



19 June 2017- Conflict-related sexual violence continues to be used as a tactic of war, resulting in severe mental and physical problems for the victims, and for many, exclusion from the place they used to call home.

The term “conflict-related sexual violence” refers to a wide range of heinous crimes ranging from rape, sexual slavery and forced prostitution to forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict. It is impossible to know the exact number of people who are victims to conflict-related sexual violence. Experts predict that for every one reported case, 20 go unreported.

“We fled to Juba after fighting started in Bentiu. At 8pm we were taking things inside the house and a man came in and I hid under the table. He grabbed me and I didn’t know who it was. He held me and forced my mouth shut. I wanted to scream but I couldn’t. He started stripping off his clothes. I started saying ‘what is this, what is this’? They said the guy is a soldier with a rank of one star. I was powerless, and when you’re powerless and your mouth is shut there’s nothing you can do,” [a 14 year-old South Sudanese](#) girl told UNICEF.

In South Sudan alone, countless stories as the one above can be heard. A quarter of all reported cases of conflict-related sexual violence in South Sudan have been committed against children.

In conflict settings, sexual violence is often used as a weapon against opposing groups, and mirrors the fault lines of the wider conflict or crisis. The violence terrorizes populations into compliance.

[The 2016 report](#) shows that sexual violence has become a core element of the ideology and operations of extremist groups, such as ISIL (Da'esh) or Boko Haram, which have specifically targeted women and girls. Sexual violence has also been used against men and boys, including during interrogation and detention.

“Sexual violence is a uniquely heart-wrenching crime because victims often bear the stigma instead of the perpetrators. Those who commit these heinous crimes often escape justice. Meanwhile, their victims are often forced to live with the shame of having been raped, rejected by their families and communities. Worst still, children born out of rape experience discrimination, exclusion and stigma. Pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS and other health challenges, are common, and survivors often find themselves doubly victimized,” [said](#) Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, Amina Mohammed, during an open debate on the topic in May 2017.

For peacebuilding and reconciliation to take root, justice must be done for sexual violence survivors. Unless those who have suffered sexual violence and the children born of rape are reintegrated into their societies and economies, they will remain susceptible to exploitation and recruitment. “We are seeing more trials, and military officers, including a General, have been convicted for sexual violence crimes”, said Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohamed in a [statement](#). “So, slowly, we are seeing justice being done, and impunity eroded.”

#EndRapeInWar