



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Media & Spokesperson Unit Press Release

24 February 2018

UNMISS acts on allegations of sexual exploitation against formed police unit

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan has recalled a unit of police officers from Wau and confined them to base after a preliminary investigation into allegations of sexual exploitation.

UNMISS has a zero tolerance, no excuses, and no second chances approach to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). Our priority is to put the victims' rights and dignity first and ensure that there is transparency and accountability for such actions.

That is why the Mission has taken immediate action to protect and support potential victims and witnesses in this case while a full investigation is carried out.

On 8 February, a complaint was received alleging that members of the Ghanaian Formed Police Unit (FPU) were engaging in sexual activity with women living at the UN Protection of Civilians site in Wau. An investigation was immediately launched by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), an independent office within the United Nations.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, David Shearer, and other Mission leaders, were briefed on the preliminary investigation on the morning of 22 February. An immediate decision was made to remove the 46-member police unit from their duty stations inside the POC that afternoon. The unit was fully withdrawn from the Wau base to Juba over the next two days.

The information received indicates that some members of the FPU allegedly engaged in transactional sex. This is a clear breach of the UN and UNMISS Code of Conduct which prohibits sexual relationships with vulnerable individuals, including all beneficiaries of assistance.

UNMISS has informed UN headquarters in New York of the allegations, which in turn notified the Member State that the matter was being investigated by the United Nations. There is no indication that this behaviour is more widespread within the Mission.

UNMISS has over 17,000 peacekeeping personnel including 13,000 soldiers and 1500 police who carry out the Mission's mandate to build durable peace and protect civilians in South Sudan where there has been widespread conflict. Any act of SEA undermines the critical work of the Mission and compromises its credibility with the people of South Sudan. It cannot and will not be tolerated.

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All UNMISS personnel are in no doubt of the prohibition on SEA. All uniformed personnel are required to participate in SEA training at induction as well as within two weeks of deployment. Personnel have been given “no excuse” SEA cards to carry with them at all times, there are conduct and discipline focal points in each field location, daily SEA broadcasts are issued, and warnings are issued in speeches given by Mission leaders at all events.

On the whole, Ghanaian peacekeepers and police serving with UNMISS have made an excellent contribution to the protection of civilians and building of durable peace in South Sudan. It is very disappointing that the behaviour of some police officers risks staining that record of service as well as the Mission’s reputation.

Note: For further data on SEA allegations, please see: <https://conduct.unmissions.org/data>

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