

Clean up the UN.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/513793.html>

NYTimes. 08 April 2004.

For the first time since last May, word came on Tuesday that U.S. forces were engaged in serious combat in Iraq, this time against Iraqi insurgents who attacked marines in a city southwest of Baghdad, and against an armed Sunni resistance in the town of Falluja. Reports of significant casualties on both sides in the pitched battle in the city of Ramadi were a grim reminder of how badly the United States needs a strong, credible and engaged United Nations.

Unfortunately, not only is the role of the United Nations still unsettled; the world organization is also suffering from two self-inflicted wounds.

One is a kickback scandal of multibillion-dollar proportions swirling around the UN-run oil-for-food program that kept ordinary Iraqis from starving during the long years of punishing economic sanctions.

The other is the recent finding by an independent investigative panel that oversights in UN security management may have worsened the death toll in last August's terrorist bombing of the Baghdad headquarters.

Urgent steps, including high-level demotions and dismissals, are already under way to address the security failures. UN officials returning to Iraq face unavoidable risks, but everything that can be done to make them safer must be done. Ferreting out the murky details of the financial scandal, and meting out appropriate punishments, is no less urgent.

At the heart of the scandal are reports that Iraq collected billions of unmonitored dollars from oil surcharges and kickbacks for awarding consumer goods contracts under the oil-for-food program. UN officials clearly failed to supervise effectively the roughly \$10 billion a year in transactions and may have been involved in illicit deals.

The oil-for-food program began in the mid-1990s, at Washington's behest, as a way to maintain political support for sanctions in the face of Iraqi civilian suffering. It seems to have fairly well served the limited goals of keeping sanctions intact enough to prevent Iraq from rebuilding unconventional weapons and of easing the burdens on ordinary Iraqis. But exporting the oil and buying the consumer goods required working with a corrupt Iraqi government, with Security Council members eager to maximize commercial gains and with some of Iraq's less than scrupulous neighbors.

UN officials have been reporting corruption in the program for years, but the Security Council never insisted on a thorough cleanup. Washington acquiesced, since the faulty program was the only way to maintain support for the sanctions. Now there is finally some political will to investigate, and details of the corruption are emerging from documents seized by American occupation authorities in Iraq. The UN investigation can be credible only if it is independent of Security Council control. The investigators must put aside diplomatic niceties and concentrate on cleansing the UN's reputation.

Scotland on Sunday print print close
Bosnia sex trade shames UN

Sun 9 Feb 2003.

This article:<http://news.scotsman.com/international.cfm?id=160672003>

The Balkans:<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=765>

DOMINIC HIPKINS IN ZAGREB

A SENIOR United Nations official is demanding that her colleagues involved in the sex trade in Bosnia should be stripped of their immunity and prosecuted.

Madeleine Rees, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Bosnia, has broken ranks to demand that UN officials, international peacekeepers and police who are involved in sex crimes be brought to justice in their home countries.

Speaking exclusively to Scotland on Sunday, the British lawyer has also launched an outspoken attack on her former boss. She accuses Jacques Paul Klein, the former head of the UN Mission in Bosnia, of not taking UN complicity in the country's burgeoning sex trade seriously enough.

In recent years there has been a massive increase in the trafficking of women in Bosnia, including girls as young as 12. The women are taken from their homes in eastern Europe by organised criminal gangs and brought to Bosnia, where they are forced into prostitution. The trade in these so-called 'sex slaves' hardly existed until the mid-1990s. It was fuelled by the arrival of tens of thousands of predominantly male UN personnel in the wake of the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord by Bosnia, Croatia and Yugoslavia in 1995.

Rees said: 'Visiting brothels where women have been gang-raped into submission, into slavery, is not part of the UN's mandate.

'Without an enforceable code of conduct, immunity often means impunity. We should look at ways of waiving that immunity.

'I would be very happy to see the possibility of prosecutions for rape or assault in the UK. There is no question this should happen.'

Rees, who has served in Bosnia since 1998, said she had encountered stiff opposition from western officials in her attempts to tackle the trafficking of women.

'They don't want to know about it,' she said.

'There is this whole 'boys will be boys' attitude about men visiting brothels. There's a culture inside the UN where you can't criticise it. That goes all the way to the top.'

Referring to Klein, she added: 'He doesn't take this issue at all seriously.'

Last year, Rees testified in support of Kathryn Bolkovac, a UN police officer who was sacked for exposing the sexual abuse of women and children in Bosnia by her colleagues.

Bolkovac's former employer DynCorp, an American security firm which supplied staff to the UN, was forced to pay £110,000 in compensation.

The chairman of the British employment tribunal which heard the case described DynCorp as 'callous, spiteful and vindictive'.

Bolkovac had revealed UN peacekeepers went to nightclubs where young girls were forced to dance naked and have sex with customers, and that UN personnel and international aid workers were linked to prostitution rings in the Balkans. At the time, Rees described it as 'the

biggest cover-up I have ever seen", adding that she believed 30% of those visiting Bosnia's brothels were UN personnel, peacekeepers or aid workers.

DynCorp insists it has the highest ethical standards of business "and encourages employees to speak openly".

However, Rees said the private defence contractors, whose British office is based in Salisbury, should be banned from the country.

"DynCorp... should not be allowed anywhere near Bosnia," she said.

In January, a 500 strong European Union police force replaced the UN's 1,800 member multinational International Police Task Force (IPTF).

Dedicated anti-trafficking teams were formed and assigned to raid nightclubs across Bosnia suspected of operating forced prostitution rackets.

Rees said the counter-trafficking efforts had mostly been a failure. "They were basically for show and completely amateurish," she said.

Referring to the EU police force, Rees added: "They are still very much on probation.

These men must understand that going into brothels is illegal in Bosnia. The sex is not consensual if the woman is a 13-year-old girl trafficked from Moldova."

Although there have been many cases of police officers being sent home in disgrace for their involvement in the sex trade, the UN can only remove them from service and is powerless to prosecute them. It is up to member countries to take any further action.

Rees said: "People will say the UN is not practising what it preaches. It is double standards, and it looks like western imperialism. Brothel raids find UN police inside, and then no one is prosecuted. The UK is prosecuting no one.

"If you send people home, countries get wild. But if you don't enforce the rules, you can't serve in the United Nations."

Human Rights Watch is equally downbeat in its assessment.

A spokesman for the organisation said: "Foreign nationals serving in Bosnia enjoy almost complete immunity. It was assumed countries would prosecute and discipline their citizens upon their return home from for crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This has rarely happened in practice."

Soldiers from S-FOR, or Stabilisation Force, Bosnia's 18,000 strong Nato-led peacekeeping force, were granted "immunity from personal arrest or detention" by the November 1995 Dayton Treaty which authorised their deployment.

S-FOR troops are banned from attending brothels but Rees said the marketing strategy of suspected new brothels opening near S-FOR bases makes it clear who they are catering for.

"Outside the Russians' base, there is a brothel called Odessa," she explained. By the Americans', its Texas or Philadelphia. There's even an El Cid near the Spanish base. While there are foreign troops in Bosnia, there will be always demand for trafficked women."

Last night, Jan Oskar Solnes, spokesman for the European Union Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, said: "Its correct we have diplomatic immunity, but I imagine any incident [of

sexual misconduct] would be a personal rather than professional matter.

"We have a zero tolerance approach to this issue and anyone involved will be removed from the mission."

Kirsten Haupt, spokeswoman for the United Nations Liaison Office (UNLO) in Bosnia, dismissed Rees's claim that Jacques Paul Klein had not taken the illegal sex trade seriously.

She said: "All cases have been thoroughly investigated. We have sent a number of officers home. There is absolutely no toleration of a 'boys will be boys' attitude here."

Klein left Bosnia on February 1 and is no longer working for the UN. He is understood to be on holiday in the United States, and could not be contacted by Scotland on Sunday.

Yesterday, a spokesman for DynCorp said: "We do not make it a practice to comment on opinions.

"However, we are familiar with previous public statements Ms Rees has made about involuntary servitude and DynCorp continues to share her concerns for women held against their will in Bosnia, just as we condemn all human rights abuses anywhere in the world."

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Explosive growth internationally in trafficking of women and children for sex trade

http://www.wsws.org/articles/2000/jun2000/traf-j08_prn.shtml

By Julie Hyland. 8 June 2000

Economic and social breakdown has fuelled an explosion in the trafficking of women and children internationally for the sex trade, according to recently published reports.

Last month the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported that sex trafficking in Kosovo had mushroomed since the end of NATO's bombing of Serbia and accused the UN and other agencies of fuelling a trade in forced prostitution. The IOM complain that UN and international aid agency staff are frequent visitors to the province's burgeoning brothel trade, disguised as bars and nightclubs. Many of the women have been press-ganged into sex work. Pasquale Lupoli, IOM's head in Kosovo, said the organisation had rescued more than 50 women in the province since last October, but that figure was just "the tip of the iceberg".

According to the IOM, more than 50 percent of the women forced to work as prostitutes in Kosovo are from the former Soviet republic of Moldova and more than two-thirds have never worked in prostitution before. Nearly all had been promised decent employment in the West, but once they left home their passports were taken from them and they were sold to pimps for between \$500 and \$1,500.

Lupoli said that such trafficking is increasing internationally. The IOM estimates that up to 500,000 women a year are brought into Western Europe and forced into the sex industry. Other estimates place the figure as high as one million. Increasingly restrictive immigration laws in the West have helped to fuel the trade, Lupoli continued, as people desperate to leave conditions of poverty and deprivation resort to illegal means and criminal gangs.

Those traded come from some of the poorest regions in the world. In the US, for example, an estimated 50,000 women are trafficked every year from "feeder" points in the Ukraine, Albania, the Philippines, Thailand, Mexico and Nigeria. The problem is growing in

scope as the number of countries facing similar catastrophic declines in living standards rises. At the centre of the recent growth in trafficking has been the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European regimes. The reality of capitalist restoration in these countries is illustrated by the fact that women from the former Stalinist-ruled countries form a large proportion of those being trafficked to the West. A survey on forced prostitution in Britain found that many of the women involved were originally from the Ukraine. An estimated half a million women have left the former Soviet republic, which has a 70 percent unemployment rate, since 1991. Research by the University of North London's Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit surveyed immigration officers, customs officials and three-quarters of the police forces in England and Wales. It found that up to 1,400 women were being forcibly trafficked in England's sex trade. In London's back street brothels, six out of ten women are trafficked. They are deprived of their passports and must work for up to 17 hours a day. They often end up earning little or nothing, as they are told they must repay thousands of pounds in accommodation, food and travel costs to the gangs that brought them into the country and the brothel keepers-a modern day variant of debt bondage. Violence and intimidation prevent them from absconding. Trafficking is more extensive in mainland Europe, particularly in Germany's major cities, which have become the centre of the continent's highly profitable sex industry. Again, Russian women are a major component of the country's "new form of white slavery", according to one BBC report.