

# PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

The protection of civilians (POC) is an essential part of many peacekeeping mandates that authorizes missions to take any necessary means – including deadly use of force – to prevent, deter and respond to threats of physical violence against civilians.

In most cases, the ability to use that force must be explicitly granted by the host country. POC activities require coordination among civilian, police and military components of a mission. Since POC mandates were established by the Security Council in 1999, the Council has launched 16 such operations, which are strictly guided by the Department of Peace Operations POC policy.



## POC Principles

- Governments are primarily responsible for POC.
- When governments are unwilling to act, peacekeepers with a POC mandate have the authority and responsibility to protect civilians.
- POC operations are completed with respect for humanitarian principles.
- POC missions operate with all core peacekeeping principles, including host country consent, impartiality and the use of force only in self-defense or when approved by the Security Council.

## Current Missions with Protection Mandates

### UN Stabilization Mission in the DRC

MONUSCO provides physical protection and early warning capacity, supports military justice for human rights violations and manages arms and weapons for national security forces.

### UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

MINUSCA employs a POC working group to coordinate information-sharing, conflict analysis and response to threats. It has established 83 community protection committees and trained 16 prefectures on POC principles.

### UN Mission in South Sudan

UNMISS completes POC activities through its Protection, Transition and Reintegration Section, which provides physical protection to civilian populations, supports transitioning security services to national actors and assists reintegrating internally displaced persons and refugees. UNMISS physically protected 250,000 civilians inside its bases during the sudden onset of South Sudan's civil war.

### UN Interim Force in Lebanon

UNIFIL has completed 600 civilian evacuations and established dozens of shelters as part of its POC mandate.

### United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

UNISFA is addressing spillover from the civil conflict in Sudan. Its mission was renewed by the Security Council in 2024.