



NHSMUN

SPECPOL

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Secretary-General
Terry Wang

Director-General
Jordan Baker

Delegate Experience
Nastasja Vásquez

Global Partnerships
Daniela Maciel
Sebastian Jimenez

Under-Secretaries-General

Nachiketh Anand
Alina Castillo

Seonghyun Chang
Naina Dhawan

Ximena Faz
Kellie Fernandez
Grace Harb

Adiva Ara Khan
Anshul Magal
Analucia Tello
Sofia Velasco
Renata Venzor

Hello delegates!

My name is Avery Chen, and I am excited to introduce you all to NHSMUN 2025! I will be the Special Political and Decolonization Committee's (SPECPOL) Session I Director, alongside my Co-Director Renata. I am currently a sophomore at Cornell University, but I transferred from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Although I am studying business, I am also on the pre-law track, where I hope to pursue corporate law in the future.

I am originally from East Brunswick, New Jersey, and I will always be a passionate East Coast defender. However, since I spent a year in Los Angeles, I am proud to have developed a mediocre understanding of California's geography. In my free time, I love playing video games—but do not ask what rank I am. In college (without my PC) I play other games like the classic Brawl Stars, Papa's Freezeria, and Roblox. Luckily, I was able to bring my greatest accomplishment: my custom-built mechanical keyboard. I also love crocheting and in the past few months, I have made an army of mini animals.

I started my Model UN journey in high school, where I attended NHSMUN twice as a delegate. In 2022, I participated in the UN Conference on Trade and Development, and in 2023, I was a delegate for the Historical Crisis Committee. I have so many wonderful memories from those conferences—whether it was the incredible opportunity to speak at the UN Headquarters or tearfully sending my friend off to her midnight crisis committee. Last year, I was the Assistant Director for the Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee (SOCHUM) in Session II. I had the best time meeting delegates, and other staffers, and learning more about NHSMUN as a whole. At UCLA, I staffed two crisis committees that allowed me to creatively develop my Model UN skills. I hope to remain involved with Model UN during my time at Cornell!

The topics that we have prepared for this year's conference are essential for working toward international peace. When discussing journalists in conflict zones, you will have to navigate through complex international legislation and differences in country policy to arrive at solutions that can protect the free press. Peacekeepers have always been an integral part of the UN, so it is crucial that the UN can employ them effectively with the help of your solutions.

At NHSMUN, you will never forget the bonds that you make in and out of committee. I cannot wait to meet all of you and hear your ideas in March!

Avery Chen

Special, Political, Decolonization Committee, Session I

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Hello Delegates!

I am delighted to welcome you to the National High School Model United Nations (NHSMUN) 2025! My name is Renata Solórzano, and I am honored to serve as your Director for Session 2 of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)! Avery and I have put a lot of effort into researching these complex issues. We cannot wait to hear your stances on the wide range of matters that the topics we selected cover. We're excited about the thoughtful discussions, challenging issues, thorough solutions, and diplomatic collaboration that this conference will provide. The two topics under discussion have a big global influence on people, thus it is crucial to hold these discussions to tackle their issues.

Model UN holds a very big place in my life. I cannot tell you enough how it remarkably changed my high school years, as cheesy as it sounds. In 2021, I attended my first NHSMUN conference. Although it was on Zoom, I had a great time representing Poland in my committee, IFAD. I returned in my senior year to represent Singapore in SPECPOL, and I fell so in love with it that I could not stand it being my last year at NHSMUN. I have been lucky enough to be part of the incredible staff for a second year now. Last year, I was an assistant director for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), where my director and I saw delegates debate on preserving education in conflict zones.

I was born and raised in Mexico City, Mexico. Currently, I am a second-year student majoring in Architecture at Universidad Anáhuac Mexico. I have been a dancer since I was four years old, so I've been dancing for a long time and I love it! I love drawing and painting and had a small business in it. Sadly for me, I haven't had any time recently to pursue it as I hardly have time to sleep. On the bright side, I'm always down to watch a good sitcom or a comedy movie (the funnier, the better), but I will never say no to a Tom Cruise action movie or F1. I love to travel and am always "on the move" so I always try to discover new things, whether it's a museum, music, food, a historical building, or just being outdoors enjoying the day.

The two subjects discussed by SPECPOL this year are "Ensuring the Safety of Journalists in Conflict Zones" and "Safeguarding Peacekeepers in Armed Conflict." Due to the broad spectrum of these topics, delegates are advised to approach them carefully, keeping in mind their country's policies as well as the objectives of cooperation and diplomacy along with SPECPOL's mission. We know that there may be questions regarding the topics because of how specific and in-depth the topics are. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Avery or myself; we would be more than pleased to assist you. Avery and I know you will make this one of the best conferences, full of great people and unique ideas. We hope to see you all in March and wish you all the best of luck!

Best,

Renata Solórzano

Special, Political, Decolonization Committee, Session II

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A Note on the NHSMUN Difference

Esteemed Faculty and Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2025! We are Terry Wang and Jordan Baker, and we are this year's Secretary-General and Director-General. Thank you for choosing to attend NHSMUN, the world's largest and most diverse Model United Nations conference for secondary school students. We are thrilled to welcome you to New York City in March.

As a space for collaboration, consensus, and compromise, NHSMUN strives to transform today's brightest thinkers, speakers, and collaborators into tomorrow's leaders. Our organization provides a uniquely tailored experience for all through innovative and accessible programming. We believe that an emphasis on education through simulation is paramount to the Model UN experience, and this idea permeates throughout numerous aspects of the conference:

Realism and accuracy: Although a perfect simulation of the UN is never possible, we believe that one of the core educational responsibilities of MUN conferences is to educate students about how the UN System works. Each NHSMUN committee is a simulation of a real deliberative body so that delegates can research what their country has said in the committee. Our topics are chosen from the issues currently on the agenda of that committee (except historical committees, which take topics from the appropriate time period). We also strive to invite real UN, NGO, and field experts into each committee through our committee speakers program. Moreover, we arrange meetings between students and the actual UN Permanent Mission of the country they are representing. Our delegates have the incredible opportunity to conduct first-hand research, asking thought-provoking questions to current UN representatives and experts in their respective fields of study. These exclusive resources are only available due to IMUNA's formal association with the United Nations Department of Global Communications and consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. No other conference goes so far to deeply immerse students into the UN System.

Educational emphasis, even for awards: At the heart of NHSMUN lies education and compromise. Part of what makes NHSMUN so special is its diverse delegate base. As such, when NHSMUN distributes awards, we strongly de-emphasize their importance in comparison to the educational value of Model UN as an activity. NHSMUN seeks to reward students who excel in the arts of compromise and diplomacy. More importantly, we seek to develop an environment in which delegates can employ their critical thought processes and share ideas with their counterparts from around the world. Given our delegates' plurality of perspectives and experiences, we center our programming around the values of diplomacy and teamwork. In particular, our daises look for and promote constructive leadership that strives towards consensus, as real ambassadors do in the United Nations.

Debate founded on strong knowledge and accessibility: With knowledgeable staff members and delegates from over 70 countries, NHSMUN can facilitate an enriching experience reliant on substantively rigorous debate. To ensure this high quality of debate, our staff members produce detailed, accessible, and comprehensive topic guides (like the one below) to prepare delegates for the nuances inherent in each global issue. This process takes over six months, during which the Directors who lead our committees develop their topics with the valuable input of expert contributors. Because these topics are always changing and evolving, NHSMUN also produces update papers intended to bridge the gap of time between when the background guides are published and when committee starts in March. As such, this guide is designed to be a launching point from which delegates should delve further into their topics. The detailed knowledge that our Directors provide in this background guide through diligent research aims to increase critical thinking within delegates at NHSMUN.

Extremely engaged staff: At NHSMUN, our staffers care deeply about delegates' experiences and what they take away from their time at NHSMUN. Before the conference, our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained rigorously through hours of workshops and exercises both virtual and in-person to provide the best conference experience possible. At the conference,

delegates will have the opportunity to meet their dais members prior to the first committee session, where they may engage one-on-one to discuss their committees and topics. Our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained and empowered to be experts on their topics and they are always available to rapidly answer any questions delegates may have prior to the conference. Our Directors and Assistant Directors read every position paper submitted to NHSMUN and provide thoughtful comments on those submitted by the feedback deadline. Our staff aims not only to tailor the committee experience to delegates' reflections and research but also to facilitate an environment where all delegates' thoughts can be heard.

Empowering participation: The UN relies on the voices of all of its member states to create resolutions most likely to make a meaningful impact on the world. That is our philosophy at NHSMUN too. We believe that to properly delve into an issue and produce fruitful debate, it is crucial to focus the entire energy and attention of the room on the topic at hand. Our Rules of Procedure and our staff focus on making every voice in the committee heard, regardless of each delegate's country assignment or skill level. Additionally, unlike many other conferences, we also emphasize delegate participation after the conference. MUN delegates are well researched and aware of the UN's priorities, and they can serve as the vanguard for action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, we are proud to connect students with other action-oriented organizations to encourage further work on the topics.

Focused committee time: We feel strongly that face-to-face interpersonal connections during debate are critical to producing superior committee experiences and allow for the free flow of ideas. Ensuring policies based on equality and inclusion is one way in which NHSMUN guarantees that every delegate has an equal opportunity to succeed in committee. In order to allow communication and collaboration to be maximized during committee, we have a very dedicated administrative team who work throughout the conference to type up, format, and print draft resolutions and working papers.

As always, we welcome any questions or concerns about the substantive program at NHSMUN 2025 and would be happy to discuss NHSMUN pedagogy with faculty or delegates.

Delegates, it is our sincerest hope that your time at NHSMUN will be thought-provoking and stimulating. NHSMUN is an incredible time to learn, grow, and embrace new opportunities. We look forward to seeing you work both as students and global citizens at the conference.

Best,

Terry Wang
Secretary-General

Jordan Baker
Director-General

A Note on Research and Preparation

Delegate research and preparation is a critical element of attending NHSMUN and enjoying the debate experience. We have provided this Background Guide to introduce the topics that will be discussed in your committee. We encourage and expect each of you to critically explore the selected topics and be able to identify and analyze their intricacies upon arrival to NHSMUN in March.

The task of preparing for the conference can be challenging, but to assist delegates, we have updated our [Beginner Delegate Guide](#) and [Advanced Delegate Guide](#). In particular, these guides contain more detailed instructions on how to prepare a position paper and excellent sources that delegates can use for research. Use these resources to your advantage. They can help transform a sometimes overwhelming task into what it should be: an engaging, interesting, and rewarding experience.

To accurately represent a country, delegates must be able to articulate its policies. Accordingly, NHSMUN requires each delegation (the one or two delegates representing a country in a committee) to write a position paper for each topic on the committee's agenda. In delegations with two students, we strongly encourage each student to research each topic to ensure that they are prepared to debate no matter which topic is selected first. More information about how to write and format position papers can be found in the NHSMUN Research Guide. To summarize, position papers should be structured into three sections:

I: Topic Background – This section should describe the history of the topic as it would be described by the delegate's country. Delegates do not need to give an exhaustive account of the topic, but rather focus on the details that are most important to the delegation's policy and proposed solutions.

II: Country Policy – This section should discuss the delegation's policy regarding the topic. Each paper should state the policy in plain terms and include the relevant statements, statistics, and research that support the effectiveness of the policy. Comparisons with other global issues are also appropriate here.

III. Proposed Solutions – This section should detail the delegation's proposed solutions to address the topic. Descriptions of each solution should be thorough. Each idea should clearly connect to the specific problem it aims to solve and identify potential obstacles to implementation and how they can be avoided. The solution should be a natural extension of the country's policy.

Each topic's position paper should be **no more than 10 pages** long double-spaced with standard margins and font size. **We recommend 3–5 pages per topic as a suitable length.** The paper must be written from the perspective of your assigned country and should articulate the policies you will espouse at the conference.

Each delegation is responsible for sending a copy of its papers to their committee Directors via [myDais](#) on or before **February 21, 2025**. If a delegate wishes to receive detailed feedback from the committee's dais, a position must be submitted on or before **January 31, 2025**. The papers received by this earlier deadline will be reviewed by the dais of each committee and returned prior to your arrival at the conference.

Complete instructions for how to submit position papers will be sent to faculty advisers via email. If delegations are unable to submit their position papers on time, please contact us at info@imuna.org.

Delegations that do not submit position papers will be ineligible for awards.

Committee History

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) is also known as the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly. It operates under the United Nations General Assembly, which means it is a deliberative body within the UN system.¹ SPECPOL was initially established to address issues related to the decolonization processes of regions still under colonial control. However, SPECPOL's mission has expanded to broader political issues and contemporary crises after the merger of the Special Political Committee and Decolonization Committee by Resolution 47/233 in 1993.²

SPECPOL has worked worldwide. The committee primarily focuses on decolonization efforts, which have historically been in Africa, the Pacific, and the Caribbean. However, due to increased decolonization efforts, SPECPOL now puts effort into territories that are not self-governed. It also treats matters such as the effects of atomic radiation, peacekeeping operations, which are concentrated primarily in the Middle East and Africa, and human rights for marginalized groups.³ As well as being involved in space exploration and discussions on peaceful and safe uses of outer space.

SPECPOL has played a crucial role in the discussion and endorsement of UN peacekeeping efforts, as well as in the transfer of more than 80 areas to independence or self-governance. It has also discussed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Palestinian refugees. SPECPOL's limitations include non-binding resolutions, a lack of executive authority, and a member-state political standstill; which often causes trouble in enforcing the committee's resolution. SPECPOL has a broad mandate and goes beyond traditional political matters. The committee operates by consensus and adopts around 50 draft resolutions per annual meeting. Since SPECPOL is one of the six main committees of the United Nations General Assembly, all 193 member states compose the committee. Unlike most of the other United Nations bodies, there is no general debate for the committee, but rather the committee establishes an agenda, where topics are submitted by member states and then the topics are ordered and prioritized for discussion. The standard resolution procedure is used, with draft resolutions and amendments, concluding with voting. This process repeats for every topic in discussion until the agenda has been exhausted or there is no longer sufficient time to continue.

It is also important to mention that articles 10-22 of the UN Charter are particularly important for the committee since they define the powers of the General Assembly, which are to let member states influence, recommend, and oversee pressing issues through means of discussion and voting. Also, The General Assembly Resolutions Related to Peacekeeping (ex: Resolution 47/71, 1992) provide a framework and guidelines to review and assess UN peacekeeping missions. They outline peacekeeping operations' mandates, operational conduct, and strategic goals, which are addressing current political issues, urging dialogue, and proposing solutions. Recently, the committee has worked closely with The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to provide humanitarian assistance, healthcare services, and education to Palestinian refugees.⁴ Moreover, the committee has established the UN Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara conflict. Although the planned referendum is yet to be held, SPECPOL has worked in urging negotiations, and ceasefires, and constantly keeping this matter on the international agenda.⁵ The Special Political and Decolonization Committee has played an important role within the United Nations since its establishment in 1993, proving to be crucial for the protection of human rights and international cooperation in current global challenges.

1 General Assembly of the United Nations. Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth Committee). About the Fourth Committee. Accessed September 19, 2024. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/>

2 UN General Assembly. Resolution 47/233, Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, A/RES/47/233. July 28 1993 https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/a_res_47_233.pdf

3 United Nations. Approving Draft Resolution, Fourth Committee Endorses Special Peacekeeping Committee's Proposals on Peace Operations. June 5, 2024. <https://press.un.org/en/2024/gaspd799.doc.htm>

4 United Nations. "Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and UNRWA." United Nations Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee). Accessed September 19, 2024. <https://www.un.org/unrwa/>.

5 United Nations. "The Question of Western Sahara." United Nations Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee). Accessed September 19, 2024. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/western-sahara.shtml>.



SPECPOL
NHSMUN 2025



TOPIC A:
ENSURING THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS IN CONFLICT ZONES

Photo Credit: Maysun Abu-Khdeir Granados

Introduction

Journalism is the backbone of a well-functioning society for governments. The United Nations (UN) defines the media's watchdog purpose. This allows civil societies to engage with political authorities and keep information flowing through communities.¹ They have established several standards for journalists and media under international law. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression[...] without interference[...] regardless of frontiers."²

Uninhibited access to information empowers societies to help people gain control over their own lives. Free media is the most powerful tool for fighting corruption and paving the path for development. The UN notes that all civilians should have access to true and unbiased information that represents several opinions. James Wolfensohn, former president of the World Bank, declared that "a free and professional press is a society's voice." Journalism ensures that a country holds all authorities accountable for their actions.

Barriers that journalists may face can be anything from physical harm to legal repercussions. Violence against journalists is one of the most dangerous threats. It is prevalent in conflict zones, where the rule of law tends to weaken. Especially during war, violence against journalists can be disguised as accidental casualties, which makes it even more difficult to hold aggressors responsible. This lack of consequence is known as impunity, which is a major concern for the UN.³ Unpunished violence only encourages further repression against journalists, which creates a dangerous cycle.⁴

Advances in technology have generated both challenges and advantages for journalists. When traditional media is censored or the government controls major news outlets, social media is a powerful tool for independent journalists to continue their work. However, the internet has increased misinformation and disinformation, which poses a major threat to civilians and legitimate journalists. Social media is also a platform for anonymous hate speech and cybercrime which have

intimidated many journalists in the past. The internet has also reignited debates on freedom of speech versus the limitations of hate speech. Governments struggle to enforce regulations that protect journalists from bias without suppressing genuine criticism. Some countries manipulate laws meant to prevent discrimination or propaganda to censor journalists doing their jobs.

Citizen journalists have revolutionized how information is sent to the public, but they are also more prone to inaccurate information. Minority journalists face disproportionately high risks in their line of work. Gender-specific threats silence female journalists and can subject them to discrimination.⁵ Other forms of prejudice often also lead to biased media that is unrepresentative of all of a country's citizens. Journalism has the potential to enhance minority voices which is why attempts to subdue minorities cannot be tolerated.

History and Description of the Issue

Protecting Free Press and Journalism in Conflict Zones

Protections for journalists and members of the media exist under international law. In 1869, the Geneva Conventions were adopted. They were the result of a series of international diplomatic meetings that produced several agreements. In 1949, the Geneva Conventions were updated and are still used by the UN.⁶ Today, the Geneva Conventions are mostly

1 "World Press Freedom Day," United Nations, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/press-freedom-day/background>.

2 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 217 A, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, A/RES/217, December 10, 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

3 "International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists," United Nations, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-impunity-crimes-against-journalists>.

4 United Nations, "International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists."

5 *Acting on UN Human Rights Council Resolution 33/2 on the Safety of Journalists*, (London: Article 19, 2017), https://www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/safety_of_journalists_WEB_23.10.pdf.

6 "Geneva Convention," History, Accessed August 25, 2024. <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/geneva-convention>.

used to regulate armed conflict and aim to protect civilians.⁷ Article 79 asserts that journalists reporting on armed conflict are considered civilians.⁸ This clause grants journalists' safety under international humanitarian law, protecting them from hostilities.⁹

Many journalists continue to be threatened in conflict zones. Conflict zones are regions with armed conflict, human rights violations, or institutional weakness.¹⁰ In 2023, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) revealed that 38 journalists and media workers were killed in conflict zones.¹¹ UNESCO also noted that their research does not include the deaths of journalists outside of their jobs, as well as journalists who have fled or stopped working.¹²

One example of the impacts of conflict zones on the safety of journalists can be found in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Committee to Protect Journalists found that over 100 journalists and media workers had been killed since October 2023.¹³ In 2023, journalists in Gaza faced unique risks with over 75 percent of all journalists who were killed in the conflict.¹⁴ Reporters in the country face injury, a lack of electricity, and pressure from the Israeli government and other political forces to report on the conflict.¹⁵

Beyond physical harm, journalists working in unstable regions

often fear imprisonment. In 2023, 65 percent of imprisoned journalists faced anti-state charges, such as false news and terrorism, and were jailed without knowing their charges.¹⁶ Article nine of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that anyone who is arrested must be promptly informed "of the reasons for his arrest [and] of any charges against him."¹⁷ Thus, many journalists are imprisoned unlawfully and these unfair charges pose a major security risk for journalist safety. Belarus holds 28 journalists in custody and punishes journalists for extremism. The 2020 election of President Aleksandr Lukashenko was disputed. Activists have stated that they believe these arrests are the result of the government's crackdown on members of the media covering the election.¹⁸

Attacks against journalists often go unpunished. In 2022, 86 percent of crimes against journalists were unresolved or uninvestigated.¹⁹ This exemption supports aggressors and sends fear into society as a whole.²⁰ It can pressure journalists to self-censor and discourage them from public-interest reporting.²¹ As a result, holding aggressors accountable can minimize future dangers journalists face and help them regain confidence. The UN reports that exemption leads to more killings and is a sign that institutional systems are collapsing.²² To combat this pressing issue, the UN has implemented the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue

7 "The Geneva Conventions and their Commentaries," International Committee of the Red Cross, accessed July 22, 2024, <https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/geneva-conventions-and-their-commentaries>.
 8 "APPENDIX I: Protection of journalists in war zones," Reporters Without Borders, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://safety.rsf.org/appendix-i-protection-of-journalists-in-war-zones/>.
 9 "Protection of Journalists," International Committee of the Red Cross, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/protection-journalists>.
 10 The Geneva Academy, *Due Diligence: Defining 'Conflict-Affected' and 'High-Risk Areas'*.
 11 "2023 : Alarming increase in journalists killed in conflict zones" United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, July 20, 2024. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/2023-alarming-increase-journalists-killed-conflict-zones>.
 12 "2023 : Alarming increase in journalists killed in conflict zones"
 13 "Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war," *Committee to Protect Journalists*, July 9, 2024, <https://cpj.org/2024/07/journalist-casualties-in-the-israel-gaza-conflict/>.
 14 "Nearly 75% of journalists killed in 2023 died in Israel's war on Gaza: CPJ," *Al Jazeera*, February 15, 2024. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/15/nearly-75-of-journalists-killed-in-2023-died-in-israels-war-on-gaza-cpj>.
 15 Parvaz D., "In Gaza, Palestinian journalists are documenting a war they're also trying to survive," *National Public Radio (NPR)*, March 15, 2024. <https://www.npr.org/2024/03/15/1221513717/gaza-journalists-israel-hamas>.
 16 "Attacks on the Press in 2023," *Committee to Protect Journalists*, accessed June 10, 2024, <https://cpj.org/2024/02/attacks-on-the-press-in-2023-2/>.
 17 United Nations General Assembly, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Resolution 2200A (XXI), December 16, 1966, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.
 18 *Committee to Protect Journalists*, "Attacks on the Press in 2023."
 19 United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, *Knowing the Truth is Protecting the Truth* (Paris: United Nations, 2022), <https://www.unesco.org/reports/safety-journalists/2022/en>.
 20 United Nations, "International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists."
 21 Xuanjie Huang, "Silencing the Truth: The Global Crisis of Press Freedom and Journalist Safety," *Human Rights First*, April 4, 2024. <https://humanrightsfirst.org/library/silencing-the-truth-the-global-crisis-of-press-freedom-and-journalist-safety/>.
 22 United Nations, "International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists."

of Impunity.²³ This initiative aims to raise awareness, set standards and make policies, monitor and report data, and host capacity-building training.²⁴

The dangers of conflict zones and political instability can often create zones of silence, where media workers are too afraid to operate.²⁵ In these areas, the public loses access to independent and nonpartisan news. Instead, they are often fed biased information that often helps the oppressing group advance their own interests.²⁶ For example, many Mexican journalists have reported being threatened or pressured by corrupt officials or organized crime gangs.²⁷ Jesús Medina is a rural journalist who focused on water access issues for his community and reported on the impacts of proposed infrastructure projects. He had quit his job after receiving threats and seeing his house watched.²⁸ Zones of silence ultimately prevent citizens, especially in conflict zones, from receiving accurate and up-to-date information.

The work of journalists around the world must be protected. This is especially true for journalists working in conflict zones. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) found that both international and local journalism can aid in conflict resolution.²⁹ International media can influence governments and inspire political change. On the other hand, local media can restore levels of trust and self-worth in a population emerging from violence. Journalists can also keep citizens informed on dangers in the area, allowing them to stay safe.³⁰

Irene Khan, UN Special Rapporteur for freedom of expression and opinion, stated that threats to journalists have been rising worldwide. It has grown especially in backsliding democracies and totalitarian countries.³¹ Democratic backsliding is a declining value in democratic institutions. It is often caused by loss of civil liberties and discrimination of minorities.³² This shows how dangers to journalists can correlate to corrupt governments.

23 “UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity,” United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://www.unesco.org/en/safety-journalists/un-plan-action>.

24 United Nations, “UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.”

25 United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, “2023: Alarming increase in journalists killed in conflict zones.”

26 Robert Mahoney, “Zone of Silence,” *Committee to Protect Journalists*, April 25, 2017, <https://cpj.org/2017/04/zone-of-silence/>.

27 Violeta Santiago, “How Violence Against Journalists in Mexico Creates Zones of Silence,” International Anti-Corruption Conference, August 12, 2024. <https://iaccseries.org/how-violence-against-journalists-in-mexico-creates-zones-of-silence/>.

28 Santiago, “How Violence Against Journalists in Mexico Creates Zones of Silence.”

29 Yll Bajraktari and Christina Parajon, “The Role of Media in Conflict,” *United States Institute of Peace*, June 1, 2007, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2007/06/role-media-conflict>.

30 Yll Bajraktari and Christina Parajon, “The Role of Media in Conflict.”

31 “UN expert warns of dangerous decline in media freedom,” The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, July 8, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/07/un-expert-warns-dangerous-decline-media-freedom>.

32 “Democratic backsliding,” Carnegie Council, accessed July 22, 2024, <https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/explore-engage/key-terms/>

Journalists take cover from attacks while covering a protest in Egypt

Credit: Alisdare Hickson



Especially when reporting in areas of war, journalists have the responsibility of providing objective and accurate information. Misinformation and propaganda are a major threat to conflict resolution. They tend to promote disagreement. The difference between them relies on the intention. On one hand, misinformation is unintentionally wrong information. On the other hand, propaganda is information purposefully used to influence public opinion.³³ An example that shows the importance of accurate information can be seen in the Mindanao conflict in the Philippines. The Mindanao conflict is a guerrilla war between the Philippine government and Muslim separatists.³⁴ In 2017, a survey found that 87 percent of Filipinos with internet access trusted information found on social media more than mainstream news.³⁵ On Facebook and Twitter, filters for fake news do not work when information is posted in the local Mindanao language.³⁶ Misinformation spreads rapidly without proper regulation and professional journalism on social media.

Efforts are being made to educate journalists on how to stay safe in unstable situations. The Peace Journalism Lab, run under Aristotle University Thessaloniki, helps to provide emerging journalists with the tools that they need such as peace journalism.³⁷ Peace journalism is a type of reporting that highlights solutions to disputes compared to simply addressing the current event.³⁸ This is to increase the balance of conflict perspectives and to have a better understanding of nonviolent solutions.³⁹

Other types of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) help to keep journalists safe. Forbidden Stories, an organization

that investigates the murders and imprisonments of journalists worldwide, tries to continue the work of silenced journalists.⁴⁰ These watchdog groups reduce exemptions for those who attack journalists.⁴¹ Combatting the violence against journalists in conflict zones requires the aid of governments, third-party organizations, and civilians alike.

The Effects of Censorship on Citizens' Political Power

Accurate information has an undeniably positive impact on political engagement.⁴² This is especially important in processes of state-building. It allows civilians to contribute to shaping their government. However, many across the world do not have easy access to local newspapers or media sources.

In the United States, 70 million people live in a community without a newspaper or are actively at risk of losing access.⁴³ This has directly resulted in lowering the amount of citizens who vote or engage in the democratic process. In 2021, a study found that a lack of news media or reliable journalism led to an increase in ballot roll off.⁴⁴ Ballot roll off is when citizens turn up to vote but do not complete the process. Many citizens who want to vote realize that they do not have enough information to make a decision.⁴⁵

Despite the clear benefits of the media in the democratic process, many newspapers in the US are under threat of closure. In 2023, there were two and a half weekly newspaper closures on average, which was an increase from 2022.⁴⁶ Since 1994, the Associated Press has estimated that 3,000 newspapers will have

democratic-backsliding.

33 Bruce Lannes Smith, "Propaganda," *Britannica*, August 8, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/propaganda>.

34 "In the Philippines a decades-long conflict nears its endgame," *The Economist*, May 23, 2024. <https://www.economist.com/asia/2024/05/23/in-the-philippines-a-decades-long-conflict-nears-its-endgame>.

35 Stavros et al., "Disinformation in Conflict Environments in Asia."

36 Stavros et al., "Disinformation in Conflict Environments in Asia."

37 "Reporting from the Front Lines: Keeping Journalists Safe in War Zones," United Nations, accessed June 9, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/reporting-front-lines-keeping-journalists-safe-war-zones>.

38 United Nations, "Reporting from the Front Lines: Keeping Journalists Safe in War Zones."

39 Peace Science Digest. "Peace Journalism and Media Ethics." War Prevention Initiative. March 14, 2016. <https://warpreventioninitiative.org/peace-science-digest/peace-journalism-and-media-ethics/>.

40 Huang, "Silencing the Truth: The Global Crisis of Press Freedom and Journalist Safety."

41 Huang, "Silencing the Truth: The Global Crisis of Press Freedom and Journalist Safety."

42 Josh Stearns, "How We Know Journalism Is Good for Democracy," *Democracy Fund*, May 3, 2024, <https://democracyfund.org/idea/how-we-know-journalism-is-good-for-democracy/>.

43 Stearns, "How We Know Journalism Is Good for Democracy,"

44 Christopher Chapp and Peter Aehl, "Newspapers and political participation: The relationship between ballot rolloff and local newspaper circulation," *Newspaper Research Journal* 42, no. 2 (May 2021): 235-252, <https://doi.org/10.1177/07395329211014968>.

45 Chapp and Aehl, "Newspapers and political participation: The relationship between ballot rolloff and local newspaper circulation."

46 David Bauder, "Decline in local news outlets is accelerating despite efforts to help," *The Associated Press (AP)*, November 16, 2023.

closed in the US, and over 40,000 journalists and members of the media will have lost their jobs.⁴⁷ A study found that low local news circulation correlates directly with high ballot roll off, decreasing political participation. Information can help reduce the imbalance between education levels, especially for political education.⁴⁸

In addition to a lack of access, censorship can also hinder citizen's ability to participate in politics. By omitting certain information, governments can suppress dissent, which restrains democracy. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reveals that laws have historically been used to punish and censor journalists.⁴⁹ This can range from misinterpreted international clauses to restraining national legislation.⁵⁰ A lack of a clear definition of censorship can put too much power into a government's hands. Standardized censorship takes away from the autonomy

of citizens, who have no choice in the information they consume.⁵¹

Legal threats are frequent in modern censorship. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression emphasizes that states must stop the weaponization of courts against journalists.⁵² Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP suits) are meant to discourage critics from producing negative publicity.⁵³ SLAPP suits are primarily used to overwhelm journalists and prevent them from producing further work. Many journalists drain their resources, time, and effort to dispute the charges.⁵⁴

Some countries practice censorship under authoritarian governments. These governments have taken almost complete control over the media. They put intense pressure on journalists

<https://apnews.com/article/local-newspapers-closing-jobs-3ad83659a6ee070ae3f39144dd840c1b>

47 Bauder, "Decline in local news outlets is accelerating despite efforts to help,"

48 Chapp and Aehl, "Newspapers and political participation: The relationship between ballot rolloff and local newspaper circulation."

49 The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Reinforcing media freedom and the safety of journalists in the digital age - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, A/HRC/50/29, April 20, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5029-reinforcing-media-freedom-and-safety-journalists-digital-age>.

50 Julie Gorlewski, "Censorship hinders critical thinking and infringes on readers' rights," *University at Buffalo*, <https://ed.buffalo.edu/magazine/issues/fall-2023/censorship.html>.

51 Gorlewski, "Censorship hinders critical thinking and infringes on readers' rights."

52 "Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression," United Nations, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-freedom-of-opinion-and-expression>.

53 "SLAPP Suit," Cornell Law School, accessed July 10, 2024, https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/slapp_suit.

54 "SLAPP Suit," Cornell Law School.

Citizens hold a memorial for Chinese journalist Liu Xiaobo

Credit: Voice of America



to comply with their rules.⁵⁵ These political leaders attempt to manipulate the media to their advantage. Because they rely on partisan media that supports their policies, governments limit access to independent journalism.

China has one of the most restrictive media environments, which includes directly blocking many US sites and using legal tactics to pressure journalists.⁵⁶ In 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that all Chinese media must reflect the party's will, safeguard the party's authority, and safeguard the party's unity.⁵⁷ Essentially, any media that criticized or opposed the government would be punished. As of 2023, 44 journalists are imprisoned in China for not following these guidelines.⁵⁸ Liu Xiaobo, Nobel Peace Prize winner, and human rights activist urged Chinese authorities to comply with freedom of speech guidelines in their constitution. In 2008, Xiaobo also advocated for China's gradual shift in the direction of democracy in his manifesto *Charta 08*.⁵⁹ He was sentenced to 11 years of imprisonment for this work.⁶⁰

Other governments utilize censorship more discreetly. Many countries are beginning to mimic authoritarian regimes by erasing critical news and building state media brands.⁶¹ This stealth censorship helps governments appear like democracies while still having subtle control over citizens. Tamoá Calzadilla was the former investigations editor at Venezuela's most popular newspaper, *Ultimas Noticias*. In 2014, anonymous buyers took over the paper and demanded that she make politically motivated changes to her story. After resigning, she described how her experience reflected a shift in traditional

censorship. She stated, "This is not your classic censorship, where they put a soldier in the door of the newspaper and assault the journalists. Instead, they buy the newspaper, sue the reporters, and drag them into court, they eavesdrop on your communications and then broadcast them on state television. This is censorship for the 21st century."⁶²

Freedom House actively monitors global press freedom. In their measurement, they consider robust coverage of political news, guaranteed safety of journalists, minimal state intrusion, and the lack of legal and economic pressures on journalists.⁶³ In 2016, they found that press freedom has been at its lowest point in 13 years.⁶⁴ Threats to media workers and independent media in authoritarian settings, only 13 percent of the world truly enjoys a free press.⁶⁵

In many democracies, partisan forces attack the credibility of independent media that oppose them. Partisanship is a strong loyalty to one political party.⁶⁶ They will criticize opinionated journalism as biased and inaccurate. Journalist Jonathan M. Ladd argues that political leaders will undermine trust in the news media as a whole.⁶⁷ A correlation was found between low political bias and high trust in the media.⁶⁸ Seth C. Lewis, professor at the University of Oregon, claims that reducing distrust in journalism is critical because it is typically the highest when it is the most necessary.⁶⁹ This can be a sign of an increase in authoritarian tendencies around the world.⁷⁰

Journalist Rana Ayyub is an advocate for press freedom who argues that news channels in India are an arm of the

55 Abramowitz, "Press Freedom's Dark Horizon."

56 Beina Xu and Eleanor Albert, "Media Censorship in China," *Council on Foreign Relations*, February 17, 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/media-censorship-china>.

57 Xu and Albert, "Media Censorship in China."

58 "Journalists Imprisoned," Committee to Protect Journalists, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.cpj.org/imprisoned.php>.

59 The Nobel Prize, "Liu Xiaobo."

60 "Liu Xiaobo," The Nobel Prize, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2010/xiaobo/facts/>.

61 Philip Bennett and Moises Naim, "21st-century censorship," *Columbia Journalism Review*, January 5, 2015, https://www.cjr.org/cover_story/21st_century_censorship.php.

62 Bennett and Naim, "21st-century censorship."

63 Michael J. Abramowitz, "Press Freedom's Dark Horizon," *Freedom House*, 2017, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/press-freedoms-dark-horizon>.

64 Abramowitz, "Press Freedom's Dark Horizon."

65 Abramowitz, "Press Freedom's Dark Horizon."

66 Brian Duignan, "partisanship," *Britannica*, accessed July 22, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/11BfooBQ8Os69pijYkNrvaibdvdqEmKZkHly4Efws8A/edit>.

67 Jonathan M. Ladd, *Why Americans Hate the Media and How It Matters*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, December 2011), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7spr6>.

68 Ladd, *Why Americans Hate the Media and How It Matters*.

69 Seth C. Lewis, "Lack of trust in the news media, institutional weakness, and relational journalism as a potential way forward," *Sage Journals* 20, no. 1 (2018): 44-47, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1464884918808134>.

70 Lewis, "Lack of trust in the news media, institutional weakness, and relational journalism as a potential way forward," 44-47.

government.⁷¹ Since most newspapers are dependent on revenue and ads from the government, if they do not appease the government, they often lose their platform. For that reason, she calls for citizens to report news stories of their own on social media.⁷² This can help them limit the government's control over media outlets.

Growing polarization and distrust in the media around the world have led to confirmation bias. Confirmation bias is a type of self-censorship when people pick and choose what sources to believe in. This can lead to radicalization, extremist opinions, and political bias. Dan Kahan, a professor at Yale Law School, conducted a study that demonstrates how political affiliation can completely misrepresent numerical reasoning ability. This can lead participants to ignore evidence completely when it does not align with their beliefs.⁷³ Those who had numerical reasoning abilities only processed information correctly when the data matched their political belief.⁷⁴

This distrust in the media and polarized groups can directly weaken democracy. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace found that severe polarization correlates with serious democratic decline.⁷⁵ The Varieties of Democracy dataset was used to measure democracy around the globe. Since 1950, half of the states with high levels of polarization, including Argentina, Chile, Fiji, Uruguay, and Thailand, experienced democratic declines.⁷⁶ Without giving citizens the full

autonomy to access diverse public journalism, governments around the world are contributing to this issue.

Impact of Social Media and Technology

Journalism as previously known has changed since the rise of the internet. While this change has incredible opportunities for sharing information, new challenges are emerging. Social media is accessible and has an especially broad audience. It removes traditional barriers to journalism by allowing nonprofessional user-based content to succeed.⁷⁷ This has redistributed power in a society.⁷⁸ Through social media, users can also overcome state-controlled media.⁷⁹

Civilians no longer need media institutions to spread a message and anyone can take part in activism.⁸⁰ In a Pew Research Center survey, 80 percent of US adults say that social media raises public awareness about political and social issues.⁸¹ 77 percent of respondents also believe that media platforms can create sustained social movements.⁸² For example, the Arab Spring was a wave of pro-democracy protests.⁸³ Online, ordinary civilians could expose political corruption, spread democratic sentiments, and update outsiders on current events.⁸⁴ CNN journalist Octavia Nasr describes social media as a “megaphone” for the Arab Spring rebellions.⁸⁵

Social media can also be used as a way to encourage citizens

71 H.J. Mai and A Martinez, “Rana Ayyub fights for press freedom in India despite harassment and death threats,” *National Public Radio*, January 3, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/01/03/1146590204/rana-ayyub-india-online-harassment-threats>.

72 Mai and Martinez, “Rana Ayyub fights for press freedom in India despite harassment and death threats.”

73 David Gurteen, “Tribal Thinking.”

74 Gurteen, “Tribal Thinking.”

75 Jennifer McCoy and Benjamin Press, “What Happens When Democracies Become Perniciously Polarized?” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, January 18, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2022/01/what-happens-when-democracies-become-perniciously-polarized?lang=en>.

76 McCoy and Press, “What Happens When Democracies Become Perniciously Polarized?”

77 Danny Crichton, Ben Christel, Aaditya Shidham, Alex Valderrama, Jeremy Karmel, “How has Journalism Changed?” Journalism in the Digital Age, accessed July 12, 2024, https://cs.stanford.edu/people/eroberts/cs201/projects/2010-11/Journalism/index3f9d.html?page_id=38.

78 Liesbeth Hermans, Maurice Vergeer, and Leen d’Haenens, “Internet in the Daily Life of Journalists: Explaining the use of the Internet by Work-Related Characteristics and Professional Opinions,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 15, no. 1 (October 2009): 138-157, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2009.01497.x>.

79 Bolane Olaniran and Indi Williams, “Social Media Effects: Hijacking Democracy and Civility in Civic Engagement,” *PubMed Central*, (February 2020): 77-94, doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-36525-7_5.

80 Alfred Hermida, “Social Journalism: Exploring how Social Media is Shaping Journalism,” *The Handbook of Global Online Journalism* (2012): 309-328, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203407615-12/social-media-journalism-times-crisis-axel-bruns>.

81 Brooke Auxier and Colleen McClain, “Americans think social media can help build movements, but can also be a distraction,” *Pew Research Center*, September 9, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/09/09/americans-think-social-media-can-help-build-movements-but-can-also-be-a-distraction/>.

82 Auxier and McClain, “Americans think social media can help build movements, but can also be a distraction.”

83 Nian Yan, “Social Media Is Redistributing Power,” *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 9, no. 6 (June 2021): 107-118, <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2021.96010>.

84 Yan, “Social Media Is Redistributing Power.”

85 Yan, “Social Media Is Redistributing Power.”

to get politically engaged. One study found that political messages shared through social networks encouraged people to learn more.⁸⁶ This would often mobilize a vast group of individuals.⁸⁷ Many anecdotal accounts suggest that social media has made a major difference in recent elections.⁸⁸ 79 percent of US adults believe that the influx of information on social media can distract people from truly important issues.⁸⁹ Social media has also been used as a way to empower disruptive voices, promote xenophobia, neo-Nazism, and more.⁹⁰

Highly accessible information on social media has contributed to fake news and misinformation. The Centre for International Governance Innovation found that 86 percent of online global citizens have been exposed to fake news and believe it to be true.⁹¹ The shocking appeal of fake news prompts users to interact with the content, boosting it and making it difficult

to avoid.

In the 2013 Malaysian General Election, the ruling party was accused of hiring 40,000 foreign workers from Bangladesh to vote.⁹² Although this rumor was disputed by the Election Commission and other national agencies, the fake news encouraged many to harass those who resembled foreign voters on polling day.⁹³ This also affects professional journalists. The 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer surveyed 33,000 respondents on their levels of trust in non-governmental organizations, businesses, government, and media.⁹⁴ Their report found that only 36 percent of respondents rated journalists as very credible.⁹⁵

Journalists face many direct risks on the internet as well, including online harassment and privacy concerns. One

86 Robert M. Bond, Christopher J. Fariss, Jason J. Jones, Adam D. I. Kramer, Cameron Marlow, Jaime E. Settle, James H. Fowler, “A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization,” *Nature* 489 (September 2012): 295-298, <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature11421>.

87 Bond et al., “A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization.”

88 Nicholas A. Christakis and James H. Fowler, *The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2009).

89 Auxier and McClain, “Americans think social media can help build movements, but can also be a distraction.”

90 Olaniran and Williams, “Social Media Effects: Hijacking Democracy and Civility in Civic Engagement.”

91 Centre for International Governance Innovation, *Fake News: A Global Epidemic Vast Majority (86%) of Online Global Citizens Have Been Exposed to it* (Toronto: Ipsos, June 2019), <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/cigi-fake-news-global-epidemic>.

92 Chong Lip Teck, “The negative impact of fake news,” *The Straits Times*, May 6, 2017, <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/the-negative-impact-of-fake-news>.

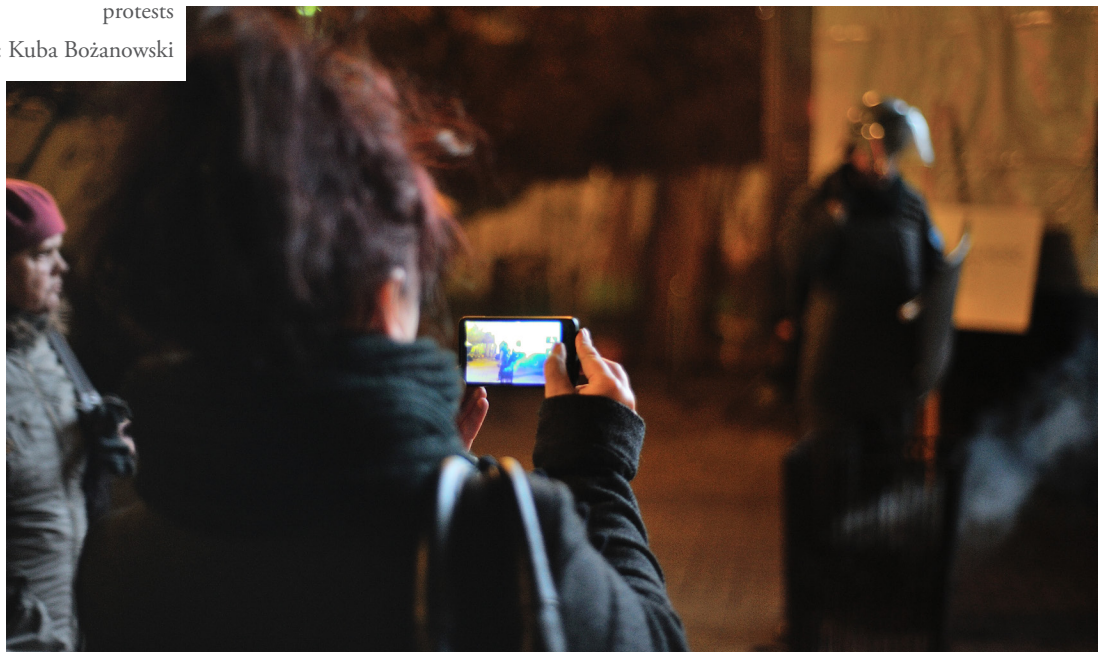
93 Teck, “The negative impact of fake news.”

94 Edelman, *2019 Edelman Trust Barometer*, (Chicago: Edelman, 2019), https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2019-02/2019_Edelman_Trust_Barometer_Global_Report.pdf.

95 Edelman, *2019 Edelman Trust Barometer*.

Technology allows ordinary citizens to document protests

Credit: Kuba Bożanowski



journalist found herself as the target of fake images, legal attacks, and death threats while advocating for press freedom.⁹⁶ Stef Schrader, a freelance automotive journalist, consistently received sexist, racist, and homophobic comments and found that someone had signed her work email up for dozens of spam mailing lists.⁹⁷ 90 percent of US journalists and 71 percent of Canadian journalists described online harassment as the biggest threat that journalists face today.⁹⁸

Unfortunately, exemptions are a major issue online because of the internet's anonymity. Organizations, like Freedom House, have urged the need for the protection of journalists who face harassment and attacks from anonymous individuals online.⁹⁹ Moreover, social media companies have a difficult time balancing between encouraging free speech and preventing hate speech. In 2021, 80 percent of respondents in a Pew Research Center survey reported that social media companies were doing a fair or poor job at addressing abuse.¹⁰⁰

When working on the internet, journalists must also be aware of their privacy. They are known as high-profile targets for malware, spyware, and digital surveillance.¹⁰¹ These cybersecurity threats can be disastrous for both the journalists and the sensitive sources they work with.¹⁰² Although reporting remotely may appear safer in conflict zones, data leaks can eliminate this protection. In January 2024, at least 263 journalists in Mexico had their personal information illegally accessed and released.¹⁰³ Journalists' physical security was also

threatened because of the leakage of home addresses.¹⁰⁴

Journalism continues to evolve with the recent popularity of artificial intelligence (AI). Some journalists have made efforts to adapt to these new technologies, but others are concerned about the risks that they bring. The definition of AI constantly changes depending on where it is applied. Sociologist Elena Esposito argues that AI is not about intelligence, but is an alternative communication form.¹⁰⁵ Felix M. Simon, a journalist at the University of Oxford, defines AI in the context of journalism as machines that mimic human actions by learning from data.¹⁰⁶ Since AI is constantly evolving from itself and information created by humans, many argue that it cannot truly generate things.¹⁰⁷ This leads to concerns about the mass consumption of content. As AI becomes more popular and makes up a larger percentage of search results, AI models begin to train on data from other models. Researchers have called this phenomenon "model collapse."¹⁰⁸ Without original content from journalists, AI loses its effectiveness, reaffirming the importance of media workers.

AI's method for learning also means that there is a widespread theft of intellectual property.¹⁰⁹ Since journalism is the foundational data that trains many AI systems, big tech companies use their writing without proper compensation.¹¹⁰ In a Google dataset that trained popular large language models, half of the top ten sites used were news sources.¹¹¹ Many media companies are worried that AI will divert readers away from

96 Gideon Sarpong, "Protecting journalists from online abuse: a guide for newsrooms," *Reuters Institute*, April 4, 2022, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/protecting-journalists-online-abuse-guide-newsrooms>.

97 Lucy Westcott, "Why newsrooms need a solution to end online harassment of reporters," *Committee to Protect Journalists*, September 4, 2019, <https://cpj.org/2019/09/newsrooms-solution-online-harassment-canada-usa/>.

98 Westcott, "Why newsrooms need a solution to end online harassment of reporters."

99 "Freedom on the Net 2022 Policy Recommendations," Freedom House, accessed July 12, 2024, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2022/countering-authoritarian-overhaul-internet/policy-recommendations>.

100 Emily A. Vogels, "The State of Online Harassment," *Pew Research Center*, January 13, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/01/13/the-state-of-online-harassment/>.

101 "Journalists & Cyber Threats," *Center for News, Technology & Innovation*, July 10, 2024, <https://innovating.news/article/journalists-cyber-threats/>.

102 Center for News, Technology & Innovation, "Journalists & Cyber Threats."

103 Brendan O'Boyle and David Alire Garcia, "Mexican leak of journalists' personal data raises security worries," *Reuters*, January 31, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/mexican-leak-journalists-personal-data-raises-security-worries-2024-01-31/>.

104 O'Boyle and Garcia, "Mexican leak of journalists' personal data raises security worries."

105 Elena Esposito, *Artificial Communication* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2022), 2, <https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262046664/artificial-communication/>.

106 Felix M. Simon, "Artificial Intelligence in the News: How AI Retools, Rationalizes, and Reshapes Journalism and the Public Arena," *Columbia Journalism Review*, February 6, 2024, https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/artificial-intelligence-in-the-news.php.

107 Ulrik Thyge Pedersen, "The Consequence of Data Cannibalism: GPT-4 and the JPEG-Effect," *Medium*, July 22, 2023, <https://medium.com/artificial-corner/the-consequence-of-data-cannibalism-gpt-4-and-the-jpeg-effect-1ea38faf9e82>.

108 Pedersen, "The Consequence of Data Cannibalism: GPT-4 and the JPEG-Effect."

109 Courtney C. Radsch, "Can journalism survive AI?" *The Brookings Institution*, March 25, 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/can-journalism-survive-ai/>.

110 Radsch, "Can journalism survive AI?"

111 Radsch, "Can journalism survive AI?"

trustworthy publishers, which reduces revenue.

Many users are starting to prefer AI over traditional journalism for its easily accessible and often generalized content. Consequently, there is an increased risk of misinformation. AI can now answer search queries in a simplified paragraph rather than a list of sources. These are known as zero-click searches.¹¹² A 2022 study from Search Engine Optimization expert Marcus Tober found that half of all Google generative AI searches were zero-click.¹¹³ While this can be very helpful for users seeking to answer a quick question, news publishers lose a significant amount of profit with the loss of this audience.¹¹⁴ For more complicated searches, users might also make assumptions about this paraphrased information, leading to misinformation.

In some aspects, AI has helped journalists. Many news companies have leveraged these technologies to increase efficiency and productivity. Some publications use AI to improve recommendations for readers in newsletters. One investigative reporter in the U.K. takes advantage of “fuzzing matching,” which is an AI technique that can help find connections in large datasets. The reporter explained that fuzzy matching made significant aspects of work possible in the first place.¹¹⁵ Despite its potential benefits, many journalists are still weary of its negative impact on journalism.

Limitations on Speech

Preserving free speech can be a lot more complicated when speech is dangerous or hateful. Many attempts to handle hate speech can silence criticism and hurt free expression as a

whole.¹¹⁶ Journalists are censored because of this blurry line, making it vital that the free press can be properly regulated without violating the rights of journalists. The UN refers to hate speech in international human rights law as unlawful.¹¹⁷ On December 16, 1966, the UN General Assembly put into motion the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Article 19 covers the right to opinions and freedom of expression through any media. Article 20 prohibits advocacy of hatred that leads to discrimination or violence.¹¹⁸ Therefore, it is well established in international law that hate speech and incitement to violence are prohibited. Yet, it continues to be challenging to protect free expression simultaneously.

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres asserted that limiting freedom of speech is not a result of addressing hate speech, but it does promote the safety of everyone.¹¹⁹ In October 2012, OHCHR experts combined conclusions and recommendations from workshops held around the world.¹²⁰ They created the UN Rabat Plan of Action to differentiate between hate speech and freedom of speech. This test takes into account six threshold tests: context, speaker, intent, content, extent, and likelihood.¹²¹ Analyzing the relevant social and political context can help assess whether statements might cause discrimination.¹²² The status of the speaker can help determine whether the speech is hateful or meaningful. Confirming intent is crucial because negligence or recklessness is not an offense.¹²³ Prosecutors should also examine the speech’s content and form. The extent of the statement is the audience that the speaker reached and whether the speech was public. Finally, states should consider if the speech had a high

112 Katie Robertson, “Publishers Worry A.I. Chatbots Will Cut Readership,” *The New York Times*, March 30, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/30/business/media/publishers-chatbots-search-engines.html>.

113 Marcus Tober, “Zero-Clicks Study,” *Semrush Blog*, October 25, 2022, <https://www.semrush.com/blog/zero-clicks-study/>.

114 Radsch, “Can journalism survive AI?”

115 Simon, “Artificial Intelligence in the News: How AI Retools, Rationalizes, and Reshapes Journalism and the Public Arena.”

116 “Hate speech versus freedom of speech,” United Nations, accessed July 18, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/hate-speech-versus-freedom-of-speech>.

117 “International Human Rights Law,” United Nations, accessed July 18, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/united-nations-and-hate-speech/international-human-rights-law>.

118 Resolution 2200A.

119 António Guterres, “Secretary-General’s remarks at the launch of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech [as delivered],” June 18, 2019, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2019-06-18/secretary-generals-remarks-the-launch-of-the-united-nations-strategy-and-plan-of-action-hate-speech-delivered>.

120 United Nations, “Hate speech versus freedom of speech.”

121 “The Rabat Plan of Action,” Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, accessed July 18, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/freedom-of-expression>.

122 “The Rabat Threshold Test,” Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, accessed July 18, 2024, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Rabat_threshold_test.pdf.

123 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “The Rabat Threshold Test.”

likelihood of provoking crime. UN operations in the Central African Republic apply the Rabat threshold to monitor incitement to violence.¹²⁴ This emphasizes the plan's potential for peacekeeping.

Another particularly dangerous form of speech is propaganda and disinformation. Before World War II, The Soviet Union (USSR) fueled a major shift in the spreading of propaganda. Firstly, the USSR government, rather than the political radicals, increased propaganda.¹²⁵ Propaganda spread rapidly through the public without the need for physical distribution due to the development of radio. The USSR's use of propaganda to stir up a war was largely what caused the development of international treaties to regulate propaganda.¹²⁶

Article 20 of the ICCPR clearly states that any propaganda for war is to be prohibited by law.¹²⁷ The UN defines war propaganda as information that threatens an act of aggression or breach of the peace contrary to the Charter of the United Nations.¹²⁸ The UN Charter orders that members are to refrain in their international relations from the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.¹²⁹ However, since this is relatively vague, there is no generally accepted definition of propaganda for war, allowing different countries to change its meaning to their wishes.¹³⁰ There are some examples of how countries have implemented this in practice. The German Democratic Republic classifies incitement to war and anti-war movement, or propaganda against peace, as an offense.¹³¹ Armenia's Criminal Code states that all propaganda for war should be punished. However,

Austrian law does not explicitly prohibit propaganda for war.¹³²

The vastly different definitions of propaganda for war in national legislation make it more difficult to implement proper safeguards. Similarly, although the Rabat threshold test can help differentiate hate speech from free speech, there is no universally accepted definition.¹³³ This is largely due to varying definitions of free speech around the globe and different interpretations of what it means to cause harm.¹³⁴ Many countries have reservations against Article 20 of the ICCPR, which declares that hate speech is prohibited by law. Although hate speech and propaganda pose major risks, many countries have manipulated these laws to silence civilians and suppress dissension.¹³⁵ Social media has been an additional factor, placing the power of censorship into the hands of private companies. In some countries, anti-hate speech laws can defuse discrimination and reduce violence against minorities. In others, they can be used to suppress minorities, dissidents, or oppressors.¹³⁶

David Kaye, UN Special Rapporteur on the freedom of expression, raised concerns that programs designed to combat violent extremism can undermine freedom of expression.¹³⁷ He emphasized that there is a lack of clear definitions for terms such as extremism or radicalization, which can be used to restrict legal expression. Kaye argues that when governments target journalists by criminalizing and detaining them, it also harms the public who relies on their information.¹³⁸

Germany takes a harsh stance against hate speech and illegal

124 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "The Rabat Plan of Action."

125 Michael G. Kearney, "The Prohibition of Propaganda for War in International Law," *Oxford Academic* (January 2009): 133-190, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199232451.003.0005>.

126 Kearney, "The Prohibition of Propaganda for War in International Law."

127 Resolution 2106.

128 "General Comment No. 11: Prohibition of propaganda for war and inciting national, racial, or religious hatred," *Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Opinion/CCPRGeneralCommentNo11.pdf>.

129 "United Nations Charter (full text)," United Nations, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>.

130 Kearney, "The Prohibition of Propaganda for War in International Law."

131 Bernhard Graefrath, "How Different Countries Implement International Standards on Human Rights," *Canadian Human Rights Yearbook* (1984) 10.

132 Kearney, "The Prohibition of Propaganda for War in International Law."

133 Natalie Alkiviadou, "Case law on Hate Speech: The Enduring Question of Thresholds," *Columbia Global Freedom of Expression*, June 2023, https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/GFoE_Hate-Speech.pdf.

134 Alkiviadou, "Case law on Hate Speech: The Enduring Question of Thresholds."

135 Zachary Laub, "Hate Speech on Social Media: Global Comparisons," *Council on Foreign Relations*, June 7, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/hate-speech-social-media-global-comparisons>.

136 Laub, "Hate Speech on Social Media: Global Comparisons."

137 "UN expert warns combat against violent extremism could be used as 'excuse' to curb free speech," UN News, May 3, 2016, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/05/528292>.

138 UN News, "UN expert warns combat against violent extremism could be used as 'excuse' to curb free speech."

content.¹³⁹ Human Rights Watch argues that this can lead to unaccountable, overbroad censorship. In 2018, Germany implemented the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG), which requires large social media platforms to immediately remove illegal content or face fines of up to EUR 50 million. The content that qualifies as illegal ranges from actual threats of violence to nothing more than insults of public office.¹⁴⁰ NetzDG censored not only Titanic, a German satirical magazine criticizing a right-wing politician but also the politician herself.¹⁴¹ The Association of German Journalists called for parliament to reverse the hate speech law as it was a US-based private company influencing censorship in Germany.¹⁴² Wenzel Michalski, the German director at Human Rights Watch, believes that this law can give private companies the power to censor without legal restrictions.¹⁴³

Ensuring the Proper Dissemination of Information

News dissemination refers to how information is written, selected, transformed into news, and received by audiences.¹⁴⁴ The most common focus of dissemination is on the distribution stage. This is the stage where news is read and interpreted by the public.¹⁴⁵ This means that journalism is accessible and equitable for all to read. For information to be distributed correctly, proper infrastructure must be established, which includes communication technology in general and internet access.

As of 2016, only 13 to 50 percent of the world had access to independent information. The International Initiative for

Impact Evaluation states that access to information through free and independent media can reduce corruption. This would be through government accountability and transparency. This can bring sustainable development by educating people on the political processes of democracy and human rights.¹⁴⁶

In many conflict zones, citizen journalism becomes increasingly more relevant for spreading information. Citizen journalism gives all individuals the ability to spread information when they feel it is necessary. Susan D. Moeller, the director of the International Center for Media and the Public Agenda, believes that citizen journalists are the backbone of democracies.¹⁴⁷ With increased access to social media and the internet, technology allows citizens to speak out. A study found that in Pakistan, the general public had more access to information and political dialogue due to the Internet.¹⁴⁸

In December 2007, violence followed the Kenyan elections which pushed citizens to create a website called Ushahidi.¹⁴⁹ Based on crowdsourcing, this involves collecting data from a large number of people.¹⁵⁰ From 2007 to 2008, 450,000 users submitted violence reports on the website that helped map critical incidents across the country.¹⁵¹ Ushahidi's fast-spreading information helped citizens understand what areas were dangerous and where to go for humanitarian aid. Juliana Rotich, the co-founder of the platform, explains that the accessibility of Ushahidi is one of the most important factors of its success.¹⁵² The rapid spread of information on social media can also be essential during times of crisis. In 2011, a destructive earthquake in New Zealand led to a death toll

139 "Germany: Flawed Social Media Law," Human Rights Watch, February 14, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/14/germany-flawed-social-media-law>.

140 Human Rights Watch, "Germany: Flawed Social Media Law."

141 "German hate speech law tested as Twitter blocks satire account," *Reuters*, January 3, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-hatecrime/german-hate-speech-law-tested-as-twitter-blocks-satire-account-idUSKBN1ES1AT/>.

142 *Reuters*, "German hate speech law tested as Twitter blocks satire account."

143 Human Rights Watch, "Germany: Flawed Social Media Law."

144 Keren Tenenboim-Weinblatt, "INFOCORE Definitions: News Dissemination," *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel*, 2015, https://www.infocore.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/def_news-dissemination.pdf.

145 Tenenboim-Weinblatt, "INFOCORE Definitions: News Dissemination."

146 "Disseminating information through media for governance and electoral change," *International Initiative for Impact Evaluation*.

147 Susan D. Moeller, "Media Literacy: Citizen Journalists," *Center for International Media Assistance*, October 1, 2009, https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CIMA-Media_Literacy_Citizen_Journalists-Report.pdf.

148 Jamil, "Journalism for sustainable development: The imperative of journalists' rights to freedom of expression and access to information for promoting sustainable development in Pakistan."

149 Moeller, "Media Literacy: Citizen Journalists."

150 Marshall Hargrave, "Crowdsourcing: Definition, How It Works, Types, and Examples," *Investopedia*, November 20, 2022, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/crowdsourcing.asp>.

151 Juliana Rotich, "Ushahidi: Empowering Citizens through Crowdsourcing and Digital Data Collection," *Field Actions Science Reports* 16 (June 2017): 36-38, <https://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/4316>.

152 Rotich, "Ushahidi: Empowering Citizens through Crowdsourcing and Digital Data Collection," 36-38.

of close to 200. A study found that social media had a major role to play in covering and responding to crisis events, with civilians working with professional media. Mainstream media could use resources to pick up on first-hand information reported by locals. The study suggests that the use of social media during disasters can help improve response mechanisms by quickly circulating information and notifying citizens of the dangers around them.¹⁵³

In 2023, a study was conducted to understand citizen journalism in Palestine.¹⁵⁴ Citizen journalists are not regulated so they can be inconsistent and uncontrolled. Citizens have more freedom when the media is repressed, allowing them to operate independently of overly-regulated media organizations. However, this can lead to inaccurate information that calls for increased efforts for ethics regulations and citizen journalist training.¹⁵⁵ In 2022, the UN's International Telecommunication Union (ITU) found that one-third of the world's population remains unconnected to the internet.¹⁵⁶ The ITU emphasizes that to bridge this gap, universal and meaningful connectivity is the main goal. Ensuring that all hard-to-reach communities have internet access will help spread information efficiently. Creating proper access to the internet can guarantee consistent and fast access to online resources.¹⁵⁷

There are significant regional differences in access to the internet, which can lead certain countries to fall behind because of a decrease in information access. In Europe, 89 percent of the population is online, but in Africa, only 40 percent is online.¹⁵⁸ In the United States, 87 percent of the population has access to the internet, but only eight percent of Pakistanis

can say the same.¹⁵⁹ As of 2022, there were 264 million fewer women accessing the internet compared to men. According to the Brookings Institute, reducing domestic inequality to internet access can lead to greater political stability, making countries less at risk of civil conflict. Global understanding is necessary to avoid creating a divide between further developed and developing countries digitally.¹⁶⁰

Civic infrastructure can also play a major role in helping journalists gain information.¹⁶¹ This refers to networks of people, organizations, and institutions such as public libraries, schools, and nonprofits. Journalists often struggle to connect to civic infrastructure because of paywalls, low literacy rates, and lack of trust.¹⁶² Much of the information spreading depends on the journalists and the audience that decides to engage. Civilians have the right to receive information from journalists and journalists have a right to receive information from the public. The UN places specific importance on developing projects that strengthen open science, multilingualism, and technology for people with disabilities and marginalized individuals, as well as media and information literacy.¹⁶³

Given that the UN is an international body, language barriers have often been a concern. Therefore, there is a push for increased multilingualism in UN documents. Multilingualism is recognized by the General Assembly as a core value and allows for greater transparency in general.¹⁶⁴ Currently, the six official languages of the UN are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. Since only English and French are working languages of the UN, there are concerns about equal use of all these languages. Inconsistent use of different languages can limit participation from other countries who

153 Bruns, *The Social Media Handbook*, chap. 17.

154 Ibrahim Horoub, "Understanding media empowerment: citizen journalism in Palestine," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 10, no. 32 (January 2023): <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01526-z>.

155 Horoub, "Understanding media empowerment: citizen journalism in Palestine."

156 International Telecommunication Union, "Internet surge slows, leaving 2.7 billion people offline in 2022," press release, September 16, 2022, <https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/PR-2022-09-16-Internet-surge-slows.aspx>.

157 International Telecommunication Union, "Internet surge slows, leaving 2.7 billion people offline in 2022."

158 Landry Signé, "Fixing the global digital divide and digital access gap," *Brookings Institute*, July 5, 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/fixing-the-global-digital-divide-and-digital-access-gap/>.

159 "Communications Technology in Emerging and Developing Nations," Pew Research Center, March 19, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2015/03/19/1-communications-technology-in-emerging-and-developing-nations/>

160 Signé, "Fixing the global digital divide and digital access gap."

161 Fiona Morgan, "Stronger together: How journalism fits into civic infrastructure," *Medium*, August 4, 2022, <https://medium.com/lets-gather/stronger-together-how-journalism-fits-into-civic-infrastructure-56fdbac29ff1>.

162 Morgan, "Stronger together: How journalism fits into civic infrastructure."

163 United Nations, "International Day for Universal Access to Information."

164 "Multilingualism," United Nations Secretary-General, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/multilingualism/index.shtml>.

may not be as proficient in certain languages.¹⁶⁵ This struggle extends to civilians who may not be able to understand current international journalism because of a lack of multilingualism.

Therefore, reaching different mediums, both traditional and digital, is also critical. The UN Department of Global Communications aims to extend the UN stories across multiple platforms and build support for the UN.¹⁶⁶ Increasing accessibility to information can also help UN policies in new ways. The Rabat Threshold Test was translated into 32 different languages in collaboration with Facebook, a private social media platform.¹⁶⁷ Miranda Sissons, the director of human rights product policy at Facebook, affirmed the UN test's importance for international use.¹⁶⁸

Journalist Joe Amditis believes that journalism has an accessibility issue.¹⁶⁹ It was only after the COVID-19 pandemic that newsrooms began to consider accessibility. This is in the form of American Sign Language interpretation, auto-transcription, and asynchronous communication options.¹⁷⁰ Jason Strother, professor at the School of Communication and Media at Montclair State, reveals that roughly one out of four Americans have some type of physical, sensory, or developmental disability. However, often little is done to ensure accessibility in traditional news outlets.¹⁷¹

Amplifying Minority Voices in Journalism

Journalism has the incredible power to enhance the voices of

the minority in the media. While there is no internationally agreed definition of a minority, these groups face obstacles that create unequal opportunities.¹⁷² Therefore, journalism plays an essential role in balancing all perspectives and projecting minority concerns to the public. However, minority journalists face significantly more barriers that threaten to harm their careers. The UN Special Rapporteur on Minorities Issues reported that 70 percent of those targeted by hate speech online are minorities.¹⁷³

The Center for Civilians in Conflict states that journalists can help marginalized communities express themselves.¹⁷⁴ James D. Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank, emphasizes that the poor often lack representation.¹⁷⁵ Consequently, a free press is vital to reduce these disparities and ensure that groups that need to be heard have the means to do so. Diversity can benefit journalism and research as a whole. From 1977 to 2015, a team of researchers that analyzed doctoral essays found that historically underrepresented groups innovate at higher rates.¹⁷⁶ This is likely because they provide new perspectives and approaches to the problems they study.¹⁷⁷ Accessing more diverse sources while reporting can also make media more relevant to audiences, allowing journalists to shape public policy.¹⁷⁸

Unfortunately, representation in the media continues to struggle. According to the United States Census Bureau, racial and ethnic minorities comprise almost 40 percent of the US population, but they only make up less than 17 percent of

¹⁶⁵ United Nations Secretary-General, "Multilingualism."

¹⁶⁶ "Department of Global Communications," United Nations, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/department-global-communications>.

¹⁶⁷ "Threshold test on hate speech now available in 32 languages," Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, May 15, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2020/05/threshold-test-hate-speech-now-available-32-languages>.

¹⁶⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Threshold test on hate speech now available in 32 languages."

¹⁶⁹ Joe Amditis, "Journalism has an (in)accessibility problem," *Medium*, April 28, 2022, <https://medium.com/lets-gather/journalism-has-an-in-accessibility-problem-6588fbd3b8d5>.

¹⁷⁰ Joe Amditis, "Accessibility becomes more than an afterthought," *NiemanLab*, 2022, <https://www.niemanlab.org/2021/12/accessibility-becomes-more-than-an-afterthought/>.

¹⁷¹ Amditis, "Accessibility becomes more than an afterthought."

¹⁷² "Minorities," United Nations, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/minorities>.

¹⁷³ "Special Rapporteur on minority issues," Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-minority-issues>.

¹⁷⁴ "How Free Press Contributes to Protecting Civilians in Conflict," Center for Civilians in Conflict, June 13, 2023, <https://civiliansinconflict.org/blog/how-free-press-contributes-to-protecting-civilians-in-conflict/>.

¹⁷⁵ "A New Journalism for Democracy in a New Age," *Pew Research Center*, February 1, 2005, <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2005/02/01/a-new-journalism-for-democracy-in-a-new-age/>.

¹⁷⁶ Denise-Marie Ordway, "5 reasons news stories about research need source diversity," *The Journalist's Resource*, November 8, 2023, <https://journalistsresource.org/race-and-gender/5-reasons-news-stories-about-research-need-source-diversity/>.

¹⁷⁷ Denise-Marie Ordway, "5 reasons news stories about research need source diversity," *The Journalist's Resource*, November 8, 2023, <https://journalistsresource.org/race-and-gender/5-reasons-news-stories-about-research-need-source-diversity/>.

¹⁷⁸ Ordway, "5 reasons news stories about research need source diversity."



Protesters call to stop violence against journalists in Sri Lanka
Credit: Vikalpa | Groundviews | CPA

newsroom staff and 13 percent of newsroom leadership.¹⁷⁹ A Reuters Institute study found that across five continents, only 22 percent of the 180 top editors across 240 brands are women.¹⁸⁰ In Mexico, only five percent of those in top editorial positions are women.¹⁸¹

The Chilling: A global study of online violence against women journalists, is a research project conducted by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ).¹⁸² They found that 73 percent of female respondents have experienced online violence and 20 percent were physically attacked as a result of online incidents. When these journalists attempted to seek help from their employers, they largely received no response, advice to “toughen up” and questions about what they did to provoke the abuse. Unfortunately, this online harassment succeeds in silencing minorities. Those surveyed most frequently indicated that they responded to online violence by self-censoring and

avoiding audience engagement as a whole.¹⁸³ In a terrifying cycle, women journalists are unable to call for justice or bring awareness to these online assaults. The online abuse of female journalists has real-life consequences that contribute to this issue. Sri Lankan writer Sharmila Seyyid was banned from her country and forced to leave her profession after the online hate campaign she faced.¹⁸⁴ Seyyid interviewed and wrote about over 200 women who were victims of the Sri Lankan civil war.¹⁸⁵ Unfortunately, her books received backlash from extremists. According to Seyyid, They threatened to throw acid on her because of her reporting as a woman.¹⁸⁶

In the past year, Freedom House estimates that more than two-thirds of the world’s internet users live in countries where people were attacked or killed in retaliation for online activities.¹⁸⁷ In the Philippines, former President Rodrigo Duterte used an anti-terrorism law to attack any press that

179 Gabriel Arana, “Decades of Failure,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, November 5, 2018, https://www.cjr.org/special_report/race-ethnicity-newsrooms-data.php.
 180 Kirsten Eddy, Amy Ross Arguedas, Mitali Mukherjee, and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, “Women and leadership in the news media 2023: evidence from 12 markets,” *Reuters Institute*, March 8, 2023, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/women-and-leadership-news-media-2023-evidence-12-markets>.
 181 Eddy, Arguedas, Mukherjee, and Nielsen, “Women and leadership in the news media 2023: evidence from 12 markets.”
 182 Julie Posetti and Nabeelah Shabbir, *The Chilling: A global study of online violence against women journalists* (Washington D.C.: International Center for Journalists, 2023), https://www.icfj.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/ICFJ%20Unesco_TheChilling_OnlineViolence.pdf.
 183 Posetti and Shabbir, *The Chilling: A global study of online violence against women journalists*.
 184 Kannan Sundaram, “Chronicle of a death online,” *The Hindu*, April 17, 2015, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/sharmila-seyyid-online-trolling-death-threats/article7109863.ece>.
 185 “Seyyid Shares Her Journey to UNO,” University of Nebraska Omaha, March 31, 2023, <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2023/03/seyyid-journey-uno.php>.
 186 University of Nebraska Omaha, “Seyyid Shares Her Journey to UNO.”
 187 Margaux Ewen and Sierra Reeves, “We Must Do More to Address the Online Harassment of Women Journalists,” *Freedom House*, November 2, 2023, <https://freedomhouse.org/article/we-must-do-more-address-online-harassment-women-journalists>.

opposed his authority.¹⁸⁸ Political minority journalists would face online smear campaigns, legal harassment, and arrest for their work.¹⁸⁹ In all forms, minorities are recurring targets of online abuse.¹⁹⁰ For instance, circulating audio on social media urged Nigeria's Igbo minority group to flee their homes or risk death.¹⁹¹ They were more likely affected by restrictions on social media content moderation systems.¹⁹² Journalists who need a more active online presence are threatened by the dangerous challenges that minorities face on social media. Furthermore, exemptions from punishment are a major issue for crimes against minorities. In 2017, Daphne Caruana Galizia, a Maltese investigative journalist, was assassinated as a result of harassment that began on social media.¹⁹³ Galizia was attacked with verbal abuse, harassment, stalking, and SLAPPs that attempted to cripple her finances.¹⁹⁴ A public inquiry from international NGO Article 19 determined that Malta's former cabinet was responsible for her death because they failed to recognize criminal intent and take protective measures.¹⁹⁵

In South Asia, journalists who oppose mainstream views are particularly vulnerable to heightened risks and difficulties.¹⁹⁶ In 2021, Ajay Lalwani, a local news reporter in Pakistan was shot and killed for exposing the misdeeds of influential local leaders.¹⁹⁷ A witness in his case died soon after from a suspicious road accident linked to Lalwani's murder, leading many to believe that their deaths were meant to silence their work.¹⁹⁸

Laws are often used to suppress minorities as well. Examples of this can be seen in India, where journalists are especially at risk. In April 2022, journalists covering a Hindu nationalist event in Delhi were attacked.¹⁹⁹ Meer Faisal, one of the victims, alleged that he, and the others, were attacked because they were Muslim.²⁰⁰ Delhi police then opened a criminal investigation into Faisal and accused him of inciting hatred. Governments can take advantage of hate speech laws to silence minorities seeking justice. Additionally, journalist Kanapathipillai Kumanan reports on violations against Tamil civilians by militarized security forces in Sri Lanka.²⁰¹ On June 7, 2022, Kumanan was covering a protest when he was harassed by Sri Lankan officers who attempted to stop him from taking photos and attempted to take his official media card.²⁰² Kumanan says that whenever they report for the rights of the Tamil people, they are categorized as terrorists and are called for investigation under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.²⁰³

Fortunately, the internet has opened up more opportunities for minorities to gain a platform. The Global Investigative Journalism Network found that social media has helped expand the coverage of problematic issues faced by minorities.²⁰⁴ In Brazil, the *Voz da Comunidade* community newspaper utilized Twitter to provide constant updates on the invasion of Complexo do Alemão. In many countries, sensitive topics such as religion, ethnicity, women, and other minorities are

188 Funk, Shahbaz, Vesteinsson, "The Repressive Power of Artificial Intelligence."

189 Ewen and Reeves, "We Must Do More to Address the Online Harassment of Women Journalists."

190 "Targets of hate," United Nations, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/impact-and-prevention/targets-of-hate>.

191 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Nigeria: UN experts denounce ultimatum and death threats targeting Igbo minority," press release, August 25, 2017, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2017/08/nigeria-un-experts-denounce-ultimatum-and-death-threats-targeting-igbo?LangID=E&NewsID=21994>.

192 United Nations, "Targets of hate."

193 Ewen and Reeves, "We Must Do More to Address the Online Harassment of Women Journalists."

194 "Malta: Landmark Public Inquiry recommendations on Daphne Caruana Galizia's assassination must be implemented," *Article 19*, August 3, 2021, <https://www.article19.org/resources/malta-landmark-public-inquiry-recommendations-on-daphne-caruana-galizias-assassination-must-be-implemented/>.

195 Article 19, "Malta: Landmark Public Inquiry recommendations on Daphne Caruana Galizia's assassination must be implemented."

196 "Minority journalists are under threat in South Asia," *Global Voices Advox*, June 14, 2024, <https://advox.globalvoices.org/2024/06/14/minority-journalists-are-under-threat-in-south-asia/>.

197 "Ajay Lalwani," International Federation of Journalists, March 19, 2021, <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/article/ajay-lalwani>.

198 "Witness in Ajay Lalwani murder case killed," Pakistan Press Foundation, October 6, 2022, <https://www.pakistanpressfoundation.org/witness-in-ajay-lalwani-murder-case-killed/>.

199 "India: Authorities Should Stop Targeting, Prosecuting Journalists and Online Critics," Amnesty International, May 3, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/05/india-authorities-should-stop-targeting-prosecuting-journalists-and-online-critics/>.

200 Amnesty International, "India: Authorities Should Stop Targeting, Prosecuting Journalists and Online Critics."

201 "Human Rights Defender and Journalist Kanapathipillai Kumanan Intimidated by Police," Front Line Defenders, June 13, 2022, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/human-rights-defender-and-journalist-kanapathipillai-kumanan-intimidated-police>.

202 Front Line Defenders, "Human Rights Defender and Journalist Kanapathipillai Kumanan Intimidated by Police."

203 Global Voices Advox, "Minority journalists are under threat in South Asia."

204 Ying Chan, "The Digital Switch: Citizen Journalism, Minority Coverage," *Global Investigative Journalism Network*, September 17, 2024, <https://gijn.org/resource/mapping-digital-media-between-wider-reach-and-sloppy-reporting/>.

avoided by the mainstream media. This makes social media an essential tool for minorities to have access to. Many South African blogs write about minority sexualities and include resources to other sites and gay communities, a topic with little exposure in mainstream media. In Egypt, social media has highlighted political entities that were ignored by traditional media, bringing awareness to important political activism.²⁰⁵

Current Status

Case Study: Journalism in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

In 2014, Russia took control of Crimea, an autonomous territory in Ukraine.²⁰⁶ In 2018, Crimea was a contested region that the European Union openly declared that by international law, “Crimea is Ukraine.”²⁰⁷ This made it clear that Russia was unlawfully breaching Ukraine’s territorial sovereignty. In February of 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine following the conflict.²⁰⁸ The invasion resulted in the start of a major ongoing war between the two countries. In this conflict, the media has been used as a powerful tool to influence civilians.²⁰⁹

In *When the Media Goes to War*, researchers found that Russian media during the crisis represents how repressive governments can pose as manipulative propaganda as reliable journalism.²¹⁰ The study showed how *Sputnik* and *Russia Today*, two government-supported news organizations in Russia, differed from independent media. They found that Russian media often attempted to place blame for the war on the West to make Russia seem like the victim or hero. Because of Russia’s

authoritarian system, all mainstream media tends to align with the government, allowing media to be used to manipulate civilians.²¹¹

There have been major concerns raised about false and misleading information spreading online.²¹² Specifically, Ukraine has aimed to combat Russia’s disinformation campaign. However, these attempts have resulted in its censorship. The RSF reports that Ukraine bans media regarded as pro-Russia and restricts access to Russian social media.²¹³ Since the Russian invasion, media outlets with Russian propaganda have been entirely blocked. Although the RSF describes Ukraine as the “front line of resistance” against Russia’s propaganda, being involved in this information war still has consequences on Ukraine’s score in the World Press Freedom Index.²¹⁴ The World Press Freedom Index calculates the degree of freedom that is available to journalists that looks at data on abuses and acts of violence.²¹⁵

Russia offers an additional perspective to the conflict, claiming that information integrity on digital platforms goes both ways. Fedor K. Strzhizhovskiy, a UN representative for Russia, stated that there is an ongoing information war against the Russian Federation. This results in a one-sided, pro-Western interpretation of events. He brought attention to the repression of pro-Russian media outlets and cited incidents where Russian journalists were deported and had their media licenses suspended.²¹⁶ The conflicting viewpoints of both countries on the importance of a free press prove that it is difficult to tell when journalism is being used incorrectly. It also emphasizes the need for objective and unbiased media.

Violence against journalists is also another major issue in this

205 Chan, “The Digital Switch: Citizen Journalism, Minority Coverage.”

206 Jonathan Masters, “Ukraine: Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and Russia,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, February 14, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/background/ukraine-conflict-crossroads-europe-and-russia>.

207 “By International Law, Crimea is Ukraine,” The Diplomatic Service of the European Union, March 16, 2018, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/41530_en.

208 Kirsten Eddy and Richard Fletcher, “Perceptions of media coverage of the war in Ukraine,” *Reuters Institute*, June 15, 2022, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2022/perceptions-media-coverage-war-Ukraine>.

209 Eddy and Fletcher, “Perceptions of media coverage of the war in Ukraine.”

210 Nhung Nguyen, Pamela Peters, Hechen Ding, and Hong Tien Vu, “When the media goes to war: How Russian news media defend the country’s image during the conflict with Ukraine,” *Media, War & Conflict* (March 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/17506352241231866>.

211 Nguyen et al, “When the media goes to war: How Russian news media defend the country’s image during the conflict with Ukraine.”

212 Eddy and Fletcher, “Perceptions of media coverage of the war in Ukraine.”

213 “Ukraine,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/ukraine>.

214 Reporters Without Borders, “Ukraine.”

215 UNESCO. “World Press Freedom Index.” Accessed on August 22, 2024. <https://www.unesco.org/en/world-media-trends/world-press-freedom-index>.

216 United Nations General Assembly, “Fourth Committee, Concluding Debate on Information Matters, Approves Draft Texts on UN Communications, Press Freedom,” press release, October 19, 2023, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/gaspd787.doc.htm>.



Medical volunteers performing medical aid to the wounded journalist in Ukraine

Credit: Mstyslav Chernov

conflict zone. At least 17 journalists have been killed covering the war and local journalists in Ukraine have transformed into war correspondents.²¹⁷ In 2023, nearly eight million Ukrainians had fled the country, but many journalists chose to risk their lives to cover the conflict.²¹⁸ These journalists have been vulnerable to the horrors of war and have to prepare for any possible dangers. Anton Skyba, Ukrainian photojournalist, reported on the frontlines of war. He came prepared with a suitcase of personal protective equipment, including a first aid kit that guarded him from bomb fragments.²¹⁹ Skyba emphasized that becoming war correspondents was not a first choice of Ukrainian journalists, but something that they accepted.²²⁰ For these journalists, the threat of injury or death is very possible. Mykola Pastukh, a former cinematographer turned war freelancer, partially paralyzed his arm in a bombing attack.²²¹

For these war correspondents, there is little supply of Personal Protective Equipment. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is equipment used for minimizing the exposure to hazards.²²² Katerina Sergatskova founded the 2402 Fund to donate safety equipment and training to journalists in Ukraine.²²³ Since 2022, they have provided over 20 Ukrainian publication offices with bulletproof vests and helmets. They also provide risk estimates and general analysis for journalist safety. This organization offers Hostile Environment First Aid Training to teach journalists how to survive in deadly wartime environments.²²⁴

Journalists who are captured in the conflict suffer horrific conditions in Russian prisons. Dmytro Khyliuk is a journalist for the Ukrainian news agency *Unian*.²²⁵ In March 2022, he was arrested two days later for writing about Russian troops

217 “Russia-Ukraine War,” Committee to Protect Journalists, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://cpj.org/invasion-of-ukraine/>.

218 Lucy Westcott, “No other option to survive’: After one year of war, Ukrainian journalists are equipped for the long haul,” *Committee to Protect Journalists*, <https://cpj.org/2023/02/no-other-option-to-survive-after-one-year-of-war-ukrainian-journalists-are-equipped-for-the-long-haul/>.

219 Westcott, “No other option to survive.”

220 Westcott, “No other option to survive.”

221 “Ukrainian journalist Mykola Pastukh seriously injured by shelling in eastern Ukraine,” Committee to Protect Journalists, June 2, 2022, <https://cpj.org/2022/06/ukrainian-journalist-mykola-pastukh-seriously-injured-by-shelling-in-eastern-ukraine/>.

222 World Health Organization. “Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).” Accessed on August 22, 2024. <https://www.who.int/teams/health-product-policy-and-standards/assistive-and-medical-technology/medical-devices/ppe>.

223 “2402 Foundation,” 2402 Foundation, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://2402.org/>.

224 2402 Foundation, “2402 Foundation.”

225 “Ukraine: RSF obtains exclusive testimony on the fate of journalist and Russian captive Dmytro Khyliuk,” Reporters Without Borders, July 26, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/ukraine-rsf-obtains-exclusive-testimony-fate-journalist-and-russian-captive-dmytro-khyliuk>.

occupying the village where his family lived.²²⁶ Released in May 2024, Khyliuk's cellmate was able to reveal the dehumanizing conditions that prisoners were forced to endure. Prisoners were deprived of food and went through beatings and forced propaganda sessions.²²⁷ The Media Initiative for Human Rights, a Ukrainian NGO, estimates that Khyliuk is one of at least 4,000 Ukrainians being held captive.²²⁸

Even foreign countries who send journalists to Russia have found themselves victims of the war. On August 1, 2024, the United States and Russia completed their biggest prisoner swap since the Cold War.²²⁹ However, there was a noticeable imbalance between the prisoners that were exchanged. Russia only released journalists and dissidents while the US released those charged with severe crimes.²³⁰ This exemplifies how influential journalists are in the war as well as the dangers that they face in conflict zones.

In Russia, new media crackdowns have forced journalists out of the country.²³¹ Seeking to eliminate all criticism of the invasion of Ukraine, authorities have blocked prominent social media platforms.²³² Russia has instituted many laws under the idea of controlling fake news. These amendments to the Criminal Code and Administrative Code prohibit “discrediting” or “knowingly spreading false information” about the military.²³³ However, these laws are just used to criminalize those who oppose Russia's actions against Ukraine.²³⁴ In 2012, Russia established a “foreign agents” law, which placed limits on civil

rights groups from abroad, and was initially meant to address foreign funding.²³⁵ Many human rights organizations argue that the term is being used far too loosely.²³⁶ Now, the law applies to all the individuals and civil society organizations who express any opinions about Russian policies.²³⁷ Many independent media outlets have suffered under this definition. Dmitry Muratov, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and the founder of *Novaya Gazeta*, an independent Russian newspaper, was forced to shut down by the Russian government.²³⁸ Upon questioning Putin publicly about the foreign agents' law, Muratov was added to the government's list of “foreign agents.”²³⁹

Case Study: The Role of Media in Myanmar

From 2011 to 2021, Myanmar had been in the process of transitioning from military rule to civilian rule.²⁴⁰ Power was being shared between the military and the civilian government, which was beginning to enact democratic reforms. However, on February 1st, 2021, the Myanmar military, Tatmadaw, launched a coup against the civilian government and seized power over the country. The military group declared that the November 2020 general election, where the civilian government had increased support, was invalid.²⁴¹

To retain their power over the country, the Tatmadaw has cracked down on all opposition. Four democracy activists were executed and the Assistance Association of Political Prisoners, a human rights group, claims that the regime has killed more

226 “Dmytro Khyliuk,” Front Line Defenders, accessed August 12, 2024, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/profile/dmytro-khyliuk>.
 227 Reporters Without Borders, “Ukraine: RSF obtains exclusive testimony on the fate of journalist and Russian captive Dmytro Khyliuk.”
 228 “Torture of Ukrainians is a state policy of Russia. Human rights organizations reveal new details of brutal torture of civilians,” Media Initiative for Human Rights, July 18, 2024, <https://mipl.org.ua/en/torture-of-ukrainians-is-a-state-policy-of-russia-human-rights-organizations-reveal-new-details-of-brutal-torture-of-civilians/>.
 229 Eric Tucker, Dasha Litvinova, and Matthew Lee, “3 newly freed Americans are back on US soil after a landmark prisoner exchange with Russia,” *Associated Press News*, August 2, 2024, <https://mipl.org.ua/en/torture-of-ukrainians-is-a-state-policy-of-russia-human-rights-organizations-reveal-new-details-of-brutal-torture-of-civilians/>.
 230 Tucker, Litvinova, and Lee, “3 newly freed Americans are back on US soil after a landmark prisoner exchange with Russia.”
 231 “Freedom on the Net 2023: Russia,” Freedom House, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/russia/freedom-net/2023>.
 232 Freedom House, “Freedom on the Net 2023: Russia.”
 233 Freedom House, “Freedom on the Net 2023: Russia.”
 234 Freedom House, “Freedom on the Net 2023: Russia.”
 235 Malig, “How Russia's Press Freedom has Deteriorated Over the Decades Since Putin Came to Power.”
 236 “Full transcript of exclusive Putin interview with NBC News' Keir Simmons,” NBC News, June 14, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/transcript-nbc-news-exclusive-interview-russia-s-vladimir-putin-n1270649>.
 237 “Russia: New Restrictions for ‘Foreign Agents,’” Human Rights Watch, December 1, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/01/russia-new-restrictions-foreign-agents>.
 238 Malig, “How Russia's Press Freedom has Deteriorated Over the Decades Since Putin Came to Power.”
 239 “Putin vs. The Press,” Frontline, September 26, 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/putin-vs-the-press/>.
 240 Angela Clare, “The Myanmar coup: a quick guide,” *Parliament of Australia*, July 2, 2021, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp2122/Quick_Guides/MyanmarCoup.
 241 Clare, “The Myanmar coup: a quick guide.”

than 2,100 people since the coup.²⁴² Following the coup, from 2021 to 2022, RSF reports that at least 115 journalists have been arrested while covering protests, and some were even tracked down by intelligence services.²⁴³ The number only continues to grow over the years. In 2024, Myanmar was reported as the second-biggest jailer of journalists.²⁴⁴ Many were subjected to violence when arrested. Freelance journalist Yin Yin Thein was captured on November 18, 2021, by a group of 30 military members and police authorities at her home.²⁴⁵ She was badly beaten and sustained injuries in the process.²⁴⁶

In 2021, RSF discovered that out of 57 journalists captured, only 14 of those were given a trial and convicted.²⁴⁷ At least three journalists have been killed in that same year and there are seven cases of torture or extreme violence.²⁴⁸ Article 10 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights entitles everyone “to a fair and public hearing” for any “criminal charge against him.”²⁴⁹ Section 505a of Myanmar’s penal code penalizes any information that endangers the interests of the military.²⁵⁰

On December 10, 2021, Soe Naing, a freelance photographer, covered a silent street protest where they were arrested.²⁵¹ After being detained for four days, he was killed by force during an interrogation.²⁵² Local news editor of the *Khonumthung Media Group*, Pu Tuidim, informed the public on the Tatmadaw’s cruelties.²⁵³ He was later abducted by the military while covering rebel clashes alongside nine other civilians. Pu Tuidim

was then shot by soldiers after they used him as a human shield in the conflict.²⁵⁴

Kyaw Moe Tun, the UN representative for Myanmar, spoke at SPECPOL’s October 2023 conference. Since the military coup of 2021, he expressed his concerns regarding freedom of opinion and expression in Myanmar. He also called for international support for citizen journalists and urged the UN to restore the free flow of reliable information.²⁵⁵ The military group was especially harsh on journalists and communications technology. In 2021, Freedom House’s Freedom on the Net report revealed that the collapse of internet freedom in Myanmar has been the worst decline ever documented.²⁵⁶ Internet service was completely shut down on multiple occasions, and social media platforms were blocked. The Tatmadaw took control of all telecommunications infrastructure and significantly limited free speech.²⁵⁷

Journalists were jailed for any online activity and one reporter for the Democratic Voice of Burma received a three-year sentence after covering protests.²⁵⁸ Article 19 finds that multiple Burmese laws violate freedom of expression standards.²⁵⁹ The legislation placed restrictions on the free press and legal wording is often vague. This leaves more room for the government to manipulate laws for their benefit. Article 19 found an issue with the term “fake news,” noting that it is not a defined term in international human rights law.²⁶⁰ Although tackling fake news is important for ensuring

242 “Myanmar: Who are the rulers who have executed democracy campaigners?” BBC, July 25, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55902070>.

243 “Figures for past year’s persecution of journalism in Myanmar,” Reporters Without Borders, February 4, 2022, <https://rsf.org/en/figures-past-year-s-persecution-journalism-myanmar>.

244 “Myanmar,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 12, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/myanmar>.

245 “Yin Yin Thein,” Committee to Protect Journalists, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://cpj.org/data/people/yin-yin-thein/>.

246 Reporters Without Borders, “Figures for past year’s persecution of journalism in Myanmar.”

247 “Barometer,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/barometer>.

248 Reporters Without Borders, “Figures for past year’s persecution of journalism in Myanmar.”

249 Resolution 217 A.

250 Reporters Without Borders, “Figures for past year’s persecution of journalism in Myanmar.”

251 “Reporter dies under interrogation in Myanmar’s escalating terror,” Reporters Without Borders, December 15, 2021, <https://rsf.org/en/reporter-dies-under-interrogation-myanmar-s-escalating-terror>.

252 Reporters Without Borders, “Reporter dies under interrogation in Myanmar’s escalating terror.”

253 “Local media editor is third journalist killed by Myanmar’s junta in less than a month,” Reporters Without Borders, January 12, 2022, <https://rsf.org/en/local-media-editor-third-journalist-killed-myanmar-s-junta-less-month>.

254 Reporters Without Borders, “Local media editor is third journalist killed by Myanmar’s junta in less than a month.”

255 United Nations General Assembly, “Fourth Committee, Concluding Debate on Information Matters, Approves Draft Texts on UN Communications, Press Freedom.”

256 “Freedom on the Net 2021: Myanmar,” Freedom House, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/myanmar/freedom-net/2021>.

257 Freedom House, “Freedom on the Net 2021: Myanmar.”

258 Freedom House, “Freedom on the Net 2021: Myanmar.”

259 “Myanmar: Crackdown on Freedom of Expression with 24-hour Monitoring,” Article 19, April 1, 2024, <https://www.article19.org/resources/myanmar-crackdown-on-freedom-of-expression-with-24-hour-monitoring-2/>.

260 Article 19, “Myanmar: Crackdown on Freedom of Expression with 24-hour Monitoring.”

accurate information to the public, governments can also leverage the term to impose control over the media.

Thomas Andrews, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, alongside other UN human rights experts, condemns Myanmar's "digital dictatorship."²⁶¹ They stress that access to such information is critical for those in Myanmar.²⁶² Some are seeking safety from the military and others are simply trying to navigate the ongoing crisis.²⁶³ Barriers to internet access directly prevent journalists from collecting evidence of human rights violations.²⁶⁴ Therefore, the mistreatment of journalists and preventing the flow of information is costing the lives of civilians.

Issues of privacy also leave journalists dangerously vulnerable. In April 2021, lists of journalists, influencers, and bloggers who were arrested by the military were publicly shared.²⁶⁵ Many journalists have fled the country as a result.²⁶⁶ Anonymity is the top priority of many journalists and readers who are afraid of government censorship. Tor, a browser that allows users to access the dark web, has spiked in use since internet control policies were implemented by the Tatmadaw.²⁶⁷ Although Tor is known for hosting criminal activity, many who use the platform in Myanmar only use it to bypass censorship and hide internet traffic from surveillance. On February 18, 2021, many users used Tor to post their support on social media after Facebook was banned on February 4th.²⁶⁸ However, Tor has much less regulation, making users more vulnerable to cybercrime even when it is their only option to access critical information.

Despite the heavy censorship that journalists face in Myanmar,

many have found workarounds for new legislation. Social media has played a major role for citizen journalists to stay active and keep civilians informed. Before many platforms were shut down, citizens often used social media to bring awareness to current events within the country and to advocate against the military.²⁶⁹ Veteran democracy activists who went into hiding would continue to post messages on social media to anti-coup protesters. On other platforms, such as Reddit, Telegram, and Discord, users would share content and videos related to protests and resources for those who wished to participate.²⁷⁰ Social media also helped broaden the reach of information beyond Myanmar to the international community.

However, the Myanmar soldiers are also using social media to spread messages. TikTok became particularly popular in Myanmar following the Facebook ban.²⁷¹ Myanmar ICT for Development, a digital rights group, found that there were more than 800 pro-military posts on the platform that threatened protesters with violence.²⁷² One video showed a man in army clothing who declared that he would be patrolling the city and shooting anyone he saw. Many activists, who saw an influx of pro-military videos on TikTok, accused third parties of being responsible for protester deaths.²⁷³ Social media is both a crucial tool for citizen journalists to spread information and responsible for the spread of hate speech and violence.

New technology also gives the military junta powerful surveillance tools. The New York Times found that the Tatmadaw is equipped with "Israeli-made surveillance drones, European iPhone cracking devices[,] and American software that can hack into computers and vacuum up their contents."²⁷⁴

261 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Myanmar: UN experts condemn military's 'digital dictatorship,'" press release, July 7, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/myanmar-un-experts-condemn-militarys-digital-dictatorship>.

262 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Myanmar: UN experts condemn military's 'digital dictatorship.'"

263 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Myanmar: UN experts condemn military's 'digital dictatorship.'"

264 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Myanmar: UN experts condemn military's 'digital dictatorship.'"

265 "Myanmar," Free Press Unlimited, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/countries/myanmar>.

266 Free Press Unlimited, "Myanmar."

267 Insikt Group, *Myanmar Coup and Internet Censorship Pushes Civilians to Underground Forums, Dark Web* (Umea: Recorded Future, May 8, 2022), <https://www.recordedfuture.com/research/myanmar-internet-censorship-dark-web>.

268 Insikt Group, *Myanmar Coup and Internet Censorship Pushes Civilians to Underground Forums*.

269 "Veteran Student Leaders, Rocker, Social Influencers on Myanmar Military's Arrest Warrant," The Irrawaddy, February 13, 2021, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/veteran-student-leaders-rocker-social-influencers-myanmar-militarys-arrest-warrant.html>.

270 Insikt Group, *Myanmar Coup and Internet Censorship Pushes Civilians to Underground Forums*.

271 Insikt Group, *Myanmar Coup and Internet Censorship Pushes Civilians to Underground Forums*.

272 "I will shoot whoever I see': Myanmar soldiers use TikTok to threaten protesters," Reuters, March 5, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-tiktok/i-will-shoot-whoever-i-see-myanmar-soldiers-use-tiktok-to-threaten-protesters-idUSKBN2AW17X/?il=0>.

273 Reuters, "'I will shoot whoever I see': Myanmar soldiers use TikTok to threaten protesters."

274 Hannah Beech, "Myanmar's Military Deploys Digital Arsenal of Repression in Crackdown," *The New York Times*, March 12, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/01/world/asia/myanmar-coup-military-surveillance.html>.

Ma Yadanar Maung, a spokeswoman for Justice For Myanmar, reported that the military would be using those tools to crack down on peaceful protesters.²⁷⁵ Surveillance devices are often used as evidence to prosecute journalists. Specifically, the military used this technology to gather data from two Reuters reporters who had uncovered evidence of a Rohingya massacre in Myanmar.²⁷⁶ Many human rights groups argue that the technology and relevant laws on defamation are only used to criminalize opposition, leaving many journalists fearful.²⁷⁷

The clash between the military group and social media platforms summarizes the complexity of managing hate speech and disinformation. Facebook actively reviewed content following the coup and banned all Tatmadaw-linked content.²⁷⁸ Similarly, YouTube removed multiple channels that were hosted by military-affiliated television networks. On the other hand, the Tatmadaw used the same reasoning of preventing fake news and misinformation to block access to Facebook and other social media platforms.²⁷⁹

The situation in Myanmar exemplifies how journalists suffer under an oppressive government and the impact of denying access to information. In this conflict zone, journalists are targets of violence and persecution, which makes it difficult for the public to receive accurate information. Myanmar also reveals the complicated role of social media for citizens and how it can be used as a platform for not only journalists but also, the governments that they try to hold accountable.

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the UN identified 17 core goals to call for action from all member states.²⁸⁰ These Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) outline some of the most important missions that the UN is committed to addressing. Every goal comes with specific targets and indicators that help track progress. Journalists play a role in bringing awareness to essentially all of the SDGs. In particular, free expression is central to SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

Goal 16 urges member states to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.”²⁸¹ The target 16.10 states to “ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, by national legislation and international agreements.”²⁸² This underscores the importance of media workers and the dissemination of information. Indicator 16.10.1 focuses on tracking the “number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists.”²⁸³ The second indicator for this target identifies countries that adopt legislation “for public access to information.”²⁸⁴ In 2024, the UN recognized that the general deaths of journalists have decreased in the past year.²⁸⁵ However, in conflict zones, there was a “sharp increase” in the number of media workers killed, with 40 lives lost.²⁸⁶ Target 16.6: “Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels”²⁸⁷ is also relevant to journalists, as they are critical in exposing corruption and holding governments responsible for their actions.

Many SDGs focus on communications technology, which is an essential part of journalism. Goal 9: “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”²⁸⁸ highlights the importance of information for growth. Target 9.c

²⁷⁵ Beech, “Myanmar’s Military Deploys Digital Arsenal of Repression in Crackdown.”

²⁷⁶ Timothy McLaughlin, “Security-tech companies once flocked to Myanmar. One firm’s tools were used against two journalists,” May 4, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/security-tech-companies-once-flocked-to-myanmar-one-firms-tools-were-used-against-two-journalists-/2019/05/04/d4e9f7f0-5b5d-11e9-b8e3-b03311fbbbf_story.html.

²⁷⁷ Beech, “Myanmar’s Military Deploys Digital Arsenal of Repression in Crackdown.”

²⁷⁸ “Facebook bans Myanmar military from its platforms with immediate effect,” Reuters, February 25, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-politics-facebook/facebook-bans-myanmar-military-from-its-platforms-with-immediate-effect-idUSKBN2AP0BK/>.

²⁷⁹ Reuters, “Facebook bans Myanmar military from its platforms with immediate effect.”

²⁸⁰ “THE 17 GOALS,” United Nations, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

²⁸¹ “Goal 16,” United Nations, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>.

²⁸² United Nations, “Goal 16: Targets and Indicators.”

²⁸³ United Nations, “Goal 16: Targets and Indicators.”

²⁸⁴ United Nations, “Goal 16: Targets and Indicators.”

²⁸⁵ “Goal 16: Progress and Info,” United Nations, August 2, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>

²⁸⁶ United Nations, “Goal 16: Progress and Info.”

²⁸⁷ United Nations, “Goal 16: Targets and Indicators.”

²⁸⁸ “Goal 9,” United Nations, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal9>.

aims to “significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet.”²⁸⁹ Similarly, SDG 17: “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”²⁹⁰ Target 17.8 strives to “enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology.”²⁹¹

SDG 5: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”²⁹² emphasizes the role of female journalists. Targets 5.1: “End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere”²⁹³ and Target 5.2 “Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres”²⁹⁴ are vital for ensuring the safety and equality for women in the media. Since women journalists and other minorities are disproportionately targeted by hate crimes, it can prevent them from getting certain opportunities. Their struggles are often trivialized by others. Furthermore, Target 5.c recommends that “information and communications technology”²⁹⁵ are used for the empowerment of women.

Education and journalism are inherently linked. Whether this is the education that journalists have to receive to succeed or the role that journalists play in educating the public, the two work hand in hand. SDG 4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”²⁹⁶ encompasses this. Target 4.6 ensures that “all youth and a substantial proportion of adults [...] achieve literacy and numeracy.”²⁹⁷ Guaranteeing literacy is also essential for disseminating information equally and fairly. Additionally, Target 4.7 stresses that all learners have the education “needed to promote sustainable development.”²⁹⁸ Journalists play an integral part in educating readers and spreading important

information about human rights, global citizenship, and cultural diversity.

Raising awareness is also an aspect of SDG 13: “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.”²⁹⁹ Target 13.3 specifically calls for countries to improve education and “awareness-raising”³⁰⁰ on environmental challenges. The UN has stated that journalists “have a key role in informing and educating”³⁰¹ the public about the world’s climate emergency. Many journalists who face obstacles and even violence do so while covering environmental topics. The UN Secretary-General reports that “Dozens of journalists covering illegal mining, logging, poaching, and other environmental issues have been killed in recent decades.”³⁰²

Bloc Analysis

Points of Division

Ensuring protections for journalists occurs alongside press freedom. The international NGO Reporters Without Borders (RSF) defines press freedom as the ability to identify, gather, and spread information following journalistic methods without unnecessary risk to a journalist’s safety. Each year, the RSF releases a World Press Freedom Index. This index helps to determine the freedom of journalists globally using five different indicators: political context, legal framework, economic context, sociocultural context, and safety.

The first category measured in this index is the political context. Media autonomy is an important part of this context. If the government or other political actors put too much pressure on journalists, their scores will go down. This also includes if

289 “Goal 9: Targets and Indicators,” United Nations, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal9>

290 “Goal 17,” United Nations, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>.

291 “Goal 17: Targets and Indicators,” United Nations, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>

292 “Goal 5,” United Nations, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>.

293 “Goal 5: Targets and Indicators,” United Nations, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

294 United Nations, “Goal 5: Targets and Indicators.”

295 United Nations, “Goal 5: Targets and Indicators.”

296 “Goal 4,” United Nations, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>.

297 “Goal 4: Targets and Indicators,” United Nations, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

298 United Nations, “Goal 4: Targets and Indicators.”

299 “Goal 13,” United Nations, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13>.

300 “Goal 13: Targets and Indicators,” United Nations, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13>

301 “Environmental journalism an increasingly dangerous profession: UN Secretary-General on World Press Freedom Day,” United Nations Sustainable Development Group, May 3, 2024, <https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/environmental-journalism-increasingly-dangerous-profession-un-secretary-general>.

302 United Nations Sustainable Development Group, “Environmental journalism an increasingly dangerous profession: UN Secretary-General on World Press Freedom Day.”

the media cannot be independent because there is too much influence from political actors. Media also plays a vital role in holding governments accountable—which is not possible if the government exerts too much control.

The second category measured is legal frameworks. Addressing impunity is essential to protect journalists against violence. This indicator also measures if journalists face too much censorship or legal barriers to freedom of expression. For example, SLAPPs can deter journalists significantly in their work and should be properly managed by a country's legal system.

The third category measured is economic context. Economic constraints against media in any way can prevent them from being fully independent. If government policies make it difficult to create news media outlets or are corrupt in how they allocate resources, the media can become very biased. Similarly, if advertisers and commercial partners or media owners themselves cannot easily support a media company, it prevents all media workers from being treated equally.

The fourth category measured is sociocultural context. This indicator focuses on how media interacts with social issues such as gender, class, ethnicity, and religion. If minorities are afraid to report on certain topics because they are contrary to the prevailing culture, it will bring down a country's score. Additionally, this context considers whether the press faces any sort of discrimination based on these factors.

Finally, the last category measured is safety. Two-thirds of the safety score is determined by the amount of bodily harm, psychological or emotional distress, and professional harm that journalists are at risk of. Bodily harm is physical violence. Psychological or emotional distress includes intimidation,

coercion, harassment, hate speech, and other dangers that target journalists in an attempt to hinder their work. Threats that impact a journalist's work process and that can cost them their job count as professional harm. RSF calculates the other third of the safety based on abuses against media and journalists.

All of these factors differ by country, as each would take a different approach to media freedom.

Countries that Rank High on the Global Press Freedom Index

Countries with a rating of 65-100 on the Global Press Freedom Index would be considered as the top third of the index. These states have very high levels of press freedom and there is little censorship involved in media production. Journalists are free to report on a wide variety of topics without limitation or fear of consequences.

However, a lack of regulation on media can also open up the floor for disinformation and generative AI. Slovakia, for example, is ranked 29th on the index with a score of 76.03.³⁰³ Currently, Slovakia has no legislation on deepfakes as a criminal offense.³⁰⁴ Deepfake refers to the usage of AI to create a false image of an event that never happened.³⁰⁵ In September 2023, journalist Monika Todova had an audio deepfake designed to influence the outcome of an election.³⁰⁶ This deepfake appeared to show Todova and the leader of the Slovak Progressive Party preparing for electoral fraud.³⁰⁷ Although unregulated media means more free expression, it can also leave the public vulnerable to fake news.

The EU has recently adopted its first media freedom law.³⁰⁸ The European Media Freedom Act aims to protect media pluralism and independence.³⁰⁹ It also takes into account how

303 "World Press Freedom Index 2024," Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/index>.

304 "As the investigation into a Slovak journalist Monika Todova's 'deepfake' is reopened, RSF is calling for this type of attack to be criminalised," Reporters Without Borders, June 3, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/investigation-slovak-journalist-monika-t%C3%B3dov%C3%A1-s-deepfake-reopened-rsf-calling-type-attack-be>.

305 Ian Sample, "What are deepfakes - and how can you spot them?," The Guardian, January 13, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jan/13/what-are-deepfakes-and-how-can-you-spot-them>.

306 "2024 World Press Freedom Index - journalism under political pressure," Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 1, 2024, https://rsf.org/en/2024-world-press-freedom-index-journalism-under-political-pressure?year=2024&data_type=general.

307 Reporters Without Borders, "As the investigation into a Slovak journalist Monika Todova's 'deepfake' is reopened, RSF is calling for this type of attack to be criminalized."

308 "Europe - Central Asia Toxic Kremlin influence reaches EU," Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/classement/2024/europe-central-asia>.

309 "European Media Freedom Act," European Commission, accessed August 1, 2024, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/protecting-democracy/european-media-freedom-act_en.

modern technology has transformed the field of journalism.³¹⁰ With transparency, this law helps many of its members, such as Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, to maintain their position on the top of the index.³¹¹

In Canada, the media operates without pressure from politicians, political parties, and political movements.³¹² The government highlights its support for local journalism and they have a variety of “shield laws” that protect journalists and their sources. However, journalists have still faced arrests, often when covering Indigenous rights and land usage. In 2021, journalist Amber Bracken was arrested while covering a protest over a natural gas pipeline.³¹³ These types of situations have led the country to obtain a score of 81.7 on the index.³¹⁴

New Zealand has taken recent steps to ensure media pluralism, allowing their score to rise to 79.72 on the index.³¹⁵ Multiculturalism is central to New Zealand’s identity. Although the media is still dominated by English-language press, the new success of Māori-language programs in mainstream media has potential.³¹⁶ Despite physically safe working environments, online threats are still a major issue. Because there is not as much media regulation by the government, citizen vigilantes attempt to discipline journalists themselves—putting the country at risk of mob censorship.³¹⁷

Countries that rank in the middle of the Global Press Freedom Index

Countries that rank from 50-65 on the Global Press Freedom Index would fall into the middle third of all countries analyzed.

These states have general press freedom, but some limitations prevent complete press freedom. Countries likely restrict some parts of speech because of concerns about discrimination, hate speech/incitement, and national security. This can lead to a less safe media environment, where journalists do not have as much autonomy to report.

Violence against journalists is generally not as widespread in this bloc, but many still face legal punishments. In Greece, with a score of 57.15, a new media law was ratified in December 2022.³¹⁸ This legislation created a Special Committee in charge of overseeing the compliance of online media to journalistic ethics.³¹⁹ However, many worry that this seemingly positive committee will be misused to exclude media that criticizes the government.³²⁰ This is especially relevant because state funding is a major source of revenue for journalists in Greece.³²¹ An amendment passed in 2023 increases the risk of journalists being jailed for defamation. One journalist was convicted for spreading fake news even though there was no hard evidence.³²²

In the Americas, many journalists are too afraid to report on certain topics, including organized crime, corruption, or the environment.³²³ Many countries are seeing their scores drop because of unstable political climates and more politicians are stigmatizing journalists and the media in public speeches. Some even use disinformation campaigns that deteriorate public trust in the media and encourage polarization.³²⁴ Argentina faces a lack of pluralism even with a score of 63.13 on the scale.³²⁵ Although freedom of expression is extremely valued by Argentines, polarization has filled the media with

310 European Commission, “European Media Freedom Act.”

311 Reporters Without Borders, “Europe - Central Asia Toxic Kremlin influence reaches EU.”

312 “Canada,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/canada>.

313 Reporters Without Borders, “Canada.”

314 Reporters Without Borders, “World Press Freedom Index 2024.”

315 “New Zealand,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/new-zealand>.

316 Reporters Without Borders, “New Zealand.”

317 Susan Fountaine, “New Zealand newsrooms saw the rise of ‘mob censorship’ in 2023, as journalists faced a barrage of abuse,” *The Conversation*, December 27, 2023, <https://theconversation.com/new-zealand-newsrooms-saw-the-rise-of-mob-censorship-in-2023-as-journalists-faced-a-barrage-of-abuse-219583>.

318 “Greece,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/greece>.

319 “Greek parliament passes new media law establishing controversial Ethics Committee,” European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, December 22, 2022, <https://www.mapmf.org/alert/25509>.

320 European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, “Greek parliament passes new media law establishing controversial Ethics Committee.”

321 European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, “Greek parliament passes new media law establishing controversial Ethics Committee.”

322 Reporters Without Borders, “Greece.”

323 “Americas: Political pressure increasingly threatens journalistic independence and safety,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/region/americas>.

324 Reporters Without Borders, “Americas: Political pressure increasingly threatens journalistic independence and safety.”

325 Reporters Without Borders, “World Press Freedom Index 2024.”

hatred and violence.³²⁶ Certain sensitive issues are censored from public debate. President Javier Milei actively discredits journalists who are critical of his policies.³²⁷

Access to information is also a concern for these countries. In Madagascar, a high rate of illiteracy means that radio is the main source of news.³²⁸ Privately owned radio stations are disadvantaged against public media because they can only broadcast by satellite.³²⁹ Additionally, the press is mainly written in French and is limited to urban areas.³³⁰ As a result, neutral and independent information is not properly disseminated. Since independent media is rare, journalists tend to self-censor to comply with politicians.

Countries that rank low on the Global Press Freedom Index

Countries that score between 0-50 on the Global Press Freedom Index would be at the lowest level of the index. Governments of these states tend to exert high levels of control on the media. Journalists are much more reluctant to report on certain topics, as they are significantly more vulnerable to detainment and violence.

Unfortunately, violence against journalists is prevalent in this bloc. In Eritrea, which ranks last on the index with a score of 16.64, all independent media has been banned and no foreign media is authorized to operate.³³¹ All existing media is directly controlled by the government. The RSF refers to this country as a “lawless zone for the media,” where a record number of journalists have been detained, missing, or held hostage.³³² President Issayas Afewerki, who is guilty of crimes against humanity according to a 2016 UN report, establishes rules as

the country’s dictator.³³³

These countries heavily control social media and the Internet, restricting access, blocking accounts, and suppressing messages with news. Vietnam, scoring 22.31, is the world’s third-largest jailer of journalists because mainstream media is controlled by a single party.³³⁴ Therefore, independent reporters who voice their opinions on social media are often sent to prison.³³⁵ Articles in the penal code punish any activities and media that are against the state.³³⁶

With the Taliban in control of Afghanistan, the media is in a perilous state and scores only 19.09.³³⁷ Since August 2021, 43 percent of Afghan media outlets disappeared in three months. 80 percent of women journalists were forced to stop working. Those who can still work face all sorts of restrictions including no access to official sources, no traveling without a chaperone, and abuse. Discussion of minorities and human rights is off-limits and criticism of the government is strictly forbidden. The Taliban’s General Directorate of Intelligence arrests journalists arbitrarily. More than two-thirds of journalists have left the profession since 2021.³³⁸

Authorities in Belarus have resorted to state-sponsored terrorism to silence independent journalists, explaining its score of 26.8.³³⁹ From general violence to coordinated raids on homes, corruption is high in the government. Raman Pratasevich was an outspoken blogger who openly opposed the regime.³⁴⁰ In May 2021, authorities hijacked a passenger jet to ground Pratasevich’s plane and force him to confess.³⁴¹ After being sentenced to eight years in prison, Pratasevich began to appear on propaganda outlets and became a mouthpiece for the regime. His sentence was then pardoned by the Belarusian

326 “Argentina,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/argentina>.
 327 Reporters Without Borders, “Argentina.”
 328 “Madagascar,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/madagascar>.
 329 Reporters Without Borders, “Madagascar.”
 330 Reporters Without Borders, “Madagascar.”
 331 “Eritrea,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/eritrea>.
 332 Reporters Without Borders, “Eritrea.”
 333 Reporters Without Borders, “Eritrea.”
 334 “Vietnam,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/vietnam>.
 335 Reporters Without Borders, “2024 World Press Freedom Index - journalism under political pressure.”
 336 Reporters Without Borders, “Vietnam.”
 337 “Afghanistan,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/afghanistan>.
 338 Reporters Without Borders, “Afghanistan.”
 339 “Belarus,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/belarus>.
 340 Andrew Roth and Shaun Walker, “I’m insanely thankful to the president’: how a Belarus dissident became an apologist for the regime,” *The Guardian*, May 27, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/27/belarus-dissident-arrested-collaborator-raman-pratasevich>.
 341 Reporters Without Borders, “Belarus.”

dictator.³⁴²

Committee Mission

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) is the UN's Fourth Committee in the General Assembly (GA). It focuses on five agenda items including special political missions.³⁴³ SPECPOL's primary purpose is to consider the General Assembly's (GA) agenda items and prepare recommendations, draft resolutions, and submissions to the GA Plenary.³⁴⁴ Specifically, SPECPOL cannot force countries to take any action. The UN Charter states that the GA can only make recommendations related to the general principles of cooperation for international peace and security.³⁴⁵ They can also initiate studies for promoting international cooperation.³⁴⁶

The GA can assist with human rights and fundamental freedoms for the protection of the free press and ensure the safety of journalists.³⁴⁷ SPECPOL governs the Committee on Information, a GA-minor body that considers questions relating to public information.³⁴⁸ It also oversees the Department of Global Communications, which focuses on spreading information about the UN.³⁴⁹

In past draft resolutions, SPECPOL has largely focused on how information can be used for peacekeeping and in the service of humanity.³⁵⁰ They also discuss how the UN spreads important information, the importance of protecting journalists, and how to establish global telecommunications networks.³⁵¹ Journalists are integral in maintaining peace and working through conflict. They are critical to upholding political processes, such as encouraging voter turnout and evaluating the impact of policies. With their safety in question, they are

unable to perform their job and societies destabilize as a result.

Delegates should aim to utilize SPECPOL's mandate to protect journalists in conflict zones where they are critical peacekeeping tools. They must consider how to address governments or private groups that are attempting to spread disinformation that promotes war or threatens international peace. Delegates should also consider how the UN can grow information effectively so there are no barriers to access and bring awareness to goals and accomplishments. Journalists and civilians represent the institutions they hold accountable. It is critical that the UN can help preserve their work.

342 Roth and Walker, "I'm insanely thankful to the president': how a Belarus dissident became an apologist for the regime."

343 "Special, Political and Decolonization (Fourth Committee)," General Assembly of the United Nations, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/>.

344 "Fourth Committee," United Nations, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/fourth-committee>.

345 "United Nations Charter, Chapter IV: The General Assembly," United Nations, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/chapter-4>.

346 United Nations, "United Nations Charter, Chapter IV: The General Assembly."

347 United Nations, "United Nations Charter, Chapter IV: The General Assembly."

348 "Committee on Information," United Nations, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/coi>.

349 "Department of Global Communications," United Nations, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/department-global-communications/>.

350 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 78/424, Questions relating to information, A/78/424, (October 31, 2023), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4026901?ln=en&v=pdf>.

351 A/78/424.



SPECPOL

NHSMUN 2025



TOPIC B:
SAFEGUARDING PEACEKEEPERS IN ARMED CONFLICT

Photo Credit: Capt George Christie

Introduction

Peacekeeping refers to deploying national or multinational forces to help control and resolve an actual or potential armed conflict between or within states.¹ It is a fundamental principle that policies must drive the design and implementation of peace operations mandates.² The United Nations (UN) Charter has made the promotion of peace and stability a top priority since World War II. The first peacekeeping operation was in 1948. The UN Security Council approved sending military observers to the Middle East for the Cold War.³ Since then, over two million peacekeepers have aided countries in their transition from armed conflict to peace. Currently, about 70,000 peacekeepers serve in eleven missions situated in global hotspots of conflict areas.⁴ Peacekeepers protect civilians, monitor ceasefires, investigate war crimes, strengthen the rule of law, and overall seek peace. However, they are constantly threatened. Of the 4,370 UN peacekeepers who have lost their lives serving, 1,130 have died from hostile acts.⁵ Peacekeepers are often targeted through explosive devices, direct assaults, riots, criminal attacks, and disinformation campaigns.⁶ Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) pose a severe risk to the safety of peacekeepers. For instance, since 2014, 643 peacekeepers have been injured or killed by IEDs.⁷

Moreover, peacekeepers are exposed to high-risk environments where the operations are not appropriately funded. Therefore, proper services, adequate equipment, resources, and access to medical facilities are limited. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court alongside the customary international humanitarian law states that it is forbidden to launch an assault on individuals or equipment engaged in a peacekeeping operation. It also provided that such individuals or equipment are entitled to the protection afforded to civilians under international humanitarian law.⁸ Every peacekeeping mission's mandate is unique to the country's needs. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in its resolution 2086(2013) established the fundamental principles of

peacekeeping. This includes the parties' consent, impartiality, and non-use of force, unless necessary for self-defense or the mission's defense.⁹ To promote accountability for crimes against peacekeepers, the UNSC adopted the resolution 2589(2021) that called for the Project on the Implementation. It aims to address the operational and technical shortcomings that lead to crimes against peacekeepers and the consequent lack of accountability.¹⁰

Despite the implementation of several resolutions and multiple programs such as the Secretary General's Action for Peacekeeping and Action for Peacekeeping +, crime rates towards peacekeepers has increased substantially.¹¹

1 "Peacekeeping / Peace Enforcement," The Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-Determination, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://pesd.princeton.edu/node/561>.

2 Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support, *Peacekeeping Practice Note: Community Engagement* (New York: United Nations Peacekeeping, March 2018), https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/practice_note_-_community_engagement.pdf.

3 Quan Yuan, Yong Chen, Shili Liu, Qingning Huang, Miaomiao Liao, Jiani Zhou, Zhaogang Li, and Ying Li, "UN Peacekeeper Health and Risk Factors --- a Systematic Scoping Review." *Global Health Research and Policy* 9, no.13, April 24, 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41256-024-00351-4>.

4 "International Day of UN Peacekeepers" United Nations, accessed September 29, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/peacekeepers-day>.

5 "Give (Lasting) Peace a Chance – 10 Facts About UN Peacekeeping," United Nations Western Europe, May 28, 2024, <https://unric.org/en/give-lasting-peace-a-chance-10-facts-about-un-peacekeeping/>.

6 "Protection in Armed Conflict." UNHCR, January 26, 2024. <https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/protection-mechanisms/protection-armed-conflict>.

7 Agathe Sarfati and Jill Stoddard, "As Crimes Against Peacekeepers Increase, How to Find Accountability," IPI Global Observatory, May 4, 2023, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2023/05/as-crimes-against-peacekeepers-increase-how-to-find-accountability/>.

8 Medecins Sans Frontieres, "The Practical Guide to Humanitarian Law: Peacekeeping," accessed June 20, 2024, <https://guide-humanitarian-law.org/content/article/3/peacekeeping/>.

9 UN Press, "Intervention Brigade' Authorized as Security Council Grants Mandate Renewal for United Nations Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo" press release, March 28, 2013, <https://press.un.org/en/2013/sc10964.doc.htm>.

10 UN Press, "Adopting Resolution 2589 (2021), Security Council Calls on Governments to Protect Peacekeepers, Requests Creation of Online Database Cataloguing Attacks," press release, August 18, 2021, <https://press.un.org/en/2021/sc14606.doc.htm>.

11 Varun VM, "Identifying Legal Gaps in International Humanitarian Law Governing Peace Operations," Centre for International Law,

Peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mali, and the Central African Republic (CAR) account for most deaths. However, most of them have not been further investigated by national authorities.¹² Today's peacekeeping operations are complex and multidimensional and require the collaborative efforts of civilian and military components.¹³ Community engagement is essential to peacekeeping missions as the members should participate in decision-making processes involving their welfare and future. In addition, peacekeepers need to have strong trust connections with the communities so they can prevent disinformation based on extremist violence and hatred. There are eleven peacekeeping missions in conflict-affected communities where political solutions are frequently lacking, resulting in vague protection strategies and criminal responsibility.¹⁴ It is important to reevaluate the current legal framework and propose strategies to ensure peacekeepers' welfare.

History and Description of the Issue

History of UN Peacekeeping

During the Cold War period the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces were created to prevent rivalries between countries from obstructing the action of the Security Council.¹⁵ UN peacekeeping missions were limited to maintaining ceasefires on the ground and supporting political efforts to resolve conflicts. These operations involved the deployment of unarmed military observers and lightly armed troops whose primary responsibilities were monitoring, reporting, and fostering trust.¹⁶ The first peacekeeping operation was the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). The UNTSO was created in 1948 to supervise the ceasefire truce in Palestine during the Arab-Israeli War.¹⁷ The following

mission was the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). It was created in 1949 to oversee a ceasefire, but this time between India and Pakistan.¹⁸ In these missions, peacekeepers were only expected to accompany local authorities and gather information.

However, the Suez Crisis of 1956 changed the way peacekeeping missions happened. The Suez Crisis consisted of the protests of France and the United Kingdom over the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company by Egypt. A few months later, Israeli forces attacked Egypt and occupied the region of Sinai and the Gaza Strip. British and French troops landed in the Suez Canal Zone a few days after this. The UNSC adopted the "Uniting for Peace" resolution that "called for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of all foreign forces from occupied territories."¹⁹ To achieve this, the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) was established.²⁰ This operation was considered successful, as the forces of France, the United Kingdom, and Israel left completely by March of 1957. This operation was considered to be so different because it was carried out with the consent and cooperation of all the parties involved. The main function of the UNEF was to supervise the withdrawal of the forces and provide impartial supervision of the ceasefire.²¹

Following the end of the Cold War, the UN switched from "traditional" missions, which typically involved military personnel conducting observational tasks, to more complex and extensive operations. This meant UN Peacekeepers were now tasked to stabilize the affected countries by building governmental institutions, monitoring human rights, and promoting the disarmament of attackers.²² An example is UNMIK, which was deployed in Kosovo in 1999. This mission was established after the adoption of the resolution 1244 of the UNSC. It was created to provide an interim administration

November 29, 2023, <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/blogs/identifying-legal-gaps-in-international-humanitarian-law-governing-peace-operations/>.

12 Sarfati and Stoddard, "As Crimes Against Peacekeepers Increase, How to Find Accountability."

13 "Safety and Performance of UN Peacekeepers: Training Is a Crucial Element," Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations in New York, June 1, 2020, <https://onu.delegfrance.org/Safety-and-performance-of-UN-peacekeepers-Training-is-a-crucial-element>.

14 "Where We Operate," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/where-we-operate>.

15 "Our History," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed July 12, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/our-history>.

16 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Our History."

17 "UNTSO Fact Sheet," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed July 12, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/untso>.

18 "UNMOGIP Fact Sheet," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed July 12, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unmogip>.

19 "Background," United Nations, accessed September 11, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/past/unef1backgr1.html>.

20 United Nations, "Background."

21 United Nations, "Background."

22 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Our History."



First UN troops to Suez 1957
Credit: Finnish Heritage Agency

for Kosovo that would allow its citizens to enjoy substantial autonomy.²³ This meant that the mission was in charge of all legislative and executive powers, as well as in charge of the administration of the judiciary. However, with the entry into force of the constitution of 2008, the mission now focuses on the security, stability, and respect for human rights.²⁴

Since the first UN peacekeeping mission, the United Nations has carried out over 70 other missions worldwide.²⁵ However, the nature of the conflicts has changed over the years, and now, more agents and parties are involved. Because of these changes in global affairs and conflicts, many of the processes carried out before need to meet the current issues, resulting in peacekeepers facing a lot of risks. More than 4,000 UN peacekeepers from almost 120 countries have lost their lives or been injured while on a mission.²⁶

UN peacekeepers, when deployed, are tasked with protecting vulnerable people in some of the most fragile political and

security situations.²⁷ These troops are not only composed of military personnel but also civilians to maintain or restore peace after a ceasefire. Their main priority is to keep hostilities from escalating so that every party involved can work towards a long-term peace settlement. For a state to host a peacekeeping mission, it has to give its prior consent to the UNSC.²⁸ It is understood that peacekeepers will operate impartially and only use force in self-defense. Nevertheless, troops have frequently been left with no peace to uphold because of the fragility of the ceasefire agreement and, occasionally, the inefficiency of the troops' organization.²⁹ The boundaries between conflict prevention, peace-making, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and peace enforcement have become increasingly blurred, making the protection of the personnel and locals even more difficult.

In 2022, the UN reiterated that the safety and security of peacekeepers is a "top priority" for the organization.³⁰ In recent years, the risk and possibility of intentional violence against peacekeepers have caught the attention as they

²³ "UNMIK Fact Sheet," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed September 11, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unmik>.

²⁴ United Nations Peacekeeping, "UNMIK Fact Sheet."

²⁵ United Nations Peacekeeping, "Our History."

²⁶ "Give (Lasting) Peace A Chance – 10 Facts About UN Peacekeeping," United Nations, May 28, 2024, <https://unric.org/en/give-lasting-peace-a-chance-10-facts-about-un-peacekeeping/>.

²⁷ "What we do," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed September 11, 2014, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/what-we-do>.

²⁸ "Principles of Peacekeeping," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed September 11, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/principles-of-peacekeeping>.

²⁹ Tomas Macura, "Accountability and Protection of UN Peacekeepers in Light of MONUSCO on JSTOR," *Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag* 88, no. 3 (2013): 143-156, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23774053>.

³⁰ UN Press, "United Nations Peacekeeping One of Global Community's Most Effective Tools in Maintaining Stability, General Assembly President Tells Committee," press release, February 14, 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/gapk243.doc.htm>.

remain constant and many facets of these attacks are poorly understood.³¹ A great example is the lack of a commonly agreed-upon definition of “crimes against peacekeepers” among member states or within the UN system. However, Resolution 2589(2021) of the UNSC refers to specific actions classified as acts of violence.³² It includes, but is not limited to, their killing, detention, and abduction.³³ Lastly, this resolution does not only make an initial attempt to classify “acts of violence”, but also, because of the urgency of the matter. The Security Council calls upon all member states to follow this resolution to protect UN personnel and promote accountability for the crimes committed against them, which are considered as war crimes.³⁴

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, recalled the Security Council’s Resolution 2518(2020) on the safety of peacekeepers. It calls “on all Member States hosting peacekeeping operations to promptly investigate and effectively prosecute those responsible for attacks on United Nations personnel”.³⁵ The resolution’s emphasis falls on the host states and their responsibility for holding criminals accountable. However, the UN stresses the pursuit of accountability, focusing especially on the missions of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Mali since these are considered the most violent.³⁶ One of the responsibilities and restrictions this resolution places on host countries to ensure accountability and remove impunity for such violations is the prosecution of

those accountable for crimes against peacekeepers.³⁷ According to the resolution, the primary responsibility for looking into and prosecuting offenses against UN peacekeeping forces and operations in the country rests within the national authorities of the host state. The host governments must ensure those who are accused of acts about the United Nations peacekeeping operation or its members are prosecuted.³⁸

Many of the rules and laws that regulate a mission are established and defined in the Status of Mission Agreement (SOMA). This is a document prepared before each mission that states the rules established between the UN and the host state.³⁹ It includes parameters for the mobility of forces, carrying of weapons, resolution of disputes, and the processes for exercising civil or criminal jurisdiction over peacekeepers. They also specify the guidelines and protocols for collaboration between the sending and receiving states.⁴⁰ It’s important to note that UN missions lack the power to prosecute crimes against their peacekeepers and cannot operate as a stand-in for national criminal justice systems.⁴¹ Instead, they can assist national authorities in carrying out their humanitarian labor and report the offense.⁴² The host state is thereafter in charge of gathering, managing, and safeguarding evidence connected to the offense. National authorities under UN supervision should report this incident to the Heads of Mission and wait to proceed. The UN does not support immunity for crimes. Therefore, field missions will ensure the proper international processes and fair trials in all cases.⁴³

31 Sara Lindberg Bromley, “UN Peacekeepers’ Safety and Security: Patterns of Attacks and Pathways to Peacekeeping Performance,” *The Challenges Annual Forum*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.61880/qjmc2097>.

32 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2589 (2021), Calls on Governments to Protect Peacekeepers, S/RES/ 2589, 2, (Aug. 18, 2021), <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n21/229/15/pdf/n2122915.pdf>

33 S/RES/ 2589, 2.

34 UN Press, “Adopting Resolution 2589 (2021), Security Council Calls on Governments to Protect Peacekeepers, Requests Creation of Online Database Cataloguing Attacks | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases,” press release, August 18, 2021, <https://press.un.org/en/2021/sc14606.doc.htm>.

35 Security Council, Resolution 2518 (2020), S/RES/2518 (2020). <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n20/081/45/pdf/n2008145.pdf>.

36 UN Press, “UN Launches ‘Key’ Initiative to Support Accountability for Crimes Against Peacekeepers,” December 16, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/12/1131777>.

37 S/RES/2518.

38 KK Sharma, “Protecting the Protectors: For an Effective Peacekeeping,” United Service Institution of India, accessed July 12, 2024, <https://www.usiofindia.org/strategic-perspective/Protecting%20the%20Protectors:%20For%20an%20Effective%20Peacekeeping.html>.

39 Terry Gill, Dieter Fleck, William H. Boothby and Alfons Vanheusden, “*Status of Forces and Status of Mission*,” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, December 28, 2017), <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/leuven-manual-on-the-international-law-applicable-to-peace-operations/status-of-forces-and-status-of-mission/4F36CDA2F67A8D8B7EC7A5882C35E047>.

40 Terry Gill, Dieter Fleck, William H. Boothby and Alfons Vanheusden, “*Status of Forces and Status of Mission*.”

41 Areesha Shahid, “Peacekeeping Operations and Accountability,” DLP Forum, May 18, 2022, <https://www.dlpforum.org/2022/05/18/peacekeeping-operations-and-accountability/>.

42 Agathe Sarfati, “Accountability for Crimes against Peacekeepers.” International Peace Institute, March 2023, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2303_Accountability-for-Crimes-Against-Peacekeepers.pdf.

43 Sharma, “Protecting the Protectors: For an Effective Peacekeeping.”

The absence of a robust legal system and inadequate security establishments in the war-torn and post-conflict environments of host nations presents significant challenges in investigating and prosecuting crimes. Securing acceptable forensic evidence and other pieces of evidence is crucial for a trial.⁴⁴ The national legal system of the host country remains the primary foundation for prosecuting those guilty of crimes against UN personnel. This is typically represented in the status-of-forces and status-of-mission agreements signed by the UN and host countries. The UN is intensifying its efforts to assist states in strengthening their justice delivery systems, a move that will help them meet the standards set in the UNSC Resolution 2589 (2021).

Despite the noteworthy achievements of the peacekeeping missions, there is an urgent need for better safety protocols and accountability. The challenges in attempting to prove crimes against peacekeepers highlight the significance of strengthening national and international legal frameworks. Even while the UN continues to modify its peacekeeping tactics to suit contemporary challenges, the protection and safety of peacekeepers must remain a primary concern.

Effects of Inadequate Training on Peacekeeper Safety

Despite providing a means of protecting citizens and delivering humanitarian relief, peacekeepers have faced several difficulties, including poor community trust, sexual exploitation, and assault crimes.⁴⁵ The education of peacekeepers must focus on better preparation for the complexity of peacekeeping operations. Peaceful methods and techniques for defending people and resolving conflicts must be highlighted.⁴⁶ Many peacekeepers serve in regions where hostilities or other violent

circumstances such as targeted attacks have limited their ability to carry out their duty and protect themselves or civilians.⁴⁷ One example can be seen with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan back in 2016. It was discovered that the troops failed to achieve one of their core mandates: to protect civilians under the threat of physical violence.⁴⁸ There were reports of women and girls being raped near the compounds of the troops. Peacekeepers didn't know how to respond to the aggressions.⁴⁹

Peacekeepers are notoriously underfunded, under-trained, and under-resourced. Effective counter-terrorism requires specialized training, anti-terrorist equipment and skills, and access to intelligence. Deploying soldiers in high-risk areas has caused several troop-contributing countries to express concerns. Ensuring troops are equipped and are willing to follow and address their training and follow their mandate rightfully, is one of the most important things to consider before sending them into nonpermissive areas.⁵⁰ UN peacekeeping deployments should be prepared to carry out the challenging missions the Security Council gives them. Because of this, training is a wise investment in peacekeeping that helps military, police, and civilian personnel perform their duties in hostile circumstances.

Pre-deployment training, which is the majority of the training, is necessary since they frequently have to adapt to the conditions, environment, and political situation they face.⁵¹ Practical pre-deployment training is essential to the effectiveness of peacekeeping forces. The Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers report released by General dos Santos Cruz in 2017 mainly examines practical ways to lower the number of deaths during UN peacekeeping missions.⁵²

44 Sharma, "Protecting the Protectors: For an Effective Peacekeeping."

45 "Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peacekeeping Operations," The Redress Trust, September 2017, <https://pseataaskforce.org/uploads/tools/1505891747.pdf>

46 "The Evolution of Peacekeeper Training," United States Institute of Peace, accessed July 12, 2024., <https://www.usip.org/events/evolution-peacekeeper-training>.

47 "Practice Relating to Rule 33. Personnel and Objects Involved in a Peacekeeping Mission," Customary IHL, Accessed September 16, 2024, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v2/rule33>

48 Tomi Oladipo, "The UN's peacekeeping nightmare in Africa," BBC News, January 5, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-38372614>

49 Oladipo, "The UN's peacekeeping nightmare in Africa."

50 Fiifi Edu-Afful, "Peacekeeping in Nonpermissive Environments: Assessing Troop-Contributing Countries' Perspectives on Capabilities and Mindsets," *International Peace Institute*, March 2023.

51 "UN Peacekeeping Training," Resource Hub, accessed September 20, 2024, <https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/training-files/Training%20Materials/038%20RTP-MIO/038-054%20UN%20Peacekeeping%20Training.pdf>

52 Reliefweb, "Strengthening UN Peacekeeping: Placing the Cruz Report in Context," press release, February 28, 2024, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/strengthening-un-peacekeeping-placing-cruz-report-context>

This report states that insufficient pre-deployment preparation leads not only to subpar performance but also to the absence of an effective mandate implementation.⁵³

Before being deployed to a mission, peacekeepers receive general, specialized, and mission-specific training by UN guidelines. The Rules of Engagement are the legal instruments that set out the conditions and restrictions on the usage of weapons in operations. They regulate the contingent commander of the troop-contributing countries.⁵⁴ There are three basic UN principles of peacekeeping. These are consent, impartiality, and non-use of force except in cases of self-defense. Each of these rules is in place to ensure that peacekeepers can be effective and maintain positive relationships in the place where they are stationed. Consent of the parties is making sure local communities accept the involvement of the UN. If there is lacking consent peacekeeping operations become risky and the parties can be drawn toward conflict.⁵⁵ Impartiality is important to maintain good relations with everyone in the area and not show favor or preference. The work of

peacekeepers is only possible if they are accepted by civil society.⁵⁶ In addition to the Integrated Training Service (ITS) of the UN Member State, trainers conduct this training for all military and police personnel in their own countries. GA Resolution A/RES/49/37 states that pre-deployment training for uniformed personnel deploying to UN operations is the responsibility of the Member States.⁵⁷ The ITS is in charge of creating training materials and providing Member States with advice and support.⁵⁸

The fundamental information that all peacekeeping personnel must possess is embodied by the Core Pre-deployment Training Materials (CPTM). The goal of the CPTM is to create a common understanding of the fundamental ideas, rules, and regulations governing UN peacekeeping. Peacekeeping workers are guided by these criteria as they perform vital duties that help nations move from violence to peace. Overall, it addresses topics and concerns including behavior and discipline, civilian protection, human rights, gender mainstreaming, sexual violence connected to war, child protection, and

53 Lotta Hagman, “Peacekeeping pre-deployment training: a shared commitment and responsibility,” *The COESPU MAGAZINE*, 2019, <https://www.coespu.org/articles/peacekeeping-pre-deployment-training-shared-commitment-and-responsibility>.

54 Daniel K. Inouye, “Challenges of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations” *Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies*, October 8, 2022, https://dkiapcss.edu/nexus_articles/challenges-of-the-united-nations-peacekeeping-operations/.

55 Inouye, “Challenges of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.”

56 Inouye, “Challenges of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.”

57 Inouye, “Challenges of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.”

58 “Pre-Deployment Training” United Nations Peacekeeping Resource Hub, accessed September 20, 2024, <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/pre-deployment>.

Bangladesh peacekeeping troops on a medical training

Credit: U.S. Navy Photo by Lt. Theresa Donnelly



environmental protection.⁵⁹ Mission personnel also go through Mission-Specific Induction Training Standards. Upon arrival at the mission, it is mandatory for all peacekeeping forces. This includes military, police, civilian staff from national and international organizations, and UN volunteers. The Mission-Specific Induction Training Standards are designed to provide peacekeepers with knowledge of issues deemed critical to the mission.⁶⁰ This is done to improve peacekeepers' early system integration and enable the start of early support to mission operations. The main purpose of mission-specific training is to act according to the site's needs. Alternatives for this have been considered. Some of the alternatives include training mission personnel more thoroughly and correctly before they are sent to the site; that way, they are aware of what to expect and how their actions should take place.

In addition, peacekeepers often face cultural barriers. The differences in lifestyle and language can cause conflicts with the local community. Diverse national backgrounds, religions, languages, and educational systems can clash with the ones of the locals.⁶¹ Preparation for this even before arriving at the site should also be taken into account. This can reduce the likelihood of cultural misunderstandings leading to violence. This can further prepare peacekeepers so they can focus on their mandate and continue refining their existing skills rather than grappling with unforeseen cultural barriers.

While there are multiple resources for proper pre-deployment training, it is often inadequate and underfunded. These shortcomings exist in national general skills training programs and UN-specific training programs. They concentrate mainly on the information, abilities, and mindsets unique to peacekeeping.⁶² Some regions have weak political institutions, slow political processes, and low levels of support from the

host government and the local population. This further challenges the situation peacekeepers face and their access to protection. These include peacekeepers stationed at the UN missions in Mali (MINUSMA), the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Their ability to carry out their mandate has been hampered by ongoing armed conflicts or other violent situations, including deliberate attacks on peacekeepers. This has led some troop-contributing countries to raise concerns about the high-risk environments in which their troops are deployed. They have urged the UN, host countries, and other stakeholders to do more to address the risks facing their troops.⁶³

Another big issue that contributes to fatalities is untreated illnesses. Out of 4,380 peacekeepers that have lost their lives while being deployed, 1,616 of these deaths were caused by illness.⁶⁴ The UN provides peacekeepers with the Core Pre-deployment Training Materials on health. This includes information regarding personal hygiene measures and disease prevention guidelines. However, because the UN troops are exposed to a variety of complicated health risk factors this problem persists.⁶⁵ Some of these factors include unhygienic environments, unbalanced diets, small social networks, and unhealthy habits. They contribute to the faster spread of diseases. In addition to physical health issues, peacekeepers tend to suffer from mental health as well. According to earlier studies, UN peacekeepers frequently experience mental health issues like anxiety, sleeplessness, and depression. They affected their physical health and their overall performance, which put at risk their and others' safety. Resolutions have been passed by the UN that highlight the need to preserve the health of UN troops and the general public they interact

59 "Peacekeeping Resource Hub: Peacekeeping Resource Hub: Pre-Deployment," accessed September 23, 2024, <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/pre-deployment>.

60 "Mission Specific Induction Training," United Nations Peacekeeping Resource Hub, Accessed September 16, 2024, <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/in-mission>

61 N. N. H. Nordin, W. N. W. Husin, and M. Z. Salleh, "The Significance of Pre-Deployment Training, Culture Tolerance and Impartiality in Reducing Conflicts During Peacekeeping Operations: Malaysian Experiences," *Journal of Education and Culture Studies* 5, no. 2 (March 10, 2021): p9, <https://doi.org/10.22158/jecs.v5n2p9>.

62 Lotta Hagman, "Peacekeeping pre-deployment training: a shared commitment and responsibility," *the COESPU MAGAZINE*, 2019, <https://www.coespu.org/articles/peacekeeping-pre-deployment-training-shared-commitment-and-responsibility>.

63 Fifi Edu-Afful, "Peacekeeping in Nonpermissive Environments: Assessing Troop-Contributing Countries' Perspectives on Capabilities and Mindsets," *International Peace Institute*, March 2023.

64 "Fatalities," United Nations Peacekeeping, Accessed September 16, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/fatalities>

65 Quan Yuan, Yong Chen, Shili Liu, Qingning Huang, Miaomiao Liao, Jiani Zhou, Zhaogang Li, and Ying Li, "UN Peacekeeper Health and Risk Factors --- a Systematic Scoping Review," *Global Health Research and Policy* 9, no. 1 (April 10, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41256-024-00351-4>.

with, including their families and coworkers. For example, UNSC Resolution 2668 (2022) emphasized the need for mental health and psychological assistance. Another example is UNSC Resolution 1308 (2000) which highlighted the necessity to include HIV/AIDS preventive awareness and skills training for peacekeepers.⁶⁶

Peacekeepers Engagement with Local Stakeholders and Communities

Strengthening community engagement is crucial in UN peacekeeping operations to protect civilians and reduce violence.⁶⁷ While peace agreements among political leaders help resolve conflicts, they also require a disposition to address constant drivers of violence at local and national levels. To achieve this, peacekeepers provide different types of support to the host government. For instance, they provide safety measures for elections to be held and facilitate peace agreements to be signed by the parties. If the host government is unable or unwilling to protect civilians, peacekeeping

operations are expected to act according to their mandate and policies to address the political situation.⁶⁸

The word “community engagement” was officially added to the UN lexicon in 2015 when the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations recommended community engagement as a component of a people-centered approach to the protection of civilians.⁶⁹ Because of the importance of this to the peacekeeping missions, the UNSC also added specific remarks on community engagement. The importance of it is shown in three key factors. First, they work to manage expectations about the scope of the mission and raise awareness of their mandate in the local communities. They also foster connections and trust between the mission and the community.⁷⁰ Secondly, they search for data that will aid in their understanding of the local environment, help them stay vigilant about any dangers, and help them learn self-defense strategies. Third, missions can work with local people to create a safe atmosphere and assist in resolving localized disputes.⁷¹

66 Yuan, Chen, Liu, Huang, Liao, Zhou, Li, and Li, “UN Peacekeeper Health and Risk Factors --- a Systematic Scoping Review.”
 67 UN Peacekeeping, “Declaration of Shared Commitments in UN Peacekeeping Operations,” July 22, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpko-dfs-declaration-shared-commitments-unpeacekeeping-1812605e.pdf>.
 68 Aditi Hate, Moore, and Dirk Druet, “Understanding and Improving Engagement With Civil Society in UN Peacekeeping”, UN Peacekeeping (United Nations Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support Policy, Evaluation and Training Division, May 2016), https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/engagement_with_civil_society_in_un_peacekeeping-web.pdf.
 69 Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support, “Peacekeeping Practice Note: Community Engagement.”
 70 Harley Henigson, “Community Engagement in UN Peacekeeping Operations: A People Centered Approach to Protect Civilians,” International Peace Institute (IPI Publications, November 2020), https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2011_POC-and-Community-Engagement.pdf.
 71 Henigson, “Community Engagement in UN Peacekeeping Operations: A People Centered Approach to Protect Civilians.”

Moroccan peacekeepers build relationships with the community

Credit: MONUSCO Photos



Connectivity between local communities and the state brings a great deal of benefits. For instance, their ability as neutral actors helps foster peaceful communication between locals and political leaders. Also, their localized knowledge gained via long-term involvement is of great value.

The United Nations guidance on community engagement goals relies on consultation, goal-setting, and communication. First, through communication, they look to understand and prioritize issues that are important to the local population. Second, through goal-setting the UN encourages the development of peace processes and political dialogues that address community and stakeholders' priorities. Lastly, through consultation, the UN aims to develop a clear and current idea of the community priorities and how current trends are perceived.⁷² The guidelines also list seven recommendations for the UN to more effectively engage with local civil society actors and their communities. First, they recommend more meaningful engagement with local youth in peacebuilding and peacekeeping. Secondly, they look to create community-based capacity-building, including flexible financing for peacebuilding.⁷³ Thirdly, a deeper understanding of the local context through respectful, coherent, and flexible engagement is desired. Then, operational and strategic coherence and effective coordination in community engagement at the country level are looked for. Next, they recommend the inclusive and meaningful participation of local civil society actors. Subsequently, safety and protection in restricted environments through conflict-sensitive and risk-informed approaches should also be considered. Lastly, meaningful engagement of local civil society actors in peacebuilding and peacekeeping. By analyzing the bases and priority of political solutions in peacekeeping is easily understood.⁷⁴

Effective community involvement can increase political opportunities for community and civil society organizations. Conversations between communities and government institutions are essential to assess the institutions' performance and help improve accountability.⁷⁵ UN missions engage communities through different modalities and formats. This includes workshops, meetings with local partners, and town hall meetings.⁷⁶ On the other hand, it is also important to consider the risks communities face when engaged with mission staff. As an example, in Mali, a key cause of civilian targeting by armed groups is due to the suspicion of collisions with 'foreign' forces. The mission must conduct a comprehensive risk assessment to ensure that individuals or communities are not jeopardized by the mission's actions.⁷⁷

The importance of community participation is even emphasized by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34). They highlight that working "with the local population is necessary for the efficient and successful action of peacekeeping operations." Twelve annual reports from the C-34 began to evolve as missions' methods for engaging the community changed. To enhance missions' "local-level analysis" and manage communities' expectations, the committee's 2011 annual report highlighted the critical role that joint protection teams (JPTs), community liaison assistants (CLAs), and civil affairs officers play.⁷⁸ National workers known as CLAs serve as a point of contact between the people, the local government, and the peacekeeping operation. JPTs are deployed to collect information and build relationships with communities and key actors. Political solutions, both national and sub-national, are the cornerstone of any UN strategy to bring peace to conflict-affected countries. This has been emphasized in the 2015 HIPPO report and continues through the 2018 Declaration of Shared Commitments under the Action for Peacekeeping

72 António Guterres, *United Nations Community Engagements Guidelines on Peace Building and Sustaining Peace*, United Nations Peace Building (UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, August 2020), https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org/peacebuilding/files/documents/un_community-engagement_guidelines.august_2020.pdf.

73 Guterres, *United Nations Community Engagements Guidelines on Peace Building and Sustaining Peace*.

74 Guterres, *United Nations Community Engagements Guidelines on Peace Building and Sustaining Peace*.

75 Natasja Rupesinghe, "How Can Peacekeepers Strengthen Their Engagement With Local Communities? Opportunities and Challenges in the Field," Norwegian Institute of National Affairs, November 2016, <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/resources/docs/NUPI-How%20Can%20Peacekeepers%20Strengthen%20their%20Engagement%20with%20Local%20Communities.pdf>.

76 Rupesinghe, "How Can Peacekeepers Strengthen Their Engagement With Local Communities? Opportunities and Challenges in the Field."

77 Rupesinghe, "How Can Peacekeepers Strengthen Their Engagement With Local Communities? Opportunities and Challenges in the Field."

78 Henigson, "Community Engagement in UN Peacekeeping Operations: A People Centered Approach to Protect Civilians."

initiative.⁷⁹ For instance, The UN peacekeeping force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or MONUSCO, conducted a review of the recent massacres. They have advised the mission leadership that instead of simply introducing additional interpreters, peacekeepers should be equipped with a resource that could play a more involved role than interacting with residents. The Community Liaison Assistant (CLA) was developed due to this. CLAs have been tasked to work with communities to increase their alertness and responsiveness to threats.⁸⁰ A conflict's local knowledge and understanding are needed to prevent threats and improve response measures to similar incidents in the future.

The host states' governments bear the primary duty of safeguarding civilians. Thus, collaborating with them at the national and local levels is a crucial aspect of community involvement. However, some states lack strong and functional security and justice sectors. In this case, they are often not able to provide the required level of security, accountability, and access to justice for peacekeepers. Therefore, the peacekeeping mission is responsible for advocating for appropriate responses under the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy. This policy states that any type of assistance will be delivered in line with the goals and ideals of the UN. At the local level, missions must identify channels of communication with local authorities to further this advocacy. They should also carry out follow-up evaluations with communities to learn about their concerns after any protective action. To promote community involvement, a variety of instruments and procedures have been developed and put into place. For example, Community Alert Networks allow community members to exchange information about potential hazards.⁸¹ Civilians can report any type of suspicious activity and ongoing conflicts to the mission directly. The information is directed to focal points which are authorities or representatives from local leadership selected

by community members or identified by CLAs. Community Alert Networks (CANs) should not negatively impact the focal point or the community. Additionally, the information provided by CANs is passed to the military. They can either quickly assist and respond to conflicts in a strategic manner or conduct preventive actions to avoid the use of force.⁸²

In resolutions 2151 and 2553 on security sector reform, resolution 2382 on United Nations policing, and resolution 2447 on police, justice, and corrections, the Council reiterated the centrality of national ownership for strengthening security and justice.⁸³ The primary focus of the UN Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI) has been on how missions may work with local populations to improve justice and national security institutions. It focuses on leading the United Nations in the implementation of Security Council resolution 2151 (2014) on security sector reform. To improve community-level justice and bring justice to remote and frequently unstable places, judicial affairs specialists collaborate with local civil society actors. This helps to prevent future local disputes and improves access to justice at the community level. They do this by facilitating individuals' access to legal services, public awareness campaigns, and the creation of rural courts. Nevertheless, due to the growing demand for peacekeeping missions, they may face the need to engage with non-state judicial actors. Depending on the situation, peacekeepers should decide whether to support the state or support non-state actors. Sometimes these might have greater legitimacy in the eyes of the community than the UN's official interlocutor.⁸⁴ Member states, senior UN leadership, peace operations, UN country teams, and regional and sub-regional partners supporting national security sector reform initiatives are all given political, strategic, and technical support by it. Overall, it provides the support needed for security policy-making. Moreover, it is the Unit's responsibility to provide

79 United Nations Department of Peace Operations, "Sustaining Peace Through Community Engagement in Peacekeeping Operations," Reliefweb, July 2024, <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/54c38c0d-36e1-3985-b1d0-2809b4964932/Sustaining%20peace%20through%20community%20engagement%20in%20peacekeeping%20operations.pdf>.

80 Janosch Kullenberg, "Community Liason Assistants: a bridge between peacekeepers and local populations," Forced Migration Review, Accessed September 16, 2024, <https://www.fmreview.org/kullenberg/>

81 Samuli Harju, "Engaging Local Populations as Partners in UN Peacekeeping | Center for Civilians in Conflict," Center for Civilians in Conflict, December 2, 2020, <https://civiliansinconflict.org/blog/engaging-local-populations-as-partners-in-un-peacekeeping/>.

82 United Nations Department of Peace Operations, "Sustaining Peace Through Community Engagement in Peacekeeping Operations."

83 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2151 (2014), Security sector in post conflict environments, S/RES/2151 (2014), April 28, 2014, [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2151\(2014\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2151(2014))

84 Jerome Mellon, "Peacekeeping Engagement with Communities for Stronger Rule of Law," Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units, 2021, <https://www.coespu.org/articles/peacekeeping-engagement-communities-stronger-rule-law>

system-wide policies and guidelines for security sector reform, including defense sector reform, in collaboration with the UN Inter-Agency SSR Task Force. For example, one of OROLSI's components is the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Section which seeks to support individuals who were previously associated with armed groups, so that they can become active participants in the peace process. In complex locations, Community Violence Reduction serves as a valuable tool for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration.⁸⁵ While this lowers tensions, it also enhances social cohesiveness and conflict resolution while encouraging political processes. Officers specializing in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) support community-based reintegration initiatives that benefit both the communities and the former combatants.⁸⁶

In the recently concluded mission MINUSMA in Mali, DDR specialists helped former combatants to become active participants in the peace process. Weapons were removed from ex-combatants, removing them from military structures. Then, they were reintroduced socially and economically into society. In addition, judicial affairs officers assisted by setting up public hearings. Moreover, In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO works to enhance early warning systems and community-level participation. It also engages in and supports community reconciliation via discussion and mediation. Furthermore, the mission aims to reduce the likelihood of violence associated with elections by promoting civil society's role in voting and taking part in the conflict resolution process. In addition, it also helps by assisting efforts to fortify local participatory security governance. A community-based method is used by MONUSCO to lower the high levels of violence within communities. These are all done to achieve a rise in security and stability. MONUSCO facilitates communication between national and local actors, as well as those who commit violent crimes. To reduce armed conflict, MONUSCO promotes social cohesion and

establishes accountability systems. Lastly, the primary goal of the MINUSCA mission in the Central African Republic is to promote local efforts. In addition, it has established strategies for social cohesion, political discourse, and protection. They have a team of 117 staff present in the 12 field offices. Civil Affairs manages the implementation of Quick Impact Projects.⁸⁷ They involve interacting with communities, creating partnerships and local networks, and fostering social cohesion. Furthermore, they focus on dispute resolution by supporting civil society groups (especially those led by women and young people). Additionally, the police component of MINUSCA is primarily concerned with providing operational support to national security forces, which includes community policing. For instance, UN police officers have implemented community-oriented policing. It helps to enhance public trust in the police along with working to establish and strengthen protective environments. UNAMID also engaged with Sudanese police to develop and build its capacity and work toward community-oriented policing for the security of internally displaced people at national and regional state levels.⁸⁸ The main purpose is to involve people in building a stronger capacity to re-establish the rule of law. The officers aim to prevent and change the conditions that lead to criminality through a community-oriented approach.⁸⁹ In Liberia, UNMIL peacekeepers provided early warning response mechanisms and a forum for managing local security issues to the public. It also established fifteen County and District Security Councils to reinforce accountability and responsiveness within the host country. These cannot be restricted to the communities and instead need to involve national and local authorities as well as members of civil society.⁹⁰

Effective peacekeeping tactics have included continuous community participation to address risks to civilian populations. To achieve this, UN peacekeeping missions have mainly employed local community committees. They serve as both early warning systems and as a means of threat

85 "Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions," United Nations Peacekeeping, July 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/office-of-rule-of-law-and-security-institutions>.

86 Jerome Mellon, "Peacekeeping Engagement with Communities for Stronger Rule of Law," Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units, 2021, <https://www.coespu.org/articles/peacekeeping-engagement-communities-stronger-rule-law>

87 "Civil Affairs," MINUSCA, February 10, 2023, <https://minusca.unmissions.org/en/civil-affairs>.

88 United Nations Department of Peace Operations, "Sustaining Peace Through Community Engagement in Peacekeeping Operations."

89 Jerome Mellon, "Peacekeeping Engagement with Communities for Stronger Rule of Law," Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units, 2021, <https://www.coespu.org/articles/peacekeeping-engagement-communities-stronger-rule-law>

90 United Nations Department of Peace Operations, "Sustaining Peace Through Community Engagement in Peacekeeping Operations."

analysis. It's of great importance as this is the first step toward the creation of mitigation measures. Ideally, they should involve communication with potential offenders or between communities in the wake of incidents.⁹¹

Propaganda and Disinformation Against UN Peacekeeping Operations

UN peacekeeping operations are facing a growing threat of disinformation. In a 2022 report for the International Peace Institute, Albert Trithart reported growing unfounded claims that UN forces are assisting terrorists, trafficking weapons to armed groups, and exploiting natural resources.⁹² False information is not a recent development, however, it has continued to rise with the advent of social media. Disinformation has long existed within host communities that have a continued lack of security despite several years of foreign aid. In sub-Saharan Africa, there's a large knowledge gap which makes individuals more susceptible to fall victim to disinformation. Many individuals lack access to the media, particularly in places devastated by violence. Thus, they turn to untrustworthy and biased resources. What has recently emerged is the extent to which fake information is produced. Furthermore, operations encounter a lack of situational awareness, insufficient resources in personnel and equipment, and motivation of UN forces to take risks and counter threats in today's social media-driven world.⁹³

Misinformation and disinformation exacerbate this unstable situation, making it far less conducive to UN peacekeeping efforts. It's important to understand that misinformation and disinformation are two terms that are frequently used synonymously. However, they are different as misinformation is false or inaccurate information not intended to deceive. Whereas disinformation is false information that is deliberately intended to mislead.⁹⁴ The increase of anti-UN

misinformation has jeopardized the safety of peacekeepers. Moreover, it affects peacekeeping operations' ability to carry out their mandates. Fair and unbiased news sources are hard to come by in conflict-affected communities. Continuous hatred and uncertainty result in ignorance and feelings of discontent and rage regarding what people perceive as failures of UN missions. This is an ideal scenario for creating fake stories to attack peacekeepers, distort the truth, and produce well-planned disinformation. In response to hatred trends in 2019, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres launched the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. It was mainly proposed due to the growing rate of xenophobia, racism, intolerance, violent misogyny, anti-Semitism, and anti-Muslim hatred around the world.⁹⁵ Hate speech can deeply impact UN forces as it can damage social cohesion and previous community progress.

The recent development of artificial intelligence (AI) has contributed to the spread of misinformation. AI has done so through synthetic media, fake images, and "deep-fakes," which are vocal clones. AI has the power to increase prejudice, legitimize discrimination, and lead to more intrusive forms of totalitarian surveillance.⁹⁶ Even though it can have negative consequences, if used correctly technology can be a powerful resource. For instance, last year UNISFA in Sudan and South Sudan launched "Voice of Peace". This is an online radio station aimed at countering hate speech, and fake news.⁹⁷ By strengthening the country's capacity to proactively identify and combat hate speech, disinformation, and misinformation, this effort supported the development of a strong information ecosystem.

There have been a lot of initiatives to address this issue. One example is The Policy Brief on Information Integrity on Digital Platforms from the UN Secretary-General advises

91 Guterres, "United Nations Community Engagements Guidelines on Peace Building and Sustaining Peace."

92 Albert Trithart, *Disinformation Against UN Peacekeeping Operations*, International Peace Institute (IPI Publications, November 2022), https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2212_Disinformation-against-UN-Peacekeeping-Ops.pdf.

93 Goswami, "Misinformation and Disinformation in UN Peace Operations," United Service Institution of India, 2023, <https://www.usiofindia.org/publication-journal/Misinformation-and-Disinformation-in-UN-Peace-Operations.html>.

94 "Misinformation and Disinformation," American Psychological Association, July 8, 2024, <https://www.apa.org/topics/journalism-facts/misinformation-disinformation>.

95 "United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech," United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, accessed September 20, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/un-strategy-and-plan-of-action-on-hate-speech>.

96 Goswami, "Misinformation and Disinformation in UN Peace Operations."

97 "Building a Digital Army: UN Peacekeepers Fight Deadly Disinformation," The United Nations Office at Geneva, press release, August 19, 2023, <https://www.un Geneva.org/en/news-media/news/2023/08/84108/building-digital-army-un-peacekeepers-fight-deadly-disinformation>.

the global community to enhance information integrity.⁹⁸ Information integrity can be defined as accurate, consistent, and trustworthy information. In addition, the UN Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide (OSAPG) has developed guidelines for policymakers and practitioners to tackle online hate speech. In the guidelines, they identify challenges they can face and recommendations on how to address them.⁹⁹ Moreover, a Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online was proposed in 2023 by the governments of the Netherlands and Canada. It was successfully approved by 30 member states.¹⁰⁰ The creation of guidelines to address the dissemination of information is the first step to mitigate this problem in peacekeeping missions. Missions should provide specific guidance on how to work with online sources considering the previous guidelines. Moreover, personnel training should equip peacekeepers with active strategies to identify fake narratives and engage effectively with communities.

In 2023, 58 percent of UN peacekeepers who were surveyed said misinformation and disinformation severely or critically impacted the work of their mission.¹⁰¹ Because of this, the UN has prioritized tackling anti-UN misinformation. For instance, The UN Security Council included wording against misinformation to the mandates of all four of the main peacekeeping missions between 2019 and 2022.¹⁰² Furthermore, the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Opinion and Expression (UNSR-FOE) was founded in 1993 to defend the rights of people to freedom of thought

and expression. Within the framework of international human rights law and standards, the UNSR-FOE was given the mission by the Human Rights Council to safeguard freedom of opinion and expression both offline and online. According to their mandate, the Special Rapporteur examines illegal types of expression, including hate speech, intolerance, discrimination, and incitement to hatred. This has been beneficial to missions, mainly the ones that have a Protection of Civilians mandate that have to counter the spread of hate speech and propaganda through dialogue and engagement.¹⁰³ Missions such as MINUSCA in the Central African Republic and UNMISS in South Sudan have explicit mandates against hate speech.^{104;105} For instance, the human rights division of MINUSCA monitors hate speech on social media and collaborates with Facebook to delete offensive messages. Similarly, UNSMIL in Libya deals with harmful social media posts that have exacerbated divisions among communities. The human rights division of UNSMIL has collaborated with Facebook and Libyan journalists to create safe online platforms.¹⁰⁶

Additionally, The UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) released the policy on Information Integrity in Peacekeeping Contexts. It is an important asset when targeting made-up situations. It clarifies how to establish boundaries that will enable host countries to work along policies that respect freedom of speech and information. This while also promoting the truth and exposing fake narratives and conspiracies.¹⁰⁷ All threats are being taken seriously at

98 “SG’s Policy Brief on Information Integrity on Digital Platforms,” United Nations, accessed September 23, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/civil-society/information-integrity-digital-platforms>

99 United Nations, “Countering and Addressing Online Hate Speech: A Guide for policy makers and practitioners,” (New York: United Nations, July 2023), https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/publications-and-resources/Countering_Online_Hate_Speech_Guide_policy_makers_practitioners_July_2023.pdf.

100 Claire Wardle, *A Conceptual Analysis of the Overlaps and Differences Between Hate Speech, Misinformation and Disinformation*, (New York: Department of Peace Operations, June 2024), https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/report_-_a_conceptual_analysis_of_the_overlaps_and_differences_between_hate_speech_misinformation_and_disinformation_june_2024_qupdate.pdf.

101 “New Report Finds Understanding Differences in Harmful Information Is,” United Nations Peacekeeping, June 21, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/new-report-finds-understanding-differences-harmful-information-is-critical-to-combatting-it>.

102 United Nations Peacekeeping, “New Report Finds Understanding Differences in Harmful Information Is,”

103 Monika Benkler, “Hate Speech - Poison for Mandate Implementation,” TechPops, April 21, 2021, <https://tech-blog.zif-berlin.org/hate-speech-poison-mandate-implementation>

104 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2459, S/RES/2459(2019), March 15, 2019, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n19/075/20/pdf/n1907520.pdf>

105 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2499, S/RES/2499(2019), November 15, 2019, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n19/369/56/pdf/n1936956.pdf>

106 “UNSMIL and Facebook convene roundtable on misinformation in Libya,” UNSMIL, September 30, 2021, <https://unsmil.unmissions.org/unsmil-and-facebook-convene-roundtable-misinformation-libya>.

107 António Guterres, “Secretary-General’s Press Briefing on Policy Brief on Information Integrity on Digital Platforms | United Nations Secretary-General,” Press release, June 12, 2023, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2023-06-12/secretary-generals-press-briefing-policy-brief-information-integrity-digital-platforms>.

the highest level of the UN. This has been discussed in the UNSC resolution S/RES/2686(2023), which “condemns misinformation, disinformation and incitement to violence against United Nations peacekeeping operations intended to negatively affect their safety or their ability to implement their mandates.”¹⁰⁸

Violence against peacekeepers has been fueled in part by disinformation campaigns. For example, in MINUSCA false accusations claim that peacekeepers work alongside jihadists and terrorist groups to exploit natural resources.¹⁰⁹ This type of disinformation, even when confirmed by the personnel to be fake, has attacked the mission as a whole, and other times it has targeted particular staff members. Furthermore, an online disinformation campaign falsely accused four MINUSCA staff members of transporting weapons to armed groups in 2020, branding them “genocidal mercenaries” and inciting violence against the mission.¹¹⁰ This disinformation has been seen in several ways. For instance, fake letters from mission leaders and photos or videos mislabeled to purportedly show UN peacekeepers engaging suspiciously. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) similar fake news cases as in the CAR and Mali are being spread. These include unfounded allegations that MONUSCO is supplying armed groups, exploiting the state’s natural resources, and offering protection to foreign forces. Especially during electoral processes, politicians promoted anti- MONUSCO rhetoric. There was a propensity among the people to place the blame for security failings on MONUSCO. The anti-MONUSCO propaganda relies on certain Congolese authorities and community leaders.¹¹¹ Disinformation against the mission has increased as a response to several violent incidents. This includes the crash of a UN helicopter in May 2022 and the assassination of the Italian ambassador to the DRC in 2021.¹¹² However, the initiatives implemented by MONUSCO against

disinformation include recruiting digital experts, building multimedia products, and reaching out to young people with knowledge of social media. This is especially aimed to prevent any type of radicalization.¹¹³

Fighting misinformation requires a complete, systemic strategy and cannot be left to the discretion of individual groups. Political engagement is imperative so that hate speech and disinformation do not result in greater consequences as a potential trigger of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.¹¹⁴

Acts of Terror Committed Against Peacekeepers

Terrorism is a planned criminal act undertaken to induce terror in the public.¹¹⁵ It is often carried out by an individual or organization seeking to advance a political or ideological viewpoint. Terrorism can take the form of explosive devices, active shooter incidents, or biological, chemical, radiological/ nuclear, or cyber-attacks. Terrorist attacks can result in death, property devastation, widespread sickness, injury, and/or mass displacement.¹¹⁶ UN peace operations have struggled to operate in increasingly volatile environments marked by extremist and terrorist threats. Most peace operations are not equipped to handle activities related to counterterrorism. Specialized training, anti-terrorist gear, expertise, and intelligence access are necessary for effective counterterrorism strategies.

The applicable international legal framework related to counterterrorism is expressed in a range of sources, including treaties, resolutions of the UNSC and the General Assembly, and legal instruments of countries. Under the obligations of international laws, countries must criminalize the relevant offenses and exercise effective jurisdiction over offenders. Additionally, mechanisms for international cooperation should

108 Wardle, *A Conceptual Analysis of the Overlaps and Differences Between Hate Speech, Misinformation and Disinformation*.

109 Trithart, *Disinformation Against UN Peacekeeping Operations*.

110 Vermeij, *The Effectiveness of UN Peacekeeping Operations*.

111 Vermeij, *The Effectiveness of UN Peacekeeping Operations*.

112 Trithart, *Disinformation Against UN Peacekeeping Operations*.

113 “Peacekeepers Campaign Against False Information,” *Africa Defense Forum*, September 19, 2023, <https://adf-magazine.com/2023/09/peacekeepers-campaign-against-false-information/>.

114 United Nations, “New Report Finds Understanding Differences in Harmful Information Is.”

115 Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, “Terrorism and Intentional Acts,”

116 “Terrorism and Intentional Acts,” Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, July 22, 2024, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/terrorism-and-intentional-acts>.

be established.¹¹⁷ While addressing counterterrorism is not the primary duty of peacekeeping missions, they significantly aid global efforts to combat it. In regions where terrorist action is likely to occur because of the lack of strong governmental power, peacekeeping efforts support the development of more robust state counterterrorism capabilities.¹¹⁸

The increase of violent extremism, jihadist fighters, terrorism, and other religiously radicalized organizations in Africa has posed a serious threat to the established UN peacekeeping missions in the region.¹¹⁹ Since terrorism impacts the whole international system, it has become a great security concern. Peacekeeping operations are deployed in areas where national security forces are unable to put an end to hostilities or lethal armed conflicts. The deployments of these operations are designed to safeguard innocent lives, advance peace, and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian relief where it is required. It is common to see peacekeeping or security missions operating under regional blocs like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU). Currently, the AU and its regional partners work in ten operations in seventeen countries. Over 70,000 people have been recruited for this project.

The UNSC approved Resolution 2719 in December 2023 to allow the UN to use assessed budget contributions to pay for African Union (AU) peacekeeping operations. The African Union-led peace assistance operations will receive expenses and compensation for all kinds of support agreed upon by the troop-police contributing country, the African Union, and the United Nations.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the limitations that regionally led missions represent. AU operations are not guided by the same robust human rights due diligence policy, civilian protection mandate, or Code of Personal Conduct for Blue Helmets. Although the AU has taken action to counterterrorism (especially in Africa) it

is believed there's still a lot of progress to be made regarding implementation. Furthermore, AU activities are not subject to the same reporting and transparency standards as those of the United Nations. Incidents involving injuries and fatalities in U.N. peacekeeping are made public. Whereas, AU operations incidents are passed onto individual troop-contributing countries. This implies that statistics are not often disclosed. For example, public evaluations of the number of AU personnel killed or injured in Somalia throughout the AMISOM years are nonexistent.¹²¹

Resolution 70/46 was established in 2015 by the General Assembly. It addressed the need for an efficient global strategy to combat the proliferation of weapons in environments of violent extremism and instability. Adopted by agreement, the resolution called for international help and collaboration. Other points addressed include victim aid, possibilities for component control, awareness raising, and data gathering. It also touches on how to approach these sectors and increase the regulations. Additionally, the resolution passed by the General Assembly urges that steps must be taken to tighten regulations over the materials and components used to make Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). These controls could apply to national ammunition stockpiles and industrially produced detonators, detonating cords, and industrially produced explosives. Corporations and important industries might be urged to regulate basic and prefabricated components. Following the same resolution, States must exchange information on the contents and manufacturing processes of the IEDs they have seized. Moreover, information on IED attacks that have occurred afterward is required. Effective information sharing on IED designs and components between Member States has the power to shorten the learning curve that military and security forces have to go through to identify and develop effective countermeasures. Improved information

117 Susie Alegre, *Frequently Asked Questions on International Law Aspects of Countering Terrorism*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, n.d.), <https://www.unodc.org/documents/terrorism/Publications/FAQ/English.pdf>.

118 Andrew Carpenter and Annika Hansen, "Guide to UN Counterterrorism," Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Accessed September 15, 2024, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/pdfs_terrorism-directory_6-DPKO.pdf

119 Niyonkuru Fulgence, "Peacekeeping Operations and Growing Global Terrorism in East and West Africa: A Call for New Re-Engagement," *Journal of Political Sciences & Public Affairs*, Volume 10, Issue 4, 2022, <https://www.longdom.org/open-access/peacekeeping-operations-and-growing-global-terrorism-in-east-and-west-africa-a-call-for-new-reengagement-100813.html>

120 United Nations "Security Council Opens Door to UN Funding for African-led Peace Missions, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2719 (2023)," Press release, December 21, 2023, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15544.doc.htm>.

121 Jordan Street, "Counterterrorism in Disguise? Does a Shift Towards 'peace Enforcement' Spell a Death Knell for UN Peacekeeping?," *News and Resources - Saferworld*, December 20, 2023, <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/news-and-analysis/post/1027-counterterrorism-in-disguise-does-a-shift-towards-peace-enforcement-a-death-knell-for-un-peacekeeping>.

exchange on new IED designs will also result in faster neutralization.¹²²

IEDs pose a serious risk to peacekeepers' safety. IEDs have killed or injured 643 peacekeepers and UN employees since 2014.¹²³ Explosive device incidents accounted for half of the hostile acts that resulted in uniformed peacekeeping fatalities in 2022. Due to the difficulty of identifying specific attackers, IED attacks are among the most complex to investigate and prosecute. Concrete and reviewed by Heads of Mission evidence recollection and analysis are necessary for this. However, host states typically lack specialist agents outside of their capitals, a situation that can be made more difficult by continuous fighting and a lack of governmental presence in various areas of the country.¹²⁴ In Mali alone, IEDs have claimed the lives of over 93 soldiers. In just one of these incidents was there a prosecution brought about by a witness who admitted to placing mines during an initial probe. In 2020, the defendant was condemned to life in prison in absentia. Currently, the inquiry into an IED strike against peacekeepers in Mali, the CAR, or the DRC has resulted in just one conviction.¹²⁵

The importance of having regulations can be shown by the increase in recent attacks on peacekeepers. According to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), there was an attack in February of 2024.¹²⁶ During the attack, UNISFA forces were targeted. Ghanaian UN Peacekeepers at a base in Marial Achak were fired upon before the attackers were repelled.¹²⁷ Consequently, there was a widespread displacement. UNISFA peacekeepers are currently sheltering and providing basic support to more than 2,000 displaced people in its bases. Children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with disabilities have been particularly aided in the

force bases.¹²⁸

Another example of the huge risk of this can be seen with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). UNIFIL was established in 1978 to oversee the Israeli military's evacuation from Lebanon following their invasion as a response to a Palestinian attack. It evolved during the 2006 war between Israel and the terrorist group Hezbollah. About 10,000 peacekeepers are in charge of supervising the cease-fire between the two parties. Hezbollah, which receives support from Iran, has expanded to over 45,000 militants. UNIFIL has not been able to stop Hezbollah from striking Israel from Lebanon using guided missiles, drones, and rockets.¹²⁹ In March, three United Nations military observers and a Lebanese translator were injured while monitoring the border in southern Lebanon when a bomb detonated nearby. The observers are part of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), which supports the UNIFIL. They were wounded by an Israeli attack and an enemy drone. Since the beginning of the Gaza conflict in October of 2023, there has been a near-daily exchange of gunfire across the border between the Israeli military and Hezbollah in Lebanon.¹³⁰

Other regions also suffer from this issue. For example, African governments face regional threats such as Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, and Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb. Therefore, African leaders have shown strong support for France's forceful military responses to the crisis in Mali and the Central African Republic.¹³¹ Several terrorist groups operate in Mali, including Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP). JNIM has increasingly conducted attacks in southern Mali and targeted the capital, Bamako.¹³² Since the establishment

122 "Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) Publication – UNODA," United Nations, July 20, 2024, <https://disarmament.unoda.org/convarms/ieds2/>.

123 Agathe Sarfati and Jill Stoddard, "As Crimes against Peacekeepers Increase, How to Find Accountability," IPI Global Observatory, May 4, 2024, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2023/05/as-crimes-against-peacekeepers-increase-how-to-find-accountability/>.

124 Sarfati and Stoddard, "As Crimes against Peacekeepers Increase, How to Find Accountability."

125 Sarfati and Stoddard, "As Crimes against Peacekeepers Increase, How to Find Accountability."

126 "UNISFA Condemns Attacks on Civilians and Peacekeepers, Calls For," United Nations Peacekeeping, July 21, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/unisfa-condemns-attacks-civilians-and-peacekeepers-calls-immediate-end-to-violence-abyei>.

127 United Nations Peacekeeping, "UNISFA Condemns Attacks on Civilians and Peacekeepers, Calls For."

128 United Nations Peacekeeping, "UNISFA Condemns Attacks on Civilians and Peacekeepers, Calls For."

129 "10 Things to Know about UNIFIL," Foundation For Defense of Democracies, February 13, 2024, <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2024/02/13/10-things-to-know-about-unifil/>

130 "UN Observers Wounded in Explosion While on Patrol in Southern Lebanon," *Al Jazeera*, March 30, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/30/un-observers-wounded-in-explosion-while-on-patrol-in-southern-lebanon>.

131 Richard Gowan, "Can U.N. Peacekeepers Fight Terrorists?," *Brookings*, June 30, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/can-u-n-peacekeepers-fight-terrorists/>.

132 "Safety and Security - Mali Travel Advice," Commonwealth & Development Office Foreign, July 12, 2024, <https://www.gov.uk/foreign->

of MINUSMA in Mali in 2013, IED and landmine attacks have consistently targeted convoys and patrols, particularly in the north and center of the country. Improvised explosive devices have tragically claimed the lives of 109 peacekeepers. This shows how peacekeepers in Mali are not equipped with the right tools to disarm roadside explosives.¹³³ Human security has also been impacted by the deployment of IEDs in certain areas by armed groups. For instance, since January 2018, IED blasts have injured 696 civilians and more than 390 peacekeepers. Some of these injuries happened during the recent mission's drawdown.¹³⁴

The reason why rebel groups may assault peacekeepers is to strengthen their negotiating position and give the impression that they are stronger. For instance, if a group needs to continue being stronger than the government, they will occasionally use the tactic of attacking peacekeepers.¹³⁵ Even though peacekeepers make an effort to maintain objectivity, peace operations are political agreements. Peace operations should help and encourage political settlements between the parties involved in a conflict. However, when counterterrorism and peacekeeping are combined, political approaches are getting lost. They are necessary for effective peace operations.

Gender Inequalities in Peacekeeping Missions

Violent conflict affects women and girls which intensifies the pre-existing gender inequalities and discrimination.¹³⁶ However, women have a fundamental right to participate in peace negotiations and decision-making that affects them, their families, and the futures of their countries. In 1993,

women constituted only one percent of deployed military forces.¹³⁷ Almost 30 years later, women made up over seven percent of military members and 16 percent of established police units out of over 72,000 peacekeepers. In 2021, women comprised 36 percent of the government-provided judicial and correctional staff serving in peacekeeping operations. This showed a strong improvement, as in 2020 it was only at 34 percent. Although the UN promotes and supports the deployment of women to roles requiring uniforms, Member States are ultimately in charge of deploying women to the military and police.¹³⁸ It is important to keep in mind that UN peacekeeping operations have a significant influence on women's lives.¹³⁹

Research has shown that the presence of women in the security sector is associated with much lower rates of misbehavior complaints, incorrect use of force or inappropriate use of firearms, and less authoritarian interactions between lower-ranking officers and civilians.¹⁴⁰ The Global Study on the Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 found that women's participation in the security sector has significantly decreased rates of improper use of force, inappropriate use of weapons, and misconduct complaints.¹⁴¹ It has been found that the presence of women in peacekeeping operations increases the legitimacy of the armed forces.¹⁴² For instance, it gives them access to communities and important information that encourages the reporting of crimes based on gender and sexual orientation. Unfortunately, women still encounter targeted harassment and discrimination. Even though women peacekeepers have shifted traditional community perceptions,

travel-advice/mali/safety-and-security.

133 Shannon Zimmerman, "Peace and Security Are Not the Same Thing," *The Interpreter*, January 13, 2022, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/peace-security-are-not-same-thing>.

134 Ignacio Yáñez and Maria Del Rocio, "Conflict and Conflict Resolutions in Africa. The Future of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)," *Universidad De Navarra Global Affairs and Strategic Studies*, 2020, https://www.unav.edu/web/global-affairs/detalle?p_p_id=com_liferay_blogs_web_portlet_BlogsPortlet&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&p_r_p_tag=mali&_com_liferay_blogs_web_portlet_BlogsPortlet_cur=1&_com_liferay_blogs_web_portlet_BlogsPortlet_delta=10.

135 Emma Nygren, *Violence Against Peacekeepers as a Strategy: Why Rebel Groups Attack Peacekeepers at Some Locations, and Not Others*, Uppsala Universitet (Department of Peace and Conflict Research Uppsala University, January 2019), <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1277613/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

136 "Promoting Women, Peace and Security," *United Nations Peacekeeping*, July 21, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/promoting-women-peace-and-security>.

137 "Women in Peacekeeping," *United Nations Peacekeeping*, July 10, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/women-peacekeeping>.

138 *United Nations Peacekeeping*, "Women in Peacekeeping."

139 "Protection and Peacekeeping," *UN Women – Asia-Pacific*, July 21, 2024, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/peace-and-security/protection-and-peacekeeping>.

140 Zahbia Yousuf, David Newton, and Judith Gardner, "Women and Peacebuilding," *Conciliation Resources*, March 2013, <https://www.c-r.org/accord/women-and-peacebuilding-insight/women-building-peace>

141 *United Nations Women*, "Protection and Peacekeeping."

142 *Council on Foreign Relations*, "Women's Participation in Peace Processes,"



Medal ceremony in the Democratic Republic of Congo including 21 women Beninese Peacekeepers

Credit: MONUSCO Photos

some may differ in their contribution to the community. The campaign has awakened resentment, hostility, and a sense of discomfort amongst male personnel.¹⁴³ Moreover, women have been affected by sexual assaults and abuse incidents. However, due to more women being involved in peacebuilding, there has been a positive impact on peacekeeping environments.¹⁴⁴ This strongly supports the role of women in building peace and focuses on protecting women's rights.

Studies made by Catalina Crespo-Sancho along with the World Bank in 2018 have shown that countries with higher levels of gender equality are more likely to settle disputes peacefully rather than through military action to settle international issues.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, security reforms haven't given women much intervention over the years, which might have led to opportunities being lost. Some may underestimate or not notice the crucial abilities and knowledge that women possess to build safer communities. Over time this misconception has been addressed and increased women's participation in

the security and peacekeeping fields. They are essential to the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations. Commanders on the ground and the UN normative frameworks on women, peace, and security both stress the significance of women in peacekeeping.¹⁴⁶ In addition, the UN is actively working to bring more women into peacekeeping efforts around the world. The 2028 target for women in military contingents is 15 percent, with a goal of 25 percent for military observers and staff officers. Moreover, they're expecting one in five police units.¹⁴⁷

When peacekeeping missions were launched across the Asia Pacific region, women were marginalized. Consequently, partnerships with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK) were created. For instance, UN Women supported the training of 1216 potential peacekeepers on sexual assault along with the CUNPK in India. As part of pre-deployment training, UN Women in India and CUNPK have worked together to

143 Robert Nagel, Kate Fin, and Julia Maenza, *Gendered Impacts on Operational Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations - GIWPS*, Gendered Impacts on Operational Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations (Washington: Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security 2021, May 2021), <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/gendered-impacts-on-operational-effectiveness-of-un-peace-operations/>.

144 "Keeping the Peace in and Increasingly Militarized World | Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325," UN Women, 2015, <https://wps.unwomen.org/keeping-peace/>.

145 "Women's Participation in Peace Processes," Council on Foreign Relations, July 22, 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/>.

146 United Nations Women, "Protection and Peacekeeping."

147 "Women in Peacekeeping - Better World Campaign," Better World Campaign, May 20, 2024, <https://betterworldcampaign.org/women-peacekeeping>.

offer over 26 courses on gender and sexual or gender-based violence prevention.¹⁴⁸ The first initiative attempts were made by UN Women in India in partnership with CUNPK. They then launched technical training for female military officers. Additionally, the UN Women Regional Office for Asia-Pacific promotes the implementation of the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda. This included assistance with developing their national action plan on WPS and implementing UNSC Resolutions 1820 and 1325. They strengthened the mandate of peacekeeping forces to prevent systematic sexual violence.¹⁴⁹

In 2015, the UNSC Resolution 2242 urged the Secretary-General to work with member states to double the proportion of women in the military and police forces participating in UN peacekeeping missions during the following five years.¹⁵⁰ Even though a significant increase was not seen, multiple protests surged in response. The U.S. Institute of Peace began a project in Colombia in 2015. The goal was to assist a network of female peacebuilders and female-led groups dedicated to mediation and nonviolence. This network supported the official peace process every step of the way. Women's organizations successfully achieved the release of captives by negotiating local ceasefires with armed factions. They recorded human rights breaches and put pressure on rebels to remove obstacles. They challenged local governments' budgetary priorities and looked for ways to stop drug trafficking and other illicit activities. A few of these women received invitations to the Havana peace negotiations about Colombia. They played a crucial role in making sure that the final accord took the concerns of the war victims into account when it came to reconciliation.¹⁵¹

Gender parity in peacekeeping, especially among its leaders and uniformed personnel, has long been a priority for the United Nations. The Secretary General's Action for

Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative includes a political commitment to implementing WPS priorities. This commitment reaffirms that women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in peace processes and political solutions is essential for effective peacekeeping. A4P has been signed by 152 Member States, a number of which have come forward to specifically champion the implementation of A4P's WPS commitment. Some of them include Bangladesh, Finland, Germany, among others.¹⁵² Supporting national armed forces to increase the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping is an important step towards meeting the UN targets on gender parity among uniformed personnel.¹⁵³ With one female Force Commander and two female Deputy Force Commanders now serving in the field, the UN Military has lately deployed a record number of women into the most senior military posts in UN peace operations. To increase the number of women police officers nominated for leadership positions, the Police Division established the United Nations Police (UNPOL) Female Police Command Cadre, launched a Female Senior Police Officer Command Development Course to support it, and implemented an all-women Senior Police Leadership Roster. In several UN peacekeeping missions such as UNISFA, UNFICYP, and UNMISS, multiple women hold the positions of Head and Deputy Head of the UN Police components.¹⁵⁴

The top three UN peacekeeping missions with the highest number of female troops in 2022 were MINUSCA, with 781 troops, UNMISS with 776 troops, and MONUSCO with 746 troops.¹⁵⁵ Despite this, female troops made up just 6.4 percent of MINUSCA, 5.9 percent of UNMISS, and six percent of MONUSCO, in relation to the overall force. The overall top missions with the highest proportion of female troops are the MINURSO at 40 percent, UNFICYP at 8.9 percent, and the UNIFIL at 7.3 percent.¹⁵⁶ Additionally, peacekeepers are essential in implementing outreach programs

148 United Nations Women, "Protection and Peacekeeping."

149 United Nations Women, "Protection and Peacekeeping."

150 Eric Rudberg, "The Importance of Meaningful Participation of Female Peacekeepers," *Women in International Security*, June 20, 2023, <https://wiisglobal.org/the-importance-of-meaningful-participation-of-female-peacekeepers/>.

151 Nancy Lindborg, "The Essential Role of Women in Peacebuilding," *United States Institute of Peace*, November 20, 2017, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/11/essential-role-women-peacebuilding>.

152 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Women in Peacekeeping."

153 "Women Peacekeepers Are Stronger Than You Think" – Interview With Lieutenant Colonel Rubana Nowshin Mithila," *UN Women – Africa*, May 25, 2024, <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2024/05/women-peacekeepers-are-stronger-than-you-think-interview-with-lieutenant-colonel-rubana-nowshin-mithila>.

154 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Women in Peacekeeping."

155 Rudberg, "The Importance of Meaningful Participation of Female Peacekeepers."

156 Rudberg, "The Importance of Meaningful Participation of Female Peacekeepers."

that are sensitive to gender and created especially to meet the special needs of women and girls. One such peacekeeper was Kenyan military gender advisor Steplyne Nyaboga, who was awarded UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year in 2020. Her work involved educating over 15,000 military personnel serving in the now-closed UN Mission in Darfur on gender dynamics and enhancing the mission's interaction with Darfuri women.¹⁵⁷ Despite all of these efforts, female military troops continue to be a minority in UN peacekeeping operations.

Current Status

Case Study: The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)

Historically, ethnic disputes have caused regional conflicts among the populations of Kosovo. Conflicts between Serbs and Albanians developed from the independence declarations of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and finally led to the separation of SFRY in 1992. The UN was unable to handle the crisis diplomatically.¹⁵⁸ The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was established on the 10th of June of 1999, as instructed in UNSC Resolution 1244.¹⁵⁹ The resolution approved the presence of foreign military and civilian personnel in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia due to the war between Kosovo and Serbia.¹⁶⁰ The main purpose was for the population to have a provisional administration and enjoy substantial autonomy. Some of the main objectives of the initial mandate were disarming armed groups, preserving peace in communities, and advancing human rights. In 2008, UNMIK handed over administrative

responsibility to Kosovo after the country's establishment and formal independence from Serbia.¹⁶¹ The mission's objectives have shifted since its beginning. The mission's main goal today is to promote security, stability, and respect for human rights in Kosovo.¹⁶²

UNMIK is one of the smallest UN peacekeeping missions. It only counts 343 people as part of their personnel and a USD 38 million budget as of 2020.¹⁶³ To increase the efficiency of peacekeeping, UN Secretary-General António Guterres released the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) agenda in 2018. The UN's biggest peacekeeping operations have received a lot of attention to implement the A4P. However, inactive conflicts are those that do not have a large threat of armed conflict, but haven't reached a political settlement yet and aren't foreseen.¹⁶⁴ These missions are viewed as static with no clear plans. Due to the difficulties of multifaceted missions, they are often ignored. Nevertheless, UNMIK continues to deploy a small number of troop units to preserve peace and promote an inclusive society for all ethnic groups.¹⁶⁵ It has made remarkable progress in implementing the A4P agenda, especially in how missions in frozen conflicts can be utilized to promote innovative solutions.¹⁶⁶

Since it was founded UNMIK has experienced several difficulties. For instance, after the pandemic one of the major challenges of the digital era has been the rise of fake news and misinformation. This triggered incidents of hate towards vulnerable groups.¹⁶⁷ The spread of false information, particularly on social media, continues to be the key driver of negative narratives that have hurt Kosovo communities and have limited trust between communities and authorities.

157 "African Women on the Frontline of Peacekeeping," United Nations Peacekeeping, July 22, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/african-women-frontline-of-peacekeeping>.

158 Alptekin Aslantas and Barış Özdal, "The Effectiveness of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Building the Capacity of Local Police Forces: Case of Kosovo," *Güvenlik Stratejileri Dergisi* 19, no. 45 (August 22, 2023): 255–98, <https://doi.org/10.17752/guvenlikstrj.1295390>.

159 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1244 (1999), S/Res/1244(1999), June 10, 1999, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n99/172/89/pdf/n9917289.pdf>.

160 "UNMIK Fact sheet" UN Peacekeeping, July 28, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/es/mission/unmik>.

161 Better World Campaign, "Kosovo | UNMIK," March 22, 2023, <https://betterworldcampaign.org/mission/kosovo-unmik>.

162 UN Peacekeeping, "UNMIK Fact sheet."

163 <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/01/how-has-unmik-delivered-on-action-for-peacekeeping/>

164 Hon Kenneth, Denis Conboy, and William Courtney, "Hitting the Pause Button: The 'Frozen Conflict' Dilemma in Ukraine," Wilson Center, July 30, 2024, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/hitting-the-pause-button-the-frozen-conflict-dilemma-ukraine>.

165 Better World Campaign, "Kosovo | UNMIK."

166 Pushkar Sharma, "How Has the UN Mission in Kosovo Delivered on Action for Peacekeeping?," IPI Global Observatory, January 22, 2020, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/01/how-has-unmik-delivered-on-action-for-peacekeeping/>.

167 "Peace Beyond the Pandemic: Panel Discusses Challenges and Opportunities of the Digital Era at the 4th UN Youth Assembly in Kosovo," UNMIK, June 7, 2022, <https://unmik.unmissions.org/peace-beyond-pandemic-panel-discusses-challenges-and-opportunities-digital-era-4th-un-youth-assembly>.

To address these issues, the Mission will act under its strategic communications resources and capabilities. To achieve this, there are great collaboration efforts from civil society, institutions, and United Nations entities to address misinformation and disinformation. As a result, peacekeepers are supporting narratives that encourage peaceful coexistence and peace for all residents of Kosovo. These goals fall in line with Action for Peacekeeping + Plan priorities on strategic communications and the Mission's pursuit of supporting effective trust-building among communities.¹⁶⁸ This plan counts eight areas of commitment and seven priorities that form the strategy for the implementation of the A4P agenda. It counts on indicators of progress and implementation arrangements to improve peacekeeping impacts.¹⁶⁹ In addition to these efforts, the Kosovo Trust-Building platform was created and managed by three women-led organizations. These are the New Social Initiative (NSI), Open Data Kosovo, and Alternativna. The platform seeks to emphasize the achievements and progress made by UNMIK. However, it also provides advice on how to identify fake news and report it so civilians can evade it in the future.¹⁷⁰

To maintain peace, UNMIK has actively collaborated with multiple partners in different initiatives. Examples of significant initiatives are a multi-ethnic Missing Persons Resource Center, a multi-ethnic gender-based violence shelter, and the first online Albanian-Serbian/Serbian-Albanian dictionary.¹⁷¹ In addition, the mission sponsors eighteen easily implementable confidence-building projects each year.¹⁷² The mission has developed a broad framework on youth, peace, and security, anchored by the annual UN Kosovo Youth Assemblies. This is the largest local multi-ethnic venue for youth development. This is done to support future leaders since youth comprise 70

percent of Kosovo's population. These carefully thought-out initiatives to promote peace can lessen the chance of violence by creating opportunities and strengthening links within the community. According to A4P, the UNSC and budgetary committees should make sure that missions have the resources to carry out these kinds of efforts, especially those in situations where there is a chance for things to go out of hand.¹⁷³

Moreover, UNMIK efforts also rely on national initiatives. UNMIK has actively supported the implementation of the UN Action Plan for The Western Balkans: Sustaining Peace Through Trust-Building, Dialogue, and Reconciliation. This initiative aims to improve cooperation within the UN system, address the causes of conflicts, and reduce tensions throughout the region.¹⁷⁴ In addition, the action plan also aims to strengthen the primacy of politics through regional analysis. Consequently, it expects to increase women's participation in peacemaking.¹⁷⁵ Due to the mission's size, it is more likely to endorse a people-centered approach which in inactive conflicts carries the potential to normalize relationships across opposing groups. UNMIK has advanced local reconciliation in Kosovo through fostering the development of a multifaceted, locally-crafted, inter-community trust-building framework.¹⁷⁶ This has been developed by 120 participants from across Kosovo at the 2018 UN Kosovo Trust-building Forum. The framework identified 135 recommendations endorsed by convening partners including the UN Kosovo Team, the European Union (EU), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).¹⁷⁷ Among the major outcomes of the Forum was the adoption by consensus of a series of recommendations in different areas. This includes good governance and access to services, access to justice, inter-religious trust-building, economic empowerment and the environment, media and

168 Action for Peacekeeping, *Action for Peacekeeping + Plan*, (New York: UN Peacekeeping, n.d.) https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/action_for_peacekeeping_plus_plan.pdf

169 Action for Peacekeeping, *Action for Peacekeeping + Plan*.

170 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Peace Beyond the Pandemic: Panel Discusses Challenges and Opportunities of the Digital Era at the 4th UN Youth Assembly in Kosovo."

171 United Nations, "First Multi-Ethnic Gender-Based Violence Shelter in Kosovo to Open Doors."

172 "Confidence Building Projects," UNMIK, July 5, 2021, <https://unmik.unmissions.org/confidence-building-projects>.

173 Sharma, "How Has the UN Mission in Kosovo Delivered on Action for Peacekeeping?"

174 "Peacebuilding in Action," United Nations, accessed September 23, 2024, <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/peacebuilding-action>.

175 Sharma, "How Has the UN Mission in Kosovo Delivered on Action for Peacekeeping?"

176 United Nations, *Kosovo Trust-Building Forum*, UNMIK, (Pristina: March 8, 2016), https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/un_kosovo_trust-building_forum_2018_final_report.pdf.

177 "Who We Are," Kosovo Trust Building Platform, accessed July 30, 2024, <https://kosovotrustbuilding.com/en/who-we-are>.

communications, and education.¹⁷⁸

The 2023 election period aggravated the violence and overall situation of the country. For almost a year, restrictive measures were imposed by the European Union in reaction to a violent outbreak.¹⁷⁹ There was a huge disagreement with the Kurdish government over how it handled elections in the region's Serb-dominated northeast. The failure to control the situation resulted in limited financing sources for the country and an undetermined pause in the implementation of EU initiatives. Some of the most significant suspensions were the programming of funds for Kosovo, which were planned to be delivered through the Investment Framework in the Western Balkans and IPA 2024 (Pre-Accession Instruments). In addition, Kosovo was left out of the grants that the EU approved in July 2023 of EUR 2.1 billion.¹⁸⁰ Overall, these measures were put in place after the EU said that Kosovo had not done enough to de-escalate the situation in the north inhabited by a Serbian majority. Many European countries urge to lift the political and economic restrictions against Kosovo. For instance, Finland, Croatia, Poland, and Slovenia are the countries with the strongest requests for the lifting of sanctions against Kosovo. France, Italy, and Germany are in favor of the gradual lifting of the measures.¹⁸¹ However, even when Serbia attacked a village last September, there hasn't been a clear response on lifting the restrictions.¹⁸²

United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)

Western Sahara is a territory on the northwest coast of Africa bordered by Morocco, Mauritania, and Algeria. It was under Spanish control until 1976. Morocco and Mauritania claimed the land, but the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia

el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (POLISARIO Front) resisted it, which resulted in conflict. The Polisario Front spent 50 years fighting for the independence of the Sahrawi Arab Republic from Morocco, mostly using arms and guerrilla warfare. These tensions encouraged the establishment of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) in 1991. The establishment of this mission was part of a settlement plan for a transitional period to prepare for a referendum in which Western Saharans would choose between independence and integration with Morocco. Although the truce has mostly been maintained since then, discussions between the two parties have stopped. It is expected for a referendum to take place.¹⁸³ On April 29, 2016, the UNSC issued Resolution 2285, urging the conflict's sides to maintain political will in order to enter a more intense and substantive phase of discussions.¹⁸⁴ The primary goal of MINURSO is to conduct a census of those eligible to vote in the referendum for Sahrawi self-determination.¹⁸⁵

MINURSO is one of the most ambiguous missions. Currently, it has 1,178 personnel consisting of staff officers, UN volunteers, civilians, police personnel, and troops.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, there are 245 uniformed personnel which include contingent troops, experts on mission, and staff officers.¹⁸⁷ Nevertheless, MINURSO has undertaken efforts to enhance the peacekeeping capabilities of its personnel through training and development programs. MINURSO's core mandate involves political efforts to facilitate a lasting solution.¹⁸⁸ This aligns with A4P's emphasis on political support. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS) was introduced in December 2019. With this system as a base, the Mission developed its CPAS Framework through a rigorous training and working process including all Mission

178 United Nations, *Kosovo Trust- Building Forum*.

179 Xhorxhina Bami, "EU Announces Measures Against Kosovo Over Unrest in North," *Balkan Insight*, June 14, 2023, <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/06/14/eu-announces-measures-against-kosovo-over-unrest-in-north/>

180 Nen Si, "EU Countries are in Favor of Lifting Measures Against Kosovo," *Euro News*, April 24, 2024, <https://euronews.al/en/eu-countries-are-in-favor-of-lifting-measures-against-kosovo/>.

181 Si, "EU Countries Are in Favor of Lifting Measures Against Kosovo."

182 Xhorxhina Bami, "EU Announces Measures Against Kosovo Over Unrest in North," *Balkan Insight*, June 14, 2023, <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/06/14/eu-announces-measures-against-kosovo-over-unrest-in-north/>.

183 "Western Sahara | MINURSO," Better World Campaign, April 25, 2024, <https://betterworldcampaign.org/mission/western-sahara-minurso/>.

184 "MINURSO FACT SHEET," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minurso>.

185 Carlos Ruiz Miguel and Yolanda Blanco Souto, *Una Visión De La MINURSO: Antecedentes, Evolución Y Perspectivas*, 2020, <https://www.redalyc.org/journal/4027/402771780011/html/>.

186 United Nations Peacekeeping, "MINURSO FACT SHEET."

187 United Nations Peacekeeping, "MINURSO FACT SHEET."

188 Miguel and Souto, "Una Visión De La MINURSO: Antecedentes, Evolución Y Perspectivas."

components. The implementation of CPAS in the MINURSO framework is one of the A4P programs for the Mission.¹⁸⁹

Even though the mission has had good progress, MINURSO has recently been experiencing several difficulties. The situation in Western Sahara continues to be characterized by tensions and low-intensity hostilities between Morocco and the Polisario Front. The prevailing situation has led to significant challenges for the operations of MINURSO, in particular its logistics and resupply efforts.¹⁹⁰ The Polisario Front resumed violence in 2020 as a result of Morocco's response to the demonstrations in Sahrawi.¹⁹¹ Despite the truce, a long-term solution is still desperately required. This would have to take place in the context of the larger African security environment, which is undergoing change due to the UN's decreasing peacekeeping efforts. Other factors that contribute are the expansion of Private Military Companies (PMCs) and the increasing involvement of countries like Turkey and Russia in African conflicts. The use of PMCs has also replaced state military forces within the last ten years. Among them the Russian Wagner Group, which was

formerly under the direction of the late Yevgeniy Prigozhin has drawn notice. Its presence has been noticeable in states like Niger, Mali, and Sudan. Moreover, it has been present in the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Chad, and Guinea, where troops are provided.¹⁹² Russia has been actively engaging with the Polisario Front and Algeria. Furthermore, it has military actors in the region, even providing military support through arms deals. It is believed that the sudden military interest could have a relationship with the global metal and mineral markets. However, the war in Ukraine has weakened Russia's financial, military, and human resources. Hence, pursuing active support of either the Polisario Front or Morocco seems a relatively remote possibility.

More recently, territorial conflicts in Africa have become even more violent. For instance, in October 2023, the Polisario took credit for multiple explosives in Western Sahara that left at least one person dead.¹⁹³ Following the attack, a few days later they struck four explosions in 3 neighborhoods in Smara which is Moroccan-controlled. These sudden attacks are a

189 "The Implementation of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System in MINURSO," MINURSO, February 27, 2020, <https://minurso.unmissions.org/implementation-comprehensive-performance-assessment-system-minurso>.
 190 United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General, Situation concerning Western Sahara, S/2023/729, October 3, 2023, https://minurso.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s-2023-729_-_sg_report_on_minurso_-_english.pdf
 191 "The Western Sahara conflict on an evolving African security landscape," Accord, April 25, 2024, <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/the-western-sahara-conflict-on-an-evolving-african-security-landscape/>.
 192 Dimitris Symeonidis, "The Western Sahara Conflict on an Evolving African Security Landscape – ACCORD," United Nations Security Council, April 25, 2024, <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/the-western-sahara-conflict-on-an-evolving-african-security-landscape/>.
 193 Basma El Atti, "Polisario Carries Out 4 Explosions in W. Sahara, Killing One," *The New Arab*, October 30, 2023, <https://www.newarab.com>.



MINURSO
Credit: Anass Sedrati

disruption to the peace process. Moreover, it also represents a heavy loss of lives and equipment.¹⁹⁴ The majority of the attacks over the border that the parties reported to MINURSO remained focused in the northern section of the territory, close to Mahbas. However, the number and location of the violent fevers were difficult for MINURSO to independently verify.¹⁹⁵ Since these attacks have taken place, MINURSO has strengthened its physical protection measures. They ensure the safety of its military observers and continue to assess risk levels in cooperation with the Department of Safety and Security.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, three members of the Polisario Front were reportedly killed on March 20 by a drone strike in Mahbes. It was believed to be conducted by the Moroccan army according to local reports. Moroccan drones have made it difficult for the Polisario to travel easily to the east of the security belt and have stopped it from building forces in these regions in preparation for a surprise attack.¹⁹⁷ Polisario members used to have a lot of time to plan their attacks without worrying about any type of response. However, these days, it's almost impossible for more than one or two cars to try to sneak in and bomb Moroccan Armed Forces positions without being detected. Additionally, they also have to retreat very quickly from the attacks which limits the impact and focus of their attacks.¹⁹⁸

The UNSC receives briefings on this mission twice each year and votes every October on a resolution to renew the mandate of the MINURSO.¹⁹⁹ Due to the recent violent attacks, from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, MINURSO will continue to implement its mandate. It was decided in the UNSC Resolution 2703 (2023). The mandate is to monitor and report on the ground situation.²⁰⁰ They should go along with political and security developments in and related only to the territory.

The Mission will continue to investigate alleged incidents related to aerial strikes and firing incidents, leveraging its role as the main and often only source of impartial information in the territory. The proposed budget for this period is USD 70,711,000 to pay for the personnel on the mission.²⁰¹

At this crucial point, it is imperative to put an end to impunity, hold those responsible for sabotaging the peace process accountable, and then put in place practical steps to allow MINURSO to carry out its mandate in full. This is the possible way toward the realization of a fair and lasting peace as well as the return of stability and security to our area.

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda aimed to provide a framework to ensure long-term global peace and prosperity, both now and in the future.²⁰² At its core are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that serve as a call for action by all countries. Following the core objective of the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda aims to achieve “a society where no one is left behind.”²⁰³ The SDGs acknowledge that reducing poverty and other deprivations must go hand in hand with initiatives that promote health and education, decrease inequality, and boost economic growth. SPECPOL strongly endorses the need for sustainable development goals as the issues are all intertwined and must be addressed collectively by the international community. If SDGs are not achieved, the risk of disputes is increased, peace and security can be compromised, and vulnerable and marginalized communities can be exposed to dangers. Overall, SPECPOL and the United Nations

com/news/polisario-carries-out-4-explosions-w-sahara-killing-one.

194 El Atti, “Polisario Carries Out 4 Explosions in W. Sahara, Killing One.”

195 Constança Sousa, *A Forgotten Mission, An Unrealized Referendum: The Failure of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara*, (University of British Columbia, n.d.), <https://fluxirr.mcgill.ca/article/download/168/133>.

196 S/2023/729

197 Amira El Masaiti, “Three Polisario Separatists Killed in Moroccan Drone Strike,” *HESPRESS English - Morocco News*, March 20, 2024, <https://en.hespress.com/81834-three-polisario-separatists-killed-in-moroccan-drone-strike.html>.

198 Masaiti, “Three Polisario Separatists Killed in Moroccan Drone Strike.”

199 Sabina Henneberg, “Algeria Takes a Seat on the UN Security Council,” *The Washington Institute*, January 8, 2024, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/algeria-takes-seat-un-security-council>.

200 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2703 (2023), S/RES/2703 (2023), October 30, 2023, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4025694?ln=en&v=pdf>.

201 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1261 (1999), S/RES/1261 (1999), August 30, 1999, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/CAC%20SRES%201261.pdf>.

202 “THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development,” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

203 “Leave No One Behind,” United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, accessed September 23, 2024, <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>.

utilize these 17 goals to improve the global environmental, humanitarian, political, economic, and social state.²⁰⁴

To address the security of peacekeepers, delegates must examine SDG 16: peace, justice, and strong institutions. Goal 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive communities. It ensures equal access to justice for all by creating effective, responsible, and inclusive institutions at all levels so this can be accomplished. All people should be free of fear from all sorts of violence and live in peace. In 2022, there was a 50 percent increase in conflict-related civilian deaths. In peacekeeping, peace enforcement looks towards restoring international peace and security in conflicts.²⁰⁵ UN troops offer security as well as political and peacebuilding assistance to countries throughout the challenging and early transition from violence to peace. When peacekeepers are victims of targeted violence, accountability is essential to reach justice against the aggressors. UN Peacekeeping helps countries reinforce the rule of law by restoring and preserving security, safeguarding civilians, clearing the way for peace-building, rebuilding communities, and providing the conditions for long-term peace. Peacekeeping actions that promote the rule of law are centered on individuals. They are adapted to local conditions and help communities generate tangible peace dividends, such as access to essential amenities through mine/explosive hazard clearance.²⁰⁶ Peace is an essential requirement for social and economic progress. Without peace, states can be more greatly affected by conflict, violence, and instability. This limits progress and results in the loss of lives and resources.²⁰⁷

Furthermore, there are many other applicable SDGs to peacekeeping and its mandate. For instance SDG 10: Reducing inequalities within and among countries is one. Peacekeeping should always ensure equal opportunities for all people seeing

as many conflicts are driven by divisions between specific ethnic, religious, gender or political minorities. Peacekeepers should decrease disparities in outcomes. This can be achieved by removing discriminatory laws, policies, and practices and advocating appropriate legislation and policies.²⁰⁸

Moreover SDGs one is at the center on the welfare of communities which is strongly related to what peacekeepers achieve while protecting civilians. According to SDG one, peacekeepers should reduce the civilians' exposure and vulnerability to violent events and the economic, social and environmental consequences these bring to communities. Conflicts difficult access to equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services and financial services.²⁰⁹ Extreme hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity remain a barrier to sustainable development and limit people who are trapped inside an armed conflict.²¹⁰ Lastly, peacekeeping missions do not directly address universal health coverage. However, risk protection, access to quality response health-care services and life protection measures do rely on its mandate.²¹¹

Bloc Analysis

Point of Division

UN Peacekeeping helps countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace. With over 66,000 personnel members and a budget of over 6.5 billion USD, the organization is currently operating 11 missions. These missions play a vital role in protecting civilians, promoting human rights, and facilitating political solutions to conflict. The points of division for this topic will depend on the type and scope of the aid or help countries provide to peacekeeping missions. Countries

204 "Fourth Committee 'Special Political and Decolonization Committee'", United Nations General Assembly, October 8, 2018, <https://www.un.org/pga/73/2018/10/08/fourth-committee-special-political-and-decolonization-committee/>.

205 "Terminology," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/terminology>.

206 "Building Rule of Law and Security Institutions," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/building-rule-of-law-and-security-institutions>.

207 "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions - United Nations Sustainable Development," United Nations, October 20, 2023, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>.

208 "Sustainable Development Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities," United Nations Kosovo Team, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://kosovoteam.un.org/en/sdgs/10>.

209 "What Is SDGs?: Goal 1 End Poverty in All Its Forms Everywhere," Hiroshima for Global Peace, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://hiroshimaforpeace.com/en/sdgs-and-peace/about-sdgs/sdgs-goal1/>.

210 United Nations, "Goal 2: Zero Hunger," United Nations Sustainable Development, October 19, 2023, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>.

211 "Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being - the Global Goals," The Global Goals, January 23, 2024, <https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/3-good-health-and-well-being/>.

can provide different types of aid. They can provide troops, military and police officers, financially support peacekeeping missions, or diplomatically support peacekeeping missions through different agreements or negotiations.

Troops and police contributing countries

Troop-contributing countries (TCCs) are vital to the success of peacekeeping missions. They serve as the backbone of operational effectiveness and mission fulfillment. In addition, their participation provides the essential personnel needed to execute tasks. For example, they maintain security, protect civilians, and support political processes in conflict zones. TCCs offer regional expertise, cultural understanding, and operational capabilities. They often help with the mission's effectiveness and legitimacy. Additionally, they make sure that peacekeeping mandates are implemented effectively and that humanitarian goals are met.

Countries in this bloc include those that have in the past or are currently providing troops to UN peacekeeping missions. These countries offer military troops, police officers, and other personnel to help maintain peace, uphold human rights, and stabilize conflict-affected regions.²¹² Troop-contributing countries are states that supply soldiers and commanders for military operations, security duties, and stabilization initiatives. These personnel are equipped to handle security challenges, perform military patrols, and engage in direct conflict if necessary. For instance, the top troop contributing countries as of June 30, 2024 are Nepal with 6114 troops, Rwanda with 5904 troops, Bangladesh with 5859 troops and India with 5466 troops.²¹³ Police contributing countries are the ones that provide unarmed or lightly armed police officers that mainly focus on law enforcement. Since 1948, almost 130 countries have contributed military and civilian police

personnel to peace operations. Approximately 11,000 police officers are now serving in UN peacekeeping operations, with police forces from about 90 different countries. A wide range of crucial responsibilities are assigned to police in modern peace operations, such as the restoration of law and order, protecting civilians, UN personnel, and facilities, and supporting the training, capacity-building, and reform and reconstruction of police and other law-enforcement institutions.²¹⁴ They are also in charge of rebuilding the host state's police systems. Furthermore, they are directly in charge of maintaining and enforcing the law with executive mandates.²¹⁵ For instance, the top contributor of police to UN peacekeeping efforts as of April 2023, was Senegal with more than 1,200 police personnel to United Nations peacekeeping missions, the most of any country.²¹⁶ Rwanda followed with over 1,000 police personnel, while Egypt contributed 617.²¹⁷

Countries that financially support peacekeeping missions

Countries that fund peacekeeping operations are vital to the long-term viability of international efforts to preserve peace and security. They cover a large percentage of the operational expenditures, such as personnel, equipment, and logistics. Financial support also allows the deployment of resources, which are essential for reacting to emergent crises. Donor nations pay for these missions to guarantee that the United Nations and other international agencies can successfully carry out their responsibilities. Furthermore, donating enables governments to demonstrate their commitment to global peace and security. They also show their support for international collaboration and shared responsibility in dealing with difficult global concerns.

Countries in this bloc include those that mainly contribute

212 "Troop Contributing Country," United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://stage-unesw.unescwa.org/sd-glossary/troop-contributing-country>.

213 United Nations Peacekeeping, *Contribution of Uniformed Personnel to UN by Country and Personnel Type*, (New York: UN Peacekeeping, June 30, 2024), https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/01_contributions_to_un_peacekeeping_operations_by_country_and_post_75_june_2024.pdf.

214 Marina Caparini, *Conflict, Governance and Organized Crime: Complex Challenges for UN Stabilization Operations*, SIPRI (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 16, 2019), https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/2212_sipri_report_un_stabilization_operations.pdf.

215 Timo Smit, "Police in Peace Operations," SIPRI, April 16, 2019, <https://www.sipri.org/research/conflict-peace-and-security/peace-operations-and-conflict-management/police-peace-operations>.

216 Preyash Shah, "Charted: Contributions to UN Peacekeeping Forces by Country," Visual Capitalist, June 15, 2024, <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/cp/contributions-to-un-peacekeeping-forces-by-country/>.

217 Statista, "Top Contributors of Police to UN Peacekeeping Efforts Globally 2023," July 4, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/871425/largest-contributors-of-police-to-united-nations-peacekeeping/>.

financially to peacekeeping missions and resources. There are currently eleven peacekeeping missions that the United Nations is responsible for maintaining and providing for them to be effective. Funding is a primary source that peacekeeping missions need to continue to operate.²¹⁸ The Member States of the United Nations have great and equal responsibility for the financial resources allocated to UN Peacekeeping missions. For instance, every Member State is legally required by the UN Charter to contribute its fair part to peacekeeping. This is in following the provisions of Article 17 of the Charter of the United Nations.²¹⁹ Furthermore, the five permanent members of the security council are required to contribute at a larger scale financially to peacekeeping missions. The permanent members are China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States.²²⁰ As of February 2023, 123 member states are contributing to peacekeeping personnel. However, voluntary contributions do exist.²²¹ The General Assembly divides peacekeeping costs according to a formula that the Member States have created. It consists of taking into consideration the relative economic resources of each Member State. In addition, the assessment made by the general assembly is revised every three years to evaluate future financial needs. It's important to take into account that each peacekeeping operation has its budget and account which includes operational costs. Some of these costs can include transporting costs and staff costs such as salaries. Moreover, the decisions about where the peacekeeping missions are established and how their maintenance will work is taken by the UNSC. Finance measures intended to reinforce the troops' security and support investment allowing the deployment of new technologies.²²² The majority of the largest economies in the world also provide the majority of the funding for UN peacekeeping operations. During the financial year 2020-2021, The United States gave almost USD two billion to the UN troops. Other countries that also contribute significantly are China with USD one billion, Japan with USD 563 million,

Germany with USD 401 million, and the United Kingdom USD 381 million.²²³

Countries that do not supply peacekeepers or provide funding but support diplomatically

Countries that support peacekeeping missions diplomatically play a crucial role in shaping the success and effectiveness of international peace efforts. Their diplomatic contributions include negotiating and facilitating cooperation between states.

Countries in this bloc include those that may not provide funding or resources but support certain peacekeeping missions diplomatically. When referring to offering support diplomatically, it can be understood as the main instrument of foreign policy that allows action from a state's relations with other countries. This includes the use of peaceful and negotiated means to assist another country or group of countries. It involves the strategic use of communication, negotiation, and cooperation to advance shared interests or resolve conflicts. Numerous kinds of diplomacy exist such as negotiations or formal talks aimed at resolving or averting conflicts between states, discussions, or consultations.²²⁴ International treaties, agreements, alliances, and other manifestations of international relations are usually the result of diplomatic negotiations and processes. Diplomats may also help shape a state by advising government officials. Leaders use a wide range of foreign policy instruments, including trade, sanctions, international aid, and military power, to protect those interests. Making decisions on which instruments to deploy and how much of each in a particular situation is the true problem of foreign policy. The ultimate objective of diplomacy is to influence the actions of other states to further one's national interests. Countries looking to have diplomatic participation can reach support with mediators such as the United Nations, the United States, or another third-party government.²²⁵ In December of 2023, 57 countries made new

218 "UN Funding by Country 2024," World Population Review, 2024, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/un-funding-by-country>.

219 "UN Charter," United Nations, accessed September 24, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>.

220 "How We Are Funded," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/how-we-are-funded>.

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225 Chris Wattie, "What Is Diplomacy?," CFR Education From the Council on Foreign Relations, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://education.cfr.org/learn/>

pledges to strengthen peacekeeping operations at the 2023 United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial. As a result, they expect to meet current and future challenges and needs, in line with ongoing reform under Action for Peacekeeping and A4P+. Out of the 57 countries, 45 Member States pledged specialized training on peacekeeping-intelligence, protection of civilians, and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse via gender-responsive leadership. Furthermore, 14 Member States made environment-related pledges to help countries deploy renewable energy. On the other hand, 12 Member States made pledges to support the UN's strategic communications efforts, including resources to address mis- and disinformation.²²⁶

Committee Mission

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL), also called the “Fourth Committee,” is responsible for many political issues. These include decolonization, peacekeeping efforts, special political missions, and peaceful uses of outer space.²²⁷ The United Nations Charter serves as the fundamental document for all UN activities. In response to changing conflict patterns and to effectively address risks to global peace and security, the responsibilities entrusted to UN peacekeeping operations have grown over time.²²⁸ UN peacekeeping missions are the most effective tools available to the United Nations to promote and maintain international peace and security.

Along with SPECPOL's mandate, peacekeeping follows international political frameworks to stabilize conflict situations. In order to fulfill their mandate, peacekeepers are exposed to security risks. Peacekeepers face the risks of armed conflicts, terrorist attacks, riots, ambushes, and other criminal activities. Delegates should take into account that peacekeepers have become increasingly targeted and the risks they face every day because of this. This can be achieved by identifying the limitations in training, resources, and equipment. A broader

understanding is achieved by looking into the history, successes, and failures of current and past UN peacekeeping missions.²²⁹ Delegates should also consider the core of modern conflicts and how peacekeepers should respond per their guidelines and principles. Moreover, understanding which policies and political strategies have succeeded or failed is essential for the success of the committee. SPECPOL's mission strongly relies on achieving political peace which is the foundation of human rights. Peace facilitates justice, human rights, sustainable development, and global cooperation.²³⁰ These are the essential components of peacekeeping. Delegates must be able to develop solutions that recognize that peacekeeping is not only about acting in times of violence but also addressing the root causes of conflicts so violence can be avoided.

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226 “57 Countries Make New Pledges to Strengthen Peacekeeping Operations,” United Nations Peacekeeping, December 6, 2023, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/57-countries-make-new-pledges-to-strengthen-peacekeeping-operations-2023-united-nations-peacekeeping>.

227 “Fourth Committee - Special Political and Decolonization,” UN General Assembly, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/>.

228 “Mandates and the Legal Basis for Peacekeeping,” United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mandates-and-legal-basis-peacekeeping>.

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Research and Preparation Questions

Your dais has prepared the following research and preparation questions as a means of providing guidance for your research process. These questions should be carefully considered, as they embody some of the main critical thought and learning objectives surrounding your topic.

Topic A

1. Do national laws provide sufficient protection for journalists in your country? Should international legislation be reformed to address impunity and violence against journalists?
2. How can countries provide information to the public without compromising national security or the safety of journalists?
3. Should journalists only provide unbiased information to the public, or should they be encouraged to rally support for their causes?
4. How can we leverage existing media/press networks to ensure that civilians in remote or compromised areas are informed sufficiently?
5. Should the UN play a role in deciding what information should be limited (hate speech, misinformation, propaganda, etc.)?
6. Should the negative aspects of social media be regulated even if it compromises the freedom that it provides to citizens? If so, how?
7. How can we preserve media outlets' independence from monetary and political influence?

Topic B

1. Has your country introduced a policy to protect the lives of peacekeeping forces? If not, what measures can be taken to minimize the danger to peacekeeping forces in conflict areas?
2. Does your country support peacekeeping missions by contributing troops, providing financial support, or providing diplomatic backing? Does your country support peacekeeping missions in any other way?
3. Since its foundation, has the UN peacekeeping force aided in the resolution of a crisis in your country? If so, which methods were used and how effective were they?
4. How can peacekeeping forces engage better with the local communities to build a trustful partnership and ensure their mission is successful?
5. How can communities with little to no access to research and information resources be aware of peacekeeping forces' mission to avoid misinformation and disinformation to intervene with their mandate?
6. Since the Actions for Peacekeepers exists, how can your country apply a similar policy to ensure peacekeepers are properly trained to carry out their missions?
7. Is there an armed conflict in your country? Is your country involved in any international conflict? If not, how can your country and the UN peacekeepers contribute to this conflict?

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