

Women of War

TRT
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citizen

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Women of War

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Preface

İbrahim Eren

Director General and Chairman, TRT

The world order is going through a time of great turmoil, and the international community is facing both old and emerging challenges. Our world is in turmoil with rising insecurity, growing inequality, and conflicts that continue to rage unabated. Wars and ethnic cleansing campaigns have led to frequent and systematic violations of international humanitarian law. More often than not, women are the most persecuted and exposed groups to the horrors of war and conflict. In war, women and girls pay the highest price, and face systematic violence and oppression, which can have life-long repercussions for survivors, and devastate their physical, psychological, economic, and social security.

In the past three decades, women have suffered countless abuses in numerous wars ranging from Bosnia to Syria and Myanmar. Often long after the guns have fallen silent, women remain traumatised and scarred by the brutalities of war. In January 2018, the U.N Security Council passed a resolution directly referring to conflict-related violence inflicted on women and calling on the Security Council members and all Member Nations to unite in fighting these abuses and employ all means at their disposal to influence State and non-State parties to comply with international law.

As Turkey gains its rightful place as a force for good in a troubled world and has become renowned in the region, and beyond, as a nation pursuing a principled and humanitarian-driven foreign policy, TRT World as a leading news organisation is also doing its part to make a difference in the world we live in.

The 'Women of War' campaign, organised by TRT World Citizen, is the opportunity for our organisation to renew its commitment to peace and justice. As a leading news organisation, we take it upon our shoulders to give a voice to underrepresented groups in society. Last year, we successfully implemented the 'Am I not a Child?' campaign, which highlighted the plight of over 170,000 unaccompanied minors of refugee backgrounds living under duress in the European Union. This year, we will shed light upon the role of women in war, highlighting atrocities they face, as well as the instrumental role they play as peacebuilders and problem solvers in a world filled with violence and conflict. We aim to spread awareness about the unique role they play in war, and encourage audiences to support women who are at risk of gender based violence and those who set up initiatives to challenge this very issue and play crucial roles in the formation of their societies after conflict.

Among the priorities of this campaign is to highlight the recent situation of the Rohingya women, who have faced unspeakable atrocities perpetrated by Myanmar's military and rampaging mobs. More than 625,000 refugees have fled Rakhine State into Bangladesh, a majority of whom are women. Therefore, the campaign will not only support the right for women to live in safety and dignity, but will also aim to work with different civil society organisations who are seeking to rebuild their confidence, ensure their well-being, and encourage their reintegration into society.

By working together to raise awareness of these women's stories who have faced the most difficult of situations, we hope to increase hope and positively impact the lives of millions of women who continue to bear burden of conflicts around the world.

Let us push ahead for justice in our world.

Introduction

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omen and children in conflict zones are among the most vulnerable populations who are adversely impacted. Women specifically are both victimised and utilised in the atrocities of war zones. Their children have to suffer in a similar vein. Women's bodies have been made into battlefields in and of themselves through the use of sexual violence, becoming targets of rape and sexual assault in a systematic process of repressing political activities. In other cases, women's bodies are politicised as targets as part of intercommunal conflicts, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

All these tactics are based on premises that politicise the bodies of women. However, as conventional wisdom dictates women are the carriers of the cultural and ethnic makeup of the society, birthing and fostering it. It is within this capacity that many of them carry the weight of societies whilst men are at war, responsible for the home, maintaining and building new livelihoods and creating initiatives which prioritise the healing of women who have directly faced sexual violence and other traumas through the impact of war. Many women have played an active role in resisting war and pushing for peace and conflict resolution in the midst of violent crises. In many violent conflicts, when women are involved in peace-making discussions, they establish a permanent role in the political process, seeking to form stable countries and societies. "Conflict-related sexual violence" entails the systematic use of rape, sterilisation, or even forceful prostitution, pregnancies and abortions in conflict (U.N Docs, 2018, p.6). Systematic rape has been strategically employed as a political tool for different political goals in numerous cases. In January, the U.N Security Council adopted a resolution referring to rape as a tactic of war that not only has adverse effects on an individual level but also collectively (U.N Docs, 2018, p.1). In addition to the trauma inflicted upon those who have been subjected to rape as a tactic of war, it is also a tactic that has implications for international security (U.N Docs, 2018, p.6). It provokes a reciprocation of violence in retaliation, leading to the displacement of peoples across borders as refugees.

In 2008, under resolution 1820, the U.N Security Council affirmed the issue of conflict-related sexual violence as a threat to security and an impediment to peace (U.N Docs, 2018, pp.3-6). The Security Council also declared later that "women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence... as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instil fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group" (U.N Docs, 2018, p.1). Further to this, on the 18th of October 2013, UN resolution 2122 was passed in order to reiterate the importance of women's involvement in conflict

prevention, resolution and peace-building. It calls for focusing more attention on women's leadership and participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, including by monitoring progress in implementation.

When women are given the opportunity to lead and contribute to decision making during conflict, the peacebuilding process can be sped up and becomes more inclusive. Achieving gender equality helps prevent conflict and the probability that violence will end increases 34% (Women Conflict Peace and Society, 2014). Women often bring a more comprehensive peace plan to the negotiating table and address societal needs as a whole, ensuring that society will thrive in the long term. It is essential that the successful examples of this are highlighted, in order to ensure that women are no longer solely viewed as victims of conflict and war.

This report, will attempt to discuss the different dimensions of the implications of sexual violence on women in order to present opportunities for mitigation of its aftermath, both on the individual and societal level. It will also discuss the various implications and instances of female involvement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in order to present opportunities of integrative solutions to war where women are agents of change.

This report presents different cases of the sexual violence and peacebuilding where women have played a variety of significant roles in conflict resolution and mitigation. It also draws from these cases some implications to be taken into account by international, local, governmental and non-governmental actors. It is important to note that ending sexual violence is a matter of political will and is intrinsically linked to giving a seat to women at the peace-making table and allowing them to take on leadership roles. However, both of these require a collective responsibility to take action in order to mitigate and counter the systematic use of violence against women in war.

The report will start by discussing several cases in which women have been victims of sexual violence, followed by a discussions regarding the wider role they have played in combating this very issue in societies ravaged by war. The second section will include examples of policymaking that involved women, leading to their successful reintegration into society. The third section will focus on the role women play as peacebuilders and leaders in divided societies, showing successful cases of the re-development of war torn societies. To conclude, the report will highlight the broader implications and present recommendations for the different actors who can actively play a role in the mitigation systematic sexual violence in war and ensure women are given agency to build peace and counter this very violation in future conflicts.



**“90% of all
victims
of sexual
violence
in conflict
and war are
female”**

*Durbach, A. and Chappell L. (2014)
International Feminist Journal of Politics,
vol. 16(4), p. 544.*

(Mohammed Elshamy - Anadolu Agency)

Sexual Violence as a **Weapon of War**



(Orhan Cicek - Anadolu Agency)

The cases presented in this section are not the only examples of the different ways women face sexual violence in politically troubled areas. The section focuses on sexual violence perpetrated in different situations and for various political reasons. The cases in which this violence occurs are varied, - some have been labeled as ethnic cleansing, genocides, or even as revolutions. The idea is that in these different cases, and beyond them, different political actors have employed sexual

violence as a means to fulfil their political agenda. The cases presented here include political turmoil that took place in Syria, Myanmar, Bosnia, Kashmir, South Sudan, and Afghanistan. These examples are not exhaustive however, they are presented in this discussion in order to provide context to the significance of the issue. Moreover, these cases will situate the implications examined in the final sections of the report.

Prevalence of Conflict-Related **Sexual Violence against Women**

Country	Date	Women Victims of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
Liberia	1989-2003	More than 40,000
Sierra Leone	1991-2002	More than 60,000
Bosnia	1992-1995	Up to 50,000
Rwanda	1994	At least 250,000
D.R. of Congo	1998-2018	At least 200,000
Columbia	2001-2009	More than 480,000
Myanmar	2016-2018	More than 400,000

- According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, women comprise 49 per cent of the refugees worldwide
- More than 75 per cent of displaced people are women and children
- Maternal mortality rate is 2.5 times higher on average in conflict and post-conflict countries
- As of 2013, more than half of all peace agreements signed included references to women, peace and security.

Syria

The year 2011 witnessed several uprisings in the Middle East and the North Africa

region (MENA). In Syria, massive peaceful protests against President Bashar Al-Assad took over different parts of Syria endeavouring to end the dictatorship that has been in place for decades. Women took an active role in the protests, and related political activities, meaning they were not excluded from the subsequent crackdown by the Syrian regime. Women were targeted by the regime regardless of whether they directly participated in political activities or protests or whether on the basis of belonging to the households of activists. Women were used by the regime in order to threaten and 'discipline' political opposition.

Since the beginning of the war, more than 400,000 are believed to have been killed (Kahf, 2014, pp. 556-563), while more than 6 million Syrians are internally displaced, and more than 5 million Syrians have fled the country in seek of refuge (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Three-quarters of these refugees are women and children (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Several UN bodies and civil society organisations have confirmed and recorded the systemic use sexual violence during the Syrian conflict.

Sexual violence has been used "as a weapon of war to intimidate parties to the conflict, destroying identity, dignity and the social fabrics of families and communities" (UN News, 2013) by the Syrian regime. A significant portion of captives have either been massacred or tortured, raped and humiliated. The government-backed militia often attack houses, gang-raping and killed women in front of their families (U.N Security Council, 2014). The

Syrian regime's militias target any women – even loosely - associated with the opposition (U.N General Assembly 22nd Session, 2013). There were accounts in Karm Al-Zeitoun of women threatened and forced to undress in the streets as a statement of humiliation for them and their households (U.N General Assembly 21st Session, 2012).

Insofar the regime was aware of the cultural stigma of its tactic, they continued this battle on, and via the bodies of women. The individual trauma inflicted on women transcends to the collective domain affecting communities as a whole. The publicity of systematic rape and the social stigma seems to have been part and parcel of the political message plotted by the regime. One can think that such acts would rather be veiled by the regime to avoid international confrontation. However, it seems that terrorising the masses in the country was the bigger endeavour to 'discipline' anyone who thought of protesting.

It is in the propagation of the incidents internally that the regime is able to control and tame those who oppose them. In late 2012, it was reported that the regime forces raided a private family household near the city of Aleppo seeking to arrest a man. When they did not find the man at home, they aggressively searched the residence and threateningly interrogated the man's wife. They threatened to kill her children if she did not reveal her husband's location (MADRE, 2014). The situation ended with the sexual assault and murder of the woman before the eyes of her six children. Such political practices of sexual violence in Syria, unfortunately, continue to be perpetuated not only by the regime but also by other non-state actors seeking to assert control over the social fabric of Syrian society as part of their respective political agendas.



(Ibrahim Ebu Leys- Anadolu Agency)

Myanmar

The Rohingya, described as the world's most persecuted minority, are an ethnic group, the majority of whom are Muslim, who have lived for centuries in majority Buddhist Myanmar. The Myanmar government does not recognise them as citizens and deems them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Only 40,000 out of the 1.3 Million Muslim Rohingya have citizenship rights in Myanmar. Tensions between the community, the state, and the majority Buddhist population have often resulted in violence (U.N Docs, 2018). They are both prosecuted and persecuted by the government and Buddhist nationalists.

In 2012 the tensions between the Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims escalated in the wake of news of the alleged gang-rape of a Buddhist woman at the hands of Muslim men. The subsequent unrest resulted in the death of 57 Rohingya Muslims and 31 Buddhists followed by an army crackdown in which 140 000 Rohingya were expelled from their homes. The number of expelled Rohingya later swelled to 700 000 as the crackdown expanded. Ashin Wiathu, the leader of this campaign, sought to 'free' the country from the Rohingya and said, "Muslims are only well behaved when they are weak. When they become strong, they are like a wolf or a jackal; in large packs, they hunt down other animals" (Fisher, 2013)"

“In situations of conflict and particularly those involving religious identities, **women and children are targeted** in specific ways.”

Hall, M. (2012), Preface, in: Kane, S. M and Yohe, G. W. (Eds). *Societal Adaptation to Climate Variability and Change*. Kluwer Academic Publishers.



(Zakir Hossain Chowdhury- Anadolu Agency)

In 2018, the office of the U.N. Secretary General, declared the Myanmar Armed Forces as “credibly suspected” of conducting sexual violence operations (UNSG, 2018, p.55). Medical and humanitarian staff operating in Bangladesh reported that the Myanmar Armed Forces, known as Tatmadaw, carried out a series of sexual assaults leaving brutal physical and physiological scars in the population (p.4). This was part of a military “clearance” operation that took place in 2016 and 2017 that was declared by the United Nations High Commissioner to constitute “ethnic cleansing” of the Rohingya (p.4). The U.N Secretary-General António Guterres said, “The widespread threat and use of sexual violence were integral to their strategy, humiliating, terrorising and collectively punishing the Rohingya community and serving as a calculated tool to force them to flee their homelands and prevent their return” (p.5).

The use of rape and other forms of sexual violence are perpetrated by the Myanmar military to instil fear as a key state terror tactic against the Rohingya. They seek to rid Myanmar of the Rohingya on the basis of a nationalist pretext - even if that is at the expense of their death or expulsion. The military campaigns included killings, looting, violent intimidations in addition to sexual violence against women (U.N Docs, 2018, pp.1-5). The use of sexual violence was a potent weapon of intimidation. The vicious and widespread attacks against women are thought to take place because women are the originators of the ethnic identity, and children are its demographic continuum. There have been fears among the Buddhist nationalist pertaining to the high fertility rates of the Rohingya community, which they deem to be an existential threat to whom they deem to be an unsolicited minority population.

Bosnia



(Samir Yordamoviç - Anadolu Agency)

The systematic use of sexual violence in the Bosnian case was a tactic used by the Serb militias as part of an effort to exterminate and expel the Bosniaks from Bosnia. The UNHCR deemed the 1992-1995 conflict to have been one of the most complicated and urgent humanitarian situations since WWII (Young, 2001). Similarly to the other cases presented in this report, the UNHCR documented multiple cases of sexual violence against Bosniak women and girls (Brubaker & Rebecca, 2013).

Bosnian-Serb forces sought to expel the population from regions in which Muslims were demographically dominant. On the premise that women are reproducers, Serbian forces sought to target women so that no pure Bosniak bloodlines would remain, in addition to killing much of the male population. According to Sharlach (2000), over 50,000 people were expelled out of their homes, and 100,000 people were massacred. Some of the most documented massacres took place in Srebrenica, which was supposed to be protected by the Dutch peacekeeping mission, but the latter failed to act accordingly. Consequently, the Serbian militias were able to control Srebrenica. The Bosniak men were killed (at least 8000) while women were detained and there were reports of systematic rape (Young 2001). Academics considered that Serbian militias employed sexual violence as an instrument of terror and humiliation (Leydesdorff & Selma, 2015). Up to 50,000 women and girls are estimated to have been assaulted (Brubaker & Rebecca, 2013).

Moreover, sexual violence was used as a means of disintegrating kinship ties, and dividing families. This was done by humiliating women before close family members, or by physically separating them from their counterparts (Brubaker & Rebecca, 2013). The Bosnian-Serb leadership wanted to ensure that the displaced population did not attempt to return, and for that reason, they also confiscated and destroyed Bosniak properties.

“It has now probably become **more dangerous to be a woman** than a soldier in an armed conflict.”

(Patrick Cammart, former commander of the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – MONUC)

Kashmir

The history of the Kashmiri conflict dates back to 1947 when the Jammu and Kashmir states were denied advancement in the State Assembly. In this conflict, sexual violence has been long employed as a weapon of war and a means of terrorizing the population (Eck, K., Sollenberg, & Wallensteen, 2004). The Indian forces, the Indian Army, Central Reserved Police and the border patrol personnel, employed sexual violence as a tactic to punish women for their resistance.

According to Eck, K., Sollenberg, and Wallensteen, P. (2004), rape cases in Kashmir were not the result of the indiscipline of the army, but rather of a systematic effort to terrorize and humiliate Kashmiris (Eck, K et al., 2004). Approximately 882 women were raped in 1992 alone, and many others cases of rape were not reported (Eck, K et al., 2004). Similar to other cases, the security forces stationed in Kashmir have employed rape as an instrument of terrorising, politically 'disciplining' and retaliating against the Kashmiri civilians deemed to be antagonistic to the Indian military presence. Most cases of sexual violence were reported as having taken place during search operations carried out by the Indian security forces (Misri and Deepti, 2014). The reports included that security forces forcefully entered the households and properties of civilians in search of women and the girls in order to rape and sexually assault them in the presence of their families (Eck, K., Sollenberg, & Wallensteen, 2004). The tactic was systematically and repeatedly employed in reprisal attacks against civilians who attempted even to protest the tactic itself (Misri and Deepti, 1977, 2014).

“It’s estimated that, since 1990, on a **global scale**, from all deaths related to armed conflicts, **90%** have been **civilians** and **80%** of this percentage is represented by **women and children.**”

(Olara A. Otunu, Special comment on children and security, Forum du désarmement, no. 3, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva, 2002, pp. 3-4



(Ahmer Khan - Anadolu Agency)

South Sudan

The Republic of South Sudan has witnessed almost continual civil unrest since its independence from Sudan. A special rapporteur for the U.N on sexual violence reported that the female population in the country has been subjected to systematic and other forms of sexual assault. Militias have raped women in order to force their ethnic groups and families to support the government (Straus, 2005). According to Totten and Markusen (2013), many women and girls have been abducted and taken to special camps, where the army repeatedly raped them and killed those of them who resisted. In many of these cases, the systematic employment of rape was meant as a political statement and a means of expressing power and dominance. The military in parallel with the government sought to internally express power and domination over civilians through the systematic employment of sexual violence.



(Pool-UNAMID - Anadolu Agency)

Psychological, Social and Economic Consequences

The fundamental function of sexual violence, no matter if it is civilian or martial is to “display, communicate, and produce or maintain dominance...acts of forcible rape, like other instances of torture, communicate dominance by removing our control” (Card, 1996 in Babar, 2016). The extensive trauma leads to the development of mental health illnesses including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and suicidal thoughts (Josse, 2010; Spirc et al., 2010 in Jones, Cooper, Presler-Marshall & Walker, 2014).

The damage extends to both social as well as economic spheres for survivors.

The violation involved in the crime of rape is intended to terrorize the victim and the nation being occupied, to destroy any community bonds that may exist, and to send a clear message of domination, humiliation, and power to both the victim and family members (particularly husbands, fathers, and sons, who may be unable to “protect” their wives, daughters, or children) (Card, 1996 in Babar, 2016)

Survivors of wartime sexual violence are isolated from their own families and communities and are forced to deal with their trauma alone (Kelly et al., 2010; Schnabel and Tabyshalieva, 2012 in Jones, Cooper, Presler-Marshall & Walker, 2014). As an example of this, only one percent of female survivors arrived with their husbands at a hospital that specializes in providing services to sexual violence survivors in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), because most have been abandoned (Jones, Cooper, Presler-Marshall & Walker, 2014). They are seen as ‘damaged goods’ as the family views the sexual violence as a dishonour with many married survivors being more likely to be divorced (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and Oxfam,

2010; Schnabel and Tabyshalieva, 2012 in Jones, Cooper, Presler-Marshall & Walker, 2014).

This endangers the individual women economically as, more often than not, marriage is seen as the only route to financial stability for the women (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and Oxfam 2010 in Jones, Cooper, Presler-Marshall & Walker, 2014). Additionally, many females do not return to the same work after experiencing rape. For example, among Ethiopian refugees in Sudan, ‘agricultural output has been reduced because women are afraid to return to their ‘normal’ lives’ (Kelly et al., 2011 in Jones, Cooper, Presler-Marshall & Walker, 2014).

Additionally, in many post-conflict contexts, conflict-related sexual violence becomes normalised as gender-based violence (Domingo et al., 2013; Ni Aoláin, 2010 in Jones, Cooper, Presler-Marshall & Walker, 2014). For example, studies show that the control of women through violence is now seen as normal in Timor-Leste after decades of conflict (Haider, 2012 in Jones, Cooper, Presler-Marshall & Walker, 2014). This impacts not just the victims but most devastating community impact of mass sexual violence, however, ‘may be the way in which it damages the social capital on which communities are built’ (Jones, Cooper, Presler-Marshall & Walker, 2014), as the social functions of different components of society no longer remain valid. In Liberia, according to results from a focus group, women talked about the fact that men in the community did not risk their lives by hiding in their homes while women went out to negotiate peace, all the while risking sexual violence and this is something the community has not faced yet or even talked about because the pain and disappointment is too much to face (Jones, Cooper, Presler-Marshall & Walker, 2014).





(Imaan Qureshy)

Rebuilding Hope

The impact of rape as a weapon of war is so multifaceted, and so pervasive, that many survivors, their families and their communities find it hard to recover. There are myriad organisations led by women, who are often survivors themselves, who work to challenge gender violence issues, many of which are survivors themselves. Following displacement in conflict, the risk of sexual violence increases as refugees migrate to unknown societies or reside in refugee camps. ABAAD is a female led organization that works with refugee women in the MENA region, who have faced gender based violence often perpetrated by individuals in their family (Abaad Stories, 2008). Adult female victims of domestic violence are still reluctant to come forward and report abuse. The organization works to push for behavior changes on gender and social norms to help prevent violence against women and children, which are long-term issues.

They also run a program that features a touring mobile bus that travels to communities where refugees reside and benefit from legal, health and educational sessions. Children also participate in psychosocial support activities on gender-based violence (GBV and refugees, 2018). Refugee camps often see high rates of sexual violence or victims; we now see numerous organisations and charities setting up to operate effectively and permanently in these environments. These often help women find work and resettle in their community, whilst others work actively to challenge and support women in dealing with the violence they have experienced. The women's centre, Sada in Gaziantep is supported by the UN, EU and the local municipality. Their lessons include training Syrian women in arts and culture as well as giving them information about their rights, and how to defend them.

WAHA is just one of many organizations based in Turkey, working with the Syrian refugee population in Gaziantep. There are over 3,100,000 refugees currently living in Turkey, and over 50% of this population are women

facing a high risk of violence that is aggravated by their displacement (Waha International, n.d.). They have successfully carried out research to explore the use of mobile phone-technology to address gender-based violence among the refugee population, particularly with adolescents. They run different sessions for women to raise awareness and conduct therapy so that women have a chance at integrating into their new society and forming a part of their new community.

The issue of rape as a weapon of war needs is being highlighted. The Nobel Peace Prize in 2018 was awarded to those who worked tirelessly to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict: Dr Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad. Dr Denis Mukwege set up the Panzi hospital in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), in 1999 to help those who were subjected to sexual violence during the war in the DRC (Nobel Prize, 2018). Although the war officially ended a decade ago, the hospital still continues to treat 1300 to 1900 women every year (Baker, n.d.). Nadia Murad belongs to the Yazidi minority in northern Iraq, and when her village was overtaken by Daesh, she was of the thousands of young Yazidi girls who had been taken hostage by Daesh and were subjected to sexual violence amongst other abuses.

However, after a three-month nightmare, Nadia Murad managed to flee. Following her escape, she spoke openly about what she had suffered. She refused to accept the crimes committed against her and to remain silent for fear of humiliation (Nobel Prize, 2018). By speaking out, she provided hope for the millions of survivors of wartime sexual violence. She highlighted the need to take every opportunity to honour and encourage those who have been subjected to wartime sexual violence, encouraging other women. She was named UN's first Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking in 2016, at the age of just 23 (Nobel Prize, 2018). Both Dr Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad not only brought attention to the plight of the survivors of rape

and sexual violence as a weapon of war, but inspired others to take action. One of these inspired actions is City of Joy, a six-month residential program for rape survivors in the DRC, which was opened in 2011 by women-rights activist Christine Schuler-Deschryver and playwright and activist Eve Ensler. Ensler had visited the country before at the invitation of Dr Mukwege, and once there, collaborated with Schuler-Deschryver who was working with Dr Mukwege. Born of synergy, City of Joy combines “group therapy with literacy classes, leadership training, self-defence courses and lessons in human-rights law. Ninety women attend each semester” (Baker, n.d.). According to Ensler, the City of Joy attempts to make women understand that sexual violence was, and is, never their fault:

“City of Joy is not a refuge. It is a centre for transformation. We are literally saying that the violence which was done to you, through a process of love, healing therapy and education, can be turned into a motor that makes you a leader” (Baker, n.d.).

According to participants of the training, it gave them “confidence, and the nurturing atmosphere enables them to build support networks that last long after the program finishes” (Baker, n.d.). The support does not end when the training ends: graduates of the program are expected to establish women’s support groups when they go home and become leaders in their community. One of the graduates of the training concluded that “people think that, after being raped, you are just a victim. What City of Joy taught me is that life goes on after rape. Rape is not the end. It is not a fixed identity” (Baker, n.d.).

Providing support for survivors is half the battle won though. The survivors’ families have to be provided support also. Many husbands have a hard time accepting the rape of their wives. Many of them often feel emasculated and guilty and many of them blame their wives for being raped and end up abandoning them. Even if they do not, the propensity for domestic violence increases, adding to the suffering of the survivors of sexual violence. Due to this, Promundo, a US-based NGO helps men who have been reported as particularly physically or verbally abusive towards their wives or who have abandoned their wives because they had trouble reconciling with the fact that their wives had been raped and experienced guilt and helplessness knowing they were unable to protect them from it. Promundo supports men through a program known as ‘Living Peace’ (Baker, n.d.) in Goma, DRC, where, over a fifteen-week series of guided group therapy sessions, the men are taught that rape is not their wives fault and that it is not a reflection of an inability to protect their families. After an initial pilot program that started with 300 men in 2012 and was successful, Promundo is now set to bring the therapy program to 9,000 more men and their wives by 2019 (Baker, n.d.). While it is crucial to focus on survivors, to really make rehabilitation sustainable, their families need to be supported also (Baker, n.d.).

Many women who have been survivors of sexual violence as a result of war are abandoned, not just by their families, but also by their communities. Besides physical wounds, deep emotional and psychological wounds ensue. This was observed by Feride Rushiti who founded the Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (KRCT) for the survivors of wartime sexual violence (McVeigh, 2018). A medical doctor by profession, Rushiti opened centres in the worst-affected communities to treat physical wounds, before gradually building up enough trust to treat the psychological ones. Women were slow to seek treatment due to the attached social stigmas. Today, KRCT has more than 400 clients (McVeigh, 2018). In addition to psychological support, this year, thanks to Rushiti’s efforts, those who have been recognised and compensated monetarily by Kosovo, alongside veterans, as survivors of war (McVeigh, 2018). As a result, more women are coming forward. Rushiti believes “the pension will now help to lift the stigma and, in a state where female unemployment stands at 57%, also empower more women” (McVeigh, 2018). According to Rushiti, this recognition, and the accompanying pension, gives the survivors and their children status and a voice within their families and communities (McVeigh, 2018).

In order for women to work effectively in one of the most recent crises the world has seen, they need to be given a voice in their own communities. For many Rohingya women who are residing in Cox’s Bazaar would have already experienced significant violence and gender based violence in the northern Rakhine state, the threat of it remains. With a lack of protection in the camps, they remain exposed to a high risk of GBV and human trafficking. There is a huge stigma attached to the issue, which means discussion of it, and overcoming the trauma can be incredibly difficult for many women.

There are a number of organisations led by Bangladeshi women and international aid workers working to challenge this issue. Community Partners International works to break the silence around GBV in Cox’s Bazaar and support initiatives that help protect women and girls from violence. HELP Cox’s Bazaar is another organisations that runs fictional storytelling sessions to facilitate dialogue on domestic violence, trafficking and harassment to inform GBV survivors that support is available (Breaking the silence, 2018).

Further to this in May 2017, the Gender-Based Violence sub-sector coordination structure in Cox’s Bazaar was established (OCHA, 2018). The aim of this structure is to bring together more than 30 partners including UN, NGOs and government agencies operating in Rohingya refugee camps to strengthen support available to communities affected. Despite these efforts, a lot more work is required to effectively provide psychosocial support in the camps, to help those most traumatized. With limited translation services, adequate medical and legal support remains difficult to give to those who have experience SGBV crimes (Gov.uk, 2017).

There are women who have thrived and rebuilt societies to support women in the midst of war. Dr Hawa Abdi is one exceptional case of a woman who having lost her mother at a very young age, pursued her dream of becoming a doctor. She opened a rural health clinic on her family's ancestral land on the outskirts of Mogadishu. As Somalia's government collapsed, and the country was hit with intense conflict, a Civil War commenced which lasted more than a decade. Individuals sought refuge from the violence and chaos in the clinic. Dr Abdi supported thousands with implementing two rules: domestic abuse would not be tolerated, and no one was allowed to identify by their clan.

She opened the Dr Hawa Abdi Hope Village, and 1,300 acres of farmland around the hospital eventually came to house 90,000 people displaced by the civil war and ongoing conflict, mainly consisting of women, children, and the elderly. This number represents about 1% of Somalia's total population. The one room clinic grew into a 400-bed hospital, providing vaccinations, maternal and paediatric care to everyone who came to their doors. At the height of operations, Dr Abdi and her two daughters, both of whom also became doctors, were seeing up to 500 patients per day, and performing up to 20 surgeries, while still dealing with the day-to-day management of a camp with 90,000 residents. In 2010, a hard-line militia, Hizb al-Islam, decided that a woman should not be in charge of the Hope Village. They ordered her to hand over her land, and when she refused, they attacked with 750 soldiers and seized the hospital. Dr Hawa was held hostage, and still she refused to give in. Demanding an apology and with support from the Somali population and diaspora she continued her work and still does today. Dr Abdi is just one of thousands of incredible women who in the face of conflict and war, looks to create solutions to benefit the population and ensure women remain supported (Nobel Prize laureates, 2013-2018).

What is clear amongst these cases is that there are many female led efforts by survivors of GBV as well as local populations in dealing with the issue of sexual violence and gender based violence. In the case of Rohingya in Bangladesh, a lot of work is still required to challenge GBV. There are many women, such as Hawa Abdi and Edna Anan, considered the mothers of Somalia, whose life's mission is to support women in conflict states, representing hope even in the midst of what is a horrific crime women face as a consequence of war.



(Arif Hüdaverdi Yaman - Anadolu Agency)

Polycymaking and Successful Reintegration into Society

The Case of Liberia

There are also many examples of women challenging the system through governance and legal reforms. The case of Liberia will serve as the primary case study here regarding the role of a number of women's organisations and their enforcement of the rape law in the aftermath of the civil war, which brought mistreatment of women to the forefront of society.

The case of Liberia shows the ability of women's movements to influence implementation of laws. Following the end of Liberia's second civil war in 2003, the efforts of women's movements bore fruit with the increased referral of rape cases in court. Gender based violence (GBV) was deeply embedded in Liberia over a number of years. As a society plagued with civil war and division - the first civil war occurring between 1989 and 1996, the second between 1991 and 2003 - facilitated the preconditions that led to increased instances of GBV throughout the course of the conflicts.

All warring factions in Liberia's civil war targeted women, with physical and sexual violence became major problems. Women had become the 'toy of war', sexual abuse was rife, and women were being raped and abused regardless of age (Profile: Leymah Gbowee, 2011). The most highly reported cases were those directed at minors, with mothers seeing their daughters being taken away to become the wives or recruits of various militias

Whilst the incidence of GBV post war remains unclear, its prevalence is becoming easier to track, and the reporting of GBV has increased. In the same vein, the rate of the

withdrawal of rape cases has declined. The longstanding hostilities between the warring parties in the Liberian civil war, revealed that despite ongoing attempts at peace talks, the men of Liberia were not able to reach an agreement that would stop the conflict. (IDS, 2014) Leymah Gbowee, a local activist at the time, worked to motivate women to push for the end of the conflict. She founded and organized the grassroots Liberian women's peace movement during the midst of the fighting, and helped mobilize thousands of Liberian women to protest the 14-year civil conflict and advocate for reconciliation.

Despite the fact that women were not represented at the negotiation table, they nevertheless mobilised in order to pressure leaders of the warring factions to end the conflict. Gbowee played an instrumental role in bringing together women from different ethnic groups, religions, political affiliations, and economic and social classes. She used GBV and rape awareness campaigns to mobilise women to channel the trauma they had faced to motivate others, in turn helping those from different backgrounds to recognize that despite their differences, they were facing the same issues. She called on women to implement what was labelled a 'sex strike', which commanded attention from men and the Liberian media alike. In essence, she employed the tools that were weaponized against women – namely sex – to gain the media's attention both nationally and internationally (Interview: Leymah Gbowee, 2018).

The women's Mass Action Campaign initially began in one community, eventually spreading to over 50 communities

across Liberia. Following three years of community awareness, sit-ins, non-violent demonstrations staged by ordinary 'market women'," and the infamous sex strike, a campaign was pushed forward calling for an immediate ceasefire, and dialogue between the government and rebels. They successfully pushed the President to attend peace talks in Accra, contributing to the announcement of the terms of the Accra peace treaty two weeks later (IDS, 2014).

Following this, women mobilized and organized to vote in an election that saw Africa's first elected female president come to power. Women's groups also worked with the state to amend the rape law, create institutions to address rape and worked with police officers and the public to raise awareness about an issue that plagued the women of the country throughout the civil war and continued to plague them following the peace process and the end of war.

There were instances where women mobilized against forms of GBV prior to the 14-year civil war, however, these were typically not sustained and inclusive national campaigns (Medie, 2013). The outbreak of the war in 1989 led women's groups to mount national campaigns against GBV and other injustices. Starting in early 1990's, female politicians and women's organizations began to appeal to the warring factions to come to a peace agreement, and as the conflict progressed, the various groups coalesced into a women's movement. As rape and other forms of sexual violence affected women across Liberia's diverse society, it became of the primary organising principles around which the nascent women's movement coalesced.

NGOs led by women have also been able to have a more active voice in policy design and implementation. They significantly contributed to the adoption by the transitional government of the rape law and the subsequent election of President Johnson Sirleaf. Examples of organisations that remain active across the country working to challenge this issue include: Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL) and Touching Humanity in Need of Kindness (THINK) who provide a variety of community-based services and advocate for governmental and educational reform in Liberia.

Following the active adoption and amendment of the rape law, women-led NGOs pushed for the creation of the 2006 GBV National Action Plan. Designed by government ministries, UN systems, international and national organisations and community based organisations, five key thematic areas were identified to work on. These ranged from outreach services becoming more available for survivors of GBV, improvements within the health sector in response to GBV, a strengthened criminal justice system and a national protection system. Finally,

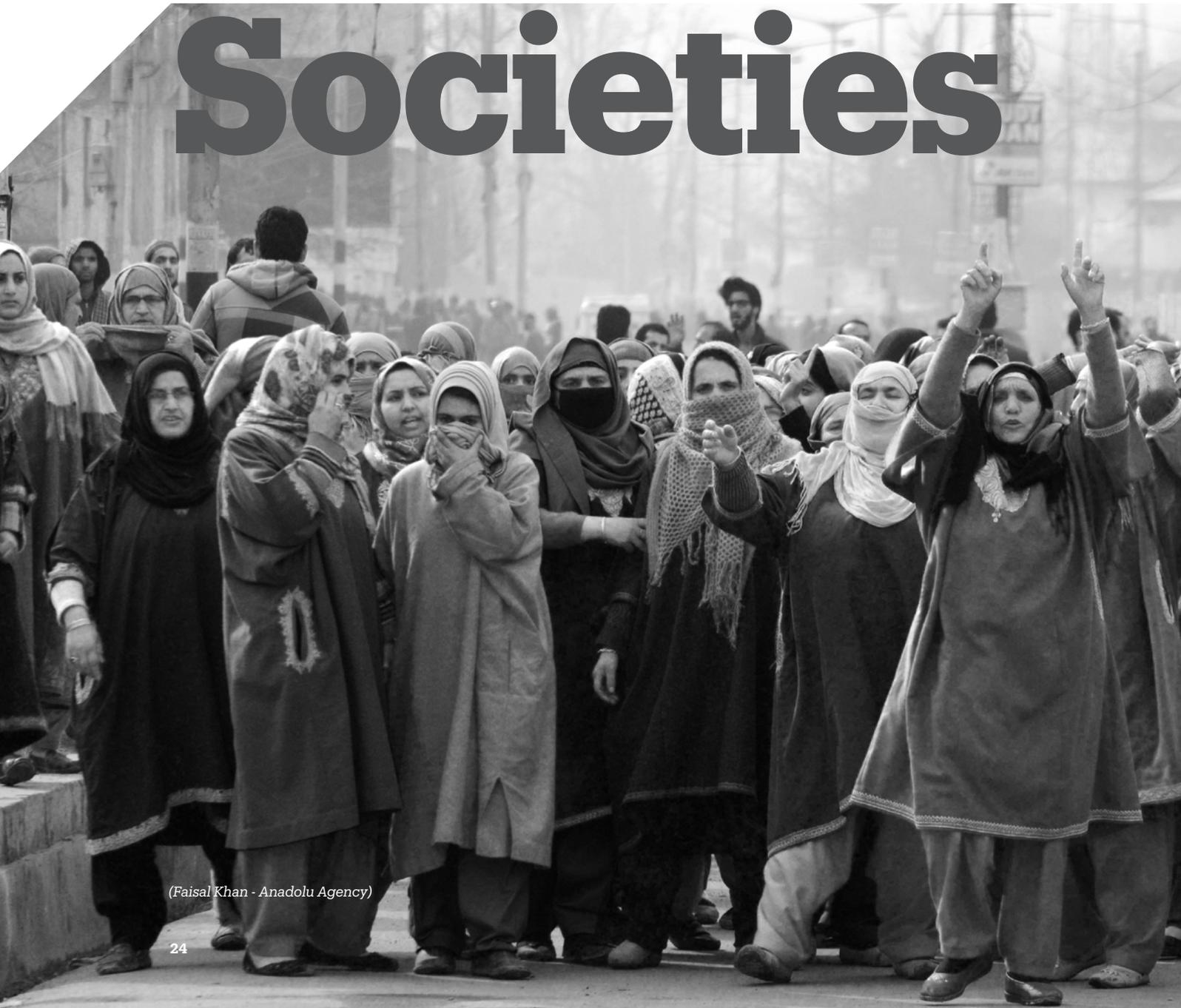
an agreed framework for the coordination of monitoring of the National GBV Plan of Action was recommended (Liberia, November 2006). The women's movement in Liberia has also advocated for the creation of new institutions, including the GBV secretariat of the Ministry of Gender Discrimination and the National GBV Taskforce consisting of women-focused NGOs, international organisations, and the government.

NGOS have pushed out countrywide awareness plans, including the 2007 Anti-Rape Campaign. Development Education Network-Liberia organizes community workshops and dramas to raise awareness of rape in Gbarnga, while the Bassa Women Development Organization airs radio shows doing the same. NGOs actively support community members to report rape and follow up with local police to ensure the cases are properly investigated. Staff of some women's NGOs visit police stations to pressure the police to prioritize reported cases and to follow up on those that are pending. Serving as liaisons between complainants and the police, their efforts facilitate the investigations. They sometimes provide transportation and phone airtime to enable investigating officers to follow up on cases.

The rate of the withdrawal of rape cases has fallen as a result. Between January and December 2009, police referred 40 percent of rape cases to court, withdrew 4 percent, transferred 3 percent to other agencies, and left 53 percent pending. . In comparison, there was a clear lack of reporting prior to the civil war. Of 49 of the rape cases reported to the Montserrado County police from July 1967 to August 1968, none were referred to court. In 1972 there were only two rape cases on record in the courts and four in 1977: these figures do not reflect a low incidence of rape but, rather, low reporting and referral to court (Medie, July 2013). Furthermore, the proportion of rape cases referred to court is significantly higher than prior to the civil war. Interviews conducted with local police officers have indicated that the efforts of the women's movement have borne fruit. The perception of rape and other acts of sexual violence has notably shifted amongst police officers from one of dismissal and indifference to one where it is recognized as a serious issue that requires action.

Women, who were the primary victims of sexual violence, channelled their pain and trauma into action through designing policies and institutions that affected political and bureaucratic structures. They worked to train implementing agencies, as well as working on the grassroots level to educate, provide support, and encourage victims of violence to seek the justice they deserve (Development, 2009). They have played and continue to play a role in supporting women by giving them the chance to re-join their respective communities or become a part of a new community.

Women as Peacebuilders in Divided Societies



(Faisal Khan - Anadolu Agency)

The Cases of Bosnia, Rwanda and Timor Leste

The cases presented in this section are focused on looking beyond the role of women as mere victims of sexual violence. War often leads to the activation of a more central role for women to play in society. This has been seen historically through the popularly depicted role of European women in the First and Second World Wars, where women assumed roles previously fulfilled by men that were essential not only to maintaining functional societies, but also to the conduct of the wars themselves. Both during and in the aftermath of war, conflict and genocide, women have demonstrated resistance, and a capacity to act as peacemakers in often deeply divided and traumatised post-conflict societies.

Sexual violence is often indirectly challenged as part of the facilitation of a peaceful transition in many countries when women become more central to governance and decision-making. When women are included in the peace process, their rights to support for the trauma they may have experienced is prioritised. The inclusion of women in conflict resolution both hastens peace processes and allows for resources to be dedicated to the suffering they have endured. The cases presented here include political turmoil followed by inclusive peacebuilding processes led and championed by women in Bosnia, Rwanda and Timor Leste.

These examples are not exhaustive and do not represent civil war, uprising and genocide extensively, but instead provide further context to the multifaceted role of women in war.



“The evidence shows us unequivocally that **women need to be full participants in peace talks as negotiators** and decision-makers in a much more inclusive process. Women have to be able to control where resources are allocated; for example, to overcome trauma and the scars of war, or directing practical recovery matters like the restitution of property and fields.”

(Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women)

Rwanda

Rwanda is often cited for having the strongest female participation in government in the world, with 56 percent of parliamentary seats being held by women (Mary Balikungeri, 2010). In the course of the 1994 genocide, the country saw the division of the population and the murder of more than half a million people, shattering its social fabric.

Sexual violence was an integral part of the genocide, with local political leaders establishing what amounted to rape camps in some villages. The international tribunal for Rwanda - which tried the perpetrators of the killings - defined rape as an act of genocide under international law, however Rwanda's own law defined rape as a minor offence. While crimes such as murder carried sentences ranging from life imprisonment to death, rape, considered as a relatively minor crime, was treated alongside looting garnering much lighter sentencing. Rape was employed systematically in the course of the Rwandan genocide and many Tutsi women who had been raped were infected with HIV, while others bore the children of their attackers.

Gender based violence still remains a challenge in Rwanda. Cases of rape remain commonplace. With most acts of violence against women occurring within the home, accountability and enforcement of the law become difficult. The consequences of violence directed at women throughout the genocide cannot be easily forgotten, with an estimation of between 250,000 and 500,000 women being exposed to GBV during the genocide.

The contribution of women in Rwanda's society remains overlooked and undermined, despite the key role they have played in rebuilding the country over the past 20 years. It was women who highlighted that the way the new constitution was written did not incorporate their needs adequately. When a proposal for a new constitution was introduced by the government, women's groups such as the Widows of the Genocide and Ibuka, the survivors' association, challenged the sections addressing gender based violence (McGreal, 2008). These groups were successful in changing the law, and ensuring that this issue was prioritized. This participation not only contributed to the creation of relevant laws, but also led to the increased involvement of women across national and local bodies of government.

Two years after the genocide, it was estimated that 54% of the population were female and that 34% of households were headed by women. Nearly 60% of women in these female-headed households were widows. Women had no option but to redefine gender roles in order to participate alongside men to rebuild Rwanda. This unique context created the conditions for women to work in grassroots

associations and networks throughout the country. They built centres for survivors of genocide and rape, championed literacy efforts, formed local businesses, and took more of an active role in politics (Quick, 2001).

The constitutional process in Rwanda evolved out of the political transition following the civil war and genocide. During the transition process, the opposition, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), formed the new government, and expressed a commitment to gender equality. The party nominated women to three of 12 seats on the Legal and Constitutional Commission. The female commissioners represented experience from other sectors in society, with at least two of them operating effectively in civil society (Tamaru & Reilly, 2018).

This particular post war context provided individuals the space to champion women's rights and participation. In the case of Rwanda, individuals such as Judith Kanakuze were afforded the opportunity to represent women in government. Kanakuze joined the draft constitutional committee as a gender expert. She used her background as a women's rights activist and her vision of women as her primary constituency to form an alliance between the commission, the Rwandan Women Parliamentary Forum and civil society, contributing to the introduction of the 2003 constitution, which required that at least 30% of seats in parliament and the cabinet be held by women.

Furthermore, she worked with women's organisations through newly forming political structures to pass legislation against gender based violence, including a provision for the legal definition for rape in the country's constitution. The presence of females in leadership roles provided the opportunity for conflict resolution to prioritise and include women's perspectives in order to effectively resolve conflict in the deeply divided society. Women have achieved and contributed a lot but there are challenges preventing them from utilizing their potential, as there is not a clear policy on the unity and reconciliation process that defines the roles of different groups in society (Ward, 2002). There are challenges of leadership in terms of providing visibility to newly implemented practices and women's associations working particularly on the issue of GBV remain disconnected from one another especially in rural areas.

However, the Rwandan case remains a powerful model of how women can lead and contribute to building peaceful change and lasting security following conflict, and the deep trauma they have encountered as a consequence. How they contributed to this transformation holds lessons for other conflicts around the world.

East Timor

Between 1975 and 1999 East Timor was occupied by Indonesia. During the course of the occupation an estimated 25% of East Timor's population was killed, a staggering statistic. When the military left in 1999, it demolished the capital and murdered dozens of its citizens. The Indonesian Occupation in East Timor had disproportionate effects on women, aggravating issues that primarily affect women, especially sexual violence, health issues, and education, some of which remain deeply embedded as challenges in society. Subsequent poverty, famine and violence led to, the death of approximately 820,000 people over the next twenty-five years. (Da Silva & Kendall, 2002). In 1996, it was estimated that 65% of women in East Timor had been raped, leaving a scarring impact and collective trauma in society.

During the occupation, women played a crucial role in the independence struggle. As men made up the majority of the armed guerrillas, controlling territory in the hills and jungles, women made up more than 60% of the clandestinos, which operated as secret support networks who smuggled supplies and information to rebels.

When the independence process commenced, former resistance fighters and a new generation of women became responsible for taking on the challenges the country faced (Groves, Resurreccion, & Doneys, 2009)...As the men returned home, there was a clear recognition that Timorese women committed to educating themselves or coordinating the home. Women played an integral role in society, helping run exile camps, sending supplies and actively working on the flow of information. As the period of occupation came to an end, women recognized they did not want to go back to their traditional roles.

This was widely recognized by women's organizations as well as women actively involved in politics. Women's mobilization in civil society had deep roots dating back to the resistance movement during Indonesian occupation. However, a united women's movement was never officially formed. The Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women of Timor Loro Sao, formed in 2000, represented a first attempt at building a coherent national agenda.

As part of the effort to restructure the system of government following the end of the occupation, a women's quota was proposed... 31 Members of the Platform advocated for a women's quota in the electoral law governing the constituent assembly elections. Timorese policymakers initially supported the quota, but ultimately refused to include it in the final electoral law. The Platform for Action mobilized and organized protests in order to pressure policymakers to create alternative measures to encourage and support female candidates.

External support was provided by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor which oversaw East Timor's transition to independence. They funded training for 200 female candidates across the thirteen electoral districts. Additionally, political parties whose party lists included at least 30 percent female candidates earned extra campaign airtime on UN-run radio and television. Even though the quota initiative failed, women still won 23 out of 88 seats in the constituent assembly (26 percent). The Platform for Action demonstrated the coordinated effort of women's organizations successfully getting women elected to the assembly.

The creation of the new constitution provided an opportunity for the advancement of women's rights, and a Gender and Constitution Working Group was set up with support from UN Women and its partners to ensure that women's rights were prioritised in the new constitution. This resulted in guarantees of equality between women and men, and a declared state objective to promote and guarantee equal opportunities in the political and social sphere for all.

“Sexual violence in conflict needs to be treated as the war crime that it is; it can no longer be treated as an unfortunate collateral damage of war.”

(UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura)

Timor Leste's opposition FRETILIN party ("Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor"), which led the country in the years following independence, has a strong women's wing, Organização Popular das Mulheres da Timor. This remained the case in 2017, as the party has sought to represent women and continues to advocate for the implementation of the Electoral Law of 2006 which requires that women make up one third of listed candidates (Woltersdorf, 2018).

When this amendment was introduced to the electoral law, it resulted in 38% of seats in the National Parliament being women, the highest rate in the Asia Pacific region. The Ministers of Finance and Social Solidarity, four Vice-Ministers, namely Health, Education, Management, Support and Resources, and four Secretary of State Positions are held by women. This also extended to the local level with women chiefs, sub-village chiefs and also 6 elders that function as traditional leaders.

Sexual and gender-based violence remain critical issues for women in post-conflict Timor-Leste. Domestic violence is the most reported case to the Vulnerable Persons Unit of the National Police. Timorese women have described domestic violence as 'normal' and for some, a daily occurrence. Following the passing of the Law Against Domestic Violence in 2010, the National Action Plan on Gender-based Violence, a strategy of prevention and provision of services for survivors of gender-based violence and domestic violence was also created and rolled out (Women, 2018). To what extent this is changing the incidence of crimes is unclear, however the creation of a government that has sought to include women from the outset shows progress in terms of effecting women at large in East Timor.

Astounding numbers of women in East Timor were affected by sexual assault for three consecutive generations; widespread rape by the Japanese during World War II and the Indonesians during their invasion and occupation, and high rates of domestic violence following the occupation. The legacy of war on these women runs deep, however with the involvement of women in the creation and implementation of laws, the country is making significant progress.

In 2000, women attending the Congress for East Timorese Women identified issues facing women and young people in East Timor, including gender-based violence, patriarchy, poverty, health, education, housing, repatriation, reconciliation and justice. In 2002, East Timor implemented a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, gained independence, and formally joined the United Nations. UN Women has been working with East Timor on addressing "Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting," women in politics, and CEDAW implementation. The UN initiated the "Women, Peace and

Security" resolution specific to East Timor in October 2000. This resolution "was the first human rights mandate that addressed gender and resolved to include women's rights, as a basic human right, into key institutions and decision-making positions within peace building and peacekeeping activities, which were traditionally dominated by men" (Groves 193).

It is clear that the government has taken continuous steps to implement the commitments. The question is to what extent that has translated into a changed reality (Warner & Failor, 2016). The majority of the population of East Timor is under twenty and many young people are questioning the ways of the previous generation. With the overall proportion of women in the population being higher than men, women still have the potential to continue playing a major role in the future of the country.

Bosnia

The case of Bosnia serves as another example of how women have been actively integrated into society following conflict and a horrific genocide, where systematic rape was perpetrated upon Bosniak women as a tool of war. When the war ended in 1993, the women of Bosnia and Herzegovina were left to rebuild what was left of the country whilst recovering from the trauma of what they had faced (Berdal, 2011).



Many women returned to education, whilst others began rebuilding their local communities. Prior to the conflict, there was not a culture of not for profit organisations. The government provided services that society required, and given the nature of communism, the political climate did not facilitate the development of civil society organisations. The humanitarian disaster that the war created led to a vacuum filled by women. They set up organisations to provide the immediate needs of counselling and medical care for rape victims. They also provided emergency food, clothing and shelter for refugees, the elderly and others in society. There are currently 284 indigenous NGOs in Bosnia, with 112 seeking to support women specifically.

On the micro level, local organizations have been successful at implementing microcredit programs to help women establish sustainable livelihoods and collectively heal their own communities. Community associations have been incredibly successful, with projects designed to raise awareness of women's issues as well as supporting their needs on the ground. Women's issues are being discussed more openly, however, there has yet to be substantial changes to the law.

Bosniak women were also successful through the mechanism of law enforcement, by holding perpetrators to account via the International Criminal Court. Many women exhibited courage and resilience, coming forward to testify regarding rape and other crimes against humanity. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) became the

first tribunal ever to prosecute war rape as an independent crime against humanity. This was one of the most significant changes that occurred with regards to women dealing with the trauma they were facing (Krasnic, April).

However, one of the most significant challenges Bosniak women face has been a lack of meaningful justice on the ground. National courts in particular have failed the women of Bosnia. In many cases perpetrators walk free in the communities where they committed their crimes. According to Amnesty International, in 2009 there was a backlog of 160,000 unresolved criminal cases, with war crimes accounting for up to ten percent of these (Peace Women, 2018). It was only 15 years after the war that the government began developing a national program to uphold survivors' rights. Women's groups have been working to actively challenge and shift the status quo, with many working across ethnic, religious and national lines to establish a women's court. One of the first of its kind, it sought to give priority to the voices of women who have suffered. Giving survivors the space to give their testimonies and local experts situating them in their historical context providing symbolic recommendations as opposed to legal conclusions. There is a lot of progress that still needs to be made to ensure women play a more active role from the top, in terms of governance and law, to contribute to peacebuilding in Bosnia.

Overall, the cases of Liberia, East Timor, Rwanda and Bosnia show that following conflict and war, women have often played an active role in rebuilding their societies and influencing a peace or transition process. War and post war societies facilitate the active collaboration of women's groups in order to repair, heal and rebuild societies. In the particular cases of Rwanda and East Timor, this involvement extends to the macro level, with women informing the peace process through direct participation in politics. This has demonstrated that when women are involved in the process, the parties are more likely to reach an agreement, and resulting cessation of hostilities is more likely to endure. In addition, women frequently bring other marginalized groups into peacebuilding and governance processes, making them more inclusive, with a lasting impact of female figures playing active roles in politics, and working with civil society to help develop and rebuild their countries.



The Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia considers **rape as a crime against humanity.**

Similarly, rape in time of armed conflict is considered a crime against humanity by the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Policy and Programmatic Recommendations

The increasing awareness of the plight of women subjected to wartime sexual violence and the acknowledgement of the immense role women play in these conflicts despite the trauma they have faced is a significant step forward. Further movement in the right direction can be achieved if the following recommendations are adhered to:

- All protagonists in international conflicts are urged to honour the Geneva Conventions and all related UN Resolutions that call for the prevention and punishment of conflict-related sexual violence, the exclusion of suspected perpetrators from the armed and security forces, and the respect of the sanctity of sites that protect women affected by conflict.
- All parties are urged to immediately end the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and ensure protection for those who are most vulnerable, especially women affected by conflict. All forms of violence and human rights violations and abuses by state and non-state actors against women and children, both in conflict and post-conflict situations must stop.
- All protagonists in international conflicts are urged to honour UN Resolutions that call for the participation of women and their leadership in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Ensuring this occurs allows promotion of the peace process and better effectivity in implementation.
- All UN Member States involved in conflicts should investigate all parties suspected of involvement in perpetrating sexual violence and prosecute all those up to the highest level of the chain of command with the most severe charges possible, including war crimes, to remove impunity and restore justice.
- All UN Member States should reinforce the capacity of their justice systems and security apparatuses to bring accountability for crimes of sexual violence.
- The investigation and prosecution of cases of sexual violence, including the provision of adequate protection

for victims and witnesses, should be a high priority for law enforcement agencies around the world.

- Civil society organisations and NGOs working on women's issues should be empowered to work closely with police forces around the world in the investigation of GBV to increase sensitivity and reduce stigma.
- Constitutional, legislative, institutional and administrative measures sanctioning all forms of sexual violence, providing access to justice and services for survivors, and expanding reintegration support should be adopted and enforced.



(Mohammed Elshamy - Anadolu Agency)

- Community mobilisation campaigns involving religious and community leaders, families of those who have been subjected to sexual violence, local journalists, and human rights defenders are required to help shift the stigma of sexual violence.
- Local organisations run by women who understand the social and cultural context should be given the necessary financial support to promote the reintegration of women who have experienced gender based violence.
- Assistance to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in obtaining reparations, including services, housing and education, and rehabilitation needs to be high on the agenda of civil society organisations.
- Media reporting, especially concerning the nexus between displacement,

trafficking and sexual violence and exploitation, must be a top priority.

- Media reporting on the successful roles of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in order to give voice to their agency and the significant role they play in conflict ridden societies.
- Family based services need to be developed for sexual abuse cases, providing psychological treatment for family members to cope with the collective trauma of rape.

Conclusion

The year 2018 marks a decade since the UN Security Council adopted a resolution that determined that the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict constitutes both a war crime and a threat to international peace and security. It is also recognized as such by the International Criminal Court (Nobel Prize, 2018). It is imperative that women are protected and provided their fundamental rights at all times, particularly in the context of armed conflict, when they are the most vulnerable. Sexual violence as a weapon of war is unacceptable in its inhumanity and is a significant threat to international peace. Individuals and organizations that work to highlight the plight of those affected by sexual violence and address the issue through rebuilding societies and

supporting women with countering the trauma they have faced as described in this report must continue to be recognized and supported by all sections of society. Women who face the trauma need to be supported by their communities in the rebuilding of society post conflict. As the successful examples of Rwanda and Liberia show, more women need to be included and given the role of leadership in the peacebuilding and reconciliation process to effectively ensure women are supported and represented in the rebuilding of societies post conflict. We have seen the strength and resilience that women have shown in the face of war, women need to be supported by their communities and their decision makers in order to enact long lasting change.



(Onur Coban - Anadolu Agency)

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