

## **Q & A – The nexus between conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking during peacekeeping missions: An insider’s view**

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### **1. Introduction**

One of the key areas related to sexual violence in conflict, including human trafficking, is the prevention of these crimes. Peacekeepers in complex peacekeeping missions are confronted on a daily basis with atrocities in (post) conflict. How do they deal with situations of sexual violence in conflict, including trafficking cases, and what can they do to prevent these crimes while on the ground? Patrick Cammaert discusses from extensive and first-hand military experience how he perceives both crimes and how he thinks that Peacekeeping missions can best prevent CRSV and trafficking: by being proactive, collecting intelligence for early warning and acting upon it and by ensuring a better gender balance in peacekeeping personnel.

### **2. Can you elaborate on what you consider to be the similarities and differences between human trafficking and sexual violence in conflict, if any?**

There are two different reasons that link conflict-related sexual violence to human trafficking. One is international terrorism. Since a couple of years ago, we see the nature of conflict changing. Conflicts are generally no longer between states, or interstate, but more intrastate, with dissident soldiers, militia's or rebels fighting the government and each other. Nowadays Jihad groups or other extremist groups are joining these actors and are operating in various parts of the world. So, we are faced with a different threat – a threat of improvised explosive devices, roadside bombs, suicide bombs – and we have never seen that in peacekeeping before, but we see it now, for example in Mali. These conflicts result in an increase of conflict-related sexual violence. The second reason for the changing nature of conflict is because of trafficking itself. Not only drugs trafficking, but in particular human trafficking, in particular women and girls. Men and boys are also victims of trafficking for instance in Libya, where people who want to cross the Mediterranean are picked up and brought back and end up becoming slaves. But there is no immediate link to sexual violence. When we talk about human trafficking of women and girls, an immediate link to sexual violence does exist. Many times, those girls and women are not used for help in the household or cleaning the house. They end up in prostitu-

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tion, pornography, pedophilia, etc. And that is where peacekeeping comes in. This is very much also on the desk of people who are deployed in a mission. For example, in Mali, there is a lot of human trafficking and a lot of trafficking in drugs. When it comes to human trafficking there is such a flow of people up to the north. Mali is a kind of central point where a lot of things come together and lawlessness is rife, with many Jihadists who are very much involved in human and drugs trafficking, and abuse women and girls, in particular sexually. That is the link and the increasing concern of the international community, including the peacekeeping community, about human trafficking.

**3. What do you consider to be the differences between the two? Why do you think it is also necessary to consider them separately in conflict, although there are a lot of similarities as well?**

Well, you do not immediately link conflict-related sexual violence with human trafficking. If you look at the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), sexual violence in the DRC has little to do with trafficking except for a group such as Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Sexual violence is often used as a weapon of war. Sexual violence exists because there is lawlessness, soldiers are not paid and it is said that they can take whatever they like. As I said, in Mali, it is very much linked to human trafficking because that is what they do there. They traffic persons up the chain, up to the north and across to various places. That is less the case in the DRC. You can argue that the LRA abduction of women and girls in the north of the DRC can be brought under the heading of human trafficking. But this is more human trafficking for 'own use' It is not so much about trafficking and selling those women as in other countries like Syria or Iraq where the ISIS human trafficking resulted in sexual slavery and related forms of exploitation. They went from one to the other. That is not immediately the issue with the LRA because they abduct girls to have their own sex slaves, etc. They are taken with them, can carry ammunition, heavy loads, and are sexually abused. So, these are two different subjects, even if they are linked because human trafficking is used for sexual purposes.

**4. Have you ever encountered or heard of situations in which people were both victims of trafficking and sexual violence, while working in the field?**

Yes, as I said, with the LRA, in the north of the DRC. When I was there, we were chasing Otti and Kony, the leaders of the Lord's Resistance Army, trying to arrest them and stop this violence. You had thousands of girls who had been abducted from the villages and used as sex slaves. However, it was for their own satisfaction, not so much to sell them somewhere else. They would hold them captive and use them for their own purposes. This was what LRA did, very much around the time I was in the DRC. I have not been deployed in Mali so I cannot give you my personal experience for that country.

**5. So how did you, and this actually goes back to the core of your work in DR Congo I believe, respond to these situations of trafficking or sexual violence in conflict that you encountered in your work?**

A, to go after the perpetrators when it happens, and B, to prevent these things from happening. Prevention is extremely important. But for prevention you have to be proactive and if you want to be proactive, you must get troop-contributing countries to be proactive. And that is one of the major challenges in peacekeeping at this moment: to make sure that troop-contributing countries (TCCs) are proactive in their attitude. And they often are not. They wait at the compound, or they wait for action until something happens and then, if you are lucky, they react. Sometimes they do not even react. So, if you talk about the reaction to atrocities, I went after the LRA and failed, because we had nine own soldiers being killed in one of our actions, because the people involved made rookie mistakes. And if they had been more professional, Kony and Otti would have been apprehended a long time ago and put in the prison of Scheveningen to appear before the ICC. But they were not. So, it was a pity and nowadays it is difficult to push TCCs, also in South Sudan, to do their job. I did a special investigation for the UN Secretary-General in Juba and the UN camp, where terrible violence took place (not so much human trafficking but rather sexual violence).<sup>1</sup> There it was so difficult to get those militaries out of their compound, to be proactive, to go out and patrol during the night. And if you do not do that, there will be a continuation of the problem.

**6. How do you try to change the attitude of UN peacekeepers to actually be more proactive?**

During my time in the DRC, you constantly put pressure on your subordinate commanders to make sure that they did it. If they did not do it, you said: 'well if you do not do it then I do it, but then there is no place for you'. So that is why we were relatively successful at that time, because I pushed it so hard. Afterwards, from 2008, I have been advocating in my presentations, teaching, lecturing and all the rest of it, the need to be proactive and preventive in your mindset and make people understand that otherwise, you will fail. You fail the international community, you will fail the whole nation and the local population because you are not doing what you are supposed to do. And you know, when

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<sup>1</sup> See, for more information, the Executive Summary of the Independent Special Investigation into the violence which occurred in Juba in 2016 and UNMISS response: UN, 'Public Executive Summary on the Special Investigation', [www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/sudan/Public\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_on\\_the\\_Special\\_Investigation\\_Report\\_1\\_Nov\\_2016.pdf](http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/sudan/Public_Executive_Summary_on_the_Special_Investigation_Report_1_Nov_2016.pdf), accessed 16 October 2018.

you are deployed, you raise the expectations, because people say, 'well, now we have peacekeepers, so we will now be safe'. And if you do not come out of your compound, they lose the confidence in you and stones are thrown at your car.

**7. But if the violence is widespread and your presence limited, there are limitations to what you can do. So how do you deal with that? The DRC is a very big country and the troops are limited. We can imagine the difficulty in making an impact at that very moment.**

Yes, in huge countries, in huge areas of operation, you have to manage the expectations of everybody nationally and internationally, you cannot be everywhere. But if you are deployed, then you have to do the job. A second point I would like to make is that you have to overcome the vastness of the country by using all the air assets possible. To be as mobile as possible: Friday there, Saturday here, two days there. You move all the time to give the impression that you are everywhere. People see that you arrive with the helicopter, that you are in control of the area, then two days later you disappear but you come back again after two days. So, you have to remain very unpredictable, very mobile and quick with a strong, robust posture. It scares people off and gives the impression of 'I have to be careful with those guys, because those guys are tough.'

**8. A bit like 'Big Brother is watching you'?**

Yes. You have to mislead your enemy a little bit, keep them on the wrong track, and give them the impression you have many more troops that you actually have.

**9. You have been discussing that it is a challenge in preventing that for example countries are not really lenient towards taking proactive action. Are there any other challenges that you can identify in the prevention of these crimes?**

Yes, that you have to have proper intelligence, proper information, of where, as I always say, the hotspots are. Where things might happen, or where things are cooking. If you patrol somewhere, or you have been observing something happening somewhere, you are driving somewhere and see some women working in the field, you should stop, have a chat, find out what is going on. And then they tell you 'well, we are working in the field today, but we slept in the bush the other night'. 'So why is that?' Then they say: 'Well, we see obscure people moving around in the area.' So, if there are obscure people, it indicates that something might happen down there. So that means that you must organise the rapid action of your quick reaction force in that area to prevent something from happening. So that is the way it works. Everybody must focus on finding the hotspots. That means that you must go and talk to the local population. It means you need to have community engagement. It is a key word. If you do

not engage with the local community, and if you do not have the right people to talk to the local population, for example liaison officers, community liaison officers, advisors and so on, your output is very limited. So, you need to set an early warning system, where you gather intelligence and you find out where things might wrong. Early warning. That is absolutely vital.

**10. It always seems that prevention is the most important form of action, because we prevent something from happening, so we do not have to respond, protect victims, but at the same time, it seems to be the least attractive type of action to fund. Because if you are preventing something, that means it has not yet occurred, and because of that, it is very difficult to actually get resources and capacity towards early warning and prevention. So do you experience that, from the perspective of capacity or resources, that also makes it difficult, or is it just the engagement?**

My point is that people are simply not active enough in what they have to do. And people are looking at the budget for instance, or resources or capacity to take it down for political reasons. But if you want to be proactive and prevent these atrocities from happening then you need air assets, for example. They are reducing the number of air assets, because the American administration is of the opinion that peacekeeping needs less money. So, you have to reduce the budget, then people say it should be from the air assets, because that's the biggest part of the budget. But if you have that kind of issue then I can assure you, you cannot go out and protect civilians and go after prevention because if you do not have the air assets to go where things are happening. It is the chicken and egg situation.

**11. We have been discussed the role of peacekeepers but what role could others play in preventing human trafficking and sexual violence in conflict? We are always looking at the big players but there might be also an individual role to play to have comprehensive prevention in place.**

Let us exclude for a second the local population, because they should go and use their own reporting mechanism with the police. But in so many of those countries, there are no authorities, there is no rule of law. So, every individual who can see a hotspot and see that things are not going well should have the responsibility to bring the information to the right place so that people who have the capacity to intervene and be preventive can do their job. An individual cannot go out and say: 'you have to stop it', because he or she might get killed. You bring the information to people who can act. The perpetrators are usually not isolated individuals. They are part of groups, rebel groups and armed groups. Therefore you need a bigger force, a bigger entity, to take care of that and to be preventive. And that is the real problem: where can everybody bring that information? As long as that information is there, they can assemble this information

and link it to other pieces and say ‘hey, that is the pattern, so let us see what we can do about that pattern, that trend’. In the UN we have this focal point where everybody can bring their information: Joint Mission Analysis Cell (JMAC).

### **12. Is there anything else you would like to bring up?**

The key issue with respect to both human trafficking and sexual violence is prevention. And that is what the UN Secretary General has said many times. We talk about prevention all the time, but it is easier said than done, because if you want to prevent something you need to be proactive. You have to make that first step to prevent things from happening. It does not come automatically and that means a switch in mindset for everybody, in particular people in uniform who are now risk-averse because increasing targets on the UN. So, there is a bigger risk of casualties on your own side, making troop-contributing countries very reluctant. The peacekeepers, the police, the other organisations, foreign affairs, etc. They do not want to take any risks. Stay away from this, stay away from that. But if you have that attitude, then you lose preventive action.

### **13. Well, that’s the important message to conclude with. Governments need to be less risk-averse.**

That is something that you have to teach and lecture during pre-deployment training. Tomorrow I will do a pre-deployment training for Dutch diplomats, NGO people and business people who will be deployed at the UN, EU, NATO and other international organisations. My message will be exactly what I am saying now. If you want to be successful in the implementation of a mandate to protect people, you must focus on prevention. For that you have to be proactive and to take sometimes a risk, a calculated risk.

### **14. Not just a risk, but a calculated risk?**

Yes, based on a threat assessment and a risk analysis. If there is a threat, how can we analyse the risk to counter that threat. Can we do it or not? When we can do it, we need to drive in two vehicles. Can we do it, yes, we can, but do not go alone, go with someone who can support you, have a backup. And then you go to areas where you can talk to the local population who might be scared of consequences, because they see people wandering around the area, they do not know exactly what is going on, etc. You have human rights defenders or others working for Human Rights Watch who are doing these kinds of investigations on what is going on. That is the temperature of the war. I have been travelling with Human Rights Watch in Central African Republic (CAR) a few years back, they are young and very courageous people who are driving for hours and hours through the bush, through check points and there you feel the temperature of the war. You talk to the local population to see what is going

on. Then you bring this information to the organization that can do something about it. And then if the African Union is deployed there or the EU or the UN, you bring the information there. Did you see a village where there are no women or hardly any? Or are there children? Why is that? You have to find out. Have the women been taken away? Have the kids been taken away? All these are indicators that something might be ongoing. So, you have to look around all the time.

We have people who are very smart on that. We have child protection advisors who have studied that subject, who know everything about trafficking in children, the misery, the abuse, child soldiers and the rest of it. They studied it in the Congo and South Sudan. It is good to listen to them and to have them also involved. So that people can be warned what to expect, what to look at and where to probe.

**15. So, it is even much more about signalling, what to look for?**

Yes, if you do not know what the indicators are, simply because nobody has told you, then you drive past, and you do not see it. If you had been warned, then you would have stopped and started probing. Engage with the community. You probe at the local medical clinics, where all the women and girls are showing up and just start talking. Certainly, you have a lot of women doing this, not men but women, and you speak to these women and get valuable information of what is going on. Because you know, they prefer to talk to women, not me.

UN Women for instance is doing a lot about it. They are organising the 11<sup>th</sup> female military officers' course for two weeks, where we have 40 female officers from 32 countries, who will be trained how to reach out to the local population and the dos and don'ts when reaching out to victims and survivors of sexual violence. If you know how to reach out to them then you get valuable information of what is going on. That information needs to be reported to your bosses in the peacekeeping chain of command, who can do something about it to address it and to prevent things from happening. Very useful, very interesting.

**16. So, you already made a great impact when training all these people.**

That is what we do. And at the same time, we raise the number of female officers to be deployed, that is one of the things that the Secretary General has said, he wants to double or triple the number of women in the field and at the United Nations, because they are still underscored. But in order to do that, you must make sure that you convince the troop-contributing countries that they send women. It is as simple as that.

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Nations, where he served as Sector Commander in Cambodia (UNTAC), as Assistant Chief of Staff in Bosnia/Herzegovina (UNPROFOR), as Force Commander in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), as Military Advisor to the Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO), and as General Officer Commanding the Eastern Division in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC).

Since his retirement from the military in 2007, he has been an effective expert advocate with regard to issues such as leadership in crisis circumstances, international peace and security, protection of civilians, civil-military cooperation in peace support operations, peacekeeping, and security sector reform. Major General Cammaert has advised the senior management of UN Department for Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO), UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN WOMEN on strategic planning issues such as Integrated Training Development, the protection of civilians under immediate threat of physical violence and sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) in armed conflict. He was the lead consultant for the drafting and implementation of scenario-based training on conflict related sexual violence and a UN Female Military Officers Course. His responsibilities have included carrying out fact finding/assessment and evaluation missions to several UN Missions such as in DRC, Lebanon, Sudan, S-Sudan, Haiti, Liberia and Chad and as Special Envoy to Sri Lanka for the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict. He was the Head of the UN Secretary General's Board of Inquiry for certain incidents in Gaza in 2014, headed in 2016 the Board of Inquiry for the violence in Malakal S-Sudan and lead the Secretary General's Independent Special Investigation into the violence in Juba at the end of 2016. Major General Cammaert is a regular senior mentor at UN Senior Leadership Courses (SML), at Intensive Orientation Courses for new Force Commanders (IOC), at Female Military Officers Courses (FMOC) and at Contingent Commanders Courses of the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI).

In 2008, Major General Cammaert was awarded the Carnegie-Wateler Peace Prize in the Peace Palace in The Hague. He is a member of the advisory board and Ambassador of the Mukomeze Foundation, which helps women and girls who survived rape and other forms of sexual violence in Rwanda. He is also a member of the Advisory Board of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and he is a member of the International Advisory Group of the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative. Patrick Cammaert joined the board of Center For Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) in May 2016. In 2015 he was a member of the High Level Advisory Group for the Global study on UNSCR 1325. He graduated at the Dutch Higher Command and Staff College and the Top Management Course at the Armed Forces War College in The Hague.