[Nine Times Peacekeepers Have Sexually Abused Those They’re Supposed to Protect](http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/30/nine-times-peacekeepers-have-sexually-abused-those-theyre-supposed-to-protect/)

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By Siobhán O'Grady

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French President Francois Hollande [vowed](http://news.yahoo.com/france-denies-cover-alleged-child-sex-abuse-troops-093641817.html) Thursday to “show no mercy” against French peacekeeping troops if they are proven to have sexually abused displaced children in the Central African Republic. But there’s good reason to believe that won’t happen.

For years, governments and multilateral bodies have promised to hold accountable those who abuse the world’s most vulnerable — the same people they are charged with protecting. Yet reports documenting decades of abuse by peacekeepers reveal a pattern of impunity.

In 2005, when Jordan’s ambassador to the United Nations [presented](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/mar/25/unitednations) a damning report on the prevalence of sexual abuse in peacekeeping missions around the world, the global diplomatic body agreed that it was responsible for ending the pattern of behavior.

Currently, there are 16 active U.N. peacekeeping missions deployed across the world, from Haiti and Western Sahara to Lebanon, India, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

But 10 years later, although some perpetrators have been identified and charged, the epidemic of abuse shows no sign of having been stamped out. Here, then, is but a sample of some of those abuses:

**Bosnia and Kosovo:** In the early 2000s, human rights groups alleged that U.N. and NATO peacekeepers and police not only frequented brothels, but reportedly [ran](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3686173.stm) them and even help [traffic](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A30286-2005Mar12.html) women from Eastern Europe to work as prostitutes in the establishments.

**Democratic Republic of Congo**: Peacekeepers [offered](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/mar/25/unitednations) starving, orphaned girls living in makeshift camps they helped supervise eggs or other small snacks in return for sexual favors. During one investigation into allegations of abuse in DRC, used condoms were found scattered around the military camps. A U.N. stabilization force for DRC was first established in 1999, and there are still peacekeepers there today.

**Haiti**: U.N. peacekeeping troops have been present in Haiti in some capacity since 1994, and they returned in 2004 to aid in suppressing violence on the island nation. In 2011, a video [surfaced](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/sep/03/minustah-un-haiti-abuse) of Uruguayan U.N. soldiers seemingly raping a Haitian teenager. In 2012, a court martial [convicted](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41538#.VUJL-mZzdW0) three Pakistani peacekeepers serving in Haiti for sexually abusing a 14-year-old boy.

**Ivory Coast:** According to a 2008 BBC [report](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7420798.stm), a 13-year-old girl told the news network that she was gangraped by 10 peacekeepers in a field near her home. In 2009, Save the Children conducted a poll of ten underaged children, and [found](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/09/01/wikileaks-un-peacekeepers_n_944917.html) that eight had exchanged sexual favors for food or housing with U.N. peacekeepers there.

**Burundi:** Two U.N. peacekeepers were [repatriated](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4697465.stm) after being accused of having sex with prostitutes, one of whom was a minor. U.N. regulations prohibit peacekeepers from patronizing sex workers.

**Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone:** Interviews with community members in these three neighboring countries [revealed](http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2005/tough-un-line-peacekeeper-abuses) that peacekeepers had withheld medical supplies, food, and water from desperate civilians until they offered them sexual favors.

**Cambodia:** During a mission to Cambodia in 1992 and 1993, U.N. peacekeepers frequented brothels with such frequency that the number of prostitutes there increased  from 6,000 to 25,000. This incident gained particular notoriety after a U.N. official [defended](http://www.un.org/en/pseataskforce/docs/must_boys_be_boys_ending_sea_in_un_peacekeeping_missions.pdf) the peacekeepers’ behavior, saying “boys will be boys.”

**East Timor:** Human rights groups have documented [cases](http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2006/s1728448.htm) of abuse of children and at least 20 babies left behind by peacekeepers who impregnated local women and then left them without financial support, often ostracized from their communities.

**Central African Republic**: [Leaked](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/29/un-aid-worker-suspended-leaking-report-child-abuse-french-troops-car) U.N. documents show that French forces serving in a peacekeeping mission in Bangui — prior to the establishment of a U.N. peacekeeping force there — sexually exploited children living in the camps for orphans and displaced civilians. They offered food and small amounts of cash in return for sex, sometimes with children as young as nine.

The allegations were leaked to the French government by a U.N. staffer. According to the Guardian, whose staff obtained a copy of the report, the abuses took place when the U.N. mission there was in the process of being set up. The U.N. employee who leaked the documents did so out of frustration at the U.N.’s failure to take action against the perpetrators, and he has since been suspended from work.

The U.N.’s secretary general’s office released a statement about the report on Wednesday, saying their Bangui office on human rights “conducted a human rights investigation in late spring of 2014, following serious allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of children by French military personnel.” The worker who was suspended for handing the documents over to the French government breached protocol in doing so, and the U.N.’s preliminary assessment found “that such conduct does not constitute whistleblowing.”