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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

United Nations and humanitarian personnel operate in the most dangerous parts of the world. Over the past year and a half, humanitarian actors became the targets of non-State armed groups, violent extremists and criminals and fell victim to kidnapping, road traffic accidents and the collateral impact of conflict and terror. Security trends indicate little to suggest that the volatility seen today will decrease in the near future. Attacks against United Nations personnel, humanitarian workers and health-care workers in armed conflicts and other situations of violence reflected systemic disregard for international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

In the present report, an overview of the global security environment and its impact on the safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel from 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2021 are presented. The Organization's response on issues under the purview of the Department of Safety and Security and the United Nations security management system is also detailed, as are efforts to meet the challenges and demands for security management and enable United Nations operations worldwide amid the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The report includes observations and recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [75/125](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly, at its seventy-sixth session, a comprehensive and updated report on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel and on the implementation of the resolution. The Assembly also requested that the Secretary-General include in his report an assessment of the impact of safety and security risks on such personnel, and the development, implementation and outcomes of policies, strategies and initiatives of the United Nations system in the field of safety and security.

2. The present report covers the 18-month period from 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2021. It provides an overview of the global security environment, the associated security threats and risks facing United Nations personnel,¹ the Organization's responses and the security challenges that the Organization faces. The report concludes with observations and recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.

II. Security threats against United Nations personnel

A. Global security environment

3. Heightened volatility pervades the global security environment, with no sign of improvement for years to come. Alongside a once-in-a-century public-health emergency, the security consequences of which remain unclear, the reporting period saw an unprecedented level of population displacement and food insecurity, combined with debt crises and climate shocks.

4. The global economic downturn resulting from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic presented tremendous challenges for many Governments in meeting the basic needs of their populations, sustaining health-care and public service infrastructure and maintaining law and order. The COVID-19 crisis has markedly increased the public's economic discontent, resulting in a global surge in protests, civil unrest and political instability across many regions of the world.

5. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the global need for humanitarian assistance, while pandemic-related and travel restrictions have presented challenges for United Nations and humanitarian personnel in gaining access to populations in need. Forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2020 rose to 82.4 million, compared with 79.5 million at the end of 2019.² At the beginning of 2021, it was estimated that 235 million people around the world would need humanitarian assistance and protection.³ This is the highest number in decades. By mid-2021, 238 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance.⁴

¹ For the purpose of the present report, the term "United Nations personnel" refers to all personnel covered by the United Nations security management system, including United Nations system personnel, United Nations Volunteers, individually deployed military and police personnel in peacekeeping or special political missions, consultants, individual contractors, experts on mission and other officials with a direct contractual agreement with an organization of the United Nations system. The term does not refer to military members of national contingents or members of formed police units when deployed with their contingent.

² United Nations, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Global trends: forced displacement in 2020". Available at www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globaltrends/.

³ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Global Humanitarian Overview 2021". Available at www.unocha.org/global-humanitarian-overview-2021.

⁴ Ibid., "Global humanitarian overview 2021: May update". Available at: gho.unocha.org/monthly-updates/global-humanitarian-overview-may-update.

6. In order to support fundamental humanitarian needs, United Nations and humanitarian personnel have been working in active armed conflict and cross-border operations and faced significant security threats across the globe. In particular, they have faced considerable challenges in operating in countries with a complex or deteriorating security environment. As humanitarian organizations worked in deteriorating security situations, humanitarian actors became the targets of criminal activities. Criminal groups thrived, especially where informal economies prevailed. In some countries, the economic fallout resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with pre-pandemic challenges, led to new levels of social inequalities, weak governance and human rights abuses. This is reflected in the number of abductions of United Nations personnel.

7. In West Africa, Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province retained a significant presence throughout the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin regions and have increased attacks on humanitarian and United Nations personnel, severely limiting humanitarian access. In East Africa, conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia and intense violence in Cabo Delgado Province in Mozambique dramatically increased humanitarian need and posed new threats to humanitarian workers. In South-East Asia, 2021 saw a renewal of civil conflicts in some areas. Extremist groups continued to recruit, maintain networks and conduct sporadic attacks on symbolic targets, including locations frequented by foreigners. In Central Asia, during the reporting period, Afghanistan saw rapid advances by the Taliban. Those conditions presented mounting challenges for United Nations personnel and humanitarian responders, while creating new waves of displaced populations. In Latin America and the Caribbean, an increase in the number of instances of civil unrest and protests notwithstanding, the United Nations was not targeted directly in most cases. The Organization has, however, faced disruptions in travel and supply chains and office closures, with an impact on access to populations in need of humanitarian assistance. In high-income Western countries, home-grown extremism and nationalism continued to thrive owing to rising socioeconomic and political marginalization and grievances.

8. For the past 18 months, three major trends, reflecting the multisectoral aspects of security, have persisted, with adverse effects on the levels and types of threats against United Nations and humanitarian personnel carrying out their critical work in volatile settings.

9. First, the role of non-State armed actors continued to gain prominence. This has had a considerable impact not only on the livelihood of the population in areas under the control of non-State armed groups, but also on the humanitarian response operations and the security of United Nations and humanitarian personnel delivering assistance to civilians in those areas. While United Nations and humanitarian personnel have not been an explicit target of non-State armed actors, except for some extremist groups, they have experienced access constraints or have been harmed through indirect or collateral exposure to violence between armed groups and State security forces, or as collateral in instances in which violence is perpetrated against civilian populations.

10. Second, information technology, alongside its benefits, has posed threats associated with disinformation. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, disinformation campaigns grew, slowing down the vaccination process, discrediting public policy action and fuelling political instability, with adverse effects on the security and safety of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. Disinformation campaigns presented an emerging threat when aimed at discrediting the United Nations and specific United Nations entities and promoting anti-United Nations and anti-humanitarian organization sentiments. In the Central African Republic, such campaigns led to threats and violence against humanitarian actors and United Nations personnel, as

well as false accusations against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (see [S/2021/571](#)).

11. Third, the expansion of violent extremism across continents continued, in particular in areas lacking employment opportunities for young people and basic State services such as security. Owing to projected debt levels and financing gaps in developing and least developed countries, many Governments hosting United Nations operations faced mounting difficulties in funding their security forces and counter-terrorism operations, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa, where the activities of non-State armed groups were increasing. Certain violent extremist armed groups continued to issue propaganda casting humanitarian workers and organizations, including the United Nations, as legitimate targets and inciting its affiliates and sympathizers to conduct attacks against them.

12. During the reporting period, attacks against humanitarian workers and attacks on health care⁵ remained a significant concern. Between January 2020 and June 2021, the World Health Organization's Surveillance System for attacks on health care⁶ reported 920 attacks on health care in 16 countries and territories that resulted in 339 deaths and 597 injuries. Those figures marked a notable decrease compared with the previous reporting period (1,195 attacks, 378 deaths and 872 injuries). Attacks against humanitarian workers and health-care workers in armed conflicts and other situations of violence reflected systemic disregard for international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

B. Security incidents affecting the United Nations security management system⁷

1. Main types of incidents and their impact on United Nations personnel

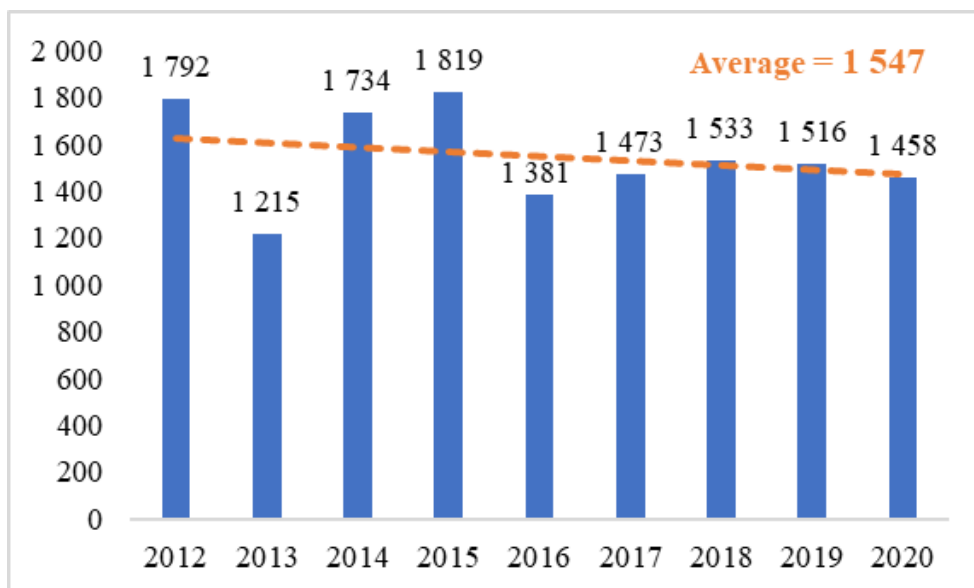
13. Overall, incidents relating to safety and security affected 1,458 United Nations personnel in 2020, compared with 1,516 in 2019, which represents a 3.8 per cent decrease, and is lower than the average number of personnel affected (1,547) between 2012 and 2020 (see figure I). In the first half of 2021, incidents related to safety and security affected 759 United Nations personnel compared with 646 in the first half of 2020.

⁵ World Health Organization refers to an attack on health care as any verbal or physical violence or obstruction or threat of violence that interferes with the availability, access and delivery of curative and/or preventive health services during emergencies.

⁶ Available at https://extranet.who.int/sssa/LeftMenu/Index.aspx?utm_source=Stopping%20attacks%20on%20health%20care%20our%20work.

⁷ The United Nations security management system is composed of all United Nations system organizations and other international organizations that have signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations on security management.

Figure I
United Nations personnel affected by safety and security incidents



14. In 2020, four United Nations personnel lost their lives as a result of acts of violence, three as a result of criminal acts and one as a result of armed conflict (see figure III and annex III). Of fatalities resulting from violence in 2020, there were no deaths of United Nations personnel attributed to terrorism (see figure III). Those casualties occurred in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Myanmar and the Sudan. The reduction in fatalities as a result of violence (see figure II) is due in part to the travel restrictions and quarantine measures implemented around the world in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first six months of 2021, three United Nations personnel lost their lives, all as a result of violence associated with crime, which is higher than the first six months of 2020 (two fatalities). Those fatalities occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Mali. This reflects a consistent trend in which crime-related incidents have accounted for a majority of United Nations personnel fatalities over the past eight years.

Figure II
Fatalities of United Nations personnel resulting from violence

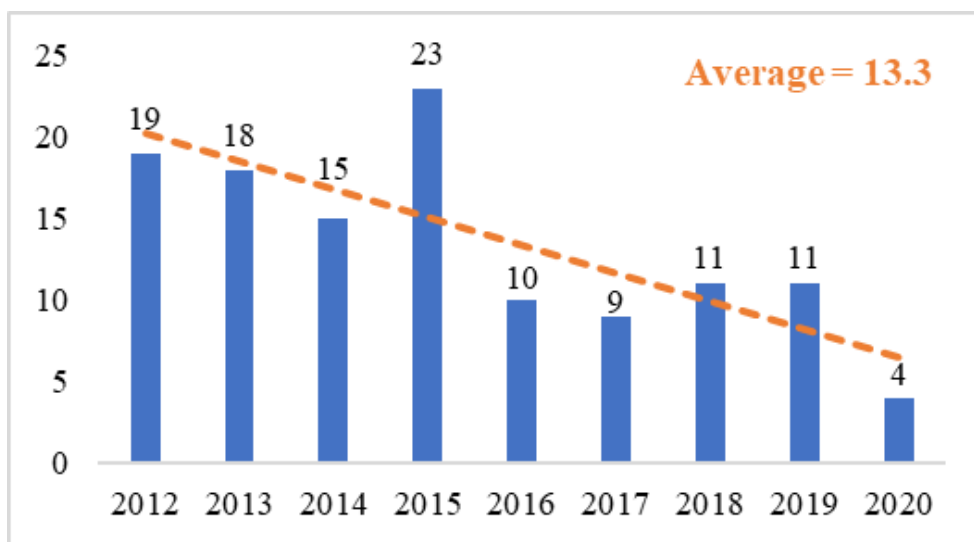
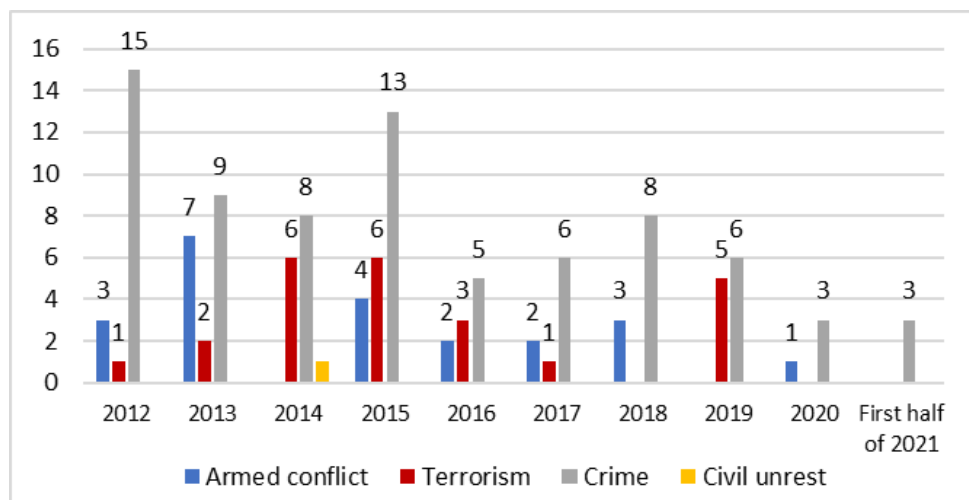
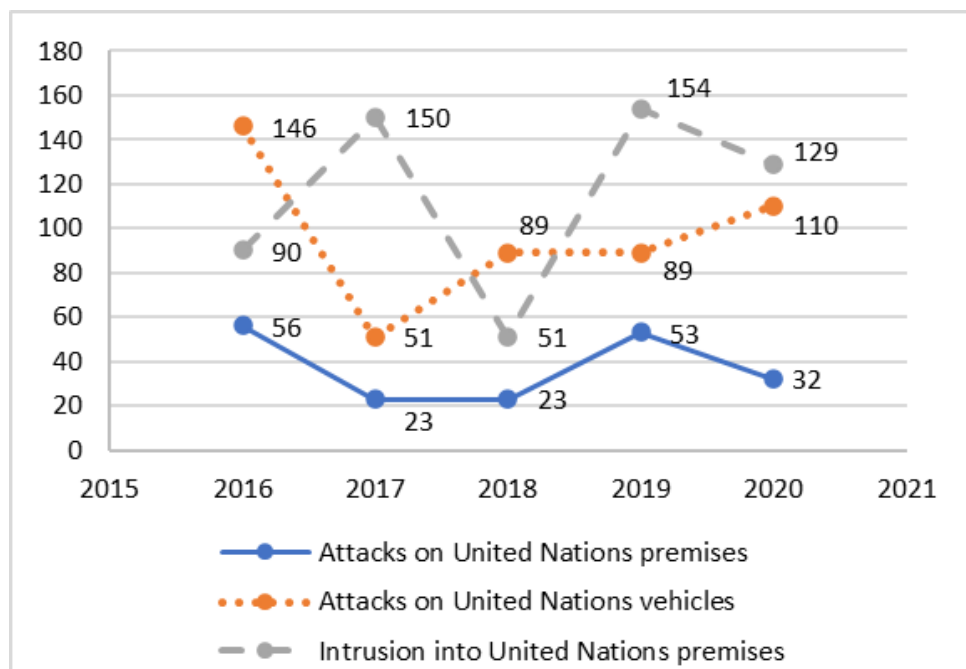


Figure III
Fatalities of United Nations personnel resulting from violence, by category of threat



15. In 2020, there were 32 direct attacks against United Nations premises, 110 attacks on United Nations vehicles and 129 intrusions into United Nations premises, totalling 271 incidents (see annex IV). Most of the attacks occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and South Sudan. Reports show that eight official United Nations vehicles were lost or damaged as the result of such attacks in 2020. For the first six months of 2021, there were 13 direct attacks on United Nations premises, 54 attacks against United Nations vehicles and 46 intrusions into United Nations premises, totalling 113 incidents. As a result of those attacks, nine official United Nations vehicles were lost or damaged.

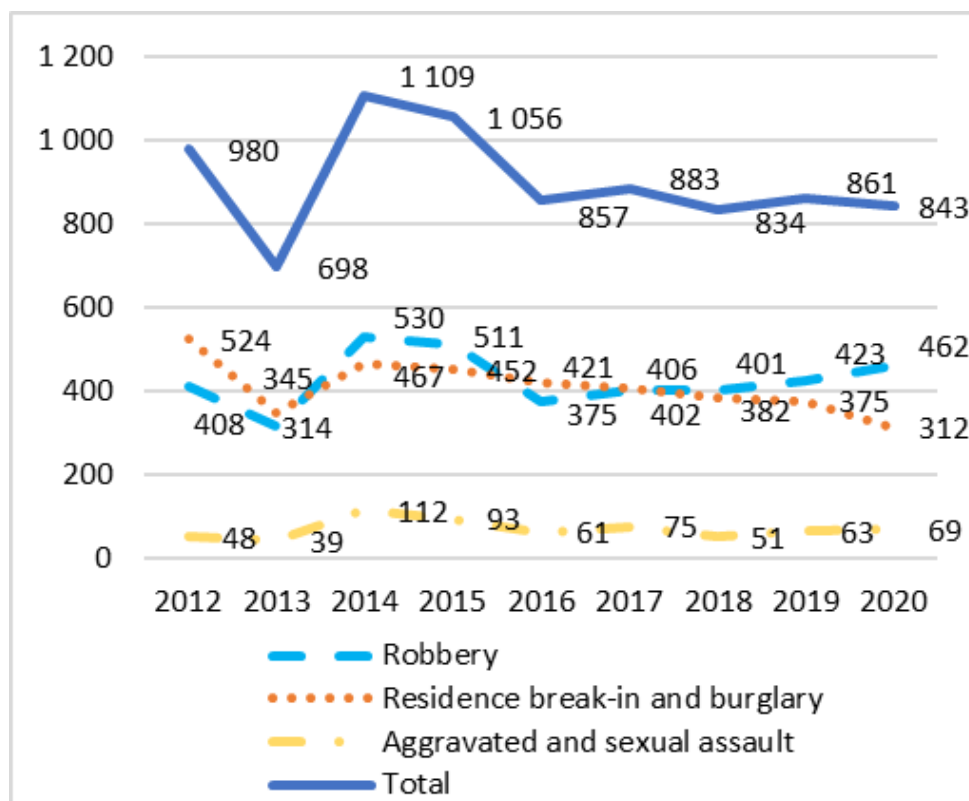
Figure IV
Attacks on United Nations premises and United Nations official vehicles



Crime

16. Of the 1,458 United Nations personnel affected by safety and security incidents in 2020, 843 (58 per cent) were victims of crimes, which included robberies, residence break-ins, burglaries, and aggravated and sexual assault (see figure V and annex III), a slight decrease compared with 861 in 2019. Of the United Nations personnel affected by crime during 2020, 554 (66 per cent) were locally recruited and 289 were internationally recruited.

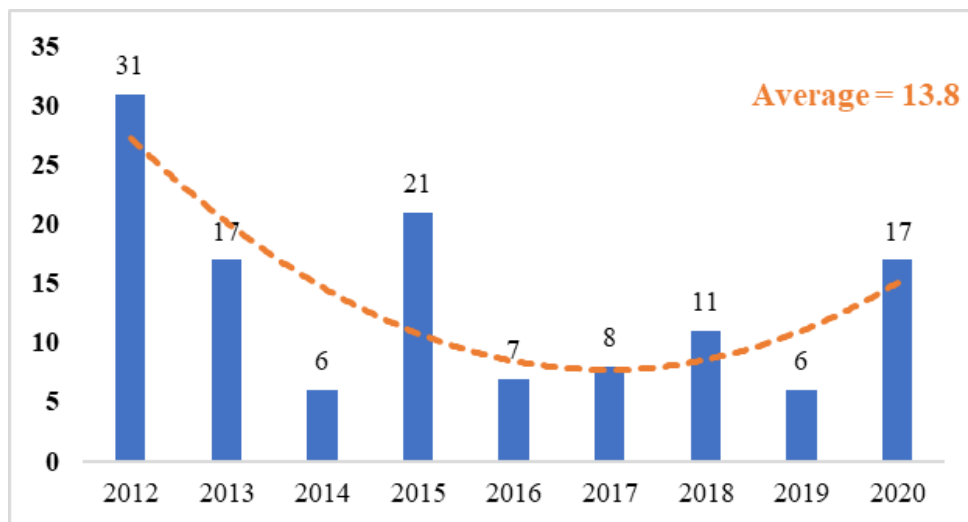
Figure V
United Nations personnel affected by crime, by category



Abductions

17. Seventeen United Nations personnel (15 men and 2 women) were abducted in 2020 (see figure VI and annex III), a significant increase compared with 6 abducted personnel in 2019. Of the 17 abductions, 1 evolved into a hostage situation when the hostage takers made their demands as conditions of the hostage's release. During the first six months of 2021, seven United Nations personnel (six men and one woman) were abducted, and four of those abductions evolved into hostage situations. The number of personnel abducted in 2020 was above the average of 13.8 during the period 2012–2020. For 2020, the majority of abductions occurred in Afghanistan, Nigeria and South Sudan. In Nigeria, a locally recruited Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) staff member was kidnapped and held for almost six months before being released. This occurred among a spate of hostage-taking incidents affecting other United Nations and humanitarian personnel. During the incident, UNHCR was able to deploy two security professionals to Nigeria to support efforts to secure releases, COVID-19 travel restrictions and quarantine requirements notwithstanding.

Figure VI
Abductions of United Nations personnel

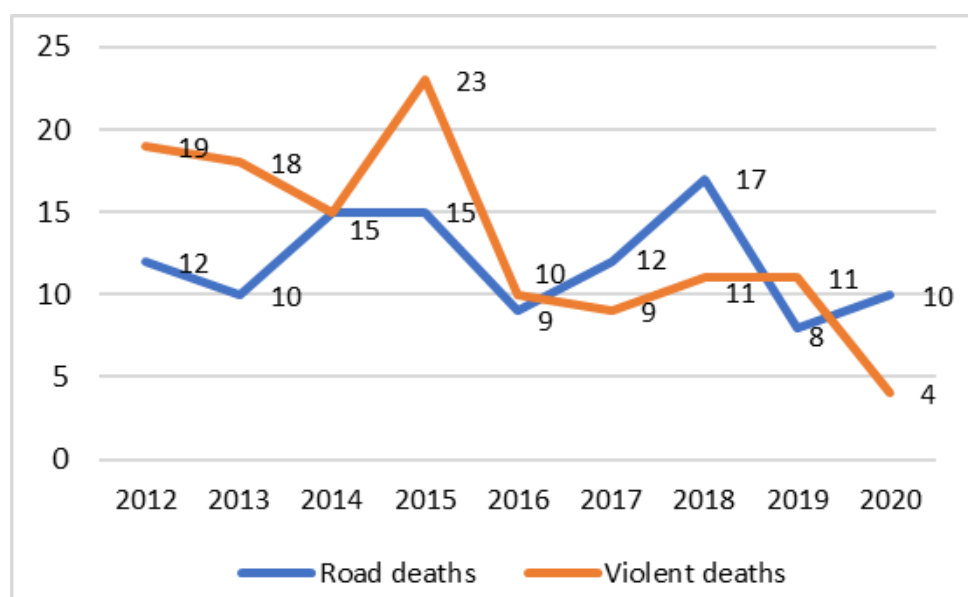


Safety-related incidents and road traffic incidents

18. The reporting period saw a decrease in the number of fatalities related to safety-related incidents. In 2020, 14 United Nations personnel lost their lives as a result of safety-related incidents, compared with 33 personnel in 2019. In 2020, the number of personnel fatalities as a result of road accidents increased slightly but remains lower than the number of fatalities in previous years. In the first six months of 2021, seven United Nations personnel lost their lives as a result of safety-related incidents, including five personnel who lost their lives as a result of road traffic accidents. In 2020, 89 personnel were injured as a result of safety-related incidents, compared with 100 in 2019.

19. In 2020, 29 non-United Nations personnel lost their lives as a result of road traffic incidents involving United Nations vehicles, compared with 11 in 2019. A total of 129 non-United Nations personnel were injured as a result of road traffic incidents involving United Nations vehicles, compared with 85 in 2019. In the first half of 2021, 14 non-United Nations personnel lost their lives and 86 were injured as a result of road traffic incidents involving United Nations vehicles, compared with 16 who lost their lives and 59 who were injured in the first half of 2020.

Figure VII
Fatalities of United Nations personnel resulting from road safety incidents, compared with those resulting from violence



Intimidation and harassment

20. There were 307 reported incidents of intimidation and harassment of United Nations personnel in 2020, a decrease from 327 incidents reported in 2019. In the first half of 2021, 168 United Nations personnel reported cases of intimidation and harassment. In 2020, 63 incidents affecting United Nations personnel were linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, comprising 61 incidents of intimidation and harassment, 1 case of abduction and 1 of an armed incident that resulted in the death of the staff member. The main drivers of the intimidation and harassment incidents in the first quarter were disinformation and xenophobic sentiments against United Nations personnel over concerns about spreading the virus, while the main cause of harassment and intimidation incidents in late 2020 was mainly frustration expressed by beneficiaries over pandemic-related restrictions.

Arrests and detention of United Nations personnel

21. In 2020, 84 United Nations personnel were arrested or detained by national authorities, compared with 86 in 2019. United Nations personnel were arrested on charges related to violations of national laws. In 10 cases, national authorities gave no reasons for the arrests. In the first six months of 2021, 54 personnel were arrested or detained. As at 1 July 2021, 16 United Nations personnel remained in detention.

Gender-related security incidents

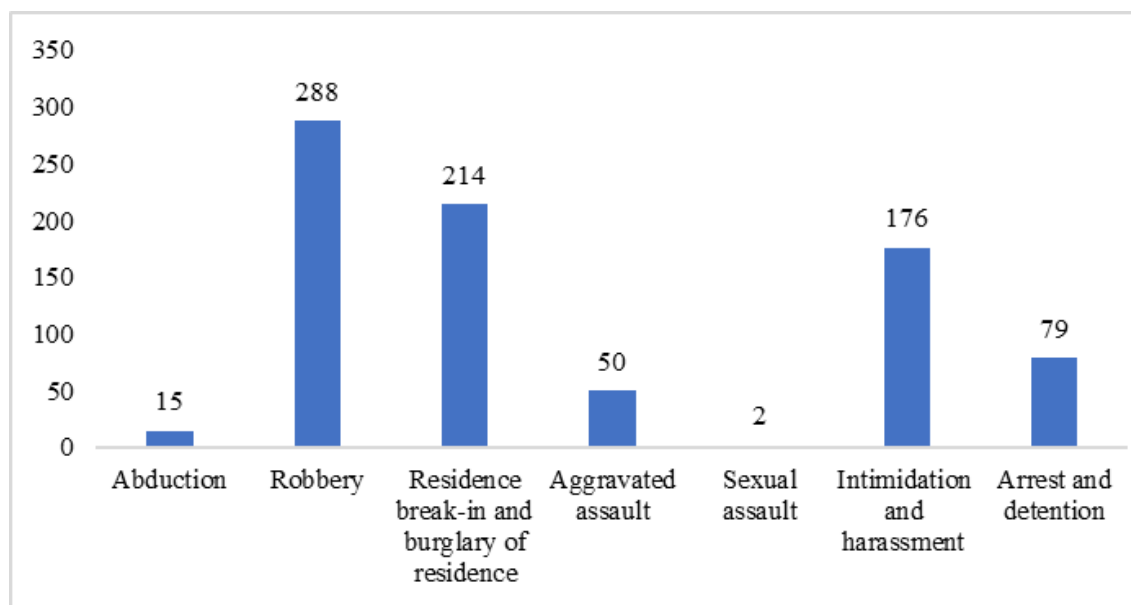
22. In 2020, female United Nations personnel accounted for 40.3 per cent of those affected by security and safety incidents. The number of reported sexual assaults of female United Nations personnel in 2020 decreased to 7 cases, from 12 in 2019. That number is below the average of 12.3 cases reported annually between 2013 and 2020. In the first six months of 2021, no sexual assault cases were reported. All United Nations personnel sexually assaulted in 2020 were women.

2. Security of locally recruited personnel

23. In 2020, locally recruited personnel represented approximately 68 per cent of United Nations personnel affected by safety and security incidents (990 of 1,458 incidents). All seven personnel killed as a result of violent acts in 2020 (in Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Myanmar and the Sudan) and in the first half of 2021 (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Mali) were locally recruited personnel. Locally recruited personnel were more affected in absolute numbers than internationally recruited personnel by security incidents resulting in fatalities and injuries from acts of violence, fatalities and injuries from safety-related incidents, abduction, robbery, residence break-ins and burglaries, aggravated assault, intimidation and harassment, and arrest and detention (see figure VIII and annex III). International personnel were affected to a greater extent, in absolute numbers, by sexual assault.

24. Following the promulgation of the United Nations security management policy on the security of locally recruited personnel in 2019, the Department of Safety and Security has made further efforts to increase awareness on security policy guidance and measures for the protection of locally recruited personnel, including relocation during crisis situations.

Figure VIII
Incidents affecting locally recruited personnel, 2020



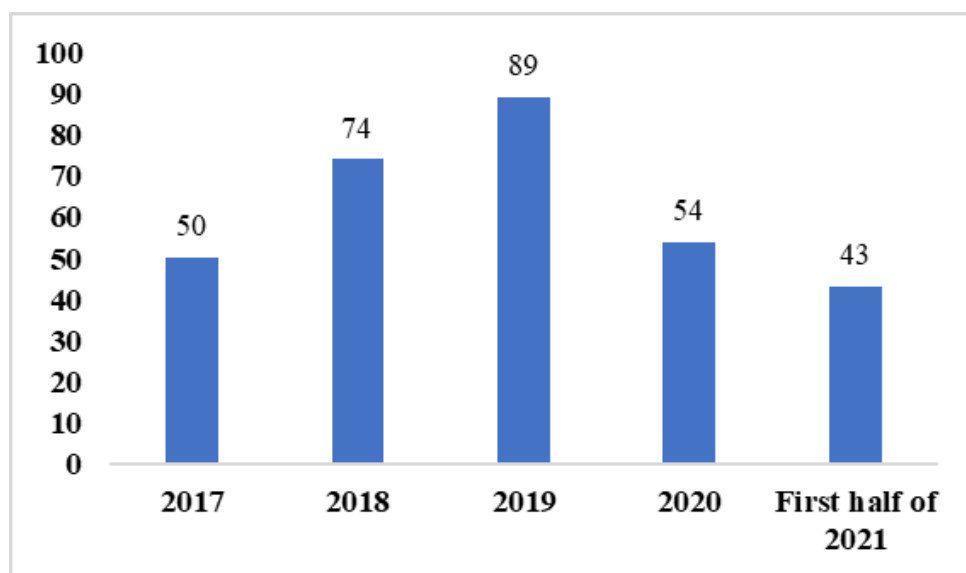
3. Impact of the global security environment on United Nations programmes

25. United Nations programmes continued amid deteriorating security conditions and COVID-19 pandemic waves, which was enabled through the application of an effective security risk management approach that supports the United Nations in considering how to operate in situations of insecurity. In many instances, a key mitigating measure identified was the deployment of additional security experts. The Department of Safety and Security therefore conducted 54 surge deployments of security personnel in 2020 and 43 surge deployments in the first half of 2021 (see figure IX and annex III) in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria and Yemen. However, pandemic-related travel restrictions resulted in a 40 per cent decrease in surge deployments of United Nations security professionals in 2020

compared with 2019. However, with the easing of COVID-19-related travel restrictions, the number of deployed security personnel in the first six months of 2021 reached 80 per cent of those in 2020. More broadly, the Department received sustained calls from United Nations humanitarian actors in complex emergencies, including the Tigray region of Ethiopia and Mozambique, not only to deploy security personnel, but also to do so more quickly and with closer attention to profiles and fit for the specific context, including more women and more analysts, which prompted a re-evaluation of the emergency security response approach.

Figure IX

Surge deployment of United Nations security professionals, 2017–2021



26. During the reporting period, the Department of Safety and Security enabled critical United Nations humanitarian operations in several parts of the world, including support for missions in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Turkey, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic. In 2020, the Department supported at least 61 field missions in areas of very high risk to enable critical United Nations programmes in those areas, including 34 missions in Yemen, 24 in Somalia and 3 in the Syrian Arab Republic.

27. The United Nations continued to adapt its mode of operations in order to continue humanitarian operations amid the COVID-19 pandemic and in a challenging operating environment. For example, between March and July 2020, UNHCR activated business continuity plans, with alternate means of communication and hotlines to maintain security support services and counselling to persons of concern.

C. Security incidents affecting humanitarian personnel of non-governmental organizations and other personnel

28. In most complex security environments, humanitarian personnel of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the area personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and peacekeepers work alongside United Nations personnel. Although abductions of United Nations personnel increased between 2019 and 2020, the number of overall safety and security incidents has been decreasing yearly. This is the opposite of the

trend witnessed for non-governmental implementing partners, in which both abductions and fatalities have increased over the past three years.

1. Impact of security threats on humanitarian personnel of non-governmental organizations

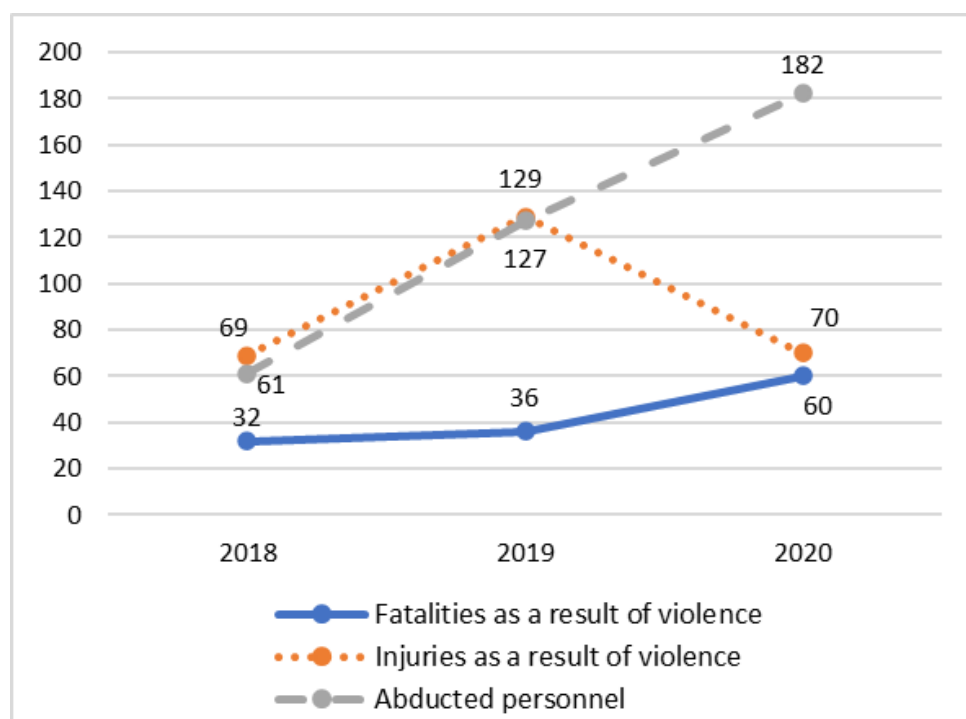
29. Critical incidents affecting humanitarian personnel of United Nations implementing partners increased from 567 in 2019 to 578 in 2020. Sixty NGO humanitarian personnel working in close cooperation with the United Nations were killed, compared with 36 in 2019, and 70 were injured, compared with 129 in 2019, as a result of acts of violence, and 182 were abducted, compared with 127 in 2019 (see figure X and annex IV).

30. In the first six months of 2021, 382 security incidents affecting NGO humanitarian personnel were reported: 41 personnel killed as a result of acts of violence, 68 personnel injured as a result of acts of violence, 126 abducted, 17 armed attacks on premises, 39 intrusions into premises and 91 armed attacks on vehicles.

31. As in previous years, NGOs and implementing partners shared reports on security incidents with the Department of Safety and Security on a voluntary basis. The data are likely to be incomplete and cannot be verified or compared with other existing databases based on different terminology of security and safety incidents and methodology for gathering data.

Figure X

Security incidents affecting personnel of non-governmental implementing partners, as reported to the United Nations Department of Safety and Security



2. Security incidents affecting the area personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East⁸

32. Employing some 32,000 personnel in five fields of operation, UNRWA delivers a range of humanitarian assistance to approximately 5.7 million Palestinian refugees.⁹ In 2020, one UNRWA area personnel died as a result of an act of violence, while no safety-related incidents resulted in fatalities. By way of comparison, there were no fatalities of area personnel in 2019. Twenty-eight area personnel were injured as a result of acts of violence in 2020, while 14 were injured as a result of safety-related incidents. Forty-three area personnel suffered assaults while carrying out their duties and 49 others suffered intimidation and harassment. There were no abductions or sexual assaults reported by personnel in 2020, while UNRWA reported two robberies involving two area personnel. In 2020, 149 area personnel (123 men and 26 women) were reportedly affected by safety and security incidents. This represents an increase of 48 UNRWA area personnel affected by safety and security incidents compared with 2020, due mainly to an increase in assaults and injuries resulting from acts of violence and safety-related incidents.

3. Comparison with peacekeepers¹⁰

33. While fatalities among uniformed peacekeepers as a result of malicious acts decreased to 12 in 2020, compared with 23 in 2019, there were 15 fatalities among uniformed peacekeepers due to malicious acts in the first six months of 2021. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali was the most affected, with the highest number of fatalities per capita due to malicious acts. The main security threats in peacekeeping environments came from armed groups, violent extremists and organized criminal gangs. Across 12 peacekeeping operations, uniformed peacekeepers are increasingly targeted by hostile actors with attacks involving artillery fire, mortars, rockets, small arms fire, various types of improvised explosive devices and complex attacks. The Department of Peace Operations is engaged in improving the safety and security of peacekeepers through accelerated implementation of the action plan to improve the security of peacekeepers and the Action for Peacekeeping initiative.¹¹

III. Strengthening the United Nations security management system

34. The United Nations security management system, led and coordinated by the Department of Safety and Security, must continually adapt to the challenges of operating in a highly complex and volatile security environment. The collaborative efforts are described below.

⁸ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) area personnel are not covered by the United Nations security management system.

⁹ The UNRWA data are based on security incidents reported to and recorded in the UNRWA security information management system.

¹⁰ For the purposes of present report, peacekeepers are personnel of contingent troops and formed police units. They are not covered by the United Nations security management system.

¹¹ See United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, "A4P+ priorities for 2021–2023". Available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/a4p_background_paper.pdf.

A. Enhancing security risk management capacity of security decision makers

35. In response to COVID-19-related restrictions, the Department of Safety and Security has adjusted its operational approaches and working methods, maximizing the use of technology to ensure business continuity and continuous support for security decision makers at the field level. During the reporting period, the Department delivered web-based mandatory security training to 104 designated officials and designated officials ad interim. The Department organized two virtual special briefing sessions for designated officials and security professionals on developments in Afghanistan and Myanmar, and web-based crisis management exercises, including mass casualty incident management planning, evacuation of United Nations security management system eligible family members and crisis management during natural disasters. The Department conducted simulation exercises, including complex scenarios for Kabul and other regions in Afghanistan.

36. The Department of Safety and Security provides advice on identifying areas of high security risk that require programme criticality assessments. Beyond security criteria and considerations, the United Nations system-wide programme criticality framework applies to countries with volatile environments. During the reporting period, the United Nations carried out full-fledged programme criticality assessments in Burkina Faso, Egypt, Haiti, Mozambique and Myanmar. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme criticality assessment has become a tool for supporting the Organization's business continuity and prioritization of critical programmes in the field.

B. Reinforcing security risk management strategies

1. Updating the framework of safety and security policies

37. The Inter-Agency Security Management Network continues to strengthen the system-wide security policy framework and remains engaged in security management issues at the strategic and technical levels. The number of Network meetings, including ad hoc sessions, doubled to adjust to emerging security issues and travel restrictions, with all meetings held virtually. In January 2021, the Network started to work on strategic communications as a support for security awareness, reinforced its attention on security training through the establishment of a standing coordination working group and established new guidance on security communications and technical guidance to support data management. The review of the implementation of the security incident reporting system and security risk management process remains ongoing. The Network maintains a rolling technical review of United Nations security management system guidance to ensure that policies and guidelines remain relevant and effective; it completed the review of four policies in 2021 in consultation with the field reference group established by the Department of Safety and Security. The Network revised the accountability framework, a key system-wide policy, which sets out the responsibilities of the major actors within the United Nations security management system. To ensure that security communications systems adapt to evolutions in telecommunications, the Network increased its support for the telecommunications security standards service, known as TESS+, which offers extensive support for field operations.

2. Effective risk management

38. The Department of Safety and Security facilitates the work of the United Nations, its Member States, and civil society by ensuring the full uninterrupted

protection of United Nations Headquarters and of special events held outside United Nations premises.

39. Following the explosion on 4 August 2020 in the port of Beirut, the Department of Safety and Security provided assessments of eight locations of United Nations entities in Beirut, including the World Food Programme (WFP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, to ensure that personnel could safely return to work. In Nigeria, the Department provided blast vulnerability assessments and related recommendations for four humanitarian hubs, in Abuja, Banki, Maiduguri and Ngala, following several violent extremist incidents in those areas.

3. Security training

40. The Department of Safety and Security and the United Nations security management system have focused on an overall strategy to prioritize training needs, requirements, standards and partnerships through improved coordination and governance. To promote further operational excellence, the Department repositioned its capabilities and oversight on training to ensure that training can adapt to the evolving needs of the integrated security workforce and the United Nations security management system. The Department has developed a road map outlining action to increase transparency and improve decision-making on security training and established a security training prioritization and governance mechanism in 2020 to define training priorities and associated resource requirements. In line with the departmental strategic plan, efforts are under way to complete an orientation pathway for the integrated security workforce, to include new personnel with diverse profiles and background in the security workforce and to promote greater consistency in following United Nations security policies and procedures across all duty stations.

41. One area of focus was to enhance the capacity of all United Nations personnel in terms of security management. As at 30 June 2021, 500,000 United Nations personnel and partners had completed the “BSAFE” training course, launched in 2018 to promote broader security awareness. The Safe and Secure Approaches to Field Environments and first responder training programmes, which are in-person training courses focused on the acquisition of technical and practical skills, were suspended in March 2020 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Safety and Security slowly resumed training where appropriate safety measures were in place.

42. The pause in the delivery of in-person training due to the COVID-19 pandemic allowed for a greater focus on updating training standards to address the evolving security context and ensure alignment with international best practices. As at 30 June 2021, organizations within the United Nations security management system delivering the Safe and Secure Approaches to Field Environments training programme had used the updated core modules focusing on personal security awareness and people-centred approaches.

43. In a rapidly evolving security environment, the capacity to provide quality assessments of security threats and to provide risk analysis is essential for security professionals in order to support decision makers. In February 2020, the Department of Safety and Security conducted one course on security analysis process and practice, certifying 24 course graduates from various United Nations agencies. The travel restrictions notwithstanding, the Department successfully conducted 38 security analysis process and practice online workshops and 152 security threat information webinars for security professionals and external partners.

4. Psychosocial response to critical incidents

44. The Department of Safety and Security, together with counsellors from other United Nations entities, coordinated an increased response to critical incidents globally and worked on emergency preparedness. This included the provision of counsellors to support personnel during various critical incidents, including violent extremist attacks in Mali, Nigeria and Somalia; political unrest in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia and Myanmar; natural disasters, such as the cyclone in Mozambique and the volcanic eruption in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the explosion in the port of Beirut; the detention of personnel in Ethiopia; and a hostage incident in Nigeria. The Department conducted 20,543 critical incident counselling sessions (compared with 10,889 in the previous reporting period) with affected United Nations personnel and their dependants and provided technical advice to 1,641 managers in the United Nations system. The demand for and delivery of psychosocial services during the reporting period increased exponentially. Globally, the Department's counsellors provided 58,422 psychosocial support services to personnel and their dependants (compared with 31,251 in the previous reporting period).

45. The Department of Safety and Security, in partnership with United Nations security management system members, continued to provide psychosocial support services to address the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on United Nations personnel. In-house counsellors, the costs for whom were shared with United Nations security management system members, engaged with the designated officials and the security management team to promote the integration of psychosocial services into business continuity plans.

C. Reform efforts of the Department of Safety and Security

46. In line with its 2020–2022 strategic plan, the Department has undertaken efforts to enable the delivery of United Nations programmes and operations during the COVID-19 pandemic to those in need, while supporting countries in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. In line with the reform of the United Nations development system, the United Nations security management system partners continued to enhance their support to the resident coordinators in fulfilling their security functions.

47. In line with the management reform initiatives on gender parity and on disability and inclusion, the Department of Safety and Security worked with United Nations security management system partners to strengthen the framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as on diversity and inclusion matters. The members of the United Nations security management system are working to increase gender parity, promoting a diverse and inclusive culture among security personnel and developing security practices and operational responses adapted to a diverse workforce. Some examples of their efforts in this area are: the adoption of a people-centred approach to security management; enhanced communication and awareness; the participation of field personnel in workshops in which half of those present were women; collaboration with the focal points for women on the development and diffusion of the Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System; and the development of a common roster. However, the path towards gender balance remains slow. The Department started work on an outreach strategy to broaden the skills and profile of its personnel, with diversity understood to be central to an effective and representative workforce. The Department also developed awareness on racism and on disability inclusion through its internal communication platforms. To strengthen decision-making and greater data access and sharing, in line

with the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere, a corporate performance measurement framework is being established.

D. Building collaboration

1. Security collaboration between the United Nations and host Governments

48. Host Governments have primary responsibility for the protection of United Nations personnel, premises and assets. Effective collaboration and engagement with host Governments remain key components of United Nations security management. The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security meets regularly with authorities of host Governments to ensure close collaboration through a common understanding of the sharing of situational awareness and threat and risk analysis, the coordination of prevention and risk mitigation measures and the management of security crises. During the reporting period, the Under-Secretary-General met the authorities of host Governments of 29 Member States to discuss security matters and briefed relevant committees of the General Assembly and groups of interested Member States. The COVID-19-related travel restrictions notwithstanding, the Under-Secretary-General visited and met the authorities of nine countries in which the United Nations is delivering humanitarian programmes and operations in high-risk areas.

2. Addressing impunity and promoting respect for the human rights, privileges and immunities of United Nations and associated personnel

49. The United Nations collaborates closely with host Governments, which have primary responsibility for protecting United Nations personnel deployed in their territory and for ensuring respect for the privileges and immunities of those personnel. The Organization encourages Member States to abide by relevant international instruments. To date, only 95 States are parties to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel of 1994, and only 33 States are parties to the Optional Protocol thereto of 2005.

50. The Department of Safety and Security, in collaboration with United Nations system organizations, is undertaking a review of the standard operating procedures on the victims of violence registry for fatalities in service, to ensure their effective implementation. The Department has contributed to the efforts of the Department of Peace Operations to develop standard operating procedures for addressing serious crimes against peacekeepers and United Nations personnel deployed in peacekeeping missions.

3. Strengthening partnerships with non-governmental organizations

51. The Department of Safety and Security strengthened collaboration with NGOs under the Saving Lives Together framework in different regions of the world. For example, in the Darfur region of the Sudan, the Department fielded a humanitarian security support team that provides dedicated support to 40 international NGOs through information-sharing, coordination, training, operations, logistics, relocation and evacuation support, in a context in which very few of the international NGOs present have dedicated security personnel. In Nigeria, the newly established security information and operations centre worked closely with several humanitarian actors under the Saving Lives Together framework, especially in north-eastern regions that are facing a volatile security situation and access challenges. That close collaboration improved the operational flexibility of Saving Lives Together members, enabling informed decisions on alternate ways of working and improving the coordination of responses to emergencies. In Burkina Faso, the Department carried out joint assessment missions with United Nations security management system organizations

in the Sahel region and collaborated with NGOs through security information-sharing, alerts, advisories and notices, strengthening the communication infrastructure of Saving Lives Together partners. In Bangladesh and Myanmar, the Department has enhanced cooperation on security matters with NGOs under the Saving Lives Together framework in response to political and security developments in those countries.

52. The Saving Lives Together collaboration helped to provide support to NGOs, including assistance in crisis situations and in the relocation and medical evacuation of personnel when feasible. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Safety and Security, with the support of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and WFP, established a mechanism for sharing biweekly situation reports and providing Saving Lives Together partners with information regarding medical support and WFP flight arrangements.

IV. Strategic challenges and opportunities

53. Security management remained key in enabling the United Nations to continue its work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Safety and Security found that a virtual meeting format made inter-agency coordination and cooperation more feasible and brought headquarters teams closer to practitioners in the field. The shift to virtual meetings also allowed the Department to provide business continuity management training, offering stress counselling sessions to personnel with heightened psychological stress and hosting virtual townhall meetings to update personnel on the most recent situation.

54. To strengthen future preparedness, the Department of Safety and Security collected lessons learned from field operations in establishing and modifying security measures to respond to significant changes, including COVID-19-related developments. Key best practices that were identified included effective business continuity and decision-making by security decision makers, while lessons learned highlighted logistical challenges and rising demands for psychosocial support to personnel.

55. The Department of Safety and Security, with United Nations security management system partners, continued to promote further strategic partnerships. This year, the Department launched its annual international security symposium as a forum for United Nations entities, regional organizations, other intergovernmental organizations, think tanks and civil society members to discuss key strategic issues related to the global security environment and security impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first symposium, co-hosted by the Department and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank on 8 June 2021, was held virtually, with more than 80 participants. In March and June 2021, the Department participated in a discussion series on ensuring the protection, safety and security of humanitarian workers and medical personnel in armed conflicts, organized by the European Union and like-minded Member States. In April 2021, the Department participated in a meeting of the Group of Friends on the Safety and Security of United Nations Peacekeepers, organized by Brazil, China, Indonesia and Rwanda. This initiative is intended to strengthen collaborative efforts to improve the safety and security of peacekeepers.

V. Observations and recommendations

56. **The global security environment remains unpredictable and marked by enduring and emerging challenges. Threats that were not traditionally considered security issues, such as climate change, large-scale public health**

emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, disinformation and populism, have resulted in various forms of violence and chaos across the world. If the underlying causes of insecurity, namely, structural socioeconomic inequalities and the secondary economic and humanitarian impacts of the pandemic are not addressed, then the threat of violent extremism, civil unrest, crimes and armed conflict will remain. It is in this highly volatile and unpredictable global security context that United Nations and humanitarian personnel are carrying out their critical work in humanitarian response, peace, security and development. This reality continued to underpin the approach to security that the United Nations took in 2020 and 2021: because the needs are so great, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations have found ways to manage risk and maintain operations, even in the most violent and insecure places.

57. United Nations and humanitarian personnel continue to risk their lives to bring aid and hope to those in despair. They have prevented the worst outcomes in dire humanitarian situations. In the past 18 months, 7 United Nations personnel and a reported 101 NGO humanitarian personnel have lost their lives as a result of violence. I am deeply saddened by these deaths and express my sincere condolences to the bereaved families. I condemn, in the strongest terms, all forms of violence against United Nations and humanitarian personnel. The legacies of these fallen brave men and women live on in our commitment to continue to work, even in dangerous places, to create a better world. They embodied the essence of multilateralism as they supported Member States in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and in striving to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

58. I am deeply concerned by the sharp rise in the number of abductions of United Nations and humanitarian personnel, with 17 abduction incidents affecting United Nations personnel in 2020, more than double the number of abductions in 2019. Similarly, the reported number of NGO humanitarian personnel abducted rose to 182 in 2020 compared with 127 in 2019. Moreover, the continuous increase in the number of injuries of United Nations personnel as a result of violence is a cause for concern, with 100 incidents in 2020 compared with 92 in 2019. The marked increase in the number of attacks against United Nations vehicles and those of humanitarian NGOs reflects a worrying trend, with 110 attacks against United Nations vehicles in 2020 compared with 89 in 2019, and 166 attacks against vehicles of humanitarian NGOs in 2020, compared with 159 in 2019.

59. Security management is a key enabler for the delivery of United Nations programmes and operations as the Organization strives “to stay and deliver” even in the world’s most volatile places, to help those in dire need. To meet continuously rising demands, the Department of Safety and Security must continually evolve and ensure nimble and flexible approaches to security management; this reality has underpinned the Department’s work on a new security risk management tool that is faster and more interactive and useful to those working across the spectrum of United Nations operations. With the support of the United Nations security management system, the Department is committed to providing effective security support through security analysis and advice, security planning and training, and effective data management with a new approach that places people at the centre of security risk management. Lessons from Ethiopia, Mozambique and the Sahel during the reporting period clearly point to the need for more agility in responding to humanitarian emergencies and an approach that allows for personnel with the right profiles to be deployed rapidly. The United Nations is proactively working to make its security workforce more diverse. I am convinced that a workforce with more

women, more balanced geographic representation and more diversity of experience and perspectives will drive excellence and enable the United Nations to respond more effectively and efficiently to evolving diverse threats.

60. In today's highly complex security environment, partnership is key to addressing multidimensional security threats linked closely to other COVID-19-related challenges. Aside from closer collaboration with host Governments and humanitarian partners, I underscore the importance of strategic partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations and other international partners. I welcome the renewed commitments of Member States and host Governments to strengthening further strategic partnerships with the United Nations on the safety and security of United Nations and humanitarian personnel.

61. The Department continuously realigns its resources and recalibrates its security management approaches to the emerging new reality of global security. I call upon Member States to ensure that security costs are sustained and maintained as an integral part of United Nations mandate consideration and programme planning.

62. I remain deeply concerned by the systemic disrespect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and by impediments to the provision of humanitarian assistance in accordance with humanitarian principles. I stress the need for safe and unhindered access for humanitarian relief and the obligation of Governments and parties to armed conflict to respect and protect humanitarian relief personnel, and to allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is impartial in character and provided without any adverse distinction. Intentional attacks on personnel and installations involved in humanitarian assistance in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations may constitute a serious violation of international humanitarian law. I urge Governments to bring to justice the perpetrators of such violations. I welcome the efforts of Governments to address impunity for serious crimes against United Nations and humanitarian personnel.

63. I recommend that the General Assembly remain engaged on the issue of the safety and security of United Nations personnel and continue to provide full support to the United Nations security management system.

Annex I

United Nations personnel affected by safety and security incidents

Category of safety and security incidents	Number of personnel affected							2021 (first six months)
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Fatalities resulting from acts of violence	15	23	10	9	11	11	4	3
Fatalities resulting from safety-related incidents	15	16	11	13	20	33	14	7
Injuries resulting from acts of violence	65	99	70	70	67	92	100	53
Injuries resulting from safety-related incidents	101	130	93	111	114	100	89	66
Abduction	6	21	7	8	11	6	17	7
Robbery	530	511	375	402	401	423	462	260
Residence break-in and burglary of residence	467	452	421	406	382	375	312	122
Aggravated assault	104	81	44	47	41	51	62	19
Sexual assault	8	12	17	28	10	12	7	–
Intimidation and harassment	295	405	231	316	391	327	307	168
Arrest and detention	128	69	102	63	85	86	84	54
Total	1 734	1 819	1 381	1 473	1 533	1 516	1 458	759

Annex II

Attacks on United Nations premises and official vehicles

<i>Category of security incidents</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021 (first six months)</i>
Attacks on United Nations premises	56	23	23	53	32	13
Attacks on United Nations vehicles	146	51	89	89	110	54
Intrusion into United Nations premises	90	150	51	154	129	46
Total	292	224	163	296	271	113

Annex III

United Nations civilian personnel affected by security incidents, 2020

<i>Category of security incident</i>	<i>Number of personnel affected</i>	<i>Recruited internationally</i>	<i>Recruited locally</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Number of countries</i>	<i>Circumstances of security incidents</i>
Fatalities resulting from acts of violence	4	—	4	4	—	4	Crime (3); armed conflict (1)
Fatalities resulting from safety-related incidents	14	3	11	10	4	12	Road traffic accidents(10); aviation catastrophe (1); other safety-related incidents (3)
Injuries resulting from acts of violence	100	25	75	80	20	43	Crime (all)
Injuries resulting from safety-related incidents	89	13	76	68	21	54	Road traffic accidents (71); other safety-related incidents (18)
Abduction ^a	17	2	15	15	2	10	One personnel member remains in captivity
Robbery ^b	462	174	288	249	213	77	
Residence break-in ^c and burglary of residence ^d	312	98	214	172	140	69	
Aggravated assault ^e	62	12	50	41	21	29	
Sexual assault	7	5	2	0	7	5	
Intimidation ^f and harassment ^g	307	131	176	153	154	63	
Arrest and detention ^h	84	5	79	78	6	20	Personnel (3) remained in detention as at 1 July 2021
Total	1 458	468	990	870	588		

^a Act of restraint through the use of, or the threat of the use of, force or through fraudulent persuasion, including hostage-taking involving demands as conditions for liberation, executed by non-State actors.

^b Act or instance of unlawfully taking property through the use of violence or the threat of the use of violence.

^c Unauthorized and forceful entry with intent to commit a felony or a crime aggravated by use of force or physical assault.

^d Unauthorized and forceful entry with intent to commit a felony or crime.

^e Unlawful act that places personnel, without consent, in fear of immediate bodily harm or battery.

^f Act of making someone timid or fearful or of deterring by threats.

^g Act of systematic or continued unwanted and annoying actions that serve no legitimate purpose, causing substantial emotional distress.

^h Act or acts executed by State actors.

Annex IV

Critical security incidents affecting personnel of United Nations implementing partners, as reported to the Department of Safety and Security

<i>Category of security incident</i>	<i>Number of personnel affected</i>			
	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021 (first six months)</i>
Personnel who lost their lives as a result of acts of violence	32	36	60	41
Personnel injured as a result of acts of violence	69	129	70	68
Abducted personnel	61	127	182	126
Armed attacks on premises	21	11	27	17
Intrusion into premises	59	105	73	39
Armed attacks on vehicles	72	159	166	91
Total	314	567	578	382

Annex V

Security incidents affecting area personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Category of security incident	Number of area personnel affected		
	2019 ^a	2020	2021 (first six months)
Fatalities resulting from acts of violence	—	1	—
Fatalities resulting from safety-related incidents	—	—	—
Injuries resulting from acts of violence	18	28	4
Injuries resulting from safety-related incidents	5	14	5
Abduction	1	—	—
Robbery	1	2	—
Residence break-in	—	1	—
Aggravated assault	12	43	9
Sexual assault	—	—	—
Burglary of residence	—	—	—
Intimidation	58	49	39
Harassment	—	—	—
Arrest and detention	7	11	7
Missing personnel	—	—	—
Theft	—	—	—
Arson	—	—	—
Fire	—	—	—
Armed conflict	—	—	—
Explosive remnants of war	—	—	—
Vandalism	—	—	—
Road traffic accidents	—	—	—
Intrusion into United Nations premises	25	15	20
Others	—	—	—
Total	126	164	84

^a The differences shown in annex V of [A/75/246](#) and in the present table in the number of incidents in each category for 2019 are due to the revision of and improvement in data collection and recording undertaken by UNRWA.