PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS (POC)

Guidance Summary of the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Policy (2023.05)

Protection of Civilians (POC) in UN Peacekeeping is a **whole-of-mission mandate** implemented through a **comprehensive and integrated approach**.

WHAT IS POC?

States have the primary responsibility to protect civilians. In peacekeeping missions with a POC mandate, the civilian and uniformed components of the mission should work in an integrated and coordinated way to **prevent, deter or respond to threats of physical violence against civilians**. They should do this within the mission's capabilities and areas of deployment, through the use of all necessary means, up to and including deadly force.

WHY IT MATTERS?

POC is a **priority mandate of UN multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations** since 1999 (S/RES/1265, 1999; S/RES/1270, 1999) and over 96% of peacekeepers serve in missions with POC mandates.

UN peacekeeping operations are confronted with a broad range of threats to civilians and increasingly complex operational environments.

Guiding Principles of POC

- International law
- Priority in resource allocation
- Principles of peacekeeping
- Active duty to protect
- Duty to do no harm
- Community-based approach
- Gender-responsive approaches to POC
- Respect of humanitarian principles
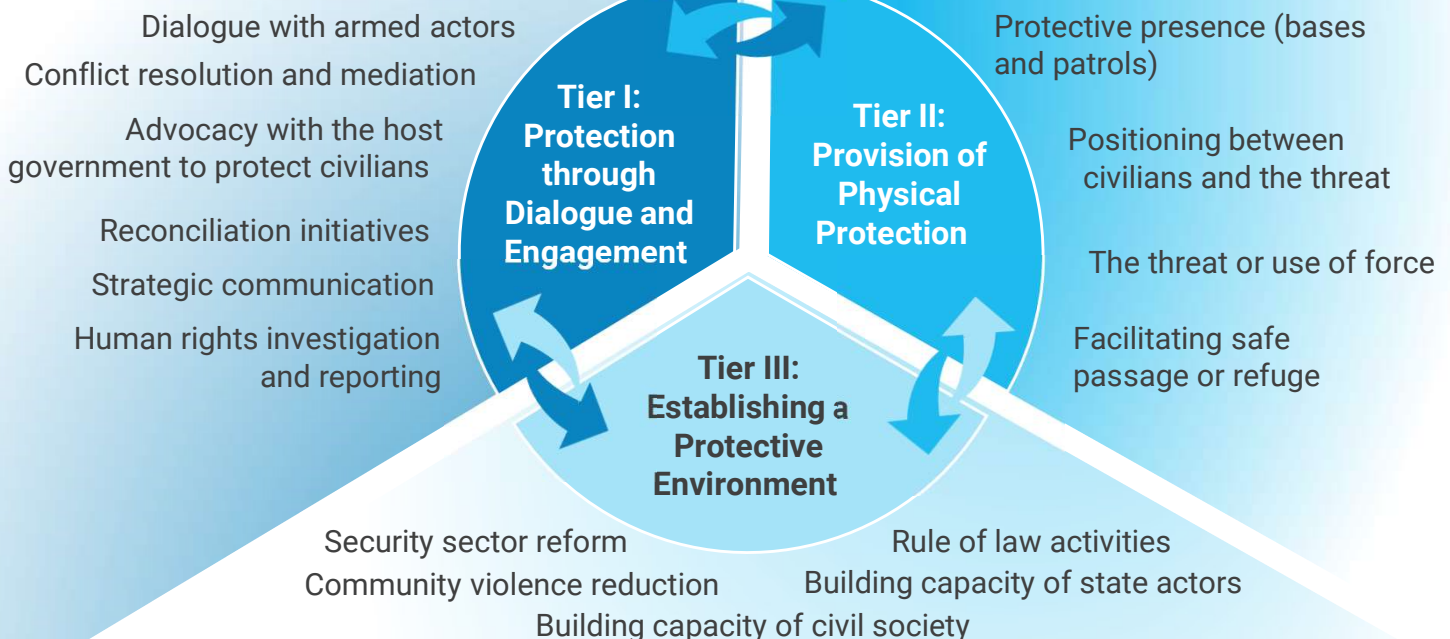- Enabled by technology and informed by data

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Head of Mission is responsible for the POC mandate implementation
- Civilian, police and military senior leadership together must ensure that POC is prioritized in mission plans, documents, and strategies
- Senior POC Advisers provide advisory support and coordination

Implementation Requirements

Missions should
- Appoint POC Advisers and POC Focal Points
- Develop a POC strategy
- Establish POC planning and coordination forums
- Establish an early warning system
- Regularly conduct forward-looking threat assessments

Operational Concept

Dialogue with armed actors
Conflict resolution and mediation
Advocacy with the host government to protect civilians
Reconciliation initiatives
Strategic communication
Human rights investigation and reporting

Tier I: Protection through Dialogue and Engagement

Tier II: Provision of Physical Protection

Tier III: Establishing a Protective Environment

Protective presence (bases and patrols)
Positioning between civilians and the threat
The threat or use of force
Facilitating safe passage or refuge

Security sector reform
Community violence reduction
Rule of law activities
Building capacity of state actors
Building capacity of civil society