

Liberia



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During the six years since the deployment of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the country has registered significant progress in its postconflict recovery. Nevertheless, and despite the absence of large-scale violence, the need for UNMIL’s presence is clear to be seen: Liberian state institutions, especially the police and judiciary, are far from self-sustaining, and criminality is widespread. Meanwhile, a variety of domestic and regional threats to Liberia’s stability remain, including frequent violent disputes over land rights, high unemployment rates, illicit trafficking of narcotics, exploitation of natural resources, and a lack of social services. Further, Liberia is preparing for presidential elections in 2011, a complex process that will require UNMIL’s support in areas of both logistics and security. Bearing these factors in mind, the Security Council renewed UNMIL’s mandate in September 2009 for an additional twelve months and authorized implementation of the third phase of the scaled mission draw-down, which began in October 2007.

UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

- Authorization and Start Date: 19 September 2003 (UNSC Res. 1509)
- SRSG: Ellen Margrethe Løj (Denmark)
- Force Commander: Lieutenant-General Sikander Afzal (Pakistan)
- Police Commissioner: Henrik Stiernblad (Sweden)
- Budget: \$561.0 million (1 July 2009–30 June 2010)
- Strength as of 31 October 2009: Troops: 10,033
Military Observers: 122
Police: 1,343
International Civilian Staff: 455
Local Civilian Staff: 984
UN Volunteers: 225

For detailed mission information see p. 302

Background

Fourteen years of brutal war in Liberia ended in August 2003 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra, Ghana. The war killed an estimated 270,000 people, displaced one-third of the population, and left the country in ruins physically, institutionally, and economically. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) brokered the 2003 peace talks and was subsequently authorized by the Security Council to establish a multinational force, the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL). This mission paved the way for the deployment in October 2003 of UNMIL.

UNMIL has a multidimensional mandate that authorizes it to provide security while assisting in laying the foundations for a lasting peace. UNMIL is mandated to support the implementation of the cease-fire agreement; develop and implement a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program; protect UN personnel as well as civilians under imminent threat of physical violence; facilitate humanitarian assistance; support security sector reform, in particular police reform; assist in the reestablishment of national authority throughout the country; and assist in national elections, which were held in 2005 and placed President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in office.

Key Developments

In early 2009, and in the context of a relatively stable security situation, the second phase of UNMIL's incremental drawdown process concluded. While the withdrawal of troops represented a 10 percent decrease of the mission's military strength, UNMIL police numbers jumped by 20 percent in the same period. Before embarking on the third phase of the mission's drawdown, a technical assessment mission by the UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support visited Liberia to assess the situation on the ground. Central to the mission's findings was the still-developing and extremely limited capacity of Liberia's state institutions, namely the justice and security sectors. During the year, the capacity of Liberia to arrest, detain, and adjudicate criminals was extremely low and UNMIL remained as the main guarantor of security throughout the country.

Nevertheless, development of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) saw some progress. At year end, US contractors implementing the reform of the AFL handed over responsibility to Liberia's Ministry of Defense. The United States will deploy sixty military personnel to continue the mentoring process of the AFL in early 2010. However, the disengagement of US contractors will present new and significant managerial and financial challenges for Liberia's Ministry

of Defense. For its part, UNMIL began a mentoring program that supported AFL training exercises. Beginning in January 2010, UNMIL offered more enhanced training and mentoring in line with the government's national defense strategy, which aims for independent operability of the AFL by 2012.

In July 2009, President Sirleaf announced the closure of the Liberian disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration program. The program was one of the key outcomes of the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and its conclusion represents a significant milestone for the Sirleaf administration, UNMIL, and its international partners. While the program boasted over 101,000 disarmed and demobilized and 90,000 assisted, difficulties with reintegration, high youth unemployment, and easy access to illegal economic activities have had a deleterious impact on the process.

Efforts toward strengthening the Liberian National Police (LNP) continued. Despite improvements in the areas of criminal investigation, weapons handling, and building of infrastructure, capacity development remained slow, with the LNP operationally dependent on



An UNMIL sergeant briefs members of the Ghanaian battalion during a daily patrol of the city, Buchanan, Liberia, 17 April 2009.

Box 3.8.1 The Security Council: Women, Peace, and Security

During September 2009, the UN Secretary-General submitted his first report on the implementation of landmark Security Council Resolution 1325, concerning women, peace, and security. The resolution, adopted in 2000, called upon member states, the United Nations system, parties to conflict, and all other relevant actors to adopt a gender perspective that prioritizes the protection needs of female populations during and after conflict. In his 2009 report, the Secretary-General observed that while much had been done to protect women in conflict settings during the nine years since adoption of Resolution 1325, overall implementation has been uneven and conflict continues to have devastating and disproportionate impact on women and girls in conflict areas.

In response to the Secretary-General's report and in recognizing the continued use of sexual violence as a conflict tool, on 30 September 2009 the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1888, identifying sexual violence as a continued scourge of conflict and outlining decisive action that the UN and its member states can take to prevent sexual violence in conflict settings. Resolution 1888 represents the most extensive evolution of gender issues in peace operations contexts and builds on the similarly focused Resolution 1820 (2008), which urged increased inclusion of female perspectives into all peace and security activities. Taking

into account several recommendations from the Secretary-General's report, Resolution 1888 codifies the incorporation of protection of women and prevention of conflict-related sexual violence against women as integral to peace operations, and exhibits a stronger commitment from the Security Council than ever before.

Among the most significant aspects of Resolution 1888 is the appointment of several posts dedicated specifically to ensure a more comprehensive approach to supporting the role of women in areas of conflict. The resolution calls for the creation of a Special Representative post to provide leadership for and strengthening of the existing UN coordination mechanisms as well as advocacy for ending sexual violence against women from all relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the resolution calls for the creation of a team of experts that can be rapidly deployed to contexts where the issue of sexual violence in armed conflict is of concern. The team is to comprise specialists in rule of law, civilian and military judicial systems, mediation, criminal investigation, security sector reform, witness protection, fair trial standards, and public outreach, and will support national efforts to enhance rule of law. Resolution 1888 also calls for the appointment of women's protection advisers to be included in the mandates of peacekeeping operations where appropriate.

As cited in the Secretary-General's report, the lack of information and reporting on sexual violence remains a key issue. In this vein, Resolution 1888 calls for a systematic reporting system on gender-based violence to be implemented, and for data to be shared regularly with the Security Council. Furthermore, the resolution requests that an annual report on the progress of Resolution 1820 be submitted to the Security Council by the Secretary-General.

For the first time, sanctions now contain language regarding women and security. The Council has agreed that when adopting or renewing targeted sanctions in situations of armed conflict, it should consider special criteria pertaining to acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence. The possibility of sanctions sends a strong message to countries facing violent upheaval by both governments and rebels at the expense of the safety of women.

The Secretary-General stressed that in order for Resolution 1888 to be a positive force in the protection of female populations, it must be implemented in the global frameworks provided by its predecessor resolutions. In addition, on 5 October 2009, Resolution 1889 was adopted, calling for both a review of Resolution 1325 and the inclusion of gender issues as the Peacebuilding Commission reviews the UN's postconflict efforts.

Note: For more information see: UNSC Res. 1325 (2000); UNSC Res. 1820 (2008); UNSC Res. 1888 (2009); UNSC Res. 1889 (2009); UN Document S/2009/465.

UNMIL police contingents. In September, senior LNP and UNMIL staff identified eighteen priority projects as part of a strategic plan for 2009–2013, and presented the plan to partners. Meanwhile, the requisite justice and corrections structures necessary to support the developing police remained wholly inadequate on account of capacity, infrastructure, and equipment deficits.

In political terms, during July the final report of the 2003 Truth and Reconciliation Commission was released. The commission outlined the root causes of Liberia's conflict, recognized that all parties involved in the conflict committed grave violations of human rights, and recommended that those who were complicit with the abuses be barred from public office for thirty

years, and that those currently serving office be barred from reelection. While President Sirleaf was cited in the report for having openly admitted association with former president Charles Taylor prior to her election, legislation enforcing the report's recommendations has yet to be passed, leaving Sirleaf's legal right to reelection unresolved. Nevertheless, international support for the Sirleaf government remained strong throughout the year.

Conclusion

At the close of the year, Liberia's postconflict progress was reflected in the government's assumption of more financial responsibility. During the year, the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP), a multidonor partnership with Liberia that was initiated in 2005 to develop national financial management capacity and accountability and to control corruption, ceased international oversight of and support for four of Liberia's national

entities (forests, airports, marine ports, and petroleum refineries). However, technical assistance and training for these supported institutions will continue through the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission, and the US Agency for International Development.

The year ahead will present new obstacles to the maintenance of peace in Liberia. Preparations for the 2011 presidential elections will challenge the developing Liberian institutions. Meanwhile, broader regional instability in Guinea and planned elections in both Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone in the coming year, coupled with the growth of the narcotics trade in West Africa, all could have destabilizing impacts on Liberia, as they have in the past. UNMIL's presence will remain crucial in the year ahead, but as the mission considers further drawdown, that process must be tied to the development of competent Liberian justice and security institutions.