

## Part Five



# THE HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER

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.....Chapter XXII  
**NORMS APPLICABLE TO  
UN HUMAN RIGHTS  
OFFICERS AND OTHER  
STAFF** .....

*Key concepts*

*While they are **within the country** of operations, HROs remain at all times members of the operation and representatives of the UN — regardless of whether they are working/ on duty or not.*

**HROs should:**

- | *be aware of and be bound by UN human rights norms, and promote their observance;*
- | *respect the basic principles of human rights monitoring set forth in **Chapter V: “Basic Principles of Monitoring”**;*
- | *be informed about the social customs in the country of operation, and respect them;*
- | *be informed of expected standards regarding their job performance and appropriate behaviour in field operations;*
- | *be able to discuss, compromise and communicate well with others;*
- | *avoid sexist or other discriminatory attitudes in dealing with co-workers and the people of the country of operation;*
- | *recognize that they are part of a much larger operation and that they cannot determine policy by themselves;*
- | *always avoid criticizing the human rights operation or any of its staff members to any person who is not a staff member; and*
- | *be respectful of the important contribution that all personnel — fellow officers, UN volunteers, seconded staff, support staff, national staff, etc. — are making to the overall effort of the human rights operation.*

## A. Introduction

1. HROs comprise the international professional staff of a field operation. This chapter deals with the conduct of HROs.
2. Even more so than with other humanitarian efforts — which might, for example, concentrate on providing material aid — a human rights field operation depends on its staff members for its success. A human rights operation is usually established as a result of a crisis in which there is a great urgency to send HROs to the country where they are needed. The *HROs need skills and knowledge that are relevant not only to human rights, but also to the country or region of operations*. In addition to *language skills* it is useful for HROs to have *knowledge of the region* — in terms of the culture and of the social, political and human rights situation. Many HROs have had useful grassroots or *field experience* in human rights, refugee work, humanitarian assistance, development, or a related field. Their experience can help them meet the very high expectations of the UN and the international community.
3. *A UN HRO in a country of operations is a member of a UN human rights field operation.* The HRO's presence in the country and administrative status are defined in terms of the operation. The travel documents — Laissez-Passer or UN consultant pass — used by staff members attach each individual to the United Nations, and provide him/her with a particular status of a diplomatic nature. In contrast, the staff members of international NGOs travel on their own national passports and, to that extent, do not possess the same international identity when they are in the country of operations.
4. While in the country of operations, *HROs are thus always representatives of the operation to which they are attached*. In their words and actions to people outside of the operation, they are identified with the operation. In the same way, the actions and decisions taken by the operation reflect upon the HRO.
5. HROs may be *required to work long hours in difficult and dangerous situations*. Perhaps most important of all, it must be emphasized that a UN HRO remains a UN HRO 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, while in the country of operations. In order to remain effective, an HRO must take time off from work. The effectiveness of the officer and the operation requires rest, but there are some significant restrictions on the way personal time should be used. *While an HRO remains within the country of operations he/she remains at all times a member of the operation and a representative of the UN — regardless of whether the HRO is working/ on duty or not.* This principle applies in part because of the legal status of UN HROs in the country of operations, and in part because of the perception of other people working and living in the area. The conduct of HROs will be the subject of judgement not only by nationals of the country of operations, but also international staff members from other organizations.
6. *UN human rights personnel should be informed of expected standards regarding their job performance and appropriate behaviour in field operations.* At a minimum, HROs are required to respect any *rules imposed by the UN or by the field operation* itself. These rules might include, for example: avoidance of conflicts with *local cultural norms*, such as, the respect of certain dress or behaviour requirements when in public; care with regard to *financial matters*; propriety with regard to *social and sexual relations*; an evening curfew in certain circumstances; a *restriction on travelling* between certain regions; a ban on visiting certain bars or night-clubs; etc. The majority of restrictions will be motivated by *security concerns*

and are imposed for the security of each individual HRO. Some restrictions, however, may be imposed out of concern for the *image of the UN* and of the field operation.

7. If HROs are mandated by the United Nations to monitor and encourage *compliance with international human rights norms*, officers should in their own conduct exemplify those norms.

8. UN personnel are *sometimes viewed as leading a privileged lifestyle* in the field. International staff may be paid salaries far in excess of national personnel and may thus drive rents and other local prices out of the reach of other people. UN personnel may also experience problems of adjusting to local customs. At the same time local residents may have exaggerated expectations of the UN personnel as perfect representatives of the highest standards of the international community, with no human failings or inadequacies.

9. No matter how well crafted the mandate of an operation, its effectiveness is dependent upon the *legitimacy of its HROs in the eyes of Government officials and ordinary individuals* at the local level, who must work with the operation on a day-to-day basis. That legitimacy depends largely upon the conduct of the HROs.

10. Hence, the UN, its HROs, and the community in which they are working need clear *expectations in a code of conduct* as to the standards to be applied to HROs and other UN personnel in the area.

## B. Previous UN codes of conduct for its on-site staff

11. The UN has regulated the conduct of its staff — particularly in field situations — through various documents and guidelines.

12. In 1954 the International Civil Service Advisory Board issued a **“Report on Standards of Conduct in the International Civil Service”** which has been applied since that time and, for example, was used in regulating the conduct of civilian, police and military personnel in the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) during 1992-93. Those standards emphasize that

“the obligation and responsibilities of supervisors at all levels to maintain in their relationships with their staff a high degree of integrity, tolerance and understanding and to treat them in all circumstances with fairness... [I]n particular, when serving in the field or on a mission assignment, International Civil Servants must understand and respect the culture, customs and habits of the country of their duty station. They must avoid giving cause for resentment and abstain from conduct which will adversely reflect on their organization. The International Civil Servant has the obligation to set for him/herself a high standard of personal conduct which must be such that it will not infringe upon any demonstrable interest of the organization he/she serves, bring it into discredit or offend the community where he/she lives.” (Internal quotation marks removed.)

13. The International Civil Service Advisory Board also made some useful observations regarding the conduct of staff members serving away from UN Headquarters:

A prime obligation of an international civil servant going to serve in a particular area of the world is to obtain in advance the best possible knowledge of the countries to which [s/he] is going and of the habits, customs and attitudes of their peoples... Such knowledge can help an individual to regulate [his/her] conduct so as to reflect discretion, understanding and tolerance...

In principle, the private life of the international staff member is [his/her] concern and should not be intruded upon by his organization. At the same time, in order that [his/her] private life will not bring his organization into disfavour, [s/he] must set himself a high standard of personal conduct — one that is more complex in some respect [than] that demanded of national civil servants. [S/he] must bear in mind that [his/her] conduct, whether connected or unconnected with official duties, must be such that it will not infringe upon any demonstrable interests of the organization [s/he] serves, bring it into discredit, or offend the community in which [s/he] lives... Scrupulous compliance with laws of the host country, avoidance of illicit or speculative dealings in currencies, honouring of financial obligations — these are only a few of the obvious requirements which derive from the general principle.

14. In 1992 these standards were particularly cited in the context of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) to deal with the following problem:

Instances have been reported where female Cambodian personnel have been asked to socialise with international personnel, in such a persistent manner as to make them feel they have no choice but to accept their invitations. Such attitudes could be viewed as sexual harassment.<sup>1</sup>

15. UNTAC responded to this problem and stated, “This behaviour is clearly unacceptable and not compatible with the high standards of conduct to be maintained by international personnel. . . . The international personnel is therefore reminded that attitudes which conflict with the established Standards of Conduct could lead to appropriate disciplinary measures being taken.” UNTAC established personnel procedures to implement the Standards of Conduct.

16. The UNTAC Civilian Police Commissioner issued a further directive on 8 February 1993 with regard to UN Civilian Police (CIVPOL) “mingling” with women of a “questionable reputation, such as prostitutes from neighbouring countries.” The Commissioner stated that such relations could cause people to question UNTAC’s neutrality and could create a security threat for the officers involved and others. CIVPOL officers were told that they “should **not** be seen with those women... and are therefore ordered not to engage in any kind of romantic relation with local women.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), Information Circular No. 67/72 “Relations between International and Locally Recruited Personnel”, 27 November 1992.

17. In 1994 the UN General Assembly adopted a **Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel**<sup>3</sup> which required ratifying governments to take all appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel. UN personnel include military, police or civilian components of a UN operation deployed by the UN Secretary-General. Associated personnel include persons deployed by humanitarian non-governmental organizations working under an agreement with the UN Secretary-General. The Convention provides for a number of protections for the security of UN and associated personnel, but also contains expectations about the conduct of the personnel. For example, if UN or associated personnel are captured or detained in the course of the performance of their duties, they shall not be subject to interrogation and shall be promptly released and returned to UN or other appropriate authorities. The Convention, however, also states in Article 6:

*Respect for laws and regulations*

1. Without prejudice to such privileges and immunities as they may enjoy or to the requirements of their duties, United Nations and associated personnel shall:

- (a) Respect the laws and regulations of the host State and the transit State;
- (b) Refrain from any action or activity incompatible with the impartial and international nature of their duties.

2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the observance of these obligations.

18. This Convention is discussed more fully in **Chapter XXIV: “Security”**, but is also relevant here because of the obligations it places on UN staff and associated personnel.

19. In 1994 the United Nations issued **Staff Rules Applicable to Service of a Limited Duration**, which would apply to the staff of peace-keeping, peace-making, technical cooperation, humanitarian and emergency operations.<sup>4</sup> The 1994 Staff Rules deal with many personnel issues, including a requirement that staff members shall not, without prior approval, issue statements to the press or other media; accept speaking engagements or take part in film, theatre, radio or television productions; submit articles for publication. The 1994 Staff Rules provide disciplinary measures for failure to observe the standards of conduct expected of an international civil servant, including censure, suspension without pay, fine, separation from service, and summary dismissal. The Rules also provide for appeals by staff members against the imposition of disciplinary measures.

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<sup>2</sup>United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, Commissioner’s Directive: “Personal Behaviour of CIVPOL Monitors”, 8 February 1993.

<sup>3</sup>UN G.A. res. A/49/59 of 9 December 1994, 49 GAOR (Supp. No. 1) at 299, annex (1994).

<sup>4</sup>United Nations, *Staff Rules, Rules 301.1 to 312.6 Governing Appointments for Service of a Limited Duration*, UN Doc. ST/SGB/Staff Rules/3/Rev.5 (1994) (revising UN Doc. ST/SGB/Staff Rules/3/Rev.4 (1987)).

20. When United Nations Civilian Police (CIVPOL) are deployed, they are regulated by “**Standard Administrative Procedures**”, which contain a very detailed “Code of Conduct”.<sup>5</sup> For example, the Standard Administrative Procedures issued on 6 February 1995 for the UNPROFOR Civilian Police in the former Yugoslavia, provide that:

8.1 Police officers are drawn from many countries with varying cultures, legal procedures and levels of training. They are, however, serving members of police organizations in their home countries, where they are accustomed and psychologically oriented to the every day problems of policing under a certain code of conduct. To carry out the tasks satisfactorily police monitors will at all times exercise patience, tolerance, tact, diplomacy, good judgement and common sense, but where the occasion demands, they will act with the necessary firmness in the discharge of their tasks and always with complete impartiality toward all communities in the Mission areas.

8.2 The following reflects a common internationally accepted code of conduct by most Police organizations which must be strictly adhered to by all participants in this mission.

8.3 Discreditable conduct

8.3.1. A member of Civpol will not act in a manner which the member knows, or ought to know, would be prejudicial to discipline or reasonably likely to bring discredit to the United Nations.

8.3.2. Perform any act conduct, disorder or neglect, to the prejudice of good order, morality or discipline of the police not specified in these regulations.

21. The Code of Conduct proceeds to forbid misconduct towards another member of CIVPOL including any act that is “oppressive, abusive, discriminatory or likely to cause offence or humiliation.” The Code also prohibits any assault on another member. Officers are required by the Code to “account properly for any money or property received” in his official capacity or “knowingly or through neglect make any false, misleading or inaccurate oral or written statement or entry in any record or document made, kept or required for United Nations purposes.” Officers “will not make an unauthorized communication in relation to any information which comes to the member’s knowledge in the course of his/her duty and which is not available to members of the public.” “Statements to the Press, Newspaper, Radio or TV or other public media are not allowed unless proper authorization is given.” Officers are forbidden to engage in any “corrupt or improper practice” including improperly using or attempting to use his/her position as UN member for his/her private advantage, wilfully and without good cause failing to pay any lawful debt in such circumstances as to compromise other members, and placing him/herself under a pecuniary obligation to any person in a manner that might affect his/her ability to discharge his/her duty or might appear to so affect his/her ability. Officers will not commit any abuse of authority in treating any member of the public in an oppressive, abusive or impolite manner. Officers may not “render himself/herself unfit for duty through use of alcohol

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<sup>5</sup>United Nations Field Operations Division, *Notes for the Guidance of Military Observers and Police Monitors*, 1 March 1992.

or drugs, or drive a UN vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.” An officer “will not use a UN vehicle without proper authority or outside the scope of the authority given.”

22. The civilian police have also established a procedure for imposing discipline which includes fair opportunity to respond to allegations, appeal, the handling of minor breaches by local supervisors, and the handling of serious breaches by their central office in the country of operations. Sanctions vary including counselling, reprimand, stoppage of daily allowance, and recommendation for separation and repatriation to the home country.

23. In 1995 the United Nations Department of Peace-Keeping Operations issued **General Guidelines for Peace-keeping Operations**, UN Doc. UN/210/TC/GG95, which are instructive also for civilian HROs in stating,

Legitimacy is the most important asset of a peace-keeping operation. It rests on an understanding that the operation is just and is representative of the will of the international community as a whole rather than some partial interest... This legitimacy is further enhanced by the composition of peace-keeping operation, typically including personnel from a broad spectrum of States. Finally, the conduct of the operation is an essential element of legitimacy... The bearing and behaviour of all personnel must be of the highest order, commensurate with the important responsibilities entrusted to the peace-keeping operation.

24. In training junior staff for peace-keeping, the UN Department of Peace-Keeping Operations has stated:

The correct behaviour and conduct required as a UN Peace-keeper.

- Good behaviour and self-discipline are your security.
- A peace-keeper is on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Your behaviour and speech will be closely observed.
- You are an ambassador of UN and your nation.
- Your behaviour will reflect upon the UN organization as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

25. In 1997, the United Nations Department of Peace-keeping Operations issued **Guidelines** and a **Ten Rules Code of Personal Conduct for Blue Helmets**, which read as follows:

### **“WE ARE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPERS**

The United Nations Organization embodies the aspirations of all the peoples of the world for peace. In this context the United Nations Charter requires that all personnel must maintain the highest standards of integrity and conduct.

We will comply with the Guidelines on International Humanitarian Law for Forces Undertaking United Nations Peace-keeping Operations and the applicable portions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the fundamental basis of our standards.

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<sup>6</sup>United Nations Department of Peace-Keeping Operations/Office of Planning & Support/Training Unit, *Peace-keeping Handbook for Junior Ranks* 19 (1994).

We, as peace-keepers, represent the United Nations and are present in the country to help it recover from the trauma of a conflict. As a result we must consciously be prepared to accept special constraints in our public and private lives in order to do the work and to pursue the ideals of the United Nations Organization.

We will be accorded certain privileges and immunities arranged through agreements negotiated between the United Nations and the host country solely for the purpose of discharging our peace-keeping duties. Expectations of the world community and the local population will be high and our actions, behaviour and speech will be closely monitored.

**We will always:**

- Conduct ourselves in a professional and disciplined manner, at all times;
- Dedicate ourselves to achieving the goals of the United Nations;
- Understand the mandate and mission and comply with their provisions;
- Respect the environment of the host country;
- Respect local customs and practices through awareness and respect for the culture, religion, traditions and gender issues;
- Treat the inhabitants of the host country with respect, courtesy and consideration;
- Act with impartiality, integrity and tact;
- Support and aid the infirm, sick and weak;
- Obey our United Nations superiors and respect the chain of command;
- Respect all other peace-keeping members of the mission regardless of status, rank, ethnic or national origin, race, gender or creed;
- Support and encourage proper conduct among our fellow peace-keepers;
- Maintain proper dress and personal deportment at all times;
- Properly account for all money and property assigned to us as members of the mission; and
- Care for all United Nations equipment placed in our charge.

**We will never:**

- Bring discredit upon the United Nations, or our nations through improper personal conduct, failure to perform our duties or abuse of our positions as peace-keepers;
- Take any action that might jeopardize the mission;
- Abuse alcohol, use or traffic in drugs;
- Make unauthorized communications to external agencies, including unauthorized press statements;
- Improperly disclose or use information gained through our employment;
- Use unnecessary violence or threaten anyone in custody;

- Commit any act that could result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to members of the local population, especially women and children;
- Become involved in sexual liaisons which could affect our impartiality, or the well-being of others;
- Be abusive or uncivil to any member of the public;
- Wilfully damage or misuse any United Nations property or equipment;
- Use a vehicle improperly or without authorisation;
- Collect unauthorized souvenirs;
- Participate in any illegal activities, corrupt or improper practices; or
- Attempt to use our positions for personal advantage, to make false claims or accept benefits to which we are not entitled.

**We realize that the consequences of failure to act within these guidelines may:**

- Erode confidence and trust in the United Nations;
- Jeopardize the achievement of the mission; and
- Jeopardize our status and security as peace-keepers.”

and

#### **“TEN RULES CODE OF PERSONAL CONDUCT FOR BLUE HELMETS**

1. Dress, think, talk, act and behave in a manner befitting the dignity of a disciplined, caring, considerate, mature, respected and trusted soldier, displaying the highest integrity and impartiality. Have pride in your position as a peace-keeper and do not abuse or misuse your authority.
2. Respect the law of the land of the host country, their local culture, traditions, customs and practices.
3. Treat the inhabitants of the host country with respect, courtesy and consideration. You are there as a guest to help them and in so doing will be welcomed with admiration. Neither solicit or accept any material reward, honour or gift.
4. Do not indulge in immoral acts of sexual, physical or psychological abuse or exploitation of the local population or United Nations staff, especially women and children.
5. Respect and regard the human rights of all. Support and aid the infirm, sick and weak. Do not act in revenge or with malice, in particular when dealing with prisoners, detainees or people in your custody.
6. Properly care for and account for all United Nations money, vehicles, equipment and property assigned to you and do not trade or barter with them to seek personal benefits.
7. Show military courtesy and pay appropriate compliments to all members of the mission, including other United Nations contingents regardless of their creed, gender, rank or origin.

8. Show respect for and promote the environment, including the flora and fauna, of the host country.
9. Do not engage in excessive consumption of alcohol or traffic in drugs.
10. Exercise the utmost discretion in handling confidential information and matters of official business which can put lives into danger or soil the image of the United Nations.”

26. UNICEF has also provided broadly relevant advice to the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations as to the minimum age for sexual relations of peace-keeping personnel:

Internationally, child prostitution is recognized as a form of exploitative child labour. ILO Convention 138 on Minimum Wage sets 18 as the age for engagement in dangerous or hazardous activities such as mining. Given the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission and its physical and psycho-social impact, prostitution is similarly considered a dangerous and hazardous activity. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which 190 States are Parties, a child means any human being below the age of 18 years (unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier). UNICEF and UNHCR recommend the establishment of 18 as the age to prohibit the sexual exploitation of children. This is wholly consistent with the basic principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the current international and legal framework.

27. Hence, one can distil the UNICEF rule as forbidding sex with anyone under the age of 18.

28. To promote proper conduct among personnel of UN peace-keeping operations, in October 1995 the UN established Guidelines for Conduct which, for example, each UN Military Observer in the UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) was required to sign before serving. The Guidelines for Conduct forbid the Military Observer, without express authorization of the Chief Military Observer, from (a) accepting speaking engagements, granting media interviews, or making public statements; (b) communicating UNIKOM documents to others; (c) visiting military or industrial installations or participating in official ceremonies sponsored by a Government; (d) taking private photographs — particularly of restricted subjects; and (e) purchasing duty-free merchandise except pursuant to regulations. The Guidelines noted that non-compliance may result in immediate repatriation. The Guidelines furthermore applied the restrictions in points (a), (b) and (c) after completion of the assignment with UNIKOM.

29. The United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1996 agreed on “Guidelines for UN Forces Regarding Respect for International Humanitarian Law.” Those Guidelines are not specifically applicable to civilian HROs, but indicate the UN undertaking to ensure that any UN peace-keeping or enforcement force “respects the principles and spirit of international humanitarian law applicable to the conduct of military personnel...”

30. Similarly, as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights observed in the Field Guide for International Police Task Force Members of the Peace Implementation Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and CIVPOL Offices of the United Nations Transitional Administration in Eastern Slavonia 1 (1996), “Of course, as personnel acting under a United Nations mandate, they are also bound by United Nations standards.” The same observation applies to all UN personnel, including members of a human rights operation.

## C. Code of conduct for human rights officers

31. Drawing from previous experience with regard to UN standards for its on-site personnel, and from other principles related to human rights work which were indicated in other parts of this Manual, it is possible to derive some basic principles which might be cited in a code of conduct for human rights field operations.

### 1. Respect for human rights standards

32. *First, UN human rights personnel should be aware of and should be bound by United Nations human rights norms, including the principles and spirit of the UN Charter, the International Bill of Human Rights, other human rights treaties, and further international human rights instruments.*

### 2. Respect for principles of human rights monitoring

33. UN HROs should also endeavour to *respect the basic principles of monitoring* set forth in **Chapter V: “Basic Principles of Monitoring”**:

- ✓ Monitoring as a method of improving the protection of human rights
- ✓ Do no harm
- ✓ Respect the mandate
- ✓ Know the standards
- ✓ Exercise good judgement
- ✓ Seek consultation
- ✓ Respect the authorities
- ✓ Credibility
- ✓ Confidentiality
- ✓ Security
- ✓ Understand the country
- ✓ Need for consistency, persistence and patience

- ✓ Accuracy and precision
- ✓ Impartiality
- ✓ Objectivity
- ✓ Sensitivity
- ✓ Integrity
- ✓ Professionalism
- ✓ Visibility

### 3. Respect for local population and customs

34. In order to achieve the standards which are expected of HROs, it is very important — as mentioned in **Chapter II: “The Local Context”** — that the operation develop a briefing on *social customs in the country*. HROs should be informed about such matters as:

- ✓ forms of address to men, women, officials, different social classes, etc.;
- ✓ social structure;
- ✓ social customs;
- ✓ religion;
- ✓ suitable dress;
- ✓ acceptable and unacceptable conduct in public;
- ✓ how individuals handle dissonance or disagreement; and
- ✓ how individuals may respond to questions.

35. For example, civilian staff of UNTAC were informed in 1992 that:

“It is not polite for Cambodians to look into the eyes of an interlocutor, especially if the interlocutor is considered of a higher social status.” “When seated, one should not cross one’s legs...”. “Smoking is very common among Cambodians. They do not think it is rude not to ask for permission to smoke.” “A person’s head is considered sacred and is never patted or touched.” “A lay person, especially a woman, should never touch a Buddhist monk. Monks should be shown respect at all times.” “A person should never step across any part of the body of another person, especially the upper part of the body. One should walk around that person to get from one place to another.” “The holding of hands between members of the same sex does not have any sexual connotation. It is simply an expression of friendship between two people.”

Notions of time among Cambodians are fairly flexible. One can expect to experience some delay for appointments and meetings. Cambodians do not usually apologise for being late. That is not due to rudeness, but rather to the fact that apologies (or expressions of thanks) are usually not over-expressed in public.” “In an office situation, it is expected that people will dress properly, i.e. no jeans, for example. Slacks and an open neck shirt are appropriate.”

36. This sort of guidance needs to be prepared for any country in which a human rights operation is located to assist staff in their work and in determining appropriate personal conduct at all times.

## 4. Inter-office relations

37. Relations within the operation are also a very important issue. *HROs, including officers in management positions, should be respectful of the important contribution all personnel — fellow officers, UN volunteers, seconded staff, support staff, national staff, etc. — are making to the overall effort of the human rights operation.* Staff should avoid any act which detracts from the cohesiveness of the operation. Staff should make every effort to share equitably the equipment and other resources which are available to make the operation as effective as possible. Each member of the staff should see themselves as part of the overall human rights operation rather than as a representative of whatever agency may have recruited them. Regardless of how a staff member is recruited, paid, equipped or classified, it should be clear that the head of operations is responsible for the management of the operation. At a minimum, UN personnel should abstain from any act that is oppressive, abusive, discriminatory, or likely to cause offence or humiliation.

38. This principle is particularly important because staff often come to the human rights operation in different ways, e.g., recruitment, secondment (by other agencies, regional organizations or governments), referral as UN volunteers, hiring on-site, etc. Accordingly, the staff may receive quite different salaries, vacation periods, equipment, civil service classifications, etc. because of differences in the sources of their support and recruitment. Nonetheless, each individual can bring valuable experience and skills to the operation — regardless of their status or provenance.

39. This principle is also important because the work of HROs is very stressful and difficult. HROs and other staff must depend heavily upon each other — particularly in small, isolated offices. Staff usually come with different nationalities, cultural backgrounds, professional experiences and working styles. It is critical that they be able to work together relying upon the strengths of each other. Personality differences — often triggered by working under stressful conditions — may undermine the effectiveness of area offices and even their security. Individual HROs must make a great commitment to working with those who share an area office. HROs should be assured of the support they will receive from their colleagues and should appreciate the different contributions each can make to the overall effort.

40. Accordingly, to *summarize the expectations* stated above, the HRO should:

- ✓ Have a willingness to respond effectively in stressful situations.
- ✓ Have a willingness and capacity to live in relatively rough conditions.
- ✓ Have an ability to work well in a team;
- ✓ Have an ability to discuss, compromise and communicate well with others;
- ✓ Avoid discriminatory or sexist attitudes in dealing with co-workers and others;
- ✓ Have a humane concern for the welfare of other people.

41. *Human rights officers should recognize that they are part of a much larger operation and that they cannot determine policy by themselves.* Wisdom resides in consultation. Unless there is a crisis requiring individual action, HROs should consult with their area coordinators and colleagues about major steps. Similarly, HROs must realize that their comments — even off-hand personal observations — may reflect on the entire operation. *HROs officers should always avoid criticizing the human rights operation or any of its staff members, to any person who is not a staff member. Criticism of the operation to people outside of the operation can be very damaging to the human rights work of the operation.* It is particularly harmful to engage in such criticisms when talking with journalists or with the members of other organizations. Such criticism gives an extremely poor impression of the human rights operation and reflects badly on the professionalism of the individual making it. Generally, an HRO who criticizes his/her own operation in this manner is trying to distance him/herself from the operation in the eyes of the person being addressed. If the criticism is genuine and the HRO feels very strongly about the problem, it would be better to raise the issue within the operation or within the UN. If those efforts fail, resignation is preferable to undermining the operation.

42. *The human rights field operation may develop other principles for a code of conduct based upon its own experience and/or the experience of previous UN operations.*

## 5. OHCHR Code of Conduct

43. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has issued in 1999 a Code of Conduct for its staff — both at Headquarters and in the field. The Code reiterates legal obligations of United Nations staff, and enumerates ethical principles to be adhered to by all. In the words of the High Commissioner, “[t]he Code complements the provisions of the Charter, the rules and regulations of the Organization, further defining the role, responsibilities and high standard of conduct expected of those who serve the United Nations human rights programme.”

44. The Code reads as follows:

“In the performance of their duties for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and in order to attain the highest standard of quality, integrity and professionalism, staff shall abide by the principles of the United Nations Charter and all applicable United Nations rules, and in particular they shall:

1. Promote the advancement and observance of all human rights as defined by international instruments, and base all actions, statements, analysis and work on these standards.
2. Respect, uphold and enforce the United Nations principle of non-discrimination with regard to race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
3. Promote the fulfilment of the mandate of the High Commissioner as defined by the relevant General Assembly and other United Nations resolutions, as well as by internal guidelines and policy documents.

4. Respect the United Nations Charter's principle of independence vis-à-vis Governments and other external authorities, accepting directives only from the United Nations and report, through the proper channels, to the High Commissioner.
5. Conduct, and be seen to conduct, themselves in an impartial and objective manner at all times — while always promoting human rights — and avoid expressions of partisanship or prejudice.
6. Discharge their functions with promptness, efficiency, a sense of initiative, competence, good faith, integrity and professionalism at all times.
7. Respect the culture, customs and people of the country of operation and all other people with whom they come into contact.
8. Encourage cooperation among the various United Nations agencies and departments and promote the integration of a human rights dimension in all aspects of their work.
9. Exercise discretion with regard to all official matters, and not communicate to any person any information known to them by reason of their official position which has not been made public, except in the course of their duties or by authorization of the High Commissioner, nor at any time use such information to private advantage — including after separation from the OHCHR.
10. Refrain from making public statements on official matters, except as provided in the relevant OHCHR guidelines.
11. Refrain from endangering, by way of their words or action during or after their service with the OHCHR, the safety and privacy of the people with whom they come into contact and their own safety, strictly comply with all UNSECOORD security directives, and refer any security queries to the appointed security advisor or Designated Official.
12. Refrain from and oppose any act of corruption or fraud, make use of OHCHR resources responsibly with a view to avoiding waste or self-enrichment, and respect OHCHR property over its assets and work products, including rights of authorship and copyright to research, publications and other materials that OHCHR produces.”

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# .....Chapter XXIII

# STRESS,

# VICARIOUS TRAUMA

# AND BURN-OUT .....

## *Key concepts*

*HROs work and live under situations in which they are likely to experience secondary trauma, that is: stress, vicarious traumatization, counter-transference, exhaustion and burn-out.*

*Secondary trauma often causes such symptoms as: fatigue, sadness, depression, cynicism, discouragement, loss of compassion, hyper-arousal, sleep disturbances, intrusive nightmares related to trauma material, somatic problems (headaches, joint pain, abdominal discomfort/diarrhoea), feelings of helplessness, denial, disbelief, anger and rage.*

*There are a number of measures and practices which can help to prevent and treat secondary trauma, including:*

- | *Mandatory intermittent work-free periods (e.g., one day per week);*
- | *Mandatory rest and recreation outside of the country (e.g., one week every six to eight weeks);*
- | *Supportive relationships with family and friends;*
- | *Relaxation techniques, e.g., meditation, listening to music;*
- | *Physical exercise, and others.*

## **A. Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

1. HROs work and live under situations in which they are likely to experience stress, vicarious traumatization, counter-transference, exhaustion and burn-out. **Taken together**, psychologists have referred to these phenomena as “**secondary trauma**”,

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from UNHCR, *Guidelines on the evaluation and care of victims of trauma and violence (1995)* and Center for Victims of Torture, *Vicarious Trauma and Burnout (1995)*.

which is quite common among those who work intensively with traumatized individuals.

2. HROs often deal with people who are suffering and who need help, but the ability of HROs to help is necessarily limited by their mandate, resources, the needs of others, and the constraints of time. HROs often feel as though they cannot afford to take a break or even to sleep, because their work requires their total commitment. In addition to their work conditions, HROs frequently need to live under less than ideal conditions of housing, food, climate, etc. The stress of work and living conditions is compounded by the vicarious traumatization HROs often feel from interviewing and working with individuals who are suffering or have suffered great loss. Hearing about the trauma suffered by others may also trigger painful memories from the officer's own past; psychologists have termed this common experience "**counter-transference**". In some circumstances, HROs may witness deaths, dead bodies, similar immediate evidence of violations, and other events, which may cause them to be **directly traumatized**.

3. If HROs do not cope well with the tremendous stress and secondary traumatization or if they have had to handle such conditions over a significant period of time, it is likely that they will suffer from burn-out and diminished capacity to live and work effectively in the field. No one is immune from these effects and HROs should understand that such feelings are quite normal. There is a great need for HROs and others in the helping professions to acknowledge and be aware of the consequences of secondary trauma. In addition, the HRO's susceptibility to secondary traumatization is shaped not only by the characteristics of the situation, but also the officer's own unique psychological make-up.

## B. Secondary traumatization

### 1. Symptoms

4. Secondary traumatization often causes such **symptoms** as:
- ✓ Fatigue, sadness, depression;
  - ✓ Cynicism, discouragement, loss of compassion;
  - ✓ Hyper-arousal, sleep disturbances, intrusive nightmares related to trauma material;
  - ✓ Somatic problems: headaches, joint pain, abdominal discomfort/diarrhea;
  - ✓ Feelings of helplessness, denial and disbelief, anger and rage.

### 2. Contributing factors

5. **Contributing factors** to secondary traumatization include:
- ✓ Concern about the potential impact of the HRO's work upon the root causes of violence, war, suffering and violations;

- ✓ Conflicted feelings and issues of trust are typical where survivors may be both perpetrators and victims;
- ✓ Communication difficulty, both of language and of culture;
- ✓ Inadequate resources and equipment;
- ✓ Difficulties in sharing scarce equipment, e.g., an automobile;
- ✓ Lack of privacy for those HROs who work in one area;
- ✓ Feelings of responsibility for having an automobile accident and thus disabling transportation for other HROs in an area; etc.

### 3. Prevention

6. There are a number of **measures and practices** which can help to **prevent and treat** secondary traumatization, including:

- ✓ Mandatory intermittent work-free periods (e.g., one day per week)
- ✓ Mandatory rest and recreation outside of the country (e.g., one week every six to eight weeks)
- ✓ Supportive relationships with family and friends;
- ✓ Professional support systems, including sharing with fellow officers their reactions that are painful and disruptive;
- ✓ Relaxation techniques, such as meditation, deep-breathing exercises and listening to music;
- ✓ Physical exercise;
- ✓ Feelings need to be openly acknowledged and resolved;
- ✓ Rotation through different types of work activity;
- ✓ Good nutrition and adequate sleep;
- ✓ Avoiding excessive use of stimulants, such as sugar and caffeine; and
- ✓ Psychological debriefing after crises in which the officer reviews the experience and deals with feelings of fear, frustration and success that accompany the work.

7. Since *work-free periods are the most important way of reducing stress*, it should be noted that HROs must be provided with regular opportunities to relax, and to leave their immediate working region. They should make an effort to get to know other international and national workers in the region to which they are deployed. Access to books, newspapers and music can also be ways of leaving work behind at the end of a day. As far as possible HROs should have a separate living and working space. During free weekends it is a good idea for HROs to be provided with the opportunity to leave the region/area office in which they are working and to travel to another part of the country — to the central office or to visit the members of another area office, for example. Vacation time should, where possible, be spent outside of the country of operations, and at least outside the region to which an HRO is deployed.

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# .....Chapter XXIV

# SECURITY.....

## *Key concepts*

*Human rights officers should:*

- | *before entering a new area, consult the operation's central office security officer about risks;*
- | *consult others in the locality about risks and how to avoid them;*
- | *place UN markings on their vehicles;*
- | *carry UN identification cards (with blood type, medical information);*
- | *wear UN markings on their clothing, e.g., hat, arm-band, shirt;*
- | *be trained to use radio communications or mobile telephones;*
- | *carefully select their office and place of residence;*
- | *contact neighbours when they first arrive;*
- | *notify the security officer of the location of office and residence;*
- | *protect documents, records and computerized information;*
- | *use locks on external and some internal doors of offices and residences;*
- | *keep a week's stock of water and food;*
- | *in dealing with road-blocks explain the operation's mandate or produce other authorizing documentation, but use good judgement in the circumstances;*
- | *learn about the type and location of mines;*
- | *know basic vehicle maintenance: check the oil, fuel, water, tyres, spares;*
- | *know how to drive carefully under local conditions;*
- | *avoid clothing, photos, or other ways of offending local sensitivities;*
- | *follow any travel restrictions;*
- | *always make sure that colleagues know their location in the field;*
- | *know what to do and where to go in an emergency or evacuation;*
- | *have received vaccinations; anticipate medical needs; know of medical facilities available; know about water and food cleanliness; know how to recognize symptoms of serious illnesses; and avoid unnecessary health risks, including sexually transmitted diseases;*
- | *keep informed of security guidelines and security situation; and*
- | *exercise good judgement and be careful.*

## A. Introduction

1. Human rights operations are often conducted in countries or regions where the security of HROs may be placed at risk. This chapter deals with the **security of HROs and other staff**. Other chapters (see for example **Chapter VII: “Information Gathering”** and **Chapter VIII: “Interviewing”**) discuss the need and methods for preserving the security of witnesses and the various individuals with whom the human rights operation may be in contact. Unless the HROs can themselves be secure, however, they will be unable to assist or protect others. Indeed, if HROs are beaten, kidnapped, or even killed, the UN operation cannot work effectively and may in extreme circumstances need to be closed.

2. This chapter provides an overview of the main security issues related to human rights officers working in United Nations field operations. For more guidance readers should also refer to the booklet “*Security in the Field — Information for staff members of the United Nations system*”, issued by the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator<sup>1</sup>.

## B. Legal guarantees

3. The principal legal guarantee for the security of HROs is the **Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations**, 1 UNT.S. 15, *corrigendum* 90 UNT.S. 327, *entered into force* 14 December 1946. For the 136 nations which have ratified the treaty, it **provides security and immunity from legal process for the premises, property, documents, officials and experts of the United Nations**. That treaty implements Article 105 of the UN Charter, which states that officials of the United Nations shall “enjoy such privileges and immunities as are necessary for the independent exercise of their functions in connection with the Organization.”

4. Either the **agreement between the host country and the UN** human rights operation or the UN action establishing the operation normally contains several means of protection for the staff of the operation, including the right to travel anywhere in the territory, to visit any facility, to speak with any person, to establish an office where appropriate, etc. With regard to any particular operation, it is critical to determine whether the Government has ratified the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and what provisions are included in the memorandum or other document establishing the operation. Those provisions constitute a minimum guarantee of the security of the human rights operation. Even if not specifically guaranteed by treaty, agreement or other instrument, the human rights operation should in any case expect that the Government will ensure protection for the security of all staff, offices, records, vehicles **and** other property of the operation.

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<sup>1</sup>United Nations, New York, 1998.

5. In addition, in 1994 the UN General Assembly adopted a **Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel**<sup>2</sup> which required ratifying governments to take all appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel. **UN personnel** include military, police or civilian components of a UN operation deployed by the UN Secretary-General. **Associated personnel** include persons deployed by humanitarian non-governmental organizations working under an agreement with the UN Secretary-General. If UN or associated personnel are **captured or detained** in the course of the performance of their duties, they **shall not be subject to interrogation** and **shall be promptly released** and returned to UN or other appropriate authorities. Pending their release they shall be treated in accordance with the principles and spirits of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The Convention does **not apply** to UN enforcement actions authorized by the Security Council under Chapter VII, in which any **personnel are engaged as combatants** against organized armed forces.

6. The Convention *establishes universal criminal jurisdiction* and a duty to extradite with regard to persons who commit attacks or attempted attacks upon UN and associated personnel. The Convention was opened for signature and ratification after 31 December 1995 and will come into force 30 days after twenty-two nations ratify it.

## C. Security within a human rights field operation

7. Despite these international legal protections, security questions arise and the **protections are not fully respected**. Indeed, there have been a number of attacks on UN, ICRC **and** other international personnel which indicate risks in some countries that must be taken into account. Accordingly, the **human rights operation** as a whole has an **obligation to take steps to ensure the security of its staff members** and can take a number of steps to avoid or pre-empt any incidents. Ultimately, however, each individual HRO will be the person best placed to ensure his or her own security. As a general rule individuals should try as far as possible to rely on themselves.

8. This chapter provides guidelines on efforts that the operation central office and individual HROs can take to minimize any security risk. “**Security**” is taken here to mean the **physical security of HROs, including health and the security of property belonging both to the officer and to the United Nations**.

### 1. General security situation

9. The security situation will be different in each country or each region within the country. The United Nations has defined a number of general security situations in which certain restrictions are imposed on UN staff members operating in the area:

<sup>2</sup>UN G.A. res. A/49/59 of 9 December 1994, 49 GAOR (Supp. No. 1) at 299, annex (1994).

- Phase I:** Normal/stable
- Phase II:** Precautionary (movements should be restricted to essential activity)
- Phase III:** Restricted movement (all movements should be restricted)
- Phase IV:** Relocation (personnel should be relocated to specific centres in anticipation of a possible evacuation)
- Phase V:** Programme suspension (regular operations cannot continue; all non-essential personnel will be evacuated)
- Phase VI:** Evacuation (all operations halted; all personnel evacuated)

10. These security phases have been developed by the UN for all activities, but they are particularly applicable to UN human rights field operations. Countries that are designated as UN *phase I* are considered to be “*family duty stations*” and UN staff members may be accompanied by family or friends. At the beginning of an operation the director of the human rights field operation should verify the UN phase applied to the country of operation. In *some situations several different phases may be applied to different areas of the same country.*

## 2. Appointment of security officers

11. **Every field operation should have a security officer**, responsible, under the director, for all security matters within the operation. This person should have experience in dealing with security issues within conflict situations, and should be able to anticipate the evolution of a security situation so as to take preventive rather than solely reactive measures. The security officer should develop contacts with any Government forces towards ensuring the safety of the operation’s staff and will be responsible for advising the direction of any necessary security measures.

12. In larger field operations with various area offices, it can be useful to appoint a security officer from among the staff of each office. This person will be given responsibility for security issues within the team (along with his/her other duties) and for coordinating with the central security officer. The security officer should serve as a repository for security information gathered by other HROs and should consult individuals in the locality who are likely to know about risks to security and how they might be avoided.

## 3. Security guidelines

13. Every HRO joining a field operation should be **provided with detailed security guidelines** written for that particular operation. In addition, an oral **security briefing** should be given by the security officer, upon arrival of new HROs.

14. The security guidelines and briefing should contain all relevant information on the recent and current security situation within the region and, where possible, the likely evolution of that situation. Each HRO should be aware of the principal threats to their safety (such as mines, armed bandits, general crime, illness, etc.) and the regions in

which those threats are most likely to occur. Before entering a new area or neighbourhood, HROs should consult the operation's central office or field security officer about risks; it is also advisable to consult others in the locality who may be informed of risks and how to avoid them. Generally, people who live in the locality will be best informed of the risks HROs may encounter every day.

15. The security officer should develop a means of collecting **information** from around the country/region **on security-related incidents**. This information should be circulated to all staff members as soon as possible and be regularly updated.

16. It is essential that staff be provided with all of the necessary information that will enable them to make an accurate assessment of the security situation.

## 4. Identification and visibility of HROs

17. United Nations human rights operations will usually have an impartial role. A key aspect of the protection of HROs will be ensuring that they are easily **identifiable as UN HROs**. To this end, vehicles should be clearly marked with stickers or flags that identify their occupants with the operation.

18. HROs themselves should always carry **identification cards** issued either by the operation or by the Government. It is also useful for any identification card used by staff members to provide medical information such as the blood type, allergies, counter-indicated medication, etc., of the bearer, in the event of accident.

19. In addition, it may be useful to wear clothing, such as a hat, arm-band, shirt or jacket which indicates clearly that the HRO is working with the UN, and which can provide easy identification from a distance. Where relevant, these items should be made available by the UN in Geneva or New York.

## 5. Radio communications

20. A radio communications network can be a very important factor in adding to the security of the members of field operations. It can also facilitate enormously the everyday functioning of the operation. The availability of radio communications means that HROs are independent of any local telephone communications network which may not function adequately and which may be monitored by the authorities. (Of course, mail, telephone **and** radio communications may be monitored by the authorities and by armed opposition groups. Hence, HROs should **avoid using the radio to discuss matters which should be kept confidential**, unless there is an emergency.)

21. It is strongly advised that a **radio communications or mobile telephone network** be used in field operations and that it be extended to cover the whole region of operations. HROs can be provided with radio handsets or mobile telephones and their vehicles and offices can be equipped with long distance base stations. For security reasons it is essential that new staff members be issued with radios and temporary call signs immediately after their arrival in the country of operation. All staff members should be given **training in how to use the radio**, and in the specific language common to this form of communication. This precaution is particularly important

where the human rights operation shares a radio channel with other organizations. Along with access to a vehicle, a radio is often the most important security device that an HRO has.

22. A *Radio Unit (operations centre)* should be established, from which a radio operator can monitor the movements of each HRO. Such a system helps to guarantee that in an emergency help can be sent to any staff member with a minimum of delay. A number of national staff can be employed as radio operators to ensure that there is *24-hour coverage* where necessary.

## 6. Office and home security

23. The security of the offices and private residences of staff members is particularly important with regard to the security of property (see below), but can also be important in terms of personal security. Some HROs have chosen their **places of residence** in minority communities or in other places where people are at risk in order to give an extra reassurance of protection to the neighbours.<sup>3</sup> Others have avoided such locations because they might invite attack and might be generally less secure. The security officer and individual HROs will need to assess this question in the context in which they find themselves. In any case, entrances to offices and residences should be controlled, with visitors passing through one entrance only. Where possible a second entrance/exit should be made available to be used only by staff members in the event of an emergency.

24. The **security of offices** is also important with regard to the documents, records **and** computerized information which may be lost by theft or destruction. The loss of information may endanger the lives and security of many individuals. Hence, **locked files and passwords on computer systems** are strongly recommended. Computerized files at an area office should be systematically copied and placed in an even more secure location, for example, at the operation central office, or even in a bank vault. Given the risk of theft, computer malfunction, or fire, such back-up computer files can help safeguard the work product and the functioning of the operation.

25. Particularly with regard to residences, there should be locks on all of the outside doors of the building and on several of the inside doors. If there are people who wish to attack the house, they will probably be able to break any locks. The objective, however, is to delay them as long as possible. Locks within the building can help to delay intruders and will provide greater time for help to arrive. In the event of an attack on a residence, HROs should immediately call for help and then leave their radio switched on at full volume so that the attackers know that help is on its way. This tactic may discourage intruders.

26. Every residence should have a *stock of water and food* for at least seven days, which may be used in emergencies. HROs should try to meet their neighbours when they first move into their residence, so that help may be sought if needed. The residences of other members of the international community in the area should be identified.

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<sup>3</sup>See Diane Paul, *Beyond Monitoring and Reporting, Strategies for the Field-level Protection of Civilians Under Threat* (1996).

27. The location of each office and residence used by area offices should be indicated to the operation's security officer and a number assigned to each building for rapid identification. **Appendix 1: "Personal Data Form"** is a form on which the HRO should indicate his/her place of abode and other personal details which will be useful in case of an emergency. The security officer and the area coordinator should have copies of the form and should know how to find all of these locations in an emergency.

## 7. Road blocks and other contacts with armed groups

28. HROs often work in situations where there are soldiers or other armed groups operating. It may be necessary to pass through road blocks or to make access to particular regions. Other than carrying identification, it can also be useful to carry a **copy of any agreement signed by national or local authorities** which guarantees safe passage throughout the territory. These documents should be available in relevant languages.

29. In dealing with road blocks and similar impediments, it is important to remain calm, not to appear nervous, and to avoid being provoked into an angry reaction. It is sometimes important not to appear too weak and thus not to agree immediately to any restrictions imposed by armed people. It may be useful to explain the mandate of the operation, show the agreement or other authorizing document, and indicate that it is important for the effective functioning of the operation that access be provided. At other times it will be important to obey instructions to the letter. These are situations in which HROs will have to judge for themselves how best to react. More specific advice based upon local experience can be provided in the country of operations.

## 8. Mines

30. Mines are indiscriminate and can be the biggest threat to the safety of HROs. If there are mines in the country of operation, this information should be included in the security guidelines provided to HROs upon arrival in the operation, along with details of the type and specifications of the mines used. Where possible, a **mine briefing** should be organized allowing HROs to see examples of the mines in use.

31. Mines can remain dangerous for many years and even a country presently at peace may still be under a significant threat from mines. In general, mines and unexploded bombs are found in zones where heavy combat has taken place at some point in the past. Mines are, however, sometimes placed in non-conflict areas with the specific intention of causing harm to civilians.

32. There are a number of precautions that can be taken to protect people from the blast of mine explosions, including the use of blast blankets in vehicles. The utility of these precautions depends on the type of mines used, and on the weight of the vehicles used. These precautions rarely provide complete protection and as a general rule operations should be suspended in areas where mines are known to have been placed.

## 9. Vehicle maintenance

33. Vehicles are the principal means of security that HROs have. A vehicle allows staff to leave dangerous security situations immediately without depending on any one else for assistance. It is also the principal means by which an HRO will travel around the country.

34. A key aspect of security for HROs is the maintenance and protection of the vehicles they use. Vehicle maintenance should usually be done by experienced mechanics, but there are a number of basic precautions that every HRO to whom a vehicle is assigned should take.

35. Even when a national driver is employed, HROs should themselves *check the oil and water levels* in the engine. They should check the amount of *fuel* in the tanks. As far as possible the fuel reservoir should be kept full and spare cans of fuel kept in the vehicle. Headlights should be checked, along with the condition of tyres. Every vehicle should always have at least one spare tyre (preferably two) and the equipment to change the tyre. All HROs should be able to change a tyre on their own. Every vehicle should have a map of the principal roads in the region.

## 10. Driving

36. As many HROs as possible should be **able to drive**, so that they can assist in emergency situations. HROs driving UN vehicles should make sure that they carry the necessary UN documents (such as a UN driver's licence) which authorize them to use the vehicle. When driving, national speed limits should be rigorously respected.

37. Field operations may be conducted in places where the road conditions are very poor and there is no lighting for night driving. For example, road surfaces may be uneven with pot-holes and cracks; there may be no signposts warning of hazards such as bends in the road, potential rock-falls or ice. Much driving may be conducted on tracks with no artificial road surface. Training should be given to HROs in using four-wheel-drive gear systems and how to handle the different road surfaces and weather conditions (dry and dusty, very wet and muddy, snow, etc.).

38. It is important to remember that other drivers in the region may not have had any formal training on how to drive. They may not be aware of any highway code or standard procedures that are in use in other countries. In addition, the other vehicles on the road may be very poorly maintained. Such devices as turning indicators, windscreen wipers **and** brakes may not function adequately on other vehicles. HROs should be wary of other vehicles on the road.

39. Pedestrians, particularly in many developing countries, are forced to use roads to walk from one place to another. The majority of these people will never have driven a vehicle themselves, are unaware of how difficult it can be for drivers to see them, and so do not always take adequate precautions. When using a road employed by large numbers of pedestrians, it is often dangerous to drive immediately behind another vehicle. Pedestrians, will only hear the first vehicle, whose noise obscures that of the second, and often step out into the road as soon as the first one has passed.

40. HROs should be very careful when driving. Other drivers and pedestrians can be very unpredictable and accidents happen extremely quickly.

## 11. General dress and behaviour restrictions

41. Some security incidents are created when an HRO does something to offend local people. Often unintentional, these incidents can be avoided through sufficient attention to the local situation. Some countries, for example, may have restrictions on dress, for religious or other reasons. These restrictions are usually less strictly applied to foreigners than to nationals; however, HROs should make sure that they observe the minimum standards. It is important that guidelines be provided on local customs and things to do and not to do. Photography, for example, is often a sensitive point and staff members should avoid taking photographs, for whatever purpose, in front of Government buildings, airports, bridges, border crossings, military installations, or of soldiers and their vehicles.

## 12. Travel restrictions

42. In the context of a changing security situation, the direction of the field operation may choose to impose certain travel restrictions. Typically, those restrictions would involve limiting travel **at night** and requiring that HROs travel **in pairs**. In some situations it may be necessary for vehicles to travel **in convoys**. A radio communications network for the operation can allow the use of a check-in/check-out system whereby HROs leaving one location for another are required to inform the radio operator when they leave for a set destination and when they arrive. In this way the movements of HROs can be monitored and the location of each individual checked. As a rule, staff deployed to area offices should always make sure that their colleagues in the office know of their location at all times.

## 13. Emergency plans, knowing where to go

43. Every HRO should know what to do in the event of an escalation in the security situation. In particular, staff members should be given a list of **several places to which they should go** once a signal is given. It is important that an emergency plan provide several alternatives to HROs, in the event that one particular route is unusable. HROs should make sure that they know the way to these locations, particularly in the dark.

44. Emergency plans focus on getting staff members away from life-threatening situations as quickly as possible. Often such exit plans will mean trying to cross an international border out of the country or assembling at one of several points within the country at which security may be guaranteed, such as an airport.

45. Emergency contingency plans should be defined by the direction of the operation and the security officer, and should usually be developed in close collaboration with other humanitarian operations in the area.

## 14. Health

46. There are a number of precautions that can be taken with regard to health security. At the beginning of a field operation the needs assessment for the operation should anticipate the medical needs of staff members and should **identify the medical facilities available in the region** (doctors, hospitals). If the local facilities are not adequate, provision should be made for medivac (medical evacuation) arrangements in the case of an emergency, allowing staff members to be transferred by air to another country where better medical facilities are available.

47. HROs should make sure that they have received the various medical vaccinations for the region and that those vaccinations, such as hepatitis, which require a series of injections over a period of months are duly updated. Many regions of the world have problems with malaria, and staff should take prophylactics, at least for the first few months following arrival. Information should be provided on whether or not tap water can be consumed and on the cleanliness of fresh food sold locally.

48. Every HRO should receive **written guidelines on the prevalent illnesses** or other dangers to health, in the region. They should avoid unnecessary health risks, for example sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. They should be told how to recognize the symptoms of those illnesses in themselves or in their colleagues, and of what to do in the event of an emergency. Cerebral malaria, for example, is not uncommon in East Africa and can lead to death within 48 hours if not treated within the first day. Illness or accident as a result of psychological stress can occur in field operations, and staff should be familiar with the early indicators of this condition.

49. It is highly recommended that the members of a field operation be given **first aid training** relevant to the security situation in which they will be working. Each area office and every vehicle should be equipped with a **medical kit** and HROs should be familiar with its contents.

## 15. Property

### a. *Personal property*

50. UN staff members are insured for the theft or damage of their personal property and should ask the administrative officer of the operation for details on the particular **insurance coverage** from which they benefit. Such advice is important as the insurance policy may have a number of exclusion clauses (see below).

51. Care should be taken to keep valuable property (cameras, tape recorders, personal computers, etc.) locked away when not in use. Items should not be left in a vehicle as car locks are easily opened. HROs should use these items, and their cash, discreetly, in part to avoid offending the sensitivities of local people who may not be able to afford them, and in part to avoid attracting thieves. Each vehicle should be parked in the safest possible location or, if necessary, kept under surveillance.

52. In the event of an emergency evacuation, staff members may be required to leave behind the majority of their belongings. In order to facilitate subsequent compensation claims, each staff member should be asked to complete an inventory of

his or her belongings (see the example in **Appendix 2: “Inventory of Personal Belongings”**). This inventory should be sent to the organization’s Headquarters in Geneva or New York.

### ***b. UN property***

53. HROs will be given the use of UN property. Most notably, HROs may use UN vehicles and laptop computers. The operation should reconfirm that these items are routinely insured for damage and theft. The insurance policy used by the UN requires that the operation administration carry out an assessment of possible **negligence** on the part of the person using the equipment. There are several degrees of negligence and each one requires that the person deemed responsible becomes liable for a maximum amount. In the case of the theft or damage of a vehicle, for example, this amount can be US\$10,000. Negligence may be found if, for example, a vehicle was stolen while being used after a UN curfew and for non-work related activities. It may be quite unwise in some contexts to use UN vehicles at night for non-work related social activities.

54. Upon arrival in a field operation HROs should be informed of the specific rules involved in assessing negligence. In any case, care should be taken in the use and maintenance of all UN property. Regardless of liability issues, it may be some time before the operation is able to replace stolen or damaged equipment and the work of HROs will suffer without it.

## **16. Concluding comment**

55. As discussed above, it is the **responsibility of HROs to respect security guidelines**, to keep informed of the security situation, to exercise good judgement, and to be careful.

## Appendix 1 to Chapter XXIV

# United Nations Personal Data Form

Please fill out this form immediately and return it to the Chief of Operations for transmission to the Designated Official.

Thank you.

1. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_
  2. AGENCY: \_\_\_\_\_
  3. LAISSEZ-PASSER No.: \_\_\_\_\_ EXPIRY DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
NATIONAL PASSPORT No.: \_\_\_\_\_ EXPIRY DATE: \_\_\_\_\_
  4. NATIONALITY: \_\_\_\_\_
  5. BLOOD TYPE: \_\_\_\_\_ RHESUS: \_\_\_\_\_
  6. UNUSUAL MEDICAL CONDITION/NEEDS/ALLERGIES: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  7. PERSON TO BE NOTIFIED IN CASE OF EMERGENCY: \_\_\_\_\_  
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
TELEPHONE No.: \_\_\_\_\_
  8. ADDRESS IN COUNTRY OF OPERATIONS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
HOTEL/RESIDENCE: \_\_\_\_\_
  9. DIRECTIONS FOR LOCATING THAT LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  10. ARRIVAL DATE: \_\_\_\_\_
  11. ESTIMATED DEPARTURE DATE: \_\_\_\_\_
  12. I will keep the Designated Official informed about any changes of address/telephone during my stay in the country of operations.
- Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_ At: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Appendix 2 to Chapter XXIV

## United Nations Human Rights Field Operation

### Inventory of Personal Effects

NAME: _____
ID#: _____
TEL. OFFICE: _____
CALL SIGN: _____
ZONE: _____
RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: _____ _____
HOTEL NAME/ROOM No.: _____

NOTE : Any staff member wishing to obtain insurance for their personal property, including an automobile, can do so by contacting:

Eebert L. Jumism & Co  
100 Executive Drive  
West Orange, N.J. 07052 USA

# Inventories of Furniture, Household Effects, Automobiles and Valuables

Note: Please complete this form in the following order:

**A. FURNITURE AND HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS IN**

- |                  |                  |                 |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Living Room   | 5. Bedroom No. 3 | 9. Laundry      |
| 2. Dining Room   | 6. Bedroom No. 4 | 10. Balcony     |
| 3. Bedroom No. 1 | 7. Office        | 11. Other Rooms |
| 4. Bedroom No. 2 | 8. Kitchen       | 12. Garage      |

**B. AUTOMOBILE(S)**

**C. VALUABLES**

**D. CLOTHING**

Name: _____	EOD UN: _____
Functional Title: _____	Grade/Rank: _____
Address: _____	Date of Inventory: _____

Description of replacement items	Place of purchase	Date of purchase	Purchase cost (in currency acquired)	Local currency cost	US\$

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