

The UN's Rape Squads Need to Be Exposed

A teenage African girl clutched an infant boy to her chest as the shocking words spilled from her mouth.

"Sometimes when I'm alone with my baby, I think about killing him," the teen [told the Washington Post](#) earlier this year. "He reminds me of the man who raped me."

The Post's [story](#) is chilling and worth reading in its entirety.

For those who have not yet heard of the scandal, in Africa many young girls are raising "Peacekeepers babies"—children born to African children raped by UN "peacekeepers" in the region to protect them.

It's impossible to say for certain how many girls and women have been raped and how long it's been happening, in part because of the UN's dismal record of documenting the abuses. (That might even be a generous description.)

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon claimed there were 68 official accusations of rape against UN peacekeepers last year. But that number doesn't seem to fit.

The *Post's* story, published in February, appears to have uncovered 42 accusations of rape in Bangui (the capital city of the Central African Republic) alone. A [Foreign Policy report](#) states that soldiers from France, Gabon, and Burundi raped at least 108 women in *one province* between 2013 and 2015. (It's unclear if that figure includes the four women raped by a French commander's dog.) And there are [credible reports](#) of girls being raped as *payment* to militia fighters.

Late in 2015, the UN admitted to "gross international failure"

in its handling of the sexual abuse scandal.

Via [US News](#):

The independent panel found that the accounts by children as young as 9 of trading oral sex and other acts in exchange for food in the middle of a war zone in early 2014 were “passed from desk to desk, inbox to inbox, across multiple U.N. offices, with no one willing to take responsibility.

Among those said to have looked the other way were the U.N. children’s agency, UNICEF, as well as human rights staffers.

The lack of attention the story has received is puzzling, but the story could pick up steam this week.

Anders Kompass, director of field operations for the UN human rights office (OHCHR), [resigned in protest on Tuesday](#).

It was Kompass who blew the whistle on the scandal two years ago; he was suspended for his trouble. He cited “the complete impunity” for those who tried to cover-up the scandal as the reason for his resignation.

Will charges be filed against those accused of rape? It’s difficult to say.

[A 2009 report](#) conducted by researchers at Cornell University suggest it’s difficult to prosecute peacekeepers for crimes—even rape—because of their immunity status.

Potential criminal individual liability for United Nations peacekeepers is severely limited by their unique situation that grants them immunity from any type of criminal prosecution in the mission area by the United Nations or the host state, and which unfortunately shields them from criminal liability for sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. In addition, because the necessary legal infrastructure is lacking, the host states are generally incapable of

prosecuting United Nations peacekeepers anyway, and troop-contributing states are likewise unable, for different reasons discussed later, or unwilling to prosecute their own nationals for sexually abusive acts committed abroad while on peacekeeping missions.

Two questions.

First, it occurred to me that this story seems rather underreported. Why would that be?

It's an evil, juicy, disgusting story filled with scandal and even an apparent cover-up. Yet a quick Google search shows Kompass' resignation has been barely covered by the media.

The Associated Press dedicated 122 words to his resignation. The *New York Times* didn't bother to do that ([unless you count](#) the 122-word story they got from the AP).

[Slate](#), a publication I enjoy, over the last four days has published four stories [on Brock Turner](#), the Stanford swimmer convicted of sexual assault who is at least going to jail for his crime. I can't find *a single story* on the UN rape scandal on Slate's site. *Nothing*. (Slate readers, correct me if I'm wrong.)

Second. Is it worth remaining in an organization that permits peacekeepers to rape women and children? If the UN does not find and prosecute those guilty of these atrocities, is it time to say goodbye?

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