General Assembly

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Agenda item 73
**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

      The global security environment has entered a phase of heightened and extended volatility. From the pre-coronavirus disease (COVID-19) context in 2019 to the unprecedented conditions caused by the pandemic in 2020, the already complex security environment has evolved, with increased threats of civil unrest and a steady rise in instability across the globe.

      Even as the COVID-19 pandemic has spread across countries and continents, United Nations and humanitarian personnel strive to continue humanitarian, peace, human rights and sustainable development work throughout the world. United Nations and humanitarian personnel face security threats, from armed conflict, crime, civil unrest and violent extremism to xenophobia and disinformation. However, they continue to work in dangerous places to help those in need. Their work has continued despite the adverse operational and security impact that the pandemic has had on humanitarian access and programme delivery, including in the response to COVID-19.

      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 are presented. Also covered are the Organization's response to issues under the purview of the Department of Safety and Security and the United Nations security management system, as well as efforts to meet the challenges and demands for security management and enable United Nations operations worldwide. The report includes observations and recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly.

I. Introduction

1.   In its resolution 74/116, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly, at its seventy-fifth 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 requested that the Secretary-General include in his report an assessment of the impact of safety and security risks on such personnel and of 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 2019 to 30 June 2020. 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 General Assembly.

II. Security threats against United Nations personnel

A. Global security environment

3.   From the pre-coronavirus disease (COVID-19) context experienced in 2019 to the unprecedented conditions caused by the pandemic in 2020, the already complex security environment has evolved, with increased threats of civil unrest and a steady rise in instability across the globe. The global security environment has entered a phase of heightened and extended volatility.

4.   The past 18 months have been a time of shifting geopolitics, protracted armed conflicts, large-scale public health emergencies, economic stresses and debt crises, climate shocks, deepening social and economic inequity, food insecurity, mass migration, populism and xenophobia, growing nationalism, disinformation and a decrease in cybersecurity.

5.   In 2019, political and social unrest remained major threats in the Middle East and North Africa. Armed conflict and political tensions dominated the Gulf region. Election-related civil unrest, armed conflict, intercommunal violence, forced displacement, resource mismanagement and cross-border insecurity linked to violent extremism, organized crime and non-State armed actors persisted, in particular in parts of sub-Saharan Africa. The Asia and Pacific region experienced multiple security incidents related to violent extremism. A rise in criminality occurred in the Latin America and Caribbean region as criminal organizations spread their influence and increased their territorial control. The region experienced the destabilizing effects of civil unrest and mass migration, as well as economic distress.

6.   The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing global challenges, further exposing the underlying causes of insecurity and social and economic inequality with overtones of racial tension and nationalism. Globally, civil unrest evolved, from demonstrations against containment measures to wider protests related to the economic

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[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.

effects of the pandemic, exacerbating political and social grievances. Violent extremist groups and organized criminal gangs exploited the pandemic in most regions.

7. In West Africa, rival terrorist and violent extremist groups expanded their operations in new areas. The expansion of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida affiliates, from the Lake Chad shores to the westernmost coast of Africa, further increased regional instability. In East Africa, the threat of violent extremism persisted, with militants continuously deploying improvised explosive devices and launching violent attacks.

8. In South-East Asia, the call by the Secretary-General in March for a global ceasefire initially yielded a few positive results. Some armed groups halted their fighting temporarily to facilitate a response to the pandemic. Extremist groups, however, exploited the fear of COVID-19 to embolden followers to incite further instability.

9. Latin America and the Caribbean experienced a reduction in violent crime as a result of COVID-19 containment. The pandemic was not a deterrent to organized criminal gangs, however. In several countries, they expanded their control, using increasingly bold tactics.

10. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida, their affiliates and other terrorist and violent extremist groups, taking advantage of the redeployment of security forces for pandemic response, increased their activities in countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Mozambique, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as in regions, including the Lake Chad region, the Sahel and the Sinai region. Some of the groups indicated their intention to attack the United Nations. Pandemic-related restrictions also provided opportunities to increase the online recruitment of vulnerable groups, such as young people and unemployed persons.

11. In countries where informal economies are prevalent, rising unemployment and a shortage of goods resulted in looting and property crime. Criminal groups weakened the response of authorities, impeding humanitarian access to the most vulnerable communities. As security deteriorated, humanitarian actors became the targets of criminal activity.

12. With measures to restrict travel and movement put in place to curb the spread of COVID-19, people became increasingly dependent on online methods of purchasing goods and services. Criminals used malware and ransomware to target all sectors, threatening health-care systems, supply chains and infrastructure, logistics and businesses. In some countries, the criminals attacked the operational systems of essential functions, such as water, electricity, sanitation and law enforcement.

13. The rapid spread and emulation of slogans and disinformation with destabilizing effects was another emerging trend. Disinformation campaigns, largely channelled through social media, were focused on false information to discredit health advice. There were incidents of disinformation campaigns targeting the United Nations, aimed at increasing anti-United Nations sentiment, as well as increasing threats to United Nations and humanitarian personnel, including on social media.

14. In the past 18 months, the humanitarian situation has continued to deteriorate as protracted crises have continued unabated. The number of forcibly displaced persons worldwide at the end of 2019 rose to 79.5 million from 70.8 million at the end of 2018.[2] At the beginning of 2020, it was estimated that 168 million persons throughout the world would need humanitarian assistance.[3] The number, which is the highest in

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[2] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019" (Copenhagen, 2020).

[3] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Global Humanitarian Overview 2020" (Geneva, 2019).

decades, continued to increase owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. As at mid-2020, 250 million persons were in need of humanitarian assistance.[4]
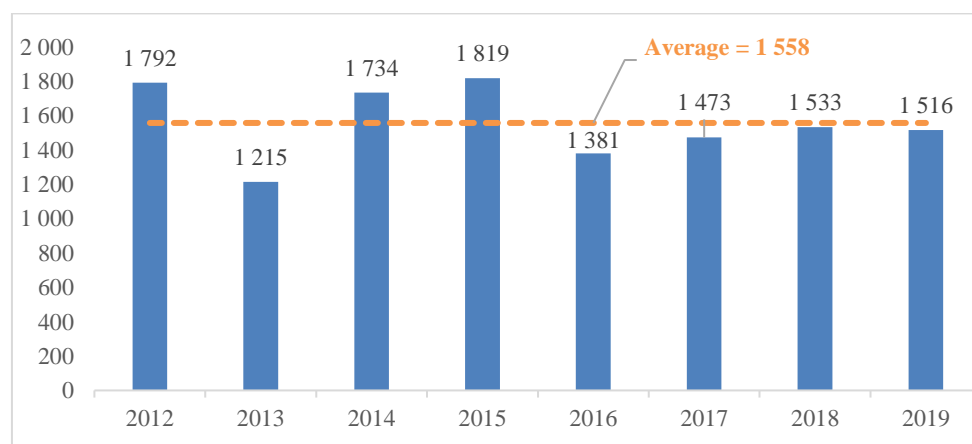
15.   The Department of Safety and Security provided safety and security support to United Nations and other international health workers across the globe. In this context, attacks against humanitarian workers and attacks on health care – which the World Health Organization defines as "any act of verbal 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"[5] – remained a significant concern. For example, the emergency response to the Ebola outbreak in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was affected by criminality and rebel activities, with medical personnel and facilities operated by the United Nations and its implementing partners frequently attacked by criminal groups and opportunistic individuals. Humanitarian personnel faced harassment, intimidation and direct attacks on their premises, vehicles and warehouses. The Department provided analysis, advice and expertise to reduce the risk of harm to personnel or the disruption of services. Attacks against humanitarian and health-care workers in armed conflicts and other situations of violence reflected systemic disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights law. The Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care of the World Health Organization[6] reported 1,135 attacks on health care in 14 countries and territories during the reporting period, resulting in 290 deaths and 779 injuries.

B.   Security incidents affecting the United Nations security management system[7]

1.   Types of incidents and their impact on United Nations personnel

16.   Overall, incidents related to safety and security affected 1,516 United Nations personnel in 2019, compared with 1,533 in 2018, a marginal decrease and a number that was lower than the average number of personnel affected annually between 2012 and 2019 (1,558) (see figure I).

Figure I
Safety and security incidents affecting United Nations personnel

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[4]   Humanitarian InSight, "Global Humanitarian Overview 2020". Available at https://hum-insight.info/.
[5]   Available at www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/attacks-on-health-care.
[6]   Available at https://extranet.who.int/ssa/Index.aspx.
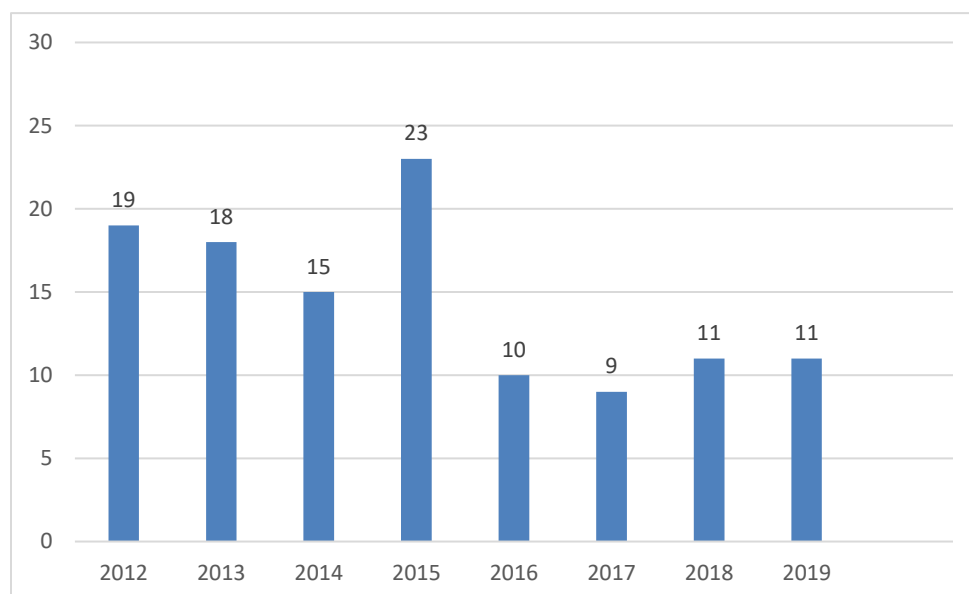[7]   The United Nations security management system is composed of all United Nations system organizations and other international organizations that have signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations for the purpose of security.

17.   In 2019, 11 United Nations personnel lost their lives as a result of acts of violence, the same number as in 2018. The incidents occurred in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Fiji, Haiti, Libya, Somalia and the Sudan. In addition, 92 personnel were injured in incidents associated with acts of violence, compared with 67 personnel in 2018. In the first six months of 2020, two United Nations personnel lost their lives as a result of violence. The fatalities occurred in Ghana and Myanmar. Overall, the number of United Nations personnel killed as a result of violence remained relatively stable from 2016 to 2019 (see figure II), although the United Nations expanded its operations in multiple complex security environments.
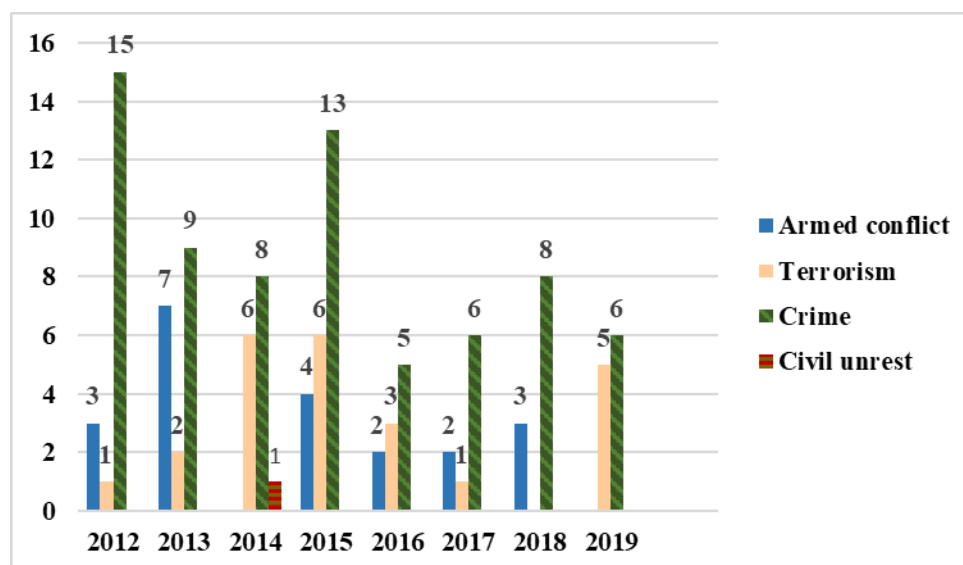
Figure II
Fatalities of United Nations personnel resulting from violence

18.   In 2019, of the 11 fatalities resulting from violence, 6 were a result of criminal acts and 5 were a result of terrorism. Ninety-five per cent of the injuries sustained that year were a result of criminal acts (see figure III and annex III). From January to June 2020, two personnel died as a result of violence related to crime. Since 2012, crime-related incidents have been the primary source of violent death of United Nations personnel, accounting for more than 60 per cent of such deaths between that year and 2019.

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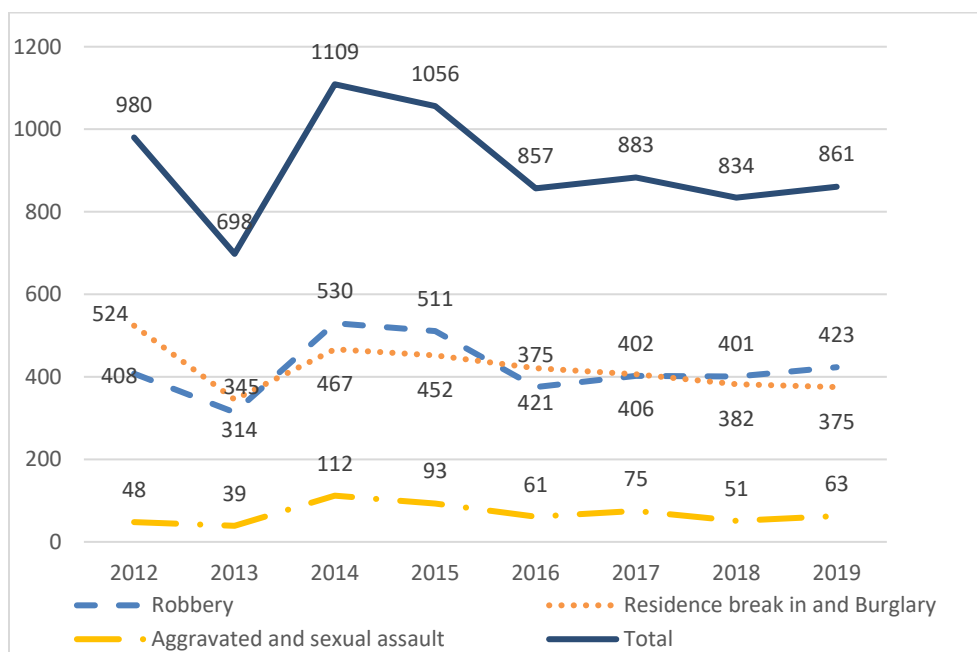**Fatalities of United Nations personnel resulting from violence, by category of threat**

19.   In 2019, there were 53 direct attacks against United Nations premises, 89 attacks on United Nations vehicles and 154 intrusions into United Nations premises, for a total of 296 incidents. Those types of attacks have been on the rise in the past four years, with a 40 per cent increase in attacks on premises, compared with 2018 (23 attacks on premises and 89 attacks on vehicles, respectively). Most of the attacks occurred in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan (Darfur). Reports show that, in 2019, 61 official United Nations vehicles were lost or damaged as a result of such attacks. In the first six months of 2020, there were 24 direct attacks on United Nations premises, 76 attacks against United Nations vehicles and 85 intrusions into United Nations premises.

20.   The worrying trend underscores the relevance of the continuous improvements being made within the United Nations security management system to security management measures, the policy framework, training and coordination with host Governments to strengthen the protection of United Nations personnel, assets and premises.

Crime

21.   Of the 1,516 United Nations personnel affected by safety and security incidents in 2019, 861 (about 57 per cent) were victims of crime, including robbery, residence break-in and burglary, aggravated assault and sexual assault (see figure IV and annex III), a slight increase over 2018 (834). Most United Nations personnel affected by crime in 2019 had been recruited internationally (around 57 per cent), similar to in 2018 (around 55 per cent).
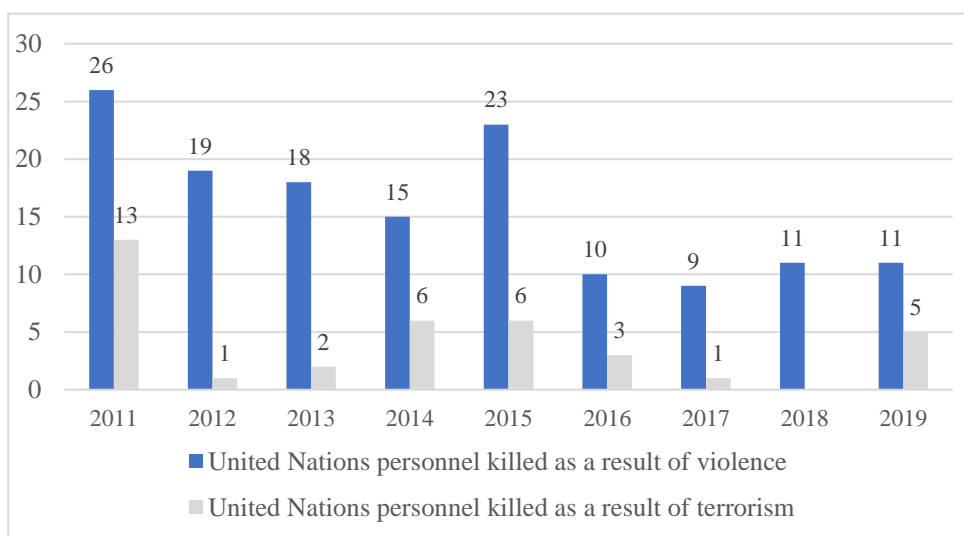
Figure IV
Crime affecting United Nations personnel, by category

Terrorism

22.   There were five deaths of United Nations personnel attributed to terrorism in 2019 (see figure V). An armed attack by violent extremists killed a locally recruited United Nations personnel member in Gaalkacyo, Somalia, on 31 May 2019. On 10 August 2019, three United Nations personnel were killed and three more were injured when a car bomb was detonated next to a United Nations vehicle in Benghazi, Libya. On 24 November 2019, an improvised explosive device placed on a United Nations vehicle resulted in the death of an internationally recruited United Nations personnel member and the injury of two locally recruited personnel in Kabul. In addition, several attacks against the United Nations occurred without fatalities. Despite the threat of violent extremism, the Department of Safety and Security continued to enable critical United Nations programmes and mandates in Afghanistan, Libya and Somalia, including the implementation of political agreements, the provision of support to key national institutions and the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
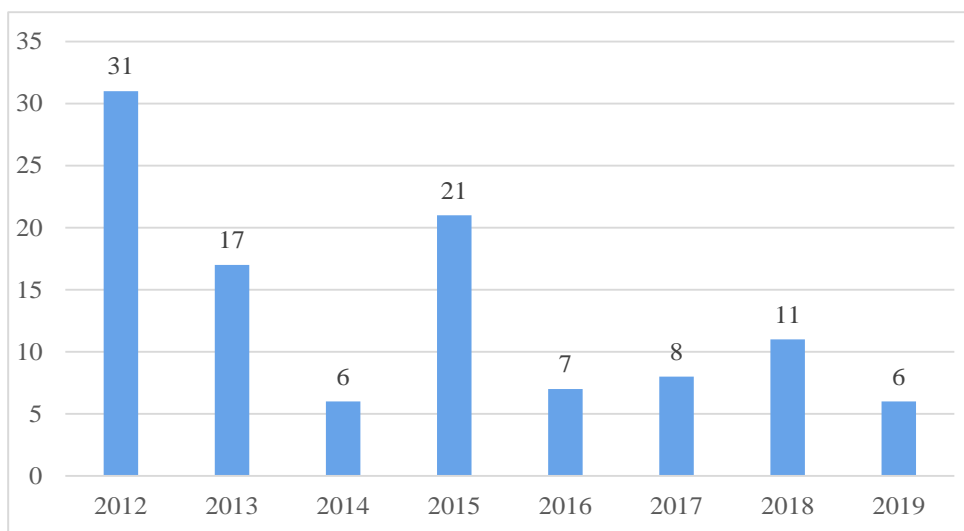
Figure V
Fatalities of United Nations personnel resulting from terrorism, of those resulting from violence

Abductions

23.   Six United Nations personnel (two men and four women) were abducted in 2019 (see figure VI and annex III), a decrease from 11 personnel abducted in 2018. Of the six abductions, four evolved into hostage situations when the hostage takers made their demands as conditions of the hostages' release. Two additional hostage incidents occurred during the first six months of 2020. As a result of the effective management of hostage incidents by the Department of Safety and Security and the United Nations security management system, all United Nations personnel abducted in 2019 and 2020 were released safely. Updated hostage incident training was conducted in September 2019, and hostage incident prevention programmes have been designed to limit the events of hostage incidents involving United Nations personnel. The number of personnel abducted in 2019 was below the average of 14 for the period 2012–2018.

Figure VI
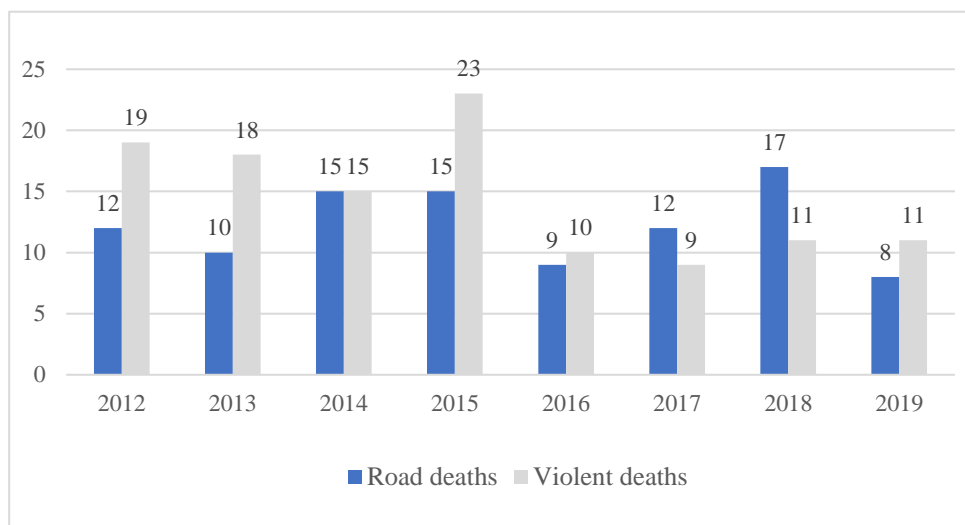**Abductions of United Nations personnel**

Safety-related incidents and road traffic incidents

24.   In 2019, 33 United Nations personnel lost their lives as a result of safety-related incidents, including 21 colleagues who died in the crash of Ethiopian Airlines flight 302, on 10 March 2019, compared with 20 personnel in 2018. The number of United Nations personnel who lost their lives as a result of road traffic incidents in 2019 decreased drastically to 8 from 17 fatalities in 2018. All victims of road traffic incidents except one were killed while using private motor vehicles or public transportation. In 2019, 100 personnel were injured as a result of safety-related incidents, compared with 114 in 2018 and 111 in 2017 (see annex I). Most safety-related injuries, averaging about 95 per cent between 2012 and 2019, involved road traffic incidents (see figure VII and annex III). In the first six months of 2020, there were six fatalities as a result of safety-related incidents, including three from road traffic incidents, and one United Nations personnel member was killed in the crash of a commercial aircraft in El Geneina, the Sudan, in January.

25.   In 2019, 11 non-United Nations personnel died and 85 non-United Nations personnel were injured as a result of road traffic incidents involving United Nations vehicles. In the first half of 2020, 16 non-United Nations personnel died and 59 were injured as a result of road traffic incidents involving United Nations vehicles.

26.   The United Nations Road Safety Strategy, launched in 2019, has contributed to efforts to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries resulting from road crashes. In the Secretariat, work is under way to update the administrative instruction on road safety and driving safely to improve the reporting of such crashes. In addition, the United Nations security management system undertook the following road safety initiatives: developing a common road traffic crash taxonomy to support better collection and management of data, developing guidelines on road safety awareness to promote a culture of safety in the Organization, providing minimum standards for personnel operating United Nations vehicles and supporting post-crash response. The United Nations, through a coordinated and multidisciplinary effort involving security, medical services and fleet management across the system, is continuing its efforts to reduce the fatalities and injuries of vulnerable road users involving United Nations vehicles.

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

Intimidation and harassment

27.   There were 327 reported incidents of intimidation and harassment of United Nations personnel in 2019, a decrease from 391 incidents reported in 2018. In the first half of 2020, there were 146 such incidents. The incidents reported in 2019 were below the highest number of such incidents (405), recorded in 2015, but above the seven-year (2013 to 2019) average of 296 (see annex I).

Arrest and detention of United Nations personnel

28.   In 2019, 86 United Nations personnel were detained and arrested by the competent authorities of Member States, compared with 85 personnel arrested in 2018. The annual number of arrests has decreased substantially since 2013 as a result of closer consultation and coordination between the United Nations and competent authorities of Member States. In addition, 54 United Nations personnel were arrested in the first six months of 2020. As at 1 July 2020, 18 United Nations personnel remained in detention. In most of the cases, United Nations personnel under arrest were charged by Member States with criminal offences, including traffic violations, financial fraud and trafficking in illicit items. In all cases but one, Member States provided required explanations to the United Nations of the rationale for the arrest.
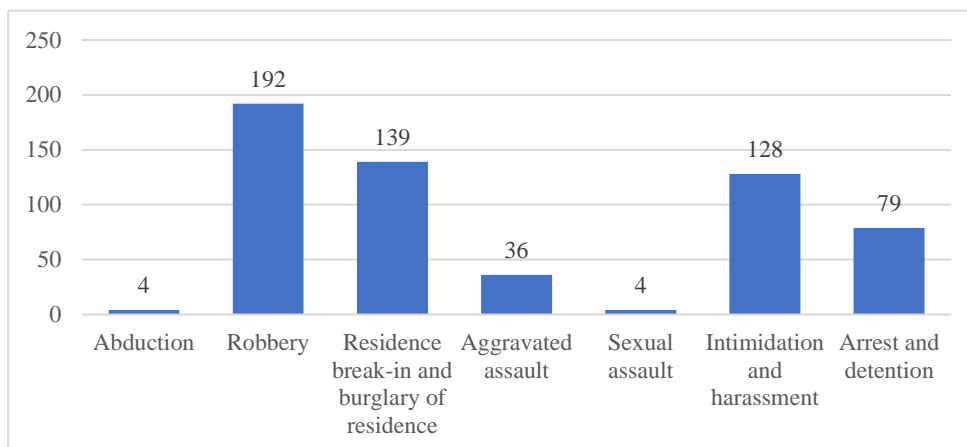
Gender-related security incidents

29.   Women represent approximately 40 per cent of all United Nations personnel in the field. In 2019, female United Nations personnel accounted for 31 per cent of those affected by security and safety incidents (see annex III). The reduction in security incidents affecting female personnel has coincided with increased efforts to include gender considerations in the security risk management process and residential security measures, as well as dedicated security training for women. The number of reported sexual assaults of female United Nations personnel in 2019 increased to 12 cases from 10 cases in 2018. That number is below the average of 13 cases reported annually between 2013 and 2019. In the first six months of 2020, two sexual assault cases were reported. All of the United Nations personnel who were assaulted sexually in 2019 and 2020 were women.

2.   Security of locally recruited personnel

30.   In 2019, locally recruited personnel represented about half of United Nations personnel affected by safety and security incidents (747 of 1,516 incidents, or 49 per cent). Locally recruited personnel accounted for 54 per cent of personnel killed as a result of violent acts (6 of 11 incidents). With a larger presence in the field in 2019 compared with internationally 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, injuries from safety-related incidents, arrest and detention, aggravated assault and abduction (see figure VIII and annex III). International personnel were affected to a greater extent, in absolute numbers, by burglary and residence break-ins, robbery, fatalities from safety-related incidents and sexual assault and intimidation and/or harassment.

31.   The United Nations makes every effort to further enhance the security of locally recruited personnel. The policy on the security of such personnel was promulgated in 2019 and supported by ad hoc presentations in various languages to increase its understanding and implementation.
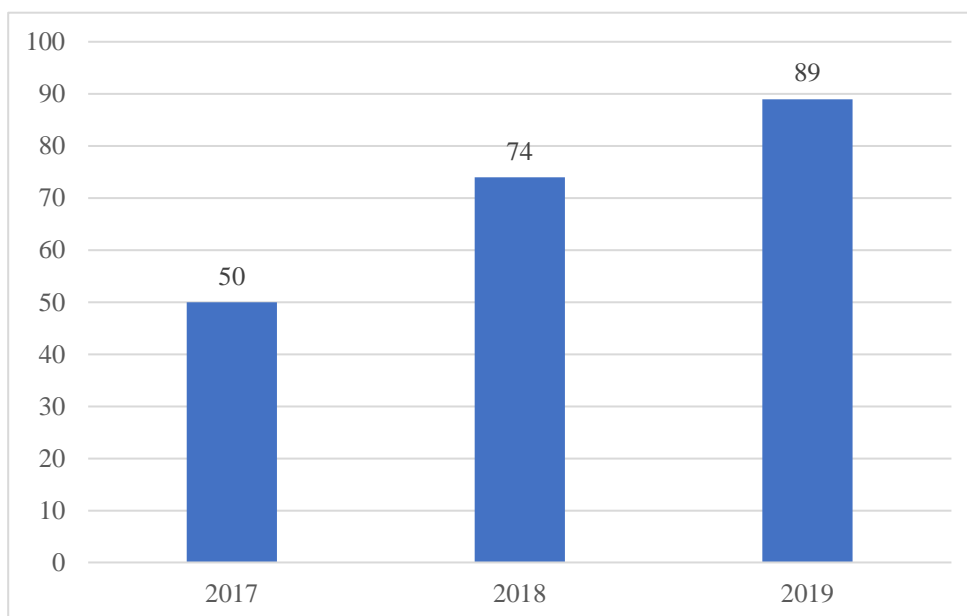
Figure VIII
Incidents affecting locally recruited personnel, 2019

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

32.   To meet rising demand for security support in volatile environments, the number of surge deployments of United Nations security professionals has nearly doubled since 2017 (see figure IX and annex III). In 2020, adapting to pandemic-related travel restrictions, the Department of Safety and Security conducted surge deployments of security personnel to support the delivery of critical United Nations programmes in Burkina Faso, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria and Yemen.

Figure IX
Surge deployments of United Nations security professionals, 2017–2019

33.   During the reporting period, the Department of Safety and Security, together with United Nations security management system organizations, provided security support to meet the expanding demand for security management in a small number of highly complex security environments – areas designated as very high risk and therefore requiring specialized security personnel and effective planning and analysis.

In 2019, the Department supported 127 field missions in very high-risk areas, comprising 31 missions in Somalia, 11 missions in the Syrian Arab Republic and 85 missions in Yemen, to enable critical United Nations programmes in those areas.

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

34. In most complex security environments, humanitarian personnel of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 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.
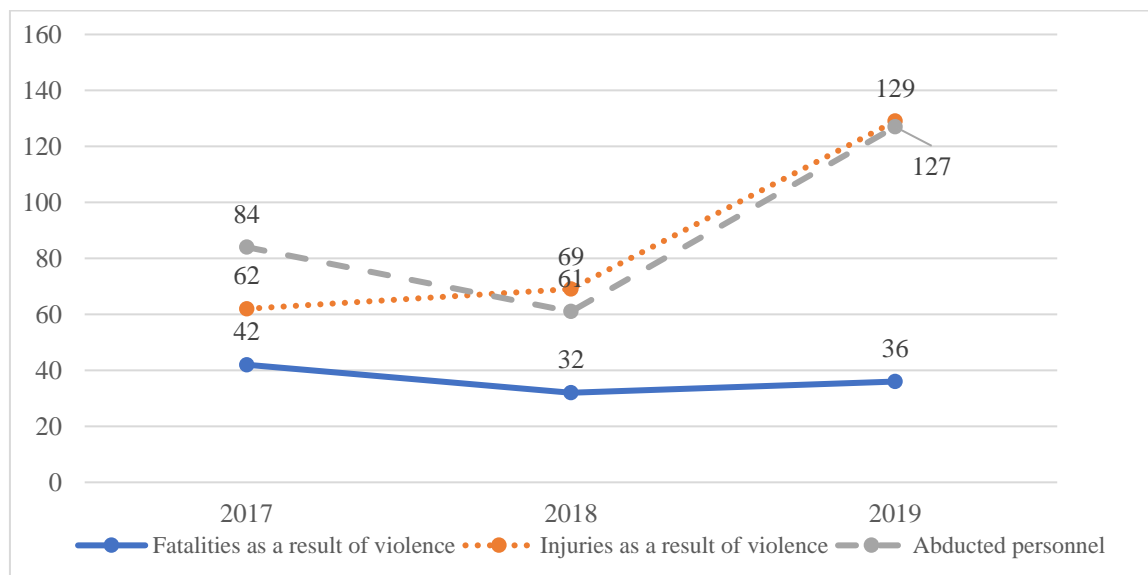
1. Impact of security threats on humanitarian personnel of non-governmental organizations

35. Critical incidents affecting humanitarian personnel of United Nations implementing partners increased significantly, from 314 in 2018 to 567 in 2019. The increase can be attributed to the deterioration of the security environment in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Yemen, the locations where most of the incidents occurred. Increased collaboration between the United Nations and implementing partners on security has resulted in more complete reporting of incidents.

36. According to reports received by the Department of Safety and Security, in 2019, 36 NGO humanitarian personnel working in close cooperation with the United Nations were killed and 129 were injured as a result of acts of violence, and 127 were abducted (see figure X and annex IV). The number of NGO humanitarian personnel killed in 2019 increased to 36 from 32 in 2018. There was a notable increase in the number of persons injured (from 69 in 2018 to 129 in 2019) and abducted (from 61 in 2018 to 127 in 2019). In the first six months of 2020, 20 personnel of NGO implementing partners were killed, 57 were injured and 39 were abducted. In 2019, the number of reported attacks on NGO vehicles increased to 159 from 72 in 2018.

37. As in previous years, NGOs and implementing partners voluntarily shared reports on security incidents with the Department of Safety and Security. 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 data gathering.

Figure X
Security incidents affecting personnel of non-governmental implementing partners, 2017–2019, as reported to the United Nations Department of Safety and Security

2. Security incidents affecting United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East area personnel[8]

38. Employing some 32,000 personnel in five fields of operation, UNRWA delivers a range of humanitarian assistance to approximately 5.6 million Palestinian refugees.[9] In 2019, there were no deaths of UNRWA area personnel as a result of violence or safety-related incidents, a decrease from 2018, when one area personnel member died as a result of violence and two died as a result of safety-related incidents. One UNRWA area personnel member was injured as a result of violence in 2019, compared with six such injuries in 2018. UNRWA is adopting a more rigorous verification process for incidents affecting UNRWA area personnel. The efforts account for a significant reduction in recorded security incidents involving theft, vandalism and intrusions into UNRWA premises in 2019.

3. Comparison with peacekeepers[10]

39. Fatalities among uniformed peacekeepers as a result of violent acts decreased to 23 in 2019 from 27 in 2018. The main security threats in peacekeeping environments came from armed groups, violent extremists and organized criminal gangs. In 13 peacekeeping operations, uniformed peacekeepers have been exposed to attacks involving artillery fire, mortars, rockets, small arms fire, various types of improvised explosive devices and complex attacks. Thirty-three fatalities among uniformed peacekeepers were reported in the first six months of 2020. Of those, seven were a result of malicious acts.

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

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

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

III. Strengthening the United Nations security management system

40. The United Nations security management system, led by the Department of Safety and Security, continuously adapts to the challenges of operating in a highly complex and volatile security environment. Its collaborative efforts are described below.

A. Enhancing the security risk management capacity of security decision makers

1. Providing continuous support to designated officials

41. In 2019, the Department of Safety and Security organized six regional workshops on crisis management and trained 113 designated officials for security with the participation of officials from the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Department's efforts strengthened the capacity of the designated officials as security decision makers to address security challenges at the field level. The measure has prepared the officials to lead United Nations country teams and peace operations during security crises. The Department has guided United Nations security advisers in organizing future crisis management training for designated officials and senior officials of United Nations entities in their respective locations.

42. The Department of Safety and Security delivered mandatory security training to 30 designated officials. Owing to COVID-19-related restrictions, it was delivered online to designated officials and designated officials ad interim. In parallel, the handbook for designated officials, which offers practical and comprehensive advice on security management and decision-making, was updated and reviewed to support the members of the security management team.

2. Strengthening decisions on acceptable risk through programme criticality assessments

43. The United Nations system-wide programme criticality framework remains an indispensable tool that contributes to an effective policy and operational approach to informed decision-making with regard to acceptable security risk. 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 framework for United Nations programmes and operations is applicable in countries with a volatile environment. During the reporting period, the United Nations carried out the unprecedentedly high number of 45 programme criticality assessments in 40 countries. In the context of the pandemic, the programme criticality assessment has become a tool for supporting the Organization's business continuity and the prioritization of critical programmes in the field.

B. Reinforcing security risk management strategies

1. Expanding the framework of safety and security policies in new areas

44. The Inter-Agency Security Management Network continued to strengthen the system-wide security policy framework and engaged in strategic discussions on security management issues. In 2020, the network approved blast assessment guidelines, guidelines on disability considerations in the security risk management process and a road crash taxonomy to support better data collection and management with regard to road traffic incidents. The network maintains a rolling technical review

of United Nations security management system guidance to ensure that policies and guidelines remain relevant and effective. In 2019, the network endorsed a manual on gender inclusion in security management, a reference and practical guide on issues related to gender considerations in security.

2. Enhancing situational awareness and threat and risk analysis

45. Security threat and risk analysis is key to maintaining situational awareness. It provides security managers with lead time to evaluate evolving threats to United Nations personnel. In the light of the expanding geographical nature of threats in a volatile security environment, the Department of Safety and Security took steps to maximize the use of existing resources, such as the flexible deployment of security analysts, to meet emerging needs and evolving threats in various regions. The cost-efficient approach has contributed to maintaining regional coverage to meet security challenges in high-risk environments. To further strengthen the expertise of United Nations security professionals in information management and analysis, the Department continued to train them in security analysis processes and practices and strategic analysis warning techniques. Through a 2019 strategic review, a key priority for action identified was the need to further improve the Department's capacity to capture and analyse data and produce analytical products that decision makers find useful in deciding on courses of action.

3. Effective risk management

46. Working with the members of the United Nations security management system, the Department of Safety and Security continued to strengthen the protection of the United Nations Headquarters premises and special events held off United Nations premises. The Department provided security support to various United Nations entities, enabling the participation of 6,196 United Nations personnel at 194 meetings and special events in 86 countries. The Department deployed 380 security personnel to provide security support during special events sponsored by United Nations entities. The adoption of an enhanced security posture, in coordination with host Governments and in compliance with United Nations security policies and procedures, has prevented serious security incidents during such events.

47. The Department of Safety and Security carried out large-scale physical security projects to enhance the protection of United Nations premises in 60 countries, including 15 United Nations System Common Premises, with new construction and security upgrades to existing premises. In addition to responding to nearly 200 requests for technical guidance on the physical protection of premises, the Department adopted a mobile phone application for physical security assessment, which allows its security professionals to identify specific site vulnerabilities and recommend appropriate security risk management measures.

48. While the pandemic restricted the travel of United Nations officials, the Department coordinated and provided protective services for 377 complex protective operations in high-risk environments. The pandemic affected the operation and staffing of protective services and led to the postponement of training and certification required for protective services personnel.

49. To further enhance security risk management, a Department of Safety and Security strategic plan resulted in a review of the security risk management process and the Safety and Security Incident Recording System. The review, which was begun in 2020, is being conducted through consultations with Headquarters, field security professionals and security analysts. With the further engagement of the Department with United Nations security management system organizations, the ongoing endeavour is expected to improve the security risk management process and Safety

and Security Incident Recording System frameworks and tools, as well as enhance knowledge management. In 2019, the Department strengthened security risk management and crisis preparedness in field duty stations, with a 52 per cent increase in the number of developed and updated security plans from 2018. The increase allowed the United Nations to deliver its critical activities in more than 30 countries and areas of elevated security risk.

50.   Through an inter-agency collaborative project referred to as "telecommunications security standards", the evolution of security-related communications is supported, in line with advances in technology. The Organization has expanded its approach to security-related communications to support overall security needs under all circumstances, not only in emergencies, while increasing cost efficiencies. The integrated effort enhances security-related communications in field missions globally and improves operational security support provided to United Nations personnel and to their implementing partners.

4.   Security training

51.   The United Nations security management system continues to work towards high-quality security training. The Department of Safety and Security, together with United Nations security management system members, is developing locally focused security induction training that is aimed at ensuring that all United Nations personnel receive the location-specific knowledge and skills needed when travelling or being recruited to a new location. The Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments training programme remains a key security risk management measure for United Nations personnel residing in or travelling to high-risk locations. Following the adoption of the Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments training programme's guidelines, in 2019, the Department implemented the guidelines and updated the programme's training modules, with a focus on prevention and practical simulations. In 2019, 11,523 United Nations personnel and partners completed 545 Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments courses in 42 countries. As at June 2020, 330,000 United Nations personnel and partners had completed the course entitled "BSAFE", launched in 2018 to promote broader security awareness. In the first half of 2020, the United Nations Development Programme prepared and delivered a series of webinars to country-level senior representatives to offer a baseline level of guidance on security-related issues.

52.   In 2020, the travel restrictions resulting from the pandemic affected the delivery of face-to-face and practical training. The Department is developing COVID-19-related guidance for security trainers that complements existing medical and safety guidance and enables the trainers and their managers to review their training needs, identify risks and redesign their security training.

5.   Response to critical incidents

53.   The Critical Incident Stress Management Unit of the Department of Safety and Security, together with counsellors of other United Nations entities, coordinated increased responses to critical incidents globally. The Department responded to 881 critical incidents, compared with 716 in the previous reporting period. It conducted 10,889 counselling sessions to affected United Nations personnel and their dependants and provided technical advice to 1,308 managers in the United Nations system. Services provided to United Nations personnel increased exponentially in 2020 owing to the pandemic. Globally, the Department's counsellors provided 31,251 psychosocial support services (compared with 10,329 in the previous reporting period) to personnel and their dependants, among which more than 15,000 were related to management of the pandemic.

54. The magnitude of the global COVID-19 crisis increased the demand of United Nations personnel for stress management counselling at all duty stations. In tackling that challenge, the Department of Safety and Security, together with United Nations security management system organizations, mobilized existing resource to increase counselling services for personnel. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Department has provided various support activities on psychosocial services, including, among others, conducting training and briefings to increase personnel awareness of the psychosocial aspects of the pandemic, building the capacity of United Nations and external mental health professionals regarding the psychosocial aspects of the pandemic, developing and disseminating technical guidelines for psychosocial contingency planning, mapping mental health resources and coordinating with United Nations entities regarding the global psychosocial response to support personnel.

C. Reform efforts of the Department of Safety and Security

55. Building on its 2019 internal realignment, the Department of Safety and Security established a strategic plan for the period 2020–2022, including strategic objectives and priority actions aimed at operational excellence achieved by a diverse and consistently trained workforce and through improved and simplified business processes. Through the strategic plan, the Department reaffirms its commitment to enabling the delivery of United Nations programmes through trusted security leadership and solutions. Continuing efforts to ensure the full integration of the integrated security workforce into field and mission settings remains the Department's priority in its contributions to the Organization's reform and system-wide integration efforts.

56. Following the issuance of guidance in 2019 to clarify the authority and leadership of resident coordinators as designated officials for security and as designated official ad interim, the Department of Safety and Security supported resident coordinators in carrying out their security management functions as the designated officials and advancing further the United Nations development reform agenda.

57. The Department of Safety and Security continued to promote flexibility and efficiencies in human resources management for its integrated security workforce, comprising about 7,000 United Nations safety and security personnel throughout more than 120 duty stations. The Department worked towards increasing the effectiveness and adaptability of the security workforce, with a focus on gender balance, diversity, geographical representation and skills. The representation of women in the Professional and higher categories is at 20 per cent, an increase of 2 per cent over the past three years. The Department is also supporting the implementation of the disability strategy of the Secretary-General through ongoing efforts towards mainstreaming disability consideration into all security policy guidance and towards developing a departmental strategy on disability.

D. Building collaboration

1. Enhancing collaboration on security between the United Nations and host Governments

58. 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 for Safety and Security met the authorities of host Governments of 24 Member States to discuss security matters and brief relevant committees of the General Assembly and groups of interested States.

59. In ensuring the security of United Nations Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions and tribunals, the Department of Safety and Security coordinated closely with the relevant host country authorities on the protection of those premises. The Department maintained coordination with the host Governments to ensure the protection of United Nations facilities and the safe conduct of events at which thousands of delegates and civil society participants gathered, including 18,000 meetings and conferences in 2019.

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

60. The United Nations collaborates closely with host Governments, which have primary responsibility not only for protecting United Nations personnel deployed in their territory but also 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 its the Optional Protocol thereto of 2005.

61. Following the promulgation of standard operating procedures on the victims of violence registry for fatalities in service, in January 2018, the Department of Safety and Security collaborated with other Secretariat departments and offices and three peacekeeping missions under the leadership of the Department of Peace Operations to establish specialized mechanisms to ensure accountability for serious crimes against peacekeepers and United Nations personnel.

3. Strengthening partnerships with non-governmental organizations

62. The Saving Lives Together framework enhances security collaboration with implementing and operational partners of the United Nations. During the reporting period, the Department of Safety and Security continued its efforts to maintain close collaboration on security with the framework's partners in 16 countries designated for Saving Lives Together enhanced-level status, including country-specific conference calls with the framework's focal points at the headquarters of 150 partner organizations.

63. The Saving Lives Together collaboration facilitated the provision of support to NGOs, including assistance in crisis situations and in the relocation and medical evacuation of personnel. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Safety and Security, with the support of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Food Programme, established a mechanism for sharing biweekly situation reports and providing Saving Lives Together partners with information on medical support and World Food Programme flight arrangements.

IV. Strategic challenges and opportunities

64. The socioeconomic, political and security implications of the pandemic have presented unexpected strategic and operational challenges to the Organization. While the impact of the pandemic has led to increasing humanitarian needs and exacerbated insecurity in many countries and conflict areas, its effects on the global economy are likely to diminish resources for humanitarian assistance and associated security costs. In addition to working in increasingly volatile environments and facing operational

delays caused by the global supply chain's breakdown and disruption, United Nations and humanitarian personnel have experienced pandemic-related restrictions on travel and visas, constraints on crossing borders and obtaining access to affected peoples in need of humanitarian assistance and protection and eroding local public acceptance in some areas.

65. Despite its unparalleled adverse effects, the COVID-19 crisis has presented opportunities to address interrelated global issues, articulated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, related to tackling the root causes of insecurity. Diminishing resources for international assistance and global restrictions have inspired innovation, local ownership and inclusivity, as well as resulted in reimagined approaches to the delivery of United Nations-mandated programmes and the protection of United Nations and humanitarian personnel. In enabling United Nations activities during the pandemic, the Department of Safety and Security has adopted innovative approaches that include flexibility in the deployment of personnel and resources, such as in strengthening regional security analysis, expanding the unprecedented scale of psychosocial support to affected personnel at all duty stations and enhancing inter-agency coordination of the use of technology in security management. The Department, in partnership with United Nations entities, has initiated efforts to promote further innovation in all areas of its daily operation, including with regard to strategic communication, broadened partnerships with stakeholders, security operational support and crisis management and securing United Nations premises. Progress made in realizing the strategic plan has included positive steps towards enhancing operational excellence, information management and security analysis. In addition, the broad recognition that security and safety are key priorities in the protection of marginalized communities is an emerging opportunity.

V. Observations and recommendations

66. **The world is facing security challenges that no single country or organization can address alone. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on peace and security across the globe, compounding geopolitical and security challenges, exacerbating grievances and inequalities, undermining social cohesion and fuelling unrest, conflict, violent extremism, populism and disinformation. However, in that unprecedented operational context, United Nations and humanitarian personnel continue to carry out their work, despite pandemic-related disruptions and restrictions. It is imperative that the international community maintain its resolve to protect United Nations and humanitarian personnel with a reinvigorated commitment to multilateralism in tackling the wide-ranging impacts of the pandemic and addressing the root causes of insecurity.**

67. **United Nations and humanitarian personnel risk their lives and well-being to carry out multifaceted United Nations mandates, helping those in need and supporting Member States in their strides towards the Sustainable Development Goals. In the past 18 months, 13 United Nations personnel and more than 56 humanitarian NGO personnel have lost their lives as a result of acts of violence. I am deeply saddened by those 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 those fallen brave men and women live in the commitment of the Organization to continuing to work even in dangerous places to create a better world.**

68. **I am concerned by the sharp rise in the number of attacks against United Nations premises – 53 incidents in 2019, compared with 23 in 2018. A substantial increase in fatalities resulting from safety-related incidents was generated by the**

tragic Ethiopian Airlines crash in March 2019, which killed 21 United Nations colleagues.

69. Any death or injury to United Nations and humanitarian personnel is unacceptable; the Organization must constantly strive to learn from past events. Likewise, as the United Nations is called upon to do more, including in the world's most volatile environments, the imperative of delivery must remain a driving force for security advice, planning and operations. More than ever, the United Nations is committed to providing outstanding security analysis and advice; its work must be based on data and risk management. Advances in training the United Nations family, including senior officials and decision makers, will continue to help the Organization to manage security crises, bring hostages home safely and manage day-to-day operations in less secure areas. The United Nations will continue to make its security workforce more agile and able to respond to unexpected needs and deploy on short notice. Fundamentally, a more diverse security workforce will lead to excellence, bringing a range of perspectives and reflecting both the United Nations family and the communities that it serves.

70. The commitment of more than 50 partners within the United Nations security management system, and their close collaboration with the Department of Safety and Security, has contributed to continuous improvement in security, serving as an enabler of United Nations work. The overall number of security incidents affecting United Nations personnel in the past five years has remained stable. To sustain that trend and overcome emerging security challenges, predictable and adequate resources for security remain indispensable.

71. In the current highly complex security environment, partnership is key to tackling security challenges and pandemic-related restrictions. In addition to closer collaboration with host Governments, broadening strategic partnerships with international organizations, regional organizations and non-governmental actors is part of effective security management.

72. As the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations is observed in the midst of the pandemic, the Organization is at the heart of the global response. In enabling United Nations response and programme delivery, the Department of Safety and Security continues to realign its resources and find efficiencies through innovative approaches. Those efforts have to be sustained. I call upon Member States to ensure that security costs are sustained and maintained as an integral part of mandate consideration and programme planning.

73. I am deeply concerned by systemic disrespect for international humanitarian and human rights law and for humanitarian principles. I urge Governments and parties to armed conflict to ensure safe and unhindered access to humanitarian and United Nations personnel so that they can continue to operate to help persons in need. Intentional attacks on United Nations and humanitarian personnel constitute a serious violation of international humanitarian law. I urge Governments to bring to justice the perpetrators of such violations.

74. I recommend that the General Assembly remain engaged in 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

	Number of personnel affected						
Category of safety and security incidents	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*	*2019*	*2020 (first six months)*
Fatalities resulting from acts of violence	15	23	10	9	11	11	2
Fatalities resulting from safety-related incidents	15	16	11	13	20	33	6
Injuries resulting from acts of violence	65	99	70	70	67	92	31
Injuries resulting from safety-related incidents	101	130	93	111	114	100	39
Abduction	6	21	7	8	11	6	2
Robbery	530	511	375	402	401	423	197
Residence break-in and burglary of residence	467	452	421	406	382	375	151
Aggravated assault	104	81	44	47	41	51	16
Sexual assault	8	12	17	28	10	12	2
Intimidation and harassment	295	405	231	316	391	327	146
Arrest and detention	128	69	102	63	85	86	54
Total	**1 734**	**1 819**	**1 381**	**1 473**	**1 533**	**1 516**	**646**

Annex II

Attacks on United Nations premises and official vehicles

Category of security incidents	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 (first six months)
Attacks on United Nations premises	35	56	23	23	53	24
Attacks on United Nations vehicles	155	146	51	89	89	76
Intrusion into United Nations premises	109	90	150	51	154	85
Total	**299**	**292**	**224**	**163**	**296**	**185**

Annex III

United Nations civilian personnel affected by security incidents, 2019

Category of security incident	Number of personnel affected	Recruited internationally	Recruited locally	Men	Women	Number of countries	Circumstances of security incidents
Fatalities resulting from acts of violence	11	5	6	10	1	8	Crime (6); terrorism (5)
Fatalities resulting from safety-related incidents	33	23	10	17	16	12	Road traffic accidents (8); aviation catastrophe (21); other safety-related incidents (3)
Injuries resulting from acts of violence	92	28	64	71	21	23	Crime (87); terrorism (5)
Injuries resulting from safety-related incidents	100	15	85	68	32	37	Road traffic accidents (93); other safety-related incidents (7)
Abduction[a]	6	2	4	2	4	5	All abducted personnel were released safely
Robbery[b]	423	231	192	279	144	73	
Residence break-in[c] and burglary of residence[d]	375	236	139	256	119	79	
Aggravated assault[e]	51	15	36	41	10	22	
Sexual assault	12	8	4	0	12	10	
Intimidation[f] and harassment[g]	327	199	128	214	113	67	
Arrest and detention[h]	86	7	79	84	2	31	Personnel (18) remained in detention as at 1 July 2020
Total	**1 516**	**769**	**747**	**1 042**	**474**		

[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 the use of force or physical assault.

[d] Unauthorized and forceful entry with intent to commit a felony or a 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

Category of security incident	*Number of personnel affected*		
	2018	*2019*	*2020 (first six months)*
Personnel who lost their lives as a result of acts of violence	32	36	20
Personnel injured as a result of acts of violence	69	129	57
Abducted personnel	61	127	39
Armed attacks on premises	21	11	8
Intrusion into premises	59	105	42
Armed attacks on vehicles	72	159	52
Total	**314**	**567**	**218**

Annex V

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

	Number of area personnel affected		
Category of security incident	*2018*	*2019*	*2020 (first six months)*
Fatalities resulting from acts of violence	1	–	1
Fatalities resulting from safety-related incidents	2	–	–
Injuries resulting from acts of violence	6	1	3
Injuries resulting from safety-related incidents	4	–	–
Abduction	–	–	–
Robbery	9	–	–
Residence break-in	1	–	–
Aggravated assault	49	21	13
Sexual assault	–	1	–
Burglary of residence	–	–	–
Intimidation	123	72	12
Harassment	5	2	8
Arrest and detention	3	8	4
Missing personnel	2	1	–
Theft	404	2	–
Arson	4	–	3
Fire	16	–	4
Armed conflict	12	–	1
Explosive remnants of war	3	–	–
Vandalism	304	–	3
Road traffic accidents	32	15	21
Intrusion into United Nations premises	59	3	22
Other	135	1	–
Total	**1 174**	**127**	**95**

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