

Statement on the International Day of UN Peacekeepers

Today marks the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect pays tribute to UN peacekeepers deployed around the world and recognizes the sacrifice of those who lost their lives in the service of peace and the protection of civilians.

As we recognize the International Day of UN Peacekeepers we recall that ten out of sixteen current UN peacekeeping missions have Protection of Civilians mandates, which involve more than 95 percent of all UN peacekeepers. Peacekeepers are also increasingly called upon to uphold the international community's Responsibility to Protect civilians from mass atrocity crimes; namely genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

As crises around the world have grown more complex and volatile, with increasing disregard for international humanitarian and human rights law, the personal risks to peacekeepers have deepened. Attacks against UN peacekeepers constitute war crimes. Last year 128 peacekeepers were killed, including those in military and civilian roles.

So far this year the UN has registered more than a dozen attacks against the UN mission in Mali while several attacks have been perpetrated against UN bases in South Sudan, which continue to shelter more than 180,000 civilians displaced by the civil war. Meanwhile, in Sudan the government continues to obstruct one of the world's largest peacekeeping operations, UNAMID, leaving civilians in Darfur inadequately protected from ongoing crimes against humanity. It is critical that the neutrality of UN bases is maintained and that all parties to a conflict respect international humanitarian and human rights law.

We welcome the recommendations of last year's High-Level Independent Review Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO) as well as the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians. The HIPPO recommendations and Kigali Principles offer practical ways to address current challenges in peacekeeping, including on issues relating to training, early warning, resources and capabilities, use of force and accountability. We acknowledge the 29 states that have already endorsed the Kigali Principles, and encourage all other UN member states to do so.

We must do more to ensure that all UN peacekeepers are better prepared to protect civilians from mass atrocity crimes. The *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes* produced by the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect should be mainstreamed into pre-deployment training, operational planning and the day-to-day work of UN peacekeeping missions.

Dr. Simon Adams, Executive Director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, noted that, "all too often in the world today UN peacekeepers are all that stand between vulnerable civilians and those who prey on human misery. We pay tribute to all UN peacekeepers who risk their lives while providing protection to displaced or threatened populations where ever they may be."