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**At Least 28 United Nations Civilian Personnel, 7 Peacekeepers Lost**

**Their Lives Due to Acts of Violence in 2009, Committee Says**

**Staff Union President Frustrated by Failure**

**To Bring Perpetrators to Book as Deadly Annual Trend Continues**

The trend of deadly attacks against United Nations personnel continued in 2009, with at least 28 civilian staff members losing their lives due to acts of violence, according to the United Nations Staff Union Committee for the Security and Independence of the International Civil Service.

In addition, the Committee said today, seven peacekeepers were killed during the year, six of them in three separate incidents in Darfur, and the Deputy Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) while on leave in Pakistan.

During 2008, at least 34 United Nations personnel lost their lives as a result of malicious acts, down from at least 42 deaths in 2007, a year that witnessed the deaths of 17 staff members killed in the terrorist bombing of the Organization’s premises in Algiers, one of the deadliest years for United Nations staff.

In 2009, 17 civilian staff members were killed in separate incidents in Afghanistan and Pakistan alone.  Five working for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) were killed during Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip last January, and two were killed in Somalia.  More than two thirds of the victims were national staff members.

Civilian staff members also came under shell fire in Gaza and Sri Lanka.  “Once again, United Nations personnel had to pay with their lives for their efforts to assist populations in distress,” said United Nations Staff Union President Stephen Kisambira.  “A particularly disturbing trend continued last year:  deliberate attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Darfur to intimidate and undermine the United Nations.  It is frustrating that hardly has anyone responsible been brought to account.”

Mr. Kisambira continued:  “Fifteen years after the adoption of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, 104 Member States have still not ratified it.  The 2005 Optional Protocol to the Convention is still not in force as only 20 Member States have ratified it.  The ratification of both the Convention and the Optional Protocol by all Member States would make a statement that Member States take seriously their primary responsibility to protect United Nations personnel and that they appreciate the United Nations role in maintaining peace and fostering development in far-flung areas of the world.”

Following is the list of major incidents compiled by the Staff Union Committee:

-- Arafa Hani A Dayem, 33, a Palestinian UNRWA teacher and volunteer Red Crescent medic, was killed on 4 January in Beit Lahia, Gaza, when his ambulance was shelled.

-- Samir Rashid Mohammad, 42, a Palestinian UNRWA staff member, was killed on 5 January in his house in Gaza.

-- Somali national staff member Ibrahim Hussein Duale, 44, of the World Food Programme (WFP), was shot and killed by three masked gunmen on 6 January while he was monitoring school feeding in a WFP-supported school in Yubsan village, Garbahare, southern Somalia.  The gunmen approach, ordered him to stand up and shot him.

-- Maather Mohammad Abu Zeid, 23, a female Palestinian English teacher in an UNRWA school, was killed on 8 January in Gaza during a drone strike.

-- Omar Moallim Mohamed, 49, a Somali WFP food monitor, was shot and killed on 8 January by unidentified gunmen while distributing food to displaced people at Daynile, 10 kilometres north-west of Mogadishu.  The gunmen put his body in a WFP vehicle and drove away, then pushed the corpse out of the vehicle before driving drove on.

-- Iyad Mohd Syiam and Mohammad Ismail Siyam, Palestinian UNRWA staff members, were killed at home on 15 January during a bombardment in Gaza.

-- Sied Mohammed Hashim Raza, a Pakistani driver with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), was killed on 2 February when gunmen abducted John Solecki of the United States, Head of the UNHCR office in Quetta, Baluchistan Province, Pakistan.

-- Aleksandar Vorkapic, 44, a UNHCR information technology specialist from Serbia, and Perseveranda So, 52, of the Philippines, Chief of Education for the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Pakistan, were killed on 9 June in a suicide bomb attack on the Pearl Continental Hotel in Peshawar, Pakistan.

-- Carlos Alberto Cardenas, a Colombian national staff member of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), was killed on 24 June in Puerto Libertador Municipality, Department of Córdoba, by presumed elements of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) insurgent group.

-- Zill-e Usman, 59, one of UNHCR’s most senior national staff members in Pakistan, was shot and killed by four to five unidentified gunmen on 16 July during a routine visit in the Kutcha Gari camp, outside Peshawar, on the border of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Province.

-- Obaidullah Obaid and Mohammad Asif, two national staff members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) were killed on 18 August in a suicide attack on Jalalabad Road in Kabul, when their United Nations vehicle was caught up in a suicide car bombing.

-- Nigerian peacekeeper Yusuf Ibrahim, 30, was killed on 28 September when a three-vehicle convoy of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) was attacked in El Geneina, capital of West Darfur, by six to eight armed men who opened fire on the convoy and also stole one vehicle.

--Botan Ahmed Ali Al-Hayawi of Iraq, as well as Mohammad Wahab, Abid Rehman, Gul Rukh Tahir and Farzana Barkat, all nationals of Pakistan, were killed on 5 October in a suicide attack on the WFP office in Islamabad.

-- Brigadier General Ahmed Moinuddin, UNMIS Deputy Force Commander, was shot dead on 22 October while on leave in Islamabad, when unknown gunmen opened fire on his military vehicle, also killing his driver.

*--* Five staff members were killed and nine wounded in a 28 October attack on a guest house in Kabul.  The victims were United Nations Volunteer (UNV) staff members Jossie G. Esto, 40, of the Philippines, and Yah-Lydia Wonyene, 47, of Liberia; Teshome Mandefro Ergete of UNICEF, from Ethiopia; and two UNAMA security officers, Louis Maxwell, 27, of the United States, and Lawrence Mefful of Ghana.  The early-morning attack was carried out by three Taliban militants with suicide vests, grenades and machine guns.  UNAMA security officers held off the attackers for an hour-and-a-half, fighting through the corridors and from the rooftop and giving more than 20 colleagues time to escape.

-- Jean Damascene Hakizimana, Yves Mutijima and François Sindayigaya, three Rwandan peacekeepers with UNAMID, were killed on4 December when gunmen ambushed a convoy escorting a water tanker in Darfur’s northern town of Saraf Omra.  The peacekeepers fired back, wounding one assailant, but the attackers escaped.

-- Dominique Nteziyaremye and Felicien Rugamba, Rwandan peacekeepers with UNAMID, were killed by gunmen on 5 December while distributing water at the Shangil Tobaya settlement, a camp for displaced persons about 40 miles (65 kilometres) south of El Fasher, capital of North Darfur.

-- A WFP warehouse security guard was killed on 24 December in a suicide bomb attack in Kandahar, Afghanistan.  The identity of the 24-year-old Afghan national was withheld for his family’s protection, but he appeared not to have been the intended target, as he was off-duty and passing by on his motorcycle when the bomb exploded.

Jean-Marie Pierre, a staff member of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) died of stab wounds on 25 January in Petion Ville, Haiti.  Theodore Lovansky, another Haitian staff member of the Mission, was murdered in Port-au-Prince, the capital, on 7 March.  Peter Muchai Mungai, a Kenyan, died of gunshot wounds in Gachie, near the United Nations Office in Nairobi, on 17 April.

Meanwhile, the two-month abduction of UNHCR Quetta chief John Solecki finally ended on 4 April, when he was found near the town with his hands and feet bound.

Another high-profile kidnapping case ended happily on 22 April, when Robert Fowler, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Niger, and his aide, Louis Guay, were released unharmed in neighbouring Mali.  Both Canadian nationals had gone missing in Niamey, Niger, on 14 December 2008.  Their driver, Soumana Mounkaila of Niger, a staff member of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), had been released unharmed on 21 March.

In another positive outcome on 13 December, Patrick Winful of Nigeria and Pamela Ncube of Zimbabwe, international civilian staff members with UNAMID, were released after more than 100 days of captivity.  Four or five armed men had abducted them at gunpoint on 29 August from their residence in the West Darfur town of Zalingei.