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## Inevitability of Sexual Abuse in Conflict Zones: Addressing the Intrinsic Causes and Consequences

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### **Abstract:**

*Violence against women in conflict is systematic, premeditated, widespread and global. Attempts to curb the practice have yielded little result. Sexual violence is now being used as a weapon of war to conquer the adversary. This has been attributed to a multiplicity of factors such as treating women as chattels and among the spoils of war; destruction of the pride of the community; and punishment of the enemy. Other reasons include discrimination on grounds of gender and general breakdown of law and order. There are social, moral, cultural, physical, psychological and economic consequences which impact negatively on victims, their families and communities. Victims have to grapple with rejection, stigma, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, torture and economic destitution. The problem seems to have defied solutions proffered by states and the United Nations. This article suggests that the tide can be stemmed through provision of medical and psychological care; enforcement of laws that protect and promote women's rights; ending discrimination and obnoxious customary practices and punishing perpetrators. It is further recommendation that women should be involved in peace processes, conflict resolution and post-war reconstruction.*

**Keywords:** Rape, war strategy, male dominance, stigma, discrimination, rejection

### **1. Introduction**

Violence against women exists in different forms around the world, with strong impact on all persons in the society notwithstanding social stratum (Etuk, 2003:2). It takes a variety of forms and includes physical harm or injury often inflicted on the victims. Distinct forms of violence against women occur during armed conflict, the main form being random acts of sexual assault by combatants and civilians and by both enemy and "friendly" forces.

In an environment of armed conflict, violence against women thrives. Sexual slavery and other types of physical violence such as trafficking, mutilations, killings and displacement are rampant (Women 2000,1998). According to Human Rights Watch (2002), women and girls are often physically violated by their assailers before, during and after being sexually abused. After being raped women and girls have had their private parts mutilated with weapons, including guns, sticks and other sharp objects (Human Rights Watch, 2002). The debasement of women's rights in settings of armed conflict violates the basic tenets embedded in international human rights regime (Sita, 2008).

In all armed conflicts which have occurred globally, all the parties involved have committed rape and sexual infractions against the female population. Thus, the perpetrators include government forces, rebel forces, militia groups and even civilians. However, it is the involvement of the UN peacekeeping force in sexual abuse that has caused a stir, embarrassment and shock to the international community (Lindsey,2001:53). This is because the UN force is supposed to be engaged in the protection women and to prevent the very act of violence which they are now perpetrating.

### **2. Inevitability of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflicts**

Sexual violence occurs in peacetime and in times of armed conflict. In virtually all armed conflicts, the female population has been exposed to various forms of sexual pervasion. The issue that has resonated in recent times relates to whether sexual violence in conflict is inevitable. This has been the subject of conversation at different colloquium (Wood, 2014). In situations of armed hostilities, rape is regarded as a 'by-product' of war (Lindsey,2001: 52). Neophytou has identified principal depictions in wartime sexual violence: "One is sexual violence as an inevitable consequence of war.... The second is sexual violence as a strategic instrument of war.... The third is sexual violence as an integral component of the war machine..." (Neophytou, 2011).

Frequently, women become the prey of sexual marauders when detached from their localities or groups. The female population in their millions currently shoulders the brunt of armed conflict, especially by exposure to sexual exploitation. The justification is that sexual violence in armed conflict is inevitable. The violators assume their conduct will be overlooked or regards themselves exempt from liability (Lindsey, 2001:52). However, the conclusion that rape is an inevitable part of war is wrongful (Lindsey, 2001:52). A recent study of the cases of Sri Lanka and El Salvador has questioned the account of wartime rape inevitability (Bogen, 2016).

### 3. A Long History as a Strategy of War

Sexual violence has a long history as a strategy of warfare. Instances abound from classical times of the prevalent sexual affliction of women and girls during armed conflicts. In primordial Greece (Abegunde, 2013), just as in other communities, the conqueror in war acquired the "right to rape" (Than and Shorts, 2003). The acts were often disregarded or accepted as unavoidable and part of the overall atmosphere of brutality and exploitation of women.

Prior to the First World War, rape in war was regarded as an unfortunate but inevitable consequence of war (Riviere, 2015). The German army used sexual violence as a means of domination in the First World War. Large-scale rapes were perpetrated by its forces when they set foot in France and Belgium in 1914 (Riviere, 2015). During World War II, Asian women were compelled to serve as whores for Japanese soldiers (Abegunde, 2013). During the hostilities in Bangladesh in 1971, rape was perpetrated in an extensive manner (United Nations, 1995). The Iraqi attack on Kuwait in 1990 was followed by prevalence of sexual violence. In the armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia, sexual violence was systematic and widespread. In Bosnia, thousands of Muslim women were raped. Sexual violence was used as a means of ethnic cleaning in that conflict (The Foca Case, Case IT-98-23/2). Throughout the armed conflict in Sierra Leone which spanned nine years, there was widespread and organized sexual assault on women and girls (Human Rights Watch, 2001). It was also used in other conflicts in northern Uganda, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Libya, Darfur, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen, Iraq and Syria.

In modern times the perceptions of rape and sexual gratification during armed conflict have transformed from a craving that is unavoidable when men are bereaved of female companionship for lengthened periods to a real strategy of war. Sexual violence is now receiving greater global consideration, scrutiny and focus as a result of its growing use as a weapon of war, and the utmost brutality with which it is being put into action. In the 1990s, attitudes began to reshape and attention started shifting to the issue of women's rights and gender-based violence.

### 4. A Problem That Defies Solutions

This predicament has defied legal and institutional efforts to stop it. From the 1907 Hague Convention to the Rome Statute of 1998, there exists a plethora of international legal instruments that outlaw the practice. Since the criminalization of sexual violence in the 1990s, there have been indictments and prosecutions by international tribunals. High ranking political and military leaders including the former president of Liberia, Charles Taylor and former vice president of D.R. Congo Jean-Pierre Bemba were tried, convicted and sent to prison for war-related sexual violence (The Prosecutor v. Charles Ghankay Taylor No. SCSL-03-01 and The Prosecutor v. Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo ICC-01/05-01/08). The former president of Cote D'Ivoire, Laurent Gbagbo, has been indicted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity, including rape (The Prosecutor v Laurent Gbagbo ICC – 02 - /11 – 01/11). In addition, the United Nations, states and non-governmental organizations have initiated measures to end war-related sexual violence. Yet perpetrators remain defiant and undaunted. Sexual marauders still operate unhindered in war zones.

### 5. Causes of Wartime Sexual Violence

#### 5.1. Spoils of War

The intractability of sexual violence in conflict is attributed to a multiplicity of factors. One of the causes of sexual assault on women in war-related conflict is the view held from time immemorial that women constitute a fraction of the "spoils" of war to which combatants are entitled (Women 2000, 1998). Closely associated with the above notion is the belief that women are chattels available to the triumphant fighters (Women 2000, 1998), a bonus for the victor, (Than and Shorts, 2003:347) and trophy of war (Ellis, 2007). Certain conventions and practices recognize women and girls as the possessions of men and usually as objects of sex (Zielinski, 2015 September).

#### 5.2. Destruction of the Pride of the Community

Destruction of the male population and by that the dignity of the community is another factor why sexual abuse thrives. Where the men are incapable of protecting their women, they would be regarded as weak and thereby humiliated. Also, women may be idealized as the carriers of cultural identity and their bodies regarded as 'territory' to be conquered. Sexual attack aimed at women is regarded as an assault on the principles of 'honour' of a community and for that reason a specifically effective instrument of war (Amnesty International, 2004). It has further been maintained that "women became a means of keeping troops happy and weakening the enemy by inflicting terror, destroying community values and pride" (Than and Shorts, 2003:347).

#### 5.3. A Kind of Punishment

Sexual violence can also be employed as a kind of punishment. It can be used to inflict terror upon the people, wreck their societies and force them from their residence (Than and Shorts, 2003:347). It may be employed to injure, degrade, intimidate and humiliate people (Ndifonand Archibong, 2009:38). Troops sometimes utilize rape as a form of subjugation and humiliation. Combatants employ the tactic of war to penalize or brutalize the female population and afflict their community (Amnesty International, 2004). This form of violence is designed to humiliate and denigrate the entire community (Amnesty International, 2004).

A former UN force commander, Patrick Cammaert, maintains that combatants employ this strategy for complete destruction of societies (UN Human Rights, 1996). According to him, "you destroy communities. You punish the men and you punish the women, doing it in front of the men, it has probably become more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier

in armed conflict" (UN Human Rights, 1996). Rape may be used as a form of torture. The rape of a 17-year-old Kurdish female detainee was held to amount to torture (Ayidn v. Turkey, Eur. Court of Human Rights, Judgment September, 1997: 1891).

#### 5.4. *Social and Cultural Disadvantage*

Sexual violence is an offshoot of the general violations of the rights of women. (Awake, 2008:3). It has been observed that "In many cultures women are viewed and treated as inferior or as second-class citizens. Prejudices against them are deep-rooted" (Awake! 2008:3). This attitude makes them vulnerable and subject to the arbitrary will of other persons (Ndifon and Archibong, 2009:39-49). Societal patterns have frequently led to ideas of inferiority of women. Many of the "practices represent stereotypical attitudes established in male-dominated patriarchal societies" (Rehman, 2010:523). In several societies, male perspectives are seen as the norm and "Such a power imbalance can result in women and girls having little or no say in decisions that affect their lives. Their voices are silenced and their experiences marginalized" (FAO, 2011).

Women and girls suffer notable social and cultural impediments. They are open to the marginalization, poverty, discrimination and other problems in times of armed conflicts (Hoist-Roness, (2006). The fact remains that women's status of deprivation and prejudice in the community suggest that the affliction and pains coexisting with war are borne mostly by them (Women 2000, 1998). According to Chinkin (1994), "rape in war is not merely a matter of chance...nor is it a question of sex. It is rather a question of power and control which is structured by male soldiers' notions of their masculine privilege, by the strength of the military's lines of command and by class and ethnic inequalities among women."

#### 5.5. *Discrimination on Grounds of Gender*

Discrimination encompasses violence derived from gender. It is violence aimed at a female because of her sex or that impacts her excessively. The harm suffered may be of physical, sexual or mental nature. As a result of discrimination, little importance is attached to women's rights (Amnesty International, 2004:4). Discrimination on the grounds of gender is one of the worst forms of violations of women's rights. This violation is grounded in a universal tradition of discrimination which repudiates and deprives women of equality of standing with men (Amnesty International, 2004). Women face numerous challenges and discrimination which are already part of some systems (Oji, 2007:106). This manifests in the socio-economic, political, educational, religious and other fields (Ndifon and Archibong, 2009:40). It has been observed that "This continuum of discrimination and other harmful practices against women and girls – from the private to the public sphere, in times of peace and in times of war – explains some of the forms of violence perpetrated against girls in armed conflicts." (Hoist-Roness, 2006:53).

#### 5.6. *Breakdown of Law and Order*

During armed conflict there is overall disintegration of law and order. This leads to an increase in diverse forms of violence especially sexual violence. According to the UN Parliamentary Hearing (2008):

Conflict creates a climate for rampant sexual abuse. Law and order are held in abeyance; communities are awash with small arms and light weapons; moral and social restraints give way to the peril and privation of war; and a culture of sexual entitlement prevails among armed groups that loot, pillage and rape with impunity, treating women as the 'spoils of war'.

#### 5.7. *Gratification for Combatants*

Women are abducted and turned into sex slaves by soldiers and insurgents. They provide sexual services to these combatants. The argument usually advanced by these fighters is that since they are not paid, they cannot patronize prostitutes, and if they gentlemanly make request on the women, they will not accept, so the soldiers use force and violence to get what they want (Sita, 2008).

### 6. **Consequences of Sexual Violence**

Rape and sexual violence in war engender instant and long-term consequences on the victims. The aftermath of sexual violence is grave for victims and may affect them for the rest of their lives.

#### **Social, moral and cultural consequences**

It has been asserted that sexuality deals with a multitude of principles and taboos regulating societal and personal conduct (Josse, 2010:178). Therefore, sexual practices are governed "by the social contract and access to sex is regulated, codified, and organized by all societies – and is sometimes even the subject of legislation" (Josse, 2010:178). Sexual assault undermines social order dealing with sexuality (Josse, 2010:179). The victims of rape suffer shame and stigmatization. They face isolation, inability to function in society and humiliation (Josse, 2010:183). Some women get pregnant as a consequence of rape (Women 2000, 1998). Women are frequently shunned, ostracized, and considered not suitable for marriage (Women 2000, 1998). They will probably suffer additional abuses of their rights.

The communities where the victims of rape hail from normally are not ready to assist them and the children who are products of such attack. Thus, while they may be willing to accept raped women back into their community, the offspring of that rape would not be accepted (Women 2000, 1998). According to Amnesty International (2004) "This leads women who have become pregnant as a result of rape to a situation of further ostracism, trauma and abuses of their rights" Victims of sexual attack are often held responsible for their misfortune in several communities (Josse, 2010:179).

The victims of the sexual violence and their families face human rights violations. The survivors and families face repression, loss of employment, inability to assert ownership rights and denial of political and civil rights (Amnesty International, 2004). They are rebuffed and deprived of such rights. According to Josse, (2010:178)

They are frequently prevented from speaking out, rejected by their spouses, prevented from marrying, forbidden to take part in certain activities...wherever they go and whatever they do, victims of sexual violence are made to feel ashamed and are ostracized, whether by their families and communities, schools, and employers, places of worship, legal institutions, or medical facilities. In some cases, whether in war or peace, they are 'buried alive' by society.

The children of victims of sexual violence who die from HIV/AIDS were often left destitute in the event of the demise of their care-givers and soon became vagabonds, homeless and vulnerable to rape and crime (Josse, 2010:179). Often justice is denied these women who find it difficult to visit the police. The victim's families rather profit from this act of violence by seeking compensation for their abuse. In other situations, a victim may be compelled to marry the perpetrator.

The social impact of rape on marriage varies according to culture. It may lead to abandonment of a wife by her husband after she has been raped (Josse, 2010:179). It has serious repercussions on family relations. It may cause friction in the family. An unmarried rape victim may be prevented from returning home. She may be rejected by family members or by her community (Josse, 2010:180). Sometimes children have been forced to witness the rape of their mothers or to have sexual relations with them. (Josse, 2010:180). For most men, the act of rape may be tantamount to an affront to themselves and their communities.

There are wide-ranging consequences arising from the stigmatization of rape victims. Married women may be "disowned" by their husbands. The unmarried victims of rape could find it very difficult to marry due to stigma or may be regarded as "spoiled" by their communities. In some societies the stigma associated with sexual assault runs so deep in their culture that the victims are practically driven into social exile, unable to marry, a disgrace and dishonor to their whole family. This has prevented the victims from seeking help. They are too scared and terrified to come out, opting to remain silent.

#### *6.1. Physical, Psychological and Health Consequences*

Most women and girls are physically abused and assaulted after an ordeal of rape by armed men. Rape may engender serious effects among them such as sterility, incontinence, and sexual infections (ICRC, 2011). Apart from the agony the victims bear, families, friends and communities also undergo psychological suffering. Human Rights Watch Report has reported cases of women and girls being raped while other family members and friends watch (HRW, 2002:12).

Another form of harm or injury often inflicted on women and girls is psychological. The survivors manifest physical, emotional and behavioural symptoms. The stress level is high in the period following the attack. There are common emotional manifestations among them fear, anxiety, agony, depression, humiliation, guilt, vexation and indifference (Josse, 2010:184). The victims of sexual violence are often rejected or castigated by her family and the society. Many girls have lost their chastity, which is critical to some communities. They cannot discuss it as it could lead to psychological affliction (HRW, 2002). A woman who is mentally traumatized may be precluded from active participation in communal activities (Josse, 2010:178).

Sexual violence is a major public health problem (WHO, 2011). A woman's mental health can be endangered by circumstances that diminish her capacity to adjust to her social surroundings (Josse, 2010:178). The challenges facing the victims of rape and sexual violence are further compounded by the lack of medical and psychological care facilities. Women and girls epitomize the potential for reproduction and survival as such are often targeted as a strategy of showing that they cannot be protected. It brings dishonor upon an entire family or community. According to Hoist-Roness "rape not only dims any prospects or marriage, it can have two very frightening consequences that endure long after the act has been committed: unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS" (Hoist-Roness, 2006:10).

The situation of raped women who get pregnant is even more precarious. Other health consequences include gynaecological problems and induced abortions. The victims may be subjected to intimidation, revenge, solitude or death (Amnesty International, 2004). In northeast Nigeria, the conflict has had severe impact on women and girls. The existing health services are normally overstretched in times of armed conflict. They also operate at reduced capacity, and are expected look after a large number of casualties arising from widespread violence (World Health Organization, 1997).

#### *6.2. Economic Consequences*

The economic costs of wartime sexual violence are huge affecting the entire community. Victims are segregated, unable to work or earn wages. Their involvement in normal economic pursuits is very low or restricted to domestic chores and caring for themselves and their children. Anytime there is an armed conflict, the resulting humanitarian crises place the female population in exceptional situations, resulting in astronomical impoverishment and scaling up of prostitution. They are often detached from their relatives and must strive to keep body and soul together.

### **7. Legal Framework Prohibiting Conflict-Related Sexual Violence against Women**

The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 referred vaguely to rape. It called on occupying forces to have regard for "family honour and rights, the lives of persons, and private property" (Art. 46). The Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols outlaw sexual violence in armed conflict, whether international or non-international. If the conflict is

international in character, the Geneva Conventions provide that women in confinement “shall be treated with all the regard due to their sex” (Article 14, Geneva Convention III 1949). The Convention further provides that “women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault” (Article 27, Geneva Convention IV 1949; see also articles 75(2) and 76/77 of Additional Protocol I of 1977).

In non-international conflict Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions outlaw conflict-related sexual violence. In addition to that, Additional Protocol II prohibits “outrages upon personal dignity in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault” (Article 4(2)(e) Additional Protocol II of 1977). The above provisions of treaty law are further consolidated by rules of customary international law. Specifically, Rule 93 proscribes rape and other forms of sexual outrage (ICRC, 2005).

There are various human rights treaties that protect women at all times. Women’s rights treaties include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; and Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

In the last two decades, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has initiated a number of measures to end wartime sexual violence against women and girls (Archibong and Nabiebu, 2018). Following the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the Security Council recognised war-related sexual violence as an international crime. As a result, rape and other forms of sexual abuse were categorised as war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Statutes of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). This marked a turning point in the fight against sexual violence in armed conflict.

The Council adopted Resolution 1325 (2000) seeking enhanced protection from sexual abuse for women in armed conflict (Barrow, 2010). A few years after, it adopted Resolution 1820 (2008) outlawing the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and ordering an end to it. Resolutions 1888 and 1889 were adopted in 2009 to reaffirm earlier resolutions seeking an end to sexual violence as a strategy of war (Iwilade, 2011).

## **8. Addressing the Issues of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict**

### *8.1. Access to Medical Care, Psychological Support and Counseling*

Women who are victims of suffered assault must be given access to appropriate and adequate medical care. A body should be established where they can access information and assistance. Free reproductive health assistance and psychological aid should be supplied by the state. Government should step up the programme of providing women affected by rape with voluntary access to testing and counseling for sexually transmitted diseases.

It should also provide appropriate drugs to prevent infections. In most cases government assistance to victims is concentrated in urban areas to the detriment of rural areas. In this regard, government should take steps to provide medical service to victims of sexual violence for both urban and rural populace. It can also collaborate with the UN and donor agencies to make it more result oriented.

### *8.2. Independent Mechanism for Accountability*

There should be an autonomous procedure for attributing liability. This would guarantee expeditious, in-depth and unbiased inquiry into police actions or omissions. Claims of police failure or refusal to prevent rape should not be ignored. Members of the armed forces found committing sexual abuse as part of peacekeeping mission should be prosecuted by their governments. Clear and unambiguous guidelines should be sent out to law enforcement agencies. The authorities should stand firm and insist on the law enforcement officials carrying out their duties to inquire into sexual abuse of women,

### *8.3. Education of Law Enforcement Personnel*

Educational programmes and awareness campaign for members of the public, the police personnel and the judiciary should be stepped up. The police should be educated on how to handle cases of sexual violence as well as provide an enabling condition for victims to report such cases. Gender-sensitive justice and security-sector reform which should embody upholding military discipline, screening previous perpetrators, prohibition of sexual violence in military training and enlisting women in the force should be enthroned. Prohibition of rape and other forms of sexual abuse must be incorporated into the domestic law as well as military manuals (Lindsey, 2001:63).

### *8.4. Reforms of Customary Law and Practices*

The legal regime available on ground for the protection of the rights of women must be scrutinized and overhauled. In other words, there is dire need for legal reforms. This is most urgent in the area of customary law and practices. This is one area where women have been subjugated, abused, violated, humiliated and battered in the name of custom. The government must embark on aggressive legal reforms to ensure that women’s rights are no longer undermined or sacrificed on the altar of custom. All forms of discrimination against women must be checked through anti-discrimination legislation.

### *8.5. Ratification of Women's Rights Treaties*

Over the years, states have paid lip-service to the protection and enforcement of women's rights. In most countries, rights of women exist only in statute books. In addition to local legislation, there are multifarious treaties on the rights of women. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women stands out as one of the landmark instruments for the protection of women's rights globally. States that are keen to protect the rights of women should ratify those treaties without reservation as well as domesticate them.

### *8.6. Abolition of Laws That Discriminate Against Women*

It is strongly recommended that all laws that promote discrimination in marriage, inheritance and ownership of property, among others, should be repealed. Government should implement and enforce anti-discrimination laws. Action should be taken against employers who discriminate against women living with HIV as a result of sexual attack.

In other areas, such as marriage, such women should not be discriminated against by government or religious officials. The children of women living with HIV/AIDS should be given assistance by the government and international aids agencies and donors. This will ensure the protection of their rights and prevent them from wasting as orphans. Such children usually end up on the street or in precarious conditions if they are not given special assistance. There should be laws and policies to protect them.

### *8.7. Amplification of Advocacy Programmes*

Promotion of the rights of women should be made an important priority of government. Measures should be adopted in peacetime to prevent sexual violence against women. Importantly and urgently government should embark on advocacy programmes respecting the women's rights and persuade people to report cases of sexual abuse to the police.

The victims must be aware of the legal instruments preventing sexual violence against them and protecting them against such violence related to armed conflict. Sensitization campaigns against impunity must be stepped up. Women affected by sexual violence should be enabled to feel free to speak out and seek help. The media, particularly the radio, should be of assistance as a channel for women's rights awareness crusade. Education programmes are crucial initiatives in re-establishing confidence and self-respect.

### *8.8. Acceptance of Survivors*

Communities are enjoined to strive earnestly to ensure that survivors of sexual attack are accepted and reintegrated into their communities. Everything possible should be done to prevent stigmatization of victims. Government must establish and maintain contact with civil society groups and law enforcement organisations. This will enhance the efforts at protecting victims of sexual violence as well as strengthen women's faith in the criminal justice system.

### *8.9. Reparation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration*

The victims of sexual violence can be assisted by way of reparation, rehabilitation and reintegration. The government should take the lead by designing and implementing a programme to support them. The UN and NGOs can come to the aid of these women and girls to enable them return to normal life as well as overcome the trauma and stigma associated rape and sexual violence.

### *8.10. Payment of Compensation by Perpetrators*

Perpetrators of crimes of rape and sexual violence may be asked to pay compensation to their victims. It is doubtful whether they can pay such compensation if they are asked to do so. As was observed by Amnesty International (2004) in the case of Rwanda, "it is difficult for victims to recover effective remedies from suspected perpetrators, as they are usually very poor, particularly if they have spent most the past decade in prison." States and international organizations such as the UN can establish compensation fund for victims.

## **9. Conclusion**

This work found that sexual violence in armed conflict is today one of the world's horrendous crimes and nightmares. It has also been found that despite successes in breaking the taboo, it has endured. The causes are deep-rooted in cultures quite difficult to dislodge, and buried in attitudes not amenable to change. Women are largely the custodian of the future of a very nation. Everything possible should be done not to undermine that motherly attribute. Ultimately however, it is the attitude of society toward the rights of women that holds the key.

It is therefore recommended that women should be accorded respect and equal treatment with men. This should manifest in the role they play in different aspects of the development of society. In relation to armed conflict, it is recommended that women should play a role in peace processes, conflict resolution, post-conflict resettlement and reconstruction. It is essential for women to be accorded ample participation where issues affecting them are addressed. However, until discrimination against women ends; until they are no longer seen as second-class citizens; and until they are no longer regarded as inferior, subservient and property of men, the war against sexual violence, whether in peacetime or time of war, would only be cosmetic, symbolic, lip service, futile exercise and a myth. Until men are ready to see women as partners in progress, the crusade to end sexual violence in conflict will remain an illusion.

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