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Unit 2.4

OFFICE SECURITY

Layout & Design: BakOS DESIGN

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2.4 Office Security

2.4.1 General Security Procedures

The risk of incidents involving violence against UNHCR staff members or other persons on UNHCR premises, or acts or threats of self-injury, must be taken into account and effectively managed in UNHCR RSD operations. All facilities and procedures for RSD in UNHCR Offices should **ensure the safety and security of UNHCR staff and asylum-seekers and other persons of concern who approach UNHCR**.

Protection staff will not be expected to take the lead role in the development and implementation of security measures and procedures for the Office, but should be involved and aware that such procedures **may have a direct impact on the quality of RSD procedures**. In particular, inadequate or inappropriate security procedures may affect the ability of asylum-seekers and other persons of concern to have access to UNHCR Offices and staff. Lack of effective security procedures can also deter asylum-seekers from approaching UNHCR.

Coordination is necessary between UNHCR Protection staff and other staff or individuals who are responsible for security in the UNHCR Office, to ensure that:

- ▶ UNHCR security policies and guidelines are fully implemented in the RSD procedures;
- ▶ Protection concerns are taken into account in the development and implementation of security procedures in each Office.

STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

SECURITY PROVISIONS IN RSD PROCEDURES:

- ▶ Measures for crowd control and the orderly entry of individuals into UNHCR premises;
- ▶ Security guidelines for conducting individual counselling and interviews, including the lay out and furnishing of interview rooms;
- ▶ Procedures regarding the movement of asylum-seekers and other persons of concern in the UNHCR compound/premise and the areas and circumstances in which escorted access should be required;
- ▶ Effective measures for all UNHCR staff to alert security personnel (UNHCR Field Security Advisors) and unarmed private security services (security guards/security company)[1] of potential security incidents and to obtain prompt assistance, including the use of emergency panic buttons at reception and in spaces used for counselling and RSD Interviews;
- ▶ Appropriate and gender and age-sensitive response to security incidents involving asylum-seekers and refugees;
- ▶ Provision of sufficient space and resources in dedicated assembly points and safe rooms to ensure that asylum-seekers and other persons of concern who are on UNHCR premises for RSD purposes are kept safe in case of security and safety emergencies when they are not themselves the source of the security threat;
- ▶ Procedures for reporting security incidents to the appropriate staff members in the Office, as well as any other requirements for reporting within the region and to UNHCR Headquarters.

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[1] Unarmed private security services (security guards/security company), armed privat security services host goverment security guards as these may all be guarding UN premises.

It should be noted that in addition to specific security procedures, the procedures that ensure **fair, transparent and consistent processing** of individual refugee status claims throughout the RSD process and **effective channels of communication** between UNHCR staff and asylum-seekers and other persons of concern are also vital elements of the Office security strategy. Keeping Applicants informed, providing timely responses to inquiries and concerns, and establishing confidence in the integrity of the procedures will serve to reduce misunderstandings and diffuse frustration and tensions that could escalate into security incidents.

2.4.2 Protection Staff Involvement in Security Guards' Procedures

In each UNHCR Office, a Protection staff member should be designated to act as the **Protection focal point for RSD-related security issues** in the Office. The individual who is assigned this role should, in principle, be the RSD Supervisor or another Protection staff member who is responsible for, or directly involved in activities relating to the reception of asylum-seekers in the UNHCR Office. Where this function is assigned to a Protection staff member other than the RSD Supervisor, the designated Protection focal point for RSD-related security issues should report to the RSD Supervisor.

Complaints by asylum-seekers or other persons of concern, or observations by UNHCR staff relating to **conduct by security company** at the UNHCR office, regardless of whether they are appointed by the host country, should be directed without delay to the Protection focal point for RSD-related security issues. Security procedures should outline specific responsibilities for following up on complaints received regarding security guards and procedures and reporting on action taken, in accordance with the principles set out in § 2.6 – *Complaints Procedures.*

2.4.3 Staff Training on RSD-related Security Issues

As part of UNHCR's security management policy procedures it is a requirement that all UNHCR staff participate in a **security awareness briefing** upon arrival in an UNHCR Office and thereafter on a regular basis as appropriate. This briefing should include RSD-related security aspect in consultation with the senior protection officer.

> TRAINING
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> THE SECURITY AWARENESS BRIEFING ON RSD RELATED-ISSUES FOR ALL UNHCR STAFF SHOULD INCLUDE:
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> ▶ The overall procedures relating to security in the Office and plans of action in the event of an emergency. Where possible, training should include exercises to allow staff to practice established ways of responding to specific emergencies and security incidents that may arise in RSD procedures;
>
> ▶ Briefings on the specific threats and relevant security factors related to RSD procedures in the particular environment in which the Office is operating;

▶ Existing means and techniques for effective communication to avoid and diffuse RSD-related security incidents including:

- Non-antagonistic interview techniques
- Delivering bad news
- Responding to threats
- Diffusing anger
- Responding to persons who are mentally ill or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

2.4.4 Security in Physical Facilities Used for RSD

UNHCR Offices should consult relevant UNHCR resources including Field Security Advisor(s) in the region or the Field Security Service at UNHCR Headquarters (where no FSA exists) as necessary to ensure that the physical facilities and layout of the particular UNHCR Office are appropriate for conducting RSD procedures in the specific security environment. UNDSS may also be a resource and should be consulted if the facility is in a common UN premises.

STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES FOR SECURITY IN PHYSICAL FACILITIES FOR RSD

▶ The facilities should comply with the standardized UN physical security requirements in terms of perimeter protection, access control, electronic security, fire safety, and, where applicable, explosive threat mitigation / building structural resistance.

▶ The **entrance gate** for asylum-seekers and other persons of concern should be physically separate from the staff and visitors' entrance.

▶ **Areas used for reception and designated waiting areas** should be separated from the main Office space by a guarded door.

▶ The **layout of the Office** should permit a simple and direct routing of asylum-seekers and other persons of concern between the waiting area and the rooms used for interviewing.

▶ All **spaces used for reception and interviewing** should permit easy unobstructed exit for UNHCR staff. Interview rooms should be cleared of breakable objects or any items that could be used as a weapon, this includes cables and wires. All interview rooms should be equipped with panic buttons.

▶ Where the threat assessment deems it necessary and depending on the operational environment, RSD personnel should check the rooms to ensure that nothing has been placed or modified that may be used as a weapon, self-harm or could compromise the confidentiality of the interview.

▶ Where used, clear provisions should be made on the handling of video and/or audio recordings in line with UNHCR's policies on the protection of personal data of persons of concern.

2.4.5 Access procedure

Access procedures are applied at UN facilitates. In addition to registration and identification verification, security screening of persons and any property will be conducted. In some instances this may be undertaken through a manual physical search where security equipment is not available, operational or initial electronic screening determines the need for further physical search.

Where physical searches are deemed to be necessary, they should be conducted in a **respectful and gender-sensitive manner**. Physical searches should be conducted by a security guard of the same sex as the person being searched in circumstances where no guard of the same sex is available – UNHCR staff may be asked to assist. Clear training on this is required.

2.4.6 Unarmed Private security services (guard force)

The Protection staff focal point for RSD-related security issues should ensure that the guards employed at UNHCR premises receive **appropriate training and direction**. These personnel must receive training on the following issues related to RSD. This training will be delivered by UNHCR staff:

TRAINING

TRAINING FOR SECURITY GUARDS

▶ Refugee protection principles and the mandate of the UNHCR Office;

▶ Rights of asylum-seekers and refugees, including the right to have access to UNHCR Offices and Protection staff;

▶ RSD procedures in the UNHCR Office;

▶ Appropriate treatment and protection of persons with specific needs (i.e relating to gender, age, disability etc.);

▶ Identification and appropriate response to persons who may be suffering from trauma or mental illness;

▶ Non-confrontational responses to diffuse security incidents involving refugees and asylum seekers;

▶ Direction to use physical restraint or force as a last resort, and only to the degree required to prevent a refugee or asylum-seeker from harming him/herself or other persons on the premises.

This training is in addition to the training determined by the United Nations Security Management System see – Security Policy Manual and Security Management Operations Manual – Unarmed private security services.

Every effort should be made to hire **female security guards** in UNHCR Offices, and to ensure that at least one female security guard is on duty during hours when asylum-seekers and other persons of concern are received at the UNHCR Office.

Security guards should not perform other tasks related to RSD unless the tasks are assigned in consultation with the Protection focal point for RSD-related security issues, and the security guard has received the necessary training and direction to carry out the tasks assigned.

2.4.7 Security Guards Assigned by Host Country

Each UNHCR Office is responsible to ensure that where security guards are appointed by a host country to provide security to UNHCR premises, the guards **do not impede access to the UNHCR Office**, and that they carry out their functions in a manner that is consistent with UNHCR standards for the reception and treatment of asylum-seekers and other persons of concern, and in line with the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP).

The Protection focal point for RSD-related security issues should ensure that security guards who are appointed by the host country are briefed on the rights of asylum-seekers and on the international protection function of the UNHCR Office. In the absence of a Field Security Advisor/Field Security Assistant, the Protection focal point for RSD-related security issues should also monitor security guards' activities to ensure that they are consistent with UNHCR's protection function. Any concerns should be brought to Head of Office/ focal point responsible for overseeing the security guard company.

UNHCR staff and host country appointed security guards should receive **clear directions regarding the appropriate scope of the involvement** of host country appointed guards with in UNHCR operations. This should include, at a minimum, relevant provisions of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and of the agreement between UNHCR and the host country (MOU, MOA or LOA).

STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES REGARDING HOST COUNTRY APPOINTED SECURITY GUARDS

▶ Host country appointed security guards should not be involved in registration and RSD procedures for asylum-seekers in UNHCR Offices;

▶ Host country appointed security guards should not be used to disseminate information regarding the mandate or procedures of the UNHCR Office;

▶ Under no circumstances should host country appointed security guards be used to receive or distribute UNHCR documents or any materials relating to individual asylum-seekers;

▶ Host country appointed security guards should not enter UNHCR premises without the invitation of UNHCR staff, unless their presence is required to respond to an immediate and compelling security incident involving a threat to UNHCR staff or other persons on the premises or to UNHCR property.

The Protection focal point for RSD-related security issues should be immediately advised if host country appointed security guards fail to observe the guidelines noted above, or engage in any other conduct that is inconsistent with the procedures established by the UNHCR Office, or UNHCR policies regarding the reception and treatment of asylum seekers and refugees.

As part of the office security plan, calling the local police may be useful under certain circumstances to diffuse a situation. If a person is self-harming, an immediate response by police and paramedics would be important to assist with a RSD-related security incident in a UNHCR Office. RSD-related security contingency plans should be drafted, regularly updated and rehearsed by UNHCR staff and security guards as part of the overall Office security plan. To ensure an effective, appropriate and timely response, the UNHCR Office should ensure that the host country security forces are briefed in advance on UNHCR's mandate and operations, and that they formally agree to the proposed RSD-related security contingency plan and the overall response plan.

Annex: List of Additional Resources

Notice: The list below highlights the UNHCR policy resources and guidelines that are relevant to Office Security for RSD operations. All Protection staff members who are responsible for RSD should have access to and be familiar with these documents. Managers should ensure that documents are disseminated to staff who are responsible for their implementation, and that the directions in these documents are reflected in the RSD procedures and practice in the UNHCR Office concerned.

UNHCR

UNHCR, *Manual on Security of Persons of Concern First Edition*, November 2011, available at: https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4f6313032.pdf

UNHCR, *Safety Guidelines for Handling Threats, Verbal Abuse and Intimidation from Refugees*, April 2003, available at: https://bit.ly/2lBjpf2

United Nation Security Management

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, *Security Policy Manual, (UN Internal)*; *Chapter IV Section K – Unarmed Private Security Services and Chapter IV section I Armed Private Security Companies*, April 2016 available at: https://bit.ly/2ltMyJb

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, *Security Management Operations Manual (UN Internal)*, available at: https://bit.ly/2jYwcrH

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, *Security Management Operations Manual (UN Internal), Guidelines on the Use of Armed Security Services from Private Security Companies*, Annex A, November 2012 available at: https://bit.ly/2ktyWgK

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, *Security Management Operations Manual (UN Internal), Guidelines on the Use of Unarmed Private Security Services*, August 2016 available at: https://bit.ly/2lxyZbE

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM Security Management Operations Manual (UN Internal), *Guidelines on Security Management of United Nations Common Premises*, August 2016 available at: https://bit.ly/2kqQc6r