Forum: Sixth Committee

Question of: Advancing psychological care for survivors of trauma with emphasis on military personnel

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I. Description of the Issue

Military personnel often have to deal with a lot of stress and trauma during their deployment, which can lead to serious mental health issues such as a Post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. Comorbidities to trauma in the military include PTSD, characterised by intrusive memories and hyperarousal, and depression, marked by persistent sadness and hopelessness. Anxiety disorders, such as generalised anxiety and panic disorder, are also common. This can lead to substance abuse and chronic pain can develop, complicating recovery and overall well-being. Providing psychological support helps address these issues and ensure the soldiers' well-being.

Furthermore, the military personnel's mental health directly affects their operational effectiveness. The UN helps keep capable military force by making sure that soldiers get the psychological care they need. Moreover, helping military personnel with their mental health aligns with the UN's larger mission of promoting human rights and dignity to further reduce the stigma surrounding mental health. Every person, including soldiers, should have access to mental health care and support. Psychological support helps the reintegration military personnel to civilian life, which reduces the risk of social issues like homelessness, substance abuse, and family breakdowns. Ultimately, by making sure that military personnel are mentally healthy, the UN contributes to global security and stability. Soldiers who are mentally healthy are less likely to do wrong things and can handle modern conflicts better. In short, it's important for the UN to help military personnel who have experienced trauma. This ensures the overall well-being and uplifts people that were traumatised.

PTSD - Post-traumatic stress disorder is a disorder, that develops in some people, who have experienced a frightening, scary or dangerous environment.

Shell shock - Shell shock is a state of mind, where one is confused or nervous. It is seen as a mental condition of people, who have been under fire in a war.

Depression - Depression is a common and severe mental health disorder, that negatively affects, how you feel, think, act and perceive the world.

Military personnel - Military personnel are members of the armed forces, who are trained and equipped to perform, national defence, security duties, including combat, support, and administrative roles. Across various branches such as the army, navy, air force and marines.

Reintegrating - Reintegration is the process of helping individuals readjust to society after a period of absence or exclusion. It involves providing support, resources and opportunities to facilitate this transition.

NGOs - non-governmental organisations, voluntarily provide services or to support a public policy and are usually not affiliated with any government.

INGOs - International non-governmental Organisations are nonprofit organisations providing different types of services in low (LICs) and lower-middle income (LMICs) countries.

Comorbidity - the simultaneous presence of two or more diseases or medical conditions in a patient.

Telehealth - health care provided remotely to a patient in a separate location using two-way voice and visual communication (as by computer or cell phone).

Trauma - severe and lasting emotional shock and pain caused by an extremely upsetting experience, or a case of such shock happening

UN - United Nations is an international diplomatic and political organisation, aiming peace and human rights.

WHO - The World Health Organisation is a part of the United Nation that deals with major health issues globally. It also sets standards for health care, disease control and medicine.

UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency is a global organisation, dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.

Sufficient psychological care for military trauma survivors is crucial. The United Nations, through agencies like WHO and UNHCR, has developed guidelines and training programs for conflict and post-conflict environments to provide effective psychological care to trauma survivors. Despite these efforts, resource constraints, restricted access to care, and a lack of long-term guidance hinder the effectiveness of these programs. Given that trauma in the military often arises from exposure to life-threatening actions, comprehensive psychological care is essential to address the intense stress soldiers experience and to facilitate their reintegration into civilian life.

The psychological trauma of military personnel has significant societal and economic impacts. The stigma surrounding mental health, especially PTSD, negatively affects interpersonal relationships and the reintegration of trauma survivors into society. This stigma not only hampers the social integration of trauma survivors but also leads to economic losses. The work environment suffers under these social constraints, resulting in decreased economic opportunities. Countries with larger active military and a insufficient healthcare systems face greater challenges because of the exposure to traumatic environments. This triggers disorders like PTSD, depression, and anxiety, further impacting societal stability and economic productivity.

Psychological trauma among military personnel can undermine political stability and human rights. Political systems suffer from instability when countries fail to provide the necessary guidance and resources to uphold human rights standards. The lack of efficient healthcare systems in countries with significant military forces exacerbates the impact of traumatic disorders. This instability harms society by failing to protect human rights and maintain order. Recent conflicts, such as those between Israel-Gaza and Ukraine-Russia, have added to the number of affected soldiers globally, highlighting the urgent need for concerted solutions to support trauma survivors adequately and prioritize mental health, thereby ensuring political stability and human rights.

IV. Major Countries and Organisations Involved

(Map highlighting conflicts in the world)

This Map depicted above displays the countries where conflict is taking place or has taken place. Therefore, military personnel are or have been exposed to mentally challenging environments. These counties are especially in need of advancements in psychological care for military personnel.

China

China has the largest armed force, with about 2 million active soldiers. However, it is clear that the establishment of a comprehensive trauma system across the country is still ongoing, and the amount of resources available to trauma survivors is limited. Therefore, when advancing the psychological care system for trauma survivors, special emphasis needs to be placed on accessibility.

India

It is estimated that India has about 1.325.000 active military personnel. Nevertheless India has made progress in providing psychological care for trauma survivors through various government and non-governmental initiatives such as, but not limited to launching National Mental Health Programme (NMHP), introducing the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) and advancing Telemedicine and Online Counselling to provide accessible psychological care.

The USA has about 561.900 active military personnel and has established a system for psychological care. It provides many approaches, such as establishing governmental initiatives, for example, the National Center for PTSD and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Additionally, the research and training of professionals exceeds average advances, such as Telemedicine and Online Counselling. The USA has by far done the most as it has invested significantly in research, developed complex mental health programs, and established institutions as mentioned above.

Other countries and organisations involved

All P5 nations have expanded the use of telehealth and online counseling services, invested in the research of trauma, and provided resources. Other countries, such as Australia, the Netherlands and Sweden, have national mental health strategies that succeed at advancing the accessibility and research of programs provided by the country.

UNHCR - The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees offers a psychological support system for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) while destigmatising mental health and addressing.

WHO - The World Health Organization Mental Health Gap Action Program supports countries to improve mental, neurological and substance (MNS) caused disorders.

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme supports the integration of mental health and psychological support to establish advanced health care systems.

V. Timeline of Events

First World War (1914-1918): It becomes apparent to the public that the "shell shock" (now known as PTSD) many soldiers experience, affects not only the mental health of the soldiers but the physical performance.

Second World War (1939-1945): Military psychiatry is advancing with an focus on understanding and treating the stress reactions of the soldiers.

1966: The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) is agreed upon, which emphasises the right for everyone on the highest possible standard of physical and mental health emphasised in article 12.

1980s: PTSD is recognised in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) by the American Psychiatric Association, starting to spread awareness and possible treatments for the disorder.

1990s: Programs and services to improve the PTSD for military personnel are being established and a common understanding for the extend of these disorders are found.

2008: The World Health Organization (WHO) Mental Health Gap Action Programme aims to provide programs for especially with low- and middle-income to provide services to treat mental health disorders.

2015: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are introduced and Goal 3 aims to ensure the mental well-being of everyone.

October 2018: Launch of the UN Policy on Mental Health and Well-being for UN Personnel emphasises the importance of treatment for

23 April 2019: Adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2467 calls for the necessary support including medical and psychological care to work on the mental health constraints caused by trauma.

June 2019: The UN Security Council Resolution 2475 has passed which focuses on prioritising the access to healthcare concerning mental health und psychological help.

VI. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

There have been multiple attempts to solve this issue, including over four resolutions from the General Assembly and the Security Council. However, there is still a need for a more advanced psychological care system. To resolve this matter more efficiently, progressive ways to solve it are needed to ensure the well-being of trauma survivors.

VII. Possible Solutions

Possible Solutions to this issue could include:

1. Set Global Guidelines: Develop and promote global standards and guidelines for psychological care for trauma survivors.
2. Invest in Research and Treatment: Fund trauma research to further expand the knowledge about trauma and identify treatment options.
3. Develop Online Resources: Create and promote mental health online resources to provide tools and access to professional support fast.

VIII. Questions Delegates Should Consider during Research

Does your country have a system which can be accessed by people with trauma?

Has your country made any efforts to solve this issue?

Has your country published any statement on this issue?

What was your country's position at Conventions or in resolution regarding this issue?

IX. Relevant UN Treaties and Events

Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols

These conventions and protocols, determine which treatments in times of war and conflict, serve as protection and care of civilians and soldiers whose physical or mental health is endangered, including those experiencing psychological trauma.

This plan attempts to solve the issue by addressing the complexity of mental health in general however, it further focuses on trauma and different approaches to the topic, such as comprehensive mental health services and community-based care. It faces challenges, such as ensuring accessibility by including care for trauma survivors in primary healthcare and early intervention for trauma survivors. The plan highlights the necessity of new strategies, to support mental well-being, prevent disorders and provide effective care and support. It calls for the need for international collaboration and the protection of human rights to reject discrimination against trauma survivors and emphasis the importance of recovery to improve their quality of life.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) Article 11 and 12
These Articles recognise the importance upholding of physical and mental health standards. Therefore it supports introducing advances for psychological care for trauma survivors.

Resolution 2467 (2019) from the Security Council
https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n19/118/28/pdf/n1911828.pdf?token=2OuXuDLSwRJUcscLCz&fe=true

Resolution 2475 (2019) from the Security Council
https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n19/186/60/pdf/n1918660.pdf?token=elGBOCEnMu95Wa24cR&fe=true

Resolution 2668 (2022) from the Security Council
https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n22/766/30/pdf/n2276630.pdf?token=qDkn1f2qkiQpXSsoLF&fe=true

X. Useful Links

The needed Military Worldwide https://military-medicine.com/almanac/countries/index.html

Mental Health Matters https://www.un.org/en/healthy-workforce-home#:~:text=The United Nations System Mental,available when it is needed.

Geneva Conventions (12.08.1949) https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.33_GC-IV-EN.pdf

Comprehensive Mental health Action Plan (21.09.2021) https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/345301/9789240031029-eng.pdf?sequence=1

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Nations with Armed Forces https://military-medicine.com/almanac/countries/index.html

PTSD: National center for PTSD home (2014) https://www.ptsd.va.gov

Depression (10.2020) https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression

Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Strategy https://www.un.org/en/healthy-workforce/strategy

Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) guidelines https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789240084278

Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013 - 2030 (21.09.2021) https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240031029

UN Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy https://unsceb.org/un-mental-health-and-well-being-strategy

Defense Health Agency Publications Library https://health.mil/Reference-Center/DHA-Publications

INGOS or NGOS (22.06.2020) https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/ingos-or-ngos

About WHO https://www.who.int/about

Map highlighting conflicts in the world: Browse Map | Rulac (2007) https://www.rulac.org/browse/map