



Accountability System for the Protection of Civilians

Medals

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SUMMARY

The United Nations awards medals to personnel who are deployed under a peace operation, including peacekeepers deployed by troop- and police-contributing countries, as well as UN staff. Medals can be awarded by the secretary-general on the International Day of UN Peacekeepers (May 29th), as well as by heads of mission at the mission level at any point. While these awards are not POC-specific, they can be awarded to peacekeepers and UN personnel who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in implementing a mission's POC mandate. Medals include:

The United Nations Medal: The United Nations Medal, established in 1966, is awarded to military and police personnel who are or have been in the service of the UN.

Mission-specific medals: Medals are awarded for ninety consecutive days of service to a specific peacekeeping mission.

Dag Hammarskjöld Medal: Established in 2000, the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal is awarded posthumously to military, police, or civilian members of peacekeeping operations who have lost their lives while serving in a peacekeeping operation under the operational control and authority of the United Nations.¹

Captain Mbaye Diagne Medal for Exceptional Courage: The Captain Mbaye Diagne Medal was created by the UN Security Council in 2014 to award "military, police and civilian UN personnel and associated personnel who demonstrate courage while fulfilling the mandate of their missions or their functions, the service of humanity and the UN."² The only two individuals to receive the award were Captain Mbaye Diagne of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) saving lives during the Rwandan Genocide; and Private Chancy Chitete, who lost his life in the line of fire saving a peacekeeper's life while deployed to the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).³

UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award: The UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award was created in 2016 to recognize the dedication and effort of an individual peacekeeper in promoting the principles of UN Security Council Resolution

¹ UN Secretariat, "Secretary-General's Bulletin: Regulations for the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Medal," UN Doc. ST/SGB/2000/15, December 1, 2000.

² UN Security Council Resolution 2154 (May 8, 2014), UN Doc. S/RES/2154.

³ UN Peacekeeping, "Fallen Malawian Soldier to be Honoured with UN Peacekeeping's Highest Award," May 20, 2019; "UN Honours Peacekeepers Who 'Paid the Ultimate Price,' for the Sake of Others," UN News, May 24, 2019.

1325 on women, peace, and security.⁴ Five individuals have received the award thus far. Force commanders and heads of mission nominate individuals for this award.

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RELEVANCE TO THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

The Captain Mbaye Diagne Medal for Exceptional Courage has only been awarded for a POC-specific occurrence once when it was awarded to Captain Diagne himself for saving hundreds of lives in Rwanda.

Mission medals are always awarded to individuals who have served for the expected period of deployment, provided they have not been convicted of serious misconduct or crimes during their assignment. However, when missions award medals to troop contingents and police units, reference can be made to the individual or unit's contribution to POC.

There are instances of general medals being awarded to individual peacekeepers or contingents based on their ability and performance to carry out mandated tasks, including POC. While not a comprehensive list, these include:

- The force commander of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) awarding UN medals to fifty Indian peacekeepers in Bor in 2019 for their service in "protecting civilians and building durable peace" by carrying out patrols across the region and providing a secure environment for 2,500 civilians at the UN POC site at Bor.⁵
- The awarding of UN medals to 320 police officers from the Nepalese formed police unit in UNMISS in 2017 for carrying out a wide range of activities, including protecting civilians in South Sudan.⁶

According to a UN staff member, there were internal discussions in the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) about creating an

⁴ UN Peacekeeping, "Gender Advocate of the Year Award," available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender-advocate-of-year-award>.

⁵ UN Peacekeeping, "UNMISS Force Commander Awards UN Medal to Indian Peacekeepers in Bor," October 13, 2017.

⁶ UN Peacekeeping, "Nepalese Formed Police Unit Awarded UN Medal for Service in South Sudan," November 15, 2017.

award specifically for POC to incentivize personnel to prioritize protection. However, no new measure or award materialized.

Governing rules

Some of the medals are automatically awarded to uniformed personnel who served in peace operations. Others recognize outstanding performance. The rules for awarding the Captain Diagne Medal are defined in UN guidelines.⁷

Process and functioning

The United Nations Medal and mission-specific medals are automatically awarded to uniformed personnel who serve for the UN and or for a specific mission, respectively. They are not related to outstanding performance. The Dag Hammarskjöld Medal, similarly, is automatically awarded to those who die during UN service.

The Captain Mbaye Diagne Medal for Exceptional Courage can be awarded to military, police, and civilian UN personnel and associated personnel who demonstrate a level of courage as set by Captain Diagne, who saved “hundreds of, or perhaps even a thousand, of Rwandans from death during the 1994 Genocide.”⁸ Any UN uniformed or civilian personnel, or any person or entity outside of the UN, may submit a nomination to the head of the mission. Missions have a standing panel that evaluates the nominated candidates and advises the head of mission on nominations for the medal. Following consultations at the mission level, the head of mission submits the recommendation to the under-secretaries-general for peace operations, political and peacebuilding affairs, and operational support and the high commissioner for human rights. Following consultations at the headquarters level, the secretary-general makes a final decision. The ceremony for the award takes place on the International Day of UN Peacekeepers. Individuals who have engaged in misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, while serving in the UN or who have been repatriated or separated on disciplinary

⁷ UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Political Affairs, and Field Support and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Awarding the Captain Mbaye Diagne Medal for Exceptional Courage: Guidelines,” UN Doc. PK/G/2016.18, July 2016.

⁸ Ibid.

grounds or for unsatisfactory performance while in the service of the UN are not eligible for the Captain Diagne Medal.

4 ANALYSIS

Most UN awards do not reflect actual performance. Rather, they commemorate service to UN peace operations.

Medals that do reward exceptional performance in carrying out mandated tasks are rarely awarded, as demonstrated by the Captain Diagne Medal, which has only been awarded twice. As such, it is unclear whether medals successfully motivate and incentivize uniformed and civilian personnel to carry out their mandated tasks in an exceptional manner. The guidelines for medals (as well as a comprehensive and accessible list of all medals) are not well known by UN staff or the public.


Most of the existing awards are also for uniformed personnel. There are few ways to recognize civilian staff beyond their individual performance appraisals.

Timing

Regular process	X	Nominations for awards are regularly accepted. More ubiquitous awards (such as mission-specific awards contingent on participation and deployment to a UN mission) are also given on a regular basis.
Extraordinary measure after incident	X	While nominations for medals based on exceptional performance are regularly accepted, medals such as the Captain Diagne Medal can be given following or during an incident.

Actors and answerability structure

Medals that are automatically awarded for serving in peacekeeping missions do not promote accountability, since they are not based on performance. However, the Captain Diagne Medal or the UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award do reward good performance in carrying out mandated tasks, including POC. They can enhance peacekeepers' sense of accountability to the United Nations as a whole, as well as to the missions and components in which they serve. Given that individuals can be nominated for these awards by those outside of UN peacekeeping, they could allow civilian populations to promote accountability for peacekeepers, though it is unclear whether local nominations have been taken into consideration and to what extent the public is aware of the process. The nomination process goes through the mission, UN headquarters, and then the secretary-general. The secretary-general, after receiving input from various individuals in the mission and at headquarters, makes the final decision.

 Held accountable by		Individuals	Unit			Mission	Secretariat	Contributing countries	Security Council/ 5 th Committee	Member states	Population	Other
			Military	Police	Civilian							
Individuals		X	X	X	X	X					X	X
Unit/ section/ component	Military											
	Police											
	Civilian											
Mission												
Secretariat												
Contributing countries												
Member states												
Security Council/ 5th Committee												

Scope and objective

Some of the medals can be considered performance-based accountability tools.

Collect best practices and lessons learned		
Track performance	X	Awards seek to reward good and exceptional performance. As such, the performance of contingents and individuals within contingents is tracked and monitored, and force commanders and police commissioners issue recommendations detailing their performance.
Establish facts and circumstances		
Establish responsibility		
Identify structural and systemic issues		

Type of accountability

Given that the Captain Diagne Medal and the UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award seek to award exceptional performance, they can be considered organizational tools that enhance internal performance accountability.

Outcome

Learn	Disseminate and integrate internally		
	Account for publicly		
Correct	Improve internal processes		
	Inform the selection of personnel		
Sanction	Recommend sanctions		
	Establish incentives	X	The Captain Diagne Medal honors exceptional work and sacrifice. The UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award can also promote gender-sensitive work and incentivize good performance. The ceremonial commemoration could incentivize individuals to go above and beyond the call of duty in carrying out mandated tasks, including POC.

Independence and impartiality

It appears that there are several iterations of consultations when nominating individuals or contingents for the Captain Diagne Medal and the UN Gender Advocate of the Year Award, including with senior management at the mission level and in the Secretariat. The process for nominating somebody for the Captain Diagne Medal is particularly transparent.

Inclusivity

For the Captain Diagne Medal, UN staff, as well as individuals from outside the UN, can submit nominations. The Captain Diagne Medal is available to all mission components, indicating a level of inclusivity. For the most part, however, medals are awarded to military and police components rather than civilian or UN staff.

Transparency

The Captain Diagne Medal and UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award are publicly announced and garner media attention and recognition. Individuals and contingents receive the medals in award ceremonies.

Follow-up mechanisms

There is no follow-up mechanism for after medals have been awarded to peacekeepers. Medals awarded to military or police contingents may be worn post-deployment, depending on national protocols. Troop- and police-contributing countries are notified if one of their contingents receives a medal.

Possible follow-up mechanisms		
Available enforcement measures		
Transmissibility to other mechanisms		