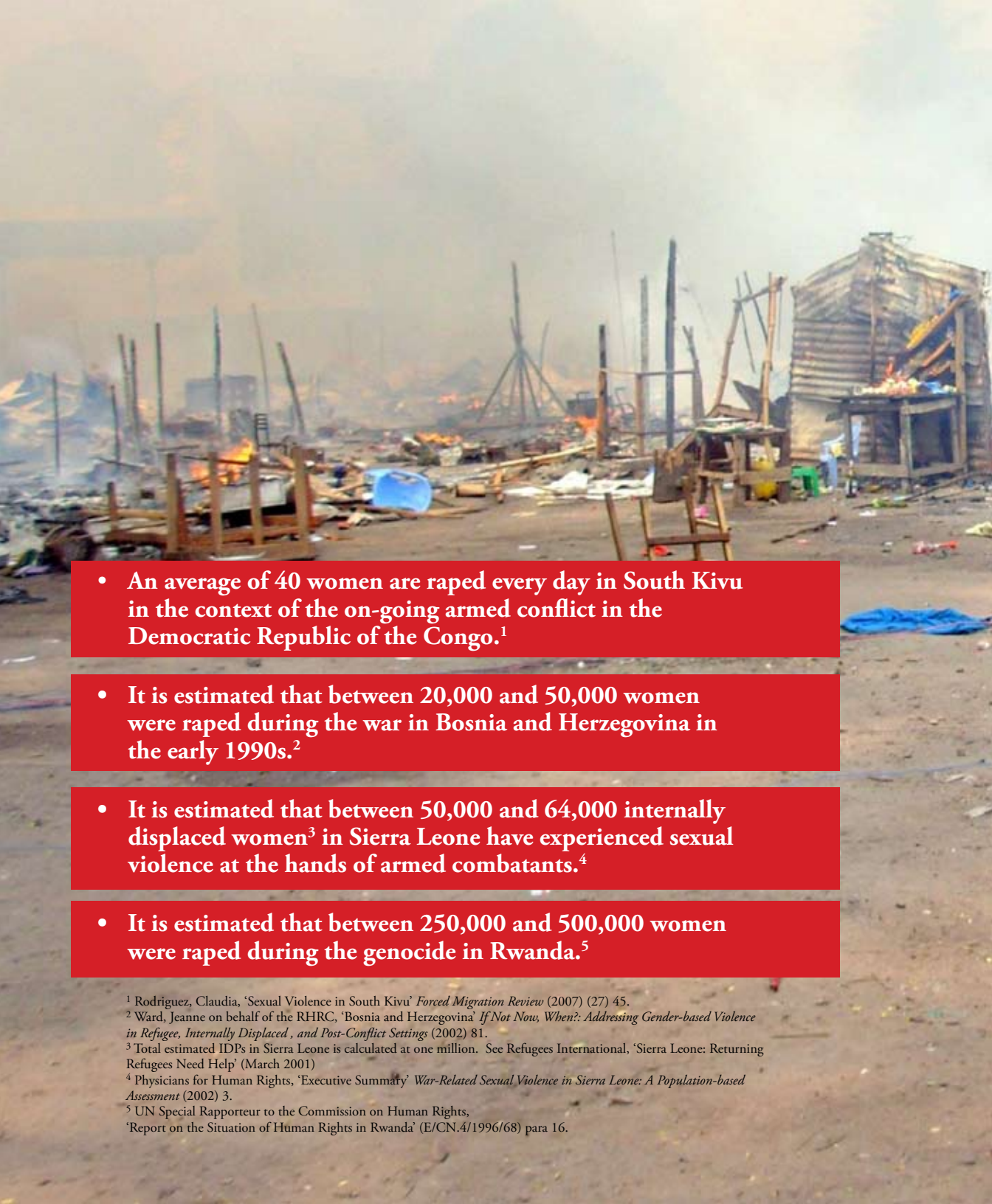


STOP RAPE NOW

UN ACTION AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT





- An average of 40 women are raped every day in South Kivu in the context of the on-going armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.¹

- It is estimated that between 20,000 and 50,000 women were raped during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 1990s.²

- It is estimated that between 50,000 and 64,000 internally displaced women³ in Sierra Leone have experienced sexual violence at the hands of armed combatants.⁴

- It is estimated that between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped during the genocide in Rwanda.⁵

UN ACTION AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

A new, cross-UN initiative, the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, is committed to prevent all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, in conflict and to support survivors. It will work with national governments and NGO partners to:

- Generate public awareness on the growing use of sexual violence as a weapon of warfare, and how to prevent it;
- End impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict;
- Improve and scale up services for survivors;
- Address the longer term impacts of sexual violence on communities and national development.

¹ Rodriguez, Claudia, 'Sexual Violence in South Kivu' *Forced Migration Review* (2007) (27) 45.

² Ward, Jeanne on behalf of the RHRC, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina' *If Not Now, When?: Addressing Gender-based Violence in Refugee, Internally Displaced, and Post-Conflict Settings* (2002) 81.

³ Total estimated IDPs in Sierra Leone is calculated at one million. See Refugees International, 'Sierra Leone: Returning Refugees Need Help' (March 2001)

⁴ Physicians for Human Rights, 'Executive Summary' *War-Related Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone: A Population-based Assessment* (2002) 3.

⁵ UN Special Rapporteur to the Commission on Human Rights, 'Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Rwanda' (E/CN.4/1996/68) para 16.

Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War

Conflict creates the climate for rampant sexual violence.

Sexual violence has been dismissed as random acts of individual soldiers. But in armed conflict, rape is also often a military tactic, serving as a combat tool to humiliate and demoralize individuals, to tear apart families, and to devastate communities. Armed forces use sexual violence as the spoils of war for soldiers who see the rape of women as their entitlement. Lawlessness allows perpetrators to act with impunity and leaves survivors with little to no recourse.

Though women and girls are the primary targets of rape, men and boys may also be targeted to inflict humiliation and shatter leadership structures.

Regardless of whether it is a single violent act or a part of a larger strategy, rape is unacceptable.

Impunity for perpetrators, and the insufficient response to the needs of survivors, can no longer be tolerated.

How does the UN address sexual violence in conflict?

The UN has a mandate to protect populations from sexual violence and to respond to the needs of survivors. Some examples of the UN's response include:

Prevention—

The UN addresses the prevention of sexual violence in conflict through its work to address social, economic, and political power imbalances among men and women. The UN has worked to integrate a gender equality perspective in its efforts on demobilization and disarmament, security sector reform, economic security issues, and access to education with a view to prevent sexual violence against women. Further, through its deployment of peacekeeping forces, including civilian compo-



nents, the UN has sought to protect women and to prevent future violence against them. In Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Kosovo, the UN civilian police has supported the creation of gender or family support units in local police stations to permit the registration and investigation of cases of sexual violence.

Care and services—

Survivors of sexual violence urgently require a range of services, from treatment for physical and psychological trauma and long-term physical and mental health consequences, to rehabilitation services to re-establish lives and livelihoods in communities. In crisis zones, the UN dispatches emergency reproductive health kits containing the medical equipment, supplies, and medicine that humanitarian workers need to address the immediate physical impact of sexual violence. In some post-conflict contexts, the UN supports clinics to treat traumatic fistula caused by sexual assault.

Justice—

The UN's international tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, the Special Court in Sierra Leone, and the International Criminal Court have special facilities to protect the identities of rape survivors and to provide post-testimony counselling. In countries such as Sierra Leone and Rwanda the UN has supported Truth Commissions and other transitional justice mechanisms, and has encouraged these to address women's experiences of sexual violence in conflict.



Participation—

In Burundi, Liberia, Sudan, Timor Leste, Guatemala, Peru, Afghanistan, Rwanda and elsewhere, the UN has supported women's participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict constitutional reform processes where women have demanded that war crime tribunals and transitional justice measures adequately respond to sexual violence and provide redress to survivors.

But this is not enough

Serious efforts are being made, but they are far from adequate. Impunity is still the rule for perpetrators of rape both during and after conflict. Survivors still suffer in silence, fearing stigma and ostracism if their ordeal is made public. The international community has been unable to prevent sexual violence from becoming a daily feature of most conflicts. Further, in some cases, international actors themselves, such as peacekeepers and humanitarian workers, have been implicated in perpetrating sexual violence in conflict and crisis situations.

What can we do?

**Sexual violence is not an inevitable feature of war.
It can be stopped.
Each one of us has a role to play in stopping it.**

The Security Council can demand consistent reporting on sexual violence and seek to fully implement SC Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and SC Resolution 1612 on monitoring and reporting violations against children. The General Assembly can promote women's rights in all of its political and development work. UN entities can better coordinate their responses to sexual violence across a range of sectors: legal reform; health, psychological and livelihood services for survivors; security sector reform; and support for women's engagement in peace-building.

The UN entities involved in this initiative will:

- Challenge international and regional security institutions to prevent sexual violence in current and emerging conflicts;
- Increase resources for the prevention of sexual violence and services for survivors;
- Monitor justice responses and support efforts to end impunity for rape;
- Replicate successful prevention strategies in other conflict zones;
- Improve international accountability for the protection of women's rights and the prevention of sexual violence.

UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict aims, above all, to build and sustain a global public and political commitment to prevent and to respond to sexual violence in conflict.



‘We feel great pain to know that our attackers, the people who killed our husbands and male relatives, who tortured, raped and mutilated us, have not been punished. Many of these people are in exile. It is as if they are being rewarded for the crimes that they committed. And what is happening to us here? We have been reduced to suffering, begging and misery. It is as if we are the guilty ones.’ —Rwandan woman interviewed for: *Women War Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment*, UNIFEM 2002

‘The extreme violence that women suffer during conflict does not arise solely out of the conditions of war; it is directly related to the violence that exists in women’s lives during peacetime’. —*Women War Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment*, UNIFEM 2002

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We can stop rape.

Every individual can do their part to end sexual violence.

We need to speak out and raise awareness that rape is not inevitable and can be stopped.

We need to tell our governments that ending sexual violence in war is a priority and that you want them to do more to Stop Rape Now.

And we need to become involved with organizations working against violence against women and girls.

For more ideas of ways you can help, go to: stoprapenow.org

