

# Abuse and Sexual Exploitation in Peace Operations: The Case of MINUSTAH

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**Abstract:** *The article discusses the conditions that contributed to the occurrence of cases involving the abuse and sexual exploitation of females committed by peacekeepers during the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The paper seeks to understand this context through a feminist perspective, considering the influence of militarized masculinity and the socioeconomic conditions in the country that perpetuated violence against women and girls during the course of the mission.*

**Keywords:** *Patriarchy; Militarized masculinity; Female sexual exploitation; Peace operations; MINUSTAH.*

## **Abuso e exploração sexual em operações de paz: o caso da MINUSTAH**

**Resumo:** *Neste artigo discutimos as condicionantes que contribuíram para a ocorrência de casos de abuso e exploração sexual feminina praticada por peacekeepers durante a Missão de Estabilização das Nações Unidas no Haiti (MINUSTAH). No trabalho, buscamos compreender a conjuntura a partir de uma perspectiva feminista, considerando a influência da masculinidade militarizada e das condições socioeconômicas do país para a perpetuação da violência contra meninas e mulheres durante o período de vigência da missão.*

**Palavras-chave:** *patriarcado; masculinidade militarizada; exploração sexual feminina; operações de paz; MINUSTAH.*

## **Introduction**

Sexual abuse and violence in contexts of war and civil conflict is not uncommon on the international scene. According to compiled data, 20,000 women were raped during the war in Bosnia and 250,000 during the conflict in Rwanda (Donna PANKHURST, 2010). Nor is it uncommon for abuses to be committed during peace operations. According to United Nations (UN) statistics published in 2018, over the past 5 years the organization has recognized the accusations of 612 women and children (Lucy JOHNSTON, 2018). Of these, 131 victims said they became pregnant after the attacks, while some of them were minors at the time of the abuse. Despite Security Council resolutions on the issue, such as number 1325, published in 2000, calling for the presence of women in peace-building efforts, and number 1820, published in 2008, recognizing sexual violence as a wartime tactic, the promotion of a gender equality policy in peace operations is still difficult to implement (Laura SHEPHERD, 2018).

In this article we intend to contribute to this debate by conducting a case study on instances of abuse and violence in the context of peace operations. Our focus is on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Beginning in 2004 and ending in 2017, MINUSTAH was one of the peace missions that received most attention in recent years. Certain studies have addressed the security and governance challenges raised by the mission. Along this line, it is worth noting the discussions on public security reforms in the country, and particularly the efforts to reform the national police, notwithstanding the political fact that public security forces have traditionally been more threats than guarantors of human security (Timothy DONAIS, 2007).

Other works have explored the country's socioeconomic and political context from the perspective of state fragility and how certain impacts hampered the country's recovery. The central argument is that Haitian institutions were historically vulnerable and once faced with internal challenges, such as the uprisings that began in 2000 after the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide and the 2010 earthquake, and external events, such as world food price inflation in 2008 and Hurricane Matthew in 2016, they were unable to resist (Amelie GAUTHIER; Madalena MOITA, 2007; Yasmine SHAMSIE; Andrew THOMPSON, 2007).

In Brazil, the main thread of analysis was the participation of Brazilian troops in MINUSTAH. There are studies that have placed MINUSTAH within a historical perspective on the Brazilian participation in peace operations (Lucas REZENDE, 2012), in addition to studies that explored the cooperation of South American countries on the mission (Danilo SOUZA NETO, 2009) and those that discussed the synergy between the stabilization of Haiti and public security in Brazil (Christopher HARIG, 2015).

Furthermore, debates arose about an incipient Brazilian model of peacekeeping (Eduarda HAMMAN, 2012), which did not prosper but would have the potential to enable Brazil to participate more effectively in the collective security system. The appointment of General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz<sup>1</sup> to the post of Force Commander of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) (UNITED NATIONS, 2013), as well as the invitation for Brazil to participate in the mission in the Central African Republic (UNITED NATIONS BRAZIL, 2017), was an indication that Brazil could be a player of relative weight in questions of stabilization for countries emerging from conflict.

As can be seen, the debate on sexual abuse and violence was not central. Despite the commitment to protect citizens assumed in the mandate, from 2004 onwards, several accusations emerged regarding abuses committed against women and girls. By way of example, according to information gathered by Paisley Dodds (2017), at least 150 allegations of sexual abuse and violence by peacekeepers were reported between 2004 and 2016. For instance, there is the case of 134 Sri Lankan soldiers accused of sexually trafficking nine children. Of that total, 114 were sent home, but none were convicted (DODDS, 2017). Recently, charges were filed against the team from the British charity OXFAM, which allegedly hired prostitutes while working in Haiti (Daniel KHALILI-TARI, 2018).

As such, we pose the following question: what conditions made it possible for cases of sexual abuse and violence to emerge during MINUSTAH's mandate? We started from the hypothesis that social and economic factors resulting from the political crisis and its worsening, after the 2010 earthquake, placed women in an extremely vulnerable situation, compelling them to resort to forced prostitution to guarantee their own subsistence and that of their families. In addition, there is the subjugation of women reproduced by peacekeepers through chauvinist and sexist conceptions that are reinforced by military institutions.

In theoretical terms, we anchor ourselves on the contributions of feminist approaches to International Relations, with particular emphasis on work that discusses international security and peace operations from a gender perspective (e.g., Sandra WHITWORTH, 2004; SHEPHERD, 2008; 2018). Methodologically, we chose to conduct a case study informed by the above-mentioned theoretical perspective and empirically based on data collected from official sources, NGO reports and press reports.<sup>2</sup> For our analysis, we followed Annica Kronsell (2006) when she suggested that we listen to the voices of the women involved in the situations. We reproduce people's testimonies, comparing them with analyses of the situation in which they were inserted. Therefore, we believe that the article contributes to the debate both in theoretical and empirical terms. By resorting to feminism, we contribute to the consolidation of theoretically informed works in the Brazilian Academy of International Relations. Empirically, we highlight an important but little explored discussion on peace operations in the country.

The text is divided into four sections. The first presents the feminist analytical framework, particularly the one developed in International Relations. We then summarize the contemporary historical context of the country, highlighting the consequences of the 2010 earthquake, followed by a brief debate on the social position of Haitian women. This section, besides illustrating the Haitian context, presents the structural conditions that place women and girls in a position of social fragility. Subsequently, we analyze cases of sexual exploitation in Haiti by peacemakers in the context of formal prostitution, survival, and transactional relationships. Finally, we present our concluding thoughts.

## Feminism(s) and International Relations

Taking *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (Cynthia ENLOE, 1990) as a reference, we have almost 30 years of feminist contributions in the area of International Relations. In the light of the material

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<sup>1</sup> General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz of the Brazilian army was Force Commander of MINUSTAH between 2007 and 2009, later serving in MONUSCO as well.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to the official documents from the UN itself, we can cite the reports from the *Save the Children* NGO (CSÁKY, 2008), the Igarapé Institute (HAMMAN, 2012), HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (2016), as well as international press reports.

produced in the Human Sciences, these are certainly recent but far from negligible developments. There is a whole plural production that has tried in good measure to address the question posed in the 1990s by Enloe: where are the women? In analyzing the functioning of U.S. military bases, Enloe argued that roles played by women – as wives, prostitutes, chambermaids, among many others – and considered marginal were in fact constitutive of international reality.

Analytically, the distinction between sex and gender is central to feminist work. If biological sex is responsible for the sexual dimorphism of the human species, traits related to behavior and temperament commonly associated to women are from the gender register. A well-known definition was provided by Joan Scott (2008, p. 14), when she pointed out that gender is “the social organization of sexual difference”. This is not to say that gender reflects or even establishes natural physical differences between men and women. The argument is that gender characteristics are socially and culturally constructed and associated with human beings in a dichotomous way, that is, one pole is assigned to men, and the other to women.

One of the main concerns of feminism in International Relations is to question the organization of what we usually call “the international” with gender inequalities as a starting point. In order to do this, the work in the area makes some assumptions. Firstly, the division between theory and practice is innocuous, since academic interventions are political interventions. Secondly, as with all the tradition of feminist work that precedes it, the great question that informs a significant portion of production in the area can be presented using the terms proposed by J. Ann Tickner (2001): what explains the subordination of women or the unjustified asymmetry between men and women in social, political, and economic positions? Furthermore, how can we subvert a certain status quo of inequality between men and women?

It is against this background that we can assert that there are “feminisms”, and not a cohesive and coherent feminist tradition, either in the Human Sciences as a whole or in International Relations in particular. Following Tickner (2001), distinct currents provide diagnoses and differentiated proposals for overcoming situations of inequality, establishing a rather heterogeneous theoretical-normative mosaic. By way of illustration,<sup>3</sup> we have “liberal feminism”, which broadly argues that gender inequalities are due to formally institutionalized prejudices in society and that the goal is therefore a legal isonomy between men and women.

“Radical feminism” argues that subordination or unjustified asymmetry between men and women lies in patriarchy as a form of social organization, which favors the male over the female experience. However, the solution is more than just legal isonomy. We should celebrate the virtues of the female experience, because the equality that is sought is based on the male experience.

The contribution of “socialist feminism” should also be highlighted. To some extent reacting to the essentialism of a certain vision of women advocated by radical feminism and an undifferentiated notion of patriarchy (TICKNER, 2001, p. 16), socialist feminists propose the idea that the differences between men and women – and the very support of patriarchy – have material bases that, in the first or last instance, can be retraced to the control that men have over women's bodies and work.

We also have the “post-structuralist feminist current”. Inspired by the contributions of authors such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, this current is anchored in the argument that any definition or perspective that proposes itself as universal is nothing more than a particular positioning that possesses nothing natural and must therefore be deconstructed. Deconstruction implies, besides questioning a supposedly essential nature of a given perspective, examining its impacts on our capacity to take action in the world (Jill STEANS, 1998).

Such ideas have had a profound impact on the area of International Relations, informing works that discuss everything from human rights to international political economy. In terms of international security issues, the feminist contribution has been evident through the analysis and reformulation of central concepts such as the State, peace and war, as well as encouragement to address new and/or previously neglected issues (Laura SJOBERG, 2009).

In light of the article's objectives, among the issues addressed by feminism in the international security arena is criticism of the military's participation in peace operations and its connection with violations against civilians in conflict or post-conflict countries. For this reason, an important concept is that of militarism. For Enloe (2014), militarism is a “package of ideas,” that is, a compilation of suppositions, values, and beliefs structured according to the following principles:

- a) that armed force is the ultimate resolver of tensions; b) that human nature is prone to conflict;
- c) that having enemies is a natural condition; d) that hierarchical relations produce effective action; e) that a state without an army is naïve, scarcely modern and barely legitimate; f) that in times of crisis those who are feminine need armed protection; and g) that in times of crisis any man who refuses to engage in armed violent action is jeopardizing his own status as a manly man (ENLOE, 2014, p. 7).

<sup>3</sup> The intention is not to exhaust or suggest a definitive division between the differing currents of feminism. For an introduction to the diversity of feminist theories, see Luis Felipe MIGUEL and Flávia BIROLI. *Teoría Política Feminista: textos centrais*. Vinhedo: Horizonte, 2013

Military training involves preparing soldiers to react quickly in highly aggressive and violent circumstances. Throughout this process, the masculinity of many men changes, creating a particular identity called “militarized manhood,” a combination of hyper-masculine traits and attitudes (ENLOE, 2000; WHITWORTH, 2004). Of all the places where masculinity is built, war and the armed forces are one of the most direct and effective instances. Despite social and political changes, the warrior still remains a symbol of manhood through the promise to “make men out of soldiers”, suggesting that people consider the armed forces to be capable of teaching manhood, while soldiering itself comes secondarily (WHITWORTH, 2004).

This virility is used to create the strong, emotionless warrior, willing to engage in violence when ordered. Some theorists who have studied both militarism and masculinity suggest that there is a strong connection between military organizations and hegemonic representations of manliness. Some of these reproductions involve dehumanizing the enemy in order to make combatants emotionally prepared to eliminate the opposition in times of war (Hayley LOPES, 2011).

Whitworth (2004) argues that in order to dehumanize the enemy, one must eliminate the “other” from oneself and feed an exaggerated ideal of masculinity, that is, disparage everything that is marked by difference, such as women, people of color, and homosexuals. In military training, for example, recruits are encouraged to become “real men”, proving they are not women, and gender humiliations are used every time a soldier shows weakness or any kind of feeling. This fact therefore implies the dehumanization of femininity, transforming women into “others” who should not be respected, since they have characteristics considered inferior (Claire DUNCANSON, 2007).

These social attributes defined for men and women strengthen the stereotypes of protected and protector, in which men are always in the “line of fire” and women, at home (Claudia SANTOS, 2015). Therefore, male military personnel are always described as the “hero soldier” protecting defenseless individuals, mostly women and children, who are placed in a position of fragility and vulnerability in relation to men because they do not have the “strong” characteristics to defend themselves. The identification of the man as the protector, and the woman as the protected, hence peaceful and vulnerable, neglects the capacity of female agency. Consequently, “male” characteristics are necessary to access a space as dangerous as war (DUNCANSON, 2007), preventing women from entering it and/or becoming combatants in the armed forces or effectively making their representation much smaller than that of men (SANTOS, 2015).

Accordingly, the possibility of sexual attacks stems from the dehumanization of the feminine, which naturalizes the conception that women should always be available sexually to men and in the belief that they have the right to enjoy the female body even without consent. Thus, the male hegemonic model of power and strength tends to reproduce itself through violence against women. This situation can be exacerbated in contexts of peace operations, considering the gender inequality and economic fragility of many women, who make their bodies a bargaining chip, reinforcing the power that a male peacemaker has over the body and life of a girl or woman.

In this regard, it is worth adding Shepherd’s contribution (2018), wherein the vision espoused by the UN tends to locate the individual woman as a vulnerable being, thus creating a binary representation in which the woman – sensitive and defenseless – is the opposite of the man – who is thus deemed to be a strong figure responsible for her protection. This creates a social hierarchy between peacekeepers and civilians, which can contribute to facilitating sexual attacks. In addition, Shepherd (2018) argued that many of the strategies for promoting gender perspectives within the UN are box-ticking exercises, since these strategies are limited to assessing the impacts on men and women individually, instead of verifying if the gender-based power relations were altered.

## The social-political conjuncture of Haiti

Having presented our theoretical framework, the second step required is a contextualization of the Haitian scenario. Such a contextualization is of the utmost importance, since it will help us to understand the structural conditioning that has culminated in a situation of female vulnerability in the country, which precedes MINUSTAH itself.

The dispute for power has made the prosperous former French colony one of the poorest countries in Latin America (Vanessa MATIJASCIC, 2014). The dictatorial Duvalier regime began in 1957 when, through a manipulated plebiscite, François Duvalier, known as Papa Doc,<sup>4</sup> was proclaimed the lifelong president of Haiti. His political stability was maintained through the assassinations of his political rivals and popular leaders, carried out by a repressive police force that also killed and tortured citizens. After the death of François Duvalier in 1971, his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier, known as Baby Doc,<sup>5</sup> came to power, whereupon he received the title of lifelong president thereby continuing the authoritarian politics of violence and terror (Anelise KAMINSKI, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> A qualified physician, François Duvalier was president of Haiti between 1957 and 1971.

<sup>5</sup> A trained lawyer, Jean-Claude Duvalier succeeded his father and commanded Haiti between 1971 and 1986.

However, Baby Doc's liberalizing measures did not please the conservative base, and this enabled the formation of the opposition, which demanded an end to the dictatorship. In 1986, the population started demonstrations asking for Jean-Claude Duvalier's removal. The weakening of the State, the dismantling of institutions, the loss of support from the military and conservatives, along with violent popular protests, prevented the continuation of the Duvalier family regime. As a result, the then president left the government and took refuge in France. The Army took command and formed a civil-military junta to govern the country during a two-year period of democratic transition (KAMINSKI, 2011). In February 1991, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected and became the people's hope for the resolution of Haiti's problems. However, in October 1991, Aristide suffered a *coup d'état* devised by the Haitian military. After going into exile in the United States, the former president led an action to compel international society to intervene.

The first mission on the island, in 1994, had the objective of bringing Jean-Bertrand Aristide back to power, even without the support of the military sector. Aristide resumed the presidency that same year and was then replaced in 1996 by René Préval, while the United Nations Support Mission to Haiti (UNSMH) was sent in an attempt to reconcile and economically recover the country. Due to UNSMH's difficulties in fulfilling its mandate, the mission was replaced by the United Nations Transitional Mission in Haiti (UNTMIH), which remained in the country until the end of 1997. Subsequently, and having the same objectives as the previous operation, the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH) was created, remaining on the island until 2000.

In 2000, Jean-Bertrand Aristide returned to power in a vote that was considered fraudulent. This led to an opposition made up of civil society, companies, political parties, and external actors, who demanded the resignation of a president deemed illegitimate and incapable of containing corruption or improving the country's economy (Mariana COBERLLINI, 2009). The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) presented a proposal in which the president would continue his term until its end, but the plan was not successful, which aggravated the situation in the country and led to a resurgence of violence, the collapse of institutions, and ineffective public security. In February 2004, armed conflicts began in the city of Gonaïves, which spread a few days later to the rest of the island. The wave of violence reached a peak on February 28 when residents pillaged deposits and Aristide government forces began attacks against the population, leaving Haiti on the brink of civil war. After pressure from the international community, Aristide left the country and sought refuge in South Africa.

Boniface Alexandre<sup>6</sup> then assumed the interim presidency, requesting assistance from the UN to contain the crisis. After an extraordinary meeting, resolution 1529 of 2004 was passed, which founded the Multinational Interim Force (MIF) to end the conflict, support the interim government, and prepare Haiti for the establishment of MINUSTAH (UN, 2004). In April 2004, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1542 of 30 April 2004, which established the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). MINUSTAH's role was to maintain a stable and secure environment and support the transitional government in restructuring the country's institutions with the support of local authorities (CORBELLINI, 2009). Specifically, the objective was to:

Assist in restructuring and reforming the Haitian National Police (PNH); establishing a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program; restoring and maintaining the rule of law, and public law and order; in addition to protecting UN personnel, facilities, and equipment and ensuring the safety of civilians "under imminent threat of physical violence". These actions, within the remit of the Mission, were and continue to be supported by Chapter VII of the Organization's Charter (Fernando CALVALCANTE, 2009, p. 58-59).

Several actions were taken in order to contain the widespread violence. For example, there were extensive patrols in the slums, actions to arrest the main gang leaders, the creation of checkpoints at the entrances and exits of the slums, anti-kidnapping actions, and the training of new police officers (CAVALCANTE, 2009), which helped to restore society's trust in the public security system.

However, in January 2010, the country was marked by a tragedy. An earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale devastated the western region of Haiti, about 30 km from the capital, Port-au-Prince. Jean-Max Bellerive, Haiti's then prime minister, estimated a death toll of 316,000 people, in addition to 350,000 injured (CBC NEWS, 2011). Three years after the disaster, the consequences were still visible: 357,785 Haitians were still living in 496 camps, and by early 2014, the number of homeless was estimated at over 200,000 people (Franck SEGUY, 2014). By 2015, the country lacked basic assistance services such as garbage collection, and people were sheltered in tarpaulin tents so they would not be exposed to the sun and rain. About 80% of the population was living in poverty, and unemployment reached 30% of Haitians, despite the fact that the population participated in many projects that generated thousands of jobs related to the country's reconstruction (Ana AGUIAR, 2015).

The following year, another environmental disaster struck the country. This time, Hurricane Matthew hit the island with winds of up to 230 km/h, which caused the death of 842 people (THE

<sup>6</sup> A trained lawyer, Boniface Alexandre served as interim president of Haiti from 2004 to 2006, before being succeeded by René Préval.

GUARDIAN, 2016), leaving about 61,500 homeless (FOLHA DE SÃO PAULO, 2016). On that occasion, the country's authorities reported that 90% of southern Haiti was destroyed (BBC, 2016). The majority of the region's population lived from fishing and small plantations, and the poverty rate was around 60% to 70% (THE WORLD, 2016).

Having briefly summarized the historical context, which portrays a situation of socio-economic fragility in the country as a whole, we will now address the situation of women in particular, and how such a scenario makes them vulnerable. Haitian women have long suffered physical and psychological violence as a result of an undemocratic and oppressive State. According to Renata Giannini (2015, p. 70-71), women are subjugated and "suffered as much if not more than men during the violent dictatorships that have dominated the country since independence in 1804". Rape in the country was and is used as a tool of oppression to make women inferior: "Their bodies are part of the battlefield. When women represent the honor of a community, their rape and forced pregnancy are ways to afflict and destroy that community" (Rita PERDIGÃO, 2010, p. 17).

This situation is worrying, as girls are coerced into marrying older men at an early age, preventing them from gaining full access to education. It is estimated that 60% of Haitian women are illiterate, and even when educated, they earn less than men for the same work (Ana Maria PEREIRA, 2015). Moreover, the impossibility of an accessible and quality education increases the lack of knowledge about condom use and its importance in the fight against STDs and the prevention of unwanted pregnancy. About 40% of Haitian families are supported by women in a culture where men can marry several women without, in most cases, assuming the responsibility for the care of their children (Odete CRISTINA, 2015).

Another dilemma arising out of gender inequality is the subordination of women to men, which naturalizes cases of domestic violence and justifies the sexual violence committed against women. It is estimated that 35,000 women were abused in the country, including 32,000 cases of rape committed by members of the Haitian police, other security forces, and anti-Aristide armed groups between 2004 and 2006 (BBC BRAZIL, 2006). Only in 2005 was the law criminalizing rape ratified, and even then the punishment for this crime was hardly ever enforced, either because of the difficulty in bringing the cases to justice or because of societal neglect (GIANNINI, 2015).

In 2010, activities were initiated to protect women against all types of violence through planning and actions in protection and empowerment. However, the dissolution of parliament in 2015 prevented progress on draft laws protecting victims of domestic violence, sexual harassment and other forms of violence (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2016), making women and girls susceptible to attack due to the lack of laws criminalizing rape.

## Abuse and sexual exploitation during MINUSTAH

Sexual violence can be defined as a phenomenon that includes various acts of non-consensual violence related to human sexuality, such as forced prostitution, sexual slavery, genital mutilation, exposure to or forced participation in pornography (SKJELSBÆK, 2001 *apud* Natalia FONTOURA, 2009). In general, the concept of "sexual abuse" is directly linked to the most serious act of sexual violence committed under coercion: rape (FONTOURA, 2009). There is also the case of sexual exploitation, a type of sexual violence that commercially appropriates the body as a commodity to make a profit, "the act of earning money, socially or politically from someone. This exploitation can occur through networks of prostitution, pornography, human trafficking and sex tourism." (FONTOURA, 2009, p. 22).

Traditionally, sexual abuse and exploitation are related to rape and prostitution, respectively. However, sexual violence in peace operations hides numerous other relationships between servicemen and local women that range from consensual to non-consensual, which for those involved often go beyond sex. Accordingly, the UN uses broader definitions for relationships between peacekeepers and local women, as these relationships are permeated by asymmetries in power and resources, and cause medium and long-term harm to local women and girls (FONTOURA, 2009). As such, the organization defines sexual abuse as "any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, power or trust for sexual purposes including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another" (UN, 2003). Sexual abuse is "the act or threat of physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions" (UNHCR, 2003).

In light of the concept adopted, sexual misconduct refers not only to forced sexual intercourse, but to prostitution and the use by the peacekeeper of his position of power to obtain sexual favors. The exchange of sex for food, clothing, money, gifts, or any other consumer good is considered inappropriate conduct because, given the asymmetry of power that exists between the institution's staff and the population, the woman's ability to freely consent is taken away, so that any categories of relationship between agents and local residents are strongly discouraged (FONTOURA, 2009).

Although policies that seek to protect women, such as the zero tolerance policy in cases of abuse and sexual exploitation, have advanced since the arrival of MINUSTAH in Haiti in 2004, there

have been several reports, accusations, and complaints of rape, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, harassment, and pedophilia practiced by the 'Blue Helmets'.

The first case of sexual abuse was reported in February 2005, when a Haitian woman claimed to have been raped by three Pakistani military personnel. The preliminary investigation carried out by the UN declared that, in reality, it was a case of prostitution. However, the young woman reported that "the officers had offered to take her to a banana plantation with the promise of giving her new clothes, but instead [...] they grabbed her, pulled down her pants, threw her on the ground, and raped her" (TERRA, 2005). There was also the account of an alleged rape committed by a Brazilian soldier in 2004. Despite three investigations in 2005, no concrete evidence was found, but the accused soldier was sent back to Brazil (FONTOURA, 2009).

It is possible to assert that the establishment of the mission stimulated the emergence of "Peacekeeping Economies", defined as economic activities that would not happen or would take place on a smaller scale without an international presence (Kathleen JENNINGS; Morten BOAS, 2015). Some of these activities are common, such as rent and food price increases due to higher demand and foreign currency payments received by members. Other consequences are problematic. The mission and presence of peacemakers tend to increase the sex industry in these places, and since there is internal demand for prostitution, there will be an expansion in human trafficking rates (Charles SMITH; Heather SMITH, 2010).

According to Smith and Smith (2010), before MINUSTAH there were no reports of human trafficking in Haiti. Complaints and reports have emerged since 2004, suggesting that the deployment of MINUSTAH occurred at the same time that violence against women began to increase in Haiti. Following this hypothesis, we believe that the presence of a large number of soldiers led to the emergence of a "Peacekeeping Economy" that contributed to the strengthening of the sex industry, the creation of brothels and trafficking in persons to supply the newly created demand (FONTOURA, 2009), coupled with the increase in the "supply" of women and girls in prostitution due to the socioeconomic context of these victims. Therefore, the "Peacekeeping Economy" is both a consequence of the mission's creation and a cause of the increase in sexual exploitation cases.

Moreover, Haiti did not have a well-established sex industry to meet the new demand, leading traffickers to turn to the Dominican Republic to supply it. Many women went to Haiti with the promise of working as waitresses, housekeepers, or day-workers, but most had to prostitute themselves in nightclubs and brothels run by international human trafficking networks (Kathleen JENNINGS; Vesna NIKOLIĆ-RISTANOVIĆ, 2009).

One of the victims reported that she went to Haiti to work as a waitress in a bar, but after being conned, she became a prostitute. According to the young woman, even though she does not "like working in the country," she has no choice, since women's passports are retained by employers (Jessica DESVARIEUX, 2010). Another woman points out that she left the Dominican Republic with the intention of making a lot of money. However, the profits are low (about \$150 per night), and are shared with the nightclub owner, while the rest is to pay for living expenses and to send to her son who lives with her grandmother back in her home country (Kyle MUNZENRIEDER, 2010).

The Haitian government and NGOs uncovered several cases of child trafficking taking place in households that take in orphaned children. There were about 230,000 of these residences and numerous reports of sexual abuse, beatings and enslavement by family members were received. In addition, it is believed that children between the ages of 4 and 12 who managed to escape from these abusive homes and were living on the streets were kidnapped, forced to work in brothels, and were sold to UN soldiers and international figures for sexual purposes (UNCHR, 2010).

The post-conflict situation in the country is one of the main factors for the prevalence of sexual abuse and exploitation. High rates of violence, corruption, poverty, hunger and an extremely vulnerable population have placed women and girls in a position of fragility, aggravated by the loss of family members in conflicts or natural disasters. In this context, they are forced to become the breadwinners.

In addition, the lack of education has made it impossible for them to get formal jobs, which explains why many have resorted to prostitution as a means of survival (Robert RUBINSTEIN, 2003, p. 44). The international presence is considered one of the only ways to get money, medicine, and food, or as the last option to ascend socially and achieve a dignified minimum standard of living. Significant numbers of the country's citizens are living in precarious conditions, where immediate needs are urgent and sometimes their only solution is the commodification of their bodies. Hence, poverty is a significant factor in understanding the involvement of women and girls in sexual exploitation (Renata LEÃO; Joana MOURA, 2016).

A young woman reported that after not eating for three days, she asked a man who was passing by on the street for money, and he had replied that she would need to "give him something in return". Hungry and having no money, she decided to have sex with him, starting her life in prostitution. After this, she claims that she managed to buy a "tent, clothes and a cell phone" (Lisa ARMSTRONG, 2017). A 15-year-old girl described that:

My friends and I were walking by the National Palace one evening when we encountered a couple of humanitarian men. The men called us over and showed us their penises. They offered us 100 Haitian gourdes (US\$2.80) and some chocolate if we would suck them. I said no, but some of the girls did it and got the money (Corinna CSÁKY, 2008, p. 5).

There is another group called *homegirls*, who usually live at home and get involved with peacekeepers in order to improve their standard of living. In this manner, they gain the means to “pay for dental care, home repairs, school fees for siblings or children, [...] as well as purchasing household items and appliances” (Athena KOLBE, 2015, p. 12).

In these relationships, there is flirting before sexual contact, and the women receive gifts, such as perfumes, clothes, cell phones, computers and jewelry. The victims describe the relationship as “dating”, and this classification is due to the financial and emotional support that the peacekeepers give the victims, mostly young people attending school who need someone to pay for their school material, uniforms and food. “Every day there are things that I want. A new phone. Shoes. I can buy them or I can ask [a peacekeeper] to buy them for me. If I stop [engaging in transactional sex] I won’t have [the things I want]” (KOLBE, 2015, p. 12).

Other women clarify their motivation: “A woman who [engages in transactional sex] can get money for professional school. She can pay for education. She can have opportunities.” (KOLBE, 2015, p. 14). In another account:

I won’t lie. Part of my motivation is the things I get that I don’t need. Every woman wants to have nice things. When he gives me money it’s like a payment. But when he gives me a necklace or some perfume, that says that he cares about me. I know he’s married. I don’t have illusions that this will last. But for now, I like that he likes me and that he gives me gifts that I like (KOLBE, 2015, p. 12).

All women have to choose a man. I chose men that give me what I need. I give them sex and they give me money. They give me food. They pay for my child’s school fees [...] To tell you the truth, my friends are all jealous! They have a man who just gave them a baby. He might not buy milk the baby needs. For me, I am lucky and my friends know it! I do it, take what I get from him, and he leaves. I don’t have to cook for him or wash his clothes (KOLBE, 2015, p. 13).

He will pay my school fees. He will take me dancing. He will buy me a nice dinner. If my mother is sick he will buy the medication she requires [...] The difference is that I need to be romantic with him even if I don’t have those feelings. I am obligated to have sex with him, even if I have a headache and I don’t feel like I want to have sex. I must do it because if I don’t then we have no one to pay for the things I need and I will have to leave school (KOLBE, 2015, p. 9)

In those cases in which the young women consciously engage with the peacemakers, even if they do not become associated with prostitution to ensure subsistence, they are still embedded in a poor and unequal country. Bearing this in mind, we can see that the imposition of consumption patterns, produced by the current societal order, is an important factor in understanding the determinations of sexual exploitation in contemporary times, considering that the desire to “change one’s life”, in terms of buying power, is increasingly visible in children and adolescents who are immersed in sexual exploitation. Thus, the power of consumption represents a change of life (LION; MOURA, 2016) for women and girls who are involved in transactional relationships, because this is the only way they can go to a restaurant, the cinema, continue in school, have a cell phone, clothes and other material goods.

The different positions in these types of relationships should also be highlighted. In the examples reported, intimidation and coercion are common in most of these relationships, as there is a great power asymmetry between an armed military man who is a UN employee and a poor black woman from an underdeveloped country. According to an account, “a woman who talks openly to her man, being honest and direct, she has equal control in the relationship. I could never never, never do that with [peacekeepers] because then I would be left alone” (KOLBE, 2015, p. 15). In another case, an informant says that “it wasn’t rape, but it wasn’t exactly consensual, either. I felt like I didn’t have a choice” (DODDS, 2017). Another victim highlights: “I don’t think you can ever really have one [a peacekeeper] as a boyfriend or husband. With a boyfriend or a husband you have to be able to say no. [...] With [a peacekeeper] you cannot really say no” (KOLBE, 2015, p. 14).

Besides the feeling of impotence, inferiority and fear, relationships between local residents and peacekeepers leave after-effects, such as the dissemination of HIV/AIDS in the community. In general, women are not aware of the importance of condom use in all sexual relations with the soldiers in order to prevent STDs or unwanted pregnancy: “I just ask [the peacekeeper] if he needs to use a condom or not. They have doctors on the base. I know they test them for illnesses. So if he doesn’t need to use them then we don’t use them” (KOLBE, 2015, p. 15).

Another young woman claims: “Personally I don’t suggest condoms but if he brings one I will put it on him. After a few times they stop bringing the condoms” (KOLBE, 2015, p. 16). “If you’re still using a condom after a few months that will tell the man you aren’t a trustworthy girl” (KOLBE, 2015 p. 16). “When he calls me and tells me to come outside to meet him, I know precisely what he wants. At



that time he's in a good mood and I don't want to make him angry by saying, "Let's use a condom" (KOLBE, 2015, p. 16).

According to the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the presence of the UN military increases the proliferation of the disease, putting the health of the population at risk (UNAIDS, 2003, p. 43). Women are the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection, both because of the issue of gender inequality, and because it is impossible to negotiate condom use with agents, or because they do not know about STD contamination.

Finally, an important consequence of sexual abuse and exploitation in the country is the birth of peacekeeping babies, children whose fathers are soldiers, but who are usually abandoned by them once the mission ends. This is the case, for example, of a young Haitian girl who, after discovering her pregnancy, had to face accusations from UN officials who claimed that she was lying about her relationship with the peacekeeper. This victim has spent over a decade demanding that the father of her daughter acknowledge paternity in order to provide for her economically (DODDS, 2017). In another case, a 16-year-old girl reported that she was taken to the barracks of Brazilian troops to receive food, but was raped with a gun to her head. She got pregnant and says she even imagined herself "strangling her daughter." Another victim reveals that she was also raped by a Brazilian soldier in 2008, became pregnant, and that her son accompanies her on the streets to beg for food (Jamil CHADE, 2017).

These women are stigmatized by the community for having been involved with foreigners or for being single mothers. And this situation causes the child to be rejected by relatives or the mother herself, who will have to take care of him/her alone in a fragile State, which cannot meet the basic needs of its citizens.

## Concluding thoughts

In this paper, we have tried to identify potential factors that contributed to the emergence of cases involving sexual abuse and violence that took place during the mandate of MINUSTAH. Based on this, we can assert that there is not simply one specific cause that created the conditions for these abuses, but rather a set of elements that resulted in such a lamentable situation.

We conclude that the creation of MINUSTAH established a "Peacekeeping Economy" that led to the consolidation of the sex industry and, consequently, an increase in the demand for prostitutes, as well as the expansion of national and international human trafficking to supply market demand. Furthermore, the country's socioeconomic situation, marked by high poverty and unemployment rates caused by political conflicts and environmental disasters, placed the population in a situation of extreme vulnerability, forcing women and girls, who for the most part had no access to education and no professional experience, to prostitute themselves for money or basic survival items.

Another group of victims included young women who engaged in a transactional relationship with a peacemaker to improve their and their family's standard of living. In search of material goods, Haitian women became involved in relationships with a peacekeeper so that in addition to money, food, and gifts, they would also benefit from a "circle of protection" that existed when "dating" a peacekeeper. On the basis of the argument put forward, it is evident that abuse and sexual exploitation contribute to perpetuating the economic dependence of Haitian women on the peacemaker, since their social reality to a large extent presents prostitution as the easiest way. From a feminist perspective, we recognize how power relations are strengthened through sexual and economic domination over women.

Bearing in mind the scenario and causes discussed, the question is: what remains to be done to solve such cases? First of all, it is important to recognize that the UN and several countries are making efforts to promote gender equality actions on peace missions. However, there is still a need for such actions to be implemented and that complaints and accusations can be made by victims without embarrassment, and in a more accessible manner. Similarly, investigations must be carried out more efficiently.

However, as we have seen, especially in the light of feminist contributions, many of the problems are not limited to institutional improvement. On the contrary, institutions embedded in a sexist culture tend to be vectors for the reproduction of that same culture. The challenge is deeper, requiring the deconstruction of a system that organizes social relations based on gender prejudice. Therefore, an important aspect is the multiplication of studies that seek to understand international security issues from feminist perspectives. If such a path makes sense, this article is our modest contribution.

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