

# **Research Report**

**Security Council**



**The issue of wartime sexual violence as a  
psychological weapon in Central Africa,  
Syria and Myanmar**

*Student Officers:  
Anne de Graaf & Eva de Roode*

## Introduction

Wartime sexual violence includes rape or other forms of sexual violence committed by combatants during armed conflict, war, or military occupation. It can therefore be defined as sexual harassment, sexual assaults, and rape committed amongst troops in military service. During war and armed conflict, rape is frequently used as a means of psychological warfare in order to humiliate the enemy. Armed groups in the Central African Republic have used rape and sexual slavery as a tactic of war across the country. Commanders have tolerated widespread sexual violence by their forces and, in some cases, appear to have committed it themselves as well. During wars in Syria, sexual violence was used as a strategy by pro-government supporters, members of the Free Syrian Army, and militants fighting for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Human Rights Watch has requested to send Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Myanmar army uses mass rapes, ordered by high-ranking officials, to inflict the maximum physical and mental harm on Rohingya women.

## The Committee

You will be a delegate in the Security Council, the most important body of the United Nations. In this committee the most important issues of the modern age are discussed. Because the Security Council is so important, you will be debating in pairs, so every country is represented by two delegates. Furthermore, the five most important countries (the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Russia, France and China) have VETO rights, which they can use to prevent an amendment or resolution from passing. Also, the Security Council is the only committee where member states can declare war on each other. If this happens staff members have to inform all the other MUNA committees of the conflict.

The Security Council is an ad-hoc committee, which means that you do not have to write your resolution beforehand. You will write a resolution from scratch with your fellow delegates by sending in amendments.

## Keywords

African Union = Continental union consisting of 55 member states located in the continent of Africa.

Interlocutor = Someone who is involved in the conversation.

Sexual violence = Any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act by violence.

Wartime sexual violence = Rape or other forms of sexual violence committed by combatants during armed conflict.

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## Overview

### *Africa:*

The United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC) and the African Union Commission (AUC), building on prior positive collaboration, agree to enter into a Framework of Cooperation to collectively address conflict-related sexual violence in Africa.

Under this Framework the Office of SRSG-SVC recognizes the Peace and Security Department (PSD) of the AUC as its primary interlocutor/Focal point when dealing with strategic issues related to conflict-related sexual violence in Africa at the continental level, and the AUC recognizes the Office of the SRSG-SVC as its primary interlocutor/Focal point within the United Nations (UN) system on issues related to conflict-related sexual violence.

One critical gap has emerged in relation to the need to be more cognizant of the role of women in peace processes and the need to address the specific vulnerabilities of women and children in conflict situations. While issues of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) have been a constant feature of conflicts, it was in the early 1990s that the international community realised its magnitude and began to take collective decisions towards addressing it. Indeed, increased demands have been placed on PSOs to ensure that they are managed in a manner that promotes and protects human rights and empowers and protects women and girls in particular, as well as men and boys, against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). It has been recognized that the underlining causes of SEA have been based on gender inequality, discrimination and patterns of violence against women, men, boys and girls. These have particularly highlighted the need to ensure accountability and end impunity for all forms of SEA. This Policy fits into these ongoing efforts to prevent and address violations, and in particular SEA, committed by AU staff and mission personnel.

### *Myanmar:*

In 2016-2017 and beyond, many Rohingya Muslim women were raped by Burmese soldiers during the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar. In November 2017, both UN officials and the Human Rights Watch reported that the Armed Forces of Myanmar were committing widespread gang rapes and other forms of sexual violence against the Rohingya Muslim women and girls for the last three months. Alongside the Armed Forces, the Myanmar Border Guard Police and Buddhist militias of Rakhine were also involved in these atrocities.

Sexual violence carried out by Myanmar's security forces against the country's Muslim Rohingya minority was so widespread and severe that it demonstrates intent to commit genocide as well as warrants prosecution for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The U.N. Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar found the country's soldiers "routinely and systematically employed rape, gang rape and other violent and forced sexual acts against women, girls, boys, men and transgender people in blatant violation of international human rights law."

Myanmar's government and military have consistently denied carrying out human rights violations, and said its military operations in Rakhine were justified in response to attacks by Rohingya insurgents.

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*Syria:*

In 2012 in a declaration by the UN stated that in Syria rape was being used as a weapon of war, however the help being given to victims was "sorely lacking", and that "Hospitals and clinics are not equipped to deal with the sheer volume of victims, and many victims do not report their attacks"

Trans women said they could not present themselves as women in Syria and had dressed as men to protect themselves from violence. Some had experienced sexual violence during interrogations in Syrian detention centres and said that, if their sexual orientation or gender identity was exposed, the violence intensified. Some had been in the Syrian army and had been subjected to sexual violence there because of their sexuality or gender identity. The UN Security Council has made it clear that non-discrimination must be a cornerstone of support services for wartime sexual violence survivors.

*United Nations:*

The latest report of the Secretary General on sexual violence in conflict was presented to the Security Council on 14 March 2013. The report reviews 22 conflict areas, which for the first time include Mali, and presents information on parties to conflict credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence. The report also emphasizes the urgency of ensuring that sexual violence considerations are explicitly and consistently reflected in peace processes and peace agreements, and in all Security Sector Reform and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration processes in which the United Nations is involved.

## **Arguments**

Rape and other forms of sexual violence should constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide. You should call upon Member States to comply with their obligations for prosecuting persons responsible for such acts.

Sexual violence in conflict is nothing new. It has long been considered an inevitable, if unfortunate, by-product of war, a form of collateral damage beyond the control of military commanders. But like other abuses of civilians, there is nothing inevitable about it. Any command structure that can organize an assault or punish deserters can organize disciplinary action to punish rapists, and thereby future abuses. Beyond a failure to prevent, evidence is mounting that in many conflicts of the last century, sexual violence has been orchestrated by political and military leaders. In some cases, sexual violence has been directed from the highest political levels.

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Sexual violence during conflict has proven highly effective in breaking the enemy's morale, particularly where women are raped in public, or where relatives are coerced into participating. Widespread and systematic sexual violence also hampers sustainable post-conflict recovery. It does so in at least three ways: first, it undermines social stability by destroying families and communities; second, the fear of sexual violence restrains women's mobility, leading them to retreat from economic activity, and causing girls to stay home from school; third, when perpetrators of sexual violence go unpunished, efforts to establish faith in the State's ability to protect its citizens and establish the rule of law is seriously undermined.

## **Timeline of Events**

*1963, May* - The 32 Heads of independent African States met in Addis Ababa Ethiopia to sign the Charter creating The Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

*1999, 9 September* - The Heads of State and Government of the OAU issued the Sirte Declaration calling for the establishment of an African Union.

*2002, July* - The African Union (AU) was officially launched.

*2013, 14 March* - The latest report of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict was presented to the Security Council

*2014, 31 January* - United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the African Union Commission concerning the Prevention and Response to Conflict-related Sexual Violence in Africa signed a Framework of Cooperation

*2014, February* - The AU has focused on operationalizing its various instruments on SGBV and SEA through the work of the Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) and through the appointment of a Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security.

*2015* - the UN created the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, recently marked on June 19.

*2017, November* - UN officials and Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that the Armed Forces of Myanmar were committing widespread gang rapes and other forms of sexual violence against the Rohingya Muslim women and girls.

*2019, May* - the Central African government and the UN signed a new agreement pledging to tackle sexual violence by armed groups, including bringing attackers to justice and providing necessary services for survivors.

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## Resolution

Because the Security Council is an ad-hoc committee, you will not need to write a resolution beforehand. Instead, we will be writing a resolution together as a product of the debate. Therefore, you will have to come up with solutions on the spot. These solutions are expressed in the form of amendments.

Because of the complex nature of this issue, it is very hard to come up with one single solution for this problem. Therefore, it should be solved in little steps.

It is important to remember that when writing amendments, you should always keep in mind your country's stance.

## Links and Sources

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