



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

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Audit of rule of law support activities in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

While UNISFA has undertaken initiatives to support the rule of law, gaps in strategy implementation, capacity building and monitoring limit the effectiveness and sustainability of the programme

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Audit of rule of law support activities in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of rule of law (RoL) support activities in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). The objective of the audit was to assess whether UNISFA adequately and effectively implemented rule of law support activities in the Mission area. The audit covered the period from January 2023 to March 2025 and included: (a) oversight and planning; (b) rule of law support activities; and (c) reporting and monitoring.

The core foundations for the RoL - including an agreed legal framework, an Abyei Police Service, and clarity on judicial authority or jurisdiction, are not yet in place in Abyei. Despite these gaps, UNISFA developed a RoL support strategy, took action to improve detention infrastructure, and mainstreamed gender considerations into RoL activities. UNISFA also accurately reported on its RoL support activities to provide transparency.

However, the support strategy lacked: (a) clear activities and measurable indicators; (b) mitigation plans for risks identified in the strategy; and (c) effective monitoring mechanisms. Training programs for the Community Protection Committee (CPCs), Joint Protection Committee (JPCs), and traditional judges were ad hoc and lacked comprehensive needs assessment. Compliance checks for CPC/JPC members were not conducted, and the membership data in the CPC/JPC database was incomplete.

OIOS made seven recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNISFA needed to:

- Review and update its rule of law support action plan and develop mechanisms to regularly monitor the progress on the action plan.
- Develop and implement a mitigation action plan to address rule of law risks.
- Conduct an assessment of its rule of law support funding requirements and review and update the Abyei Joint Programme priorities.
- Conduct a training needs assessment and develop a curriculum for CPCs and JPCs and assess the capacity-building needs of the traditional justice mechanisms.
- Develop processes to conduct and document regular compliance and human rights checks while updating the CPC/JPC database.
- Finalize and implement the co-location concept.
- Review and update its Comprehensive Performance Assessment System rule of law impact indicator.

UNISFA accepted all recommendations and has initiated action to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

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Audit of rule of law support activities in the United Nations Interim Force for Abyei

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of rule of law (RoL) support activities in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

2. RoL is defined as “a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards.”

3. Abyei, a contested region between Sudan and South Sudan, was granted special administrative status under the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. A key component of the Agreement, the Abyei Protocol, specifically addressed the status of Abyei with the following key provisions related to the RoL:

- Abyei was to be administered by an Abyei Area Administration, with equal representation from Sudan and South Sudan.
- Abyei was to be demilitarized, with joint integrated units of the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army providing security.

4. UNISFA was established through Security Council Resolution 1990 (2011), which mandated the Mission to: (a) ensure security in Abyei; (b) oversee demilitarization; (c) protect civilians under imminent threat of violence; and (d) strengthen the capacity of the Abyei Police Service by providing support on matters of law and order, with an initially authorized ceiling of 50 United Nations police personnel. Subsequent resolutions adjusted UNISFA’s mandate to address evolving challenges and place greater emphasis on RoL, including raising the police personnel ceiling to 640, comprising 148 individual police and corrections officers and three formed police units.

5. However, the requisites for the RoL do not currently exist in the Abyei Area; these requisites should be such as: (a) agreed legal framework or publicly promulgated law; (b) duly mandated law enforcement body; and (c) judicial jurisdiction or authority within the Abyei area. For example, while the two governments signed in June 2011 another agreement that provided for the establishment of joint institutions, including the Abyei Police Service under the authority of the Abyei Area Administration, the Abyei Police Service had not yet been established and the proposed increase in police personnel ceiling to 640 has not been authorized by the host nations. In February 2023, the Government of Sudan granted entry permission for an additional 10 United Nations police officers; thus, UNISFA had been operating with up to 60 United Nations police officers in the Abyei area. Instead, Community Protection Committees (CPCs) and Joint Protection Committees (JPCs), composed of unarmed volunteers, serve as community-based mechanisms that perform law and order-related functions. As of June 2025, there were 1,223 registered CPC and JPC members. Dispute resolution is primarily conducted through the Joint Community Peace Committee and traditional courts, overseen by local chiefs applying customary law.

6. UNISFA’s role in supporting RoL focused on two key areas: (a) building the capacities of CPCs and JPCs through training and logistical support; and (b) strengthening traditional justice systems through training and logistical assistance. RoL initiatives were supported through programmatic funding, an annual pool of resources allocated to support substantive mandate activities. For the 2024/25 budget cycle, \$157,000 was allocated for: (a) co-location of United Nations Police (UNPOL) with CPCs and JPCs; (b)

capacity-building for CPCs and JPCs; and (c) community engagement on customary justice and dispute resolution.

7. Responsibility for RoL was assigned to UNPOL, a RoL focal point in the Office of the Mission Chief of Staff who coordinates RoL support work across the Mission components, and the Community Liaison Office (CLO), also under the Office of the Mission Chief of Staff. The CLO comprised a chief at the P-5 level and 11 staff members, including a P-4 Community Liaison Officer, who also served as the human rights focal point, and a P-4 Community Liaison Officer, who also served as customary justice focal point. UNPOL was headed by a Police Commissioner at the D-1 level and supported by a Chief of Operations at the P-4 level, who oversees UNPOL operations implemented by the individual police and corrections officers.

8. UNISFA primarily uses repository folders on OneDrive to store information related to RoL activities, which includes source data on crime statistics captured in an Excel worksheet. An Excel spreadsheet, named CPC/JPC membership database, is used to record registration details of CPC and JPC members.

9. Comments provided by UNISFA are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

10. The objective of the audit was to assess whether UNISFA adequately and effectively implemented rule of law support activities in the Mission area.

11. This audit was included in the OIOS 2024 risk-based work plan because the RoL, a critical component of UNISFA's mandate, has not been previously reviewed.

12. OIOS conducted this audit from April to September 2024. The audit covered the period from January 2023 to March 2025 and included: (a) oversight and planning; (b) rule of law support activities; and (c) reporting and monitoring.

13. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key Mission officials and personnel from the Department of Peace Operations; (b) review of relevant documentation, including Security Council resolutions, bilateral agreements between the two host nations, applicable guidance materials, and Justice and Corrections Standing Capacity deployment reports; (d) analytical review of the CPC/JPC membership database, 2024/25 budget allocations, and training activities; and (e) site visits of two detention facilities in Abyei town and Amiet market.

14. To assess the reliability of data pertaining to the CPC/JPC membership database, OIOS tested samples of nominee lists used to populate the database. The reliability of crime statistics data was verified by reconciling entries against monthly situation reports. Through a walkthrough, OIOS confirmed that access rights to both spreadsheets were restricted to a designated officer within UNPOL. Based on the review and with the exception of the completeness issues raised in the report regarding the CPC/JPC membership database, OIOS concluded that the data was sufficiently reliable for the purposes of the audit objectives.

15. The audit was conducted in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Oversight and planning

The rule of law support action plan did not sufficiently elaborate on implementing activities and the Mission did not monitor its implementation

16. Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2575 (2021), a strategic review of UNISFA was conducted in June 2021 to recommend options for the reconfiguration of the Mission. One of the key recommendations from the review was the development of a dedicated rule of law support strategy. The Department of Peace Operations, in collaboration with the Justice and Corrections Standing Capacity, Standing Police Capacity, representatives of the Abyei community and both national governments, developed the Rule of Law Support Strategy for Abyei (ROLSSA), which was finalized and endorsed by the Acting Head of Mission and Force Commander (Ag. HoM/FC) in November 2023. The ROLSSA set the approach to strengthen law and order, prevent and redress violations between communities, and contribute to improved security and the protection of civilians.

17. The ROLSSA was subsequently updated and revised in April 2025 to reflect the new conflict dynamics and shape the Mission and United Nations Country Teams' response. The objectives of the strategy included: (a) promoting a consensus-based approach to the investigation and prosecution of serious crimes; (b) enhancing civilian protection through improved protective environment; and (c) ensuring humane and dignified treatment of detainees. OIOS noted that the ROLSSA was aligned with its mandate and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Rule of Law.

18. The Mission drafted an accompanying action plan to serve as a guide to operationalize and implement the strategy. However, the plan did not fully translate the strategy into sufficiently clear and actionable activities and measurable performance indicators as noted below:

- While the plan articulated a number of broad outcomes, it did not elaborate on the implementing activities to operationalize the outcomes. For example, one of the key outcomes was to “decrease security threats through operationalization of joint mechanisms” to be achieved through “advocacy with Sudanese and South Sudanese authorities on joint investigations and the establishment of the Abyei Police Service”. However, further elaboration could include defining the appropriate level of authority and the modalities of dialogue.
- Throughout the plan, accountability for delivering activities was assigned broadly to multiple units, including external agencies, without specifying the contributions of each stakeholder. For example, to provide “regular advice and mentoring on women and juvenile detention”, UNPOL, United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund, and UN Women were listed without clarity on how the stakeholders would implement the activity.
- The expected results listed in the plan did not include measurable indicators, baselines, or targets. For example, results such as “increased community responsiveness and early warning” or “humane and dignified treatment of detainees increased” cannot be objectively assessed without defined benchmarks or indicators.

19. OIOS further observed that the action plan was not monitored to track progress making it difficult to assess the extent of implementation or measure progress toward intended outcomes. Strengthening the monitoring framework would enhance the Mission’s ability to demonstrate achievements, ensure accountability, and facilitate timely adjustments where needed.

(1) UNISFA should: (a) review and update its rule of law support action plan to include detailed implementing activities, clear responsibilities and expected contribution, and measurable performance indicators; and (b) develop mechanisms to regularly monitor the progress on the action plan.

UNISFA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that it would conduct a review of the action plan and key performance indicators accordingly and monitor progress against the updated action plan.

Lack of mitigation plans for identified rule of law risks

20. The United Nations Enterprise Risk Management and Internal Control Policy emphasizes the principle of integration, requiring risk management to be fully embedded within key operational processes.

21. Within the ROLSSA, UNISFA documented an assessment of the operating environment in Abyei, which included the identification of several risks that threaten the successful implementation of the RoL mandate. Although the Mission developed certain mitigation frameworks, including the HRDDP policy and a guidance note on the extension of state authority, several critical risks highlighted in the strategy still require targeted mitigation, such as:

- Criminal accountability challenges arising from the customary use of "blood money" to resolve serious crime.
- Inadequate logistical support and lack of incentives for CPCs who are unarmed.
- Proliferation of firearms and increased armed criminality, particularly among armed youth.

22. The Mission had experienced operational setbacks stemming from these risks, including restricted access to key Mission areas of operation. For instance, in Agok, a detention centre constructed by the Mission as part of its RoL support efforts was taken over by the South Sudanese People Defence Forces and the South Sudanese National Police Services, hindering the Mission's efforts to support RoL in that area. In addition, reported incidents of hijackings of United Nations vehicles and armed attacks on CPC stations have further constrained mandate delivery. The absence of defined mitigation plans for critical risks limits the Mission's ability to proactively address threats that could undermine the implementation of the RoL mandate.

(2) UNISFA should develop and implement a mitigation action plan with clearly defined ownership to address rule of law risks and strengthen the Mission's ability to respond to related threats.

UNISFA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that a mitigation action plan would be developed, identifying key rule of law risks, defining specific mitigation measures and assigning responsibilities.

Inadequate assessment of funding requirements for rule of law implementation activities

23. Under the New Vision of the Secretary-General for the Rule of Law, the Organization is expected to integrate eight core elements into its work, including working with all stakeholders to secure adequate, predictable, and sustained funding for RoL initiatives. Furthermore, the United Nations results-based budgeting framework requires that budgets be prioritized in line with strategic objectives, and that resource constraints do not undermine the viability or sustainability of critical programmatic outcomes.

24. RoL initiatives in UNISFA are financed through programmatic funding, which is a pool of resources allocated annually to deliver substantive mandate-related activities. OIOS reviewed UNISFA's budgets for 2023/24 and 2024/25 and noted that the programmatic funding available to the Mission was capped at \$2.5 million. Of this total, \$2 million was earmarked for the Abyei Joint Programme, which is a multi-agency initiative led collaboratively by UNISFA and the Resident Coordinators of Sudan and South Sudan, intended to fund joint peacebuilding, humanitarian, and development interventions in Abyei, while the remaining \$500,000 was allocated to UNISFA's in-house programmatic activities. These in-house activities encompass not only RoL initiatives but also other priority areas within the Mission's mandate, such as community engagement, conflict mitigation, and local capacity-building. Consequently, RoL activities must compete for funding within this \$500,000 allocation, leading to the prioritization of only the most urgent or politically significant interventions.

25. This financial limitation has resulted in a narrowed scope of RoL programming, reduced flexibility to respond to RoL needs, and the deferral or scaling back of certain strategic objectives that require sustained investment for effective implementation. For example, for the 2024/25 budget cycle, \$157,000 was allocated to implement the following three RoL activities amongst many other priorities outlined in the strategy: (a) co-location of UNPOL with CPCs and JPCs; (b) capacity building for CPCs and JPCs; and (c) community engagement on customary justice and dispute resolution activities. While the Mission had identified the implementation of the ROLSSA as one of its key strategic priorities, several critical components remain unfunded, such as support of traditional justice mechanisms. Moreover, the feasibility of delivering the prioritized activities is questionable. For instance, \$10,000 was allocated for UNPOL's co-location with CPCs and JPCs.

26. Furthermore, OIOS observed that the Abyei Joint Programme prioritized interventions in health, food security, community security, social cohesion, inclusion, and water and sanitation, consistent with its original objectives. A review of Joint Programme-funded projects implemented during the 2024/25 financial year showed that none of the ten funded projects directly supported RoL activities. The ROLSSA had identified the Joint Programme as a potential funding source for several RoL activities, such as logistical, infrastructural, and equipment support to CPCs, JPCs, and traditional courts; however, these activities were not included among the Programme's original focus areas. OIOS further observed that the Joint Programme had not been updated since its endorsement in December 2022, despite the evolving dynamics in Abyei and the subsequent adoption of the ROLSSA. Consequently, the Programme may no longer adequately reflect UNISFA's evolving mandate priorities, particularly those related to RoL support.

27. The Mission has not undertaken an assessment to determine the funding requirements for the implementation of ROLSSA. In the absence of such an assessment, resource allocation has been subject to the constraints of the programmatic budget. Without assessing and identifying the required funding for RoL activities, this could limit the Mission's ability to effectively implement the activities in its RoL strategy and action plan.

(3) UNISFA should: (a) conduct an assessment of its rule of law support funding requirements to identify funding gaps and alternative resource mobilization strategies; and (b) in consultation with the Resident Coordinators in Sudan and South Sudan, review and update the Abyei Joint Programme priorities to align with the Mission's current mandate, particularly rule of law support activities.

UNISFA accepted recommendation 3 and stated that a funding gap analysis would be conducted and alternative resource mobilization advocated for, in consultation with the Resident Coordinators of Sudan and South Sudan. UNISFA further stated that the Abyei Joint Programme, as a mandate implementation tool, should be a living document that is updated whenever the political and/or operational environment requires.

The Mission took steps to mitigate staffing gaps affecting rule of law support activities

28. The implementation of RoL strategies requires clear assignment of responsibilities and accountability, in line with the Secretary-General's Guidance Note on the United Nations Approach to RoL Assistance.

29. The Ag. HoM/FC held formal accountability for the implementation of the Mission's RoL strategy, which was formally reflected in the Ag. HoM/FC's leadership compact. Day-to-day operational responsibilities for delivering specific RoL activities in UNISFA rested primarily with UNPOL and the CLO, who were responsible for activities, such as community engagement, justice support, and capacity building of local actors.

30. While various units contributed to the implementation of individual RoL activities, there was a gap in coordination, oversight and monitoring to ensure that all efforts are aligned and that progress is systematically measured and reported. The need to recruit a full-time RoL officer to address this gap was highlighted in UNISFA's 2021 strategic review and reinforced in its Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS) impact assessments completed in 2024. UNISFA submitted the required post requests as part of the 2022/2023 and 2024/2025 budget proposals, with approval granted in 2024/2025. However, due to the ongoing recruitment freeze, the post had not yet been advertised. In the absence of a full-time RoL officer, the Community Liaison Officer was informally designated as the RoL focal point. In August 2025, this function was realigned to report directly to the Mission Chief of Staff, and the terms of reference were updated to formally reflect the coordination of RoL support work across the Mission components.

B. Rule of law support activities

UNISFA did not conduct a comprehensive needs assessment for its training programmes

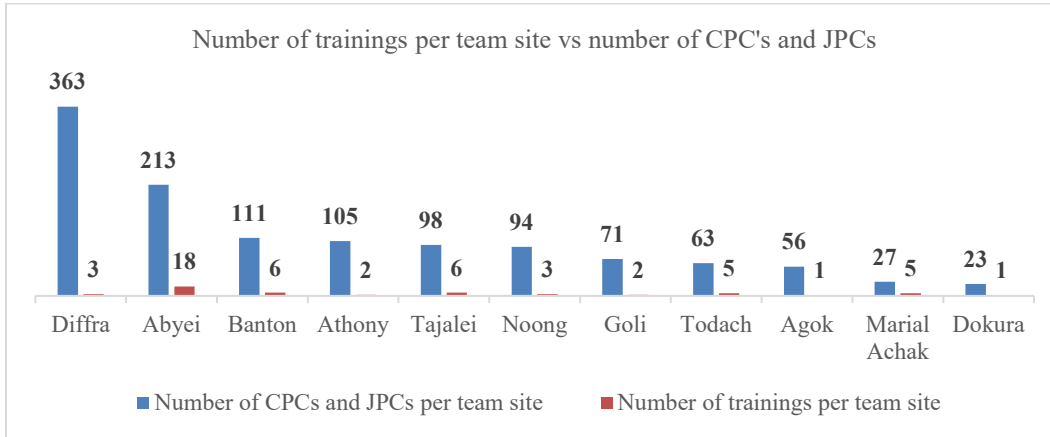
31. The policy on justice support in United Nations peace operations highlights the importance of tailoring support to the specific country context, informed by the needs of the justice system and the prevailing political and social environment. This requires conducting assessments of the local context and articulating justice support needs.

a) CPC and JPC training programmes

32. Training is a key capacity-building tool highlighted in the ROLSSA for both CPCs and JPCs. Based on an analysis of the 2024 training records during which 52 training courses were delivered, the following observations were made.

- The allocation of training courses showed a notable imbalance across team sites, with no apparent link between the number of CPCs and JPCs per team site and the volume of training delivered. For example, Diffra, which has the highest number of CPCs, received only three training courses during the period. Conversely, some smaller team sites received more training sessions and broader topic coverage than those with greater CPC staffing levels, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: Number of trainings per team site versus number of CPCs and JPCs



Source: UNISFA UNPOL training records

- There was no clear, documented basis for the selection and prioritization of the types of courses provided to CPC and JPC team sites. Courses such as security management/prison safety and basic police techniques were conducted only once, despite their direct relevance to core CPC and JPC operational duties. The most frequently delivered trainings were human rights-based courses with a focus on detainee rights, which accounted for 43 per cent of all training sessions. While this is consistent with the Mission’s emphasis on promoting human rights, it may be a disproportionate focus on a single category.
- Attendance records reviewed showed that, within a given team site, it was mostly the same individuals attending training and there was no follow-up to ensure coverage of all CPCs and JPCs. This raised question about the overall reach of the training programme and whether all CPCs and JPCs received equitable learning opportunities.

33. No formal training curriculum had been developed for CPCs and JPCs due to the absence of a structured training needs assessment. UNPOL acknowledged that the training has been delivered on an ad hoc basis, but noted that guidelines, including training needs questionnaires, are being developed to support a more systematic needs assessment.

b) Capacity building for traditional justice mechanisms

34. While the ROLSSA identifies strengthening traditional justice mechanisms through capacity building as a key objective, progress towards this objective had primarily relied on ad hoc, short-term trainings without a comprehensive needs assessment. For example, there were two workshops conducted in 2025. In February 2025, UNISFA co-facilitated a training designed to enhance the capacity of community-based mechanisms to support law and order processes, manage disputes, and promote access to justice. In May 2025, the United Nations Development Programme, through a local implementing partner, organized and funded a one-day pilot paralegal training. While these initiatives may have contributed to awareness-raising, the absence of a comprehensive needs assessment and structured roadmap to achieving these needs makes it difficult to determine whether they were sufficient interventions, addressed the most critical justice support needs, or contributed sustainably to UNISFA’s objective of enhancing traditional justice mechanisms.

(4) UNISFA should: (a) conduct a training needs assessment and develop a curriculum that ensures adequate coverage and focus for Community Protection Committees and Joint Protection Committees; and (b) assess the capacity-building needs of the traditional justice mechanisms and establish implementation modalities with measurable performance indicators.

UNISFA accepted recommendation 4 and stated that training and capacity-building needs would be assessed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, a curriculum developed, and implementation modalities established.

Compliance checks were not conducted for CPC/JPC members, and the membership data was incomplete

35. The selection of CPC and JPC members is based on nominations by their respective community leaders, who submit lists of interested individuals to UNPOL. UNPOL's profiling of CPCs and JPCs should capture information such as tribe, gender, identification number, and chiefdom, along with other key personal identifiers in a database. Compliance and human rights checks should be performed, with the results documented. Maintaining an up-to-date database is a critical HRDPP mitigation measure and should serve as the foundation for all planning and support activities related to CPCs and JPCs.

36. Compliance and human rights checks were not conducted or documented at the time of CPC and JPC member registration. The Mission's approach was reactive, relying on the community to voluntarily provide information regarding potential compliance or human rights breaches by the CPCs. In addition, the CPC/JPC membership database was incomplete, as 13 of the 25 fields in the database had missing data. For example, key fields such as date of registration/update did not have data for 959 (or 78 per cent) of the 1,223 members and the field for compliance and human rights checks were left blank for all members. In addition, no systematic verification has been undertaken to confirm whether the 1,223 registered CPC and JPC members in the database remain active.

37. The Mission acknowledged the potential risks of CPC and JPC members shifting allegiance or moving into armed groups, increasing the danger of inadvertently supporting individuals who may contravene HRDPP provisions. UNPOL indicated that logistical support events, such as the distribution of consumable materials, were used as informal opportunities to verify active CPC membership by requesting sector teams to provide updated lists. However, these verifications are neither systematically documented nor reflected in the database. The absence of the compliance checks, combined with the lack of regular verification, undermines the reliability of the membership records and may expose the Mission to reputational risk and risk of non-compliance with HRDPP provisions.

(5) UNISFA should develop processes to conduct and document regular compliance and human rights checks while updating the Community Protection Committee and Joint Protection Committee database.

UNISFA accepted recommendation 5 and stated that the development of compliance and human rights checks would be part of the HRDDP risk assessments.

UNISFA took action to improve detention infrastructure, but needed to finalize the co-location concept

38. Ensuring the humane and dignified treatment of suspects and detainees is a key strategic objective of the ROLSSA and is also a requirement of the Department of Peace Operations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Safety and Security standard operating procedures on the handling of detainees in the United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions.

Detention facilities in Abyei are managed by the CPCs and JPCs. UNISFA has no executive mandate to run these facilities; however, it is mandated to ensure the humane and dignified treatment of suspects and other detainees. UNPOL provides capacity-building, mentoring and monitoring support. UNISFA advisory support also focuses on case management and crime prevention strategies.

a) UNISFA took measures to improve detention facilities

39. In Amiet (the main commercial hub of the Abyei area), detainees were previously held in two modified shipping containers with inadequate ventilation, poor sanitation, and no ablution facilities. As part of its quick impact project funding, UNISFA constructed a permanent detention facility in June 2025. The new facility provided expanded capacity, with larger cells that allow separation of inmates, office space, ablution facilities, and a kitchen.

40. The Abyei town detention facility, originally constructed in 2008, continues to operate but faces overcrowding, with pre-trial and sentenced detainees often held together. UNISFA has contributed to enhancing conditions by providing perimeter fencing, a kitchen, water supply, and generator fuel. A third facility in Agok, although renovated by UNISFA, remains non-operational. The Mission attributed this to its occupation by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces.

b) UNISFA did not finalize nor implement the co-location concept

41. UNISFA supports CPCs and JPCs in managing detention centres through the daily co-location of UNPOL correction officers, intended to provide on-the-job mentoring and monitor adherence to human rights standards.

42. Currently, co-location was limited to two sites, Abyei and Amiet detention facilities, out of the anticipated 10 team sites. The limited co-location sites was attributed to the lack of formed police units to support broader deployment across the Abyei area. During OIOS onsite visits, UNPOL correction officers reported that their co-location support included on the job mentoring of CPCs and JPCs, ensuring compliance with intake protocols (such as registration, notification of rights, and recording of charges), and following up on cases of prolonged detention without trial. Some benefits were evident, such as structured systems for detainee intake and release, which were monitored by detention officers. However, the less tangible outcomes, such as capacity development through onsite mentoring of CPCs and JPCs, could not be verified as the process remained unstructured and reliant on individual correction officers. Furthermore, activities undertaken during co-location visits appeared to vary by officer, with no structure or defined tasks, performance indicators, or corrective actions to be followed. As a result, the effectiveness and impact of the co-location initiative could not be adequately assessed.

43. In February 2024, UNISFA developed a draft co-location concept, which defined co-location as a “mandate implementation modality to facilitate the processes of transferring knowledge and skills through training and practical demonstration of policing techniques to CPCs and JPCs”. The draft co-location concept outlined the tasks to be undertaken by UNPOL officers during co-location, along with the expected results. It also established provisions for monitoring and evaluating CPC/JPC skills development and the overall effectiveness of co-location efforts, while further detailing the human resources required for successful implementation. Once finalized and implemented, the concept could provide clearer guidance and a stronger structure. At the time of the audit, the concept was still under review and had not yet been finalized or implemented.

(6) UNISFA should finalize and implement the co-location concept to provide guidance, structure, and monitoring of the implementation effectiveness of the co-location initiative.

UNISFA accepted recommendation 6 and stated that the co-location concept is under review and would be implemented once finalized within a year.

UNISFA mainstreamed gender in its rule of law activities

44. In accordance with Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security and the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity, peacekeeping missions are mandated to integrate gender perspectives across all operational and programmatic areas. OIOS review of UNISFA's bi-annual progress reports on Women, Peace, and Security for 2024 and 2025 verified that the Mission has undertaken actions to integrate gender considerations into its RoL support activities. The Mission noted the following activities that confirmed the mainstreaming of gender in RoL activities.

- In June 2025, UNISFA facilitated the first Joint Ngok Dinka–Misseriya Women's Conference addressing women's participation in decision-making, prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, and child protection.
- UNISFA launched the Tea-Time Talk programme, which brings women together at the grassroots level across villages in Abyei to enhance women's confidence, amplify their voices in community decision-making, and link their perspectives to broader justice and governance mechanisms.

45. UNISFA was also measuring and monitoring participation, such as: (a) female participation in RoL-related trainings, workshops, and dialogues; (b) number of women participating in CPCs and JPCs; and (c) women's representation in community-based peace and migration conferences. Women's participation in RoL mechanisms remained low, averaging 15 per cent in CPCs and 12 per cent in JPCs. However, UNISFA was taking action, starting with the recruitment of a gender focal point in 2024. Since then, the Mission initiated several interventions aimed at improving gender representation and mainstreaming gender considerations in RoL activities.

46. In the updated 2025 ROLSSA, UNISFA emphasized that all RoL support in Abyei should promote the protection of women, children, and other vulnerable groups. The strategy called for targeted efforts to eliminate discriminatory practices, strengthen accountability for sexual and gender-based violence, and enhance women's access to and participation in justice and law-and-order mechanisms.

C. Reporting and monitoring

Reporting of rule of law support activities was adequately supported

47. OIOS reviewed the Secretary-General's reports of 16 October 2024 (covering 16 April to 1 October 2024) and 1 May 2025 (covering 2 October 2024 to 15 April 2025). The October 2024 report documented 15 training sessions, while the May 2025 report recorded 38 sessions. UNISFA corrections officers further provided mentoring through regular visits to two detention facilities in Abyei as part of co-location efforts, with 340 visits reported in the October 2024 report and 258 visits in the May 2025 report. These training and co-location statistics were verified against the UNPOL activity reports for 2024 and 2025, which were supported by participant training attendance sheets and UNPOL corrections daily situation reports for co-location. The Secretary-General's reports also noted that the continued occupation of the Agok CPC facilities by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and the South Sudan National Police Service significantly hindered UNPOL's ability to co-locate with the CPC and provide mentoring and support.

48. OIOS also reviewed UNISFA's budget performance report for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 which provided similar information on the RoL support activities, including the implementation of four quick impact projects on infrastructure. These reported activities and figures were supported by training and logistical records from UNPOL, as well as site visits conducted by OIOS.

Need to update CPAS RoL indicators and strengthen crime data reporting to ensure reliable performance assessments

49. UNISFA assessed the support to the RoL, through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS). At the inception of CPAS in UNISFA in October 2022, 40 impact indicators were established to monitor five priority objectives, one of which was the support of RoL.

50. The designated impact indicator for the RoL objective was the number of reported criminal incidents, disaggregated by the type of crime. This data is collected by UNPOL and is supposed to be uploaded monthly into the CPAS platform via the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) system. The CPAS platform is used by mission components, including UNPOL, to collect, manage, and report operational data through designated focal points.

51. A review of the online CPAS system for the period January 2024 to June 2025 noted that data was entered manually as narrative text in the 'analysis' box on a monthly basis, rather than uploaded through SAGE. This approach limited the system's capacity to automatically generate trend analyses across reporting periods, as text-based commentary does not support such functionality. The Mission indicated that the UNPOL database which records major incidents and general crime statistics was not yet integrated with SAGE and that efforts are currently underway to develop a solution that will enable automatic uploading of these statistics into the SAGE system.

52. OIOS reviewed the two most recent CPAS reports, covering the periods October 2023 to April 2024 and May to November 2024, which showed an overall positive trend in impact under the RoL objective. However, crime statistics obtained directly from UNPOL for the overlapping period January 2024 to June 2025 revealed a steady increase in total reported criminal incidents, from 1,130 cases to 1,504 cases representing a 33 per cent increase. Furthermore, UNPOL's biannual report of June to December 2024 assessed the security situation in the mission's area of responsibility as fragile and unpredictable, marked by a significant presence of armed elements and evolving types of criminality that included carjackings of United Nations vehicles and armed attacks on CPC stations. The report also noted that while serious crimes, such as armed attacks and kidnappings, decreased overall, this was offset by a sharp rise in other violent acts like stabbings and a noticeable increase in general criminal activity, including theft and assault and pointed to the rising proliferation of weapons being a major driver of the rising criminality. This raised questions regarding the basis of the positive impact assessments in the CPAS reports.

53. In addition, interviews and a review of the CPAS framework also revealed that its impact indicators were established in 2022 and have not been subsequently revised. Given that UNISFA has since implemented a RoL strategy and the operational context has evolved, these RoL indicators may no longer serve as a comprehensive benchmark for measuring the mission's current interventions and their effectiveness.

(7) UNISFA should review and update its Comprehensive Performance Assessment System rule of law impact indicator to align with its current strategy and operational realities.

UNISFA accepted recommendation 7 and stated that the CPAS rule of law impact indicator would be updated as part of the KPI revision process and the CPAS/SAGE integration work.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

54. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNISFA for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of rule of law support activities in the United Nations Interim Force for Abyei

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	UNISFA should: (a) review and update its rule of law support action plan to include detailed implementing activities, clear responsibilities and expected contribution, and measurable performance indicators; and (b) develop mechanisms to regularly monitor the progress on the action plan.	Important	O	Evidence of an updated rule of law support action plan with clear activities, responsibilities, measurable indicators and the action plan is regularly monitored for progress.	31 December 2026
2	UNISFA should develop and implement a mitigation action plan with clearly defined ownership to address rule of law risks and strengthen the Mission's ability to respond to related threats.	Important	O	Evidence of a mitigation action plan with clearly defined ownership to address rule of law risks.	31 December 2026
3	UNISFA should: (a) conduct an assessment of its rule of law support funding requirements to identify funding gaps and alternative resource mobilization strategies; and (b) in consultation with the Resident Coordinators in Sudan and South Sudan, review and update the Abyei Joint Programme priorities to align with the Mission's current mandate, particularly rule of law support activities.	Important	O	Evidence of an assessment of rule of law support funding needs, identified funding gaps and alternative resource options, including a review of the Abyei Joint Programme.	31 December 2026
4	UNISFA should: (a) conduct a training needs assessment and develop a curriculum that ensures adequate coverage and focus for Community Protection Committees and Joint Protection Committees; and (b) assess the capacity-building needs of the traditional justice mechanisms and establish implementation modalities with measurable performance indicators.	Important	O	Evidence of a training needs assessment and curriculum for Community and Joint Protection Committees, and documented capacity-building needs of traditional justice mechanisms.	31 December 2026

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

³ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁴ Date provided by UNISFA in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of rule of law support activities in the United Nations Interim Force for Abyei

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
5	UNISFA should develop processes to conduct and document regular compliance and human rights checks while updating the Community Protection Committee and Joint Protection Committee database.	Important	O	Evidence of conducted regular compliance and human rights checks and the updating of the Community and Joint Protection Committee database.	31 December 2026
6	UNISFA should finalize and implement the co-location concept to provide guidance, structure, and monitoring of the implementation effectiveness of the co-location initiative.	Important	O	Evidence the approval and finalization of the co-location concept and the monitoring of the concept to assess its effectiveness.	31 December 2026
7	UNISFA should review and update its Comprehensive Performance Assessment System rule of law impact indicator to align with its current strategy and operational realities.	Important	O	Evidence of the review and update to its Comprehensive Performance Assessment System rule of law impact indicator.	31 December 2026

APPENDIX I

Management Response



INTER OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Date: 16 December 2025

UNISFA/MHQ/HOM/IOM/043/2025

To: Byung-Kun Min
Director
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

From: Major-General Robert Yaw Affram
Acting Head of Mission and Force Commander
UNISFA

Subject: Draft report of an audit of rule of law support activities in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (Assignment No. AP2024-635-04)

1. Reference is made to OIOS interoffice memorandum of 1 December 2025 on the above subject matter.
2. UNISFA appreciates the comprehensive review and constructive recommendations contained in the draft audit report. We acknowledge the importance of strengthening rule of law support in Abyei and remain committed to implementing improvements in line with our mandate.
3. Thank you and best regards.

cc: Ms. Helmey Hilma Laudika Abraham, Police Commissioner, UNISFA
Mr. Alexander Stephane Gerard Rose, Chief of Staff, UNISFA
Ms. Marta Miguel Almeida Pedroso Da Silva Duro, Liaison Officer, UNISFA
Mr. Josphat Kariuki, Chief, Audit Response Unit, UNISFA

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Draft report of an audit of rule of law support activities in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (Assignment No. AP2024-635-04)

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation Date	Client comments
1	UNISFA should: (a) review and update its rule of law support action plan to include detailed implementing activities, clear responsibilities and expected contribution, and (b) develop mechanisms to regularly monitor the progress on the action plan.	Important	Yes	Rule of Law (ROL) Focal Point within the Office of the Mission Chief of Staff (O/MCOS), in consultation with UNPOL and the Community Liaison Office (CLO) as co-leads of ROL support within their respective areas of responsibility.	Q1-Q4 2026	UNISFA will conduct a review of the action plan and KPIs accordingly and monitor progress against the updated action plan.
2	UNISFA should develop and implement a mitigation action plan with clearly defined ownership to address rule of law risks and strengthen the Mission's ability to respond to related threats.	Important	Yes	Action requires cross-component input and alignment with Security Management Team risk assessments, with support from: - UNPOL Police Commissioner (PC) for CPCs/JPC - UNDSS Chief of Security for risk mitigation related to security threats, weapons proliferation - Chief, Community Liaison Office (C/CLO) for dispute resolution mechanisms - JMAC - Human Rights Due Diligence Policy Standing Technical Committee (HRDDP STC) - ROL Focal Point for coordination and integration into ROLSSA Action Plan	Q1-Q4 2026	A mitigation action plan will be developed, identifying key rule of law risks, defining specific mitigation measures and assigning responsibilities within a year.
3	UNISFA should: (a) conduct an assessment of its rule of law support funding requirements to identify funding gaps and alternative resource mobilization strategies; and (b) in consultation with the Resident Coordinators in Sudan and South	Important	Yes	(a) Community Liaison Office (traditional dispute resolution mechanisms), UNPOL (CPCs/JPCs) and ROL Focal Point (coordination).	Q1-Q4 2026	A funding gap analysis will be conducted and alternative resource mobilization accordingly advocated for, in consultation with the RCs of Sudan and South Sudan.

1 Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

2 Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/ Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation Date	Client comments
	Sudan, review and update the Abyei Joint Programme priorities to align with the Mission's current mandate, particularly rule of law support activities.			MCOS, in consultation with Joint Programme Senior Programme Manager, Resident Coordinators of Sudan and South Sudan; and ROL Focal Point for coordination and integration into ROLSSA Action Plan.		Please note that the Abyei Joint Programme (AJP) contains the rule of law as one of its priority areas. AJP as mandate implementation tool should be a living document that is being updated whenever the political and/or operational environment requires.
4	UNISFA should: (a) conduct a training needs assessment and develop a curriculum that ensures adequate coverage and focus for Community Protection Committees and Joint Protection Committees; and (b) assess the capacity-building needs of the traditional justice mechanisms and establish implementation modalities with measurable performance indicators.	Important	Yes	UNPOL PC for CPCs/JPC. C/CLO for traditional justice mechanisms. ROL Focal Point within the O/MCOS for coordination across components	Q1-Q4 2026	Training and Capacity-building needs will be assessed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, a curriculum developed, and implementation modalities established within a year.
5	UNISFA should develop processes to conduct and document regular compliance and human rights checks while updating the Community Protection Committee and Joint Protection Committee database.	Important	Yes	Mission Leadership Team; HRDDP Standing Technical Committee; and UNPOL as the sponsoring entity as part of HRDPP framework UNPOL PC for the update of the CPCs/JPC database	Q1-Q4 2026	This recommendation would be part of the HRDDP risk assessments.
6	UNISFA should finalize and implement the co-location concept to provide guidance, structure, and monitoring of the implementation effectiveness of the co-location initiative.	Important	Yes	UNPOL	Q1-Q4 2026	The Co-location concept is under review and will be implemented once finalized within a year.
7	UNISFA should review and update its Comprehensive Performance Assessment System rule of law impact indicator to align with its current strategy and operational realities.	Important	Yes	MCOS	Q1-Q4 2026	Dependent on CPAS/SAGE integration work and KPI revision process.