

# “Their Priority is not the People”: Civilian Views on Peace Operations in Africa



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## ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE RIGHTS INITIATIVE

The International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI) was founded in 2004 to inform and improve responses to the cycles of violence and displacement that are at the heart of large-scale human rights violations.

Over the last 13 years, we have developed a holistic approach to the protection of human rights before, during, and in the aftermath of displacement, by focusing on:

- identifying the violations that cause displacement and exile,
- protecting the rights of those who are displaced, and
- ensuring the solutions to their displacement are durable, rights respecting, safe and timely.

We work to ensure the voices of the displaced and conflict affected communities are not only heard but heeded at the international level through our evidence based advocacy that is built on solid field based research and analysis.

We are registered as a non-profit organisation in the US, the UK, and Uganda.

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## ABOUT THIS PAPER

This paper was written by Thijs Van Laer and is based on three reports written and researched by International Refugee Rights Initiative. It was first published on the website of Global Peace Operations Review.

*Cover Photograph: UNAMID, 2011.*

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“Their priority is not the people of Somalia,” a Somali woman who had recently fled to the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya said about peacekeepers in her home country. “It is the government and themselves.”

Unfortunately, this view is not unique. Civilians in countries with peace operations often experience a wide gap between them and those missions. Yet, at a time when peacekeeping is at a crossroads—again—and under increasing financial pressure, it is more important than ever to solicit and acknowledge the views of the citizens who are affected by peace operations.<sup>2</sup> Their suggestions on how to bolster results should be taken into account in the ongoing debates about successes, failures, and costs of peace operations. However, despite an acceptance in the ever-quoted HIPPO report that “engaging with host countries and local communities must increasingly be regarded as core to mission success”<sup>3</sup> and despite the acceptance of protection of civilians as a core norm for UN peacekeeping, realities on the ground demonstrate that too little has been done to access or include these voices.

Between October 2015 and April 2017, International Refugees Rights Initiative (IRRI) conducted close to 200 interviews with civilians in South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur) and Somalia about how they perceive the peace operations in their countries.<sup>4</sup>

The three missions in those countries, all of which are mandated by the UN Security Council, embody the range of different options available to implement the strategic partnership between the African Union and the UN,<sup>5</sup> from a fully-fledged UN mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), to a joint AU-UN mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and an AU-operated mission in Somalia (AMISOM). While all three operate in significantly different contexts, they all have “little peace to keep” and have been often criticized for their limitations in implementing their mandate, especially when it comes to the protection of civilians.

All three missions have also been reviewed this year. UNAMID has been restructured and its troop numbers have been seriously reduced;<sup>6</sup> the UN and AU have just concluded a joint review of AMISOM and strengthened the focus in its mandate on withdrawal and handover to Somali security forces.<sup>7</sup> UNMISS faces some minor budget cuts and a review, even as reinforcement by a Regional Protection Force is slowly being implemented.<sup>8</sup>

While much of what was talked about by the Somalis, South Sudanese, and Darfuris interviewed during the course of the research was specific to their context, a number of similarities and trends emerge from their responses, despite the strategic, operational, and contextual differences between the three missions. These trends are important, not only for any new rounds of high-level policy debates, but also for addressing the strategic challenges for protection of civilians and the rock-bottom popularity of peacekeepers among the civilians they are supposed to protect.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A. Novosseloff, “Can we make UN Peacekeeping great again?”, *Global Peace Operations Review*, 9 May 2017, available at <http://peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/can-we-make-un-peacekeeping-great-again/> (accessed on: 6 February 2018).

<sup>3</sup> High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, “Uniting our strengths for peace – politics, partnership and people”, 16 June 2015, available at [http://peaceoperationsreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/HIPPO\\_Report\\_1\\_June\\_2015.pdf](http://peaceoperationsreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/HIPPO_Report_1_June_2015.pdf) (accessed on 6 February 2018).

<sup>4</sup> International Refugee Rights Initiative, “Protecting some of the people some of the time – civilian perspectives on peacekeeping forces in South Sudan”, 15 September 2016, available at <http://refugee-rights.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ProtectingSomeofthePeopleFINAL.pdf> (accessed on: 6 February 2018); International Refugee Rights Initiative, ““No one on the earth cares if we survive except God and sometimes UNAMID: The challenges of peacekeeping in Darfur”, 26 April 2016, available at <http://refugee-rights.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/UNAMID20FINAL.pdf> (accessed on: 6 February 2018); International Refugee Rights Initiative, ““They Say They’re Not Here to Protect Us”: Civilian perspectives on the African Union mission in Somalia”, 31 May 2017, available at <http://refugee-rights.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/AMISOM-final-june.pdf> (accessed on: 6 February 2018).

<sup>5</sup> L. Connolly, “AU-UN Partnership is a necessity, not an option”, *Global Peace Operations Review*, 2 June 2016, available at <http://peaceoperationsreview.org/commentary/au-un-partnership-is-a-necessity-not-an-option/> (accessed on 6 February 2018).

<sup>6</sup> UN Security Council, “Security Council Renews Mandate of African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2363 (2017)”, 29 June 2017, available at <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12893.doc.htm> (accessed on 6 February 2018).

<sup>7</sup> African Union Peace and Security Council, communiqué, 12 July 2017, available at <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc-700-com-au-un-joint-review-12-7-2017.pdf> (accessed on: 6 February 2018).

<sup>8</sup> UNMISS, “Press Conference on Arrival of Regional Protection Forces into Juba, South Sudan”, 8 August 2017, available at [https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/170808\\_-\\_srs\\_g\\_shearer\\_presser\\_on\\_arrival\\_of\\_rpf.pdf](https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/170808_-_srs_g_shearer_presser_on_arrival_of_rpf.pdf) (accessed on 6 February 2018).

<sup>9</sup> R. Mamiya, “Protection of Civilians strategy: a greater role for the council”, *Global Peace Operations Review*, 14 January 2016, available at <http://peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/protection-of-civilians-strategy-a-greater-role-for-the-council/> (accessed on: 6 February 2018).

## Understanding the Mandate

A common conclusion when talking to citizens from these three countries is that they struggle to fully understand the mandate of the mission in their country. Most civilians only know the parts of the mandate that are most visible to them and overestimate its mandated ability to use force and to protect civilians. This lack of understanding means expectations often differ from reality and contributes substantially to the overall, primarily critical, views of the forces.

In Somalia, most interviewees understood that AMISOM is supposed to fight the Islamist armed group Al-Shabaab and protect government institutions. While this is indeed the core aspect of AMISOM’s mandate and activities,<sup>10</sup> interviewees were not aware of its other tasks, such as securing humanitarian assistance and key supply routes, engaging with communities and receiving defecting Al-Shabaab members. Many Somalis criticised the mission for its failure to protect civilians even though this is not part of its mandate (although the AU has increasingly accepted, at least on a policy level, its responsibility to do so).

South Sudanese citizens interviewed about UNMISS thought that the blue helmets’ task was essentially limited to protecting what became known as protection of civilians (PoC) sites,<sup>11</sup> the UN premises in which hundreds of thousands of displaced persons found (relative) protection and shelter when large-scale violence erupted in 2013. Originally, UNMISS’ mandate was broader, and while the mandate did indeed shift away from peacebuilding activities towards a larger focus on the protection of civilians following the violence and serious atrocities committed by both government and rebel forces in 2016, UNMISS has retained other responsibilities, including monitoring human rights, securing humanitarian assistance, and supporting the now almost defunct 2015 peace agreement.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, its protection of civilians mandate goes well beyond protecting displaced civilians in UN compounds and includes a wider package of tasks to provide protection to all civilians, with a use of force dynamic as well as through peaceful means. Yet many interviewees thought that UNMISS was not tasked to play any role outside the PoC sites.

Likewise in Darfur, many interviewees were confused about UNAMID’s mandate. As one woman in the Belil IDP camp said: “UNAMID is a hybrid force that is spread out in all IDP [internationally displaced persons] camps but without goals.” Many of those interviewed simplified UNAMID’s mandate to protecting IDPs and reporting about the situation. While these are certainly core parts of the mandate, UNAMID is also responsible for restoring the security situation for humanitarian assistance and development, for more broadly “contributing to” civilian protection, and for assisting the political process and rule of law.<sup>13</sup>

For all three missions, the limited civilian understanding of the mandates is shaped by two mutually reinforcing factors: a lack of interaction with the mission and the limited visibility of all of the mission’s priorities. Firstly, most civilians rarely interact with the mission, despite its proximity. Language and cultural barriers, security risks, government interference, and a general unwillingness to engage with citizens were all cited, to varying levels, as hampering interaction. There have been all-too-limited results of the scarce efforts made by peacekeepers to conduct outreach towards citizens and explain what they were doing, or to assign such tasks to dedicated personnel who speak the local language. This gap has ramifications beyond the understanding of the mission’s mandate, as this interaction is seen as key for the mission to achieve its goals. As a Somali man in Mogadishu explained: “Instead of being suspicious of us, AMISOM should work with us. The population is the best ally. They [AMISOM] won’t achieve anything without the support and information of the population.”

<sup>10</sup> AMISOM, “AMISOM Mandate”, available at <http://amisom-au.org/amisom-mandate/> (accessed on 6 February 2018).

<sup>11</sup> H. Donges, “Protection of Civilians needs to be understood as a collaborative strategy and not as a campsite”, *Global Peace Operations Review*, 23 June 2016, available at <http://peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/protection-of-civilians-needs-to-be-understood-as-a-collaborative-strategy-and-not-a-campsite/> (accessed on 6 February 2018).

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1996 (2011), 8 July 2011, available at [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1996\(2011\)](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1996(2011)) (accessed on 6 February 2018); United Nations Peacekeeping, “UNMISS fact sheet”, available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unmiss> (accessed on 6 February 2018).

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2296, 29 June 2016, available at [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2296\(2016\)](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2296(2016)) (accessed on 6 February 2018);

Secondly, due to them being poorly informed, citizens naturally align the mission’s mandate with what they see it doing: engaging Al-Shabaab and protecting the government in Somalia, defending PoC sites in South Sudan, and protecting IDP camps and reporting in Darfur. This can be because other parts of the mandate, such as support to peace processes and rule of law, are inherently less visible than the former tasks, but it can also give an idea about where missions’ priorities lay in practice—be it due to limited capacity, strategic choices or lack of will by the mission leadership, headquarters or troop-contributing countries. In some cases, people expressed frustration to IRRI that the mission in their country was not doing what they considered important, such as supporting the South Sudan peace deal or working with the Somali army, while in fact this was—and still is—an inherent part of the mission’s mandate.

The lack of understanding, therefore, not only negatively affects the assessment civilians make of the mission in their country and further contributes to the often-mentioned gap between what civilians expect and what a peace operation can deliver, but also points to some of the deficiencies inherent with the missions, which surpasses the shortcomings in communication (and are discussed in more detail below). The three cases studies show that a concerted effort has to be made by the missions to explain their mandates and in addition, ensure a realistic understanding of what aspects of their missions are achievable given the level of troops, budget, and political backing available.

## Protection of Civilians

Independent of its mandate or capacity, a mission’s ability to provide protection, especially for civilians, is the main criteria on which civilians in the three countries assess the mission’s results. Expectations are particularly high and results have therefore often been disappointing.

The three missions studied in this project have different protection mandates, ranging from UNMISS, which on paper has a strong mandate to protect civilians; to UNAMID, which is mandated to “contribute” to the protection of civilians when civilians are under “imminent” threat; to AMISOM, which has no explicit reference to protection of civilians in its mandate, but has increasingly, on a policy level at least, accepted its responsibility to do so.

In Somalia, citizens complained to IRRI that the mission’s primary focus was on the protection of politicians and institutions—one of the primary tasks in the mandate—while overlooking the vital protection needs of the population. Many also complained that the mission in fact exposed civilians to additional risks by losing towns to Al-Shabaab, followed by reprisal attacks by the armed group.

In South Sudan, many interviewees appreciated the fact that the UN mission took a rapid decision in December 2013 to open their gates to people fleeing atrocities. As one PoC resident in Juba said: “If it was not because of peacekeepers, all of us would have been killed.” At the same time, however, there was harsh criticism for the lack of presence and protection outside of the UN compounds. (Similarly, in Darfur, people appreciated the protection offered by UNAMID in and around the IDP camps, but criticised the lack of ability and/or willingness to provide protection in more remote areas.) A UN investigation into the July 2016 events—when heavy fighting erupted in the capital Juba as the 2015 peace agreement broke down, and which happened after IRRI’s research—confirmed UNMISS’ failure to respond to serious threats to civilians.<sup>14</sup> The report cites a lack of leadership and unified command, as well as a risk-averse attitude, as factors in the “loss of trust and confidence—particularly by the local population and humanitarian agencies—in the will and skill of UNMISS military, police to be proactive and show a determined posture to protect civilians under threat, including from sexual violence and human rights violations.” Following the report, the mission’s Kenyan commander was dismissed by the then-UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon.

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<sup>14</sup> Executive Summary of the Independent Special Investigation into the violence which occurred in Juba in 2016 and UNMISS response, available at [http://peaceoperationsreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/rei\\_doc\\_Public\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_on\\_the\\_Special\\_Investigation\\_Report\\_1\\_Nov\\_2016.pdf](http://peaceoperationsreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/rei_doc_Public_Executive_Summary_on_the_Special_Investigation_Report_1_Nov_2016.pdf) (accessed on 6 February 2018).

Many people mentioned the unintended consequences of the PoC sites on longer-term protection in South Sudan, such as isolation from information about the security situation outside the sites and the reinforcement of ethnic dimensions.

In Darfur and Somalia, several respondents expressed their anger about abuses committed by the peacekeepers themselves, including sexual violence and incidents that resulted in the death of civilians, thereby seeing the mission as a source of insecurity instead of as a source of protection. Similar allegations have been published about peacekeepers in South Sudan. While there seems to be a growing awareness at UN Security Council and AU level of the importance for accountability mechanisms, including reparations, interviewees were often unaware of any investigations or accountability efforts, either because of the absence of such mechanisms in practice or because of poor effectiveness and/or communication about its functioning and results.

Three general observations can be made about people’s perceptions of the protection of civilians in the three country situations. First, in all three cases, civilians recognized that peacekeepers have also experienced serious losses when their camps have been attacked. Most saw this as a sign of commitment, but it also led them to question the forces’ subsequent capacity to protect civilians. As one Darfuri man put it, “If they are not able to protect themselves, how could they protect civilians?”

Second, civilians seem largely to equate “protection of civilians” with the mission’s ability to use force to deter and repel attacks on civilians, advocating most often for a stronger mandate to do so. However, in the cases studied by IRRI, it is not just the mandate that prevents more robust responses but other factors, such as capacity, equipment, directives from the contingents’ capitals, or unclear guidance from mission leadership and headquarters.

Third, even when the government is allegedly responsible for many abuses against civilians, as is the case in Darfur and South Sudan, the government is still seen as the primary responsibility bearer for providing protection to civilians, a view in conformity with international standards such as the Responsibility to Protect,<sup>15</sup> but at odds with realities on the ground. Based on this view, interviewees’ testimony seems to support an important role for the missions to engage politically with governments about their failure to provide protection, about the abuses they commit, and about restrictions to the mission’s functioning, thereby broadening the perception of protection of civilians beyond the use of force. While supporting those role, many criticized the mission for toeing the government line.

## Relations with the host government

In their assessment of the peace operations, civilians often take the relationship between the peace operation and the government into account as a primary factor. There is a clear distinction between the situation in Somalia, where citizens criticize the government for its lack of capacity and action but attribute most violence to Al-Shabaab, and South Sudan and Darfur, where the government is seen as a key instigator of violence and atrocities.

In Somalia, many people favour their national forces over the AU peacekeepers, despite recognizing that the Somali national army struggles from serious shortcomings in terms of capacity, accountability, and inclusivity. Several Somalis interviewed by IRRI criticised the AU and other international actors for not sufficiently respecting, collaborating, and supporting the Somali security system—which they saw as their priority—and advocated for a quick handover of responsibility from AMISOM to the national forces. The latest renewal aligns the mandate with such views.

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, “Responsibility to protect”, available at <http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.html> (accessed on 6 February 2018).

In South Sudan and Darfur, on the other hand, the missions are criticized for their failure to challenge abuses by government forces, to provide protection in instances of government attacks, and to mitigate restrictions on their freedom of movement imposed by the government. This perceived failure seriously damages the image of the mission as a neutral actor capable of providing protection for all. In South Sudan, for instance, UNMISS was criticised during interviews for not patrolling in opposition areas (allegedly because of the government opposing this), for conducting common patrols with government forces, and for complying with restrictions at checkpoints instead of trying to negotiate or, if necessary, force passage. (Since the research was conducted and the UN recognized its shortcomings, there seems to have been an improvement of the latter element.) Likewise in Darfur, the mission was accused of covering up government attacks on its peacekeepers and the population, of accepting restricted access to several zones and the refusal by the government for the provision of visas to key UN staff members. “It makes it look like the government is in charge of UNAMID,” explained a woman living in Darfur.

Such observations also bear relevance for the debate about the “key principles of peacekeeping,” consent of the parties, impartiality, and the non-use of force, except in self-defence or defence of the mandate. It was clear that civilians interviewed during this research disagree with the continuous attempts by UNMISS and UNAMID to seek consent from the host state for day-to-day operations. They are also wary of its lack of distance from the host state, especially given allegations of state responsibility for serious violations of international law and obstruction of the mission’s mandate.

In the cases of South Sudan and Darfur, many civilians seem to support a more robust political role for the UN mission, at a national and local level, in order to prevent abuses, mediate conflicts, and reduce barriers to the missions’ functioning. “We need help to reconcile. We need mediators like UNMISS,” a displaced man from South Sudan said. Both missions have a mandate to work on such issues, for example by supporting the 2015 peace agreement in South Sudan or by assisting the political process and the reconstruction of rule of law in Darfur, but, as stated above, this was not clearly understood by civilians. This observation is consistent with the widely-shared view, reflected in the HIPPO report, that UN missions and their political backers in New York or Addis Ababa should play a more political role to prevent and solve conflicts and should be more politically-informed in the design and roll-out of the mission.

## Humanitarian assistance and services

Many citizens also judged the three missions on their ability to provide humanitarian assistance or other direct services to civilians. While all three missions are mandated to contribute to the creation of the necessary environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid, none of them have a direct task in the delivery of aid or other services. Yet, in practice, peace operations often find themselves in a situation where they are prompted to provide humanitarian services, either because of the dire situation in or around their camps, or because of attempts to create better relations with nearby communities.

The involvement in humanitarian assistance seems to have a positive relation with civilians’ expectations and perceptions of the mission. In Somalia, people’s perception of AMISOM is shaped positively when AMISOM contingents provide them with medical assistance, medicine, or food aid. In South Sudan, the presence of many vulnerable, displaced persons inside UN compounds creates a strong demand for humanitarian assistance by the mission. While in this scenario, interviewees differentiated between humanitarian actors and peacekeepers, they still often held UNMISS ultimately responsible for the lack of food, water, and charcoal in the PoC sites.

In Darfur, UNAMID’s roles in providing humanitarian assistance directly and in escorting humanitarian actors were positively regarded by its beneficiaries, but they were also seen as insufficient, given the considerable demands. In a context in which several humanitarian agencies have been forced to leave Darfur because of government restrictions, similar to those imposed upon UNAMID, there are serious deficits in humanitarian assistance, increasing the demands on UNAMID.

Furthermore, in both Darfur and South Sudan, respondents mentioned the important role for the respective missions in assisting displaced persons in their return, by providing protection and assistance and by negotiating appropriate return conditions.

While it clearly goes beyond the core tasks of a peace operation to deliver humanitarian assistance, the importance attached by civilians to this aspect of the mission’s functioning demonstrates the multi-dimensional nature of human security. Providing such support not only helps in addressing the dire humanitarian situation in which many citizens in these conflict zones live, near or in UN compounds, but would also be beneficial for the relations between the mission and civilians—and thus for its effectiveness.

## Troop-Contributing Countries

Many of the points cited above—especially military-civilian relations, protection of civilians, and humanitarian assistance—are linked to the different country contingents present in the region where the civilians live. When asked about how they perceived the mission in their country, many civilians made a distinction between different the country contingents present.

Somalis are generally wary of foreign presence on their soil and are especially distrustful about the presence of troops from Kenya and Ethiopia—two countries with a history of unilateral intervention in the country. However, other contingents, especially those from Djibouti, are much better regarded because of their better relations vis-à-vis the Somali community, the provision of services, and the lack of abuses and misconduct.

By contrast, the Ethiopians seem to be positively regarded in South Sudan, while the Indian and the Bangladeshi contingents are at the other end of the spectrum. Citizens mentioned a lack of consistency in the effectiveness of the more negatively regarded contingents, especially in their willingness to use force when civilians, or even the peacekeepers themselves, were under attack. In Darfur, there appears to be a preference for troops coming from non-African countries—the majority of the troops come from other continents than Africa. Other Darfuris mentioned differences among African troops, better regarding the Rwandan troops than Ethiopian or Egyptian troops.

Several reasons were given for the perceived (or actual) varying quality of the different national contingents. Some believed it had to do with their training and equipment, while others pointed to the different levels of commitment of the country contingents and directives from national capitals. The differences between troop-contributing countries are a well-known matter of concern for most peace operations. As the HIPPO report states, it is “past time to institutionalise a framework to engage troop and police contributing countries.”

## What needs to be done?

As demonstrated above, those interviewed from all three countries were fairly critical about the performance of the peace operations in their countries, prompted by a combination of a failure to protect civilians, a limited understanding of the mandates, difficult relations with the host government, varying levels of humanitarian assistance, and the disparity between troop-contributing countries.

Overall, a dedicated effort should be made to include the voices of citizens in the strategy, design, and implementation of peace operations and recognize these citizens as essential agents for success. This is even more relevant in the current climate, where financial motives override other factors in decision-making. Some see this as an opportunity for reform—and accountability for the failure to protect.<sup>16</sup> In any case, if such cuts are unavoidable, those at the decision-making table should mitigate any negative effects this will have on the

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<sup>16</sup> L. Spink & A. Day, “Protecting Protection: How Antonio Guterres should use funding cuts to reform peacekeeping”, *Global Peace Operations Review*, 30 May 2017, available at <http://peaceoperationsreview.org/commentary/protecting-protection-how-antonio-guterres-should-use-funding-cuts-to-reform-peacekeeping/> (accessed on: 6 February 2018).



citizens the mission is supposed to protect and learn lessons from those citizens' reality to bolster results. To improve on this, the UN, AU, and other partners should:

- Improve effective communication on mandate, capacity, and activities. Dedicate sufficient resources, training, and dedicated staff to ensure effective outreach and interaction with the communities in which peace operations are present, including to prepare the ground and manage expectations prior to and during deployment. Effectively consult citizens about mandate renewal, pro-actively engage with them after incidents (abuses, attacks on civilians, etc.), and explain to them what the mission can do and, equally important, what it cannot do. As suggested by another observer, work with community liaison assistants, measure perceptions, and move beyond interaction with elites.<sup>17</sup>
- Increase efforts on the protection of civilians. Engage in serious discussions with troop-contributing countries about operational command and pre-mission training. Keep mission and contingency leadership accountable for any failure to protect civilians. Provide sufficient resources and guidance.
- Engage in a high-level political dialogue with the host country about its involvement in atrocities and any obstacles to mission performance. Reinforce the mission's political standing by regular high-profile visits. Impose, if appropriate, adequate and timely sanctions on host countries in case of persistent non-cooperation.
- Create a humanitarian action plan for every zone in which peacekeepers are present, in coordination with UN agencies and NGOs. Ensure that adequate protection is available to enable NGOs to fulfil their responsibilities without risking the lives of their staff, while fully respecting their independence and humanitarian principles.
- Create a forum for regular, structured dialogue with troop-contributing countries about mandates, chain of command, troop capacity and the handling of complaints or proved incidences of abuses committed against civilians by peacekeepers. Guarantee that only troops with sufficient training (including on protection of civilians and international humanitarian law) from countries committed to fully and effectively implementing the mandate can participate in peace operations.
- Create transparent and effective accountability mechanisms to help rebuild trust between the civilians and mission after incidences of abuse or neglect committed by peacekeepers. Ensure appropriate responses to complaints by the civilians and make sure any outcomes are clearly and effectively communicated to the population.

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<sup>17</sup> J. Karlsrud, "How can the UN Move towards more people-centered peace operations?" *Global Peace Operations Review*, 23 September 2015, available at <http://peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/people-centered-reform-at-the-un/> (accessed on: 6 February 2018).