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Convictions against UN peacekeepers in Haiti do not serve justice

A year in jail for three UN Pakistani peacekeepers found guilty of sexually assaulting a 14-year-old boy is a travesty of justice, Amnesty International said today.

On 14 March the UN revealed the three peacekeepers were convicted following a Pakistani military hearing in the city of Gonaïves in January 2012.

This is the first known trial and conviction of a member of the UN peacekeeping force for an offence in Haiti. The three police officers have now been sent back to Pakistan where they are expected to serve their jail sentence.

“Very little information is available on this case and the nature of the sexual assault but what is clear is a military trial conducted in virtual secrecy that resulted in a one year sentence is utterly unacceptable and a travesty of justice,” said Javier Zúñiga, Special Advisor at Amnesty International.

“Cases of sexual abuse should never be dealt with in military courts, rather in civilian courts prepared to deal with human rights issues.”

“The UN must inform the public about the exact circumstances of this crime, the extent to which these peacekeepers and possibly others were involved. We also need to know what investigation has taken place, the judicial process that was followed and about any compensation for the victim and his family,” said Zúñiga.

The UN has announced it is liaising with the Pakistani authorities to examine the details of the procedures followed and to ensure appropriate follow-up. Amnesty International urges the UN to publicise those details and to conduct a thorough follow up to the case in order to ensure the rights of the victim to reparation and of the accused to a fair trial are respected.

Amnesty International urges the United Nations to review its internal mechanisms to deal with abuses committed by their personnel and multinational forces.

In a separate case, during the second half of last year, Uruguayan UN peacekeepers were accused of sexually abusing a young Haitian man. That case is now being dealt with by the Uruguayan judicial system.