

The United Nations and G4S: Challenges in the contracting of private military security companies for international peacekeeping and humanitarian support

Two reports authored by Lou Pingeot and published by the Global Policy Forum and the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung – New York Office present the alarming trend of the United Nations (UN) contracting private military security companies (PMSCs) to provide a broad range of security and non-security services connected to peacekeeping and humanitarian missions as well as other UN operations. This article briefly reviews some of the findings of Pingeot's reports and the concerns raised regarding the relationships between the UN and PMSCs, particularly in light of the companies' track record of malfeasance and human rights abuses.

Pingeot's reports identified ten major PMSCs and of dozens smaller and local companies in the industry that have been contracted by the UN. This article focuses on G4S and its contracts with UN agencies, summarizing the UN contracts with the G4S family and presenting some examples of the company's misconduct. The responses of G4S to Pingeot's reports are also presented.

The fundamental concerns with the UN's use of PMSCs are described, along with the UN's response to the initial report, as presented by Pingeot in the follow-up report. The article ends with questions raised by this issue, in particular how to address the trend towards the "securitization" of peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts and how to hold private multinational corporations in the military and security industry accountable for their actions.

Key reports: *Dangerous Partnership and Contracting Insecurity*

In 2012, the Global Policy Forum and the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung – New York Office published *Dangerous Partnership: Private military security companies and the UN*, exposing the growing reliance of United Nations (UN) on private military and security companies (PMSCs) for the provision of a broad range of services – from armed security of UN facilities to transport and logistics support, from landmine clearing to identifying voting sites for elections (Pingeot 2012). Author Lou Pingeot presents the companies' negative track record on human rights, financial scandals, and other illegal and unethical practices, and questions whether PMSCs are appropriate partners for the UN.

Lack of transparency on UN contracting raises questions about accountability

The *Dangerous Partnership* report raises several concerns, among them the lack of transparency at the UN regarding contracting with PMSCs. The author uncovered **USD**

44 million in security services contracting by the UN in 2009 and USD 76 million in 2010. A follow-up report by the same author documented **USD 113.8 million in UN expenditures for “security services” in 2011 and USD 124.3 million in 2012** for a combination of UN contracts regarding “Security and Safety Services and Public Order” and “Security, Safety, Law Enforcement Equipment, including Demining and [Personal Protective Equipment]” (Pingeot 2014, p6).

These figures are incomplete, as not all UN agencies fully reported their expenditures in contracts with PMSCs. In the initial report, Pingeot analyzed data provided by the UN which listed the World Food Program (WFP) and UNICEF as having no private security service contracts, even though both agencies spend “substantial amounts” on private security. (Pingeot 2012, p46) The WFP is a UN agency dedicated to providing food supplies during emergencies, including armed conflicts, natural disasters, and crop failures. The WFP also provides emergency support to farmers and other impoverished communities engaged in food production. The WFP often contracts with PMSCs for security and logistics support in providing emergency relief to remote areas around the world.

Additionally, the figures provided by the UN do not include indirect contracting of PMSCs for UN-related activities. The WFP, for example, outsources food distribution operations to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or local contractors that have the capacity and local contacts to provide emergency responses. These groups may in turn hire a PMSC to provide security for their WFP-funded activities. NGOs like CARE – among several others – have reported using professional security firms to ensure the safety of convoys transporting food to areas in desperate need of humanitarian relief (International Alert, p26). This type of sub-contracting of PMSCs through a third party is not captured within the UN’s reporting, even though these activities are paid for by the UN and the overall project is perceived as a UN project.

Another form of indirect PMSC contracting described by Pingeot takes place when member states hire PMSCs to conduct UN-related activities on their behalf. This includes allegations that PMSCs Aegis and Control Risks Group were contracted by the US and the UK to protect UN officials in Iraq, and instances of US contracting of PMSCs to provide police personnel for UN peacekeeping missions (Pingeot 2012, p26). These services are also excluded from the UN’s reporting since they are not UN contracts.

The lack of comprehensive information available on the UN’s contracts with PMSCs points to a culture of secrecy and lack of accountability that enables, and in fact encourages, the use of disreputable companies. Pingeot reports that the UN often issues no-bid contracts to PMSCs, which “allow for exceptional profits and maximum

secrecy” (Pingeot 2012, p12). Prior to Pingeot’s first report, the UN had never conducted a policy review of the impact of its use of PMSCs, nor had member states debated the issue. Despite the lack of standards and monitoring, UN contracting with PMSCs continues to grow, as evidenced by the figures cited above. Pingeot assesses the UN’s justifications for using PMSCs – cost-effectiveness, immediate availability, and the need for a ‘last resort’ option – and finds that they are weak arguments and that the supposed benefits do not stand up to scrutiny.

The rise of the private military security industry and its misconduct

Pingeot’s *Dangerous Partnership* report provides a background on the emergence of PMSCs as an industry with roots in mercenary groups that appeared in European colonies after World War II as well as the private detective and security business that originated in the United States in the 1850s. After reviewing the concerns about PMSCs that have been expressed by public critics and governments, the report outlines the different types of services that PMSCs provide to the UN with examples of contracts and the questions that these contracts raise. Referring to mobile or convoy security provided by PMSCs, Pingeot states that “[m]any of the best-known scandals of security companies have arisen in this activity, when guards have been known to open fire on civilians wrongly suspected of evil intentions. In the past, the UN has contracted with notorious firms Lifeguard and DSL for such services” (Pingeot 2012, p25). Defence System Limited (DSL) became ArmorGroup in 1997, which in turn was acquired by G4S in 2008.

Among the concerns is the ubiquitous nature of PMSCs. The companies are often hired to work in the same geographic area on behalf of different clients – multiple agencies within the UN as well as NGOs and governments, providing different types of services. This creates confusion for local residents who do not differentiate among contracts and simply see the same people, sometimes carrying guns other times not, conducting a very broad variety of tasks. One example of this situation is described by Pingeot in relation to ArmorGroup in the Herat Province of Afghanistan. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) – a UN agency that provides operational support for peacebuilding, humanitarian and development projects – contracted ArmorGroup to conduct mine clearance in the area at the same time that the company was sub-contracted to provide security for the US government’s Shindand airbase in the same province.

This particular situation had an additional complication when it was alleged that ArmorGroup had hired Afghan warlords to conduct its activities in Herat. The US Senate Committee on Armed Services investigated the allegations and released a report in

September 2010 revealing that ArmorGroup had hired Afghan warlords to staff these contracts, including the provision of armed security guards to protect the UN-contracted demining operations. There were rival warlords involved, one killed the other, the dead warlord was replaced by his brother, and the arrangement continued. Despite the allegations and the US Senate Committee report, and even though, as Pingeot states, “[t]hese events occurred while ArmorGroup was under a UN contract, ... there is no indication that the UN has conducted a thorough review of this case, that it has established strict rules on contractors’ subcontracting and staffing practices, or that it has decided to suspend the company from its vendors’ list following this incident. As of mid-2011 ArmorGroup was ‘not on any [UN] blacklist’” (Pingeot 2012, p30).

UN reliance on PMSCs has implications for the institution’s approach to fulfilling its mission

In light of the information uncovered, the *Dangerous Partnership* report questions the effectiveness of the UN’s use of PMSCs for peace and security efforts. Specifically, Pingeot asks: **“Can [PMSCs] work for the UN to promote democracy, legality and human respect when they so evidently foster secrecy, impunity and a contemptuous warrior ethos?”** (Pingeot 2012, p8) The report highlights the alarming reality of the UN’s use of disreputable companies: **“In the absence of guidelines and clear responsibility for security outsourcing, the UN has hired companies well-known for their misconduct, violence and financial irregularities – and hired them repeatedly.** These include DynCorp International, infamous for its role in a prostitution scandal involving the UN in Bosnia in the 1990s and, more recently, its participation in the US government’s ‘rendition’ program; G4S, the industry leader known for its violent methods against detainees and deported asylum seekers; ArmorGroup, a G4S subsidiary singled out in a US Senate report for its ties to Afghan warlords; and Saracen Uganda, an offshoot of notorious mercenary firm Executive Outcomes with links to illegal natural resources exploitation in the Democratic Republic of Congo” (Pingeot 2012, p7).

More broadly, the report questions how the involvement of PMSCs shifts the framing of the UN’s approach to peace and security. On this point, the report argues that PMSCs have helped to create a market for themselves by promoting stronger security measures within the UN, and that this has coincided with the establishment of increasingly ‘robust’ peacekeeping missions, ‘integrated missions’, and a hardened security approach that privileges bunkerization. The report concludes that “[b]y using these companies to provide risk assessment, security training and guarding in critical conflict zones, the UN is effectively allowing PMSCs to define its security strategy and even its broader posture and reputation” (Pingeot 2012, p8).

Although the questions raised in *Dangerous Partnership* merit political considerations by the UN, the 2014 follow-up report documents the institution's growing reliance on PMSCs that is accompanied by bureaucratic measures to improve tracking of contracts . *Contracting Insecurity: Private military and security companies and the future of the United Nations* (Pingeot 2014) provides an update on the debate and argues that the problems created by the privatization of security cannot be solved by voluntary mechanisms and other 'soft' regulatory approaches. At the heart of the issue is the UN's ability to promote its peacekeeping mandate with the involvement of contractors that promote militarization and securitization.

G4S is among the companies contracted by the UN

One of the "disreputable" UN contractors is London-based Group 4 Securicor (commonly known as G4S), the world's third-largest private-sector employer whose *Securing Your World* motto is pursued by over 618,000 staff in over 120 countries. According to its website, the company specializes in "outsourced business processes and facilities in sectors where security and safety risks are considered a strategic threat." Their "provision of security products, services and solutions" includes – among several areas of work – government contracts for border security, "[f]rom ensuring travellers have a safe and pleasant experience in ports and airports around the world to secure detention and escorting of people who are not lawfully entitled to remain in a country."

G4S was created through the merging of British company Securicor and Danish Group 4 Falck, and has built up its operations through acquiring and merging with other companies around the world. For example, G4S acquired Global Solutions Limited (GSL) in 2008, a company that at the time had 9,000 staff in the UK, Australia, and South Africa. Among other services, GSL held contracts with the Australian government for the transport of prisoners in the country. G4S also owns several military and security companies that often function under their original names, such as Wackenhut, the second largest security services company in the United States, which was acquired by Group 4 Falck in 2002. In 2008, G4S acquired RONCO Consulting, which specializes in landmine clearance and ArmorGroup, "a leading provider of defensive and protective services to national governments and international peace and security agencies." ArmorGroup was created in 1997 when US-based Armor Holdings acquired UK-based Defence System Limited (DSL).

The G4S family also includes local branches with a national presence that allows the company to compete for national government contracts. For example, the company recently announced on the G4S Kenya website that "G4S Kenya will be cementing its position as the leading provider of security solutions with a contract award from the

Ministry of energy, to secure the Lake Turkana Wind Power Project; this will be the single largest wind power project to be constructed in Africa, and the largest private sector investment in the history of Kenya.”

G4S: A disreputable company

G4S has been criticized for its mismanagement of government contracts linked to several incidents of abuse, violence, and deaths of people in the custody of G4S employees. In the 2012 *Dangerous Partnership* report, Pingeot states that “[o]ne of G4S’ troubling business areas is the detention and management of illegal immigrants in Europe, the US, and Australia. In the UK, G4S was contracted by the government to deport refused asylum seekers back to their country of origin. The company’s practices came under scrutiny following the death of an Angolan national during such a removal. A report by Amnesty International UK examining cases of abuse by G4S found widespread use of excessive force by the company during enforced removals. A G4S whistleblower described the company’s practice as ‘playing Russian roulette with detainees’ lives.’ G4S was finally removed from the contract. Its practices have also come under legal review in Australia, where the company provides prisoner transport services” (Pingeot 2012, p30). The latter refers to the death of Mr. Ward, an aboriginal elder, when he was being transported by G4S officers in a custodial vehicle in Western Australia.

The 2014 *Contracting Insecurity* report updates and summarizes some of the incidents that has put G4S in the disreputable category, and which should raise alarm among UN officials who are hiring the company:

“In the summer of 2012, G4S received unwanted attention when it proved incapable of fulfilling the terms of its contract to secure the Olympics in London. Originally tasked with providing more than 10,000 personnel for the Olympics, the firm admitted that it could provide fewer than 6,000, with less than a month remaining before the Games. The British Government had to mobilize military personnel to fill the gap.

“G4S had previously been in the spotlight following the death of Angolan deportee Jimmy Mubenga, who suffocated while being restrained by three G4S guards on a flight from Heathrow to Angola. An inquest into Mubenga’s death condemned the systematic use of excessive force during removals and found evidence of ‘pervasive racism’ among G4S personnel tasked with removing detainees.

“G4S contracts to run prisons in several countries have also come under scrutiny in recent months. In early 2013, a South African government report found that G4S was illegally holding inmates in isolation for up to three years and failing to provide them with life-saving medication, charges that the company denied. In October, after a string of violent riots and stabbings and strikes by prison officers at a maximum security prison run by G4S, South African authorities announced they would take over the management of the facility [Mangaung Correctional Centre]. The government declared that ‘the contractor [had] lost effective control of the facility.’ G4S has also come under scrutiny for its management of prison facilities in the UK [including Oakwood prison], where the Inspectorate of Prisons found that the company was failing to provide basic health care and sanitation to prisoners. In 2012, a British high court judge found that the unlawful use of force and restraint techniques against children had been widespread in child prisons and ‘secure training centers’ operated by G4S and Serco between 1998 and 2008. G4S also manages security systems at the controversial Ofer Prison in the Occupied Palestinian Territories” (Pingeot 2014, p7).

In addition to the examples cited in Pingeot’s reports, other G4S-related scandals include a riot involving local residents attacking asylum seekers being held in Papua New Guinea (PNG) in February 2014, which resulted in the death one asylum seeker and several people seriously injured (*The Guardian*, 24 February 2014). In 2013, the Australian government enacted a policy of sending refugees who were attempting to enter the country by boat to an immigration detention facility on PNG’s Manus Island for processing prior to resettlement in PNG. The detention center in PNG has been the site of many incidents – including inhumane treatment of refugees and clashes among the security forces, prompting a report by Amnesty International in December 2013 and the creation of a special coverage page on *The Guardian* that as of June 2014 had 184 news items. Expressions of concern about the conditions in the Australian-run detention centers in PNG were made by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in November 2013, and reports of the volatile situation that could lead to violence began appearing in late November 2013.

After the February 2014 riot, a G4S guard who worked at the detention center testified that his colleagues allowed local residents on Manus Island to enter the compound and that he witnessed them violently attack the asylum seekers, aided by local guards. “The police fired warning shots and that scared the clients [asylum seekers] and they went into their rooms, so that’s when the G4S went in. And when the G4S get into the camp, they belt, they fight with the clients [asylum seekers] and belt them very badly and some are wounded, blood run over their face,” the witness told Australia’s ABC News program (ABC News Australia, 24 February 2014). The UNHCR conducted an

investigation of the incident and criticized Australia's regional processing policy for asylum seekers, affirming that Australia is legally responsible for ensuring the safety of asylum seekers at Manus Island (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 May 2014).

The UNHCR investigated another incident involving G4S, this time in relation to the beating of handcuffed Iraqi asylum seekers by G4S security officers under contract with the UK Border Agency during a charter flight back to Baghdad. In June 2010, *The Guardian* reported that as many as 25 men who were deported from the UK to Iraq were held in detention at Baghdad airport after Iraqi officials were alleged to have boarded the airplane to "...help security staff employed by the UK Border Agency (UKBA) punch and drag reluctant failed asylum seekers off the plane." (*The Guardian*, 18 June 2010) A UNHCR spokesperson was quoted in the news article confirming that UNHCR lawyers had interviewed deportees: "The men claim they were beaten while being forced on to the plane. We met six of the men and saw fresh bruises that indicate mistreatment."

UN contracts with G4S

Despite the high-profile scandals and scrutiny, the UN continues to do business with G4S and its affiliated companies, including ArmorGroup, RONCO, and Wackenhut. Armed security of UN compounds, security of refugee camps, security for transport convoys and transport logistics, risk assessments and security training for UN agency staff, landmine clearing and coordination of WFP-provided emergency benefits for farmers during crop failures are some examples of G4S services.

For G4S, the contracts with the UN and other humanitarian organizations are good for public relations and for supporting their corporate social responsibility claims. The G4S-Kenya website states that the company "secures and supports the operation of key NGOs in Kenya including the UN, UNHCR, Unicef, among others. ... G4S Kenya also works with other likeminded NGOs like Red Cross society to promote disaster management preparedness and responds to emergency situations as they arise." From the G4S-Madagascar website, we also learn that the company provided security training to 100 people involved with the UN in 2010 and 11 UNICEF staff in 2011.

The *Dangerous Partnership* report states that UNOPS paid G4S subsidiary ArmorGroup USD 15 million in 2008 for its services, including mine clearance activities in Afghanistan. In 2010, UNOPS paid G4S Risk Management more than USD 14 million for 'mine action' and related activities. The Haiti peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH) contracted G4s to provide armed security guards at its Santo Domingo office, and received services from

DSL (and later ArmorGroup) for transporting personnel, troops and humanitarian supplies into and within the county.

As reported by Pingeot, in 2012 alone, **G4S had more than sixty contracts with the UN for guards, 'security services', 'office security', security systems, consulting, mine action, cleaning, and other services.** This includes contracts with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Austria and Pakistan, the UN Development Program (UNDP) in Chile, India, Iraq and Somalia, and UNHCR in Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Additional 2012 contracts identified through the WFP include the hiring of G4S to coordinate the disbursement of cash assistance to farmers in Lesotho as part of an emergency assistance in response to crop failure in the country. During that same year, the WFP also hired G4S guards to provide security in a refugee camp in Lebanon, to protect Save the Children staff as they distributed food aid to Syrian refugees at the camp. The WFP has also hired G4S-owned RONCO on multiple occasions to clear landmines in the South Sudan.

G4S responds to Pingeot's reports

G4S is pro-active in responding to allegations that it has been involved in human rights violations and other misconduct. The company regularly issues statements to distance itself from incidents that cast it in a negative light, opening with statements such as: "G4S is the world's leading provider of secure outsourcing solutions. We are committed to fulfilling our responsibilities on the issue of human rights in all of our companies operating around the world." The letters continue with a short description of G4S' corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, such as the company's leadership in the development of an International Code of Conduct for Private Security Providers, and then they proceed to give nominal responses to the specific allegations of misconduct to which the company is responding, without addressing the main issue – its role in perpetuating violence and violating human rights. The company's responses to Pingeot's reports can be found in the Business and Human Rights Resource Center website.

The company's response to the 2012 *Dangerous Partnership* report limited itself to addressing the death of Jimmy Mubenga at the hands of G4S employees during his deportation from the UK to Angola in October 2010, the January 2008 death of Mr. Ward in Western Australia whilst being transported by escorting officers of GSL Custodial Service (subsequently acquired by G4S) from Laverton to Kalgoorlie, and the 2010 allegations that ArmorGroup had hired Afghan warlords. Regarding Mr. Mubenga,

G4S states that the death was tragic and that the custody officers involved transferred to the new service provider (since G4S no longer provides escort services for the UK). Regarding Mr. Ward, G4S states that this incident took place prior to G4S acquiring GSL and that the company had ceased operating the contract with the State of Western Australia in June 2011. Furthermore, G4S has “publicly apologized to Mr. Ward’s family and community for Mr. Ward’s tragic death on several occasions.” G4S also addresses “the unfounded assertion of the US Senate Armed Services Committee that ArmorGroup, now G4S Risk Management, turned to Afghan ‘warlords’ to serve as manpower providers during the duration of the UN contract. This was simply not true.” According to the US Senate Committee, its inquiry “uncovered evidence of private security contractors funneling U.S. taxpayers dollars to Afghan warlords and strongmen linked to murder, kidnapping, bribery as well as Taliban and other anti-Coalition activities” (Senate Committee on Armed Services, p.i) In a section titled “U.S. and UN Funded Contracts Benefit Afghan Warlords,” the Committee documented how ArmorGroup hired two known warlords to provide manpower to guard the US Air Force airbase construction project, one of whom was later transferred to service the UN contract. Although the Senate Committee gathered testimony about the links between the guards hired by ArmorGroup and the Taliban, as well as information that the company was aware of the warlords’ actions, G4S claims in its letter of response that the Senate Committee’s findings are “not supported by evidence and did not exist.”

The five-page response by G4S to the *Contracting Insecurity* report reads much like the 2012 response. After citing its CSR record, G4S takes on “specific issues mentioned in the February 2014 report by Lou Pingeot:” the “regrettable” failure to provide a complete, contracted security workforce for the London Games (which had led the UK government to bring in the military to provide security for the 2012 Olympics); the “tragic” death of Jimmy Mubenga, noting that the Crown Prosecution Service found no basis on which to bring criminal charges against G4S in this case; the situation at Mangaung Correctional Centre (MCC) in South Africa, noting that during the time it has been operated by G4S, “the MCC has come to be regarded as a benchmark in correctional services in South Africa, receiving numerous national and international awards”; the poor management of the Oakwood prison in the UK, at which the company has “taken steps to make improvements”; the use of restraint against young people at UK Secure Training Centers, stating that “[t]he issue referred to in [Pingeot’s] report was a result of a conflict in the interpretation of the authority’s rules and primary legislation”; and the company’s operations in Israel and the West Bank, which the company concluded that it did not violate any national or international law.

The attitude of G4S that “stuff happens” as part of their “care and justice” work, which covers police and prison contracts, is exemplified in a *Financial Times* article titled “G4S:

the inside story.” In response to a question by an analyst at a investor meeting, “chief executive [Ashley Almanza] added: ‘we do difficult things sometimes in difficult places... It’s the nature of the business that we can... hit the ball out of the park for 364 days of the year and on the last day of the year something goes wrong.’ His response hints at an uncomfortable truth. When uniformed staff – however tightly supervised – are placating violent prisoners, tackling pirates or even fingerprinting drunks, the situation will occasionally get out of hand. Sometimes people will be hurt or could even die” (*Financial Times*, 14 November 2013).

The UN’s response

The 2014 *Contracting Insecurity* report provides an update on the relationships between PMSCs and the UN and examines the institution’s response to the 2012 report. The update indicates that the trend towards outsourcing security continues and that the UN’s responses have been limited to addressing the concerns about tracking and oversight of contracts with PMSCs. “The UN’s use of private military and security companies (PMSCs) is not a technical issue – it is a deeply political one. Since the publication of ‘Dangerous Partnership’... , the UN has taken steps to improve the selection and oversight of these companies and to make its practices more transparent. While positive, these efforts have tended to focus on technical issues, such as the selection process and the definition of which services PMSCs can perform. There has been little reflection on the reasons behind the need for more security, the influence of PMSCs on UN security policies, or their potential impact on the perception of the organization by local populations” (Pingeot 2014, p5).

In late 2012, the UN Department of Safety and Security finalized a set of guidelines on the use of armed private security companies. The guidelines seek to standardize the use of PMSCs across UN agencies and provide an initial step towards transparency and accountability in the contracting of PMSCs. Pingeot states that these guidelines are severely limited as they rely primarily on companies self-reporting and there is insufficient monitoring and oversight of PMSCs with regards to training and screening of employees as well as to the companies’ institutional practices and approach. “The guidelines also raise concerns that some controversial services – such as the use of armed private security for convoy protection – may become normalized” (Pingeot 2014, p10).

Another step taken by the UN was a first-ever report by the Secretary General on the use of armed private security presented to the General Assembly in October 2012. The report explains the conditions under which PMSCs are contracted – primarily as a ‘last resort’ when internal options in the UN and among member states are exhausted – and

describes the institution's new guidelines on armed private security. Pingeot points out that Secretary General's report "was slim on facts and numbers. It did not name any of the companies used by the UN and did not address the rise in private security contracts" (Pingeot 2014, p9).

A later report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) provided further details on contracting with PMSCs. The ACABQ report was incomplete and at times contradictory, thereby exposing the lack of oversight within the UN regarding contracts. As exemplified by Pingeot, the ACABQ report states that it has "only one contract with a large multinational armed private security company" – IDG Security in Afghanistan, and later lists contracts with other companies, including the multinational G4S and its local branches in Cameroon, Haiti, and Kosovo (Pingeot 2014, p9). The ACABQ only reported on political and peacekeeping missions and excluded contracts with other UN agencies, which hold important contracts with PMSCs. In addition to the inconsistencies and inaccuracies of the ACABQ report, the fact that this issue was taken up by an budgetary oversight body indicates the technical nature of the UN's approach, rather than the political response required by Pingeot's findings.

The UN reports led to the issues regarding UN contracting with PMSCs to be raised in the UN General Assembly committee that oversees administrative and budgetary matters. The debate in the committee in turn resulted in a set of recommendations from the committee to the General Assembly in early 2013. Pingeot summarizes that the "resolution is by far the clearest mandate that the UN has received from member states on the issue of PMSCs. It underlined the potential risks involved in the use of armed private security and demanded more transparency and accountability from the Secretariat" (Pingeot 2014, p10).

Overall, the UN response to the concerns raised regarding contracting with PMSCs is judged by Pingeot as insufficient in the political realm of the UN's ability to fulfill its mission and the role of PMSCs shaping the UN's approach to peacekeeping and security. "The use of PMSCs has important ramifications for the activities, mandate, and legitimacy of the UN. Ultimately, the question behind the UN's use of PMSCs is what the organization is today and what it might become" (Pingeot 2014, p5).

Unsettling conclusions

The lack of accurate information from the UN about the extent of its contracts with PMSCs is a significant obstacle for understanding the full scope of the situation. If the UN does not systematically track its contracts with PMSCs, how can they ensure that violations are not taking place in the institution's name?

Despite the incomplete picture, it is clear that the UN's reliance on PMSCs is compromising the institution's ability to fulfill its mission and that it is further entrenching the securitization of peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts. Additionally, three questions are surfaced:

- How can UN agencies that are tasked with guaranteeing human rights and investigating perpetrators of human rights violations simultaneously hire those perpetrators?
- Where does corporate social responsibility fit into this debate?
- As more public services and functions become privatized, this is resulting the privatization of human rights violations. How can we hold PMSCs accountable for their role in human rights violations?

How can UN agencies that are tasked with guaranteeing human rights and investigating perpetrators of human rights violations simultaneously hire those perpetrators?

G4S has been involved in high-profile incidents of ill-treatment of refugees, both during deportations and transfers and during the guarding of detention or processing centers. The UNHCR is an important contracting body of PMSCs within the UN system, hiring G4S to guard refugee camps in several countries, among other services. At the same time, the UNHCR has been responsible for investigating incidents of human rights violations against refugees in Iraq and PNG, where G4S has been implicated. Despite its awareness of these situations, the UNHCR continues to hire G4S to provide security in refugee camps. At best, this is a sign of lack of coordination and communication within the agency that can lead to serious consequences. At worst, the UNHCR does not find it important that G4S has been involved these and other incidents, and is therefore complicit in the misconduct.

Where does corporate social responsibility fit into this debate?

G4S is an active promoter of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and proudly states that it is an active member of the Global Compact since February 2011. The Global Compact was launched by the United Nations in 2000 as a tool to promote 'responsible corporate citizenship'. It is open for any corporation to join as long as they sign on to its principles of human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption, and as long as they report annually on their CSR efforts. This voluntary mechanism lacks an enforceable legal framework – meaning that corporations cannot be held liable for human rights violations or other practices that go against the principles. While Global Compact

members may be sanctioned if they fail to report, no company has ever been expelled for their practices that violate human rights (Friends of the Earth International 2012).

The Global Compact rewards members with privileged access to the UN and its agencies and at the same time it provides cover for the UN regarding its use of disreputable companies, since Global Compact members – such as G4S – should be legitimate partners for the UN. UN contracts are not the most profitable but they go a long way in building a positive profile of the companies, thereby feeding into the CSR smokescreen of PMSCs.

Using a similar model as the Global Compact, the UN's response to concerns about PMSCs was to focus on data management of its contracts and set up systems of monitoring of PMSCs based on self-reporting by the companies. As long as the technicalities of reporting are met, the companies get the stamp of approval. This approach ignores the institutional problems with relying on PMSCs as well as the fundamental issues regarding the PMSCs' influence over the UN's approach to peacekeeping and humanitarian missions.

As more public services and functions become privatized, this is resulting the privatization of human rights violations. How can we hold PMSCs accountable for their role in human rights violations?

As policing, security, and other public functions are increasingly privatized, it is to be expected that the human rights violations that were committed by state agents will now be committed by private contractors on behalf of the state. The profit-motive for PMSCs leads to poor working conditions among their employees – as evidenced by multiple reports of strikes of G4S guards at prisons and refugee camps, which in turn creates additional situations of stress and violence (see, for example, Corpwatch G4S corporate profile). Regarding mismanagement and incidents of abuse, the G4S CEO was quoted earlier as saying, “it is the nature of the business.” When public entities are involved in human rights violations, they can be held accountable through the use of laws and multilateral treaties including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. When private multinational entities are the perpetrators, how are they held accountable? The international legal frameworks need to be updated in order to respond to the trend of global privatization and hold multinational corporations accountable for rights-violations in all contexts (see, for example, Friends of the Earth International 2014).

Pingeot's reports raise critical questions about the direction that the UN is taking regarding peace and security, and the influence of PMSCs. Many NGOs in the humanitarian sector also contract with PMSCs for security of their offices and of their

field operations at refugee camps and elsewhere. Providing security services to humanitarian operations has become a niche market for PMSCs; G4S-owned ArmorGroup has counted several NGOs among their clients, including International Rescue Committee, CARE and Caritas. (International Alert, p16) This turn towards securitization has led to the normalization of violence and conflict, creating a context in which the UN and other organizations are cornered into making choices that effectively counter their efforts at humanitarian relief and peace.

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Buro Jansen & Janssen 2014

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