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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Celebrating May 29, International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers:

Canada's support for UN peace operations falters

Ottawa - Today, as the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers is celebrated worldwide, Canada's support for UN peacekeeping remains weak . . . and is about to get weaker.

Canada's largest peacekeeping deployment in Mali is scheduled to end July 31st. The UN Department of Peace Operations had requested that Canada's air task force remain a few months longer, until replacement personnel from Romania arrive in October 2019. But, controversially, Canada has declined to extend its task force participation in the mission.

WFMC President Walter Dorn says, "Canada's one-year deployment in Mali was shorter than most. A two or three-year deployment is what usually occurs. It's difficult to see why Canada couldn't have remained in support of the mission for a few more months."

Dorn continues, "In the spring of 2018, the Canadian government billed the Mali deployment as a 'smart pledge,' which means providing the UN continuous service in coordination with other governments to remove any UN gaps. But Canada is not filling the gap, despite the Canadian Forces having the ability to do so. So, for the government this turns out to be not an example of smart pledging, but to apply the analogy, an example of rather dumb pledging."

According to WFMC Executive Director Fergus Watt, "Minister Freeland's public explanation for the decision is far from convincing." As reported in the Canadian Press, Freeland stressed the importance for Canada "To keep our word to Canadians. To keep our word to the UN. To keep our word to partners around the world. To keep our word to Mali."

"In fact, the record of this government has more often than not been one of not living up to its public commitments to UN peacekeeping," says Watt.

Of Canada's current complement of 192 United Nations peacekeepers, 146 of them are part of the Mali deployment, according to UN statistics. By August, when Canada's role in Mali comes to an end, there will be only 46 Canadian peacekeepers deployed

overseas (19 military and 27 police). Prior to the mission in Mali, the number of Canadian peacekeepers had dwindled to the lowest level (40) since Canada proposed the first peacekeeping force in 1956.

WFMC's campaign Canadians for Peacekeeping tracks Canada's personnel commitments to UN peace operations. For the record:

- Upon election in 2015 Justin Trudeau promised that Canada would re-engage in UN peacekeeping. The Prime Minister gave explicit instructions to this effect in Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan's Mandate Letter.
- At the September 2016 Peacekeeping Ministerial Meeting in London, Canada announced new personnel pledges ("up to" 600 military and 150 police).
- At the November 2017 Ministerial Meeting held in Vancouver the Prime Minister specified the nature of the previous pledges. The 2017 commitments included training and a new project dedicated to increasing women's participation in peace operations.
- In March 2018 Defence Minister Sajjan announced a commitment to deploy an Aviation Task Force to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

The Canadians for Peacekeeping campaign calls upon the Government of Canada to live up to its pledges. It seeks to educate and mobilize Canadians so that Canada can contribute to the improved effectiveness of United Nations peace operations.

May 29th, the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, recalls the May 29, 1948 establishment of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in the Middle East. UNTSO remains in force and four Canadians are currently deployed to it. There have been 71 peacekeeping operations over the last 71 years and there are currently 14 UN peace operations with over 87,000 uniformed personnel.

The World Federalist Movement – Canada is a longstanding peace organization advocating more effective and accountable global governance. WFMC's peacekeeping monitoring program includes publication of a website updated monthly that tracks Canadian deployments, plus an annual fact sheet on Canada and UN Peacekeeping.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

See <https://peacekeepingcanada.com/>

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