

Combating 'scourge' of sexual abuse allegations remains 'key' UN priority, as 54 new allegations emerge

More than 50 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving personnel serving with the United Nations and its partners in the field were received in the first three months of this year, the global organization said on Tuesday.

The allegations have not all been verified and many are in the preliminary assessment phase.

They involve 66 victims, including 13 girls under the age of 18, and 16 victims whose age remains unknown.

Farhan Haq, UN Deputy Spokesperson, provided journalists with an [update](#) on cases.

Overall, he said that 54 allegations had been reported between 1 January and 31 March 2018.

Fourteen cases related to on-going peacekeeping operations; 18 from UN agencies, funds and programmes; while 21 relate to implementing partners, and one to a member of a non-UN international force.

Two of the allegations have been substantiated by an investigation, while two were not substantiated.

Mr. Haq said that with over 95,000 civilians and 90,000 uniformed personnel working for the UN, sexual exploitation and abuse are not reflective of the conduct of the majority of those who serve the organization.

"But every allegation involving our personnel undermines our values and principles and the sacrifice of those who serve with pride and professionalism in some of the most dangerous places in the world," he told journalists at UN Headquarters.

"For this reason, combating this scourge, and helping and empowering those who have been scarred by these egregious acts, continue to be key priorities for the Secretary-General in 2018."

UN chief António Guterres has committed to a "[zero tolerance](#)" policy for sexual exploitation and abuse.

His initiatives to prevent and respond to the issue include appointing a [Victims' Rights Advocate](#) and establishing a [Circle of Leadership](#) consisting of Heads of State or Government who have agreed to hold perpetrators to account.