



THE UN'S DIRTY SECRET:

THE UNTOLD STORY OF ANDERS KOMPASS AND PEACEKEEPER SEX ABUSE IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Editor's note: For the full list of internal UN documents leaked to AIDS-Free World, visit: www.codebluecampaign.com/undocuments

On April 29, 2015, the world learned of disturbing accounts of sexual abuse of young boys by French, Chadian, and Equatorial Guinean peacekeepers at a displaced persons camp in the Central African Republic (CAR). The interviews, which had been conducted nearly a year earlier by staff from the UN's Office of the High Commission for Human Rights and UNICEF, were [leaked to the Guardian newspaper](#) by AIDS-Free World. The resulting article also detailed the account of Anders Kompass, a career human rights official from Sweden, who had been suspended and was being investigated by the UN for his role in passing details of the abuse to the French government.

For the past month, Anders Kompass has remained silent on his role in this affair, even as the UN publicly blamed him for 'leaking' the report. AIDS-Free World has since obtained and is releasing today a series of incriminating internal UN documents, memos and email correspondence—including [Kompass' own account of the events](#)—that expose the UN's inaction. They also point to efforts by several senior UN officials to silence a staff member who could expose their failure to sound the alarm or protect children from imminent harm.

This is the untold story.

In early May of 2014, an international NGO requested help from MINUSCA, the UN's peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic: several displaced children in the capital, Bangui, had reported that they and their friends were being raped by international forces in exchange for food.

On May 19, 2014, a junior OHCHR Human Rights Officer on temporary assignment with MINUSCA and a UNICEF staff member conducted an interview with an 11-year-old boy. The child reported that a French soldier promised him food in exchange for oral sex, negotiated with a guard to bring him onto the base, raped him, and then gave him biscuits and cash. The boy gave a detailed description of the soldier and said he could positively identify him in a photo.

The human rights officer ‘immediately’ relayed her interview notes to a MINUSCA official who acted as her supervisor in the Central African Republic. By all accounts, Renner Onana, Chief of Human Rights and Justice, did not take action: No warning was sent out to soldiers, no effort was made to inform the French or other authorities, nothing was done to prevent ongoing abuse, no alert was issued to the tens of thousands of internally displaced adults in the camp that sexual predators were disguised as protectors and posed imminent danger to children and other civilians. There is no record that on May 19th, 2014 that first child interviewed was offered the immediate protection he required.

Over the next five weeks, the Human Rights Officer and UNICEF staff members [interviewed multiple known child victims](#) as they were tracked down by a volunteer for the NGO that had requested the UN’s assistance. Several child victims known to the volunteer couldn’t be located. After each interview—on May 19th, May 20th, June 5th, June 17th, June 18th, and June 24th—the OHCHR human rights officer delivered her notes to MINUSCA; the UNICEF staff members wrote up their own notes of forced oral sex and anal rape of boys aged 8 to 15—and still no action was taken.

During the June 18th interview, a 13-year-old boy said he couldn’t number all the times he’d been forced to perform oral sex on soldiers but the most recent had been between June 8th and 12th, 2014—several weeks after the UN’s first interview. Even with solid proof that the crimes were still occurring as they gathered additional testimonies from children, MINUSCA, OHCHR, and UNICEF took no action. (UNICEF is cited in the human rights officer’s reports as having plans to attend to the interviewees’ education, family reunification, and psycho-social needs. UNICEF spokespeople have since been directed, ‘[if asked](#),’ to state that those needs were met. No specifics are included about which children received assistance, or how many in total.)

Leaked documents show that additional UN officials in MINUSCA, Geneva, and New York received the human rights officer’s official final report of interviews with child victims before her departure from CAR, on July 14th, 2014. It is not known which UNICEF officials received final reports. In total, the interviews document sexual abuse of 13 children by a total of 16 peacekeepers: 11 were French, 3 were from Chad, and 2 were from Equatorial Guinea. Another 7 peacekeepers solicited children or acted as accomplices. The report implicates 23 soldiers in all.

By agreeing to be interviewed by the UN, the children expected the abuse to stop and the perpetrators to be arrested. When children report sexual abuse, adults must report it to the authorities. A child needs protection and, by definition, does not have the agency to decide whether to press charges. They deserved the protection they assumed they would receive once the UN knew of their abuse.

Instead, more than a year passed before their stories came to light, and the investigations began in earnest.

By mid-July 2014, at least 12 UN staff had received the human rights officer's report. All were aware that no action had been taken, no authorities had been alerted, and the abuse was ongoing. One of the 12 recipients, Roberto Ricci, brought the report directly to the attention of his supervisor in Geneva, Anders Kompass. It was then that Mr. Kompass informed French diplomatic authorities, who requested a copy of the report in order to launch an investigation. Kompass delivered the report to the French authorities in July with a written and signed cover note and received written acknowledgement and thanks on July 30th from the French government, informing him that an investigation was underway. That [official letter](#) was stamped as received on August 5th and entered into the OHCHR correspondence log.

French investigators arrived in CAR's capital, Bangui, on August 1st and questioned Renner Onana, MINUSCA's Chief of Human Rights and Justice—the official who had received a summary report from the Human Rights Officer after each interview. The investigators were referred by MINUSCA to the Human Rights Officer, who asked first Renner Onana, and then Cecile Aptel, OHCHR's Senior Legal Advisor, about whether to speak to the police. After consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs in New York, Aptel instructed her to reply to the French authorities that they should present any questions in writing through UN lawyers; the legal office would convey written answers.

The Human Rights Officer's UN immunity from legal process had been invoked. The UNICEF staff members who had taken part in the interviews were similarly approached by French investigators. They too referred investigators to the Office of Legal Affairs.

The French investigation stalled.

On August 7th, 2014, Anders Kompass briefed OHCHR Deputy High Commissioner Flavia Pansieri and emailed the report to her on August 8th. The Deputy High Commissioner's assistant, acknowledging receipt, informed Mr. Kompass by email that same day that the Executive Office of the Secretary-General had been briefed.

Despite Kompass' definitive assertion and reference to an August 8th email, Pansieri testified in [her official account](#) of events—submitted months later to 'inform' the investigation into Kompass' actions—that she first “became aware of the situation some time in early fall, most probably September 2014 (I regret I do not recall the exact date)” through Cecile Aptel, in the context of a leak. Pansieri expressed regrets for having failed to follow up once she learned about the abuses in CAR, (citing a 'very hectic' period dealing with budget cuts and the inherent staff tensions and stresses), and attests that her attention was only turned to it again many months later, in early March 2015.

[In his statement](#) to the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein also claims to have learned about the allegations of sexual abuse in CAR in "Autumn of 2014," shortly after he took over the post.

Around the same time, OHCHR formally requested that the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) investigate Anders Kompass regarding 'leaked cables' in an incident involving Western Sahara.

On December 22, 2014, just before the UN offices closed for the holiday break, the Secretary-General submitted the final report of the International Commission of Inquiry on the Central African Republic ([S/2014/928](#)). While the commission did not reference the MINUSCA/OHCHR/UNICEF report of abuse by international peacekeepers, it did provide a very specific recommendation: "The Secretary-General's periodic reports on peacekeeping operations in the CAR should include an analysis of any violations that are alleged to have been committed by both UN peace-keepers and non-UN peacekeepers authorized by the Security Council."

Three months later, when the Secretary-General submitted his annual report on the UN's response to sexual exploitation and abuse for 2014, it contained no mention whatsoever of the reports of child sexual abuse in the Central African Republic.

In early March 2015, High Commissioner Zeid learned informally from UN Chef de Cabinet Susanna Malcorra that Anders Kompass had been cleared of wrongdoing in the Western Sahara case because the investigation "could not substantiate any responsibility for Kompass."

On March 6th, a full eight months after she'd last heard any news about the CAR case, the Human Rights Officer who had interviewed the child victims [spoke with two senior OHCHR lawyers](#). They questioned her about her report and her assignment in CAR, and then they briefed both Zeid and his deputy, Flavia Pansieri.

On March 12th, on Zeid's orders and at the request of UN Peacekeeping head Hervé Ladsous, Deputy High Commissioner [Flavia Pansieri asked Anders Kompass to resign](#).

In demanding Kompass' resignation, the UN made a grave tactical error: a career human rights official from Sweden, Kompass was so trusted that he'd been put in charge of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) just weeks before his abrupt dismissal, when the High Commissioner and Deputy High Commissioner were both absent from the office. The sudden move to terminate him stunned Kompass; the reasons given outraged him. He was being accused of having inappropriately alerted the government of France, nearly a year earlier, to the

discovery by OHCHR and UNICEF staff of rampant child sex abuse by French soldiers who'd been sent to protect civilians in the war-ravaged Central African Republic.

Kompass refused to resign, and he threatened to go to the press.

On March 13th, Pansieri briefed High Commissioner Zeid about her interaction with Kompass. Zeid decided that the situation was serious and that they should brief Chef de Cabinet Susanna Malcorra and "other senior colleagues" in person.

The following week, at the Secretary-General's Senior Staff Retreat in Turin, Italy on March 19-20, 2015, Chef de Cabinet Susanna Malcorra arranged a meeting between Zeid, Deputy High Commissioner Flavia Pansieri, Under-Secretary-General (USG) for OIOS Carman Lapointe, and the UN's Director of Ethics, Joan Dubinsky, to [discuss Anders Kompass](#).

At the meeting, these senior UN officials decided to open an investigation into Kompass—a fact made even more striking by the knowledge that OIOS and the UN Ethics Office are meant to operate at arm's-length from the rest of the UN system, in order to ensure accountability and transparency.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Deputy High Commissioner, and the most senior officials of the UN in New York had known for many, many months about Kompass' 'inappropriate' emergency transmittal of a report documenting the child abuse. And they knew that it was only thanks to his transmission of that report to the government of France that the French had immediately reacted and sent an investigation team to the CAR.

With the High Commissioner's ill-considered demand that Kompass resign, and Kompass' unexpected refusal to do so, the UN's most senior officials were finally forced to pay long-overdue attention to the contents of the document they were claiming he had leaked. That was enough to instill panic: clearly, they had all ignored and neglected the appalling crisis it described. If their negligence became public, the UN would face questions for which there were no reasonable answers.

In Turin, it was decided that Zeid and Pansieri would collect statements from a select group and would send them on with a request for a formal OIOS investigation. Pansieri asked Kompass to write an account of his role in passing documents to the French and suggested he send it to her at her personal email account, rather than her UN account. When Kompass gave his statement, he was not informed that it was intended to be used as part of an investigation against him.

On April 7th, the Deputy Swedish Ambassador to the UN called Chef de Cabinet Susanna Malcorra. Unable to reach her, [he called Joan Dubinsky, Director of the UN Ethics Office](#). He told her he was informed about an OHCHR report about paedophilia alleged against French soldiers

in MINUSCA. Furious that Kompas had been asked to resign without any trace of an investigation or due diligence, he warned that "it would not be a good thing if the High Commissioner for Human Rights forced Mr. Kompas to resign. If that occurred, it would go public, and a harmful and ugly debate would occur."

Following the initial meeting in Turin, the group continued corresponding via email about an investigation into Kompas. Two weeks later, on April 9, 2015, Zeid formally requested an OIOS investigation into Kompas for his 'leak' of the report of sexual abuse in the Central African Republic.

Attached to the High Commissioner's [official request for an investigation](#) into Kompas' actions are six statements: a statement from [Anders Kompas](#), the subject of the investigation; a long and a short statement from the Human Rights Officer who conducted the interviews; a statement from High Commissioner [Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein](#); a statement from Deputy High Commissioner [Flavia Pansieri](#); and a joint statement from [two OHCHR lawyers](#) recounting their conversation with the Human Rights Officer about her request from the French investigators and the fact that the request had immediately been turned over to the UN Office of Legal Affairs. The request for investigation and the statements were sent together as one package, first to the Director of Ethics, then to OIOS.

The statements conflict dramatically, with one exception: throughout the period when the abuse of African children first came to the attention of numbers of people within the UN, senior officials who were informed seem to have kept no records of meetings or discussions, and recollections are vague. The child victims receive no mention in the statements, nor are there any expressions of concern or curiosity about their welfare. No one providing testimony claims to have inquired about the status of any investigations, about any protection measures enacted, or about any tracing, prevention or support provided to child victims; those omissions are neither noted nor explained. The sole focus of concerted attention is on the alleged 'leak' by Anders Kompas.

During the week of April 13, 2015, a month after his refusal to resign, Kompas was suspended with pay and escorted from his office. He challenged OHCHR's actions against him before the UN's Dispute Tribunal; a judge subsequently found in his favor and demanded his reinstatement—pending the outcome of the investigation that is now under way.

The Director of the Investigations Unit in the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), who would normally oversee such a case, recused himself from involvement in the investigation. He had [protested in writing](#) to his supervisor, OIOS USG Carman Lapointe, that a decision had been made at the highest levels to investigate Kompas, that the requisite intake process to first determine whether an investigation was warranted had been bypassed, that due process had been abridged, and because of this, any investigation would be prejudiced and improper. The USG for OIOS replied that while she agreed that such processes are usual, the senior management

had decided to bypass these processes, and the Director of the Investigative Unit should abide by senior staff's wishes. She wrote, "Agreed; however in this case I have decided."

When questioned by Member States in mid-May about why her Director of Investigations had recused himself from the investigation of Kompass, OIOS Under-Secretary-General Lapointe responded that she did not know why.

Since the Guardian reported on the information provided by AIDS-Free World, the High Commissioner, his spokesperson, a UNICEF spokesperson, the Secretary-General's spokespersons, and officials from Peacekeeping have addressed the media. There is ample reason for Member States to question the answers given.

UNICEF statements regarding the agency's involvement in the interviews raise grave questions about UNICEF protocols and mandatory disclosure regulations when dealing directly with children in general, and with child victims of sexual abuse in particular. The fact that a child victim of sex abuse by soldiers still at-large was interviewed in the MINUSCA offices, ushered past military and civilian peacekeepers—many of whom could have been perpetrators, their accomplices, or friends—raises critically important questions about the training and skills of all involved. Also of concern is the fact that there appear to have been no 'mandated disclosure' guidelines for OHCHR or UNICEF staff, making clear the obligation to report, without delay, any allegations or suspicions of child sexual abuse to law enforcement authorities. The interviewing also raises questions about whether protocols exist regarding the interviewing, by UNICEF and OHCHR staff, of minors who are unaccompanied by an appropriate adult and whose legal parents or guardians may not have consented to the interview.

The investigation is currently underway to determine whether Kompass is guilty of any wrongdoing. Susana Malcorra, who occupies one of the most powerful positions in the UN system as Chef de Cabinet for the Secretary-General, is publicly stating to governments and the media that Kompass is being investigated because he is guilty of wrongdoing. This suggests a pre-determined, inevitable outcome of the investigation and calls into question the judgment of the Chef de Cabinet regarding public statements. More seriously still, it should cause Member States to wonder whether the entire system of adjudication in the UN has become a kangaroo court.

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The account above, the leaked documents linked to it, and the strong implications of misconduct and impunity at the very highest levels of the UN may come as a shock to many readers. The grim reality is that those with experience within the UN system are unlikely to be surprised. They know that this is not an unusual case; it is simply one that has come, partially, to light. For those of us who are staunch believers in the UN's critical purpose and noble ideals, this case is deeply troubling because it is not unique. It is part of a continuing and disturbing pattern afflicting and endangering the entire UN system. That pattern is never more overtly on display than in the UN's handling of sexual exploitation and abuse. The starkest miscarriages of justice and disregard for victims of UN sexual abuse occur within peacekeeping operations.

The UN secretariat exists to serve the collective interest of the world's governments, to uphold their highest standards, and to implement their agreed actions.

Today, those Member States are balanced on a precipice, in imminent danger of losing all control over a UN secretariat that acts without discretion, without governments' full knowledge, with no real oversight, and with increasing levels of impunity.

Member States must commission an external investigation into the whole UN system, at every level, in headquarters and country offices, to review all components related to sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping, the UN's most costly undertaking. Investigating this CAR case is critically important, but insufficient; the external investigation must focus on the handling by the UN system of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations in all peacekeeping operations. That investigation must comprise—and be administratively supported by—entirely external, totally independent, impartial experts, with no past or current conflicts of interests, and no future interests that would hamper their ability to judge, critique, demand accountability, and recommend harsh sanctions if and where necessary.

This account raises the tragic spectre of countless children in the Central African Republic who will be scarred for life by sexual abuse. They were betrayed when they disclosed to the UN, and it failed to protect them. In the life of a 9- or 12-year-old, a year waiting for protection from an abuser is an eternity. In the life of a serial rapist, a year provides countless opportunities to abuse and exploit more children and become more practiced at escaping detection.

The events and their gross mishandling have done tremendous damage to civilians, and to the UN's reputation and credibility. They call into question the top leadership, while casting a dark shadow on the many thousands of principled, hard-working UN staff who report to them.

If these dreadful revelations aren't enough to press Member States to initiate an external investigation and take back control of the United Nations, nothing will.

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