



the auschwitz institute  
for the prevention of genocide  
and mass atrocities

# Integrating and Operationalizing Atrocity Prevention in Peacekeeping Operations



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Peacekeeping operations are often deployed in environments with a high risk of mass atrocities, namely genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Yet, more than 20 years after the genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica, peacekeeping operations still frequently fail to account for the specific factors that can lead to such crimes. In countries like South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic, recent failures to respond effectively have severely hindered peacekeepers' ability to prevent or halt large-scale violence.

Based on consultations with a diverse range of stakeholders – including UN Security Council members, UN mission staff, peacekeepers, and civil society organizations – and thorough review of key policy documents and reports, this policy paper presents an evidence-based analysis of the tools and strategies necessary to fill identified gaps. The prevention of atrocity crimes remains a core mandate of the international

community and a critical responsibility of the UN. As such, this policy paper highlights the pressing need to build the capacity of peacekeeping personnel to conduct thorough threat assessments that factor in atrocity risk indicators and warning signs. In doing so, it proposes comprehensive guidance for embedding atrocity risk assessment and management throughout the entire lifecycle of peacekeeping missions.

By adopting these strategies, the UN can significantly bolster the legitimacy and effectiveness of its peacekeeping operations, restore global confidence in its ability to address contemporary challenges, and, most importantly, ensure the protection of vulnerable populations in conflict-affected regions.

The key recommendations, aimed at harnessing the UN's analytical, advisory, convening, and coordinating capacities to institutionalize atrocity prevention within the UN system, include:

- Explicitly incorporating detailed atrocity prevention language and clear guidelines for action in UN Security Council mandates on peacekeeping whenever possible.
- Enhancing strategic-level commitment by establishing a dedicated atrocity prevention task force within the UN.

- Improving operational coordination by requiring each peacekeeping mission to establish standardized protocols for atrocity risk assessments. These protocols should be integrated into the mission's initial strategic planning, operational orders, and regular situational updates.
- Appointing dedicated atrocity prevention officers and specialized advisory teams within each mission to ensure that atrocity risk assessments are consistently applied and inform decision-making processes throughout the lifecycle of a peacekeeping mission.
- Conducting regular training of peacekeepers on atrocity risk assessment, early warning signs, and preventive measures to ensure that peacekeeping operations are both proactive and responsive to emerging identity-based threats.
- Strengthening peacekeeping mission partnerships with local and regional stakeholders, conducting comprehensive risk assessments before mission drawdowns, and ensuring the continuity of atrocity risk management through close collaboration with other UN agencies and regional organizations in order to manage transitions effectively and sustain the protection gains achieved during peacekeeping missions.



## About This Study

This study has been developed as part of the AIPG's *Conflict-Related Atrocity Crimes Prevention (CRACP) Training and Technical Assistance Program*, funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland. This program has been created to address a need for specialized capacity building on conflict-related atrocity crimes, expressed by more than 45 of AIPG's State partners. To address this need, through CRACP, AIPG provides training to security sector personnel on foundational atrocity prevention knowledge, legal frameworks, risk analysis, as well as conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. As such, the CRACP program goes beyond standard compliance-focused international humanitarian law training by empowering security sector officials to proactively engage in prevention.

## INTRODUCTION

As conflicts grow increasingly complex, with a rise in identity-based violence, hybrid warfare, terrorism, resource-driven tensions, and geopolitical rivalries, UN peacekeeping operations are under enormous pressure to adapt and respond effectively. Traditionally, peacekeeping involves deploying international forces to stabilize areas affected by conflict, monitor ceasefires, and support the implementation of peace agreements. However, the nature of peacekeeping has evolved significantly over the last two decades, with efforts intensifying over the last ten years to address more complex and multidimensional challenges. This evolution marks a shift from merely observing and maintaining peace to actively engaging in conflict prevention, protecting civilians, and rebuilding post-conflict societies.<sup>1</sup>

The UN Security Council's adoption of resolution 1265 in 1999 on civilian protection in armed conflict represented a major step forward in efforts to respond to the threats faced by civilians.<sup>2</sup> UN peacekeepers are now able to actively intervene to protect civilians from violence, use force when necessary to deter attacks, establish secure zones for at-risk populations, and conduct regular patrols in conflict areas to

prevent violence. This evolution reflects a growing understanding that peacekeeping must extend beyond responding to conflicts. Peacekeeping must also proactively prevent the escalation of violence into mass atrocities, incorporating strategies that anticipate and mitigate potential crises before they erupt.

These transformations are also reflected in important strategic reviews and initiatives including the Brahimi report which called for clear, credible and achievable mandates; the Capstone Doctrine which outlined important principles and guidelines for UN peacekeepers; the 2005 World Summit establishing the Peacebuilding Commission; and the 2015 High-Level Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report, which advocated for more adaptable peacekeeping mandates to respond to the changing nature of conflicts. The Secretary-General's 2018 Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative also focused on strengthening peacekeeping and making it responsive to current and future challenges.<sup>3</sup>

Consequent to these, there have been ongoing discussions at the UN and within civil society circles about making peacekeeping more adaptable and

<sup>1</sup> United Nations. (2023). *UN peacekeeping: 70 years of service & sacrifice*.

<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/un-peacekeeping-70-years-of-service-sacrifice>

<sup>2</sup><https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/285718?ln=en&v=pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Security Council Report. (2023). *Monthly forecast: UN peacekeeping*.

responsive to contemporary needs. In September 2021, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2594 under the leadership of Ireland during its tenure as a Security Council member from 2021 to 2022.<sup>4</sup> This resolution highlighted the importance of integrating strategic planning throughout the entire life cycle of peace operations, including mission deployment, engagement with national actors, and transition phases. It stressed the crucial role of peacekeeping operations and the need for early involvement in transition planning, in collaboration with UN system partners, host country authorities, and other stakeholders. It also provides a framework for incorporating lessons from current and past missions into future planning and management processes.

Following this, the UN has introduced several important initiatives to address current and future challenges in peacekeeping. The 'Our Common Agenda' report from the Secretary-General in 2021, which preceded the 2024 Summit of the Future – the UN's attempt at mobilizing world leaders to chart a new international consensus on overcoming current and future challenges – reflects the UN's response to these challenges. In 2023, a New

Agenda for Peace report encouraged UN Member States to find avenues for cooperation and collective action to pursue shared interests.<sup>5</sup> Informal discussions at the UN further emphasize the need for peacekeeping to become more agile and adaptable to evolving patterns and demands.<sup>6</sup> At the core of these reform efforts is the conviction that repositioning peacekeeping to better respond to crises and protect populations would mitigate the current mistrust towards peacekeeping operations. This reposition is essential, as the legitimacy of and public support for peacekeeping operations and the UN are intrinsically tied to the fundamental responsibility of protecting populations from violence.

Since the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in 2005, efforts at institutionalizing atrocity prevention have been progressive, if gradual. The creation of the Office of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG R2P) enabled the UN to leverage early warning system to monitor and advise on threats of atrocity crimes, particularly through the development of its Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Stein, S. (2023). *Two years on: Advancing UN Security Council Resolution 2594 through the New Agenda for Peace*. Center for Civilians in Conflict.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations. (2021). *Our common agenda: Report of the Secretary-General*. United Nations.

<sup>6</sup> Geneva Centre for Security Policy. (2024). *Preparing and Building for the Future: Pathways Towards More Nimble, Adaptive, and Effective Peacekeeping*.

<sup>7</sup> See United Nations. (2014). *UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention*.

Notwithstanding these advancements, UN peacekeeping operations continue to face significant challenges in addressing genocide and other mass atrocities. Missions such as the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) have been criticized by experts and governments for failing to adequately protect populations against atrocities, creating backlash and resentment among local populations.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, UN Member States have called for the integration of a more focused atrocity perspective into existing peacekeeping operational guidance.<sup>9</sup> Meeting this demand necessitates a holistic approach that ensures peace operations are both responsive and preventative. It also requires developing and refining strategies, tools, and guidance for assessing and mitigating risks of atrocity crimes and equipping peacekeeping operations to act decisively against emerging threats.

Based on a thorough analysis of the tools and strategies essential for mainstreaming atrocity risk assessment and management in UN peacekeeping

operations, this paper evaluates the current mechanisms for detecting and responding to atrocity risks. It identifies gaps and proposes actionable policy solutions to better integrate mass atrocity risk assessment and prevention into peacekeeping mandates and operational plans and how peacekeeping missions can optimize already available resources and capabilities to enhance their response to atrocity risks. In consequence, it highlights the need for improved capacities among UN entities, member states, and other stakeholders to institutionalize and prioritize atrocity risk assessment at all stages of peacekeeping.

After presenting its approach in the following chapter, this policy paper will then re-iterate the need to integrate atrocity prevention strategies in peacekeeping operations. More concretely, it will 1) address the necessity and options to integrate atrocity risk assessments in peacekeeping mandate development, 2) lay out how mass atrocity risk assessment and management can be operationalized in peacekeeping missions, and 3) underscore the critical need to plan for and manage transitions effectively, ensuring that peacekeeping efforts are sustainable and that the protection gains made during the mission are not lost.

<sup>8</sup> Anyadike, O. (2024). *The changing face of peacekeeping: What's gone wrong with the UN?* The New Humanitarian.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations. (2018). A/72/884-S/2018/525. Responsibility to protect: from early warning to early action: Report of the Secretary-General.

By providing a detailed examination of these issues, this policy paper aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the current shortcomings and challenges in atrocity prevention within UN peacekeeping missions. The objective is to propose actionable recommendations that will enhance the UN's capacity to protect human lives and prevent atrocities, thereby contributing to more effective and responsive peacekeeping operations.



## AN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH

This paper relies on a multi-faceted data collection process. The study began with a thorough review of literature on UN peacekeeping. This included analyzing UN peacekeeping policies, guidance documents, and resources from the Peacekeeping Resource Hub. The review also encompassed an examination of Security Council resolutions, debates, and discussions, Secretary-General's reports on the subject, as well as other relevant policy documents and academic materials. This comprehensive review provided insights into past trends, current challenges, and future gaps, which further informed the development of guiding questions for data collection.

Following this review, the research team conducted 22 semi-structured interviews with 26 experts in peacekeeping and atrocity prevention. These interviews lasted between 50 and 90 minutes each, and included staff with working knowledge of the Security Council, current and past Security Council Members (both permanent and non-permanent), civil society practitioners, former and current peacekeepers, UN peacekeeping mission staff from various missions (e.g., MINUSMA, MINUSCA, UNISFA, UNIFIL, UNOCI, UNMIL), staff from peacekeeping training institutes, as well as academics, trainers, and diplomats. The respondents were drawn from diverse nationalities and included both military and civilian officials, covering the full spectrum of peacekeeping from strategic to tactical levels.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to identify key issues emerging from both the literature review and interview data. This analysis was then cross-referenced with UN policies and guidance on peacekeeping to ensure accuracy and relevance. To validate the findings and refine recommendations, feedback from key practitioners and policymakers were incorporated to enhance validity and relevance of the findings.

Potential limitations and risks of such an undertaking, such as the sensitivity of the subject and reliance on interview data, were acknowledged and addressed. To mitigate concerns related to sensitivity, strict assurances of anonymity and confidentiality were provided to interview participants, encouraging them to provide open and honest responses. The reliance on interview data was balanced by triangulating these insights with comprehensive literature reviews and policy analyses, ensuring a well-rounded and robust analysis. Overall, our approach to the study was influenced by international efforts and initiatives which focus on conflict-related atrocity crime prevention and security sector reforms. These initiatives align with the Security Council's efforts to embed atrocity prevention within peacekeeping frameworks, reflecting the growing global recognition to enhance the effectiveness of peace operations through targeted reforms.

## INTEGRATING ATROCITY PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

- Recent shifts in conflict dynamics, including urban warfare, terrorism, and climate-related resource conflicts, have pressured peacekeeping operations to adapt and highlighted a need for greater flexibility.
- Strategic initiatives aimed to make peacekeeping more responsive, but atrocity prevention strategies, including atrocity risk assessments, remain inconsistently integrated.
- Prioritizing atrocity prevention is crucial for the legitimacy of UN operations. Addressing the underlying causes of mass violence requires a broader approach than Protection of Civilians mandates.
- Leveraging the UN's analytical, advisory, convening, and coordinating capacities is essential for effective atrocity risk assessment and prevention. These capacities are not yet fully or consistently applied across peacekeeping missions.

As peacekeeping operations have evolved to address increasingly complex and multidimensional conflicts, there has been growing recognition of the need to integrate the protection of civilians into the mandates and activities of peacekeeping missions. The focus on *Protection of Civilians* (POC) has resulted in the UN Security Council mandating mission-wide obligations to prioritize civilian protection in relation to the allocation of resources and capabilities.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, POC mandates are often

designed to be specific to the mission's capabilities and areas of deployment, with clear guidelines on protecting civilians in the immediate context of ongoing conflict where civilians are in imminent threat of physical violence.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, the *Human Rights Up Front* initiative aimed to enhance the capacity of the UN system to prevent serious human rights violations, including those that could escalate into atrocity crimes, by raising early warnings and taking

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Resolution 1894 (2009), S/RES/1894 (2009), November 11, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Hitoshi Nasu. (2011). Operationalizing the Responsibility to Protect in the Context of

Civilian Protection by UN Peacekeepers, International Peacekeeping, 18:4, 364-378.

proactive measures before abuses intensify. Alongside these processes, *Joint Mission Analysis Centres (JMAs)* and *Joint Operations Centres (JOCs)* across all peacekeeping missions have facilitated the integration of multidisciplinary analytical capabilities. These structures enhanced mission-wide situational awareness and security information analysis, thereby supporting more informed and effective decision-making at the management level.<sup>12</sup>

Although they are related, POC strategies and analysis of lower-level human rights violations are neither synonymous with atrocity prevention strategies nor do they involve atrocity risk assessments. Mass atrocity-specific risk assessments and responses are, however, a key component of any effective approaches that aim to protect civilians. Mass atrocities can, after all, occur inside and outside of armed conflicts and wars, meaning in peacetime. Even when they **are** perpetrated in the shadow of wars and armed conflict or in their aftermath, Rwanda, Srebrenica, and countless other episodes have shown that the tools that help analyze and address conflict dynamics might not cover or **may even**

create blind spots that lead to sub-optimal responses to mass atrocity risks.

It thus remains crucial to systematically identify and analyze specific risk factors and triggers, such as political or economic instability, ethnic tensions, and hate speech, that heighten the likelihood of atrocities occurring. By understanding these risks early, peacekeepers and policymakers can take proactive steps to prevent escalation and protect vulnerable populations more effectively.<sup>13</sup> The focus here is thus on creating an integrated mission response to protect vulnerable populations during wherever peacekeeping missions are or will be deployed.

A fundamental question arising from this discussion is: What would the integration of atrocity risk assessment and management throughout the entire cycle of peacekeeping operations—from initiation and operation to transition and exit—entail, and how could this be practically achieved? The key, this paper argues, lies in institutionalizing atrocity prevention within the UN system, which requires leveraging four essential capacities throughout the peacekeeping cycle, namely analytical, advisory, convening, and coordinating capacities.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Philip Shetler-Jones. (2008). Intelligence in Integrated UN Peacekeeping Missions: The Joint Mission Analysis Centre, *International Peacekeeping*, 15:4, 517-527.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations. (2014). UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention.

<sup>14</sup> Bellamy, A. J. (2015). Operationalizing the “Atrocity Prevention Lens”: Making Prevention a Living Reality. In S. P. Rosenberg, T. Galis, & A. Zucker (Eds.), *Reconstructing Atrocity Prevention* (pp. 61-80). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The UN's **analytical capacity** is crucial for understanding and anticipating the risk of atrocities in conflict-affected areas. It enables the organization to monitor early warning indicators, conduct in-depth risk assessments, and tailor analysis to the specific dynamics of conflict situations, thereby informing strategic decision-making and resource allocation to protect vulnerable populations. An **advisory capacity** translates these analytical insights into strategic guidance for integrating atrocity prevention into peacekeeping mandates and operations. This includes advising Security Council members and mission leadership, building the capacity of national and regional actors through specialized training, and aligning national and international policies with atrocity prevention goals. Similarly, a **convening capacity** is essential for bringing together diverse stakeholders to collectively address atrocity risks. It facilitates dialogue among governments, civil society, and international partners to build consensus and mobilize resources, while also coordinating rapid response teams during crises to ensure timely interventions. Additionally, it promotes seamless inter-agency collaboration within the UN to implement a comprehensive atrocity prevention strategy. Finally, a **coordinating capacity** is crucial for ensuring the cohesive implementation of atrocity prevention strategies across different levels and with external

partners. It involves aligning the actions of military, police, and civilian components within peacekeeping missions, coordinating cross-border efforts with regional organizations, and maintaining a focused approach to atrocity prevention during the transition phases of missions.

Mindful of the UN's analytical, advisory, convening, and coordinating capacities, the following three subsections lay out how the UN's significant capacities can be more fully and consistently applied across the entire lifecycle of peacekeeping missions with regard to atrocity risk assessment and prevention. More concretely, the first subsection examines integrating atrocity risk assessment in peacekeeping mandate development. The second subsection addresses the issue of operationalizing atrocity risk assessment and management in peacekeeping. The last section examines incorporating atrocity risk considerations in transitions planning. Such a comprehensive approach ensures that atrocity prevention becomes a foundational pillar, not just an auxiliary concern, in the UN's commitment to uphold international peace and security. It centers the conversation on effectively mitigating atrocity risks during every stage of peacekeeping operations.

## INTEGRATING ATROCITY RISK ASSESSMENT IN PEACEKEEPING MANDATE DEVELOPMENT

- Clear mandates are essential, providing explicit instructions for atrocity risk assessment within peacekeeping operations.
- Political dynamics within the UN Security Council, which are influenced by geopolitical interests, can impact the incorporation of atrocity risk assessment in mandates.
- Including specific language on atrocity risk assessment enables proactive measures and early intervention capabilities in peacekeeping mandates.
- Effective atrocity risk de-escalation and prevention relies on well-resourced analytical and advisory bodies like OSAPG R2P that influence mandate formulation with accurate risk assessments.

A mandate, as articulated in UN Security Council resolutions, serves as the foundational blueprint for any peacekeeping mission, setting a clear strategic tone from the outset. It conveys the Security Council's intentions directly to mission leadership, providing a basis for the development of strategic objectives. This clarity is crucial for peacekeepers on the ground, who rely on a well-defined mandate to understand their roles, responsibilities, and the scope of their authority. A clear mandate also guides the allocation of necessary resources to effectively execute the mission. Conversely, an ambiguous or poorly constructed mandate can lead to suboptimal implementation on the ground, significantly hindering the mission's

success and compromising the safety and effectiveness of peacekeepers.

The discussion that follows analyzes how atrocity risk language, strategic-level commitment, and policy considerations influence integration of atrocity prevention into peacekeeping mandate development. Each of these themes addresses different aspects of the UN's capacity to institutionalize atrocity prevention within peacekeeping operations. They reflect the need for these capacities to be effectively applied from the outset during the development of peacekeeping mandates.

### **The Need for Atrocity-Specific Risk Assessment Language in Mandates**

The Security Council has long-standing experience in formulating peacekeeping

mandates to respond to conflicts and atrocities. Yet, experts and practitioners involved in this study expressed concerns that current mandates do not adequately address the evolving nature of conflicts and violence. Although mandates have included civilian protection since 1999, this inclusion has not automatically translated into a focus on reducing atrocity risk and preventing atrocities. Civilian protection mandates are primarily designed to shield civilians from immediate harm. This typically involves reactive measures such as deploying peacekeepers to hotspots, setting up safe zones, and sometimes intervening to prevent violence from escalating.

The language of most multidimensional POC mandates now emphasizes protecting civilians 'under threat of physical violence,' in recognition of the need to emphasize preventive actions in peacekeeping missions.<sup>15</sup> Further, the mandate language for some missions has been prescriptive (rather than broad) to address specific protection issues in peacekeeping missions. For instance, the inclusion of protection of cultural and historical sites in MINUSMA's mandate highlights the need for specific atrocity-related dimensions.<sup>16</sup> However, preventing atrocities requires a broader and more proactive approach that addresses the underlying causes and

dynamics of potential mass violence, not just the symptoms.

As such, atrocity prevention necessitates an analytical capacity for early detection and intervention before violence escalates into mass atrocities. This involves understanding the early warning signs of atrocities. While civilian protection mandates enable peacekeepers to react when violence occurs, they are not inherently designed to engage in the deep, anticipatory analysis and strategic intervention that atrocity prevention requires. Thus, an explicit atrocity prevention focus is vital as it provides peacekeepers with a firm basis and clear directives for engagement.

Findings from the study highlight differing views regarding the feasibility of incorporating atrocity-specific language in peacekeeping mandates. Importantly, this apprehension largely reflects uncertainties about how certain Security Council members might respond to such inclusions, rather than doubts about the need for atrocity risk language itself. The primary concern around introducing explicit atrocity risk assessment prevention provisions in mandates relates to the potential resistance within the Security Council, which could jeopardize the chances of implementing the more widely accepted

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations Department of Peace Operations. (2020). *Protection of civilians in United Nations peacekeeping handbook*.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Security Council. (2013). Resolution 2100 (2013). S/RES/2100 (25 April 2013).

civilian protection agenda. Additionally, there is the argument against creating a "Christmas tree mandate"—overburdened with too many tasks, making it overly complex and difficult to execute effectively. In interviews with officials familiar with the workings of the Security Council, many pointed to MINUSMA – which included atrocity prevention language in its mandate, but struggled to achieve its protection objectives. However, the challenge in this concrete case mainly stemmed from misaligned expectations between the host authorities and the peacekeeping mission regarding POC and human rights mandates.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the key issue often lies in opposition from host states to including atrocity prevention language, rather than the concept itself. Nonetheless, there is recognition that a mandate sets the strategic posture from which actions are derived, and omitting explicit atrocity risk assessment language constrains the authority, resources, and capacity to engage in preventive action effectively.

### Strategic-Level Commitment

Strategic-level commitment is essential for integrating atrocity risk assessment and management into the full cycle of peacekeeping missions, ensuring that

atrocity prevention is perceived and understood uniformly across the UN system, and ultimately becomes a core priority from the outset. Without a clear and sustained focus at the highest levels of decision-making, atrocity prevention risks being sidelined in favor of more immediate, reactive priorities, as is often the case in current practice. Elevating atrocity risk assessment to a strategic priority ensures that peacekeeping missions are equipped to anticipate, prevent, and respond to the threat of mass atrocities at every stage of the mission cycle.

The Secretary-General articulated a three-pillar implementation strategy in 2009 that has often been referenced in policy and academic circles as offering broad guidance for atrocity prevention.<sup>18</sup> Together with subsequent elaborations of the norm by the UN, scholars, and practitioners, this provides a starting point to reflect atrocity risk assessment and management in peacekeeping mandates from a strategic perspective. However, compared to other global agendas like POC and Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, it lacks a clear strategy that could form the basis for practical guidance for peacekeepers and national actors. In other words, it is

<sup>17</sup> Sharland, L. (2023). *MINUSMA and protection of civilians: Implications for future peacekeeping missions*. IPI Global Observatory.

<sup>18</sup> Barber, R. (2023). Reflections on the three pillars of the responsibility to protect, and a

possible alternative approach. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 77(4), 415–422; Thakur, R. (2016). The Responsibility to Protect at 15. *International Affairs*, 92(2), 415–434.

difficult for peacekeepers to know what responsibility is placed on them under the current articulation.

The OSAPG R2P, which leads the production of the annual thematic reports of the Secretary General on R2P, is gravely under-resourced and often remains peripheral in key engagements concerning peacekeeping, even though it frequently circulates early warning analysis and advisory on at-risk populations. The office's convening power in the wider UN system, particularly in mobilizing action to respond to imminent threats of mass violence, remains limited.<sup>19</sup> Interactions with some Security Council members revealed that concerns exist within the UN that involving the office in complex and sensitive discussions might jeopardize decision-making. There is also a notable disconnect between the Security Council and UN subsidiary offices dedicated to atrocity prevention, with the OSAPG R2P having no clear input in pre-authorization risk assessments and mandate design for peacekeeping operations. Enabling the OSAPG R2P and similar offices prominent roles in the development of peacekeeping mandates would allow the UN to leverage its analytical and

advisory capacities to assess and anticipate atrocity risk and to translate them into strategic-level policies and decisions.

## Political Considerations and Concessions

The Responsibility to Protect norm has become an unfortunate victim of Security Council politics. Discussions on atrocity prevention within the UN often encounter discomfort and resistance. Informal discussions outside the Security Council appear to have improved international support for atrocity prevention. But the Security Council remains a key impediment to incorporating strategic planning for effective atrocity prevention. There is no doubt that the Council's unity or otherwise is reflected in a mission's political strategy, which in turn affects the signal that is sent to the host government, armed groups and other actors.<sup>20</sup> Mandate content is heavily influenced by P5 member negotiations, which often dilutes a prevention focus in contentious situations. The mandate design process involves extensive negotiations and compromises, particularly among the P5 members, reflecting their interests. For instance,

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<sup>19</sup> McLoughlin, S., Gifkins, J., & Bellamy, A. J. (2023). The Evolution of Mass Atrocity Early Warning in the UN Secretariat: Fit for Purpose? *International Peacekeeping*, 30(4), 477–505.

<sup>20</sup> International Peace Institute. (2024). *Emerging lessons from MINUSMA's experience in Mali*. Meeting Note.

MINUSMA's mandate was significantly shaped by the interests of France,<sup>21</sup> just as Security Council deliberations on how to respond to the crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR) were driven by French interests. Host state's preferences also influence mandates in significant ways. In Mali, initial resistance to include central Mali (Mopti region) in the mandate led to avoidable casualties. MINUSMA's areas of responsibility had to be reviewed in later mandate renewals due to escalating violence and atrocities, and yet these attempts were also met with vigorous opposition from Malian authorities.<sup>22</sup>

Divisions among major powers on critical issues of unfolding atrocities represent a central challenge to strategic planning for atrocity risk assessment and prevention. In countries like Syria and Myanmar where atrocity crimes were a daily occurrence, the lack of consensus among Security Council members on the most appropriate response created a regrettable deadlock that hindered any

attempts at a decisive response. Between 2011 and 2019, more than a dozen resolutions on Syria were vetoed by some members of the P5, particularly Russia and China.<sup>23</sup> Similar vetoes and threats to cast a veto on resolutions on Myanmar have hindered much-needed international intervention as the Council has been split on Myanmar for decades.<sup>24</sup> More recent divisions and Security Council deadlocks on worrying issues such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas conflict has brought in the UN General Assembly under the "Uniting for Peace" resolution.<sup>25</sup> Yet the lack of legal enforcement of General Assembly resolutions makes such decisions symbolic and of limited practical significance for atrocity prevention.

To address this, the UN should leverage its broader convening capacity to create inclusive forums that extend beyond formal Security Council and General Assembly debates. By convening informal dialogues and multi-stakeholder

<sup>21</sup> France, which served as the penholder for MINUSMA, led the adoption of Security Council Resolution 2100 (2013) which also authorized French forces to intervene in support of MINUSMA's mandate.

<sup>22</sup> Africa Confidential. (2022). Mali rejects human rights mandate. Vol. 63, No. 14. July 7, 2022.

<sup>23</sup> Nichols, M. (2019). Russia, backed by China, casts 14th U.N. veto on Syria to block cross-border aid. Reuters. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/russia-backed-by-china-casts-14th-un-veto-on->

[syria-to-block-cross-border-aid-idUSKBN1YO23S/](#)

<sup>24</sup> Nanda, V. P. (2023). Power shift: The UN Security Council has lost its clout. *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, 55(1); France24. (2022). UN Security Council adopts first ever Myanmar resolution. Retrieved from

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20221221-un-security-council-adopts-first-ever-myanmar-resolution>

<sup>25</sup> General Assembly resolution 377 (V), November 3, 1950.

consultations—such as joint strategic assessments between the African Union Chairperson and the UN Secretary-General, as articulated in Security Council resolution 2719 (2023), alongside engagement with Security Council members, regional organizations, civil society, and atrocity prevention experts—the UN can foster a space where sensitive issues around atrocity

risk assessment and prevention are discussed more openly, free from formal constraints, and the threat of vetoes. These forums could help build consensus on the necessity of integrating atrocity risk assessment into mandates, and gradually reduce the political resistance within formal Security Council settings.



## OPERATIONALIZING ATROCITY RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT IN PEACEKEEPING

### Key Takeaways

- Effective atrocity risk assessment requires deep analysis of identity-based conflict dynamics and proactive decision-making, supported by early warning systems that often struggle with timely action due to bureaucratic and political hurdles.
- Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs) play a vital role in building bridges between peacekeepers and local communities, crucial for enhancing grassroots intelligence around atrocity risk and improving coordination with other UN entities.
- Novel initiatives such as MINUSMA's ASIFU have advanced intelligence capabilities within missions, although they encounter challenges like overlapping mandates and intense competition for resources.
- Strong partnerships with regional organizations and the incorporation of civil society insights are essential for a comprehensive approach to atrocity risk assessment and prevention, requiring aligned strategies and principles for effective peacekeeping.
- Continuous training and capacity building are essential for peacekeepers to effectively manage atrocity risks, with a focus on situational awareness, compliance, and accountability.

Successful implementation of atrocity risk assessment in peacekeeping operations relies on several crucial abilities. First is the capability to analyze complex dynamics of identity-based violence and detect early warnings of escalating risk and potential atrocities. This supports informed decision-making through expert guidance provided to mission leadership. Additionally,

peacekeeping missions must be able to facilitate dialogue among local communities, government bodies, and other stakeholders, which is vital for fostering collaboration and understanding. Lastly, an effective coordination framework is essential to ensure that all operational components work seamlessly together and align with

the efforts of external partners and organizations.

This section discusses the critical roles of training and capacity building, early warning systems and risk assessments, and collaboration with diverse stakeholders. Training and capacity building are essential for equipping peacekeepers with the skills needed to analyze, interpret, and respond to atrocity risks effectively. Early warning systems and risk assessments provide the necessary data to anticipate potential threats and provide timely and relevant advisory. Effective collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including local communities and civil society organizations, ensures that peacekeeping missions can integrate local insights and tailor their risk assessments and response strategies to address specific context-related challenges, ultimately strengthening their capacity to prevent and respond to atrocity risks.

### Training and Capacity Building

An integral part of an atrocity risk assessment strategy is building the capacity of local security forces, strengthening the judiciary, and enhancing the capabilities of human rights organizations to contribute to long-term stability and resilience against future violence. In a peacekeeping context, training and capacity building

for peacekeepers are essential to ensure they understand and can implement atrocity risk assessment and management strategies to prevent escalation of violence. Emphasis on training programs that are mandatory for all peacekeepers focused on compliance, accountability, and situational awareness is crucial for their success. Despite pre-deployment training and in-mission capacity building efforts to standardize peacekeeping competencies, the reality is that inconsistent capacities and a lack of specific guidelines for detecting and responding to atrocity risks negatively impact operational outcomes. The varying capacities of peacekeeping troops, and willingness to intervene remain inconsistent across different missions and circumstances.<sup>26</sup>

Respondents have emphasized the importance of the mindset of police- and troop-contributing countries (PTCCs) and individual peacekeepers—which training can help shape—to engage effectively in challenging mission environments.

Building the capacity of peacekeepers will reduce the current knowledge and skill gap regarding atrocity risk assessment and prevention, enabling the application of a unique lens comparable to POC in peacekeeping missions. More specifically, dedicated trainings and capacity building in analyzing identity-based tensions, monitoring hate speech

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<sup>26</sup> Report of the Independent Special Investigation into the violence which

occurred in Juba in 2016 and UNMISS response. November 1, 2016.

and incitement, assessing patterns of violence (including sexual and gender-based violence), and developing de-escalation, mitigation, and prevention strategies would further enhance their ability to anticipate, prevent, and respond to potential atrocity crimes within their missions. PTCCs could provide specific targeted training and orientation for different mission components—military, police, and civilian elements—to enhance their roles in situational awareness, intelligence analysis, and response coordination. Overall, sustained integrated training at the PTCC level would help shape the internal culture of military and civilian components to emphasize the importance of atrocity prevention as a fundamental objective of their peacekeeping efforts.

### Early Warning Systems and Risk Assessments

Early warning systems and risk assessments are critical for atrocity prevention. However, there is often a disconnect between having the right information and acting on it. Bureaucratic and political processes within the UN can delay response times, undermining the effectiveness of early

warnings. Besides the OSAPG R2P, UN departments and units such as the JMACs, Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS), and the JOCs have been established and strengthened to provide integrated mission-wide analyses, but their effectiveness varies from one mission to the other. Some commentators have highlighted their positive role in enhancing intelligence capabilities, while others have pointed out ambiguities in their mandate. There is a strong sense that while JMACs within peacekeeping missions provide integrated mission-wide analyses, there has not been a strong focus on identifying and assessing long-term atrocity risks that transcend the threat of physical violence. It is not entirely clear the extent to which JMAC collects and analyzes information about identity issues such as ethnic groups, tribal leaders and local dynamics that have a significant bearing on the direction of violence and likelihood of atrocity crimes.<sup>27</sup> UNMISS has, for instance, fallen short severely in this regard in spite of being confronted with perennial identity-based violence.<sup>28</sup>

To bridge these gaps and enhance the UN's analytical, advisory and coordinating capacities, the role of

<sup>27</sup> Sebastiaan Rietjens & Erik de Waard (2017). UN Peacekeeping Intelligence: The ASIFU Experiment, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 30:3, 532-556.

<sup>28</sup> United Nations (2016). Troubled by Report's Findings on July Violence,

Secretary-General Pledges Greater Accountability by United Nations Mission in South Sudan. Press Release. SG/SM/18245-AFR/3478-PKO/607.

<https://press.un.org/en/2016/sgsm18245.doc.htm>

Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs) has become increasingly crucial. CLAs act as vital interlocutors between the peacekeeping missions and the communities in which they are present, facilitating a deeper understanding of local contexts and needs. Their presence has been instrumental in gathering grassroots intelligence that complements the data collected by traditional intelligence units like JMAC. By building trust with local communities, CLAs enhance the mission's capacity to respond to early warnings and engage in preventive measures more effectively. Moreover, their ongoing engagement helps tailor peacekeeping efforts to address specific local dynamics, thus improving both the relevance and impact of mission activities.

The UN has also taken steps to enhance its capacity in collecting relevant and actionable intelligence information to aid peacekeeping response, including establishing a dedicated team to combat misinformation and disinformation that affects the ability of peacekeepers to protect civilians and safeguard the security of peacekeepers. The All- Sources Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU) was created in MINUSMA to contribute to non-military intelligence analysis and enhance decision-making by mission leadership.<sup>29</sup> ASIFU's use of advanced

technology, including high-tech sensors, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and state-of-the-art information technology systems helped improve MINUSMA's intelligence capacity. Peacekeepers who served with MINUSMA noted that ASIFU was better equipped to leverage local sources of information to produce relevant and actionable risk assessment reports and longer-term threat assessments.<sup>30</sup> ASIFU is an innovative and potentially useful tool that could be repurposed for atrocity prevention in future peacekeeping missions. However, its operational challenges have also been noted, particularly in overlapping mandates which engendered unhealthy departmental rivalries and duplication of efforts.<sup>31</sup> For these efforts to succeed and indeed increase the capacity of peacekeepers and personnel to assess mass atrocity risks, it remains crucial, however, to also offer dedicated training for peacekeepers and personnel.

### Collaboration with Diverse Stakeholders

The UN's recent push to make peacekeeping more flexible and adaptable has also underscored the importance of collaborating with civil society, local communities and regional organizations like the African Union (AU). Collaboration with civil society

<sup>29</sup> Nordli, D., & Lindboe, M. (2017). *Intelligence in United Nations peace operations: A case study of the All Sources Information Fusion Unit in MINUSMA*.

<sup>30</sup> Various interviews. June 2024.

<sup>31</sup> Sebastiaan Rietjens & Erik de Waard (2017) UN Peacekeeping Intelligence: The ASIFU Experiment, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 30:3, 532-556.

organizations and local communities can play a vital role in atrocity prevention by providing ground-level insights and early warning signals that external actors might miss. Peacekeepers can work closely with CSOs to gather localized intelligence, monitor human rights violations, and implement community-driven protection strategies. CSOs often have strong ties to vulnerable populations and marginalized groups, making them essential partners in understanding the socio-political dynamics that may contribute to heightening their vulnerability and potential atrocities. As with CLAs, the involvement of CSOs also helps bridge the gap between international peacekeepers and local communities, fostering trust and cooperation, which is critical in conflict-prone environments. Strengthening relationships with CSOs ensures that peacekeepers can act with cultural sensitivity and respond to atrocity risks with a greater level of precision.

Integrating an atrocity prevention lens in peacekeeping thus should also provide the space to actively involve civil society organizations and local actors in planning and implementing atrocity prevention measures, ensuring that their insights and capabilities are utilized effectively. To optimize mass atrocity risk assessment and management, coordination among various

stakeholders, including UN agencies, regional organizations, local governments, and civil society should be actively encouraged and increased. This facilitates a more coherent and unified response to emerging threats, promoting sustained engagement and comprehensive strategies that encompass legal, political, economic, and humanitarian dimensions. Such engagements demonstrate a commitment to protecting vulnerable groups and curtailing large-scale violence, thereby building trust with local communities, which is crucial for the success of any peacekeeping effort.

Furthermore, regional and sub-regional organizations are increasingly seen as pivotal players in peacekeeping due to their ability to deploy rapidly in response to crises within their regions. This capability is crucial given the mounting pressures on UN peacekeeping resources. The longstanding recognition of regional organizations' capacity to respond swiftly to local crises makes such arrangements viable and necessary. For instance, the AU's strong normative commitment to atrocity prevention, as reflected in its Constitutive Act, explicitly authorizes intervention in member states in cases of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, closely aligning with atrocity prevention principles.<sup>32</sup> This capability to deploy swiftly within their regions is crucial,

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<sup>32</sup> African Union. (2000). Article 4(h). Constitutive Act of the African Union.

particularly given the increasing strain on UN peacekeeping resources, enabling a timely and decisive response to prevent the escalation of violence. Rapid response, such as was demonstrated in The Gambia in 2017 following their political crisis after disputed elections, can mean the difference between escalation and containment. In that instance, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with AU support, acted quickly to prevent potential violence, showing how regional organizations can act decisively to avert atrocities.<sup>33</sup> This makes the ability of regional organizations like the AU to respond rapidly particularly valuable in situations where the UN may face delays due to bureaucratic or political hurdles.

In December 2023, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2719 (2023), which



provides funding for African-led peace operations.<sup>34</sup> This development represents a positive step toward leveraging the analytical, convening and coordinating capacities to enhance regional organizations' capabilities in peacekeeping efforts. Following the resolution, the AU has initiated steps to streamline its approach, particularly concerning human rights and protection strategies, to bring them in line with the AU and UN's compliance frameworks. By aligning their strategies and principles, the UN and regional organizations can enhance their collective ability to respond to crises, protect civilians, and maintain peace and security.

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<sup>33</sup> Nantulya, P. (2017). *Lessons from Gambia on effective regional security cooperation*. Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

<sup>34</sup> United Nations Security Council. (2023). Resolution 2719 (2023), S/RES/2719.

## INCORPORATING ATROCITY RISK CONSIDERATIONS IN TRANSITION PLANNING

### Key Takeaways

- Transition planning in the context of UN missions is complex and requires critically integrating atrocity risk considerations to maintain stability and protect civilians effectively. The existing policies sometimes lack the flexibility needed to adapt to the unique circumstances of each mission, impacting the success of transitions.
- Lack of comprehensive risk assessments of host government capabilities can lead to protection vacuums and increased atrocity risks during and after mission drawdowns.
- Partnerships with local and regional stakeholders are crucial in ensuring continuity in atrocity risk management and civilian protection. These collaborations help bridge the gap left by the withdrawing peacekeeping forces and support the sustainability of peace initiatives.
- There is the need to strengthen the capacity of UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and address the resource limitations that constrain their ability to support countries undergoing transitions.

The need to prioritize atrocity risk considerations during the transition from peacekeeping missions to host governments or other entities is a key strategy for preventing a resurgence of violence. Without comprehensive atrocity risk assessments, transitions risk neglecting crucial elements, such as the host government's capacity to ensure civilian protection, address grievances, and manage security threats. Many host governments lack the institutional strength to fill the protective role previously held by peacekeeping

missions, which can heighten the risk of atrocities, including ethnic violence, mass killings, or severe human rights abuses. Conducting thorough risk assessments enables the UN and other international actors to identify weaknesses in policing, justice, and security sectors, and to implement collaborative strategies to bolster these areas during the transition. By incorporating atrocity risk factors, transition plans can be more context-specific, ensuring the establishment of

conditions necessary for long-term stability and the protection of civilians.

Currently, the UN's policy on 'Transitions in the Context of Mission Drawdown or Withdrawal' provides guidance for early planning, national capacity development and ownership to ensure sustainable transitions.<sup>35</sup> The policy has informed successful mission closures, such as the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) in 2017 and the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2018.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the 2019 Secretary-General's Planning Directive for the Development of Consistent and Coherent UN Transition Processes emphasizes the need for early planning, the creation of a transition roadmap, and the development of a long-term disengagement strategy well before mission drawdown. Ireland, instrumental in the adoption of Resolution 2594 in 2021, urged the Security Council to use its authority to advance the transition agenda, stressing the importance of careful planning. However, since Ireland's term on the Security Council ended, no other member has prioritized the issue of transitions, despite the resolution's significance. Recent experiences have also raised concerns regarding mission

closures, with peacekeeping operations facing forced, unplanned departures or leaving unfinished tasks to host countries.<sup>37</sup> The resulting post-transition violence and instability, as well as the potential to exacerbate atrocities, underscore the need for a comprehensive strategy that integrates atrocity risk considerations into transition planning.

### Risk Assessments in Transitions

The New Agenda for Peace underscores the importance of early exit strategy planning through a coordinated and adaptive approach to ensure smooth mission drawdowns and consolidate operational gains, reducing the risk of conflict recurrence. A key aspect of this planning involves assessing the host government's capacity in critical areas like justice, policing, and civilian protection, which is essential for determining when a mission can responsibly withdraw. However, this assessment is often neglected or obstructed by host government interference, leading to poorly timed drawdowns that create protection vacuums and escalate the risk of atrocities.<sup>38</sup> In recent cases, UN mission

<sup>35</sup> United Nations. (2013). *Policy on UN transitions in the context of mission drawdown or withdrawal*. Endorsed by the Secretary-General.

<sup>36</sup> Security Council Report. (2023). *UN transitions in a fractured multilateral environment*. Research Report, No. 4.

<sup>37</sup> These include UNAMID/UNITAMS, UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), MINUSMA and MONUSCO.

<sup>38</sup> ACAPS. (2024, June 7). *Mali: Situation of internal displacement*. ACAPS Briefing Note. Retrieved from [https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data\\_Product/Main\\_media/20240607\\_ACAPS\\_Briefi](https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240607_ACAPS_Briefi)

drawdowns have frequently prioritized logistical concerns over atrocity risk considerations, increasing the potential for violence after a mission's departure. The phased withdrawal of MONUSCO from the DRC serves as a pertinent example, where escalating violence in the eastern regions was insufficiently considered during the UN's departure. Criticism arose over the lack of attention to the fragile security situation and the government's limited capacity to maintain order.<sup>39</sup> The resurgence of militia activity and inter-communal violence in areas like Ituri and North Kivu, along with the risk of regional spillover, underscores the deficiencies in current transition planning. A more robust approach that incorporates atrocity risk assessments would better inform strategic decisions on mission termination. This process should involve leveraging the analytical and coordinating capacities of the JMAC, UN Country Teams (UNCT), other entities, and the host state to identify gaps in civilian protection and implement targeted risk mitigation measures before and during the transition.

### **Leveraging Partnerships for the Sustainability of Atrocity Risk Assessment**

Recent experiences have shown that peacekeeping missions may not always

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<sup>39</sup> Nantulya, P. (2024). *Understanding the Democratic Republic of the Congo's push for*

control the timing of their exit, underscoring the need for a holistic approach that incorporates UN entities and other stakeholders into transition planning. Engaging UNCTs, regional organizations, and CSOs mobilizes broader institutional capacities and resources to address the complex challenges of transitions, especially in mitigating risks that arise when missions withdraw. To prevent disruptions during these transitions, the UN strategically transfers responsibilities to UNCTs and builds robust partnerships with local and regional actors. This ensures that essential connections with civil society and community groups remain active, sustaining platforms for atrocity risk identification and the protection of vulnerable populations. For instance, tasks such as civic engagement or human rights monitoring can be transferred to UN agencies with relevant mandates, such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) or the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). These agencies are well-positioned to continue initiatives focused on strengthening local governance and supporting the rule of law. However, Security Council members recognize that UNCTs often lack the capacity to effectively support countries

MONUSCO's departure. Spotlight. Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

undergoing transitions.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, they highlight the significant resource disparity between peacekeeping operations and the under-resourced UNCTs, which are expected to assume critical responsibilities after peacekeeping missions withdraw. For transition planning to be effective, it is imperative to strengthen the capacities of these key partners and ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to address protection gaps and support host state responsibilities.

The UN has also acknowledged the vital role that regional and sub-regional organizations play in peacekeeping transitions. These entities often have deeper contextual knowledge of local peace and security dynamics, making them crucial partners in transition planning.<sup>41</sup> Organizations such as the AU and its sub-regional arrangements are well-equipped to maintain stability and continue the protective functions

established during peacekeeping missions. The transition of responsibilities from MONUSCO to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) forces illustrates how regional capabilities can be effectively utilized. However, the UN has been reluctant to provide the necessary logistical and operational support to regional forces, creating gaps in protection. This was evident in recent negotiations around the UN's disengagement from the DRC, where limitations on MONUSCO's support for regional forces were criticized by several member states. Involving regional organizations in transition planning ensures that protective measures do not end abruptly but are adapted and sustained by entities with a long-term commitment to regional stability.

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<sup>40</sup> Security Council Report. (2023). *UN transitions in a fractured multilateral environment*. Research Report, No. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

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## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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There is growing skepticism about the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations in preventing and responding to the gravest human rights violations that destabilize regions and cause profound suffering. This skepticism arises from a plethora of strategic and operational challenges that limit the UN's ability to deploy the necessary tools to address the pressing protection needs of populations. To address this, the UN must innovate and adapt its strategies to the evolving nature of conflicts and atrocity risks, making atrocity risk assessment and management a core component of all peacekeeping operations.

This requires embedding atrocity prevention at all levels of decision-making and operational planning. To effectively integrate atrocity risk

assessment into peacekeeping mandate development, implementation and transition, a multifaceted approach is necessary, addressing issues from mandate design to operational implementation and transition phases. The following policy recommendations provide a comprehensive framework to enhance the UN's capacity to prevent and respond to genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. These recommendations are geared towards harnessing the four aforementioned institutional capacities within the UN at all levels of intervention throughout the peacekeeping cycle. Implementing these recommendations will lead to more effective and responsive peacekeeping operations, ultimately enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of the UN's peacekeeping mandates.

## Enhancing Strategic-Level Commitment

- Mandates should explicitly include atrocity risk assessment and prevention language to clarify the roles and responsibilities of peacekeepers. This explicit inclusion should detail the preventative actions required, not just reactive measures, and emphasize the importance of addressing underlying causes and dynamics of potential mass violence.
- The Secretary-General and the Security Council should prioritize atrocity prevention in the core agenda of UN policy discussions and strategic planning. This involves ensuring that atrocity prevention is a central theme in Security Council resolutions and is consistently emphasized in reports and briefings by the Secretary-General.
- Strengthen the roles of entities like OSAPG R2P. Ensure these offices are well-resourced and integrated into the mandate design process, allowing them to provide timely analyses and advisories that can influence strategic decision-making and mandate formulation.
- The responsibilities of the OSAPG R2P should be mainstreamed in the early warning analysis of JMACs, JOCs and other specialized intelligence and information collection functions of missions to help provide actionable intelligence tailored to atrocity prevention needs.

## Improving Operational Coordination and Implementation

- Enhance coordination between peacekeeping missions, host states, regional organizations, and local actors to ensure a unified approach to atrocity risk assessment and prevention, including deploying atrocity risk assessment experts to offer ongoing strategic advice to support mission leadership.
- Improve the collaboration between all information collection and analysis units, including JMACs, Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs) and other intelligence networks to ensure that both high-level analysis and grassroots intelligence are effectively synthesized, providing a comprehensive understanding of atrocity risks.
- Peacekeeping missions should also establish specialized advisory teams, joint task forces and information-sharing protocols to improve situational awareness and response capabilities.
- Develop clear guidelines and operational protocols for peacekeepers that prioritize atrocity risk assessment and prevention, ensuring that these guidelines are incorporated into the mission's rules of engagement and decision-making processes.
- Establish dedicated teams within peacekeeping missions to handle non-military intelligence analysis focused specifically on atrocity risks, ensuring that these teams are well-supported and integrated into the mission's overall strategic framework.
- Partner with relevant peacekeeping training institutions and CSOs to develop and deliver foundational and specialized training that is rooted in real-world scenarios and best practices in atrocity prevention.
- Standardize and expand training programs for peacekeepers to include specific modules on situational awareness, threat identification, legal obligations, and appropriate responses.

## Improving Sustainability of Transitions

- The UN should work with host governments and civil society to conduct thorough joint assessments of the host government's capacity in key areas such as justice, policing, and civilian security before initiating a drawdown. This will help determine whether the state can effectively assume the responsibilities previously managed by the UN mission, preventing protection vacuums and mitigating risks.
- Implement capacity-building programs tailored to identify weaknesses in the host state's security, judicial, and civil administration sectors as part of the transition planning. These programs should aim to strengthen local systems to a level that ensures they can effectively handle security responsibilities post-transition.
- Design transition strategies that are phased and condition-based, taking into account the ongoing security assessments and the host country's progress in meeting predetermined stability criteria.
- Adapt the pace of mission withdrawal to the improvements in local governance and security capabilities, ensuring that these are capable of preventing a resurgence of violence.

## Leveraging Partnerships to Ensure Continuity

- Establish formal frameworks for partnerships between UN peacekeeping missions and other UN agencies well before the transition phase. This should include clear guidelines on the transfer of responsibilities, ensuring that agencies such as the UNDP and OHCHR are prepared to take over specific roles like civic engagement and human rights monitoring without disruption.
- Intensify efforts to build the capacities of local institutions and civil society organizations during the mission's operation phase. This preparation ensures that these groups can effectively contribute to and eventually lead the efforts in atrocity prevention, governance, and law enforcement after the transition.
- Develop comprehensive collaboration strategies with regional organizations such as the AU and sub-regional arrangements. This strategy should not only involve operational support during the transition but also long-term planning that considers the regional bodies' capabilities and contextual understanding to continue peacekeeping efforts effectively.
- To enhance the effectiveness of the UN in managing transitions, it is essential to improve logistical support and training for UNCTs that assume the residual responsibilities of peacekeeping operations and assist states in fulfilling their protection responsibilities.
- Establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of transition processes. This should involve tracking the stability of regions post-transition, the efficacy of local and regional bodies in assuming their new roles, and the impact on the civilian populations.