

GOING FURTHER TOGETHER

The contribution of human rights components to the implementation of mandates of United Nations field missions

This report examines the ways in which human rights components **contribute to the implementation of broad strategic goals** of United Nations field missions, including objectives that are not always associated with a narrow interpretation of human rights work or with human rights components.

The study finds that, when properly leveraged, human rights components become **significant enablers** for these mandates by creating opportunities for mission initiatives, managing risk and offering leverage with key actors. These contributions strengthen the pursuit of political solutions, the ability to build a sustainable peace, and the ability to prevent violent conflict. The study also finds **strong support for the importance of human rights principles** in mission mandates and the role of human rights components in field missions amongst mission

leadership and mission personnel. Mission staff felt that their work would be detrimentally affected if the human rights component were a stand-alone office rather than a part of the mission.

This study explores its central thesis—that human rights components contribute to broader mission mandates—through research on **case studies** that elaborate in **concrete terms** the link between human rights work and the peace, security and peacebuilding goals of the United Nations. These case studies highlight the many ways in which human rights components **contribute across a range of missions operating in different contexts**. In examining the contributions of human rights components, this report examined three baskets of mandated tasks, including (1) supporting political objectives; (2) building sustainable peace; and (3) preventing, deterring and mitigating violent conflict.

HOW DO HUMAN RIGHTS COMPONENT CONTRIBUTE TO MANDATE IMPLEMENTATION?

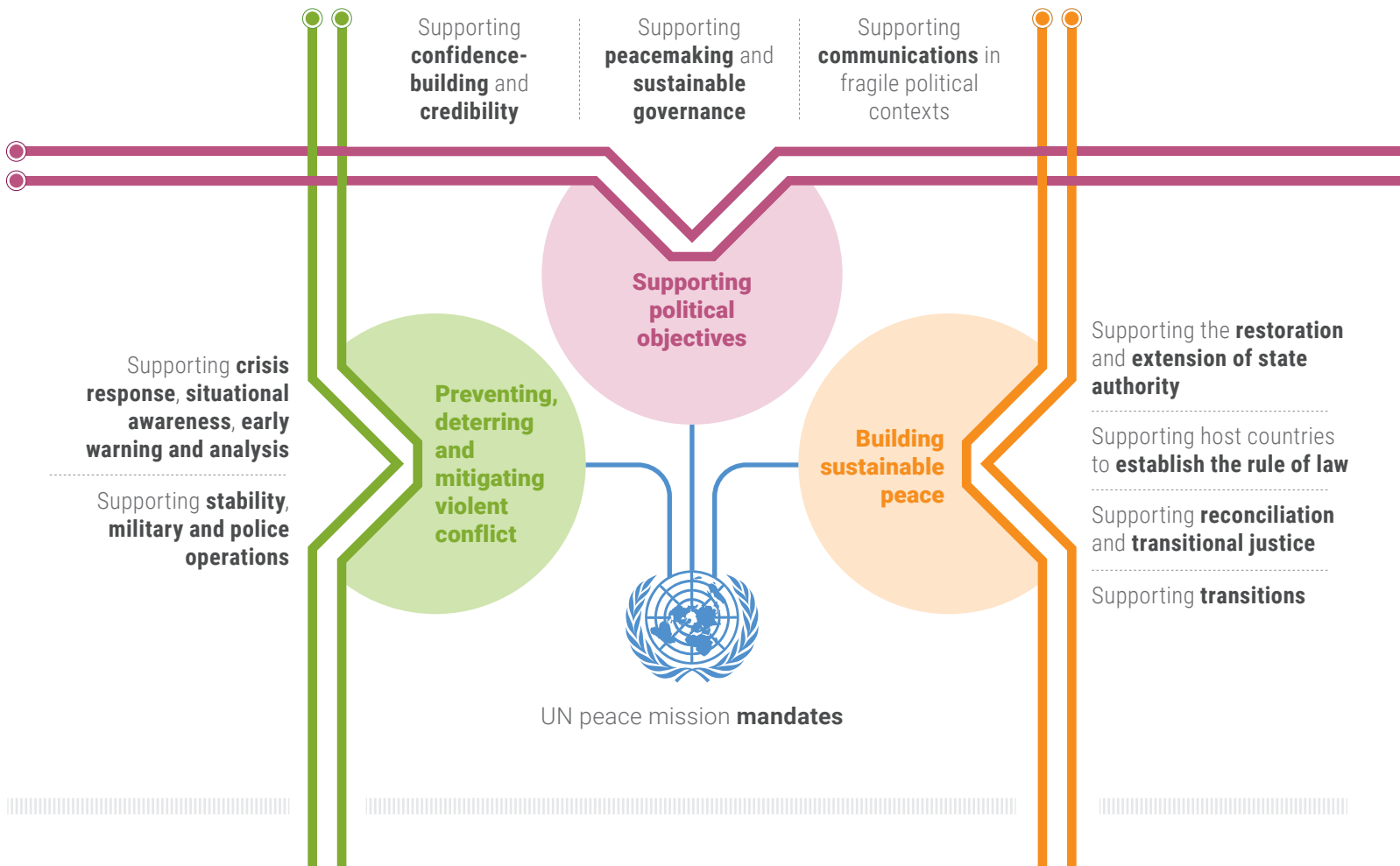
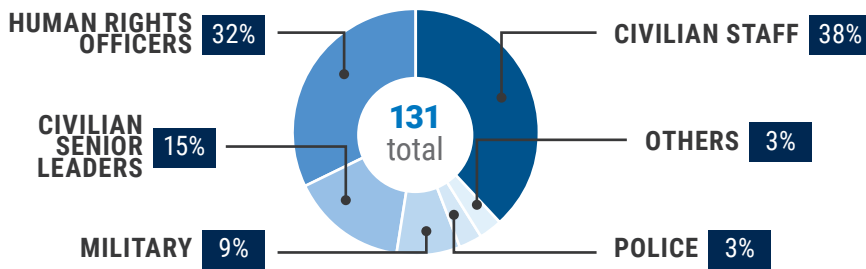


FIGURE 1. INTERVIEWS PER CATEGORY OF PERSONNEL



To assess the contribution of human rights components, the study team conducted **131 interviews with current and former staff from more than 20 field missions**. All interviews were strictly confidential to encourage frank and honest feedback.

“United Nations peace operations are among the Organization’s most significant achievements, and a powerful tool to protect and promote human rights. They need resources – and your strong political support, to bind together all UN operations around a common effective approach to crisis, from prevention to recovery.”

Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights, 7 July 2020

// SUCCESS FACTORS

Senior leadership who **UNDERSTAND THE POLITICAL VALUE** of human rights

Senior leadership that understands the role and potential benefits of human rights components is a key element for effectively leveraging human rights work, including as an entry point for political dialogue, utilizing broader human rights communication streams, and recognizing the importance of impartial human rights work.

Human rights work **ALIGNED TO THE POLITICAL STRATEGY** of the mission

Heads of human rights components are most effective where they have engaged with government and strategically directed the human rights work of the mission in ways that best align with its broader mandate and with the vision of the SRSG. Priority areas may change over time, but they should remain focused on the mandate and political context, and firmly linked to overall mission strategies. Public reporting should be part of a broader strategy to achieve human rights impact, tailored to the mission context and aligned with the strategic objectives of the mission.

Engagement in **CROSS-MISSION COLLABORATION**

Many missions have established cross-mission forums to coordinate and align mission actions to support leadership priorities. Human rights components should be proactive in coordination and fully engage in these forums in order to mainstream human rights work and allow their insights to feed into the mission’s decision-making structures.

TAILORED capacities

Focusing human rights work to support mission priorities may often require specific capacities within the human rights components.

// ASSETS OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMPONENTS FOR MISSION-WIDE WORK

Standards for **IMPARTIAL ENGAGEMENT**

Inherent to human rights work is a set of universal standards that have the potential to strengthen the impartiality, legitimacy and credibility of a field mission. With field missions increasingly deployed in complex and contested contexts, often in support of one party to a conflict, human rights frameworks can help reinforce the credibility and impartiality that remain central to the political, mediation and good offices efforts of the UN and, ultimately, to its success in bringing sustainable peace.

Legal, policy and programmatic expertise complemented by a **BROADER ARCHITECTURE**

Human rights work takes place within a broad international framework that includes connections to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the representation of the human rights component on the UN Country Team (UNCT).

NETWORKS within civil society, government and non-state groups

The relationships between human rights personnel and many of these actors, coupled with the relationship between human rights components and OHCHR and the broader UN human rights machinery, offer information and networks that multiply the tools and channels missions can use to influence behaviours of key actors through direct and indirect action.

ADAPTABILITY

Human rights components have shown to be highly adaptable, with a broad range of skills that can be brought to bear across a spectrum of peace and security scenarios. From small political missions to the largest peacekeeping operations to the transition from a Secretariat field mission to a UNCT presence, human rights components regularly tailor their activities to fill a variety of roles.



// CASE STUDIES

MINUSCA:

- Combating hate speech on social media
- Supporting the Government in re-establishing the security sector
- Supporting the work of the Central African Special Court
- Supporting situational awareness through information sharing with the UN military and police
- Supporting the work of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic
- Supporting the Joint Mission Analysis Centre in profiling armed groups
- Advising on the planning of police and military operations

MINUSMA:

- Building confidence between the government and armed groups through access to detainees
- Supporting engagement in mediation efforts
- Supporting situational awareness through information sharing
- Supporting situational awareness through information collection
- Monitoring recruits trained by the European Union Training Mission
- Supporting early warning through human rights monitoring
- Supporting engagement with armed groups to protect civilians

MINUSTAH & MINUJUSTH:

- Rebuilding trust and credibility through engagement with civil society and communities
- Supporting the Inspector General of the national police
- Supporting situational awareness through information sharing with the UN police

MONUSCO:

- Supporting the good offices of the SRSG during elections
- Supporting the Inspector General of the national police
- Supporting national judicial authorities in bringing perpetrators to justice
- Supporting stabilization and peacebuilding efforts as part of the gradual handover of tasks in areas emerging from conflict
- Supporting the Ebola response in the DRC
- Sharing information with the Joint Mission Analysis Centre
- Supporting the work of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Supporting early warning on potential election-related violence
- Advising on the planning of military operations
- Supporting the Force liaison with the Congolese army
- Advising on UN military deployments to protect civilians
- Investigating and documenting serious violations to inform crisis response

UNAMA:

- Establishing credibility through regular public reporting on the protection of civilians
- Establishing credibility through credible and independent investigations
- Supporting the COVID-19 response by reducing overcrowding in prisons and promoting equal access to testing for men and women

UNAMI:

- Building confidence between groups through work on the conditions of detention of prisoners
- Supporting the good offices of the SRSG during demonstrations
- Contributing to reconciliation and social cohesion by supporting the conduct of judicial investigations and trials in accordance with international standards
- Monitoring and reporting on protests and galvanizing action by the Government
- Working with civil society and national authorities to raise awareness about COVID-19

UNIOGBIS:

- Supporting communication around COVID-19
- Supporting situational awareness through the establishment of a network of human rights defenders and civil society members

UNMIK:

- Supporting reconciliation through sustained dialogue across ethno-political lines

UNMIL:

- Supporting the Ebola response in West Africa

UNOCI:

- Supporting situational awareness through information collection

UNMISS:

- Supporting the government in its efforts to extend judicial capacity through the deployment of mobile courts
- Supporting the rule of law through the release of prisoners in pre-trial detention
- Supporting the COVID-19 response by decongesting prisons
- Advising the UN military on the planning of patrols

UNSMIL:

- Combating hate speech on social media
- Supporting reconciliation and peacemaking through shuttle diplomacy between parties
- Supporting the work of the Panel of Experts on Libya

UNSONM:

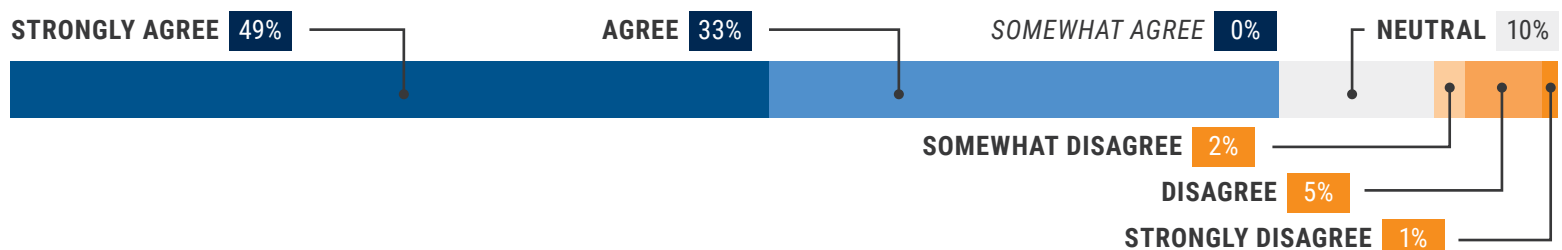
- Contributing to efforts aimed at ensuring political space and freedom of assembly
- Supporting mediation of inter-clan conflict at the local level
- Supporting the extension of state authority through partnership with the UN Development Programme
- Supporting the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants
- Supporting the reform of the security sector
- Supporting pre-deployment training through the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy

FIGURE 2. SURVEY

As part of this study, OHCHR administered a survey to UN civilian and uniformed personnel serving or having served in UN field missions with integrated human rights components. The survey aimed to collect views regarding the role played by human rights components in the implementation of other workstreams of UN field

missions. Responses were anonymous to invite honest feed-back from participants. Out of the 104 staff (5 members of Senior Leadership and Heads of Office, 85 UN civilian staff, 7 UN military and 7 UN police) who participated in the survey, **85 (82%) responded positively when asked whether they agreed with the statement:**

“Human rights components contribute to the implementation of mission mandates beyond human rights / contribute to the work of my section/component.”



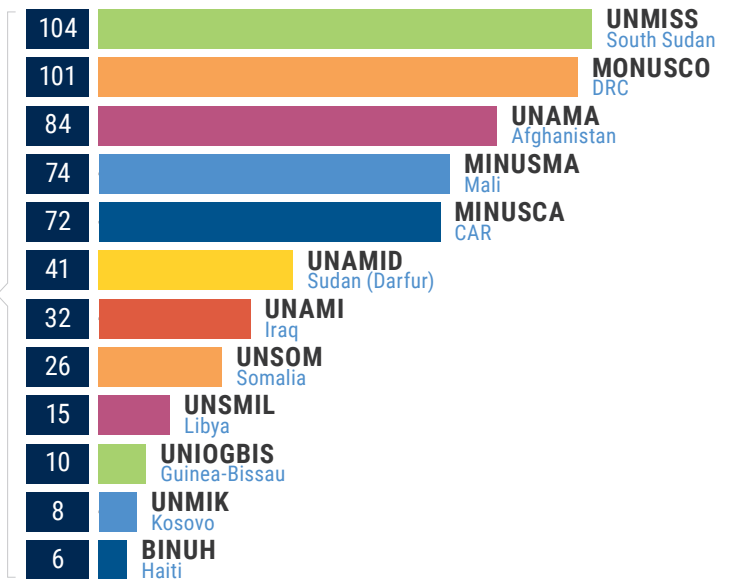
HUMAN RIGHTS IN PEACE OPERATIONS

// WHO ARE WE?

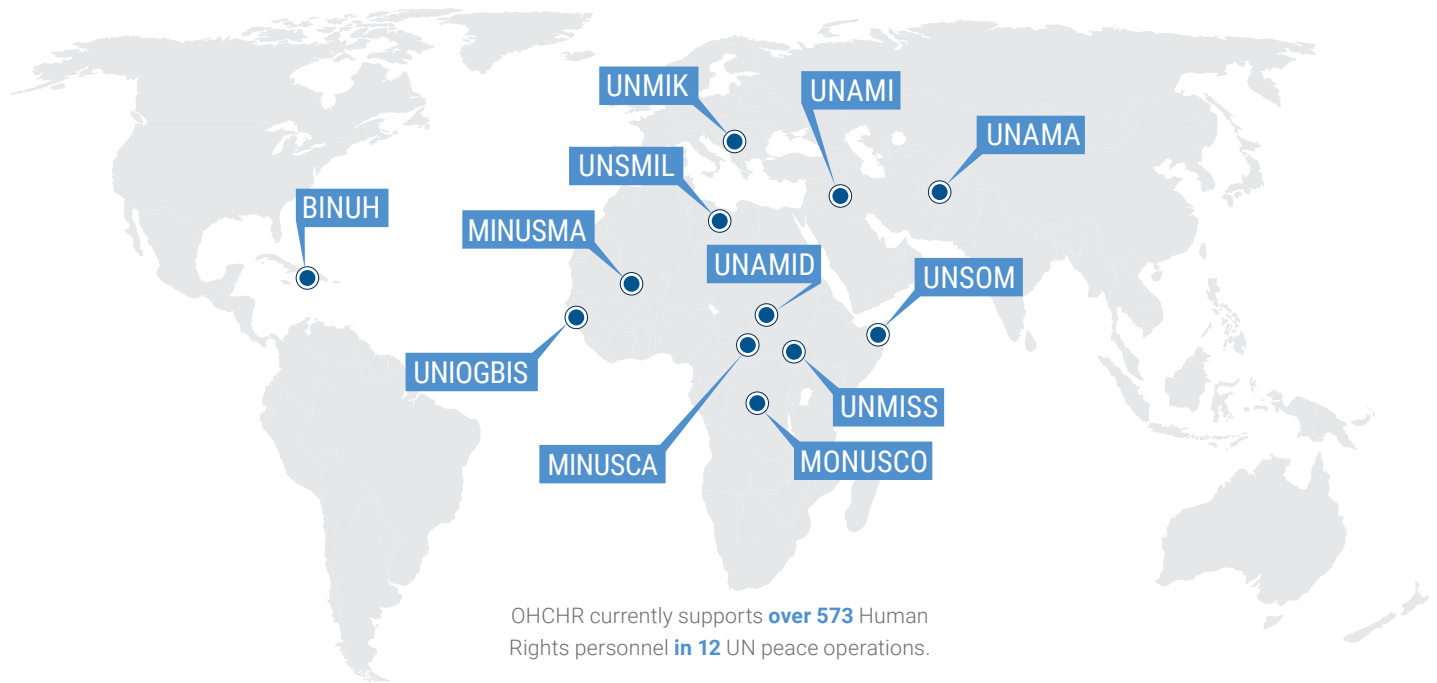
Established in 1993 by General Assembly resolution 48/141 and led by the High Commissioner for Human Rights (USG), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is the United Nations (UN) Secretariat department for the promotion and protection of all human rights. On peace and security matters, OHCHR works in close partnership with the Departments of Peace Operations (DPO), Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), and Operational Support (DOS) to ensure that the promotion and protection of human rights remain a core function of the UN's support to the maintenance of international peace and security. The most substantial outcome of this engagement is the UN Security Council's inclusion of robust human rights and protection mandates for peace operations, which are implemented effectively by civilian human rights components integrated into UN peace operations.



**573 staff in
12 UN peace
operations**



// WHERE DO WE WORK?



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR WORK IN SUPPORT OF UN PEACE OPERATIONS, PLEASE CONTACT US.

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