

UNITED NATIONS

PRESS RELEASE



Indian Peacekeeper Wins 2023 Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award

New York, 28 May 2024 - An Indian military peacekeeper serving with the United Nations Organization Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([MONUSCO](#)) will receive the 2023 United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award.

Major Radhika Sen served in the East of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from March 2023 to April 2024 as the Commander of MONUSCO's Engagement Platoon for the Indian Rapid Deployment Battalion (INDRDB).

She will receive the award from UN Secretary-General António Guterres during a ceremony marking the [International Day of UN Peacekeepers](#) on 30 May 2024.

Created in 2016, the United Nations "[Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award](#)" recognizes the dedication and efforts of an individual military peacekeeper in promoting the principles of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres congratulated Major Radhika Sen for her service: "*Major Sen is a true leader and role model. Her service was a true credit to the United Nations as a whole,*" he said.

"In an escalating conflict environment in North Kivu, her troops actively engaged with conflict-affected communities, including women and girls," he explained. *"She earned their trust (...) doing so with humility, compassion, and dedication."*

Upon receiving news of the Award, Major Sen expressed her gratitude for being selected and reflected on her peacekeeping role: "*This award is special to me as it gives a recognition to the hard work put in by all the peacekeepers working in the challenging environment of DRC and giving their best to bring a positive change in the society,*" she said. "*Gender-sensitive peacekeeping is everybody's business – not just us, women. Peace begins with all of us in our beautiful diversity!*" Major Sen led mixed-gender engagement patrols and activities in a volatile environment, where many people, including women and children, were leaving everything behind to flee the conflict.

The Community Alert Networks she helped create in North Kivu served as a platform, including community leaders, young people and women to voice their security and humanitarian concerns, which she would in turn help address together with her colleagues in the Mission.

As a Platoon Commander, she also helped foster a safe space for men and women to operate together under her command and quickly became a role model for both women peacekeepers and her male counterparts. She also made sure that peacekeepers under her command engaged in a manner that is sensitive to gender and socio-cultural norms in eastern DRC to help build trust and thereby increase her team's chance of success.

Major Sen facilitated English classes for children, and health, gender and vocational training for displaced and marginalized adults. Her efforts directly inspired women's solidarity, providing safe spaces for meetings and open dialogue. As a gender advocate, she encouraged women in the village of Kashlira, near Rwindi town, to organize themselves to address issues collectively, advocate for their rights and amplify their voices within the community, in particular in local security and peace discussions.

Major Sen is the second Indian peacekeeper to receive this prestigious award following in the footsteps of Major Suman Gawani who was a co-recipient for 2019. Other past honourees were from Brazil, Ghana, Kenya, Niger, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

India is currently the 11th largest contributor of women military peacekeepers to the United Nations with 124 now deployed.

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***About the awardee:** Born in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh in 1993, Major Radhika Sen joined the army eight years ago. Major Sen graduated as a biotech engineer and was pursuing her Master's degree from IIT Bombay, when she decided to join the armed forces. She deployed to MONUSCO in March 2023 as the Engagement Platoon Commander with the Indian Rapid Deployment Battalion and completed her tenure in April 2024.*

***Note to the editors:** The Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award is underpinned by the principles outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and follow-on resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. The resolutions call on actors to mainstream a gender perspective in all aspects of peacekeeping and peacebuilding and to ensure women's participation in peace and political processes. They also call for the protection from, and prevention of, conflict-related sexual violence and for an expansion of the role and contribution of women in UN operations, including of uniformed women peacekeepers.*

Find out more about the award here: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender-advocate-of-year-award>

Photos and digital assets are available here: <https://trello.com/c/i5PHY08s/80-military-gender-advocate-of-the-year-2023>

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