

***Press Release No. 15/07*****Unfounded Allegations of Sexual Abuse Against UNMIS Peacekeepers**

Khartoum, 11 June 2007 - The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) has been the target of two false media allegations of sexual misconduct by UNMIS peacekeepers during the course of 2007. UNMIS takes allegations of this nature very seriously as per the UN policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse.

On 8 May 2007, the Sudanese paper *Akhir Lahza* claimed on its front page that an UNMIS peacekeeper was the perpetrator of a sexual assault against a child in Wau.

Following a detailed investigation by the independent UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), no evidence of an incident of sexual abuse in Wau, as described by *Akhir Lhaza*, was uncovered. This was confirmed by local police and hospital services.

A letter was sent to the editor of *Akhir Laza* explaining the results of the UN inquiry and requesting the editor to provide OIOS with evidence which might substantiate his newspaper's allegations. If the paper was unable to provide evidence, UNMIS requested that *Akhir Lhaza* should then publicly retract its story. On 23 May, *Akhir Laza* published on its third page, an acknowledgement that the (UNMIS) inquiry results confirmed that the local police and Wau hospital, as well as the UNMIS Head of Office, were never notified of such an incident. *Akhir Laza* also issued an apology to UNMIS and to its readers for publication of the original article.

In its apology, *Akhir Laza* reminded its readers that it published the original story, following a story which appeared earlier in the year, in the UK newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph*. That story had also alleged that minor age children in Juba had been raped by UNMIS peacekeepers.

UNMIS wishes to make clear that, since this story appeared in January 2007, OIOS investigators have repeatedly requested *The Daily Telegraph's* editor and lawyers to provide them with evidence of the allegations. To date, the newspaper has refused to co-operate, leading the investigators to believe that no such evidence exists.

UNMIS encourages anyone who has witnessed or experienced misconduct by a member of UN peacekeeping personnel to report to the UNMIS office or to OIOS with all the facts and the evidence which will allow immediate and proper investigation, followed by disciplinary action. All allegations of misconduct, including sexual misconduct, by UNMIS personnel are rigorously followed up by the Mission's Conduct and Discipline Unit and investigated by OIOS independent investigators.

False allegations against the United Nations published in the press may have a political motive and/ intended to discredit the UN and its Mission in Sudan. UNMIS reserves the right to respond fully and publicly in cases where such allegations are found to be false.

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