

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 11, 2016

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
320 21st Street NW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Samantha Power
Ambassador
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary Kerry and Ambassador Power:

We are writing to express dismay and indignation at yet another report of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations (UN) peacekeepers, including eight new cases documented by Human Rights Watch this past week in the Central African Republic (CAR) and earlier reports by Human Rights Watch, the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). This litany of reports reinforces to us that these scandals sadly are not isolated occurrences nor are they limited to the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) peacekeeping operation or to a single country's peacekeepers. This ongoing tragedy has apparently persisted despite the UN Secretary General's stated zero tolerance policy for such horrific crimes.

Systemic changes must be made to ensure that sexual abuse is identified and perpetrators held accountable. While the vast majority of UN peacekeepers serve with honor, sexual exploitation and abuse by any peacekeeper violates the solemn responsibility to protect innocent civilians. As the largest financial contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, the United States has an obligation and responsibility to insist upon immediate and significant reforms.

We appreciated Ambassador Power's testimony at the December 9, 2015 Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing that you are "working to ensure a higher standard of performance and conduct once peacekeeping contingents are deployed, specifically in two critical areas: the complete fulfillment of their mandates, and the combatting of sexual exploitation and abuse." We also agree sexual exploitation and abuse "is especially abhorrent when committed by those who take advantage of the trust that communities are placing in the United Nations, and those responsible must be held accountable."

Unfortunately, since that testimony, an independent report on December 15 revealed that at least thirteen soldiers from France, two from Equatorial Guinea, and three from Chad participated in alleged abuse of children between December 2013 and June 2014. In January and February there have been multiple new allegations regarding UN peacekeepers from MINUSCA at the M'poko displaced persons camp and near the Banbari airport. There are also fresh allegations against peacekeepers associated with missions that predate MINUSCA. Just as the United States has a leadership role supporting peacekeeping, we must take a leadership role holding abusers accountable and excising this disturbing phenomenon, which Secretary General Ban has called a "cancer," from the UN system.

We respectfully request that you provide the following information so that we may work with you to implement a more rigorous process to stop the abuse:

- What is the United States doing to raise this issue at the UN and to ensure that this purported policy of zero tolerance is implemented?
- What will you do to ensure transparency in the investigation and prosecution of these crimes?
- What will the UN and the Administration do to ensure that the respective governments prosecute these individuals fully and completely once they are sent home and ensure that they and their colleagues do not benefit from assistance or other U.S. government engagement after returning home?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



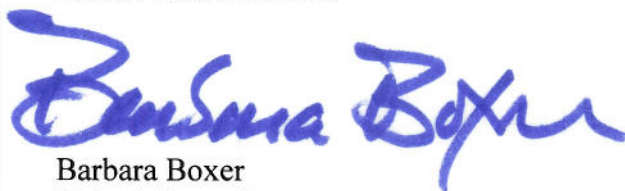
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Susan M. Collins
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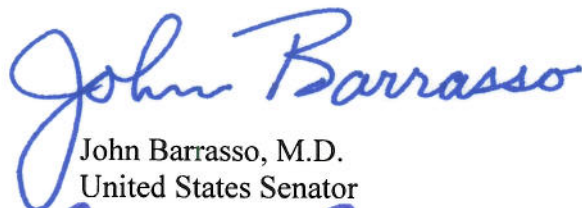
Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Johnny Isakson
United States Senator



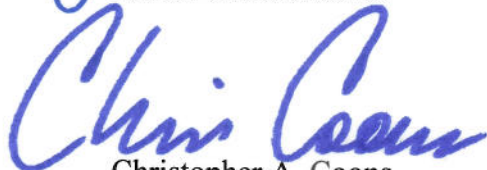
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



John Barrasso, M.D.
United States Senator



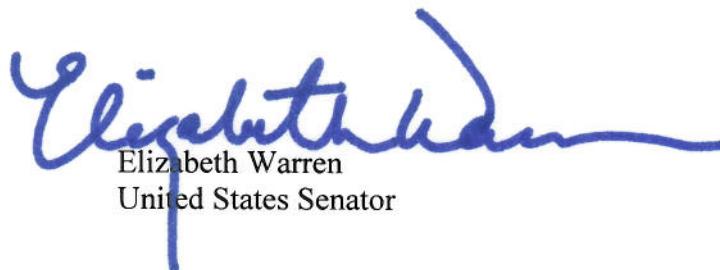
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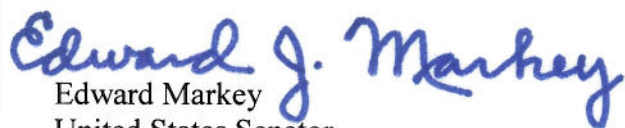
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