



10 years **OSRSG-SVC**
OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON
SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

TEN-YEAR SYNTHESIS REPORT

Country situations monitored by the mandate over the past decade 2009-2019

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Clara Moy | 15 years old
Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

This painting is part of the Art Exhibition "Sexual Violence In Conflict: Youth Speak Out Through The Arts" launched on the occasion of the 10-Year Anniversary of the Establishment of the Mandate on Sexual Violence in Conflict

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AFGHANISTAN

Ongoing conflict has greatly influenced patterns of sexual violence in Afghanistan over the past decade. Sexual violence has taken the form of assault, rape and forced marriage of women and girls, including in the context of abduction, and it has particularly affected those living in communities that came under the influence of the Taliban and other warlords operating in opposition to the government, as well as armed groups and tribal militias. As reported by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, an increase in sexual violence against men and boys has also been noted, as well as a pattern of sexual exploitation by military commanders and the

police who in some regions commonly engaged in bacha bazi, a practice involving the sexual abuse and exploitation of boys by men in positions of power. Military clashes have recurrently intensified the sexual violence, as was the case with the attack by Taliban forces on Kunduz city in northern Afghanistan in September of 2015. This attack caused widespread chaos and fear, with the Taliban conducting house searches with lists of women's rights and human rights defenders, and NGO and United Nations staff. The fighting and a number of reported abductions and assaults of women verified by the United Nations

Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) triggered mass displacement. The emergence of ISIL affiliates in the east of the country also caused families to flee, and confined women and girls to their homes.

Chronic insecurity, resulting in a rule of law vacuum in some areas, lack of trust in law enforcement authorities, limited access to services, and cultural taboos and stigmatization contributed to severe underreporting of acts of sexual violence. Women and girls were intimidated and refrained from bringing complaints for fear of punishment. Not only did the law conflate rape and adultery, exposing complainants to the risk of being criminally charged, but there were also reports of communities inflicting punishment such as public stoning of women and girls who reported sexual violence. The available statistics on the incidence of conflict-related sexual violence must be read accordingly in this context. UNAMA documented 44 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls in 2014; 55 incidents in 2015; 11 incidents in 2016, which included 4 cases of sexual abuse of boys through bacha bazi by men in positions of power linked to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. In 2017, UNAMA documented 53 cases of sexual violence against women and girls, 4 cases against boys including incidents of bacha bazi, as well as 78 other credible allegations of bacha bazi that could not be verified due to the sensitivities involved. In 2018, UNAMA documented 37 cases

of sexual violence against women and girls and two cases against boys, one of which involved bacha bazi. The significant impact of the conflict on the prevalence of sexual violence across the country was reflected in research presented by the New Afghanistan Women's Association in 2014, in which a survey of 2,000 women and girls revealed that 35 per cent of respondents identified the perpetrators of sexual violence as "influential people, armed commanders and illegal armed individuals".

Some of the positive measures undertaken by the Government have included a dedicated budget allocation in 2017 to fund implementation of measures set out in the 2015 National Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325, including measures to address conflict-related sexual violence, and the criminalization of bacha bazi in the revised Penal Code, which entered into force in 2018. The revised Code also rectifies the conflation of rape with adultery, recognizes forms of conflict-related sexual violence as war crimes, crimes against humanity and constitutive acts of genocide, and introduces new provisions in line with international standards. UNAMA organized a dialogue in 2018 with the Government, Afghan Military and police forces, international military forces and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission to develop strategies for combatting sexual violence in this new context. The Ministry of Women's Affairs also established a technical committee to review the

2009 Elimination of Violence Against Women Act, in order to align its definition of rape with that of the revised Penal Code. The representation of women in the national police has remained low over the past decade, however, and women constituted only 1.8 per cent of the Force in 2018, despite the Ministry of Interior Affairs' initiative to improve recruitment by attempting to curb sexual harassment against female police officers.

In 2018, the Secretary-General commended the Afghan authorities on the steps they had taken to improve the prosecution of cases of sexual violence, but emphasized that further action was urgently required to ensure that victims are protected and perpetrators are held accountable. Furthermore, the Government has been encouraged to promote women's political, social and economic participation, and put an end to the stigmatization of victims by promoting substantive equality and enacting laws and policies to prohibit discrimination against women. It will also be critically important to develop institutional and accountability structures and financing mechanisms to ensure the full and effective implementation of the National Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325. Effective implementation entails empowering women to have a voice in the peace process, including on issues that affect them disproportionately, such as conflict-related sexual violence.



**Grace Palacios | 15 years old
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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Twenty years after the end of the war, conflict-related sexual violence remains a sensitive subject in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and serious challenges continue to stall access to justice and support for the estimated 20,000 survivors of sexual violence crimes that were perpetrated between 1992 and 1995. These crimes have left a profound scar on survivors and society as a whole, with many survivors of rape and sexual slavery still suffering from trauma, stigma and socio-economic exclusion. The reluctance of survivors to expose themselves to stigma by coming forward to

seek redress is compounded by the fact that many of the alleged perpetrators hold influential positions in the police and political apparatus. The services available to survivors have been fragmented and primarily provided by civil society organizations. The lack of services for children born of wartime rape, who faced a high risk of abandonment, rejection, stigma and marginalization, has been of particular concern. Despite the fact that hundreds of Bosnian men are believed to have been victims of wartime sexual abuse, services for them have been extremely

limited and their status not properly recognized under the law. As of 2012, the State had prosecuted 200 cases of war crimes relating to the conflict, with only 29 cases involving charges of sexual violence leading to sentencing. Furthermore, the legal framework does not adequately provide legal aid or reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

Some notable steps taken by the Government between 2013 and 2018 to improve the response must be acknowledged. The Government and the United Nations country team developed and began implementing a comprehensive joint programme on “Seeking Care, Support and Justice for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence”. The inclusion of a specific objective on conflict-related sexual violence in the second National Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325 laid the foundation for improved service-delivery to survivors. Various government ministries have worked to build the capacity of medical and psychosocial service providers to deliver appropriate support to survivors across the country, and a standard operating procedure for managing conflict-related sexual violence has been adopted in 20 communities, streamlining service delivery and allowing for more uniform care. In 2017, the Interreligious Council (composed of leaders of the Serbian Orthodox, Islamic, Jewish and Catholic communities) issued an interfaith declaration denouncing the stigmatization of survivors of conflict-

related sexual violence, and several months later the Government adopted a national plan to alleviate stigma. The pace of justice accelerated at the national level and, by 2017, 116 cases of conflict-related sexual violence had been adjudicated, with 58 cases still open and 128 under investigation.

However, stronger efforts are needed to safeguard victims and witnesses from intimidation in the context of conflict-related sexual violence trials, as five women who testified as witnesses received threats in 2017. The United Nations continues to support authorities in the country’s two territorial entities in their efforts to improve assistance to survivors. In 2018, Republika Srpska adopted the Law on Victims of Torture, which addresses access to services, justice and reparations. After the first month of its implementation, 100 applications for recognition of victim of torture status had been submitted by survivors of wartime rape. Access to justice for survivors is regulated in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Law on Basic Social Protection and the United Nations supported the creation of a Commission under this law to grant rapid determination of status for survivors. Since becoming operational in 2017, the Commission has received 72 applications, 61 from women and 11 from men, and has granted status to 59 applicants.

A quarter of a century after the close of the civil war, efforts continue to address the justice and reparations deficit faced by survivors of conflict-related sexual

violence, who have struggled to achieve recognition as legitimate victims of armed conflict on a basis of equality before the law. While important reforms have been made, the country continues to grapple with the legacy of conflict, including trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence, trauma, and persistent challenges linked with a lack of social cohesion and inclusivity. Tens of thousands of survivors are still piecing together their shattered lives with little access to the medical, psychological and financial assistance they desperately need. Since war crimes trials began in Bosnia in 2004, courts across the country have completed only 116 cases involving sexual violence charges. Although the number of prosecutions has increased in recent years, more must be done to ensure all perpetrators are duly brought to justice.



Jessie Huang | 15 years old
Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

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BURUNDI

The political crisis that erupted in Burundi at the end of 2015 generated a pattern of crimes of sexual violence against women and girls committed by members of the security forces, including the police, the military and the ruling party's youth league (the Imbonerakure). The attacks on military camps in Bujumbura were followed by reprisal attacks by security forces on communities in opposition districts. Thirteen cases of sexual violence were documented, and in each case security forces entered the victims' homes, separated women and girls from their families, and subjected them to rape and gang rape. Rape victims reported insults based on their actual or perceived ethnic or political affiliation. A number of women and girls attempting to flee were also reportedly taken by the Imbonerakure to a military camp in Marembo and sexually assaulted. In the aftermath of the crisis, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) documented incidents of sexual violence committed against 264 women and 59 girls, which occurred either in Burundi or during flight.

Similar allegations were received in 2016 and 2017, but these could not be verified due to the Government's decision to suspend its cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Operations continued on an almost daily basis in 2016 against areas perceived to be opposition strongholds, many allegedly involving sexual violence committed by the police and the Imbonerakure. There were hundreds of reports that children were raped during night patrols and house searches, which could not be verified. Female-heads of households, adolescent girls, widows, internally displaced persons and returnees were especially vulnerable to sexual violence. Women and girls were deterred from reporting for fear of retaliation linked to the fact that perpetrators were part of the security apparatus or politically connected. The United Nations reported a number of cases in which the authorities either failed to investigate complaints or colluded in the perpetrators' escape from detention.

In the spring of 2017, the Imbonerakure hosted gatherings during which slogans were chanted inciting sexual violence, including calls to forcibly impregnate women and girls associated with the opposition "so they can give birth to Imbonerakure".

The International Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, established by the Human Rights Council, received allegations continuing into 2018 of rape and gang rape for the purpose of intimidation and punishment; of women and girls fleeing the country being subjected to sexual violence by members of the Imbonerakure, border guards and unidentified armed men; of female relatives of political opponents and dissidents being targeted for sexual assault by the security forces; and of acts of sexual violence and humiliation being committed against men during interrogations. In the aftermath of these crimes, there have been serious challenges to the provision of medical and psychosocial support to survivors, exacerbated by the Government's suspension of international non-governmental activities in October 2018, and its closure of the OHCHR country office in December 2018.

The patterns of politically and ethnically-motivated sexual violence that followed the 2015 crisis occurred in a context of impunity for human rights violations and of unchecked inflammatory rhetoric, including gender-based hate speech and incitement to sexual and gender-based violence. In order to address these challenges, the Government has been encouraged to renew cooperation with the United Nations system, in particular its human rights mechanisms, and to investigate the allegations of sexual violence reported by the International Commission of Inquiry in order to ensure accountability and non-repetition. The Government has also been encouraged to improve access to justice for victims of sexual violence, strengthen protection systems, and ensure the provision of medical and psychological support to survivors, including displaced persons and refugees.



Olivia Hampton | 16 years old
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CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The chronic instability, insecurity and repeated armed clashes that have characterized the Central African Republic over the past decade have exposed women and girls to conflict-related sexual violence on a constant basis. Armed groups have used sexual violence as a tactic of war with shocking regularity and flagrant impunity. The offensive that began in 2012 by armed groups under the rebel coalition Séléka was accompanied by multiple reports of sexual violence perpetrated against civilians in areas under their control. There were reports of rape by armed actors in the north and east of the country, and of girls being forced into marriage by members

of the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix en Centrafrique (CPJP). In the southeast there were 85 reports of the abduction of women and girls by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) for use as sexual slaves. A contingent of Chadian forces that entered the town of Ndele in 2012 committed acts of sexual violence against civilians, and there were also reports of sexual violence committed by national security forces.

The situation worsened in 2013 with the attack on Bangui by anti-Balaka groups and members of the former armed forces. Sexual violence crimes were

committed against civilian populations by ex-Séléka groups as a form of “score-settling”, and multiple armed groups committed rapes in the context of house-to-house searches. There were reports of forced marriages, and of girls who were kept in military camps becoming pregnant as the result of sexual slavery. Women and children were also reportedly kidnapped, raped and killed by the LRA in the country’s mining areas. The United Nations also received reports that female politicians and female relatives of public officials had been kidnapped, raped and sometimes tortured.

This pattern continued throughout the years that followed, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict informed the Security Council that all parties to the conflict had committed crimes of sexual violence. Women and girls were systematically targeted for rape in efforts to terrorize, punish and humiliate their communities, attacked in their homes during door-to-door searches, or while sheltering in fields or the bush. A large percentage of the rapes reported were gang rapes, often committed in front of family members. Reports continued of forced marriages and the use of women and girls as sexual slaves. There were also cases of conflict-related sexual violence against men and boys, including in the context of detention and within armed groups, though such incidents remain chronically underreported. Furthermore, as of 2017,

there were over 688,000 internally displaced persons in the Central African Republic, with displacement significantly increasing the exposure of women and girls to sexual violence. There were reports of sex being demanded from women fleeing war zones as a “payment of passage”. Sexual assault was so chronic in and around the displacement camps, especially when women and girls were attempting to farm or collect firewood, that United Nations agencies began distributing flashlights and whistles so that they could alert local protection committees of attacks.

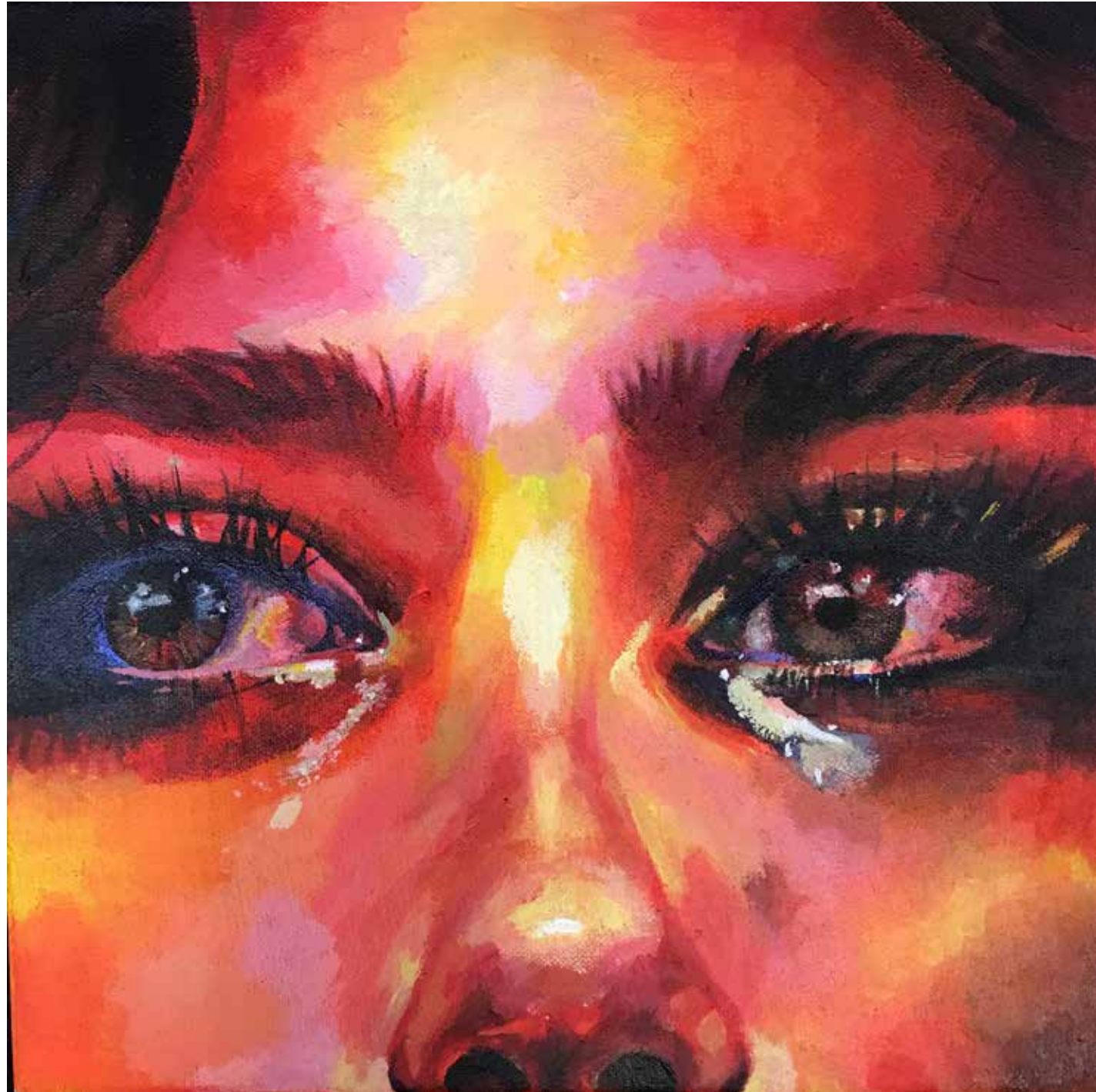
Survivors are generally deterred from reporting because of the continuing presence of perpetrators, the lack of a functional justice system, and fear of stigmatization and social rejection. Public infrastructure, including transportation and communication networks, have been ravaged by war and insecurity remains severe, which inhibits women and girls from seeking out even the limited services available. In 2016, only 32 per cent of recorded victims received emergency assistance within 72 hours of the incident. This was of particular concern given the survivors’ elevated risk of HIV infection. Children born of rape were rarely accepted into their communities, and many women resorted to unsafe abortion, the leading cause of maternal mortality in the country. Owing to the paralysis of the justice system, most rape cases are resolved through “amicable settlements” such as promises of marriage

that include dowry payments. Forced marriage has also increased as a negative coping mechanism to protect the victim’s “honour”.

The Government undertook a number of important steps to strengthen its capacity to respond to conflict-related sexual violence, with ongoing support from the United Nations. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict visited the Central African Republic at the end of 2012, and joint communiqués were signed between the Government and the United Nations to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence and ensure the provision of services to survivors. In 2014, the Transitional Government began to develop a joint rapid response unit to combat sexual violence. In addition, efforts began to create a special criminal court with jurisdiction over grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including sexual violence. The United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict visited the Central African Republic in 2016 and encouraged the Government to accelerate efforts to appoint national police and gendarmerie to the joint rapid response unit, and the United Nations Police provided support to their training. The Team of Experts encouraged placing conflict-related sexual violence at the heart of the work of the special criminal court. In 2018, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization

Mission (MINUSCA) and the United Nations country team supported the development of a strategy for the court’s investigations and prosecutions, and supported the establishment of a digital database. The joint rapid response unit has received hundreds of reports of sexual violence against women and children, and in 2018 undertook its first field mission outside of the capital to investigate an alleged mass rape committed by armed groups. However, the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic noted that very few of the 320 cases the joint rapid response unit had submitted to the courts resulted in trials. The United Nations worked with national partners to establish 83 community-based protection committees and 109 protection networks, with significant results: 80 per cent of the victims of sexual violence who reported their cases to the United Nations and its partners in 2018 were able to access clinical and psychosocial care.

For many years, conflict-related sexual violence in the Central African Republic has been a “forgotten crime” in the midst of a “forgotten conflict”. The peace and transitional justice process provides an opportunity to meaningfully address the issue. Accordingly, it is critical that financial and political support to the joint rapid response unit and the special criminal court be sustained on a long-term basis, and that adequate measures are taken to ensure that women benefit from the dividends of peace.



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COLOMBIA

Colombia endured five decades of armed conflict, which the Constitutional Court in 2008 characterized as inflicting sexual violence on women and girls in a widespread and systematic manner. It was perpetrated by all of the illegal armed groups, and also in some cases by individual members of the armed forces. The specific forms of conflict-related sexual violence cited by the Court included: acts of sexual violence within armed operations; sexual violence against women and girls who had been forcibly recruited; sexual violence against women whose relatives belonged to armed groups; acts of torture and sexual mutilation; and forced prostitution and sexual slavery.

Furthermore, the demobilization of paramilitary organizations under the 2005 Justice and Peace Law led to the emergence of illegal armed groups, which have been implicated in extensive crimes of sexual violence and sexual exploitation. Girls who were recruited by or associated with them were forced to have sexual relations at an early age, and forced to terminate any resulting pregnancies. Sexual violence was also used by illegal armed groups to forcibly displace populations from lucrative mining and agricultural areas, and in corridors for drug trafficking. In addition, sexual violence was deployed as a strategy to exert control over civilian populations, and to intimidate and silence women

leaders and human rights defenders. Sexual violence disproportionately affected girls, displaced women and girls, and Afro-Colombian and indigenous women and girls. Data collected by the United Nations in 2012 and 2013 also indicated that up to 10 per cent of reported incidents of sexual violence were committed against men and boys. Sexual violence committed against lesbian, gay, transgender and intersex individuals, as “corrective” violence or to “cleanse” the population, caused many to flee areas under the influence of armed groups.

The Colombian authorities have made extensive efforts to strengthen the country’s institutional response to conflict-related sexual violence. In 2011, the Government appointed a High-Level Advisor for Women’s Equality to help guide public policies, including those related to the prevention and prosecution of crimes of sexual violence. The Victims and Land Restitution Act was adopted, providing for specific protection measures and special procedures such as reparations, and the Centre for Comprehensive Attention to Victims of Sexual Violence was established. The Attorney-General issued a directive committing to fight impunity for sexual violence, and the Minister of Defence issued a directive obliging the armed forces to prevent sexual violence against women and children in the exercise of their functions. The Constitutional Court of Colombia also ordered the Attorney-General’s Office to pursue

183 pending cases of sexual violence against women and girls (only four of which had been brought to trial). In 2012, the President presented a national policy for gender equality, and the Ministry of Health developed programmes to ensure access to healthcare and psychosocial support services for survivors.

The Government met with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and committed to identifying opportunities for technical cooperation with the United Nations to fight impunity, place survivors at the centre of strategies and actions, and share knowledge on sexual violence response initiatives. In 2014, Colombia adopted a landmark law on access to justice for victims (Law 1719), focused on enhancing the status of sexual violence survivors to enable them to receive reparations, psychosocial support and free medical care. This law recognizes that sexual violence can constitute a crime against humanity, provides that there can be no statute of limitations for these crimes, includes offences that had been omitted from the Penal Code, and specifies aggravating circumstances, such as the commission of sexual violence in order to intimidate or retaliate against human rights defenders.

In addition, May 25 was officially designated the National Day of Dignity for Women Victims of Sexual Violence caused by the Internal Armed Conflict. In 2014, 2,081 women victims of “crimes against sexual freedom and integrity” received compensation, and

the Peace and Justice Tribunal in Bogota delivered an important judgement against Salvatore Mancuso and other paramilitary leaders, ordering them to pay reparations to over 9,500 people, including victims of conflict-related sexual violence, and to issue a public apology. As of 2017, Colombia’s national victims’ unit had registered 24,576 victims of conflict-related sexual violence, of which one third has to date received compensation.

The Havana peace talks culminated in 2016 with a final peace accord between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). Sexual violence survivors had participated in the peace talks as part of a group of 60 victims that addressed the negotiations and, following the creation of a gender sub-commission, leaders of women’s right organizations and sexual diversity organizations also participated in the talks. Accordingly, both survivors and other stakeholders were able to raise conflict-related sexual violence issues during the negotiations in a manner that had not been seen in any prior peace process. The resulting peace agreement contains over 100 provisions on women’s rights and conflict-related sexual violence. They include provision for a truth commission that recognizes the disproportionate impact of conflict and conflict-related sexual violence on women, and a special jurisdiction for peace, as a mechanism to deliver justice for victims of violence. The peace agreement also names the Special

Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, UN Women, the Government of Sweden and the Women’s International Democratic Federation as parties supporting implementation.

In July 2017, the Security Council established the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to help oversee the implementation of the peace agreement, including by monitoring the political, economic and social reintegration of FARC-EP. Despite the overall reduction in sexual violence associated with armed conflict in Colombia in 2018, it has persisted in some areas. Research indicates that only 4 per cent of the peace agreement’s gender provisions had been implemented by mid-2018, and that implementation was especially slow in the former conflict areas where insecurity was increasing. Concern was also raised by OHCHR about continued attacks on Colombian social leaders and human rights defenders, many of them women’s rights and LGBTI rights defenders. One important step forward taken in 2018 to implement the peace agreement was the creation of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition.

In the next phase of implementation of the peace agreement, it will be critical to ensure funding for the full realization of the historic, gender-focused provisions of the agreement, and to guarantee the inclusion of women, particularly Afro-descendant, indigenous and rural women in all transitional justice, reconciliation and reconstruction measures, notably at the local level.



**Jacquelin Chokpaporn | 15 years old
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CÔTE D'IVOIRE

The 2010-2011 post-election crisis in Côte d'Ivoire resulted in over 3,000 deaths and the rape and gang rape of hundreds of women and girls. Sexual violence crimes were committed by all parties to the conflict, with civilians being ethnically and politically targeted. Sexual violence was inflicted publicly or in front of family members in order to humiliate men and women perceived to be political opponents. Armed clashes continued in some regions throughout 2012 and the security situation deteriorated alarmingly. The collapse of the judicial and corrections systems led to the nationwide escape of almost 12,000 prisoners, including notorious repeat sex offenders. Incomplete disarmament of former militias and

other combatants left the western region and Abidjan inundated with guns. A significant increase in rapes was reported in western Côte d'Ivoire, committed by individuals believed to be members of militia groups at checkpoints and during armed attacks on commercial convoys, public transport vehicles and private homes. Between December 2011 and September 2012, 248 cases of rape were documented, of which 80 per cent were allegedly perpetrated by armed men, including members of the armed forces of Côte d'Ivoire (formerly the FOCI, now the FRCI), members of militia groups and Dozos (traditional hunters).

Women and children continued to be at high risk of sexual violence for several years following the post-election crisis, particularly in the western and northern regions where most of the ex-combatants were concentrated. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration moved slowly, the High Court was not fully functional, criminal courts faced severe backlogs and law enforcement was weak, contributing to a pervasive climate of impunity.

Beginning in 2012, however, a series of important initiatives and reforms were undertaken. The Minister of the Interior, the Director General of the National Police and the Senior Commander of the Gendarmerie made commitments to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to implement prevention programmes and cooperate with efforts to prosecute perpetrators of sexual violence. Furthermore, thirty senior officials of the FRCI and 8 commanders of the Gendarmerie nationale signed personal commitments to take action against sexual violence in their ranks.

The 2015 report of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission included documentation of crimes of sexual violence and recommendations for accountability measures. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire adopted a national justice policy designed to improve service delivery, access to justice, and legal

documentation for vulnerable persons, and also revised the legal framework for women's rights and protection. The Government also launched a national strategy to combat sexual and gender-based violence, with support from United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action).

Legal reforms included the expansion of the definition of sexual violence and clarification of the elements of this offence to harmonise with international standards, as well as the introduction of a specific law on the protection of victims and witnesses. The Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Public Liberties issued a circular declaring that a medical certificate would no longer be required in order to open a rape investigation. These certificates typically cost USD \$100, which has proven prohibitively expensive for most victims. The United Nations country team supported the national police to establish specialized units and gender desks, and the United Nations Police provided leadership training to female police officers.

The FRCI established a committee of national experts on conflict-related sexual violence that developed an action plan for the national armed forces. Implementation of this plan was supported by technical assistance from UNOCI and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict (Team of Experts). The Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior

conducted trainings on conflict-related sexual violence for members of the armed forces and police, with support from the United Nations and international partners. In addition, gender training was integrated into the re-socialization programme for former combatants to help mitigate the threat of sexual violence, with support from the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

By 2016, the political situation in Côte d'Ivoire had stabilized, and reports of sexual violence had reduced quite significantly. UNOCI verified seven cases of sexual violence committed by FRCI soldiers across the country that year, noting that each of the victims was referred for medical and psychosocial support, and that prosecutions were initiated, with three convictions secured. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict visited the country in 2016 to review progress and challenges remaining since the FRCI was listed in the annex to the Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in 2012. The Secretary-General removed the FRCI from this list in April 2017 following his assessment that all reasonable measures had been taken in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, and that these measures had led to a reduction in the number of violations attributable to the national armed forces.

It remained unclear, however, whether justice would be achieved for all survivors. As of 2017, there had been

no adjudication of the 196 cases of sexual violence perpetrated during the post-electoral crisis that were documented in the report of the Commission nationale d'enquête. Furthermore, none of the 43 cases of conflict-related sexual violence that were under investigation by the Cellule spéciale d'enquête et d'instruction had reached trial. A presidential decree was issued in August 2018 granting amnesty to individuals prosecuted for or convicted of offences related to the post-electoral crisis. While the President stated publicly that perpetrators of serious crimes would not be exempt from responsibility, there was widespread concern that high-level military commanders, members of armed groups and political leaders would receive amnesty for crimes of international concern. Moreover, while the Government has provided general compensation to many victims of the post-electoral violence, no reparations for crimes of sexual violence have been awarded to date.

In the lead-up to the 2020 presidential elections, it will be critical to ensure that early-warning and early-response mechanisms are in place to guard against any renewed patterns of political violence. It will also be important to consolidate the gains made in combating sexual violence, including through ongoing training and mentoring of security sector personnel, and efforts to ensure that cases of sexual violence committed during the electoral crisis duly proceed to trial, signalling an end to impunity for such crimes.



Coralís Rivera | 16 years old
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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The unrelenting armed clashes, struggle for control of natural resources, ethnic conflict, population displacement, political instability, weakened State structures and severe insecurity that have characterized the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) over the past decade have exposed women and girls to horrific levels of conflict-related sexual violence, especially in the eastern part of the country.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) verified 764 cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2012, 860 cases in 2013, 698 in

2014, 637 in 2015, 514 in 2016, 804 in 2017, and 1,049 in 2018. The large number of non-State armed groups that have proliferated in the country, including groups such as the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Congolese Revolutionary Army (M23), various Mai-Mai groups, and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), committed the majority of sexual violence crimes. However, the United Nations estimated that over a number of years, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) was responsible for up to half of these crimes, with the Congolese National Police (PNC) also significantly involved.

Mass rapes, such as those committed in 2010 and 2011 in Walikale, Bushani and Kalambahiro, were perpetrated against civilian populations by both government forces and non-State armed groups in retaliation for their perceived collaboration with the enemy. Rapes and other acts of sexual violence were committed as part of ethnically-motivated attempts to humiliate and forcibly displace communities, as was evident during the 2012 attacks on Hutu villages in North Kivu in which victims were sexually mutilated with the foetuses of pregnant women being removed. Furthermore, the rate of sexual violence against girls remains distressingly high. During many reporting periods, the United Nations found that 40 to 50 per cent of the sexual violence crimes documented in the country were committed against children. Access to medical, psychological or legal support for survivors has been limited outside of the provincial capitals. The Government, the United Nations and other partners struggle to provide multi-sectoral assistance, including urgently needed post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV, treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and mental health support, to survivors in the east of the country.

Sexual violence was also systematically deployed by armed groups in order to expand their economic and political control over areas in which highly lucrative resources were located. For example, the Mai-Mai Lumumba and Mai-Mai Morgan used sexual violence

as part of their strategies to terrorize communities and control mineral resources in the gold-rich Okapi Reserve. The Mai-Mai Simba/Morgan used sexual violence to spread fear and compel civilians to undertake forced labour in mining areas. Most of the non-State armed groups, along with some FARDC elements, in the east of the DRC were involved in illicit activities such as trafficking in conflict minerals and poaching, and sexual violence crimes were often committed against opponents and civilians in the course of these activities, as part of the political economy of war. There have been persistent reports of forced marriage and the abduction of women and girls into sexual slavery by armed groups. Sexual violence has also been frequently documented in the process of displacement and in and around displaced persons' camps.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has worked closely with the United Nations to improve many key aspects of its response. The 2013 visit of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict resulted in the signing of a Joint Communiqué on combatting sexual violence with the Government, and its implementation has been supported by the Team of Experts. The Special Representative visited the country again in 2014 to participate in the launch of the armed forces' action plan against conflict-related sexual violence, and the Team of Experts assisted the

FARDC with its implementation. MONUSCO provided extensive support for capacity-building in the justice system, and trainings for the armed forces and police. United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, UNFPA and UNHCR, under the auspices of United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, have provided ongoing support for the implementation of the country's national strategy on sexual and gender-based violence. In an important expression of political will, in 2014 the government appointed a Personal Adviser to the President on sexual violence and child recruitment, who convened all relevant parties to articulate a roadmap of national priorities for preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

Significant efforts have been made to bring perpetrators of crimes of conflict-related sexual violence to justice. In 2011, Government authorities issued arrest warrants for "Colonel" Sheka Ntaberi, "Lieutenant Colonel" Evariste Sadiki Kanzeguhera and "Captain" Seraphin Lionzo, in connection with the attacks and mass rapes committed by the Mai-Mai Sheka and the FDLR in Walikale. "Lieutenant Colonel" Mayele of Mai-Mai Sheka has since been arrested as well. MONUSCO and other United Nations entities provided assistance to the Government to conduct the trials of over 250 members of the national security forces, with the result that over 150 FARDC and PNC elements were sentenced for rape and other crimes of sexual violence.

The Bukavu military tribunal also conducted a landmark trial in which two Rwandan FDLR combatants were convicted of crimes against humanity, including rape, committed against the populations of Kalonge and Bunyakiri in 2006.

Further progress was made during 2012 in holding perpetrators to account for the Walikale and Bushani mass rapes. Major Karangwa Alphonse Musemakweli, who was allegedly involved in sexual violence in Walikale, was arrested in September 2012, although he absconded during a mass escape from Goma prison a few months later. Another senior military leader accused of the Walikale rapes died in Goma prison. Of the five senior army officers accused of crimes of conflict-related sexual violence including mass rape, whose names had been provided to the President by a visiting Security Council delegation in May 2009, one had been killed, one had gone missing, and one had been tried and acquitted. The fourth, General Kakwavu, was on trial before the Military High Court, and the trial of the fifth suspect, an FARDC officer, was pending. At least 49 FARDC elements were sentenced for other sexual violence crimes, and an arrest warrant was issued for Paul Sadala, alias "Morgan", on charges of war crimes and crimes of sexual violence in connection with the Efulu attack.

In 2013, 61 members of the national defence and security forces were sentenced for sexual violence crimes, and 40 FARDC members, including five high-ranking officers, were accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes that included rape in connection with the violence in and around Minova. Military tribunals convicted 135 members of the national armed forces, national police and armed groups of sexual violence crimes in 2014. The trials of persons accused in connection with the Minova mass rape were concluded, but only two of the 39 members of the armed forces charged with sexual violence crimes were convicted.

In 2014, a milestone was reached in the effort to hold high-ranking officers to account, with the sentencing of General Jerome Kakwavu to ten years of imprisonment for the war crimes of rape, murder and torture, and the sentencing of Lieutenant Colonel Bedi Mobuli Engangela (alias "Colonel 106") to life imprisonment for crimes against humanity, including rape and sexual slavery. Another breakthrough came with the Government's decision to award financial compensation to 30 victims of the mass rape that had been committed in 2003 in Songo Mboyo. However, it should be noted that the United Nations subsequently reported a failure on the part of the government to issue reparations payments to victims in response to judicial awards. In 2015, 109 members of the State security forces were convicted and sentenced to prison terms of between

one and 20 years in conflict-related sexual violence trials.

In 2016, and there were 100 convictions of members of the security forces for sexual violence crimes. Nonetheless, concerns continued that several of the mass rape incidents dating back to 2010 remained unresolved, with arrest warrants left unexecuted. While the Government had arrested Séraphin Lionso in 2016 in connection with the Walikale mass rape, other members of the Mai-Mai Sheka remained active in the conflict and continued to commit sexual violence crimes. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict urged the Government to act on the arrest warrant for the leader of this group, Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, who had been sanctioned by the Security Council 1533 Committee on the DRC.

In 2017, 42 members of the FARDC and 17 members of the PNC were convicted by military tribunals of rape, and the military authorities in South Kivu successfully prosecuted three emblematic cases of conflict-related sexual violence: convictions were handed down to an FARDC colonel for command responsibility for rape as a war crime in Musenyi; a commander of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) for sexual violence as a war crime in the Nzovu case; and a member of Parliament in South Kivu for the abduction and rape of children as a crime against humanity in the Kavumu case. In 2018, Serafin Lionso and Ntabo

Ntaberi Sheka were brought to trial in military courts for the mass rapes committed in Walikale.

Overall, United Nations reports express concern that the process of bringing perpetrators to justice has been uneven. A significant number of cases of sexual violence committed by members of armed groups and the FARDC have not been pursued. Even where cases were investigated, trials were not held, sentences were not enforced, or the courts imposed penalties below the legal minimum. Concerns have also been raised about the apparent impunity enjoyed by high-ranking officers who bear individual and/or command responsibility for sexual violence crimes and other grave violations of human rights.

Decisive action to combat impunity for conflict-related sexual violence, whether committed by State or non-State actors, and irrespective of military rank or political affiliation, will be essential for inclusive and durable peace and development in the DRC. In addition, the armed and security forces must be vetted and trained on a continual basis, and the policy of zero tolerance for sexual violence must be respected, implemented and enforced. The structural barriers that continue to impede women's ability to access justice, reparations, and peace negotiations must be dismantled and the root causes of protracted violence and instability addressed.



**Noor Basim Luaib | 20 years old
Baghdad | Iraq**

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IRAQ

Iraq has a long history of conflict, resulting in immense civilian suffering and massive population displacement. In addition, the legal, political and economic marginalization of women is deeply entrenched. When the Government of Iraq launched a National Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325 in February 2014, it marked the first such plan to be adopted in the Middle East region.

In June 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) declared an "Islamic caliphate" extending from Aleppo province in the Syrian Arab Republic to Diyala province in Iraq. It was the deadliest year on record for Iraq since 2003, with more than 15,000 casualties reported among the civilian population and security forces. ISIL

integrated sexual violence into its military strategy for the region on a horrific scale, most notably during the attacks on Mosul, Sinjar, Tall Afar and the Ninewah plains. Sexual violence was used to serve multiple purposes: spreading fear, persecuting ethnic and religious minorities, suppressing communities opposed to its ideology, incentivizing its recruits, and generating financial resources. Reports received from women and girls who fled or were rescued from ISIL-controlled areas indicated a systematic pattern of brutal physical and sexual assault, sexual torture, sexual slavery, forced marriage and human trafficking. Attacks on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals were conducted as a form of "moral cleansing" by armed groups.

According to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), ISIL purportedly issued a “regulation” setting out the prices to be paid for Yazidi and Christian women and girls. As of November 2014, UNAMI reported that at least 2,500 women and children, primarily from ethnic and religious minorities, were being held captive by ISIL in Northern Iraq. This pattern of extreme sexual violence continued unabated throughout 2015 and 2016, with evidence indicating an ISIL strategy of separating Yazidi children from their mothers, and then transferring these women within Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, in order to more easily control the population and to supply women to their fighters. Sunni women and girls living under ISIL occupation were also subjected to forced marriages, in which rape was used as a punishment for disobeying ISIL rules.

The tide turned in 2017, with the liberation of Mosul, Tall Afar and other areas from ISIL control. As of November 2017, 3,202 civilians (1,135 women, 903 girls, 335 men and 829 boys) had been released from ISIL captivity. During 2018, women and girls continued to be released from captivity, but the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) estimated that 1,472 Yazidi women and girls remained missing. Unfortunately, many of the liberated women and children encountered stigma and serious challenges to reintegration into their communities. There are reports of local officials registering children on their birth

certificates as “ISIL terrorists” based on assumptions about their parentage. Women and girls who had been forcibly married to ISIL fighters faced a widespread assumption of guilt by association, made worse by harmful social norms relating to family “honour”. In the camps for internally displaced persons, women and children with a perceived affiliation with ISIL suffered sexual exploitation and had their movement, access to services and civil documentation restricted. Declarations issued by Yazidi and Sunni spiritual leaders that encouraged solidarity with survivors of rape and the children conceived as a result proved helpful in improving the prospects for family reunification.

United Nations agencies also supported the authorities to try to address this issue, as well as other conflict-related sexual violence challenges such as the urgent need to build capacity for the delivery of multi-sectoral services. The SRSG-SVC visited Iraq in 2017 and 2018 to advance implementation of the joint communiqué signed between the Government and the United Nations in 2016, which focuses on six areas: legislative and policy reform; accountability; services and reparations; engaging religious and tribal leaders, civil society and women’s groups; integrating gender considerations into counter-terrorism measures; and awareness raising.

Ensuring justice and reparations for crimes of conflict-related sexual violence remains a pressing concern. Trials were conducted in 2017 under anti-terrorism

legislation, which did not explicitly designate sexual violence as a crime. As a result, by the end of 2018 no ISIL member had been prosecuted for crimes of sexual violence. The United Nations therefore prioritized support to the Government in this area. In 2018, the Special Advisor of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD) was appointed with a mandate from the Security Council to collect, preserve and store evidence of war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide, including acts of sexual violence. The Iraqi Government also launched a pilot project to facilitate the registration of children born of rape to support their social integration and access to public services.

Prosecuting sexual violence as a self-standing crime, including in the context of terrorism trials, will set an important precedent and create a deterrent for the future. In addition, shelters and other services need to be scaled-up as part of efforts to support the socioeconomic reintegration of women and children released from ISIL captivity, and to promote social cohesion and healing in the wake of protracted war. Particular attention must be paid to the plight of survivors with children born from rape, who are currently being forced to choose between disowning their children or being socially shunned by their communities.

Montserrat Chavez | 16 years old
Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

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LIBYA

Parties to the 2011 conflict in Libya committed crimes of sexual violence against both women and men. Rape was reportedly employed as punishment against individuals who rebelled against the Gaddafi regime, and was alleged to be prevalent in the regions of the country that had been besieged by former Gaddafi forces. Women were abducted from their homes or public places and taken away to be raped. Men were subjected to rape and sexual torture in prisons and other places of detention. Reports were also received of members of the former Gaddafi forces being detained in Hafra prison and subjected to torture, including sexual violence, in order to extract confessions.

This conflict ended in October 2011, but the Government took little action in its aftermath to address the problem of conflict-related sexual violence, apart from the prosecution of the former Prime Minister, whose charges reportedly included crimes of mass rape committed in Zuwara. There were no other investigations, new legislation or programmes introduced for survivors. The almost complete absence of services deterred survivors from coming forward. Positive steps that were subsequently taken were initiated by civil society organizations, which advocated for the survivors of sexual violence and developed programmes to support them. In addition, in 2013, the interim Libyan Government issued a decree to improve the plight of the survivors.

With the eruption of intense fighting in Tripoli, Benghazi and elsewhere across Libya in the second half of 2014, women were particularly affected, with women's rights activists being targeted for assassination. The temporary withdrawal by the majority of the international community restricted access to services for survivors, as well as access to information about the conflict. In addition, attacks on the courthouses and members of the judiciary shut down the justice system in Benghazi, Derna, Sirte and Tripoli. Widespread insecurity and fear of sexual violence drove displacement to neighboring countries. At the same time, the country was experiencing an influx of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees attempting to reach Europe by sea from the Libyan coast, and sexual violence against women and girls began to be reported in this context. While the Council of Ministers issued a decree recognizing survivors of sexual violence as equal and legitimate victims of war, opening up the possibility of redress, and the Ministry of Justice adopted a resolution to establish a reparations fund to benefit them, the conditions of repeated armed confrontations, compounded by the growth and expansion of terrorist groups, caused the prevailing instability and impunity to deepen.

Libya entered a period of sustained violence and insecurity from which it has yet to emerge. It has been a country of transit at the centre of the global migration

crisis (UNHCR recorded 162,895 arrivals to Italy in 2016 alone), while also being affected by sporadic conflict, instability, political fragmentation, and a proliferation of arms and armed terrorist groups. Sexual violence became endemic on both of these fronts. Reports emerged of forced marriages to fighters belonging to violent extremist group such as ISIL and Ansar al-Sharia and the imposition of draconian legislation concerning women. Women's rights defenders and other women engaged in public life continued to be subjected to sexual violence and abuse by non-State armed groups and the Libyan National Army.

In 2015, OHCHR documented the case of a woman who had been abducted in Tripoli and repeatedly raped by the leader of an armed group for six months during which time she also witnessed six other girls being raped by members of the group. Testimony of at least 117 women who had been released from ISIL captivity following military operations in Sirte revealed a pattern of physical and sexual abuse and slavery. These women were transferred to Jawwiyah prison, and 31 were released in April 2017 after having been cleared of terrorism charges by a Prosecutorial Committee. The remainder continued to be held arbitrarily without judicial review. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has received reports of physical and sexual abuse of those women being held in Jawwiyah prison.

Migrant and refugee women and girls have been widely exposed to sexual violence in the course of their journey through Libya. The perpetrators include smugglers, traffickers and other criminal groups, as well as parties to the conflict and officials from the Ministry of the Interior. Migrant and refugee women and girls of Nigerian origin reported being detained in "connection houses" in Tripoli and Sabha and being subjected to sexual abuse by uniformed men. There are multiple reports of sexual assaults being perpetrated in the detention centres in which migrant women and girls were being held, and in 2017 international pressure led the Department of Combatting Illegal Migration to announce the closure of a notorious detention centre in Surman. The Tariq al-Sikkah detention centre was also closed because of similar allegations, although the perpetrators were not brought to justice. UNSMIL has been documenting accounts from migrant women and girls who were assaulted in the course of their journeys through Libya, including in detention centres. The SRS-G-SVC visited a transit centre in Niger in 2018, where she met with women, men and children who had been subjected to sexual violence while being trafficked through Libya, some of whom had been "sold" multiple times, while others had children conceived as a result of rape.

Reporting remains limited, as Libya lacks anti-trafficking legislation or any system to identify and protect survivors. In addition, women and girls, as well as men and boys, fear prosecution and do not report their experiences to the Libyan authorities. In June 2018, the Security Council imposed sanctions on six of the individuals involved in trafficking and migrant smuggling, including the head of the Shuhada al-Nasr brigade, Mohammad Kashlaf, who controlled the Nasr detention centre for migrants. An order was also made for the centre's closure, yet it remains open to date. In November 2018, the Security Council adopted a resolution explicitly including sexual violence as a stand-alone criterion for sanctions designations. It has been recommended that the Government address the nexus between conflict-related sexual violence and trafficking, including by adopting anti-trafficking legislation. Libyan authorities should facilitate the release of all those held arbitrarily and without legal basis, particularly survivors of trafficking, torture and rape, and take measures to protect female detainees from sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation. Furthermore, the authorities should ensure that all allegations of sexual violence are investigated and prosecuted, and that survivors are duly provided with protection, services and reparations.



Michael Cordova | 15 years old
Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

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MALI

The crisis that began in Mali at the beginning of 2012 was followed by the occupation of the northern region by Islamic rebel groups, and exacerbated by the influx of heavily armed Tuareg fighters returning from Libya. Sexual violence was systematically used in the conflict to punish, intimidate and subjugate women and girls by the Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA), Islamist groups such as Ansar Eddine, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and the Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO). Widespread crimes of sexual violence were reportedly committed by armed State and non-State actors, including rape, gang

rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, torture and sexual violence in places of detention. Abduction and sexual violence were also reported during house-to-house searches and at checkpoints. In response to reports of grave violations of human rights in the north, the Human Rights Commission authorized a United Nations human rights assessment mission to Mali in November 2012. Rape was used as a tactic of war in the rebel-controlled areas, and the fear of rape contributed to mass displacements from the Gao, Timbuktu and Mopti regions. Women and girls from the Bella community, historically considered to be the slaves of the Tuaregs, were particularly targeted.

The rebels also engaged in a practice they termed “requisition”, which involved abducting women and girls from a district to spend a night at the camps. Each district was given a quota, and the nature of the attacks suggested that they were condoned by rebel commanders. Cases of women and girls being forced to marry members of Islamist rebel groups were reported in all areas under their control, and these marriages resulted in rape, sexual slavery and, in some instances, death. The rebel groups also beat, flogged and punished women for engaging in behaviour that contravened their interpretation of Sharia law. Multiple cases of sexual violence were also reported during an attempted counter-coup carried out by Mali’s “red beret” military regiment, and subsequently in the context of reprisals by the “green berets” loyal to the putschists.

A wide range of factors combined to severely restrict data collection and the reporting of sexual violence crimes. Survivors had little access to services in the north, where they were mainly limited to urban centres and their perimeters, and hospitals were often under the control of armed groups and lacked trained personnel. Women and girls who were further intimidated by cultural taboos and social stigma, justifiably feared retribution for reporting, and when they did make complaints they and their families were often pressured to withdraw. There was no protection available to complainants, witnesses and

the organizations supporting them. Humanitarian workers were repeatedly subjected to attacks and death threats were made against local human rights monitors. Survivors lacked faith in national justice institutions, which had limited capacity and were completely dysfunctional in the north. For instance, there were numerous reports of suspects detained for sexual violence crimes being released from custody.

A peace and reconciliation agreement was signed in June 2015 between the Government of Mali, the Plateforme and the Coordination des mouvements de l’Azawad, which excluded the possibility of amnesty for crimes of sexual violence. In September 2015, the political leaders of the Plateforme issued a statement committing to engage with their military and political wings to combat conflict-related sexual violence, and to work with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to develop an action plan. However, sexual violence crimes continued to be reported across the country, and especially in the north, which remains volatile. The Government also took steps to bring the perpetrators of sexual violence committed during the 2012 crisis to justice. The national authorities referred the situation in Mali to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2013. As of 2015, 19 of the legal proceedings concerning 80 cases of CRSV by members of violent extremist groups had progressed, although the process continued to move slowly. Further cases were filed in 2015 against 15 additional suspects of sexual violence crimes

committed in 2012, including one suspect who was also on trial at that time at the ICC. The Government also set up a protection trust fund to support sexual violence survivors during investigations. In 2018, the Secretary-General urged the Government to improve its efforts to secure justice for survivors of sexual violence. In addition, he called upon both the Government and the donor community to ensure that sufficient financial resources be made available to prioritize the investigation and prosecution of sexual violence crimes.

The SRSG-SVC first visited Mali in April 2016 to assess the situation, as a step towards the agreement of a joint communiqué with the Government, which was eventually signed in March 2019. Other United Nations actors also undertook a range of initiatives to provide assistance to survivors and improve the Government’s capacity to respond. The United Nations worked with the Government in multiple ways to train the national army, judiciary, police and gendarmerie on sexual violence. The United Nations country team supported health-care providers to improve the clinical management of rape, and helped to establish “safe spaces” for women and girls. The Gender-based Violence sub-cluster raised public awareness through 48,000 radio broadcasts in local languages. The Team of Experts worked with the judicial system to address the backlog of sexual violence cases, and with the Bar Association of Bamako on the provision of free

legal aid. Most recently, MINUSMA has supported the development of a national strategy to combat gender-based violence, facilitated the economic reintegration of survivors of sexual violence, and supported a coalition of non-governmental organizations to bring 120 cases of conflict-related sexual violence to court. The Peacebuilding Fund in Gao and Timbuktu helped to increase the rate of reporting of cases of sexual and gender-based violence to the police, from one per cent in 2014 to 14 per cent in 2017. The Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel integrated measures for prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence into their framework for cooperation. Moving forward, the Government’s full commitment to implementing the joint communiqué with the United Nations will be essential in order to ensure a more structured response to conflict-related sexual violence, to facilitate the adoption of legislation prohibiting all forms of sexual violence, and to provide access to justice, services and socio-economic reintegration support for survivors. Furthermore, in the context of the peace process, it will be critically important to ensure the inclusion of women and girls and to properly address the issue of conflict-related sexual violence.



Angieliz Caceres | 15 years old
Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

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MYANMAR

From 2011 to 2015, the United Nations received ongoing reports of sexual violence committed against women and girls by Government armed forces and armed groups in the context of tensions and conflict in the ethnic border areas of Myanmar. While the peace process was moving forward with the signature of a number of ceasefire agreements, fighting continued in many locations and large numbers of people were still displaced along the eastern and southeastern borders, with further displacement generated by communal conflicts in Rakhine State. The United Nations was frustrated in its efforts to document allegations of sexual violence and provide humanitarian assistance in

Kachin State, Rakhine State and northern Shan State owing to access restrictions imposed by the Government. In his 2013 report, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar found that the obligations of the State to fully investigate and hold perpetrators to account for rape and other forms of sexual violence in Rakhine State had not been met. The Government's endorsement of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in 2014, and the inclusion of sexual violence in the nationwide ceasefire agreement signed by the Government and ethnic groups in 2015, were promising signs. However,

serious concern remained about the high level of impunity for sexual violence crimes perpetrated by State actors and the lack of transparency in military justice processes.

“Clearance operations” were launched by the Government in northern Rakhine State in October 2016, which led to numerous reports of sexual violence committed against the ethnic Muslim minority Rohingya people by the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw Kyi), the Border Guard Police, and the Myanmar Police Force. An estimated 66,000 civilians fled to Bangladesh following the October operations. According to OHCHR, more than 50 of the 100 women interviewed after they had crossed the border reported having been subjected to rape, gang rape, or other forms of sexual violence, which had apparently been systematically deployed to humiliate and terrorize their communities. During armed clashes, which intensified in Kachin, northern Shan and parts of the southeast, sexual violence was once again inflicted on ethnic minority groups, as a result of which 98,000 civilians fled and sought safety in displaced persons’ camps. Further operations in Rakhine State in August 2017 generated a mass exodus of almost 700,000 Rohingya civilians to Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh, creating a major humanitarian crisis. The SRSG-SVC visited camps and settlements in Cox’s Bazar in November 2017, where she received first-hand accounts from women and girls of rape, gang rape, forced nudity and abduction for sexual slavery perpetrated during military

campaigns of slaughter, looting and the razing of homes and villages. The use of brutal sexual violence was integral to the Government forces’ strategy of humiliating, terrorising and collectively punishing the Rohingya people as a means to force them to flee their homelands and prevent their return. In December 2017, the Human Rights Council expressed grave concern about consistent allegations of widespread sexual violence, and the General Assembly expressed its deep distress about the excessive and unlawful use of force in Myanmar, including sexual violence. The High Commissioner for Human Rights characterized the Government’s operations as “ethnic cleansing”.

An independent international fact-finding mission established by the Human Rights Council in 2018 documented mass killings, rape and other forms of sexual violence by Tatmadaw soldiers during the 2017 “clearance operations” in Rakhine State, credible accounts of sexual violence in Kachin and Shan States, and cases of sexualized torture in detention perpetrated by the Tatmadaw Kyi. These patterns of conflict-related sexual violence led to the listing of the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw Kyi) in the annex to the 2018 Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. In 2019, the Human Rights Council also established an independent investigative mechanism to consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence of international crimes committed in Myanmar since 2011, and prepare files for criminal proceedings. The Government of Myanmar established its own

independent commission of inquiry, and also took some steps to revise legislation relating to violence against women and children, and to implement the National Plan for the Advancement of Women. In December 2018, the SRSG-SVC signed a joint communiqué with the Government that requires concrete actions by the Myanmar Armed Forces, including the issuance of clear orders prohibiting sexual violence, accountability for violations, and timely investigation of abuses. The SRSG-SVC returned to Myanmar in February 2019 to facilitate the development of an action plan to implement these commitments. She also voiced her concerns about the extreme vulnerability of the women and girls who had been displaced and their lack of access to basic services and livelihood opportunities, their exposure to high risks of sexual exploitation and trafficking, as well as an increase in negative and harmful coping strategies such as child marriage and the confinement of adolescent girls to their homes. The SRSG-SVC signed a framework of cooperation with the Government of Bangladesh in October 2018 to help address these concerns.

Sofia Juan Ramirez | 16 years old
Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

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NEPAL

Crimes of sexual violence were perpetrated by both the Government security forces and the Maoist Communist Party combatants during the ten-year civil war in Nepal. While the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement made commitments to address human rights violations and counter impunity, successive governments fell short of ensuring accountability, in particular of delivering justice and reparations to the survivors of sexual violence. Members of the security forces accused of human rights abuses including sexual violence continued to be promoted to senior ranks. In addition, survivors of sexual violence were not officially recognized as "conflict-affected persons" and were therefore excluded from the Government's interim relief programme. A Presidential Ordinance was passed in 2013 to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. However, in 2014 Nepal's Supreme Court ruled that key provisions of this ordinance contravened the rights guaranteed by Nepal's Constitution and international standards of justice. The Supreme Court's decision set out the parameters that should be respected when establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in terms of guarantees of autonomy and impartiality, and the protection of victims and witnesses. Positive steps were taken in 2014. Parliament adopted a law that established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Inquiry on Disappearances. The new Act recognized rape and other forms of sexual violence as "serious violations of human rights". The Minister of Foreign Affairs also participated in the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, where he announced that Nepal had adopted a zero-tolerance policy on sexual and gender-based violence. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission created a Sub-Committee for Victims, Children, Senior Citizens, Persons with Disabilities and Women. The Act to Amend Laws to End Gender Violence and Ensure Gender Equality also entered into force, broadening the definition of rape and extending the statute of limitations for filing complaints from 35 days to 180 days (although this extension was still not sufficient to assist survivors from the civil war era). In 2016, the Government

recognized gaps in meeting its obligations under Security Council resolution 1820, and committed to allocating a dedicated budget, strengthening coordination and engaging more closely with victims' associations. The United Nations trained survivors of sexual violence in advocacy, leadership and resource mobilization skills, and UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare to ensure that children born of rape and other conflict-affected children would be eligible for services and protection from the State.

By 2018, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had received over 63,000 complaints, and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappearances had received 3,197 complaints. However, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had registered only 308 cases of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by the Government security forces and the Maoist Rebels. This was considered at least partially attributable to the fact that some cases were reported as "torture" to avoid the stigma associated with reports of sexual violence. Another relevant factor was the limited access of women to the formal complaint system due to a lack of information and outreach. The Government also introduced other important amendments to the law that had established both Commissions, by recognizing victims' rights to reparations, eliminating the statute of limitations for sexual violence cases, and unconditionally restricting the Committees' powers to recommend amnesties for gross violations of human rights, including torture, rape and other acts of sexual violence. While the Government has begun to consider the extension of reparations to victims of conflict-related sexual violence, overall progress has been slow, and survivors continue to be denied the full range of sexual and reproductive healthcare, psychosocial assistance, legal aid and livelihood support. It will be critical to ensure that survivors of wartime sexual violence have full access to national relief and recovery programmes, and that concrete measures are taken to end impunity for these crimes and ensure their non-recurrence.



Camila Araque | 15 years old
Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

This painting is part of the Art Exhibition "Sexual Violence In Conflict: Youth Speak Out Through The Arts" launched on the occasion of the 10-Year Anniversary of the Establishment of the Mandate on Sexual Violence in Conflict

NIGERIA

From 2008 to 2014, the insurgency in northern Nigeria was characterized by consistent violations of human rights, including abductions and sexual abuse committed by Boko Haram. Forced marriage, enslavement and the "sale" of women and girls were integrally connected to Boko Haram's ideology, and in Borno State many were abducted into coerced marriages that involved repeated rape, and violence and threats of death inflicted for refusing sexual contact. Boko Haram also began using abducted women and girls as suicide bombers. The abduction of 276 girls from a government-operated secondary school in Chibok, Borno State, in April 2014 raised international alarm. In total, an estimated 2,000 women and girls were abducted by Boko Haram

in 2014 and 2015, many of whom were forced into sexual slavery. Fifty-seven of the schoolgirls abducted in Chibok were released in 2015, and the government's continued efforts to secure the release of these girls resulted in the liberation of 82 more girls in 2017. In February 2018, Boko Haram kidnapped a further 110 school girls from a secondary school in north-east Nigeria, who were also subjected to forced marriage, rape and physical and emotional violence. Boko Haram released 107 of the girls in March 2018, but announced that one of the girls who had refused to convert to Islam would be kept as a slave. The women and girls who escaped or were released from Boko Haram's captivity, many of whom were pregnant or with infants, encountered

serious difficulties reintegrating into their communities. Displaced communities were distrustful of those who returned, and women and girls faced rejection because of their perceived “dishonor” and presumed “guilt by association”. Children born to the abducted women and girls were especially stigmatized. Some of the women and girls who had been “married” to the fighters were subjected to prolonged detention and questioning by the national security forces.

At the same time, the humanitarian situation in the northeast was triggering large-scale displacement. Women and girls were subjected to rape and trafficking while in transit, and in the displacement camps they continued to face rape, early and forced marriage, and many even resorted to “survival sex” in order to meet their families’ needs. In 2016, the United Nations reported 43 cases of sexual violence perpetrated by security guards, camp officials, army officers, members of the Civilian Joint Task Force and vigilantes. Nine of the officers were reportedly arrested and are standing trial. The Government deployed 100 female police officers to the displacement sites in an effort to make services more accessible to women and girls, and the United Nations also worked to strengthen service provision, but only 2 per cent of the survivors who sought medical care were able to access it. In addition, it was estimated that almost half of all sexual violence survivors declined to report the abuse due to a lack of trust in both the formal and informal justice systems, stigma and fear

of reprisals. The SRSG-SVC participated in a high-level visit to Nigeria in 2017, which focused on the need to improve accountability, training and oversight of the security forces, to provide support to survivors of abduction and abuse, and to address the rise in early marriage and sexual exploitation in displacement settings. The United Nations also engaged in ongoing dialogue with the Government about counter-terrorism measures that violated women’s human rights, such as detaining those released from Boko Haram captivity on the grounds that they were affiliates or intelligence assets.

In October 2017, the Nigerian authorities began conducting trials of Boko Haram suspects under the Terrorism Prevention (Amendment) Act. Of the 200 defendants in the third round of trials, 113 were convicted, 97 discharged and five acquitted. However, despite the central role that sexual violence played in Boko Haram’s operations, none had been charged for sexual violence crimes. In 2018, the National Human Rights Commission launched special investigations into human rights violations in northeast Nigeria. Public submissions were invited, including submissions related to sexual violence against internally displaced persons, sexual exploitation of women and girls in exchange for food and security, discrimination and violence against women and girls returning from Boko Haram captivity, and the lack of investigations. The United Nations continued its assistance, providing 278,194 people,

mostly women and girls, with medical and psychosocial services and livelihood support, and 18 women-friendly spaces were established in areas that had been recently-liberated from Boko Haram. Two hundred girls who had been forcibly married to Boko Haram militants and associated with non-State armed groups were released by the military to the Borno State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, which provided them with rehabilitative care and support for reintegration.

Moving forward, it will be important for the Nigerian authorities to intensify their efforts to ensure accountability for all crimes of sexual violence, both crimes committed by members of armed groups and by military officers, and to improve service delivery for survivors. In the context of investigations and prosecutions of members and affiliates of Boko Haram, the United Nations has called for attention to be paid to crimes of conflict-related sexual violence, and for programmes of recovery and redress to be made available to victims and former captives.



Kelsy Acosta | 16 years old
Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

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SOMALIA

Decades of protracted conflict, widespread violence, insecurity, drought and massive displacement have combined to expose women and girls to extremely high levels of sexual violence in Somalia. Girls have been especially vulnerable, and boys have also been targeted in some cases. While crimes of sexual violence have been committed across the country, they have been most frequent in the south central regions, and have consistently intensified in the context of military operations. The most common patterns have been rape and gang rape committed by State forces, militias associated with clans and unidentified armed men, and the abduction of women and girls for forced marriage and rape by non-State armed groups such as Al-Shabaab. In 2018

the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence against 20 women, 250 girls and one boy, 83 of which were attributed to unknown armed actors, 34 to Al-Shabaab, 33 to clan militias, and 52 to various state regional forces. In the same year, the United Nations also verified cases of rape and gang rape committed against three women, 44 girls and one boy by members of the Somali National Army, and acts of sexual violence against five women and 12 girls committed by members of the Somali Police Force. The majority of sexual violence crimes have been committed against internally displaced women and girls, who in many cases have been subjected to repeated and systemic sexual violence, including

through forced marriage and sexual slavery. Displaced women and girls lacking clan protection, as well as those from minority clans, were especially at risk. In 2014, there were over one million internally displaced persons in Somalia, and they constituted 81 per cent of reported victims of sexual violence.

Women and girls remain highly reluctant to report crimes of sexual violence for fear of retribution and other potential negative consequences. Data collected by the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) indicated that the majority of survivors declined offers of referrals to legal assistance. There were serious obstacles impeding access to the formal justice system: survivors who reported crimes were required to pay fees to file and process their cases, as well as to cover the cost of feeding the accused in detention; the formal system's reach was extremely limited in the rural areas; reports continued to circulate of girls being raped by members of the police and national army; and the Penal Code criminalized rape as a crime against morality rather than as a crime against the person. The majority of women and girls who did seek redress relied on traditional justice systems, based on customary or Sharia law, which failed to protect survivors' rights and very often re-victimized them. Survivors were frequently forced to marry their rapists as a form of "restitution" to the clan ordered by customary courts. Furthermore, the women and girls who had been forced into marriage with members of Al-Shabaab were viewed as security

threats, and persecuted and punished by Government authorities, with arbitrary arrests, sexual violence and extra-judicial killings reported in this context. The Security Minister of Jubaland appeared on national television in July 2017, threatening to expel "Al-Shabaab wives and children" from Government-controlled towns, and claiming they were "enemies of the State" who provided intelligence to the insurgency.

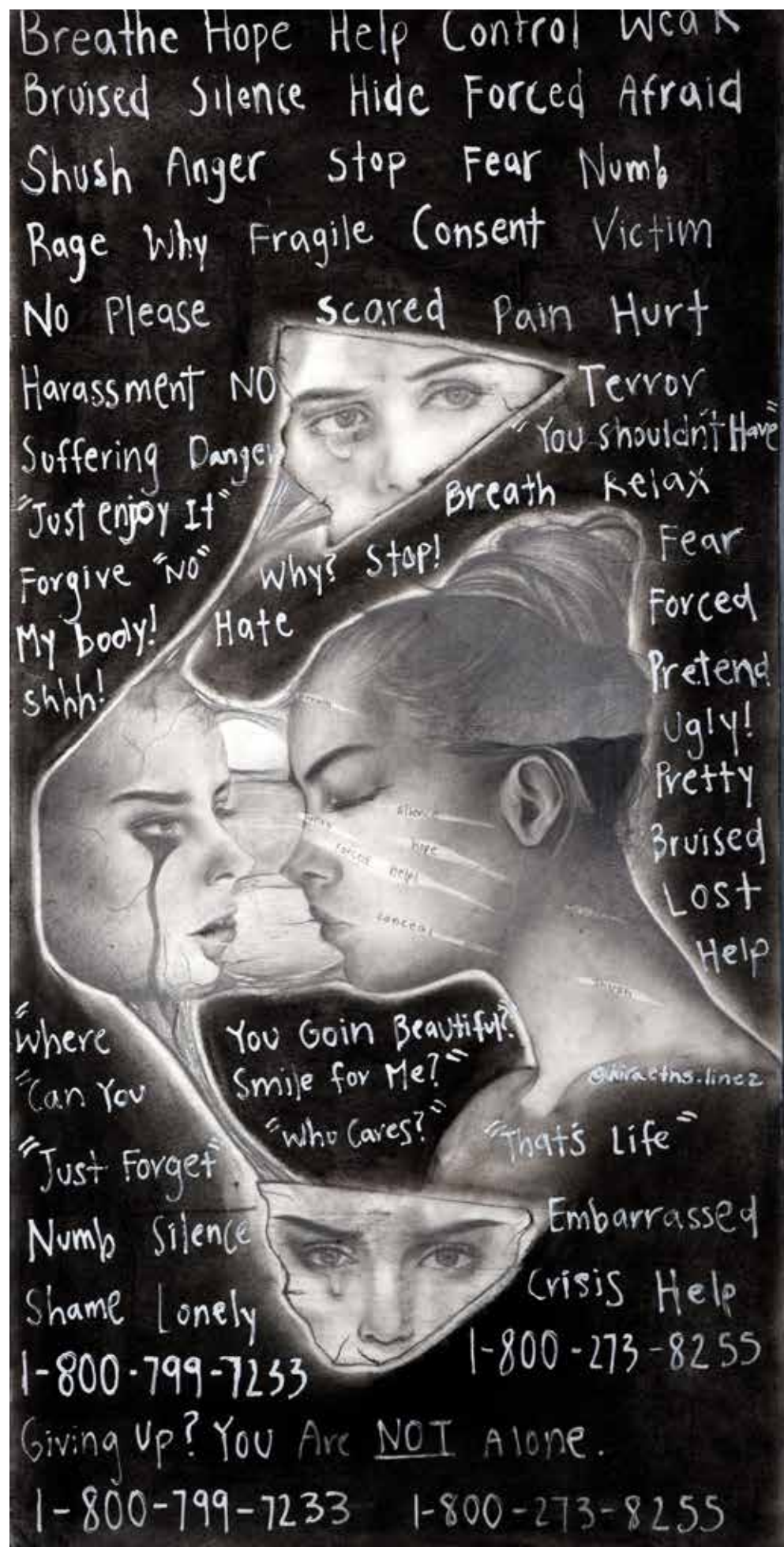
A particularly low point in Somalia's administration of justice was reached in February 2013, with the trial and conviction of a woman who had reported being raped by members of the security forces, along with the journalist who had interviewed her. The serious human rights concerns that this case, and several others associated with it, raised about due process, freedom of expression and the protection of survivors and journalists helped to catalyze some of the reforms that followed. In December 2013, the President of Somalia made a public commitment to address the issue of access to justice and services, promised that no more victims who reported rape would be imprisoned, and announced that a specialized crime unit and dedicated clinic would be created to deal with cases of sexual violence. After a visit from the SRSG-SVC, a Joint Communiqué on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict was signed between the Government and the United Nations, and the Team of Experts provided support to an implementation plan focused on accountability and service provision. The Ministry of Women and Human

Rights Development developed a National Action Plan to combat sexual violence in conflict with support from the United Nations.

In 2016, a Woman and Child Protection Unit was established within the police, a protocol for the clinical management of rape was put in place to enhance the quality of care, and 17 "one-stop" centres were established across the country. Free legal services and mobile courts were also established by the Government. A Sexual Offences Act was adopted in Puntland. The Government also developed a traditional dispute resolution policy to encourage sexual violence cases to be brought before the courts. In 2017, UNSOM partnered with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support the Government to develop a pilot project focused on the rehabilitation and reintegration of women and girls who had formerly been associated with Al-Shabaab. The Chief of Defence Forces of the Somali National Army issued a command order prohibiting sexual violence and affirming a policy of zero tolerance for these crimes. The nation's first forensic laboratory, critically needed to facilitate the prosecution of rape, was established. The Office of the Attorney-General also developed a new policy on the prosecution of sexual offences that incorporated a survivor-centered approach. In May 2018, the Federal Council of Ministers adopted the Sexual Offences bill, which is still pending before Parliament. Once this bill is enacted, rape will no longer be classified as a crime against morality, and a more survivor-centered legal framework will be established.

The Sexual Offences bill also specifically addresses issues such as sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, forced marriage, sexual slavery, and kidnapping for the purposes of rape and sexual slavery.

The enactment and implementation of the Sexual Offences Bill will be important steps forward in strengthening the legal framework, facilitating prosecutions and, ultimately, bringing an end to impunity for crimes of sexual violence. The United Nations has also recommended that the Government ensure full implementation of the National Action Plan on Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the extension of activities to Federal Member States to support their efforts to combat sexual violence and provide the necessary support to survivors. The adoption of transparent legal processes and enforcement mechanisms to investigate and prosecute sexual violence crimes perpetrated by soldiers and their commanders should also be prioritized.



Nayoung Ma | 15 years old
Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

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SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan has endured decades of war, accompanied by crimes of conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls that have reached extreme levels of brutality. The initial promise held out by the 2011 referendum and the achievement of internationally recognized independence was not fulfilled. Instead, military clashes continued to erupt, and the country has been riven by conflict since heavy fighting broke out between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) in December 2013. Women and girls' exposure to sexual violence has remained consistently high, with active hostilities intensifying its frequency and severity. In 2016, for example, during the year in

which fighting erupted in Juba and spread to other regions of the country, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) documented 577 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, gang rape and sexual slavery. UNMISS noted that there was an alarming increase in the number of rapes reported that year, with cases of abduction for the purpose of sexual slavery having more than doubled, and the number of cases of sexual violence perpetrated by men in uniform having increased by 32 per cent.

Sexual violence has been committed by all parties to the conflict, as well as in the course of inter-communal clashes, in an appallingly pervasive manner. Repeated offensives and counter-offensives have led to cycles

of revenge attacks and rapes, and in many cases sexual violence has been systematically used, with marked ethnic and political undertones, as a tactic of war. The Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, established by the Human Rights Council, found that acts of rape, gang rape, mutilation of sexual organs, and other forms of sexual violence were perpetrated against women, girls, men and boys, often in front of relatives, in order to humiliate victims, families and entire communities. The Commission also found that the continuing violence and human rights violations in South Sudan, including rape and sexual violence, could amount to war crimes. Women and girls have been further affected by massive internal displacement, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and the normalization of extreme violence in a militarized society. Lawlessness and impunity have been widespread, and national institutions have proven unable to effectively prosecute rape or provide remedies. The weakness of the formal justice system has increased reliance on traditional mechanisms, which have not treated rape as a serious crime and have settled most cases by ordering the victims to marry their perpetrators.

There has been minimal compliance with the multiple ceasefire agreements, commitments and command orders signed since 2014, including the Joint Communiqué signed between the Government and the United Nations and the Unilateral Communiqué issued by the armed opposition forces, which include many important measures to prevent and punish sexual violence. The United Nations has therefore intensified its efforts to enhance

accountability. A United Nations working group has been assisting the Government with its efforts to implement the Joint Communiqué. UNMISS and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict have supported training for the military and police to reinforce individual and command responsibility for preventing and addressing sexual violence, and specific action plans have been developed for the security sector. UNMISS and humanitarian agencies have been working to improve safety and security in and around displacements setting, by strengthening early-warning systems, increasing the frequency of patrols, and establishing weapons-free zones. The military constituted a special tribunal to try soldiers accused of crimes, including the rape of women humanitarian workers housed at the Terrain compound in 2016, and UNMISS monitored the proceedings. In September 2018, 10 soldiers of the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces (SSPDF) were convicted of these crimes and sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging between 10 and 14 years. However, the trial was limited to low-ranking soldiers, with senior officers having largely evaded responsibility. In addition, the mobile courts in Bentiu convicted three SSPDF soldiers of rape, sentencing them to imprisonment terms of between six and 12 years.

The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan was signed in September 2018 and widely commended as a sign of hope for lasting peace. The Secretary-General urged the Government to estab-

lish the Hybrid Court specified by the Agreement without delay, and to ensure that conflict-related sexual violence would be addressed as one of the Agreement's central aspects. Further forward-looking recommendations include the rigorous investigation of all incidents of sexual violence, regardless of the rank and affiliation of the perpetrator; the provision of comprehensive services to survivors; the extension of services to remote locations; the safe release and return of women and girls abducted in the course of military operations; and ensuring humanitarian organizations have full and unfettered access to assist survivors and displaced civilians.

**Sydney Richards | 15 years old
Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts**

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SRI LANKA

While decades of civil war in Sri Lanka between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) came to an end in 2009, sexual violence against women and girls continued. Vulnerability was especially marked in northern and eastern areas of the country, which had previously been affected by conflict and remained heavily militarized. A culture of violence, entrenched during the civil war, fuelled sexual violence crimes in all nine provinces. Widowed and single women, who headed nearly 60,000 households in the Tamil communities, described an ever-present threat of sexual assault and harassment by the military. There were some indications that abduction, arbitrary detention, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence actually increased in the post-war period, and women who were released from detention in 2014 testified about acts of sexual torture that were accompanied by racial slurs and insults directed at those perceived to be linked with the LTTE.

The Government took a number of steps to strengthen its response to sexual violence. It acknowledged that widows and other female-heads-of-households and their children were more vulnerable to sexual violence owing to the long-term damage to the social fabric. In fact, by 2016 single women still headed one quarter of all households across the country. Considerable progress was made in the resettlement and reintegration of civilians displaced by violence, and the Government established special Women's Protection Units at police stations and women's centres in camps for internally displaced persons. In 2016, it also appointed a Civil Society Taskforce to conduct a national consultation on the design of an inclusive transitional justice mechanism, which incorporated the voices of survivors of sexual violence. With United Nations support, the Government launched a new Action Plan to address sexual and gender-based violence in 2016, and a

plan on the promotion of human rights, adopted in 2017, included measures to expedite sexual violence cases. The Action Plan on sexual violence generated a specific policy to support women-headed households in areas previously affected by conflict.

There was, however, a chronic failure to address impunity. The High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern that the Government had made only limited and piecemeal efforts to investigate grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. It was only in 2015 that the first convictions of soldiers for conflict-related sexual violence were handed down by the High Court of Jaffna for the rape of two women in 2010. The Human Rights Council underlined in its 2015 resolution that sexual violence, torture, abduction and a climate of intimidation continued in Sri Lanka as a part of the legacy of war. The Committee on Torture noted in 2016 that serious allegations of torture of a sexual nature were continuing, and the International Truth and Justice Project corroborated this finding, calling for effective reform and vetting of the national security apparatus. Efforts to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission or judicial mechanism were delayed by the constitutional crisis that began in October 2018.

United Nations human rights mechanisms have urged the Government to take all necessary steps to ensure that reparations are made available to survivors of sexual violence through the Office for Reparations. It will also be important to ensure that all cases of conflict-related sexual violence are systematically documented, and that transitional justice mechanisms are mandated to deliver accountability in cases of sexual violence against women, girls, men and boys from all ethnic groups, including cases committed by State actors.



Tayla Evans | 15 years old
Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

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SUDAN (DARFUR)

The 2011 signing of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur by the Government of the Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement was an important step forward in Sudan's peace process. It did not, however, signal the immediate cessation of conflict, or an end to the crimes of conflict-related sexual violence committed against women and girls. The incidence of sexual violence remained high throughout the next five years. The majority of the cases reported during this period by the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) involved attacks on internally displaced women and girls living in and around the camps, and attacks taking place in the context of continued military operations and armed clashes. A large number of the attacks took place when women and girls ventured to isolated areas in

order to farm or collect firewood. In 2015, UNAMID documented 105 cases of conflict-related sexual violence. All of the victims except one were female, 53 per cent were minors, and 47 per cent were internally displaced persons. It should be noted that, according to UNAMID, the available data did not reflect the actual scale of the violations taking place, due to the denial of access to places of alleged violence, the limited presence of law enforcement, and the victims' fears of stigmatization and reprisals. Furthermore, there were allegations of a mass rape of over 200 women and girls by the Sudanese armed forces in Tabit, North Darfur, in 2014, and of a mass rape following the attacks by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Golo in 2015, although UNAMID had difficulty gaining access to the area in order to corroborate these accounts. A climate

of insecurity and impunity prevailed, and the threat of sexual violence devastated the lives and livelihoods of women and girls in Darfur, seriously constraining their freedom of movement.

Significant obstacles limited the reporting of crimes of sexual violence. In addition to security constraints and access restrictions imposed by the Government, small arms proliferated in and around displaced persons' camps and settlements, as well as in towns and villages, and banditry was on the rise. It was often difficult to identify alleged perpetrators, given the wide range of armed actors operating in the country. Indeed, many survivors could only report that they had been attacked by "armed men", "men in military uniforms", or "armed Arab men", thus many crimes could not be connected to any specific armed force or group. The protocols for reporting rape to the Government, especially the use of a document known as "Form 8", also discouraged women and girls from making complaints, as did the fact that a reference to adultery was included in the criminal law's definition of rape, and rape victims often ran the risk of being charged with this offense. In addition, the track record of the Sudanese police response to allegations of sexual violence did not inspire confidence in the system. In 2014, UNAMID reported that even when cases were initiated the authorities generally failed to bring perpetrators to justice, noting that of 63 cases reported to the police, only 20 had been investigated and only 14 led to arrests, resulting, ultimately, in just two convictions. Accordingly, many cases of rape were

instead resolved through traditional justice mechanisms, which often ordered victims to marry perpetrators.

A number of important steps were taken to strengthen the response to sexual violence. A National Action Plan to combat violence against women was developed in 2011. In 2012, Family and Child Protection Units were established in police stations in some localities, with United Nations police advisors co-located with those units. The United Nations conducted ongoing training and capacity-building for the armed forces, law enforcement officials, and members of the judiciary. Considerable efforts were made to improve protection at community-level, for instance: in camps for internally displaced persons, women were organized into large groups for the purposes of farming and the collection of water and firewood; the UNAMID police force trained community policing volunteers to assist sexual violence survivors; and women's police and the women's protection networks established in the camps provided a platform for internally displaced women to identify their protection concerns and inform the response strategies. Sudan's Criminal Act was amended in 2015 to distinguish rape clearly from adultery and achieve greater alignment with international standards. UNAMID and UNDP further supported the establishment of a Victim and Witness Protection programme. In 2016, the mandate of the Darfur Special Court was expanded to include rape. There was an overall improvement in security conditions in Darfur in 2017, which continued throughout 2018, facilitated by the reduction in military confrontations

between Government forces and rebel groups and the sustained unilateral cessation of hostilities. The rate of new displacements was reduced and humanitarian access improved, although conflict-related sexual violence remained a concern in light of on-going armed clashes, the proliferation of weapons, and continuing insecurity in the displacement camps. The Government conducted an important campaign to remove illegal weapons in Darfur, and undertook efforts to repatriate refugees, allocate land to returnees, and reintegrate internally displaced persons in host communities. While it also established specialized police structures and deployed judges to strengthen the investigation and prosecution of sexual violence crimes, there have been few prosecutions to date.

In February 2018, the Government facilitated the first visit of the SRSB-SVC to Sudan, and a constructive dialogue began towards the development of a framework of cooperation with the United Nations for addressing conflict-related sexual violence. The Secretary-General has underlined the importance of adopting this framework of cooperation, and developing an implementation plan that is aligned with Security Council resolutions 2016 (2013) and 2429 (2018). The Government has also been encouraged to strengthen existing accountability mechanisms, and to cooperate with the United Nations system to facilitate access throughout Darfur for service-providers, humanitarian actors and human rights monitors.



Yunez Morales | 15 years old
Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

This painting is part of the Art Exhibition
"Sexual Violence In Conflict: Youth Speak Out Through The Arts"
launched on the occasion of the 10-Year Anniversary of the
Establishment of the Mandate on Sexual Violence in Conflict

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

The Syrian crisis has been characterized from its inception by sexual violence against women, girls, men and boys. Sexual violence against women and girls was most commonly committed during house searches and at checkpoints following the advance of Government forces, and many men and boys were subjected to brutal rape and sexualized torture while in detention. Activists were increasingly targeted, as well as LGBTI persons, and the fear of sexual violence was one of the factors driving families to flee their homes. Verification of allegations and data collection were constrained due to Government-imposed access restrictions. In addition, many survivors declined to report because of the serious risk of reprisals, social stigmatization, and targeting for "honour" killings, compounded by a lack of safe and confidential services for survivors.

In 2012, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic found that Government forces and Shabbiha were the main perpetrators of crimes of sexual violence, and that the rapes committed as part of the attack on the civilian populations during military operations in Homs and Al-Haffe could be prosecuted as war crimes. In 2014, an increase in the reports of sexual violence committed by ISIL and other terrorist groups was noted. During the August attack on Sinjar in Iraq, ISIL abducted thousands of Yazidi women and girls who were trafficked into and across the Syrian Arab Republic for sexual slavery, as part of its ongoing campaign against members of minority groups. Reports were also received of women and girls from the Yazidi community, and other minority groups, being forcibly transferred into Syria in 2017, following military operations to liberate ISIL-controlled areas of Iraq. Despite the accumulation of evidence of crimes of sexual violence committed by multiple parties to the conflict, as of 2017 not one of these crimes had been prosecuted, either within Syria or abroad. The General Assembly's call to establish an independent, international mechanism to support prosecution of the most serious crimes, staffed with dedicated expertise in addressing sexual violence, was therefore an important development.

The situation of the millions of women and girls displaced by the conflict has been a matter of great global concern. Already in 2013, 6.5 million people had been internally displaced within the Syrian Arab Republic, and over 2 million displaced to Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and other parts of North Africa. The risk of sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking has been high in and around refugee and displaced persons' camps, because of overcrowding, lack of privacy, financial desperation and lawlessness. Most Syrians living in Jordan and other countries have had limited or no access to income, exposing women and girls to prostitution in the effort to pay rent or gain essential services. The incidence of child marriage, removal from school, and the physical confinement of women and girls has been increasing in displacement camps and refugee communities, as their members adopt negative coping strategies in the attempt to protect their families. Women and girls who are heads-of-households, widows or divorcees have been exposed to forced marriage, polygamy and serial "temporary marriages". Many children are also at risk of statelessness. Mothers have had great difficulty registering children whose fathers are missing, including those born as a result of rape, especially in countries that do not legally allow women to confer their nationality upon their children.

The Secretary-General has urged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and all other parties to the conflict to immediately cease all acts of sexual violence. It has also been strongly recommended that women are enabled to participate meaningfully in peace processes, negotiations and future transitional justice mechanisms, and that conflict-related sexual violence be comprehensively addressed. It is also critically important that the security forces operating in Syria provide full cooperation in identifying missing women and girls and facilitating their safe return to their families.



Jennifer Dresner | 16 years old
 Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
 Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

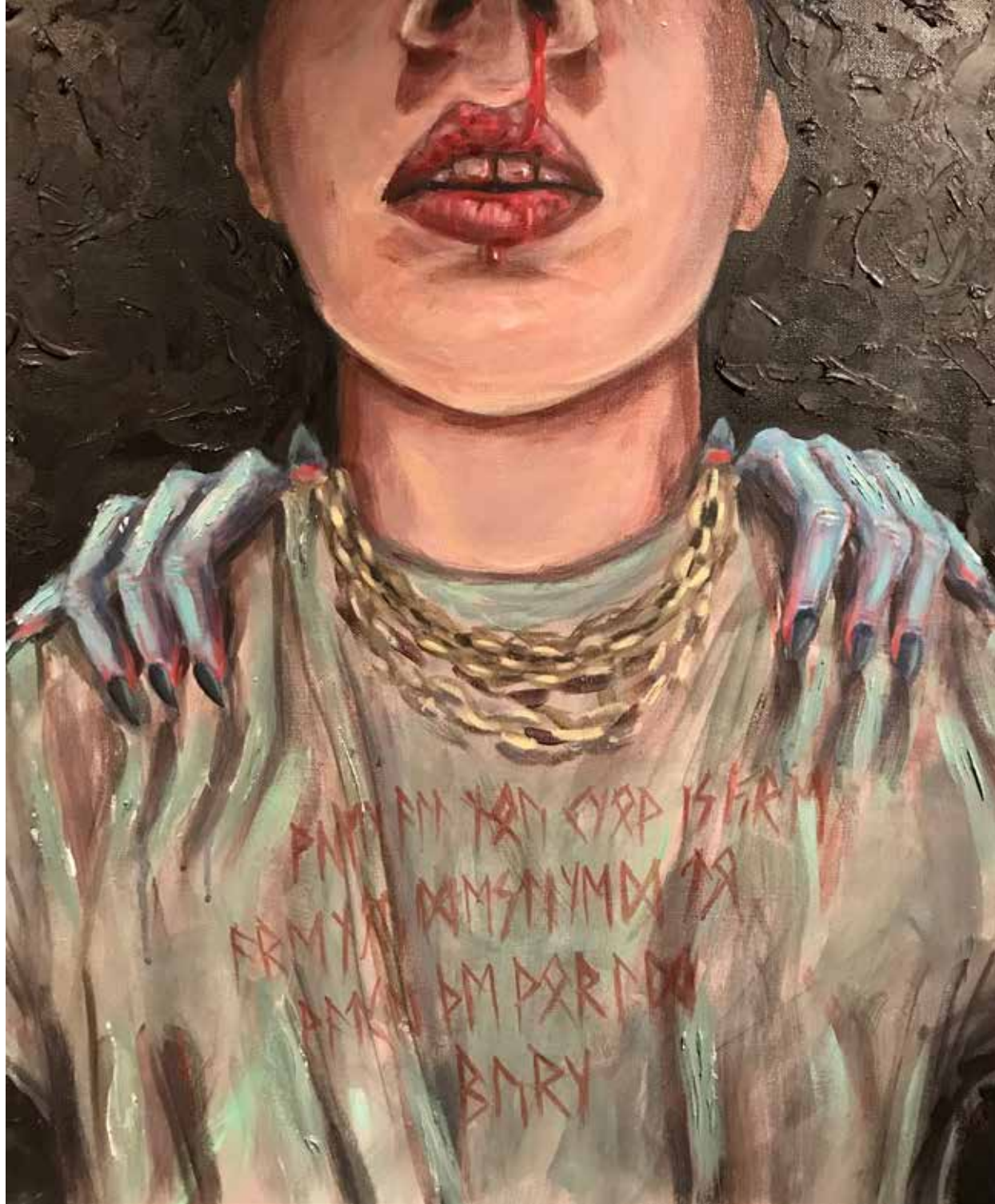
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YEMEN

With the escalation of armed conflict, political instability and lawlessness in 2015, the already dire situation in Yemen became the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. Over 80 per cent of the population has required humanitarian assistance and protection. Women and girls constitute the vast majority of the country's 2.5 million internally displaced persons, with more than 30 per cent of displaced households headed by women. Men have left their families across the country to join the fighting, leaving women and girls exposed to violence. Reports of sexual violence increased dramatically, including cases of sexual assault, rape and sexual slavery, though most of these cases are not directly attributable to parties to the conflict. They are, rather, the result of the high level of risk to which many women and girls have been subjected, especially in the context of internal displacement and forced migration. Severe economic and security challenges have also given rise to negative coping strategies such as child marriage, "survival sex", and forced prostitution. There have also been reports of possible linkages between mass migration, trafficking, and conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups, including violent extremist groups, operating in Yemen. Violence and abuse against migrants and asylum seekers in detention centres has become a serious concern. The Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen established by the Human Rights Council has documented incidents of rape and sexual assault in migrant detention centres controlled by the Security Belt Forces. The management of many of these centres remains unclear, and the United Nations has been

working with the Government and de facto authorities to gain access to detained persons of concern.

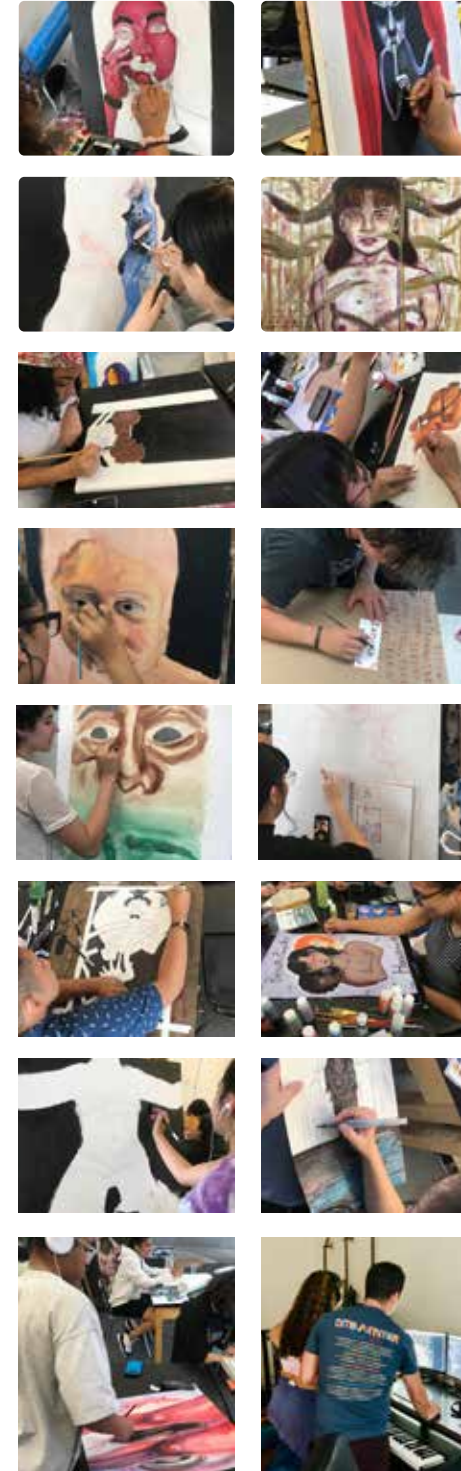
The breakdown of law and order and the collapse of Yemen's public infrastructure, combined with pre-existing gender inequality, has produced a daunting environment for survivors of sexual violence. Widespread impunity and the fear of retaliation, including through "honour" killings and tribal responses to rape, have led to chronic under-reporting of these crimes. The reluctance to report is even more pronounced among refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls. The Government has demonstrated an incapacity to protect or assist survivors of sexual violence, and the United Nations system has been providing referrals for medical, psychosocial and legal aid support, along with safe shelter, cash assistance, livelihood training and dignity kits. The United Nations has also been training healthcare providers on the clinical management of rape, and has worked with religious and tribal leaders to challenge the harmful social norms of victim-blame and acceptance of gender-based violence. The Secretary-General has recommended that all parties to the conflict ensure the protection of vulnerable persons, including displaced civilians and detainees, and that they facilitate access for humanitarian assistance, including services for survivors of sexual violence. Enhanced monitoring and reporting has also been recommended, particularly on the nexus between displacement, trafficking, sexual violence and exploitation.



Yunez Morales | 15 years old
Nicole Spata's Fine Arts Painting Class
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

This painting is part of the Art Exhibition "Sexual Violence In Conflict: Youth Speak Out Through The Arts" launched on the occasion of the 10-Year Anniversary of the Establishment of the Mandate on Sexual Violence in Conflict

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT NEW YORK YOUTH SPEAK OUT THROUGH THE ARTS



This exhibition was conceived by Special Representative Patten, after seeing the work of students at the Frank Sinatra School of Arts, who decided to address the issue of sexual violence through their artwork. The students' works on display here were chosen through a selection committee, chaired by Special Representative Patten, on the basis of both their artistic merits and ability to address this complex topic through visual art with a raw emotional impact.

Original music was also produced to accompany this exhibition by composer Carlos Aguilar, who was inspired by the students' work.

Listen to his composition "Fearless" by scanning here:





Artist: Noorlhuda Nadheer Al-Mudhafar
Basrah | Iraq

This painting is part of the Art Exhibition
"Sexual Violence In Conflict:
Youth Speak Out
Through The Arts"
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