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## The Irony of Refuge: Gender-Based Violence Against Female Refugees in Africa

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## The Irony of Refuge: Gender-Based Violence Against Female Refugees in Africa

### Abstract

The Sudanese soldiers and the Janjawid invaded her village. When she tried to escape, they gang-raped her. At that time, she was eight months pregnant and described giving birth to a dead baby afterward and being very sick. She could not make it with her group to the border to flee to Chad so she had to walk alone. Once she got to Chad, she was raped by a Chadian soldier outside of the camp and became pregnant. Afterwards, her husband divorced her, and she now lives with the stigma of being a rape victim. She has been expelled from her family and has a child who is a product of this rape (Sharp 2009).

### Keywords

Human rights, Africa, Women's rights, Sexual violence, Refugees, Displaced peoples

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## The Irony of Refuge: Gender-Based Violence against Female Refugees in Africa

By Liz Miller

The Sudanese soldiers and the *Janjawid* invaded her village. When she tried to escape, they gang-raped her. At that time, she was eight months pregnant and described giving birth to a dead baby afterward and being very sick. She could not make it with her group to the border to flee to Chad so she had to walk alone. Once she got to Chad, she was raped by a Chadian soldier outside of the camp and became pregnant. Afterwards, her husband divorced her, and she now lives with the stigma of being a rape victim. She has been expelled from her family and has a child who is a product of this rape (Sharp 2009).

The woman recalling this story is one of hundreds of thousands of women who have experienced gender-based violence. Refugee women are more affected by violence than any other population of women in the world, and all refugee women are at risk of rape or other forms of sexual violence (Vulnerable Women's Project 2009). Gathering specific statistics of gender-based violence against refugees is problematic; sexual violence is often under-reported and the instability of conflict zones can disintegrate civil society. Among the myriad challenges related to gender-based violence, the major themes warranting global attention include: viewing sexual assault and rape as security risks; eliminating the culture of impunity for offenders; empowering victims; and creating appropriate treatment facilities for victims.

Refugees are affected by sexual violence both as victims of war-related rape crimes, and also as victims of increased domestic abuse that occurs during conflict. Additionally, evidence shows that domestic violence may even intensify post-conflict (Vulnerable Women's Project 2009). The sexual abuse of women during conflict is not new, but it has remained an under-researched and under-documented issue. Sexual violence has become a strategic weapon of war used to destabilize, punish, coerce, and instill terror in refugee populations, and it has been institutionalized in many countries by security forces and places of supposed "refuge."

The International Criminal Tribunals of both Yugoslavia (ICTY) and Rwanda (ICTR) introduced several groundbreaking decisions in the 1990s and 2000s. The ICTR produced the precedent setting *Prosecutor v. Jean-Paul Akayesu (1998)* case, where Akayesu, a mayor in a region of Rwanda during the genocide, was convicted of sex crimes treated as a means of genocide. Furthermore, the ICTY set new standards in international law in the *Celebici Case (1998)* and in *Prosecutor v. Anto Furundzija (1998)*, where defendants were convicted for using rape as a means of torture.

Gender-based violence against women is a widespread issue in many countries, in times of peace and in times of war. Moreover, the issue deserves attention and research regardless of context, but female refugees experience it in a slightly different way. When a refugee uproots her family to flee persecution, her entire frame of reference is altered, and the social structure that she knew turns out to be only a thing of the past. Changes in access to services, community support, resources, and security diminish the capacity of refugees to feel empowered (Ganeshpanchan 2005). The setting in which a refugee lives, often a refugee camp, forces her to rely on others in a way that

makes her increasingly vulnerable to violence. For example, if she is no longer able to contribute to the family income, she becomes dependent on male support, increasing the likelihood that she will endure abuse in order to meet her needs. Also, there have been documented cases of humanitarian aid workers committing acts of rape and other violence against women and girls inside the camps (Amnesty International 2009).

Refugee camps, however, are not the only problem. Reports by Amnesty International (2009) have highlighted the particular risk faced by females when leaving the relative safety of refugee camps to search for firewood. Families frequently decide to send out women and girls to do these tasks because it is considered “less dangerous” in armed conflict and displacement zones; females are seen as risking “only rape,” while it is believed that men and boys will most likely be killed (Marsh, Purdin & Navani 2006).

The most difficult element of “rape culture” for advocates to overcome within refugee populations is the cultural perception of rape. First of all, sexual violence is a difficult and painful topic for victims to discuss because sex is a taboo topic, and to report rape feels like an invasion of privacy. Moreover, in many communities the act is seen as an embarrassment to the community and to the victim’s family. Some African beliefs assert that a raped woman is untouchable, dirty, or somehow defective. From this perspective, the social stigma of rape creates an intense form of psychological trauma, caused by the rejection from husbands and communities. How can refugee victims of rape receive any justice if they are consistently placed in circumstances where they are judged by those who are supposed to help?

Gender-based violence puts women’s health at an extremely high risk for both physical and psychological problems. According to an article in *Global Public Health*, “reproductive health outcomes alone include: trauma to reproductive organs, including fistula; acquisition of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV; and unwanted pregnancies that can lead to unsafe abortions and other complications.” *Global Public Health* also includes several psychological consequences of sexual violence, including “anxiety, shame, post-traumatic stress, depression, loss of sexual pleasure, fear of sex, and a loss of function in society” (Laurie & Petchesky 2008). Furthermore, in a crisis situation, victims who are refugees are at an even higher risk for medical complications due to the unstable environment, unfamiliar territory, and increased exposure to violence.

According to Amnesty International, individuals who commit rape and other violence against women and girls often enjoy near total impunity. Some of the barriers to justice for these crimes include: inability of victims to identify their attackers; lack of will by authorities to investigate; threats and intimidation techniques to prevent victims from testifying; weaknesses in the legal framework; and the use of traditional customs of conflict resolution that do not discourage perpetrators from negative behavior. The documentary “The Greatest Silence” illuminates another devastating fact: sometimes there simply are not enough authoritative figures to make a huge difference. For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo there is only one person who investigates sex crimes in the eastern portion of the country.

Even when rape crimes go to trial, prosecution can be difficult. According to one source, one of the primary obstacles is insufficient evidence. The trend in these cases is that the prosecution “must meet higher evidentiary standards in these cases than in other types of cases” (SaCouto & Cleary 2009). Additionally, even when women are able to testify against their perpetrators,

international tribunals often “do not serve their need for creating a record, achieving justice, remembering, or forgetting” (Mertus 2004).

As refugee victims of sexual violence, many attempt to gain political asylum. Refugees must overcome many obstacles and known issues in order to get any chance at asylum, including “the underreporting of rape, the inability of the victim to ‘tell the story’ in her own words, a hostile adjudicative environment, and the tendency to regard factors such as late disclosure, narrative inconsistency, and calm demeanor with suspicion” (Bailot, Cowan & Munro 2009).

In the last twenty years, significant progress has been made in the human rights field focusing on gender-based violence against refugees. For example, in 1995 the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) published *Sexual Violence against Refugees: Guidelines on Prevention and Response*, the first field manual “to address prevention and management of gender-based violence from the acute emergency phase to the more stable phases of displacement” (Marsh, Purdin & Navani 2006). More recently, the primary focus on the 2010 United Nations State of the World Population report is women— specifically, gender-based violence, education, consequences and effects from conflict and crisis, and the inclusion of females in peacemaking processes.

Steps are being taken toward the improvement of women’s rights internationally, but there is much to be done. Although many NGO, individual activist, and governmental reporting mechanisms are maintaining a strong awareness of the negative circumstances women face daily, the war waged against females continues. Some of the most important parts of ending this “war” include: eradicating the impunity for perpetrators; creating modalities of empowerment for women in refugee communities; stepping up the level of protection for women in times of conflict and peace; encouraging women to report crimes; raising children in a culture that does not condone sexual abuse; enhancing the support mechanisms for refugee health and well-being; enhancing and strengthening the legal system to enforce punishment and justice; and finally, to show victims that the international community is listening, respecting, and doing everything possible to create safer and healthier lives for all.

### **Annotated Bibliography**

Amnesty International. 2009. “‘No Place for Us Here’: Violence against Refugee Women in Eastern Chad.” London: Amnesty International Publications.

Annotation: This report from Amnesty International highlights the details surrounding the issue of rape and sexual violence in Darfur, Sudan, and Eastern Chad. The main points of the report include: the current context of the violence in Eastern Chad; the safety illusion of refugee camps; a culture of impunity for rape in Chad; and an assessment of the international response. The report draws on statistical data from research in the area, but also includes several call-out boxes that illuminate the stories of particular individuals-- many of them rape victims-- in eastern Chad. The report establishes a strong connection with the reader by not only presenting solid information, but by also providing a personal perspective. This combination is an extremely effective way of educating and of also creating compassion.

Anker, Deborah E. 2002. "Refugee Law, Gender, and the Human Rights Paradigm." *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 15:133-154.

Annotation: This article explores some of the international women's rights issues that refugee law is now addressing. Anker explains that the refugee regime is producing a serious body of law that creates basic human rights norms and has important implications in—and beyond—the refugee context. However, Anker posits that despite the growing understanding for this type of law, international human rights law continues to distance itself from refugee law. The author claims that refugee law is often treated like a “poor cousin,” as many human rights activists are hesitant to engage in refugee advocacy, especially through individual claims. Although Anker heavily discusses these points in a legal context, the article is accessible to readers with no legal background, and it grants an interesting perspective regarding what options refugees have after claiming such status.

Atlani, Laatia, and Cecile Rousseau. 2000. "The Politics of Culture in Humanitarian Aid to Women Refugees Who Have Experienced Sexual Violence." *Transcultural Psychiatry* 37 (3):435.

Annotation: Atlani and Rousseau delve into the issue of sexual assault against refugees from a mental health perspective. They explore the most effective ways psychiatry can be used to help victims of sexual violence, particularly refugees, and how “traditional” psychiatry needs to be modified in order to cater to this specific population. They analyze cases in which psychiatric methods have been successfully used to treat sexual violence victims and draw conclusions about what makes these particular instances effective compared to those which are not as effective. Not only do the authors look into psychiatric methods specifically, but they correlate these treatment plans with the type of action coming from the U.N. and NGOs. The article eloquently articulates important features of well-planned care for victims, and it is an essential topic to understand when treating mental health issues stemming from sexual violence.

Bailot, Helen, Sharon Cowan, and Vanessa E. Munro. 2009. "Seen but Not Heard? Parallels and Dissonances in the Treatment of Rape Narratives across the Asylum and Criminal Justice Contexts." *Journal of Law & Society* 36 (2):195-219.

Annotation: The authors explore possible parallels and dissonances in the treatment of rape across several legal contexts, using the findings of a 2007 study to support their claims. Some of the problems within the rape context have contributed to the difficulty in getting asylum claims granted, including: under-reporting of rape; the inability of the victim to ‘tell the story’ in her own words; a hostile adjudicative environment; and the tendency to regard factors such as late disclosure, narrative inconsistency, and calm demeanor with suspicion. The authors also emphasize the complex intersection of race, gender, culture, and nationality in this context. Bailot, Cowan and Munro produce an extremely useful analysis that probes deeper into the more philosophical understandings of identity and how they relate to the process of obtaining asylum.

Erjavec, Karmen, and Zala Volčič. 2010. "'Target', 'Cancer' and 'Warrior': Exploring Painful Metaphors of Self-presentation Used by Girls Born of War Rape." *Discourse & Society* 21 (5):524-543.

Annotation: When looking at the issue of gender-based violence against refugees, the authors of this article point to the prolonged effects that the progeny of rape victims endure. Although many research studies focus on the victims, Erjavec and Volčič create a new viewpoint from which future generational development can be better understood. They assert that children of war rape are often ignored and marginalized within society, and also discuss the metaphors associated with these female children. Additionally, the authors effectively create a greater understanding of female identity in populations affected by war rape and sexual violence.

Ferris, Elizabeth G. 2007. "Abuse of Power: Sexual Exploitation of Refugee Women and Girls." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 32 (3):584-591.

Annotation: The article highlights the sexual exploitation of refugee women and girls in the areas of Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. The article presents information from a report entitled "Sexual Violence and Exploitation: The Experience of Refugee Children in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone," which was written by staff members from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Save the Children UK. Data related to the issue showed that sexual exploitation practices were carried out by warlords, soldiers, armed gangs, and border guards. The article asserts that the more disturbing information from the data shows that sexual exploitation was also being carried out by aid workers, peacekeepers, and community leaders. The article offers a perspective in stark contrast with many other articles on the same topic, and it is well-cited and based on an empirical study, granting it more legitimacy than a simple opinion piece. One of the most disturbing points that the article emphasizes, and can be noted by individuals in research, is the fact that as long as some humanitarian workers hold access to life's necessities, women and children will continue to be exploited in order to have their basic needs met.

Ganeshpanchan, Zinithiya. 2005. "Domestic and Gender based Violence among Refugees and Internally Displaced Women." *Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies*. Available Online: <http://www.humiliationstudies.org/research/teamlong.php#ganeshpanchan>

Annotation: Ganeshpanchan authors an incredibly detailed and explicit article describing the mechanisms of violence affecting refugees and internally displaced women. She lists many of the ways that violence has emerged in refugee populations in particular, and also discusses the nature of the impact of violence. Embedded within the article are anecdotes and quotes from victims of violence, giving the article a more personal and compassionate perspective. The article appropriately serves as a way to understand, explicitly, how violence emerges both during conflict and in times of peace. She describes not only what occurs to victims as the result of those within the conflict, but also the family members who are affected by the displacement as well, leading them to inflict violence against female refugees.

Gruber, Aya. 2009. "Rape, Feminism, and the War on Crime." *Washington Law Review* 84 (4):581-660.

Annotation: Gruber presents a strong critique of the methods and mechanisms of feminism in response to “rape reform,” “those animating the modern American penal state” and “the destructive effect criminalization efforts have on feminist discourse and the feminist message.” The author asserts that criminal rape law reform negatively affects female sexuality in many ways, and that gender norms create an impossible avenue for social justice to emerge. The author uses heavy philosophical and legal language, making this article difficult for those without a background in those fields. For a better understanding of refugee identity, this article is not helpful because it has a heavy bias towards feminism.

Hajdukowski-Ahmed, Maroussia, Nazilla Khanlou, and Helene Moussa (eds.). 2008. Not Born a Refugee Woman: Contesting Identities, Rethinking Practices. New York: Berghahn Books.

Annotation: Not Born a Refugee Woman explores the identity construction of refugee women. The book examines current identity concepts, policies, and practices in a globalized world, and in the post-September 11th context. The authors emphasize refugee women's incredible abilities to counteract the struggles they endure with creativity and resilience in the continuum of domestic, civil, and transnational violence and conflicts, whether in transition or during their uprooted journey and beyond. By assessing local examples and international case studies, the authors critically examine gendered and interrelated factors such as location, humanitarian aid, race, cultural norms, and current psycho-social research that affect the identity and well-being of refugee women. This volume is designed for a wide audience of scholars, students, policy-makers, advocates, and service providers interested in new developments and critical practices in domains related to gender and forced migrations.

Hynes, Michelle and Barbara Lopes Cardozo. 2000. "Sexual Violence against Refugee Women." *Journal of Women's Health & Gender-Based Medicine* 9 (8):819-823.

Annotation: This article gives a comprehensive overview of many of the elements associated with gender-based violence, including defining what it is, who the perpetrators are, why it prevails during times of conflict, the constraints of assessing it, and health consequences. However, the more important and helpful part of the article is the second half, in which the authors discuss the state of current research on gender-based violence, including prevention and response. Additionally, they offer several suggestions on how research could be improved and how they see it functioning in the future. The best use of this article would be for individuals looking to understand gender-based violence on a very basic, general level but who are also interested in pursuing the topic more in-depth and may need advice on how to continue.

Jackson, Lisa F (dir.). 2007. The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo. New York: Jackson Films, The Fledgling Fund, and HBO Documentary Films.

Annotation: Lisa Jackson, the director and producer of this documentary film, spent six months in the Democratic Republic of Congo interviewing rape victims, authority figures in

villages, and even rapists themselves. Jackson reveals in the course of the film that she was the victim of gang rape earlier in her life, and it becomes a strong connecting point between her and the victims she interviews. She sets out to assess what measures are being taken in the DRC to prevent, protect, and help heal victims, finding that few resources are available to victims in the country. One of the most fascinating parts of this film is her interview with self-identifying rapists, and she asks personal and in-depth questions that reveal hypocrisy and an utter disregard for humanity. The film is extremely well-produced and put-together; it is a powerful demonstration of the reality of rape during conflict, and it goes beyond the normal scope of interviewing and research to produce an incredibly moving story.

Jager, Kathleen Burns and Marsha T. Carolan. 2010. "The Influence of Trauma on Women's Empowerment within the Family-based Services Context." *Qualitative Social Work* 9 (2):267-283.

Annotation: Jager and Carolan introduce the topic of women's participation in family-based therapy services. In particular, the women they discuss have a history of traumatic experiences. The authors conducted a research study, interviewing sixteen women and gathering evidence for understanding the function of a woman's influence on a community. They discover that women who have participated in a family empowerment process, even when informed by previous trauma, are more efficient at handling obstacles and creating stronger communities. The authors essentially achieve what they set out to do: to demonstrate a strong positive connection between women's empowerment and the effect on a community.

Jayasinghe, Udara. 2006. "Women as Members of a Particular Social Group." *Alternative Law Journal* 31 (2):79-83.

Annotation: This article presents the nature and various forms of sexual and gender-based violence that females have endured. The author primarily examines the experiences of asylum seekers in Australia and discusses the ways that Australian law has constructed mechanisms to persecute perpetrators of sexually-based crimes. Additionally, the author looks into the specific definition of refugee and how disagreement over its meaning have kept many claims from going forward in the court system. Although Jayasinghe's article is detailed, the focus on Australia does not provide enough broad insight on the situation. Additionally, the article reads too dense in legal context for an average reader to grasp meaning.

Kivlahan, Coleen, and Nate Ewigman. 2010. "Rape as a Weapon of War in Modern Conflicts." *British Medical Journal* 340: 468-469.

Annotation: Kivlahan and Ewigman offer a general and basic article setting up the context of rape in the midst of conflict. They explain the causes behind rape as a weapon of war and share details that explain how women are targeted, vulnerable, and when they are most at-risk for assault. The authors also use various statistics to emphasize the issue. Although the article is short and concise, Kivlahan and Ewigman do an excellent job explaining the issue thoroughly-- especially to readers who may be unfamiliar with the context in war.

Laurie, M., and R.P. Petchesky. 2008. "Gender, Health, and Human Rights in Sites of Political Exclusion." *Global Public Health* 3 (S1):25-41.

Annotation: In this report, the authors examine the intersections of gender, health, and human rights in sites of political exclusion. The main points of the report include the increasing intensity of sites of conflict, highly-gendered effects of conflict, contradictions within refugee and IDP camps, connections between political participation and health outcomes, and the necessity for a rights-based understanding of humanitarianism. Laurie and Petchesky demonstrate examples from many different areas of the world, including the Middle East and Africa. They efficiently achieve what they set out to do, and they include many relevant examples.

Marsh, M., S. Purdin, and S. Navani. 2006. "Addressing Sexual Violence in Humanitarian Emergencies." *Global Public Health* 1 (2):133-146.

Annotation: Marsh, Purdin, and Navani explore the harmful acts of gender-based, particularly sexual, violence in humanitarian emergencies. They discuss: the roots of this type of violence; its impact; how it relates to conflict; causes; addressing it through a humanitarian response; and recommendations for improving support systems in the future. The authors articulate specific evidence relating to the topic, and they also present the information in a way that can be understood by audiences who may be unfamiliar with the issue.

McGinn, Therese. 2000. "Reproductive Health of War-Affected Populations: What Do We Know?" *International Family Planning Perspectives* 26 (4).

Annotation: In this article, data on fertility and family planning, safe motherhood, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV, and sexual and gender-based violence are reviewed, from both published and unpublished sources, to determine if, and how, reproductive health status is affected by refugee or displaced status. McGinn states that if researchers can uncover the ways in which refugee women's reproductive health problems are both similar to, and different from, those of women in settled populations, it can help policy-makers and programmers more effectively address the needs that are specific to refugees. This article is particularly helpful in determining some of the health effects that are found on refugees post-violence. McGinn makes several useful recommendations for advancing the research in this field.

Mertus, Julie. 2004. "'Shouting from the Bottom of the Well: The Impact of International Trials for Wartime Rape on Women's Agency.'" *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 6 (1):110-128.

Annotation: This article analyzes the assumption that international adjudication of wartime rape cases advances the interests of survivors. The author states that, just as many domestic women's rights organizations understand the difficulty in trying rape cases using solely testimonial evidence they should also understand this same difficulty exists at an international level when rape cases are tried as crimes of war. Mertus establishes that international tribunals are extremely limited in their ability to try these cases, and those

organizations that focus on this issue should look for alternative mechanisms to succeed in a legal context. Mertus uses one case as an example in her article, and though she delves deeply into the specifics, it would be more helpful to see a variety of other examples to determine patterns and trends.

Mitchell, Jenny and Ignacio Correa-Velez. 2010. "Community Development with Survivors of Torture and Trauma: An Evaluation Framework." *Community Development Journal* 45 (1):90-110.

Annotation: Mitchell and Correa-Velez claim that, despite many new community development action plans in refugee populations, there still needs to be a framework in place that evaluates the effectiveness of these programs. Using the example of the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma, the authors demonstrate what a basic evaluative framework might look like and how it could work. Additionally, the authors state that evaluating the mechanisms of community programs settings that survivors of torture and trauma attend can create an increased sense of empowerment and positive community building.

Musalo, Karen and Stephen Knight. 2002. "Unequal Protection: When Women are Persecuted, It's Often Described as a Cultural Norm Rather than a Reason to Grant Asylum." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 58 (6):56-62.

Annotation: Karen Musalo and Stephen Knight describe the unpredictable nature of women's rights in international law, particularly in cases involving asylum. The article explores the progress that has been made in the past decade with regard to international development for women, but the authors assert that this progress has been slow. The article's main focus is on the current status of women's rights and protection in the eye of the law, and how this is changing (or not changing) in countries around the world. The authors present several astonishing stories of women who have suffered human rights violations, and one of the most powerful parts about the article is the inclusion of photographs that match with each victim's story. The photographs supplement the strength of the article and create a more vivid display of what reality looks like for the women who endure an ongoing struggle for protection and safety.

Nagai, M., U. Karunakara, E. Rowley, and G. Burnham. 2008. "Violence against Refugees, Non-refugees and Host Populations in Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda." *Global Public Health* 3 (3):249-270.

Annotation: This article was an assessment and data analysis of a study that surveyed Sudanese refugees and Ugandan nationals in Arua district, Uganda, and Sudanese non-refugees in Yei County, Sudan. The article reflects data related to violent events experienced and witnessed, both to document the frequency and nature of violent events and to assess the potential burden of psychological trauma. The article is helpful to readers who want hard facts, empirical data, and a well-written analysis of the information. Though technical in nature, the article does effectively explore an extensive amount of factors that create powerful and disturbing understandings of reality.

Nanda, Ved P. 2007. "History and Foundations for Refugee Security, Health, and Well-Being under International Law," in J.D. White and A.J. Marsella (eds.), Fear of Persecution. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Annotation: Ved Nanda, a highly distinguished and well-known professor and scholar in the global international law community, offers a look into the current status of refugee law in the international community. He examines both the history of refugee law and the current problems associated with its structure, implementation, and consistency in the context of globalized society. Nanda's piece clearly and eloquently spells out the terms of refugee law, while also articulating his dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs.

Nowrojee, Binaifer. 2008. "Sexual Violence, Gender Roles, and Displacement," in D. Hollenbach (ed.), Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Annotation: This book provides an analytical framework for advocacy on behalf of refugees and internally displaced people. Topics discussed include the fundamental right to freedom of movement, gender roles and the rights of women, the effects of war, and the importance of reconstruction and reintegration following armed conflict. One of the most compelling parts of the book is the introductory narrative chronicling the story of Abebe Feyissa, an Ethiopian refugee who spent over fifteen years in a refugee camp. Introducing the book with this piece creates a poignant connection between the reader and the topic, enabling the reader to view the subject matter with more compassion and understanding.

Peters, Julie and Andrea Wolper (eds.). 1995. Women's Rights, Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives. New York: Routledge.

Annotation: The over-arching theme of this book is that regardless of political systems, conflict, or peace zones, women's human rights are violated daily and often systematically. The authors in this compilation detail the types of abuses that many women endure globally, including disenfranchisement, rape/sexual abuse by authority figures, forced marriages/pregnancies, and strict policies on how to raise children. The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," yet the authors within this book argue that women's freedom, dignity, and equality are consistently compromised by laws and by customs in ways that men's are not. The authors assert that the mere extension of existing human rights protection to women is insufficient; women's rights must be understood as human rights.

Pittaway, Eileen and Linda Bartolomei. 2001. "Refugees, Race, and Gender: The Multiple Discrimination against Refugee Women." *Refuge* 19 (6):21-32.

Annotation: This paper analyzes race and gender discrimination in refugee populations, in particular the various forms of discrimination against refugee women. The authors argue that racism and the gendered nature of the refugee experience have strongly influenced the

human rights violations that have occurred in this part of the population. The article explores these topics as they relate to the treatment of sexual violence in international and domestic law, and in policy, armed conflict, refugee camps, asylum, and countries of resettlement. The article is extremely detailed, and the research is presented in a well-stated, clear fashion. Due to the authors' intensive research, this article effectively demonstrates the relationships between race, gender, and the refugee experience for females.

SaCouto, Susana and Katherine Cleary. 2009. "The Importance of Effective Investigation of Sexual Violence and Gender-Based Crimes at the International Criminal Court." *American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law* 17:337-359.

Annotation: Susana SaCouto and Katherine Cleary are the director and assistant director, respectively, of the War Crimes Research Office at American University's Washington College of Law. The article effectively demonstrates how gender-based violent crimes are tried at the international level and grants insight into the challenges and features that make these cases particularly unique. The article is helpful in determining what types of obstacles both the victims and the prosecutors face when attempting to seek justice for crimes motivated by war and conflict, targeting both citizen and refugee populations.

Schafer, Loveness H. 2002. "True Survivors: East African Refugee Women." *Africa Today* 49 (2):29.

Annotation: The article details many of the types of crimes that have been committed against women and how these crimes were dealt with in the process of filing for asylum in Malawi. Schafer argues that both international conventions and individual host countries should modify the laws for admitting refugees. One unique part about this article is that Schafer explores the different ways in which men and women experience applying for asylum, and how each gender perceives their individual role within the refugee population. Her assessment paves a way toward understanding the ways in which women are more easily targeted and attacked. Another very effective research point in Schafer's article is the way in which female refugees respond to the violence, whether passively or aggressively. This distinction is important because it gives readers more understanding into how they can partner with the victims to empower and/or to generate more effective aid for them.

Seu, Bruna Irene. 2003. "The Woman with the Baby: Exploring Narratives of Female Refugees." *Feminist Review* (73):158.

Annotation: In this article, Seu uses a social constructivist framework to explore the issue of female refugees. She explores the identity of a female refugee not from the perspective of the refugee herself, but from the various global viewpoints that construct a female refugee's identity. Seu conducts interviews across the globe to discover what people believe about female refugees and the plight of transition. Her goal in conducting this research is to reveal many of the stereotypes, images, and perceptions that she claims can be an important instrument in understanding not only female identity, but the constructed identity of a female refugee as well. The article provides a unique perspective on refugee issues, and Seu creates a comprehensive look at common views, beliefs and the influence of societal beliefs on the refugee experience.

Sharp, Jeb. 2009. "Darfur Refugees Still Suffering in Chad." *Public Radio International's "The World"* (June 1). Available Online: <http://www.pri.org/theworld/?q=node/26677>.

Annotation: This short clip from the radio show "The World," part of a Public Radio International (PRI) broadcast, includes a discussion of Darfur refugees and their experiences in Chad. Jeb Sharp, the show's host, interviews several physicians who work overseas as part of an organization called Physicians for Human Rights. The physicians explain their experiences and tell stories they heard from people during a trip to Sudan. Although the clip is short, its message is powerful, and the doctors interviewed give a realistic, yet disturbing, portrayal of their time spent in Sudan.

Some, Jane. 2008. "GBV in Post-election Kenya." *Forced Migration Review* (30):56-56.

Annotation: The article illustrates that three agencies, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Christian Children's Fund (CCF), have found that the risk of rape and sexual abuse is high for young girls and women displaced by Kenya's post-election conflict between December 2007 and January 2008. As per the agencies' assessment of gender-based violence (GBV), women in Nairobi have expressed fears and concerns about sexual victimization linked to refugee camp design and services, including lighting and sanitation facilities. This article is most pertinent to those who are interested in research focused on the recommendations made to improve the settings in which refugees live. Additionally, details from the article are rooted in victims' perspectives. The most effective point made by the article is that the lack of reporting mechanisms in refugee camps allows much of the violence to persist.

Steinhardt, Ralph G., Paul L. Hoffman, and Christopher N. Camponovo. 2009. International Human Rights Lawyering: Cases and Materials. St. Paul, MN: Thomson/Reuters.

Annotation: Ralph Steinhardt, Research Professor at The George Washington School of Law, and his associates offer a technical look at the cases of rape and sexual crimes as they occur in the context of human rights law. Not only does the work illustrate the legal definitions that determine what constitutes these crimes, but it also outlines several cases in which these crimes have been prosecuted under international law. This reference is extremely useful when trying to understand what can be prosecuted and determined as a crime against humanity. In particular, a more interesting point that the authors note is that rape has also been determined as a crime of torture. This can be particularly important to victims, as evidence of "lack of consent" can be tricky to find, and torture may be relatively easier to use as a basis for understanding evidence.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (prod.). 2004. Our Bodies, Their Battleground. IRIN: Humanitarian News and Analysis. Available Online: <http://www.irinnews.org/film/?id=4128>.

Annotation: This short film, hosted by the Integrated Regional Information Networks website (a project of the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), describes the disturbing nature of rape and gender-based violence presently happening in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The film highlights several victims of rape, allowing them to share their stories and experiences following the act. Additionally, the film shares statistics and informative briefs about the health and well-being of rape victims, including what organizations in the area are doing to create a more peaceful, supportive environment for victims.

Varkey, Prathibha, Sarah Kureshi, and Timothy Lesnick. 2010. "Empowerment of Women and its Association with the Health of the Community." *Journal of Women's Health & Gender-Based Medicine* 19 (1):71-76.

Annotation: Varkey, Kureshi, and Lesnick present data and analysis from a research study conducted to discover what type of effect the empowerment of women has on a community. Although the article is written in a research and data-oriented way, the information grants substantial insight into the role of female empowerment in community development. The results of this study suggest that the empowerment of women is associated with several key health indicators at a national level. The authors assert that they need further research to understand the cause-effect mechanisms associated with the conclusion, but that the fact alone is beneficial in the development of communities.

Vulnerable Women's Project. 2009. "The Vulnerable Women's Project: Refugee and Asylum Seeking Women Affected by Rape or Sexual Violence - Literature Review." London: Refugee Council.

Annotation: This is a widely comprehensive literature review published by the British Refugee Council, known as the Refugee Council. The report extensively details a number of causes, effects, contexts, understandings, history, procedures, challenges, and concerns related to sexual violence. In particular, the report includes anecdotes by victims and statistics by nationally recognized NGOs and governmental institutions. This report is one of the most helpful and interesting, and it entails the exact type of material needed for any analysis on this topic.

Ward, Jeanne and Beth Vann. 2002. "Gender-based Violence in Refugee Settings." *Lancet* 360 (9350):s13.

Annotation: Jeanne Ward and Beth Vann both gender-based violence officers at the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium, examine gender-based violence in refugee settings. They provide a legal context in which the reader can easily understand how gender violence has become intertwined with international law; they primarily focus, however, on the mostly ineffective means by which humanitarian assistance is implemented. They also provide an excellent, yet brief, background on what causes sexual violence to occur during times of conflict. Most importantly, their main point is that the current policies and programs in place to eradicate this type of sexual violence during war are not adequate, despite many advances. This article would be helpful to anyone needing a greater

understanding of the legal and social context of gender-based violence, in addition to a perspective on current programming needs.

Wilson, John P., and Boris Drozdek. 2004. Broken Spirits: The Treatment of Traumatized Asylum Seekers, Refugees, War and Torture Victims. New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Annotation: This book examines refugees and asylum seekers from a mental health perspective. Wilson and Drozdek note that there are few materials that exist describing the conditions that these population sets endure, such as complex post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The authors assert that issues such as forced migration and cultural sensitivity are often overlooked in diagnosis and treatment of people with mental health conditions, which often require extensive knowledge into the events that precede them. Although a majority of attention in this area focuses on current events and causes, this book delves into the minds of the actual victims, offering recommendations that may lend more insight into the situations that refugees face.