rigorous compliance with OHCHR's standard monitoring methodology that builds

“Reporting is like cooking soup. You cannot cook a decent soup with rotten ingredients. Thorough documentation and verification is central for credible reporting”

Jose Maria Aranaz,
Director, MONUSCO Joint Human Rights Office

on the documentation of individual cases through credible first-hand witness accounts and other reliable sources. Apart from instructing their own staff to comply with relevant requirements, these missions also make a point of continuously communicating their methodology to government authorities and other stakeholders. This helps pre-empt questions of how credible information can be obtained in crisis environments where facts are difficult to find and rumours abound.

87. It is crucial to diligently and systematically record the raw data that human rights components obtain, in a format that facilitates analysis. For instance, UNAMA records protection of civilians-related incidents in a database that can generate statistics disaggregated by victim-type, time and place of incident, responsible actor, tactics used, target, and number of casualties. This allows UNAMA to discern trends and include comprehensive [quantitative data](#) in its public reports. UNAMA also ensures quality control by ensuring that all recorded incidents are reviewed twice, at the level of the human rights field office and at mission headquarters.

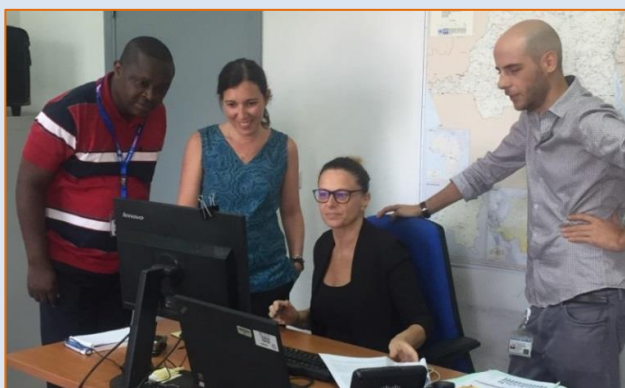
88. United Nations Policy requires all components to enter data generated by human rights monitoring and investigation into the OHCHR Human Rights Case Database or a comparable OHCHR-approved database.¹⁵ Nevertheless, many human rights components are not properly using the OHCHR Database and some do not use any database. This results in a lack of institutional memory, which is compounded by rapid staff turnover in mission settings. Using other storage platforms such as shared drives also raises serious questions about data security and witness protection.

¹⁵ OHCHR/DPA/DPKO/DFS, Policy on Human Rights in United Nations Peace Operations and Political Missions (2011), para. 57.

6. Investing in reporting

89. Quality reporting requires investment. Human rights components need to invest in reporting capacity and recruit staff with the necessary skill sets. Continuous training can help close existing capacity gaps but only to some extent. Heads of components must also invest personal goodwill and political capital to push reporting forward when it meets resistance in or outside the mission.

90. A key reason why UNAMA has a successful reporting programme is that successive chiefs of UNAMA's Human Rights Unit have forcefully defended public reporting as a central element of the Unit's strategy and focused the component's attention on it. They have recruited staff with the analytical and drafting skills to generate solid reports and placed them in positions to lead thematic priority areas. The MONUSCO Joint Human Rights Office has invested considerable resources in a dedicated reporting unit, headed by an experienced human rights officer with strong drafting and analytical skills. The reporting team also integrates specialised investigators, who can be rapidly deployed to situations of concern and assist human rights field teams in generating incident reports quickly.



MONUSCO Human rights reporting and investigation team.
UN Photo / Barbara Matasconi.

91. In contrast, some human rights components have struggled with their reporting due to problems in recruiting and retaining staff who can conceptualise reports based on the analysis of large amounts of information and draft at a publishable level. Generic profiles for human rights officers and the staff selection criteria to ensure mandatory mobility do not necessarily emphasise the skills that reporting officers need to have.

Good practice: Persistence in reporting

Some missions dedicate a single report to a particular issue before moving on to the next item. However, experience shows that persistent and repeated reporting on the same issue is more likely to have an impact. Regular reporting allows the tracking of trends and the documentation of progress and setbacks. Authorities are put on notice that their actions regarding the issue of concern will continue to be the subject of continuous international public attention resulting either in further criticism or commendation for positive action. Persistent reporting requires careful planning on the part of the human rights component and its reporting team, including a realistic appraisal resources can be dedicated to monitoring a given issue on a sustainable basis.

7. Building support through broad and systematic consultation

92. Human rights components can build support for their reporting and reduce resistance to such reporting by regularly consulting relevant stakeholders throughout the reporting cycle.

Local consultations

93. Human rights components should consult their field staff, civil society, and local communities to make sure that reporting priorities are informed by local perceptions. For instance, UNAMA made the documentation of civilian casualties a priority after extensive consultations by its former director with field offices, local communities and Afghan civil

society. All MONUSCO human rights reports commence with a concept note that is first shared with field offices for their input.

94. Local civil society groups interviewed for this study expressed a desire to be more closely involved in the reporting process. Some suggested that they should be given the opportunity to comment on reports, although most understood that such access may undermine the integrity and perceived impartiality of United Nations reporting. More reasonable proposals centred on the organisation of consultations, in which NGOs and local communities could provide input to the formulation of recommendations.



UNAMA consulting women on the impact of conflict in Laghman, Afghanistan. UN Photo / UNAMA.

Consultation within the United Nations

95. In addition to OHCHR, human rights components should routinely consult the political teams in the mission and headquarters. This is not consistently the case. While heads of human rights components usually discuss their reporting ideas with the mission leadership, early consultations with mission's political sections and desks at DPA or DPKO are not standard. This appears to result from a concern that political actors will try to prevent reporting on politically sensitive matters. Yet, such consultations could be an opportune moment to jointly strategize on the ways in which human rights reporting can advance broader mission objectives, while also taking into account potential sensitivities. A lack of early consultation on the concept may also result in political sections raising conceptual concerns at a late stage of the drafting process, when it is far more difficult and time consuming to address such concerns.

96. For some missions, it was also flagged that consultations on draft reports between human rights and rule of law/justice and corrections sections are not as automatic as should be expected given that both types of components work on overlapping issues and have mutually reinforcing areas of expertise to offer one another.

97. Human rights components should consistently consult specialised mission components and United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes, where reports touch on their mandates, regardless of whether such entities report publicly themselves. United Nations partners can provide valuable technical expertise and also help with the roll-out and follow-up. For instance, UNSMIL built its 2016 report on the human rights of migrants in Libya¹⁶ on recommendations formulated in early consultations with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). This coordinated approach ensured that the United Nations could base its follow-up advocacy with the host country and the European Union on a strong common platform.

98. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes may also provide the funding and programming capacity necessary to help governments implement more resource-intensive recommendations put forward by human rights reports. Ideally, their commitment to follow-up on such recommendations should be sought long before the report is published so that the

¹⁶ See <http://unsmil.unmissions.org/Portals/unsmil/Documents/Migrants%20report-EN.pdf>

UNCT can set the necessary project planning and budgeting processes in motion. Yet, this study found no examples where that approach was taken.

Consultation with the government

99. Occasionally, human rights components involve government authorities committed to advancing human rights in their report planning. This can prove useful. UNSMIL worked closely with the Libyan Minister of Justice prior to the publication of its report on torture and deaths in detention. This helped to spur legislation criminalising torture and removing the jurisdiction of military courts over civilians – positive advances that the subsequent report could then flag.¹⁷

100. It has become standard practice for missions to share draft reports with the government and provide it with an opportunity to correct factual errors and make comments. In addition to taking into account the government's comments when finalising the report, many missions also publish the comments received in full, which governments usually appreciate. Consulting the government and giving it a chance to correct errors, not only enhances the accuracy of reporting, but also ensures that the government is not taken by surprise.

101. Consultations with the government can have pitfalls. Governments usually appoint focal points to receive draft reports and gather comments from across the government system. However, missions have to be careful that such focal points do not become “gatekeepers” that monopolise and control all contact with the government. Human rights components should make sure that they maintain a broad network of government contacts for advocacy purposes.

102. Government officials interviewed for this study highlighted the need to be provided with sufficient time to follow up on reported concerns and gather comments. However, some governments use the consultation process to hold up a report. Missions have fared well in dealing with this conundrum by insisting on tight deadlines for comments on a report, while establishing mechanisms to consult the governments on the underlying individual cases of concern long before the report is drafted. Where governments continuously seek to hold up reports by failing to meet deadlines for comments, some missions have adopted the practice of proceeding with the publication of the report and annexing the government comments later.

Good practice examples: Early consultation of the government on human rights concerns

Early discussion of documented cases of concern can enhance the government's acceptance of the eventual report. It provides the authorities with a genuine chance to conduct timely follow-up and provide remedies that can be reflected in the report.

- MINUSMA has established a monthly meeting with the Ministry of Justice dedicated to sharing information about newly documented human rights violations and abuses. The Ministry has made the commitment to follow up on cases brought to its attention.
- UNAMA regularly provides the different branches of the Afghan security forces with a list of documented civilian casualty incidents and asks the security actor concerned to confirm case details and provide information on corrective action taken. In addition, UNAMA's human rights field teams raise cases with commanders at the local level. If international military forces are implicated in a case, UNAMA notifies them and gives an opportunity to provide comments.

¹⁷ See <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/LY/TortureDeathsDetentionLibya.pdf>

Consultation with armed groups

103. Public human rights reporting often focuses on violations by armed groups. Yet, many missions lack channels of communication to engage them, although senior officials may engage with known intermediaries for such groups on an ad hoc basis. The UNAMA Human Rights Unit has built confidential channels for regular contact with representatives of the Taliban and raises general issues of concern with them. Individual cases are not shared for comments as details provided may lead to reprisals against victims or witnesses. The Taliban provide written feedback on issues raised and their responses are attached to relevant UNAMA reports, which helps secure the Taliban's continued engagement with UNAMA's reporting.

Excerpt of translated Taliban comments
on 2016 UNAMA Annual Report on the
Protection of Civilians.

Thank you for sharing your report with us. We reviewed your report, but unfortunately and regretfully, we say that your report was written skillfully in a way that attributes high numbers of civilian casualties to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and shows low levels of civilian casualties committed by the Americans and the hiring regime. For instance in your 2016 annual report, in your definitions you include the Islamic Emirate together with other anti-government groups. Instead of dividing the numbers of civilian casualties between each separate group, which would therefore show lower numbers of casualties for each group, you attribute all casualties to Anti Government Elements. You then state in the executive summary of the report that all 62 percent of casualties were caused by Anti-Government Elements and in particular by the Islamic Emirate Mujahedeen. This is an ambiguous, and is deliberately intended to blame all casualties inflicted by other anti-government groups on the Islamic Emirate and to demonstrate that the Islamic Emirates' Mujahedeen caused more civilian casualties. Such conduct is a deliberate effort to conceal facts, which is not acceptable to us and we consider this to be biased.

8. Establishing a reporting routine

104. The more regular a mission reports, the easier reporting becomes. Since MONUSCO, UNAMA and UNAMI have routinely reported for many years, their host governments view their public reporting as a given, even if they vigorously disagree with the findings of some reports. Governments tend to see reporting as less threatening when it is regular and frequent since they anticipate it and do not suspect an ulterior motive behind it. Conversely, where reporting is very irregular, there is a heightened sense of anxiety in the lead-up to the publication of a report due to uncertainty about its content and potential impact. Public reporting often faces the strongest resistance where missions have either failed to establish a reporting practice altogether or have allowed a large gap between reports. Accustomed to a convenient status quo, the authorities may consider the initiation or recommencement of reporting to be a hostile act. Some missions have responded to this problem by easing into reporting by first focusing on issues that are less likely to antagonise the authorities.

Good practice examples: Easing into a reporting routine

After not reporting for the first two years of its existence, UNSMIL dedicated its first report to torture and deaths in detention. The topic had the support of the Minister of Justice, given that his government was particularly concerned about abuses in detention centres operated by militias beyond the control of his government.

The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) had not issued a report for three years before releasing a public report on sexual violence. The report identified private individuals and armed groups as the main perpetrators. It implicated state authorities mainly for failures in investigating and prosecuting cases, which was a less sensitive charge. Furthermore, the topic provided authorities with an opening to give immediate and meaningful follow-up by issuing orders prohibiting inappropriate plea bargains and amicable settlements in rape cases.

III. Maximising the impact of public reporting

105. Human rights reporting is not a standalone activity. Reporting must be embedded in the mission's broader mandate and human rights strategy. Relevant information has to be gathered, analysed and shaped into compelling documents, which are effectively rolled out and followed up. OHCHR and other organisations have developed comprehensive guidance on how to conduct human rights monitoring, reporting and follow up.¹⁸ Rather than replicating such guidance, the following sections discuss trends and challenges that are particularly relevant for peace operations.

1. Moving from lengthy reports to swift reporting

106. A public reporting approach that seems to prevail in some human rights components reduces reporting to the publication of lengthy documents that are issued once or twice a year, cover a host of issues and are entirely distinct from press releases. However, in rapidly changing crisis settings, such reports quickly become dated and often have little impact on the behaviour of the authorities or armed groups. The current focus on comprehensive periodic reports, issued at large intervals, also makes it difficult to feed up-to-date information for early warning purposes into situational awareness briefings, special sessions and other real-time processes taking place in the Security Council and the Human Rights Council.

107. These considerations suggest moving away from lengthy periodic reports that cover large time spans and moving towards nimble and swift reporting that communicates information using a variety of reporting formats. Comprehensive reports containing detailed evidence and analysis may still be needed. However, it will often make sense to devote them to a deeper analysis of specific themes, not least since such thematic reports tend to have a longer "shelf life" than annual or biannual periodic reports.

108. The current reporting practice of MONUSCO's Joint Human Rights Office has perhaps advanced furthest towards the proposed approach. MONUSCO reports on the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo through a monthly human rights note. While



MONUSCO Human Rights Director
Jose Maria Aranaz at ONE UN press conference.
Radio Okapi / John Pompengo.

the note itself focuses heavily on figures, MONUSCO's Human Rights Director elaborates on the context when presenting the monthly notes at one of the weekly ONE UN press conferences. In addition to these monthly notes, the mission also issues special reports covering larger, more complex incidents and thematic reports on priority issues such as accountability. Furthermore, MONUSCO's Joint Human Rights Office operates its own Twitter account, which allows it to comment on violations quickly and achieve an immediate protection impact.

¹⁸ See notably the OHCHR Manual on Human Rights Monitoring,
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/PublicationsResources/Pages/MethodologicalMaterials.aspx>

Good practice example: Instant reporting impact through Twitter

The MONUSCO Joint Human Rights Office has been authorised to maintain its own Twitter Account, which is separate from the MONUSCO's main Twitter account. Through this channel, the Joint Human Rights Office reports in real time on verified human rights concerns, conveys news on progress made and features capacity-building initiatives.

Arbitrary arrests of political activists and human rights defenders – as well as their release – may be the subject of tweets. NGOs and others indicated that this has been effective in securing the release of detainees, because the information is instantaneously picked up by the general public and the security forces concerned. Local NGO partners emphasised that tweets have a discernible protection impact, because the perpetrators are put on notice that the United Nations is aware of the arrest. Government actors committed to upholding human rights also become immediately aware and can weigh in with the security forces to seek a remedy.



Twitter message sent from account of MONUSCO Joint Human Rights Office.

109. Reporting at faster intervals responds better to the rapidly changing conflict dynamics on the ground. Many interlocutors were dissatisfied, for instance, that UNAMI had extended the reporting intervals for its protection of civilians reporting from three months to six months. They pointed out that the situation in Iraq evolved so quickly that new patterns had already replaced concerns described in UNAMI reports by the time these reports were published. While UNAMI's human rights component cannot issue comprehensive reports at shorter intervals due to capacity constraints, it has expedited reporting by increasingly releasing new information through public statements issued by the High Commissioner for Human Rights or OHCHR's spokesperson. To some extent, UNAMI also uses its monthly public statements on civilian casualties to draw attention to emerging patterns of violations.

110. UNAMA has responded to demands for timely reporting by supplementing its biannual reports on the protection of civilians with two additional quarterly public statements that provide updated figures and information on the latest trends. UNAMA also issues a large number of public statements. UNAMA's Human Rights Unit has developed objective criteria to trigger public statements on civilian casualties. Incidents involving ten or more deaths or, alternatively, a very high number of injuries will always result in a UNAMA statement. Parties to the conflict are aware of these criteria, which shields UNAMA from accusations of selectivity.

111. These three missions increasingly report through public statements, which shields them from the lengthy [clearance](#) procedure reserved for reports. This also means that such reporting outputs are often not published on the same webpages as comprehensive reports, making information difficult to find. There is a need to update procedures that are still based on a somewhat artificial distinction between reports and public statements.

2. Reporting based on remote monitoring

112. With more and more peace operations deployed in contexts where there is no peace, human rights components increasingly have to document violations without physical access to sites of violations and affected communities. The problem is further compounded by some governments using security restrictions as a pretext to deny access to areas where their own forces are committing violations. Lack of access poses a serious challenge to information gathering and has been invoked to call into question the credibility of public reporting in such circumstances. There are, however, effective techniques to overcome these challenges and remotely monitor the human rights situation in inaccessible areas.¹⁹

Building networks of connectors

113. Human rights components need to vigorously pursue windows of relative security to access areas of concern and build a network of personal contacts with connectors such as community leaders, education and health professionals, journalists and local NGOs. This approach allowed UNAMI to continue to receive first-hand information from areas that could no longer be physically accessed after ISIS' takeover. In addition, UNAMI established a network of locally contracted staff who serve as Governorate Liaison Officers (GLAs) in government-controlled areas where UNAMI has no fully-fledged offices due to capacity limits or security concerns. In addition to their main functions, GLAs may be asked to initially follow up on alleged violations. In light of security concerns, they will not carry out full investigations and may refuse to take on any matter that they consider too risky.

114. UNAMA's Human Rights Unit at times travels witnesses to more secure provincial capitals where personal meetings can be held. MONUSCO regularly deploys its aerial assets to provide human rights staff and others taking part in multi-sectoral Joint Protection Teams access to places that could not be safely accessed by road.

115. In peacekeeping missions, human rights components can also garner valuable leads on violations from uniformed components, which often deploy to remote and insecure areas where human rights components are not present. The United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and recently also MINUSCA have institutionalised that process by putting in place standard operating procedures on the exchange of information on human rights violations between human rights, police and military components.²⁰



MINUSCA Peacekeepers in Bambari.
UN Photo/Nektarios Markogiannis.

¹⁹ Often denied access to the country altogether, commissions of inquiry use similar techniques. See also OHCHR, Commissions of Inquiry and Fact-Finding Missions on International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (pp. 42-49), http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Col_Guidance_and_Practice.pdf.

²⁰ United Nations policy requires all peacekeeping missions to adopt such mission-specific guidance. See DPKO-DFS Guidelines on Development of Mission-Specific Guidance (2016), Annex A.

Use of social media

116. Human rights components use modern communication technology to identify and contact sources in physically inaccessible areas. Mobile phones are increasingly complemented by other communication tools. UNAMI, for instance, conducts interviews through web-based applications such as WhatsApp or Viber since sources are often afraid that regular phone lines have been compromised.

117. Missions monitor Facebook, Twitter and other social media to gather leads on potential violations, identify first-hand witnesses and establish contact with them. UNAMI and UNAMA systematically monitor the rapidly evolving cluster of websites and social media channels affiliated with anti-government armed groups, where such groups regularly admit to their involvement in particular abuses. This helps corroborate first-hand information on abuses.

118. Civil society groups have also used crowdsourcing software like the *Ushahidi* application to gather real-time information on issues such as electoral violence.²¹ However, no instances could be identified in which peace operations have used such technology.

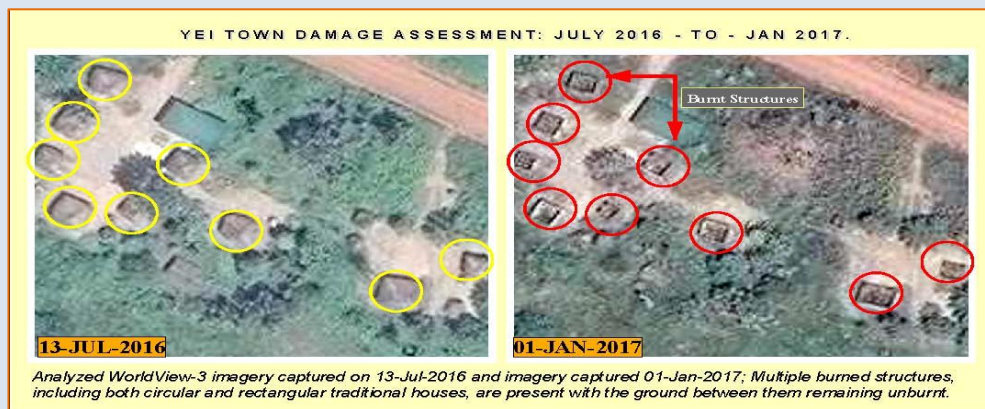
Photos, videos and satellite imagery

119. Thanks to the ubiquitous presence of mobile phones in many mission areas, photos and videos depicting human rights abuses have become increasingly available. In Afghanistan, for instance, witnesses reporting air strikes with civilian casualties often provide UNAMA with photos from the site to corroborate their account. However, human rights components are cautious about relying too heavily on photos and videos because the chain of custody to the original source is often unclear and files may have been manipulated. OHCHR is currently developing a tool to help authenticate photos and videos based on metadata and profound image analysis.

120. United Nations commissions of inquiry on human rights have used satellite imagery and associated analysis by specialists of the United Nations Satellite Applications Programmes (UNOSAT) to document the existence of prison labour camps, mass graves, deployment of heavy weapons or large-scale looting and destruction in areas inaccessible to them. In contrast, it is still rare for human rights components to use the technology. In some instances, UNAMA used satellite images to corroborate the impact of airstrikes. UNMISS included satellite images in a report to document the destruction of civilian homes and has continued to use it to corroborate allegations on the burning of villages.²² Satellite imagery allowed UNAMI to verify the existence of the site of a reported massacre and corroborate information that survivors provided on its location. Although some missions now have unmanned reconnaissance aircraft (drones) at their disposal, human rights components are yet to use them to verify violations.

²¹ Ushahidi, which was developed to map reports of violence in Kenya after the post-election violence in 2008, develops free and open-source software for information collection, visualization and interactive mapping. It uses the concept of crowdsourcing, which allows eyewitnesses to report violence by a variety of means, such as SMS, email and Twitter, and plots them on a Google Maps map. See <https://www.ushahidi.com/about>.

²² <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/un-report-exposes-human-rights-violations-and-abuses-against-civilians-and-around-yei-south-sudan>



Satellite imagery featured in UNMISS Report on violations in Yei, South Sudan.

121. Increased use of images and other non-human sources not only provides informational gains, but also help dispel some attacks on the credibility of reporting. Due to the deep social and political rifts that characterise conflict settings, authorities and others are often quick to discredit local witnesses as being inherently biased; no matter how careful the human rights component vetted their credentials. The objectivity of authenticated images is much harder to impugn. The availability of images also invites more media coverage because it visualises the concerns expressed.

3. Quantitative reporting – strength in numbers?

122. Quantitative data is increasingly presented in public reports, driven also by growing demand for figures from the Security Council, headquarters departments and mission leaderships. Notable examples include the detailed civilian casualty statistics that are at the heart of UNAMA's reporting on the protection of civilians. MONUSCO's monthly human rights notes provide a breakdown of the number of human rights violations committed by the army, police, intelligence services and different armed groups. The Mission also publishes figures on prosecutions for crimes involving gross human rights violations.

Advantages

123. Integrating quantitative data into reports provides a number of advantages:

- The mission leverages its broader geographic coverage and resources to produce a comprehensive picture of the situation that other human rights actors with a smaller presence cannot provide.
- Quantitative data is seen as more objective than qualitative analysis, making it harder for governments and others to dismiss reports as biased opinion. They provide benchmarks allowing for comparisons between time periods and different actors. MONUSCO figures on documented violations, for instance, suggest that Congolese security forces are just as implicated in serious violations as the armed groups.

- United Nations figures constitute exclusive information that media will pick up and build coverage around. UNAMI’s monthly statements on civilian casualty figures, for instance, give media a regular occasion to report on the situation in Iraq. It is telling that the casualty statements are downloaded about seven to ten times more often than SRSG statements on human rights or the component’s fully-fledged human rights reports. If packaged with qualitative analysis, United Nations figures on casualties are a powerful vehicle to generate media coverage of the larger human rights concerns underlying the naked figures.

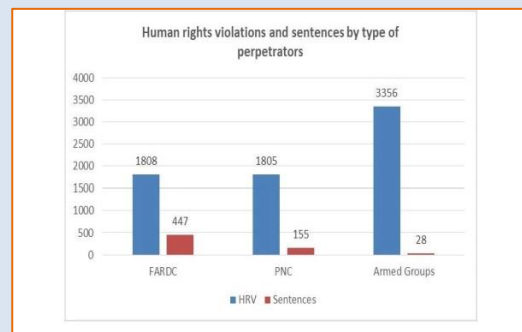
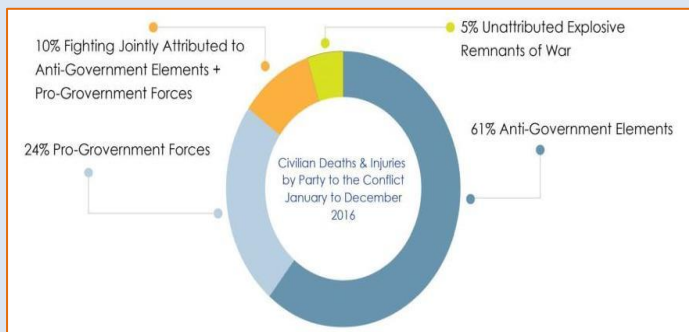


Fig. 4: Human rights violations and sentences by type of perpetrators from January 2014 to March 2016

Graphs included in reports by UNAMA (left) and MONUSCO (right).

Challenges

124. The growing emphasis on numbers presents challenges as well. A number of those interviewed expressed concern that the greater emphasis on figures had a tendency to deprive reports of their narrative and transform them into “*litanies of cases and figures*,” as one interlocutor put it. A number of interlocutors also noted that root causes such as economic factors or gender dimensions of violations were often not adequately captured. Quantitative data can strengthen qualitative analysis, but must not replace it.

125. Quantitative reporting has so far been typically based on numbers of documented violations or casualties. Methodologically, this approach takes more than simply counting up cases at the drafting stage. It requires putting in place a rigorous methodology before relevant information is gathered. Human rights components must work based on a shared taxonomy of violations, victims and perpetrator groups, so that different field offices produce comparable quantitative data. The use of databases is imperative, not only to diligently record quantitative data but also to analyse trends and generate statistics.

126. Quantitative reporting is resource-intensive and may overwhelm the capacity of some components, especially in smaller missions. Human rights components must have the staffing and geographic coverage necessary to ensure that they document a sizable portion of violations that actually occur. If a human rights component documents only a very small percentage of actual cases, decision-makers may underestimate concerns (even if the likelihood of underreporting is expressly acknowledged). A too small sample of documented cases also makes it impossible to derive statistically credible inferences on how concerns evolve over time or how different perpetrator groups compare with one another.

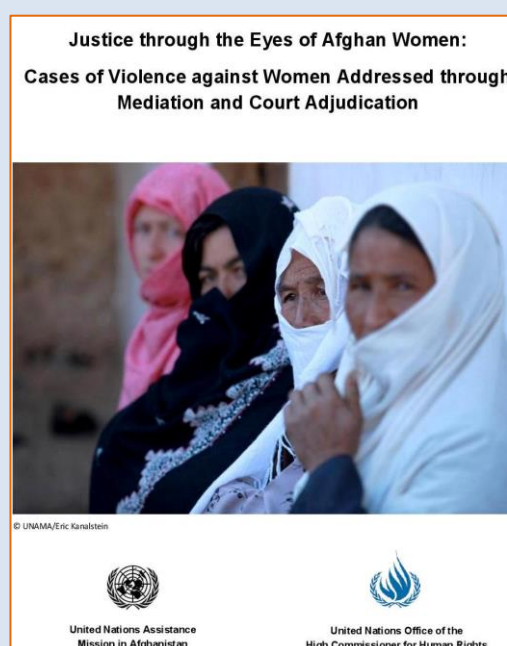
127. Staffing and coverage must remain relatively constant over time. Any significant changes will have an impact on the figures – even if the actual human rights situation remains exactly the same. Human rights components also have to maintain a degree of constancy in monitoring

priorities, because a component will document more or less cases involving particular violations or perpetrators depending on whether its monitoring focuses on such cases.

128. A methodology based on a total number of documented cases will also be affected by intervening variables that cannot be controlled. The violations of actors operating in accessible areas can be more readily documented than those of other actors operating in remote or insecure areas. The trust that local populations extend to the mission will fluctuate over time and this will affect the propensity of victims to report violations.

129. Some types of incidents lend themselves more easily to quantitative reporting than others. Conflict-related fatalities usually provide a good basis for quantitative reporting, because authorities and communities record deaths fairly consistently. In comparison, sexual violence is notoriously hard to document. Some manifestations of a given type of violation are also easier to detect than others. Due to a factor that statisticians refer to as “event size bias”, for instance, a human rights component is more likely to detect the massacres that are the hallmark of one type of armed group than the individual secret executions favoured by another group.²³ Reporting based on qualitative analysis can take these effects into account, while quantitative data may convey a distorted picture.

130. Relying on documented cases is an empirically imperfect approach. In conveying the underlying methodology, reports should be transparent about the limitations of figures provided. Human rights components should also explore other methods to generate quantitative data. Notably, surveys of representative population samples can provide meaningful indicators on the incidence of violations that are prone to underreporting. Academic researchers have, for instance, used household surveys to estimate sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and determine major risk factors.²⁴ Some of UNAMA's reporting work has gone in that direction, albeit without yet employing a fully-fledged survey methodology. One report, for instance, presents statistics on Afghan women's access to justice derived from interviews with 110 victims of violence whose complaints were addressed through adjudication or mediation.²⁵ Another report estimates the likely incidence of torture of conflict-related detainees based on 790 interviews with such detainees.²⁶



UNAMA/OHCHR report on women's access to justice.

²³ See Megan Price & Patrick Ball, Big Data, Selection Bias and the Statistical Patterns of Mortality in Conflict, SAIS Review of International Affairs vol. 34 (2014), 9-20, <https://hrdag.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/SAIS-bigdata-Price-Ball-2014.pdf>

²⁴ See Amber Peterman et al, Estimates and Determinants of Sexual Violence Against Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, American Journal of Public Health, vol. 101 (6) (2011), pp. 1060-1067, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3093289/>

²⁵ See https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_ohchr_justice_through_eyes_of_afghan_women_-_15_april_2015.pdf

²⁶ http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/AF/UNAMA_OHCHR_Detention_Report_Feb2015.pdf

4. Finding the right trajectory – reporting angle and timing

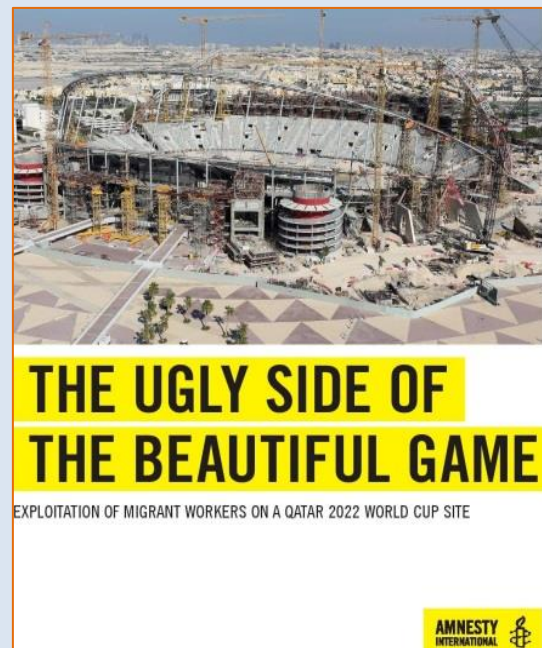
131. NGOs have become adept in drawing attention to human rights violations by connecting them to high profile events such as political summits or major sporting events in the country concerned. Another strategy draws attention to a forgotten country situation by highlighting how more powerful third countries fuel violations, e.g. through arms transfers or the refoulement of refugees.

132. UNAMA's reporting provides a useful example how a peace operation can create leverage through the strategic selection of the reporting angle. UNAMA tied alarming findings on torture of conflict-related detainees in Afghan custody to the transfer of such detainees by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to Afghan security forces contrary to international non-refoulement obligations. This compelled the states involved in ISAF to set up mechanisms to monitor the situation of transferred detainees. Moreover, they brought their political weight to bear in support of longstanding demands that the Afghan Government improve its legal and institutional framework to suppress torture.

133. Timing can make or break the impact of reporting. Some missions have timed the release of reports so that they feed into other processes, which augment their impact. This requires planning months in advance. For instance, MONUSCO released its latest thematic report on the fight against impunity just before the Human Rights Council's annual interactive dialogue on the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

134. It may be occasionally advisable to slightly delay reports to maximise human rights impact or minimise potential consequences for other activities. For instance, UNSMIL released a report on torture a few days later than initially scheduled in order not to distract from reconciliation talks convened by the Secretary-General during a visit to Libya. Sometimes, communications specialists in the mission or at OHCHR may also counsel slight delays in order to maximise media coverage.

135. For the most part, however, delays diminish reporting impact. In practice, this is a real problem. It is not uncommon for some missions to publish reports on specific incidents more than half a year after they occurred. At that point, the event has long been taken over by other developments and the report has at best historic value. In some cases, missions have shelved reports altogether, instead of publishing them, because the investigation and drafting process took too long. [Clearance](#)-related delays that may result not only from political obstacles but from the sheer complexity of the process are a recurrent concern that undermines the impact of reporting.



NGO reports have linked human rights concern to sporting events that draw global attention.

5. Exceptionally shifting reporting to OHCHR Headquarters

136. Under the 2008 Policy Directive on Human Rights Reporting, reports are generally required to be issued by the mission at the country level, although in some circumstances they can also be issued by OHCHR or jointly by the mission and OHCHR.²⁷ In practice, joint publication has become the preferred practice for releasing comprehensive reports. Meanwhile, public statements are issued variably in the name of the SRSG, the High Commissioner or include statements from both.

137. In a number of instances, sensitive reports or statements are released from OHCHR Headquarters in Geneva in the name of the High Commissioner of Human Rights only. There was wide agreement that this strategy can effectively shield the mission from political backlash. This seems to be the case even though the government would typically be fully aware that the information published by OHCHR was gathered by the mission.



High Commissioner Zeid.
UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferre.

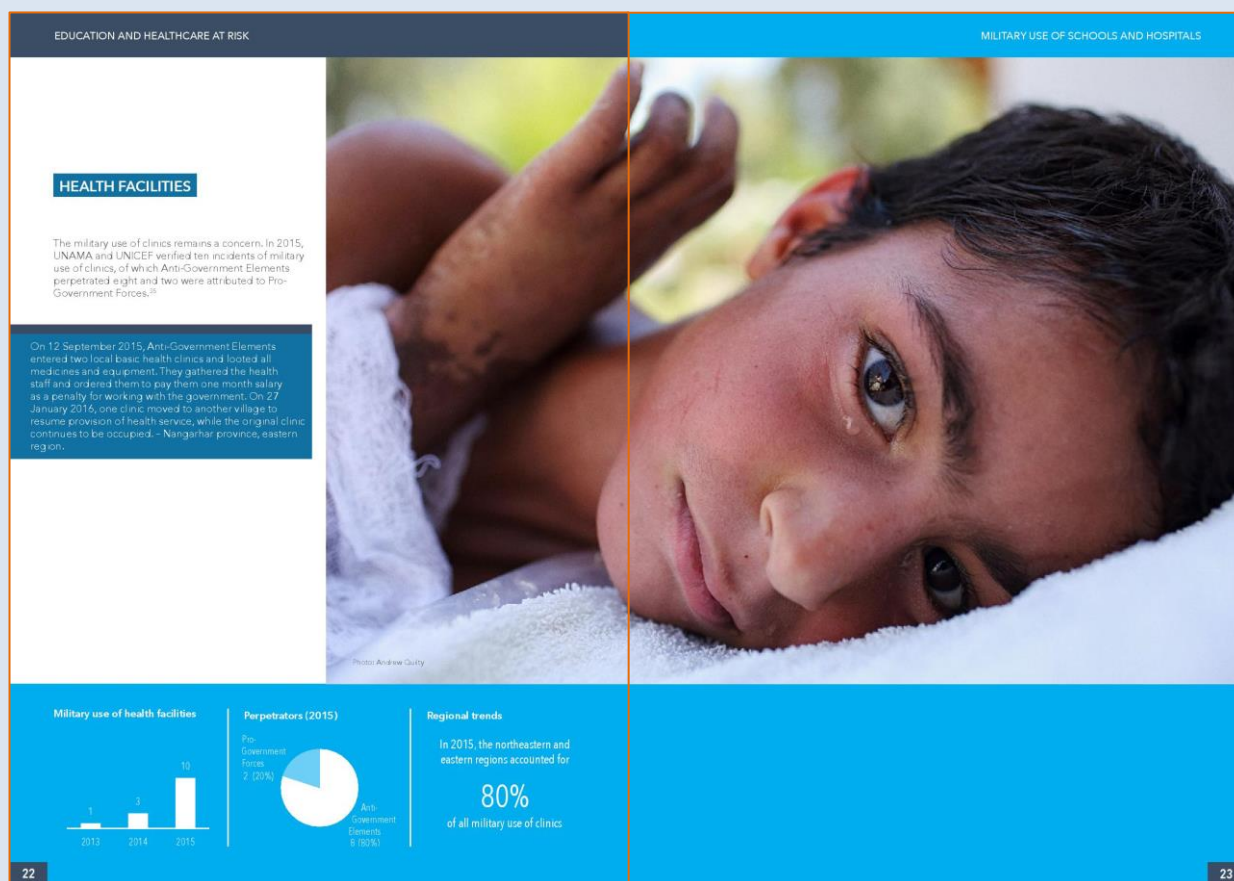
138. Human Rights Council mandates calling for public reports by the High Commissioner or independent expert mechanisms can provide human rights components with additional cover to get information published that might be too sensitive to release in the mission's name. In some instances, human rights components have shared information with special rapporteurs, commissions of inquiry, and OHCHR fact-finding missions for use in their reporting. For some countries that host a peace operation, the High Commissioner has also been mandated to report to the Human Rights Council. In some cases, reports have been used as a strategic opportunity to broaden reporting space, in others they have merely recapped information that had already been published in mission reports.

139. While it can contain backlash against the mission, many interlocutors cautioned that releasing information through Geneva has drawbacks as well and should remain exceptional. Many interlocutors noted that reports released only by OHCHR have less impact on the government, because they do not have the weight of the SRSG behind them. They may attract less public attention in the host country, especially since the mission's public information apparatus will often promote them less vigorously in an effort not to associate the mission with the report concerned. Shifting the release of reports and statements regularly to Geneva will also undermine the idea that reporting is a [routine activity](#) of the mission.

6. Reporting that attracts attention

140. How reports sound and look is a crucial, yet often neglected aspect of reporting. Compared to how much effort goes into documenting accurate human rights information, far too little is invested into the presentation of reports.

²⁷ Policy Directive Public Reporting by Human Rights Components of United Nations Peace Operations (2008), Ref. 2008.25



Report on Education and Healthcare at Risk, jointly published by UNAMA's Human Rights Unit, UNICEF and OCHA.

Layout

141. According to one study, the average person's attention span dropped by one third between 2000 and 2015.²⁸ Yet the average United Nations human rights report presumes a reader willing to attentively read 20-30 pages of plain text in black and white. Beyond text, reports typically provide little more than a cover photo, a map of the mission area and perhaps some basic graphs. Notable exceptions include a UNAMA report on children's rights²⁹ that uses a professional layout with photographs and informational graphics to generate a visually attractive product. Not coincidentally, that report was produced jointly with UNICEF and OCHA, which have long invested in the layout and visual appeal of their publications.

Length

142. In determining the right length of reports, missions face the conundrum that reports have to relate a high level of detail in order to convey credibility. At the same time, some reports have become so long that key audiences will not read them. Some diplomats and senior officials interviewed for this report stated bluntly that they would never read more than an executive summary of two pages. Taking into account such feedback, OHCHR is piloting the development of short and visually attractive summaries that are geared to making comprehensive reports more accessible to decision-makers and journalists.

²⁸ Kevin McSpadden, You now have a short attention span than a goldfish (2015), <http://time.com/3858309/attention-spans-goldfish/>

²⁹ <https://unama.unmissions.org/education-and-healthcare-risk-children-afghanistan>

Language

143. United Nations human rights reports deliberately use dispassionate language. This conveys impartiality and distinguishes them from the more emotive, narrative-based approach commonly employed by NGOs. Yet, apart from objectively and impartially conveying cold hard facts, effective human rights reporting draws its strength from arousing outrage and empathy with human suffering. Different techniques can be employed to achieve that effect without squandering the objective appeal of United Nations human rights reporting.

- UNAMA's protection of civilians reports add a human element by including visually enhanced verbatim statements of victims or perpetrators. These humanise concerns and emotionally engage the reader. These statements are not inserted as an afterthought but result from advance planning: All UNAMA human rights field teams are instructed to extract a certain number of emblematic verbatim statements from interview records and share them with the lead drafter of the report.
- Reports can also be complemented by separate feature stories that focus on particular victims or human rights defenders. OHCHR has used such stories, for instance, to draw attention to the work of its country offices and trust funds. Human rights components could work with the missions' public information offices and radio stations to prepare similar stories. So far, this has rarely been done.



The OHCHR booklet “The Human Face of Slavery” shows beneficiaries of the trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery.

144. Many human rights reports are not published in the most widely spoken national languages. Human rights components generally do not have professional translators. It is left to national staff to double as translators, which means bottlenecks may ensue. Afghan officials noted with concern that the Dari and Pashto translation of UNAMA reports were published long after the English version. UNAMI manages to provide translations into Arabic upon release, but

Kurdish versions follow only with considerable delay or not at all. MONUSCO releases its reports in French and English only. However, the MONUSCO radio station, Radio Okapi, reads out summaries in more widely spoken national languages such as Swahili and Lingala.

7. Public communication and dissemination strategy

145. It cannot be taken for granted that a human rights report will receive media coverage just because it comes from the United Nations. At the international level, reports compete with a host of other news stories for the attention of a shrinking number of professional international news correspondents. Human rights reports are further constrained by the fact that they often focus on marginalised groups in whose plight a broader public is not interested. At the local level, host governments have become very adept at crowding the airwaves to counter and drown out critical human rights reports.



Government spokesperson denounces MONUSCO human rights report. Screenshot of ForumsdesAs.org of 17 March 2017.

Close cooperation with public communication sections

146. Human rights components should work closely with communications specialists so that their reporting receives the attention it deserves. Experience also shows that communications sections should be approached well in advance of the intended date of publication to allow for the careful planning of the report's launch and related social media messaging.

147. Considering the limited capacity and numerous demands on OHCHR's communication team, it is also crucial that missions' communication sections are fully engaged in supporting human rights components in communicating their message. They may also provide further outlets to disseminate the main findings of report. The major findings of MONUSCO Joint Human Rights Office's monthly human rights notes, for instance, are always included in the "Echos de la MONUSCO" monthly magazine that is widely distributed throughout the country.

148. Some reports will generate media coverage mainly in the host country, while others generate international interest, making it important to assess early on whether to launch a particular report only at the mission level or also in Geneva. In view of the large press corps at the United Nations Office in Geneva and OHCHR's extensive global media distribution list, the benefits of launching a report simultaneously in the host country and in Geneva are obvious, provided the report has international news value. The involvement of Geneva also means the number of senior human rights staff who could be interviewed on TV and radio is amplified, especially if there are security concerns about field staff doing interviews on sensitive topics.



OHCHR Spokesperson Rupert Colville at weekly briefing. UN Photo/Sylvian

149. Communications professionals can capture complex issues in media-friendly language and build bridges to the press. Their advice on timing can prove crucial to ensure that a new report is not eclipsed by parallel events (including other human rights reports). At the advice of OHCHR's Communication Section, for instance, UNAMI held off on the publication of one of its major protection of civilians reports to ensure that it would not be released on the same day as a major report on another country that would have overshadowed it. At the same time, key media partners already received copies under embargo in order to prepare their coverage. This resulted in the New York Times and other major outlets running feature stories on the report. Sharing reports under embargo with trusted media outlets has also proven to be an effective strategy with regard to other human rights reports produced by peace operations.

Audio-visual content

150. As written documents, human rights reports are easily picked up by print media, but lack the visuals to make them attractive for televised news or social media. Among international NGOs, it has therefore become standard to produce film clips that accompany public reports and can be accessed via the website or are provided as complimentary footage to media outlets. Human Rights Watch goes as far as approving the concept for a future report only if it sets out what audio-visual content will accompany the written report.

151. In contrast, it is still very rare that United Nations missions' public reports are complemented by audio-visual content. It often proves difficult to get public information components to prioritise giving more visibility to public human rights reporting, while distance and capacity constraints make it impossible for OHCHR's Communication Section to step in and cover that gap. Setting a positive example, UNAMA has, on some occasions, produced short film clips in English, Dari and Pashto to emphasise key messages from its human rights reports. A clip prepared in relation to UNAMA's 2015 protection of civilians report, for instance, explains in pictures the range of individuals who must be considered civilians, before highlighting the number of civilian casualties that UNAMA documented that year. The mission also prepares pre-recorded interviews that can be shared with media outlets upon publication of the report.



Radio interview with UNAMI Human Rights Director Francesco Motta. UN Radio Photo.

152. Making heads of human rights components available for follow up interviews and press conferences is perhaps the easiest way to produce moving pictures and boost media coverage. However, many human rights chiefs have never received professional training on how to engage with media. This is a challenge not least since the media landscape in host countries is as polarised as the rest of society and journalists often seek to twist interviewees' words to feed their political agenda.

Online accessibility of reports and statements

153. Many interlocutors, including United Nations staff, complained about difficulties in finding out about reports and statements emanating from human rights components. They felt that international NGOs were often doing a better job of maintaining up-to-date contact lists and proactively informing stakeholders about new reports and statements.

154. Public reporting outputs of the mission, especially statements, are not consistently featured on the OHCHR website; and vice versa. On the OHCHR website and some mission

websites, documents are also kept in separate places depending on whether they happen to be classified as reports or as public statements. The United Nations human rights system lacks a common human rights information portal that provides easy access to all publicly available human rights information on a country, regardless of whether it takes the shape of reports or statements, and to which United Nations human rights mechanism the information is attributed.

8. Direct engagement of stakeholders and follow-up

155. Even where a report receives wide media coverage and is easily accessible, this does not mean that the concerned authorities and other stakeholders will proactively download the report, study it and work on its recommendations. Human rights reports should serve to not only document human rights violations but also to trigger responses. In that sense, human rights components are not merely reporters but also facilitators of change. Reports will only have an impact if they are directly followed up with a range of stakeholders at different levels.

Follow-up with state authorities and the international community

156. Personal engagement with decision-makers is crucial. UNAMI's Human Rights Director, for instance, personally briefs key authorities in Baghdad and Erbil on reports, after sending them a hardcopy accompanied by a personalised letter. UNAMA's Human Rights Unit hosts formal luncheons to brief government officials from relevant ministries and branches of the security forces about new reports. Mission headquarters also provides detailed instructions and guidance to human rights field teams on how to follow up with local civilian authorities, field commanders, elders and other stakeholders. The mission leadership should take a proactive role in raising concerns with higher-level interlocutors.



Follow-up with authorities in Logar, Afghanistan. UN Photo/UNAMA.




UN Photo/Bikem Ekberzade.

“Advocacy in follow-up to human rights reports needs to be linked to the SRSG personally to be effective.”


Martin Kobler,
former Special Representative of the
Secretary-General for Iraq and Libya

157. Action-oriented recommendations targeted at specific authorities or other stakeholders are an essential element of reporting and lay the ground for effective follow-up work. They can be used to keep track of progress and maintain the political momentum generated by a report. In pursuance of these objectives, MONUSCO has published brief updates that track the extent to which recommendations from previous reports have been implemented.



Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies
pour la Stabilisation en République
démocratique du Congo

United Nations Organisation Stabilization
Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

PROTECT

STABILIZE

CONSOLIDATE PEACE

Status of implementation of recommendations identified in UNJHRO Report on human rights and fundamental freedoms during the pre-electoral period in the DRC between 1 January and 30 September 2015, published on 8 December 2015

8 December 2016

	Recommendations	Implementation	Evaluation
	To the Congolese authorities :		
1.	To take the necessary steps to open the democratic space by respecting freedoms of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly, thus contributing to the credibility of the electoral process.	The trend of shrinking of democratic space has accelerated. From 1 December 2015 to 30 November 2016, the UNJHRO documented 885 violations of civil and political rights and fundamental freedoms, which is more than four times the total number for the period between 1 January and 30 November 2015, during which the UNJHRO documented 260 violations of this type. Freedoms of opinion and expression were particularly restricted (185 cases) as well as freedom of peaceful reunion (274 cases). At least eight general bans of demonstrations have been decided by the Congolese authorities since 2015 (Bandundu, Kalemie, Mai Ndombe province, Lubumbashi, Kinshasa, Kisangani, Bunia and Matadi).	Negative

Excerpt from published update on recommendations made in MONUSCO human rights report.

158. In all three missions studied, the human rights components also systematically engage the diplomatic community by holding regular meetings to present the findings of reports. Some missions invite not only traditional supporters of human rights, but reach out to a larger group and include as many Security Council members as possible.

159. Raising awareness of delegations at headquarters is challenging, given that missions' human rights reports are generally not shared as official documents unless a Security Council or Human Rights Council mandate specifically requested the report in question. In New York, OHCHR has adopted the good practice of consistently emailing new reports published by human rights components to all members of the Security Council. The same practice is not yet followed in Geneva for member states of the Human Rights Council, even though that Council takes a special interest in many of the countries hosting a peace mission and has subjected them to country specific mandates.

Reporting back to civil society and local communities

160. Proactive reporting back to victims, local communities and grass roots civil society organisations provides a measure of accountability towards the intended beneficiaries of human rights monitoring and reporting. It also generates buy-in and multiplies follow-up advocacy for reports and their recommendations. There is room for improvement in this area. NGO representatives interviewed for this study were often not aware of key reports issued by human rights components. Interlocutors also conveyed that human rights components should organise more briefings around the time of publication in order to inform NGOs and community leaders about reports, invite their feedback and discuss their role in the follow-up.

161. It is often very difficult to reach broader swaths of the population, many of whom may not be able to speak the language the report is published or may not be able to read. Some missions regularly feature summaries of their public reporting in their radio broadcasts. This has also proven effective in reaching armed groups and their supporters in remote areas. Radio Okapi broadcasts MONUSCO's monthly press conferences on human rights and summaries of its major reports. MINUSCA's Radio Guira FM features messaging on the protection of civilians in

its broadcasts. UNAMA works with local Afghan radio stations to broadcast the major findings of its reports, including through call-in shows.

162. Missions have also developed innovative practices that build on local cultural preferences and social conventions to reach local communities.

- In order to draw attention to its report on girls in armed groups,³⁰ MONUSCO's child protection team developed a song that summarised key concerns and became well known in the Congolese community.
- In follow-up to its 2015 report on women's access to justice,³¹ UNAMA convinced the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs to instruct mosques to devote a Friday prayer to women's rights to property, alimony and child custody under Sharia law.



Open air theatre on protection of civilians in Kandahar. UN Photo/UNAMA.

9. Building national reporting capacity

163. Missions will eventually draw down even though major human rights concerns remain. Standalone human rights presences or other capacity in the UNCT may be established but their monitoring and reporting mandate and capacity may be weaker than that of the mission. They also tend to have less predictable funding sources to ensure continuation of the work of the mission and the sustainability of their own efforts. It is, therefore, critical that throughout their presence and particularly as part of their exit strategy, the human rights components of missions consider how to gradually build national monitoring and reporting capacity and also transmit their knowledge and expertise to national and other actors who may take up reporting once the mission leaves. After drawdown, the UNCT will also need to be equipped with the necessary human rights capacity to ensure continuation of the work of the mission, particularly on reporting. At the moment, this remains a formidable challenge.

164. National human rights commissions and ombudsmen are predestined to assume the impartial, yet official monitoring and reporting role fulfilled by human rights components.

³⁰ https://monusco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/151202_girls_in_armed_groups_2009-2015_english_final.pdf

³¹ https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_ohchr_justice_through_eyes_of_afghan_women_-15_april_2015.pdf

Missions therefore devote considerable resources to building the capacity of such national human rights institutions. However, conveying technical expertise does not protect such bodies against reprisals and executive interference. Some missions have tried to empower national human rights institutions by jointly issuing reports with them. However, this can place a human rights component's own impartial profile and rigorous methodology at risk. The alternative of gradually handing over reporting to national institutions has been seldom tested, and where this was done, the results have been mixed. In Afghanistan, UNAMA tried to scale down its own systematic reporting on implementation of a law to eliminate violence against women as the Ministry of Women scaled up its own in line with promises made to donors. The Ministry's public reporting came to a halt, however, when it ran into obstacles of limited capacity and shifting political priorities.

IV. Public Reporting and the future of United Nations peace operations

165. The public reporting of United Nations peace operations often exposes inconvenient truths that those at war and in power may not wish to hear. To faithfully discharge their mandate, United Nations peace operations must be prepared to tell host countries, the Security Council and other relevant actors what they ought to know to end human rights abuses, protect civilians, bring about peace and prevent further crises that would take an even greater toll of human suffering.

166. The importance of public advocacy will only increase in the foreseeable future; not just in relation to human rights. Warring parties and their backers employ increasingly sophisticated informational warfare strategies. It will be crucial that missions can effectively counter strategic disinformation campaigns through credible public reporting of their own that cannot be dismissed as "fake news." Furthermore, the capacity of missions to project armed force may shrink to the extent that the Security Council will move away from larger, more expensive missions. Therefore, peace operations will increasingly have to complement quiet engagement strategies with the power of their voice to fully implement their mandates and generate change for the better.

167. This voice means little, however, if it can be hardly heard outside United Nations corridors and meeting rooms. What peace operations have to report must touch the hearts and minds of a broader public to maintain popular support for their work. This also follows from the people-centred approach to United Nations peace operations called for by the High-Level Independent Review of Peace Operations.

168. The good practices, lessons and challenges identified in this report therefore invite reflection on our reporting and public advocacy generally. Complacency may compel us to keep preparing reports and press releases, the way we have always done. Yet, in an information age, the success of the United Nations depends on how much we are willing to adapt and optimise the way we communicate our ideals and concerns to the "peoples of the United Nations" from whom our Organisation and its Charter derive their authority and unique strength.

Summary of Recommendations, Good Practices & Lessons Learned:

Mission leaderships should:

- Strategize how public reporting can support the mission's [good offices](#) work and other political objectives. Ensure that the messaging of human rights and other sections is consistent and mutually reinforcing and that strategic priorities are well aligned.
- Convey [strong support for public human rights reporting](#) and personally engage in follow-up advocacy. Stand by reports even when they trigger criticism or backlash.
- Support the human rights component in [gaining access](#) to sites of violations by intervening when authorities impose restrictions on the mission's freedom of movement. Ensure that the human rights component can make reasonable use of capacities such as drone-based aerial photography, satellite [imagery](#) analysis, aerial assets and force protection to document concerns in remote and insecure areas.
- Authorise heads of human rights components to speak to [media](#) prior to and in follow up to reports. Allow human rights components to maintain separate [social media](#) channels.
- Ensure that information on the implementation of the [United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy](#), including on the nature of assessed support and the mitigation measures adopted, is featured in the reporting of the mission and the Secretary-General.

Human rights components should:

- Set [strategic priorities](#) focusing on issues where a positive impact can reasonably be made. Priorities should align with the mission's broader mandate and consider the major concerns on all sides of the conflict or political divide, including those relating to armed groups and international forces.
- Strategize from the outset how the [reporting angle and timing](#) can enhance the impact of planned reports, while minimising negative impact on reconciliation and other processes. Consider how reporting can be linked to accountability, sanctions, human rights diligence processes or major political and social events to maximise its impact.
- Consistently ground this strategic and planned approach to reporting on coordination with the mission leadership and [extensive consultations](#) with political, justice and other relevant mission components, UNCTs, OHCHR, the lead department, civil society, and local communities and, to the extent appropriate, the authorities concerned.
- Draw on the specific expertise of political, justice, mission analysis and uniformed components in its analysis. Consider how empirically sound [quantitative data](#) can complement the qualitative analysis provided by reports. Identify positive developments and duly feature them in reports.
- Establish a predictable and regular [reporting routine](#).
- Enhance the [timeliness](#) of reporting by issuing monthly public reports and short flash reports/statements on major incidents and emerging trends. Give more comprehensive reports a clear thematic focus that sheds light on the root causes of concerns.
- Provide [clear guidance to field teams](#) on what information they are expected to gather and by when. Ensure rigorous compliance with OHCHR monitoring and documentation standards, including on mandatory [human rights database](#) use.
- Employ satellite and drone imagery, social media mining, crowdsourcing, and other [modern technology](#) to complement interviews with victims and first-hand witnesses.
- Dedicate [adequate human resources to reporting](#) and recruit staff with the documentation, analytical and writing skillsets to produce reports of publishable quality.
- Systematically include structured [early warning analysis](#) in reporting.

- Provide implicated authorities with [early opportunities to comment](#) on documented incidents of concerns and follow up on such cases. Give the government a reasonable opportunity to comment on draft reports and statements.
- Develop a sound strategy, in advance of publication and in close cooperation with other mission components and the UNCT, to ensure systematic [follow-up](#) of the recommendations with national and local authorities, the international community and all other relevant stakeholders. Consider how to directly engage and influence [armed groups](#) implicated by reports. Track the implementation of recommendations.
- Strengthen efforts to [reach out to NGO partners and local communities](#) to familiarise them with new reports, get their feedback and secure their support for follow-up.
- Coordinate the launch of reports well in advance with the public communications specialists in the mission and at OHCHR and develop a [public communication and dissemination](#) strategy.
- Enhance the “[look and feel](#)” of reports in cooperation with communications specialists in the mission and at headquarters. Prepare videos, graphics, radio broadcasts and appealing stories to accompany reports. Ensure that reporting gives victims a voice and makes a strong appeal to end human suffering.
- Leverage [the reporting of the High Commissioner and independent United Nations human rights mechanisms](#) when concerns are too sensitive for the missions to publicise.
- Strengthen efforts to build [national capacity](#) for human rights monitoring and reporting.

[Headquarters, in particular DPA, DPKO and OHCHR, should:](#)

- Continue to [request](#) that all missions report routinely in line with U.N. policy. Include public reporting in evaluations of the human rights component and the mission leadership.
- Review and streamline [clearance processes](#), in particular within OHCHR, by reducing the number of headquarters sections consulted, ensuring compliance with timelines and quality control procedures, commenting based on shared document applications. Introduce genuine fast-track procedures for shorter and urgent documents.
- Support human rights components in generating more [diverse and timely reporting](#) outputs. Review and streamline clearance processes in that regard.
- Strengthen the OHCHR methodology underlying [quantitative data generation](#) in cooperation with subject matter experts. Establish criteria and processes allowing human rights and other civilian components to make use of unmanned reconnaissance aircraft [imagery](#) capacities in relevant peacekeeping missions.
- Provide all heads of human rights components and other relevant human rights staff with [professional media training](#) on how to conduct press conferences and interviews and write press statements. Enhance training on how to conduct [effective advocacy](#) with authorities and other stakeholders.
- Ensure that human rights components have adequate access to the [translation](#) capacity needed to consistently publish reports in widely spoken national languages.
- Strengthen OHCHR’s work with human rights components on preparing accurate, easy-to-read [summaries](#) that extract key information for decision-makers and media.
- Enhance the OHCHR website to provide [consolidated easy access to all publicly available human rights information](#) on a country, regardless of whether contained in reports, public statements or other documents issued by the High Commissioner, a peace operation or a United Nations independent expert mechanism.
- Configure transition and draw down processes to ensure continued United Nations capacity to sustain monitoring and reporting even after the mission leaves, while continuing to build an independent [national monitoring and reporting capacity](#).

