

Soldiers for hire

The trend in Africa towards using mercenaries, who work for private military companies, has been observed elsewhere (“Are mercenaries no longer taboo?”, May 30th). Left unabated, the privatisation of warfare will increase the risk of human-rights abuses and worsen humanitarian problems, especially where conflict persists and governance is weak.

This is why governments, civil-society organisations and private-security companies set up the International Code of Conduct Association for private security-service providers, based in Geneva. All those who use private contractors for legitimate security purposes, including governments, businesses, international organisations and ngos, should exercise greater responsibility and due diligence. The UN now requires its own private-security providers to be members of the association, opening up their operations to continual monitoring and oversight by it. Nevertheless, more must be done to reel in rogue private contractors and to strengthen accountability.

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