



August 6, 2021

Dear Members of the U.S. House of Representatives:

As organizations focused on a range of international peace and security, civilian protection, and humanitarian issues, we write today to urge you to cosponsor [H.R. 4420](#), the U.S. Commitment to Peacekeeping Act of 2021. This balanced legislation will help ensure that the U.S. meets its financial obligations to UN peacekeeping and reinvest efforts to make these missions more effective, accountable, and fit-for-purpose.

Peacekeeping operations are among the most visible, complex, and impactful activities undertaken by the UN. Authorized by the UN Security Council and tasked with a range of responsibilities—including protection of civilians; disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating former combatants; facilitating delivery of humanitarian assistance; and assisting democratic elections and transitions of power—UN peacekeeping is a key tool in the international community’s toolkit for promoting stability and laying the groundwork for a more sustainable peace in countries undergoing conflict. As a permanent, veto-wielding member of the Security Council, the U.S. plays a central role in crafting peacekeeping mandates and ensuring that missions have the resources and political backing necessary to fulfill them.

UN peacekeeping is by definition a collective multilateral endeavor. Every UN member state is required to finance UN peacekeeping missions at specified rates—consistent with their ability to pay—that are revised every three years and agreed to by consensus in the UN General Assembly. Unfortunately, in recent years, the U.S. has failed to fully meet its financial commitments.

Since Fiscal Year 2017, the U.S. has accrued more than \$1 billion in arrears on its peacekeeping assessments due to Congressional enforcement of an arbitrary statutory cap that prevents the U.S. from contributing more than 25% of mission budgets. This cap has remained in place since 1995 and must be revisited by Congress during the appropriations process every year. This is despite the fact that the U.S. assessment rate has decreased in recent years and the U.S. provides exceedingly few uniformed personnel or other resources to UN peacekeeping missions.

Continuing to enforce this arbitrary and antiquated cap and accrue arrears is harmful for several reasons. First, the UN does not have a standing army, and therefore depends on voluntary contributions of troops, police, and essential equipment from member states. The UN's top contributors of uniformed personnel are generally low and middle-income countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, Senegal, and Jordan, who possess fewer financial resources and depend on UN reimbursement payments to sustain complex and often hazardous peacekeeping deployments. Unfortunately, U.S. arrearages have contributed to a significant cash crunch at the UN, which means that the UN is perpetually delayed in making these payments, sometimes by as much as 6-12 months. If these shortfalls and delays are allowed to fester and grow, it will affect the willingness and ability of countries to participate in UN peacekeeping.

Second, accruing arrears undermines the ability of the United States to push for necessary reforms at the UN. During the Obama Administration, the U.S. and UN worked together to adopt a number of critical reforms and efficiencies, including reducing the cost per peacekeeper, expediting the deployment of missions, and ensuring greater accountability for cases of exploitation and abuse. By contrast, failing to pay U.S. dues in full alienates reform-minded countries and sends the message that the U.S. is more interested in punishing the organization than improving it.

Finally, the cap enables other countries who do not share U.S. commitment for reform to fill the gap. The U.S. has long supported efforts by UN peacekeeping operations to monitor and promote human rights in their areas of operation, to protect civilians, and to address conflict-connected gender-based violence. These essential activities could be in increasing jeopardy if the U.S. does not meet its financial obligations, and member states less committed to these values fill the vacuum.

The U.S. Commitment to Peacekeeping Act seeks to address this issue by permanently repealing the 25% cap, thereby permitting the U.S. to pay its bills on time and in full. The U.S. will be able to meet its obligations consistent with the rates agreed to by American diplomats at the UN and end repeated and destabilizing cycles of unilateral financial withholdings. The bill also recommits the U.S. to push for tangible progress on critical peacekeeping reform measures. This includes:

- Supporting the development and implementation of standard performance assessment systems for peacekeepers;
- Ensuring that peacekeeping operations are undergirded by a common political strategy among all international actors operating in a country;
- Providing greater support for community-led peacebuilding initiatives as a key component of peacekeeping mandates;
- Pushing for robust funding and support for staff positions within peacekeeping missions focused on monitoring, protecting, and promoting international human rights standards; and,
- Building on recent reforms to ensure justice and accountability for UN personnel who commit abuses against the people they are sent to protect.

Crucially, the bill also requires new comprehensive reporting from the State Department on ways to strengthen conflict prevention efforts in UN peacekeeping and political missions, as well as to ensure that decisions regarding

the withdrawal of peacekeepers from the field are made based on a complete assessment of conflict dynamics and risks to civilians. All of these measures are essential to ensure that peacekeeping operations are not only sufficiently funded, but effective and accountable in meeting their critically important stabilization and civilian protection responsibilities. Enacting the U.S. Commitment to Peacekeeping Act of 2021 would put the U.S. on a clear path to achieving both of these objectives.

We urge your support for this important and commonsense legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

- Alliance for Peacebuilding
- American Jewish World Service
- Americans for UNESCO
- Better World Campaign
- Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)
- Charity & Security Network
- Darfur Women Action Group
- Friends Committee on National Legislation
- Global Communities
- Global Water 2020
- InterAction
- J Street
- Leadership Conference of Women Religious
- Minnesota Peace Project
- Nonviolent Peaceforce
- Oxfam America
- Pax Christi USA
- Peace Direct
- Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Refugees International
- Saferworld (Washington Office)
- United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
- The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
- United Nations Association of the USA