THE COST OF SILENCE

Examining the impacts of conflict-related sexual violence on male survivors

EDITION VI REPRINT

7 JULY 2025

Magazine presented to you by the Sexual Violence Team,
Centre for African Justice, Peace, and Human Rights

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KEYNOTE

BY TEAM LEAD, VISHNU PRIYA KOTLO

The phrase 'sexual violence' conveys the widely held belief that women are the victims of sexual violence and men are its perpetrators. Rather than a fossilised classification, as men and boys also constitute a vulnerable population and have experienced sexual abuse, it is time to redefine this perception. There are a number of situations in which sexual violence against men and boys occur, and this list is not all-inclusive. These include domestic settings, conflict and post-conflict situations, and peaceful times as well.

In this context, the Sexual Violence team at the Centre for African Justice, Peace, and Human Rights tends to raise awareness by publishing a magazine that attempts to shed light on the relevant topic of sexual violence against the male gender. Through their articles and interviews, renowned speakers have shared their perspectives. The publication "The Cost of Silence: Examining the Impacts of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence on Male Survivors" draws attention to an issue that is typically overlooked yet needs immediate action. Although there has long been evidence of sexual violence associated to conflicts, male victims have been marginalized as the majority of the attention has been on female survivors. These male victims experience severe physical and psychological trauma and are frequently silenced by shame, cultural norms, and a lack of resources. In addition to prolonging their pain, the silence surrounding male victims jeopardizes our collective efforts to confront sexual assault comprehensively. Ignoring male survivors results in us at potential danger of an inadequacy in public health programs, support networks, and justice—all of which are necessary for all survivors to recuperate and reintegrate into society.

This issue isn't just a matter of individual pain but a broader societal cost. Male survivors who do not receive support are more likely to face social isolation, economic marginalization, and long-term mental health issues. These repercussions have an impact on communities, families, and the stability of areas that have experienced conflict. Our objective in bringing attention to this topic is to abolish the taboo around it, promote inclusive support and justice systems, and cultivate a society that acknowledges and supports survivors of all genders. A more equitable and peaceful society that respects the rights and dignity of every person impacted by conflict can only be attained by healing these hidden wounds.

The United Nations Security Council Report of the Secretary General (S/2024/292) on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence highlighted that the beginning and intensification of war in 2023 exposed people to elevated levels of conflict-related sexual violence, which were fueled by rising militarization and the proliferation of weapons. In the midst of record levels of internal and cross-border displacement, weapon bearers from both State and non-State armed organizations targeted civilians with rape, gang rape, and abductions.

According to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, which was published in 2023, "the Commission also found evidence of rape and sexual violence or threats thereof

committed against female victims between the ages of 16 and 83 during home incursions by Russian authorities in Kherson Province in 2022." The human rights monitoring mission documented ten cases in which Ukrainian law enforcement and military personnel committed acts against eight men and two women, including civilians and prisoners of war, including forced nudity, beatings to the genital area, attempted rape, threats of rape, and unwanted touching. Since the Russian Federation began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, strikes have occurred all around the nation, killing civilians and destroying a large amount of infrastructure. A total of 85 incidences of conflict-related sexual violence against civilians and prisoners of war were reported by the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine during the reporting period. These cases involved 52 men, 31 women, 1 girl, and 1 boy.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) reported 290 occurrences of sexual violence related to conflict in 2023, which affected 127 women, 160 girls, and 3 men. This represents a 51% increase from 2022. Rape, attempted rape, gang rape, forced marriage, forced nudity, and sexual servitude were among the instances.

Furthermore, in the occupied West Bank, UN-verified data also supported reports that after the October 7 attacks, Israeli security forces frequently beat, mistreated, and humiliated Palestinian women and men who were arrested or detained. This included sexual assault, including kicking genitalia, threats of rape, and stripping male detainees naked or half-naked (A/HRC/55/28).

ROBERT O' MOCHAIN

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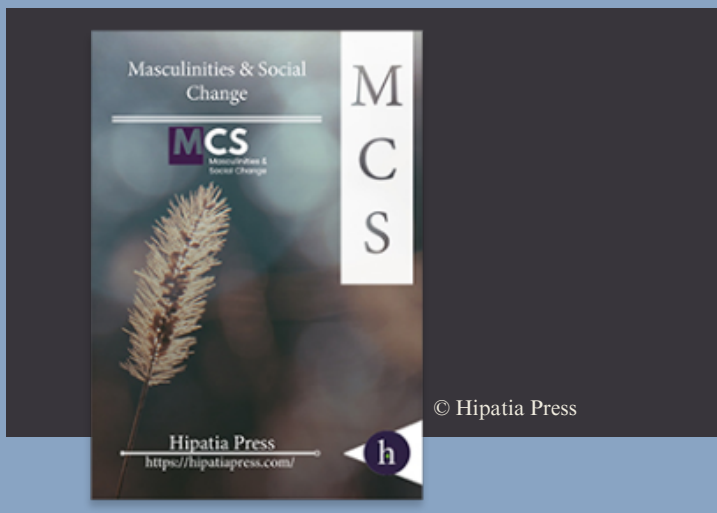
Can you introduce yourself and explain your research background?

My name is Robert O'Mochain and I'm a professor at the College of International Relations, Ritsumeikan University, in Kyoto, Japan. I've lived in Japan since the late 1990s, and I've focused mainly on issues of gender and sexuality in Japanese society. I first became interested in CRSV issues after seeing an Al Jazeera current affairs television report, "Inside Story: The silent victims of rape." I learned that "sexual violence" covers all acts of physical outrage against the private parts of the body. So, when men's genitals are subject to mutilation or electrocution, those men are experiencing sexual violence and their sense of self as men and as sexual beings will be compromised. From this perspective, the numbers of men around the world who are forced to endure sexual violence are much higher than the official figures usually indicate. I was shocked to learn about the large numbers of men whose lives are destroyed by sexual violence and how the numbers of victims are often comparable for men and women in areas of military conflict. The experts on the program presented data on horrific levels of sexual violence against women and men in Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), in former Yugoslavia, and in many other parts of the world. A representative from a United Nations human rights group spoke on the program, but it was obvious that her organization was not giving comprehensive attention to male-directed CRSV.

In contrast, I was impressed by the witness of Dr. Chris Dolan of the Refugee Law Project (RLP) in Uganda. Dr. Dolan and his colleagues have done tremendous work improving the situation for male survivors of CRSV. After seeing the Inside Story program, I spoke to a young Japanese scholar who had done research in Uganda and she was able to confirm that conditions are exactly as the RLP activists had outlined. Since then, I have maintained a research interest in these issues. I've been interviewed for my views surrounding issues of sexual abuse in Japan and I worked with a Japanese female scholar, Yuki Ueno, to publish a work on those issues last year. We found that, for men and boys, just as for women and girls in Japan, it is difficult to come out of the shadows, especially as Japan still has some characteristics of a "shame-honor" society. I also published work on my research into male-directed sexual violence within a pedagogical context. I found that, even though, it is challenging to raise sensitive issues such as anal rape with Japanese students – this is a country where issues surrounding sexual activity are rarely given serious discussion and where anal rape was not even mentioned in the legal statute books until 2017 – it is possible to do so, as most young people are open to all ideas about alleviating human suffering and improving conditions for people around the world.

ROBERT O' MOCHAIN



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In your publication 'Male Directed Sexual Violence in Conflict: A Challenge for Gender Studies', you argue that international agencies should focus on the long-term transformation of gender relations and the empowerment of women to address issues surrounding conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV'). Can you elaborate on why you believe this approach is essential and how it relates to the challenges of framing sexual violence as a military problem?

At the root of the problem is a mentality that constructs gender in terms of power. If we call this mentality "masculinism" we can say that it constructs a social world of competition for power with the need for those on top to constantly display power over those below them. Violence in the domestic sphere is often the arena for masculinist displays of power over women. Militarized violence outside the home is often the arena for masculinist displays of power over "weaker" men. These processes are accentuated in conflict zones and there is a discursive tradition that sees rape as one of the inevitable consequences of war, what some have called a "rapelootpillage" mentality, so that no efforts are made to prevent CRSV from happening. However, there are many cases of military conflicts where very few combatants engage in sexual assaults on civilians. Similarly, there are cases where military units are effective in protecting citizens from such offenses. Soldiers and other combatants, then, can be part of the solution in conflict areas, if the political will is exerted there. Experience shows that the more access women are given to participate in peace-making and social transformation, the more do we see a diminution of the role of violence and militarism in broader society. This empowerment of women and girls helps get at the root of the problem which is a masculinist mentality on violence and power. Toxic masculinity needs to be replaced by humanity which means women and men, girls and boys, living together with profound mutual respect.

You mention that some feminists may overlook male-directed conflict-related sexual violence, either because they don't see it as a serious gender issue or fear it may disturb feminist sensibilities. How do you respond to this perspective, and what do you believe is the importance of recognizing and addressing male victimhood in the context of conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV')?

There is a fear among some activists and commentators that attention to male victims of CRSV will reduce the amount of aid for female victims. But it is not a "zero-sum-game". All survivors deserve the aid and support that they need to have their human dignity restored. Feminists are right to be concerned, because we live in a world where men and boys get too much attention and status just on the basis of biological sex. However, that does not justify unfair treatment and it is unfair when a male survivor has the courage to go to a hospital to seek treatment and is told "Oh, but men can't be raped. Men cannot be allowed in here".

Female-only spaces can be maintained in medical facilities if that is deemed necessary but spaces have to be provided for all victims. I think that anyone who spends time listening to the stories of the men who have been given a platform by the Refugee Law Project and similar forums will see their plight as a serious gender issue. Gender equity means that all of us are treated fairly, that none of us are discriminated against because of our identities as "woman" "man" "girl" or "boy." That is the kind of transformation we should all be working on to achieve. Estimates from expert sources in the Unites States indicate that one in six boys experience some form of sexual assault before their

eighteenth birthday. In most of these cases, the boys experience PTSD but they do not feel they can speak to anyone about it and end up experiencing much less quality of life, which affects everyone around them. If we consider these facts, and the fact that the figures in the U.S. are probably replicated all over the world, to a greater or lesser extent, it is obvious that all of us are adversely affected by male directed sexual violence, and we can all play a part in changing the situation for the better.

If we focus specifically on areas of conflict, experience shows that positive peace is difficult to achieve and maintain. Ideally "transitional justice" projects make it possible for targets of CRSV to live with their trauma. However, if male targets are not given any opportunities for healing, they are likely to be consumed by powerful affective states that impel towards revenge, retribution, and violent acting out of repressed pain and frustration. If we are serious about preventing a return to conflict, then projects of transitional justice and of reconciliation have to represent everyone, even if that disturbs traditional notions of "tough" masculinity.

ROBERT O' MOCHAIN

> "Estimates from expert sources in the U.S. indicate that 1 in 6 boys experience some form of sexual assault before their eighteenth birthday."

Your work emphasizes the need for inclusivity in feminist discourse, arguing that research and activism highlighting male victimhood should be accepted as sufficiently feminist. How can an inclusive feminist approach enhance our understanding of sexual violence in conflict, and what challenges do you foresee in promoting this inclusivity within academic and activist circles?

Feminism is challenged by a perennial tension between "being" and "doing". Some feminists see gender in terms of being, our essential, innate identities as women or men. Others focus exclusively on "doing", seeing gender as an inner sense that emerges from constant repetitions of gendered behaviors or exposure to such behaviors. When these contrasting orientations apply to controversial areas such as transgender issues, the tensions flare up into irreconcilable differences. However, "being" and "doing" are inextricably intertwined, and this applies to gender as much as to any other social fact. When we consider the issue of male-directed sexual violence, also, this is brought home to us. Survivors of such violence have been exposed to a "doing" to a set of actions which have been experienced as disruptive for one's most vital sense of self, one's individual existential being. In sum, attention to male-directed sexual violence can help feminists engage in more productive collaboration as it moves them away from the polarities that have been constructed around "being" and "doing." When men rape and sexually brutalize other men in prisons, in political detention centers, in conflict zones, or wherever, they believe that they are enhancing their own "dominant masculinity" self-image whilst also feminizing and degrading their targets. In fact, they are perpetuating the belief that women lives don't matter, that powerful men are the ones who play a significant role in society while women and "weak" men are only there in a supporting role. This is why feminists should agree with authors like Claire Cohen who entitled her notable 2014 book as "Male rape is a feminist issue." Some feminists feel uncomfortable when authors use terms like "feminization", "homosexualization", and "emasculation" to refer to the intended purposes of perpetrators of male rape and other forms of sexual violence.

ROBERT O' MOCHAIN

You discuss the role of homophobia and the "taint of homosexuality" as reasons institutions are reluctant to engage with male-male sexual violence. How can a feminist perspective contribute to understanding and addressing these issues, and what steps do you believe should be taken to overcome societal hesitations in recognizing and responding to male-directed sexual violations?

When I was young, a number of "rape myths" about female victims of rape were prevalent, and these prevented women and girls from reporting rape as they were afraid they would not be believed or would be labeled as fake victims. Over the past half-century, much progress has been made to dispel rape myths, and the situation has improved in many parts of the world for female survivors of sexual assault. However, the situation has hardly changed at all for male survivors, and they must contend with a number of "male rape myths" including the myth that only weak or homosexual men ever experience rape. Additionally, there is a myth that the experience of anal rape takes away the essence of manhood so that the target is no longer a "real man" or, indeed, that he no longer has heterosexual power, has been made homosexual, in fact. Feminist perspectives are aware of all the ways in which these male rape myths destroy lives, just as rape myths continue to destroy the lives of women and girls in some parts of the world. Masculinism demands that men display power over women and power over "weak" men in order to assert or project an image of hyper-masculinity. Feminists should make common cause, then, with activists who work on behalf of male victims or who campaign to decriminalize same-sex sexual activity. The more that such activity is stigmatized, the easier it is for rapists to continue destroying lives without ever facing justice.

There is a danger of course of strengthening the discourse of toxic masculinity which applies its logic when it uses those concepts and terms. However, the important point is that we are not endorsing these toxic views and we don't "buy in to" their twisted logic of gender. The author and activist Philipp Schulz shows sensitivity to these concerns when he suggests that we use the term "displacement from gendered personhood" as a way to refer to the intentionality and psychological effects of male-directed sexual violence, and this is a welcome contribution.

> "Masculinism demands that men display power over women and power over 'weak' men in order to assert or project an image of hyper-masculinity."

In your publication, you stress the importance of providing adequate health care services to all victims of conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV') regardless of sex, age, or other categorizations. How can the international humanitarian community ensure an ethical response that supports the physical and psychological integrity of all survivors, and what changes do you believe are needed in current approaches to achieve this goal?

Reproductive health programs almost always exclude male victims. This is indefensible. While the role of physical injuries underlines this point, the role of psychological injuries is even more relevant. Many victims have been made to feel profoundly emasculated in such a way that they no longer respond to the conditions of sexual intimacy. "My manhood has been robbed from me. I no longer count as a valid sexual partner for a woman." If this is the notion that paralyzes an individual male's sexuality, then it is bound to have consequences for reproductive health and parenting. Ideally, then, provision of funding will be increased to provide well-equipped clinics to care for male survivors, with trained medical personnel, psychologists and counsellors, along with social care providers who will engage in follow-up activities to help affected men and boys re-integrate into their communities

and continue living.

Unfortunately, the medical personnel who are the first to interview displaced persons, refugees, and others fleeing from conflict, often lack the training required to help male survivors of CRSV. Their screening tools need to allow them to patiently elicit accounts of trauma from men who find it extremely difficult to break their silence.

Enough data have been collected from diverse locales – El Salvador, former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Northern Ireland, a number of countries in Africa and the Middle East – all of which indicate very clearly that large percentages of men are liable to being targeted for sexual violence during periods of conflict, especially if their ethnic or religious identities place them in more vulnerable positions. Political prisoners, both women and men, in every part of the world are at high-risk of sexual violence.

These are well-established facts now so it is imperative on citizens to demand that their political representatives support the efforts of humanitarian organizations to shine a light in darkness and put an end to widespread cases of sexual torture. Male victims of such torture in Uganda and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have formed support groups for one another, "Men of Courage", "Men of Hope" and so on. We should do everything possible to promote such groups. When survivors can break the silence, share their stories and support one another, they can begin to make life bearable again. Too often, these men are let down by the medical, policing, and legal institutions that are obligated to protect them, and then they are let down again by communities which either stigmatize them or demand their social erasure and silence. Trying to transform this situation is complex and multi-level approaches are required, but that is what an ethical, humanitarian response would involve.

"When survivors can break the silence, share their stories and support one another, they can begin to make life bearable again."

ROBERT O' MOCHAIN

What is your general message to the world about the need to investigate and prosecute conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV') perpetrated against men and boys?

This gross abuse of human rights is a reality that global society needs to acknowledge. It should not be ignored just because victims have kept silence and their presence made invisible. Enforced silence is the seal of their loneliness and alienation, and it will be perpetuated by our indifference. If we are true to our humanity, though, we will help male survivors to speak about their trauma and we will not do them the injustice of thinking that we have solved the problem once they have been set on the road to healing. Survivors need long-term, multi-faceted support across community and institutional levels if they are going to continue to heal and to flourish, so we will take the first step with them by hearing their stories, listening deeply with empathy, and realizing that this is simply the first step of a long journey.

We should also realize that sexual violence is not an aberration that suddenly springs up during periods of military conflict in economically underdeveloped states. Take the example of a Scandinavian country, Sweden, which has a good record for attempts to end all cultures of impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence. Only a few years ago, medical authorities in Stockholm opened the world's first clinic to provide treatment for male victims of sexual violence. This indicates that, for all societies, sexual violence is a constant, unwelcome presence. It exists in the form of sexualized domestic violence, cases of sexual assault and sexual harassment, abusive use of digitalized pornographic images, and so on. Toxic practices become accentuated and magnified during conflict, but the harm done would be much less if we had dealt with sexual violence in our own peacetime societies previously and if we had undone the invisibility of male victims.

ROBERT O' MOCHAIN

HOW SHOULD *CSRV* BE DEALT WITH OPTIMALLY?

Are there any improvements/changes that you would like to see happening in international criminal law and the prosecution of sexual violence against males?

Lara Stemple is a leading scholar in this field and she points out that international criminal law, in CEDAW for example, basically equates "gender-based violence" with violence directed against women and girls. This is obviously problematic, because if men and boys are singled out for castration, forced viewing or outrages, genital torture, rape, or other forms of sexualized violence, they are being selected because of their gender identity. Additionally, their own sense of gender identity will be profoundly affected by the experience of sexual violence. Yet, gender-based violence in instruments of human rights law and international law often keep men and boys invisible so that cultures of impunity are perpetuated.

This can also be seen with regard to international criminal tribunals, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia ('ICTY', 1993-2017) The researcher Valerie Oosterveld explains that tribunal protagonists often ignore the actions of perpetrators of sexual violence against boys and men, which results in gaps about the facts about what happened, gaps about the social effects, and gaps in relation to criminal law.

In fact, this lack of recognition results in a fundamental gap between the stated objective of the tribunal (to pursue justice on behalf of all the targets of sexualized violence) and the experience of large numbers of victims, men and boys who remain invisible under the terms of the tribunals' inquiry. We should remember, also, that ad hoc tribunals come and go. There is a need for permanent structures and an enduring judicial system that can pursue justice in peacetime. When prosecutors are pursuing cases, they should also make full use of any members of non-governmental organizations who are working on the ground. Their contribution can often prove invaluable in locating witnesses and helping to see that legal trials are concluded successfully. Local, grounded knowledge is also essential in determining what type of transitional justice program works best in particular contexts. Restorative justice programs, for example, focus on communitarian responses and the justice needs of everyone involved. These programs can be the most culturally appropriate way to work towards the healing of whole communities in many parts of the world where criminal law case traditions are not well established.

ROBERT O' MOCHAIN

How do you perceive the role of capacity building for judges and prosecutors in prosecuting conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV') cases or sexual violence in educational contexts? In what ways do you think such capacity building can enhance access to justice for victims?

The training which legal professionals receive during their formative years often lacks any reference to the realities of male-directed sexual violence. "Capacity building" in this context would mean the provision of comprehensive educational programs and ongoing refresher courses for these professionals, so that they can do their job properly in helping victims pursue and achieve justice. In conflict zones or post-conflict zones this pursuit is highly problematic, especially within the looser frameworks of transitional justice or restorative justice programs. Additionally, the laws of the land may actually criminalize same-sex relations, so that male victims are doubly reluctant to come forward. This underlines the need for social transformation which often is brought about through education, the "building block" of capacity development. Even in economically under-developed areas, most children attend primary school for some years at least. Primary education should include comprehensive curricula on Relationships, Intimacy, and healthy sexuality. Children and young people need to learn about their right to bodily integrity and their right to justice when their psychological interiority has been violated through sexual abuse. When citizens receive this basic understanding of the extreme harm done by perpetrators of sexual violence, they will be better able to pursue justice if they are victimized and they will provide stronger support for fellow citizens of whatever gender who are trying to overcome the trauma of sexual victimhood. Well-educated citizens are more likely to demand national laws and local norms which empower people, rather than holding them back.

Based on your experience with this issue, how would you define best practices to address conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV') or sexual violence in educational contexts against the male gender and support male survivors?

Already a decade has passed since the (then) UN Secretary General (Ban Ki Moon) referred to the issue of male survivors of CRSV as an "emerging concern". That simple admission was enough to bring some degree of visibility to these men and boys but their situation remains precarious. The United Nations Security Resolutions which refer to CRSV almost always frame it as an issue concerning the victimhood of women and children. This framing is then echoed by educators and others whenever they disseminate knowledge about global society issues and limited progress is made. As of now, the only degree of visibility for male survivors of sexual abuse is often in the context of popular culture references to male rape in prison. This is often referred to in a jocular or humorous context, or else the victim is seen as having failed to display macho masculinity strongly enough and so came to merit their punishment. But "rape is not part of the penalty" (to quote the slogan of an organization which works on behalf of prisoners who have experienced sexual assault, "Just Detention International"). If young people receive proper information about these issues in school, they will know straight away not to laugh at "male rape jokes" and they will fully support any individual they know who has experienced sexual violence. Ideally, then, all of the relevant issues are explored within comprehensive programs of sexuality and relationships education. In my own context with university students, I found that it was meaningful to review articles in academic journals that deal with these issues and to use these readings as a basis for classroom discussion and further research. Some students surveyed their friends to find out how prevalent male rape myths were among them. Others did a content analysis of popular films and television dramas to see how the issue of male-directed sexual violence was treated in those products of popular culture. In all cases, attention to the realities of sexual violence and the need for justice and healing always constitutes a valuable practice for educators and students alike.

RICK GOODWIN

MSW RSW

Managing Director, MEN & HEALING

Rick is a clinician and trainer on issues concerning men's mental health. Much of his work over the past twenty-five years has focused on services that address male sexual trauma, managing both regional and national initiatives in Canada. He currently directs Men & Healing, a collaborative mental health practice (menandhealing.ca) in Ottawa.

In the United States, he is the Clinical Trainer for 1in6 Inc., the leading non-profit organization that addresses male sexual trauma and recovery. He is their primary trainer to work with community services and first responders, and has provided training to all branches of service with the US military.

His training work on men, family violence, and trauma recovery has taken him throughout Canada and the USA as well as India, Great Britain, Japan, Cambodia, South Korea, Guam and New Zealand.

Among his publications, Rick co-authored the guidebooks Men & Healing: Theory Research and Practice with Male Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse (2009), Foundations (2017) – both used to formulate services internationally. His forthcoming book, "Men's Road to Healing" is written for men who are seeking recovery from childhood trauma.

He was recently awarded the Meritorious Service Medal from the Governor General of Canada (2024).

> "When we talk about child sexual abuse, atleast in Canada, the average age of male victimisation is between 9 and 10. The average age though for men attending our trauma recovery series here is 45."

RICK GOODWIN

Could you please introduce yourself and elaborate on how your experiences working as a registered psychotherapist has prepared you to work with and understand survivors of sexual violence?

I'm a social worker by training. So, many, many years ago, I received a master's degree in social work practice here in Canada. For much of my life, my clinical focus has been on men, and mental health of men. Many years ago, I started up an initiative here in Ottawa, Canada, to work with men who were assaultive to their loved ones, particularly partner assault. And these were, working with men who were often charged and convicted of violence and then they were mandated to attend a program. So, those were my early years working and setting up programs for abusive men.

Then my career shifted a little bit and I taught social work at colleges in Canada, some focusing on our indigenous communities, some working more in a mainstream college, and I did that work for a good 10 years. And since about 1998, we first started a men's mental health initiative here. That work focused primarily on men who have experienced trauma, childhood trauma specifically, and sexual trauma specifically. That's been much of my work now for the last 25 years. The other thing to add, apart from starting up this initiative 25 years ago in Canada called the "Men's Project", we received government funding for the first 16 years of that initiative, then we lost the government funding. And so the nonprofit charity had to close. But we kept the type of work going. And so I've since led an initiative called "Men in Healing", which is a more focused work, counseling work with men, as well as training. And I'm the managing director of that initiative. My job is primarily more training, while my staff are primarily providing mental health services for men, male survivors, both individual counseling and group therapy.

> "Traumatic memory, though, is not encoded like regular memory. It's often fragmented."

What exactly is the approach that you use in your social work to heal the trauma on sexual violence survivors? And how is it different from women and men? If you have had previous experience with women on this matter, would you say it is harder to deal with the trauma of people or victims that have suffered sexual violence at a young age as opposed to someone more mature?

I'll start with the first one. Well, first of all, our approach. So, therapy has often a therapist, or even a therapy model has different approaches to it. And there's a word for that. There's a word 'eclectic'. So we may borrow from this approach and yet, borrow strengths from another approach. So our overall model we could say is somewhat eclectic, but it focuses mostly on a psychodynamic engagement. Psychodynamic suggests that much of our trauma responses are not only held in our conscious awareness but also our subconscious. So things that we are not aware of or things that for survivors of trauma, they're not aware of, but through the therapy process, we can bring them to awareness. If you can bring things to awareness, then what we hope to do is allow for some type of integration process.

What we know about trauma of any form is trauma is not stored, not taken in like regular memory. I'm sure all of us could remember maybe what we had for breakfast this morning. You know, we had coffee, toast, whatever, that would be regular memory. And it doesn't take any effort to reflect on memory, adopt regular memory. And even though we may forget what we had for breakfast, a week from now, you probably will forget what you had for breakfast.

RICK GOODWIN

Traumatic memory, though, is not encoded like regular memory. It's often fragmented, and through the experience of danger, the body being flooded by various neurotransmitters, even what we know, the dissociative experience suggests that there are different pieces that are not integrated in memory. So part of our work then in working with survivors is to have them do this broader reflection, work on the parts of memory that they have, and maybe memories that are coming to them to create a cohesion or integrated memory. If we, the belief here is if we have integrated memory, then we can kind of get on with life.

But if traumatic memory is not integrated, often we get stuck. And that's how we often find men who approach our services. They're in distress, they're in crisis. There may be things going on now, but it may have stemmed from an experience a couple decades ago. When we talk about child sexual abuse, at least in Canada, the average age of male victimization is between 9 and 10. The average age, though, for men attending our trauma recovery services here is 45. So we know that for many men, they may experience an average of 35 years waiting until they finally put up their hand to say, “Look, I was sexually abused as a child. I need help now and seeking us out for that”. Now, it could be well that those men try getting help over the years, maybe in addiction services, because we know many men use alcohol and drug as a coping mechanism. They may have been in conflict with the laws or they may have been arrested or convicted of crimes. They may have had run-ins or they may have engagement in the health system, psychiatry system, because of the profound mental health issues that survivors of trauma may have. But it's the age 45 that they come, they seek out a very dedicated trauma recovery program. So that's our approach.

There is a difference between child trauma victims and adult trauma victims. This is a very generalized statement I'm going to make here, and I'm sure we can find exceptions. However, when we're abused as a child, we are still developing what we call our psychosocial identity, who we are, what's our role in life, what meaning do we make. When children are abused, it throws off their development. So then the trauma becomes more complex. It could throw off the child's psychosexual development. And by saying that, it's more to the presentation now as an adult, it's more complex. Now, I'm reluctant to use the word ‘simple trauma’ if, say, a man or anyone was sexually assaulted as an adult. We don't want to use language that minimizes their experience. And we know that many people can receive horrific abuse, trauma from adult experiences. But what we can say is that for most adults by the age of 20, 25, are formed in terms of who they are. They know who they are, they've matured, their body has matured, including brain functioning. So if, say, that person was assaulted at age 25, age 30, what have you, that part of their life at least has been developed, their identity has been developed, their development has finished. So, again, I don't want to minimize one type of violence because I'm putting more emphasis on the childhood of violence being more complex, but this is the broad understanding in doing this work.

Your third question, is the difference between men and women. And here, I can back up, my clinical work, my therapy work is almost all being with men so I'm not a good person to ask. I haven't had half my practice working with women. I've been very specialized in this field for, again, the last 25 years. But this is what we know, is that gender plays a big role in how we experience the abuse or the assault in the moment. And there's many angles to that. And then, secondly, our gender has a lot to do with how the trauma is expressed. You know, from our thought patterns, to emotions, to behavior, to relationship patterns. This is where we see gender play out a fair bit. In terms of research, there's not lots of research that has, compares a group of male survivors and a group of female survivors. Almost all the research focuses on one gender or another, or we could say there's some news, not much, but there's some research coming out about people that don't identify in the binary of gender.

You know, that might be you present as non-binary. That's another area that's needed for research. But most of the research, as you know, all know, has been on women survivors. The vast majority of research, the vast majority of funding, the vast majority of services, have been focused on women. So, representing this men's sector, we're a good generation or two behind the women's movement in creating these services. And as such, we know less about working with men than we do about working with women. That, again, is part of my job in providing training. I train services in Canada. We're having a big contract now with the Canadian military and I also provide training in the United States. We have a partner agency in the United States called 1in6, Inc. I work with them around training issues, including their military as well so that's a good part of my job, to provide online training, in-person training on a variety of issues affecting men and well-being, but most of that training is trauma-specific.

Referring to your aforementioned experience working with Indigenous groups, do you have any experience in the healing process of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV') or not?

I'm going to say no. Certainly no men have come into our clinic with that identity. Now, I have met men who've experienced conflict-related sexual trauma in conferences over the years, and I'm volunteering for an initiative. You may be familiar with it, called "Men of Hope", who works with a lot of refugees coming from, I guess, Uganda but my understanding is that probably more from the Congo, these men show up in Uganda, and now a number of these men are refugees in the United States and in Canada. So I'm helping that initiative, but I haven't done a lot in that regard. Back to your question, no, I'm going to say I have not had experience clinically providing services for men who've had conflict-related sexual violence.

Based on your experience and career, how do you see the role of therapy and social work in addressing the psychological challenges faced by male survivors of sexual violence?

I think these men have many, many needs. There's no doubt about that, and we're going to have some core responses to offer them. I think the type of response we

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offer survivors depends on how we understand trauma. I'm going to simplify it down a little bit as an example. If we all believed here that trauma causes an interpersonal harm to the person, okay, that's where the injury lies. It's how they are with other people, and it kind of makes sense because they were harmed by other people. Then our work with them might look more like peer support, because peer support puts an emphasis on interpersonal connection between people with lived experience, and that's the means of recovery.

However, if we believe that sexual trauma causes, I can use the word 'intrapsychic injury', so an injury within one's mind, if that's where the true injury lies, then our work would not be peer support. Our work would look more like traditional Western therapy, whether it be one-on-one with a therapist in an office, or whether it be a group experience with a therapist, we would be focusing more on the intrapsychic, the emotion, the defense mechanisms, the cognitive patterns of those men. So all that to be said, I think there's, while there are merits in both, this is how our understanding could apply now to men stemming from, you know, who were traumatized from conflict violence, there may be good merit for them to be in group with other men who have had that experience. We know that that practice of sitting in circle is traditional practice for many people around the world. For Indigenous people here in Canada, the circle is very important. I've met other Indigenous people in other countries, they do similar work. So we shouldn't be using words like, "oh, that's a Western approach" or whatever. I think whether we call that, a therapy group, or a healing circle, or anything else, that plays an important role.

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And yet, I do believe that to really help a person recover from trauma, we need to focus on their intrapsychic experience as well. Now, again, that could be individual therapy or group therapy, but it would look more like the traditional Western therapies that I'm sure we all hold some awareness of. So it may be well on both, you know, it's not one or the other, but there may be merits in both approaches. It's important for any trauma survivor to be with people who have like experience.

So if one was a childhood abusive survivor, they may identify with a guy, a man who was recently sexually assaulted, but it may not be as good as if that child abuse survivor met with other child abuse survivors. So when we're talking about group work, group therapy, the more homogeneous a group is, the better the results of the work will be. So that's why at our clinic, for men who are abuse survivors, that's one circle, that's one program. For men who have problems with anger, to work on the anger issues, that's a different circle. And for men who have problematic sexual behaviors, that's a different program as well.

> “So we know that for many men, they may experience an average of 35 years waiting until they finally put up their hand to say, ‘look, I was sexually abused as a child. I need help now’”

As there's a lot of social stigma centered around this topic, especially for men, we have found that it is very difficult for them to communicate this because of the hierarchy of power and the role they have in society. What are some challenges that you have encountered in providing help?

Certainly, social messages around men and masculinity. We could talk about dominant Western culture. I can speak as well to other cultural messages around masculinity but certainly in a Western perspective, if we look at all the components of what we call the male code, the male code is how we hold as men, we hold ourselves as individuals, not as socially connected people. We have a lot of energy trying to figure out a relative hierarchy amongst men because the higher you go in hierarchy, the middle hierarchy, the more benefits, the more money or shiny things or what have you, the more availability of sexual partners could be had by a man with higher social standing. We can talk about men's relationship to aggression and violence. That's another part of the male code. And then the last part of the male code being that for a man of dominant culture means that he can't hold any qualities within him that could be seen as feminine or homosexual, because the male code in Western society suggests that he has to be heterosexual, and he can't hold feminine qualities. If we put all of those together, we may come up with the word that suggests that as males, we are invulnerable.

Now, if we accept that, that is the one word that defines masculinity so well, then men have a real problem because if you're invulnerable, you can't be abused. It defies the definition of the word. So right from the get-go, masculinity does not allow for men to share stories of being wounded, stories of being abused or assaulted. It's just not in keeping with the male code. So that may well contribute to why we don't see men acknowledging their abuse like women do. We don't see men publicly confronting their offenders as much as women. We don't see as many court cases. We don't see charges laid as much because men hold their secret of being abused or assaulted much more than women do. Still, there's a stigma for women, but for men, I think it's quite bigger. So to the angle of storytelling, I think storytelling is essential for healing to occur.

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And we can use the process of sharing stories or sharing parts of one's story. I mean, that is truly the work of therapy. Again, group therapy, individual therapy, peer support, all require storytelling. So it'd be hard, if not impossible, to envision trauma recovery without storytelling. And for our model of service, it is a measure of when a man is ready to graduate, to leave our program for trauma recovery. And that exercise he's asked to do is called 'testimony'.

And testimony is essentially a retelling of one's story in completion, from where they were born, to who was in their family growing up, to the harms that they experienced, the trauma that came as a result of the harm, and then all the steps he has done towards recovery, including up till the day that he's telling the testimony. That if a fellow can do all that, and he can not avoid things, you know, because there's nothing there that's unexplored that would hold such great pain. If you can do all that in fullness, then that's probably the best measure that he is ready to recover, or I'm sort of ready to graduate from our trauma recovery services. So storytelling, I think is just essential, and can be used in different ways, from the first steps of healing to measuring, measuring that kind of graduation, if you want to call it that, from therapy focusing on trauma.

> "So right from the get-go then, masculinity does does not allow for men to share stories of being wounded, stories of being abused or assaulted."

As the Center advocates for more attention and support for male survivors, and in addressing the social stigma, what policy changes or research focus do you think would be most beneficial in enhancing mental health support for male survivors on a global scale?

I think there's two areas to consider. One is, I think we need to do, and I'll say this very respectfully, we need to take gender out, away from the consideration of admission for, admission to helping services. And this is still very active, you know, here in Canada, and I'm sure many places around the world, that whether it be this agency or clinic, whether it be the funding source for the agency or clinic, whether it be policy directives, all the way up to the UN, there is very much a gendered consideration. And historically, you know, the only efforts have been made to, or most, almost all the efforts have been made to say sexual violence survivors have been to female identified people. So I think we really need to move away from that as much as it may have been helpful for the women's movement to have that front and center, this is not helping other parts of society that are left behind. That would be the first thing I would say. I don't think gender discrimination should be in any aspect of services for those who have been harmed.

The other part of policy work, I would think, would be to see that the primary emphasis needs to lie that these services be considered as health services. Often, services for victims of sexual violence are held by non-health based organisations. Often, in many countries, the funding, what little funding there may be, are justice organizations. Now, while I'm not opposed to having a justice lens to this issue, justice does not know, it's not a good provider of therapy. They're lawyers and there's, you know, everything but therapy in a justice response.

So, in Canada, we have chronic issues that the justice sector provides whatever little bits of funding for survivors. But they're not doctors, they don't focus on evidence-based practices. They don't necessarily hire people who are trained in terms of mental health services provision and this makes the available services pretty, well, they're underfunded, but they're under-resourced too. And I think this is a problem area as well. If it was a health service, then there are medical standards that we could consider. We could look at health services, which always looks at research. What's

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the best intervention? If we were to focus about diabetes, diabetes prevention, diabetes intervention, we'd be guided by the research. But when it comes to services provided by justice, often there's no standards and it's a belief that people with good meaning can do the work, but not having accreditation, particular knowledge of the helping relationship. Those would be the two areas of policy work that I think need to be re-thought.

Sometimes male victims that suffer are left with the opinion that going to female-focused health centers are not very suitable for their needs. While this is more from a medical perspective, we are curious if you think that these medical interventions might be effective for male victims? And how can we as society improve response in relation to establishing male-catered survival-centered health care services?

I think that challenge is everywhere. And I think we need to at times move away from thinking we'll have a female-identified system or intervention here, and over there we'll have a male-identified system or here, and then somewhere else for working with people who don't identify with either gender, it may be that all these services have to be under the same building or the same organization. But I think there still is argument that for men, we need to create services that allow for the door to open as wide as possible for a man to walk through it. And certainly from what we've just talked about in terms of social stigma and all that, we can't expect a man could come into a women-identified space without having that being a barrier, at least for some men.

So the expression we have here is that wherever these services are, it needs to have a sign on the door, like a shingle, saying men are welcome and what we need to do as well is not to identify that that service is for men who've been victimized by sexual violence, even though that may be the work we want to do with them. Just having that on the door is going to be off-putting, it's going to prevent men from walking through it. That's why we chose our first initiative here in Canada called the "Men's Project", because no one could know by reading the name on the door, 'oh this is a program for men who've been victimized sexually' and maybe a guy will come to us for that but he might be coming to us for anger management, he may come to us to just become a better father. So I think that's an example of how we can offer a more integrated service. You may be familiar with the one-stop shopping where a fellow shows up and he says "I need help", and then okay, well we'll meet with you and figure out what your needs are. We'll put them in order if they need to be in order. Rather than having that sign on the door or that name of the organization, that's because he may not be included in the goals of that agency.

How do you believe that raising awareness on sexual violence against men can contribute to breaking the cycle of violence and promoting healing? And again, what could be useful factors or steps that need to be taken in order to break the cycle of violence?

I think as a society, for us to break any patterns like that, we have to work together. And yet, because sexual violence has been, I'll use the word 'gendered', now this is not a criticism of the feminist movement. The Western feminist broke the ice. It really allowed a social conversation, but happened to just focus on girls and women so I think we need to all come together on issues of sexual violence but that's easier said than done.

Sometimes I believe that the women's community, Canadian reference, pays attention to men's services but often they don't. Often they just want to focus on women and so I think that needs to change. Now, sometimes you hear from women or women activists or women leadership that men are not stepping in to help us. “Where are all the men who want to help end violence against women?”, and that's a good question but I've heard this from a number of men who reply, “well, it isn't like the men's struggle to establish men's services is supported by women”. Now, it's funny, we're on this call, and three of you all look female-identified.

But so often, these services are not supported by the existing women's services and so I can appreciate there could be some anger or resentment from men saying, “well, hell, they don't seem to care about us, but they really want us to step in to help them end violence against women” and I think that's a no-win situation. It's going to keep energies divided rather than be unified and I don't think we've witnessed it coming forward but in some jurisdictions, there’s more acknowledgement.

> The expression is *leave no one behind*. So that means everyone impacted by sexual violence, regardless of context - regardless of their identified gender, have a right to these services, they’re essential services, and there should not be any discrimination on the basis of gender or gender identity. I think that’s where we need to go.

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We wanted to know more about your work, as you have some work published on men and healing theory, research, and practice in working with male survivors of childhood sexual violence, as well as healing sexually betrayed men and boys. Could you speak about these pieces of your work?

The first one, that's a larger document. There was a government inquiry here in Canada of a community of about maybe 75,000 people, widespread sexual abuse of boys and youth and they were abused by priests and they were abused by government, by justice workers, and they were abused by city employees.

It was very widespread, hundreds of boys and male youth. There was an existing resource in town for sexual abuse survivors, but that service didn't focus on men. So they never contributed to helping these men. And that was the first time, where I come from in Canada, that services for men were funded because some of the offenders were government workers so the government was responsible in many ways. That initiative led to an inquiry where we received funding to write that research document. That research document looked at all of us, psychology, all the research studies, and came up with support for the model of work that we've been doing. That's where that one came from. And that document has helped establish other models around the world to help men.

And we're proud of that, that record so I think good research, good writing, can help give confidence and ideas for local initiatives to be built. We offer training to different places around the world, not just Canada and the U.S., but other times we've been invited, the UK, and New Zealand. There was an international event in

Cambodia. We have gone to Japan, Singapore, and Korea, but most of our training work has been here in North America. Both the writing and the training work is to help start initiatives wherever they may be. And that's part of the work. It's not just for us providing services as a counselor or therapist, it's to help other communities or government services build resources as well.

You also mentioned that you present a model of therapeutic group engagement from the last 10 years of your clinical service. I assume that this is very extensive work that you have done, which is very impressive.

Well, it's impressive in some ways but it also is sad because you would think there'd be a lot more research and documents like that in the world, but there's not. There's only one outcome study working with men who've experienced sexual trauma as children. And so this research study was on group work, you know, the healing circles, like group therapy. And then there was someone evaluated our model 10 years ago, and that led to a peer reviewed publication. Again, we're very proud of that work, but it's the only one of its kind in the world. So it's a sad statement that these services are so underfunded and under researched that there can only be one at this time. We need a lot more initiatives and then for them to document their work to see if what we're doing is helpful or not.

“Well, it’s impressive in some ways, but it also is so sad because you would think there’d be a lot more research and documents like that in the world, but there is not. There’s only one outcome study working with men who’ve experienced sexual trauma as children.”

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ADESOLA ADEBOYEJO

International Lawyer | Investigator | Sexual Crimes Expert | Int.l Justice | Governance | Trainer | Mentor | Coach

EXECUTIVE BIOGRAPHY

Adesola is a committed, impartial and resilient senior lawyer with more than three decades of international experience in Europe and Africa, including with the International Criminal Court ('ICC') and the UN, working in multi-jurisdictional criminal investigation and prosecution and in private practice in Nigeria.

Adesola studied for an LL.B. at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria before completing her BL at the Nigerian Law School in Lagos. She is also an alumnus of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and the Harvard Business School. She spent the next ten years in corporate counsel and private practice, rising to Head of Chambers for Bolaji Ayorinde & Co., Legal Practitioners, before establishing her highly successful practice in Lagos.

She began her career in international criminal law in 1998 while pursuing a Master's in International Law and Diplomacy at the University of Lagos. She acted as an observer for the charity African Concern International before moving to Rwanda as a Legal Advisor for the United Nations and later the ICC, where she prosecuted high-profile cases involving sexual and gender-based crimes.

More recently, she has engaged in further academic pursuits at the University of Calgary in Canada, where she diversified her leadership, change, and project management skills. Adesola has been a passionate international trainer and coach who desires to inspire individuals and organizations to unlock their full potential. She has become a trusted advisor to clients worldwide in executive coaching, leadership development, and personal growth.

Her educational background and a deep understanding of human behavior allow her to provide invaluable insights and practical strategies for personal and professional transformation.

Adesola has worked with diverse clients, from multinational corporations to non-profit organizations and individual executives. Her holistic and results-oriented approach fosters self-awareness, builds resilience, and enhances interpersonal skills. She is known for successfully empowering individuals to navigate the complexities of the modern global business and/or interpersonal relationship landscape.

Adesola is dedicated to helping her clients reach new heights and break through barriers. Her unwavering commitment to personal growth and leadership excellence has made her a sought-after speaker, international coach, and trainer.

Areas of Expertise

- International Law
- Criminal Investigation & Prosecution
- Corruption & Human Rights Abuses
- Democracy & Rule of Law
- NGOs & Supranationals
- Victim Protection & Support
- Team Leadership
- Training & Mentoring
- Talent Development
- Coaching
- Advisory Services
- Leadership Development
- Decision-making & Planning
- Programme Management
- Media Engagement
- Socioeconomic & Political Environments

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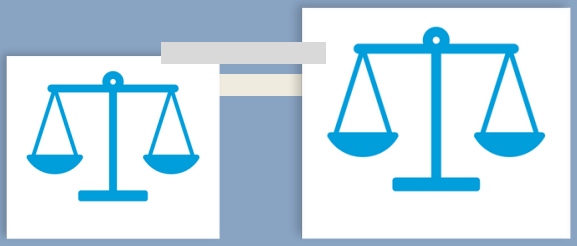

You have been part of the prosecution in the Dominic Ongwen Case in the ICC. How would you describe the significance of this case in the larger context of international criminal justice?

The Ongwen case holds significant importance within the broader landscape of international criminal justice. The trial of Ongwen, a former commander in the Lord's Resistance Army ('LRA'), represents a crucial step towards holding individuals accountable for their actions during armed conflicts. Ongwen faced charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, enslavement, and forced marriage, among others. His case underscored the international community's commitment to ensuring that perpetrators of such atrocities are brought to justice, but it also allowed the countless victims of the LRA campaign an opportunity to be heard and to obtain justice and redress for the atrocities committed against them. The case highlighted the complexities of international justice systems, challenges like delayed justice, the interplay of peace and justice, and the need for accountability for crimes committed by individuals transitioning from victims to perpetrators.

During the proceedings, complex issues regarding individual culpability and the rehabilitation of perpetrators who were themselves victims of exploitation and abuse were considered. The need to hold former child soldiers accountable for their crimes had to be balanced with the call for rehabilitation and reintegration within the context of the LRA conflict.

Finally, by bringing such a high-profile case as Ongwen's to trial, the international community has sent a strong message that perpetrators of mass atrocities will be held accountable for their actions.

Dominic Ongwen was found guilty of 61 crimes, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, in Northern Uganda between 2002 and 2005. The ICC Appeals Chamber confirmed his conviction and sentenced him to 25 years in prison. This serves as a deterrent to future crimes and contributes to the prevention of similar atrocities in other conflict zones around the world.

Were there any unique challenges in prosecuting Ongwen on crimes against humanity and war crimes given his background as a former child soldier?

Prosecuting Dominic Ongwen on crimes against humanity and war crimes presented unique challenges due to his background as a former child soldier. Ongwen, was abducted at around nine years old and recruited as a child soldier by the LRA, and he rose through the ranks to become a commander. During his trial, he argued that his experiences as a child soldier and the brutal LRA regime left him with no choice but to commit the acts he was accused of.

The complexities of the case arose from Ongwen's defense strategies, especially mental incapacity and duress, which he used to argue for exoneration. The Rome Statute, governing the ICC, outlines defenses that can be used by an accused. Ongwen's case raised questions about how factors like duress and his background as a former child soldier should impact

> In the context of the law, Dominic Ongwen is considered both, a victim and a perpetrator.

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sentencing considerations. Mental health experts from both the Prosecution and the defense testified extensively before the Court on the mental capacity of the accused at the time of his commission of the crimes alleged.

Furthermore, the case highlighted the need for a more nuanced approach in international criminal law, especially in distinguishing between full and partial defenses and considering factors like duress in mitigating punishment. The judgment also emphasized the challenges of delayed justice in international criminal proceedings and the limitations international courts face in providing immediate responses to atrocities.

The combination of factors such as his background as a former child soldier, the ethical and legal dilemmas regarding accountability, defense strategies, and sentencing considerations all contributed to the interesting and complex legal issues that can arise within the scope of international criminal justice.

Does it make a difference whether Ongwen committed rape as a child soldier willingly or commanded to do so by his supervisors? Is he to be considered as a victim or as a perpetrator by law?

Under international law, individuals can be held criminally responsible for their actions, including acts of rape, if they are found to have acted with intent or knowledge of the crime. If Ongwen committed the rapes and other crimes willingly, knowing the nature and consequences of his actions, he could be held individually accountable for those acts. However, if he was coerced or forced by his superiors to commit rape, his culpability may be mitigated, and his actions could potentially be considered under duress or a result of unlawful orders.

The distinction between whether Dominic Ongwen committed rape as a child soldier willingly or under command, therefore, held significance in the context of his prosecution for crimes against humanity and war crimes. Ongwen was convicted of numerous charges, including rape, sexual slavery, torture, and recruitment of child soldiers. The defense of duress, which Ongwen raised during his trial, hinges on the argument that he was coerced into committing these acts due to threats or fear for his life. However, the court did not accept Ongwen's claim that he lived in a state of fear. Instead, the Court took into cognizance his willing participation in the crimes.

The sentencing judgment was, therefore, based, among other considerations, on whether Ongwen acted willingly or under coercion in carrying out the crimes. While some argued that Ongwen's background as a former child soldier should be considered in the mitigation of punishment, the majority opinion emphasized his active role and willingness to perpetrate atrocities, leading to his conviction and sentencing to 25 years of imprisonment.

In the context of the law, Dominic Ongwen is considered both a victim and a perpetrator. Ongwen's case presents a complex situation as he was a former child soldier who suffered abduction and forced recruitment by the Lord's Resistance Army (‘LRA’) and a rebel commander responsible for committing serious crimes against humanity and war crimes. As a victim, Ongwen's history as a child soldier subjected to violent abduction, coercion, manipulation, and indoctrination by the LRA is acknowledged. His abduction at a young age and coercion into becoming a child soldier are factors that were taken into consideration by the

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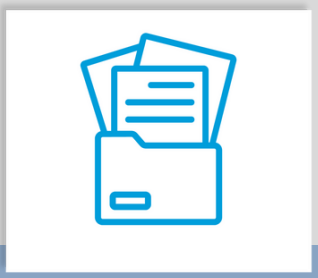


However, despite his victimization, Ongwen was also held accountable for his actions as a perpetrator of crimes against humanity and war crimes, particularly considering such crimes took place well into his age of accountability.

Determining whether Dominic Ongwen is considered a victim or a perpetrator by law is complex. It depends on various factors, including the specific crimes he committed, his role within the Lord's Resistance Army ('LRA'), and the circumstances surrounding his actions. International criminal law acknowledges that individuals, including child soldiers, can be held accountable for their actions if they are found to have acted with intent or knowledge of the crimes committed.

> "The Court found Ongwen guilty of 61 crimes even whilst highlighting the dual nature of his status as both a victim of circumstances beyond his control and a perpetrator responsible for grave offenses."

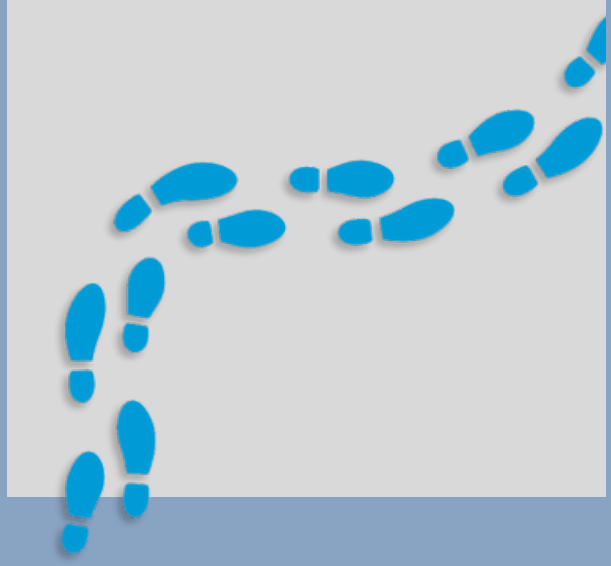
The case underscored the complexities faced by international criminal justice systems in addressing individuals like Ongwen, who transitioned from victimhood to perpetration within armed groups. Efforts to address his victimization by providing psychological support and facilitating his rehabilitation and reintegration into society may be part of the broader response and consideration for restorative justice but it nevertheless did not detract from the need to hold him individually criminally responsible for the crimes he committed as a rebel commander.

How was evidence pertaining to conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV') gathered and presented in the case and are there any testimonies or stories that left a lasting impact on you?

Gathering and presenting evidence related to conflict-related sexual violence in a case before the ICC can be quite challenging and complex. The multiplicity of actors, diverse and sometimes far-flung locations, language barriers, and lack of immediate documentation are just some of the most obvious challenges involved in documenting international crimes. Finding victims willing to testify can also be quite daunting due to cultural taboos and the desire of the victims to put the past behind them. Some of the victims are also reluctant to testify in court due to fear. In approaching witnesses to testify, care must be taken to avoid re-traumatizing survivors, and to provide support to vulnerable victims in compliance with the instruments of the court.

In the context of the ICC, gathering evidence pertaining to conflict-related sexual violence for prosecution must be done in a sensitive manner with regard to the safety, dignity, and well-being of the victim. Article 68 of the Rome Statute provides for the protection, safety, privacy, and well-being of witnesses and victims of sexual violence. This may include anonymity, pseudonyms, and closed-door or private sessions during testimony. Witness protection programs may also be utilized to safeguard individuals who fear reprisals or retaliation for providing testimony.

Where documentary evidence is gathered as part of the evidence to prove sexual violence crimes, proper documentation of the chain of custody for physical evidence is crucial to establish its authenticity and reliability.



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Throughout the gathering and presentation of evidence, it is essential to approach victims and survivors with sensitivity and empathy, considering their trauma. Trauma-informed practices should guide interactions with survivors and inform decision-making throughout the legal process. Thus, whilst gathering and presenting evidence on conflict-related sexual violence before the ICC can be challenging, the Court has practiced a sensitive victim-centric approach that ensures accountability while prioritizing the well-being of survivors.

Based on your experience, what are the most prevalent physical and psychological consequences faced by male survivors of conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV')?

CRSV can have profound physical and psychological consequences for male survivors. While much of the focus on CRSV has historically centered on female survivors, it is essential to recognize that male victims of these atrocities face equally daunting challenges as their female counterparts. Almost all the physical and psychological consequences faced by female survivors of CRSV are also faced by their male counterparts and even more so considering the psychological complexities of the male ego. These psychological effects can manifest as PTSD with consequent symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, hyperarousal and insomnia. Most victims also struggle with severe mental health trauma and typically express feelings of anxiety, depression, and hopelessness. On a wider scale, the psychological impact on the family is also significant as the male victims frequently have trust issues with their partners and difficulty in establishing intimacy due to erectile dysfunction and loss of sexual arousal. These are often a result of shame or perceived shame where the male victim still experiences a profound sense of loss of masculinity even when no one in the family or community is aware of the sexual trauma he suffered.

Along with the psychological consequences are the social challenges the male victim grapples with as he struggles with an overwhelming sense of rejection and stigma associated with sexual violence. Male victims are often economically challenged as they struggle with the ability to integrate and function normally to earn a living. They most often struggle with social isolation, distrust, communication difficulty, and psychological distress. In extreme cases, they can act out their distress by themselves, becoming hyper-aggressive in a bid to repress their psychological distress. Not to be overlooked is the physical trauma that accompanies male rape. Victims can suffer from lacerations in the genital area, internal injuries, rectal prolapse, and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, because of the sexual violence they experienced.

Like their female counterparts, male survivors of CRSV need comprehensive support services that address their physical, psychological, and social needs. This includes access to medical care, mental health support, psychosocial counseling, and legal assistance. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is crucial in providing holistic care and support for male survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

"These are often a result of shame or perceived shame where the male victim still experiences a profound sense of loss of masculinity ..."

ADESOLA ADEBOYEJO

In your view, how can outreach programmes be modified to suit the needs of male victims of conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV') on one hand and the experts investigating and prosecuting CRSV against men on the other hand? And, do you have any successful examples to share?

To effectively support male victims of CRSV and enhance the capacity of experts investigating and prosecuting CRSV against men, outreach programs need to be tailored to address the unique needs and challenges faced by both groups. It is crucial to develop outreach programs that prioritize safety, confidentiality, and well-being for male survivors. These programs should be survivor-centric, gender-sensitive, and non-discriminatory. Trauma-informed care should be provided, including for those with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Community engagement and legal support should be offered to reduce stigma and promote support. Experts investigating and prosecuting cases should receive specialized training, implement gender-sensitive investigative techniques, foster collaboration, and advocate for policies that address the specific needs of male survivors.

> "While much of the focus on CRSV has historically centered on female survivors, it is essential to recognise that male victims of these atrocities face equally daunting challenges as their female counterparts."

How prevalent are cases of conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV') against men, based on your experience? And are there any inherent challenges in bringing such cases to domestic and international courts?

Bringing cases of CRSV against men to domestic and international courts presents several inherent challenges, many of which stem from societal norms, legal frameworks, and the unique experiences of male survivors. Male survivors of sexual violence (CRSV) face several challenges, including stigma, legal definitions, gender biases, lack of awareness, limited support services, complex evidence collection, and barriers to reparations. Societal stigma and stereotypes often lead to underreporting, as male survivors may fear being perceived as weak or emasculated.

A few decades ago, underreporting of female sexual violence was prevalent for these same reasons and it took an intentional and consistent campaign to turn the tide in its reporting. The same must be done for CRSV against male victims. Legal definitions may not fully encompass the range of acts experienced by male survivors, such as forced nudity, genital mutilation, and sexual torture, but a deliberate and systematic development of the necessary nomenclature to capture the various types of victimization suffered by the victims is needed. Gender biases within justice systems can also hinder the investigation and prosecution of CRSV against men. Limited support services, such as medical care and psychosocial support, can deter survivors from seeking justice. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that includes legal reforms, awareness-raising initiatives, capacity-building for justice professionals, and gender-sensitive support services.

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How has the recognition and understanding of conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV') against men evolved over the years in international criminal justice? And in what way does it manifest differently compared to CRSV against women?

The recognition and understanding of CRSV against men has evolved significantly in international criminal justice over the years, albeit with some historical underemphasis. Historically, international criminal justice mechanisms have primarily focused on sexual violence against women and girls in conflict settings, leading to a lack of recognition and understanding of CRSV against men. Over time, legal definitions and frameworks have expanded to include CRSV against men, with international instruments like the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court ('ICC') codifying this understanding into law. Landmark cases and precedents have contributed to the recognition and understanding of CRSV against men. Victim participation and advocacy have played a crucial role in raising awareness and advocating for justice. Expert guidance and training have also been provided to legal and judicial professionals on recognizing and investigating CRSV against men. CRSV against men and boys has been a significant issue in international criminal justice. Historically, few cases have been prosecuted, reflecting a broader challenge in addressing CRSV. Under-reporting and stigma are significant issues, partly due to cultural sensitivities, fear of reprisal, and negative reactions. International criminal law recognizes CRSV as war crimes or crimes against humanity, and efforts have been made to address it within international legal standards.

Conflict-related sexual violence against men manifests differently compared to CRSV against women. CRSV against men is under-reported due to cultural sensitivities, stigma, fear of reprisal, and negative reactions. This under-reporting contributes to challenges in recognizing and addressing CRSV against male victims. The categorization of violations, often as torture or cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment, can obscure the sexualized nature of the act and the full extent of harm suffered. CRSV can intensify through different cultural and religious norms, building on existing taboos around sexuality, especially homosexuality. Existing support systems are often specifically for women, highlighting the need for resources tailored to male victims. Legal and procedural barriers hinder access to justice for CRSV. While international criminal law recognizes CRSV as war crimes or crimes against humanity, there has been a historical lack of prosecutions for CRSV against men. It is crucial to address these differences to ensure comprehensive support and justice for male victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

In what way do cultural perceptions of masculinity and stigmas impact the prosecution of such crimes and exacerbate the challenges faced by male survivors?

Cultural perceptions of masculinity and stigmas surrounding male victimization have significant implications for the prosecution of CRSV against men and exacerbate the challenges faced by male survivors in seeking justice and support. Cultural norms and stereotypes that equate masculinity with strength and dominance can create barriers to male survivors' disclosure of CRSV. Fear of being perceived as weak or unmanly can prevent them from reporting their experiences or seeking assistance. Male survivors often face stigma and shame associated with their victimization, leading to feelings of shame and self-blame. This can result in judgment, ridicule, or ostracism from their communities.

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Cultural perceptions of masculinity can impact legal proceedings and prosecution of CRSV against men. Law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and judges may hold biased beliefs about male survivors, leading to skepticism or disbelief of their testimony. Stereotypes about male sexuality and consent may also influence legal interpretations of sexual violence against men.

Access to support services, such as medical care and psychosocial support, may be hindered by cultural norms surrounding masculinity. Male survivors may also face rejection and social isolation from their families, communities, and peer groups due to cultural attitudes toward male victimization. Addressing the impact of cultural perceptions of masculinity and stigmas surrounding male victimization requires multi-faceted interventions that challenge harmful stereotypes, promote gender equality, and provide culturally sensitive support services for male survivors. Efforts to combat stigma, raise awareness, and engage men and boys as allies in ending gender-based violence are essential for creating environments where male survivors feel safe, supported, and empowered to seek justice and healing.

In your view, does the international justice system provide adequate reparations and support for male survivors?

In my view, the international justice system does not provide adequate reparations and support for male survivors of CRSV. While the International Criminal Court ('ICC') has developed principles for ordering reparations that commit to applying 'gender-inclusive' procedures, male survivors' views on reparations primarily focus on material compensation and physical rehabilitation. Additionally, cultural perceptions of masculinity and stigmas often exacerbate the challenges faced by male survivors, making it difficult for them to come forward and seek justice.

While Security Council resolution 2467, passed in April 2019, names men and boys as victims of CRSV, it gives no guidance on what kind of support male survivors need or what entity in the UN system would provide this support. Thus, there is still much work to be done to ensure that their rights are fully upheld and their needs are adequately met. This requires a concerted effort to challenge stigma, promote gender equality, and provide comprehensive support services and reparations for all survivors, regardless of gender.

Given that conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV') cases against men are not pursued in courts as much as CRSV cases against women, what barriers and obstacles exist within the international legal frameworks that hinder the effective prosecution of CRSV against men?

Barriers and obstacles within international legal frameworks hinder the effective prosecution of CRSV against men in several ways. Cultural norms and stereotypes that equate masculinity with strength and dominance can create barriers to male survivors' disclosure of CRSV. Fear of being perceived as weak or unmanly may prevent them from reporting their experiences or seeking assistance. Stigma and shame associated with under-reporting and misclassification of CRSV against men can also hinder the accurate characterization of the violation.

International legal frameworks may lack comprehensive definitions of CRSV against men, leading to ambiguity and inconsistency in their identification, investigation, and prosecution. Biases and stereotypes about

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> Biases and stereotypes about masculinity and victimisation can influence perceptions of CRSV against within the legal system, leading to skepticism or disbelief of their testimony.

masculinity and victimization can influence perceptions of CRSV against men within the legal system, leading to skepticism or disbelief of their testimony. Collecting evidence of CRSV against men can also be challenging due to factors such as delayed reporting, lack of physical evidence, and difficulty obtaining witness testimony.

Legal proceedings may lack gender-sensitive approaches that take into account the unique needs and experiences of male survivors. Limited access to trained personnel, forensic facilities, and victim support services can impede efforts to deliver justice and accountability.

Addressing these barriers requires comprehensive reforms within legal systems to strengthen legal definitions, combat biases and stereotypes, enhance evidence-collection methods, raise awareness of CRSV against men, and provide gender-sensitive support services for survivors. Efforts to promote gender equality, challenge stigma, and empower male survivors to seek justice are essential for overcoming these obstacles and ensuring accountability for perpetrators of CRSV against men.

What lessons from the ICTR have been implemented at the ICC regarding the prosecution of CRSV against men?

Several lessons from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda ('ICTR') regarding prosecution of CRSV against men have informed the practices and approaches of the International Criminal Court ('ICC'). While the ICC is a distinct institution with its own mandate and legal framework, it has drawn upon the experiences and precedents established by the ICTR in prosecuting CRSV.

The ICTR has played a crucial role in recognizing and addressing CRSV against men, particularly in cases involving sexual violence during the Rwandan genocide. The tribunal's jurisprudence challenged stereotypes and biases, establishing that men can also be victims of sexual violence in conflict. The ICTR's legal precedents, such as Akayesu, Musema, and Semanza, have influenced the ICC's jurisprudence. The tribunal developed gender-sensitive approaches to investigating and prosecuting CRSV, including addressing the unique needs and experiences of male survivors.

The lessons from the ICTR have influenced the ICC's approach to prosecuting CRSV against men by promoting gender-inclusive procedures, survivor-centered approaches, recognition of male victims, and inclusive and trauma-informed practices.

While the ICC has drawn upon the lessons and experiences of the ICTR in prosecuting CRSV against men, it continues to work to further strengthen accountability, address gaps in legal frameworks, and ensure that the rights and needs of male survivors are fully upheld within the international justice system.

The ICC has implemented principles for reparations that prioritize gender-inclusive procedures, focusing on the needs of male survivors of CRSV. Trauma-informed approaches prioritize the safety, confidentiality, and well-being of survivors, including male victims. The ICC recognizes the unique challenges faced by male victims and provides adequate support, justice, and reparations. It advocates for inclusive, trauma-informed practices, considering cultural perceptions of masculinity and stigmas that may impact access to justice for male

survivors. The ICC has also implemented measures to protect witness identities and provide psychosocial support during legal proceedings.

In your view, how can international courts better engage with local communities to address and redress sexual violence against men?

International courts should engage in community outreach and education to raise awareness about sexual violence against men, challenge stigma, and promote understanding of the legal and psychosocial consequences. They should approach local communities with cultural sensitivity and respect, understanding the cultural context of sexual violence to build trust and credibility. Collaboration with local organizations, civil society groups, and community leaders is essential for developing strategies to address sexual violence against men and supporting survivors. Victim participation and support should be established, providing psychosocial support, legal assistance, and medical care. Capacity building and training should be invested in for local stakeholders, focusing on recognizing, investigating, and prosecuting sexual violence against men. Reparations programs should be developed to address the specific needs of male survivors and affected communities. Long-term engagement with local communities is crucial for sustainable impact, fostering trust, fostering partnerships, and empowering stakeholders to take ownership of justice and redress initiatives.

These were the approaches practiced in the Ongwen trial and it ensured the community was thoroughly engaged, sensitized and carried along throughout the duration of the trial. Engaging with the local community was essential to effectively address and redress the sexual violence perpetrated by the LRA in Northern Uganda, promote accountability for the perpetrators, and to support the healing and recovery of survivors.

Are there any initiatives you would recommend to further support male survivors of sexual violence?

Several initiatives can support male survivors of sexual violence. These include providing specialized support services, legal assistance, and capacity-building programs for male survivors of sexual violence. Services including counseling, therapy, peer support groups, and helplines, all staffed by trained professionals, should also be provided. Legal assistance should be provided to help male survivors navigate legal processes and seek reparations. Training programs should be offered for healthcare providers, social workers, law enforcement officers, and other frontline responders. Public awareness campaigns should be launched to challenge stereotypes and promote support services. Peer support networks should be established to connect male survivors with others who have experienced similar experiences. Inclusive policies and guidelines should be developed within healthcare, legal, and social service systems. Research and data collection should be conducted to understand the prevalence and impact of sexual violence against men. Collaboration with communities and civil society organizations can promote community-based responses. Trauma-informed care should be implemented to ensure sensitive, empathetic, and supportive care. Intersectional approaches should be adopted to address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of diverse populations.

By implementing these initiatives, communities, governments, and organizations can work together to create a more supportive and inclusive environment for male survivors of sexual violence, promote their healing and recovery, and facilitate their journey towards justice and empowerment.

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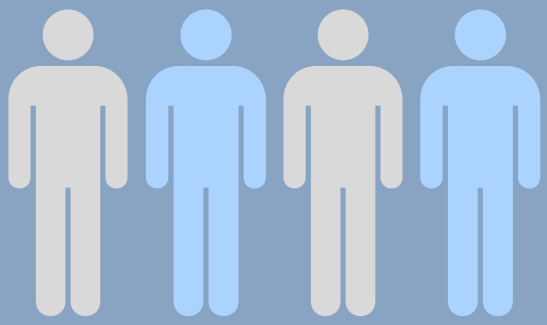

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How do you envision the future of international criminal law in addressing male-targeted sexual violence in conflicts?

International criminal law needs to better understand the harm inflicted on male victims and the dynamics of sexual violence in armed conflict. This involves systematic data collection on prevalence, patterns, and effects. Trauma-informed approaches should be adopted by international courts, prioritizing the safety, confidentiality, and well-being of survivors, including male victims. Collaborating with local organizations, law enforcement, medical professionals, and legal experts is crucial for increasing capacity in documenting and prosecuting cases of sexual violence. Developing gender-sensitive legal frameworks can guide international criminal law practices and serve as a model for domestic jurisdictions. Despite progress in investigating and prosecuting male sexual violence, international criminal law is still at an early stage in understanding and addressing sexual violence against men and boys. Recognizing sexual violence crimes as serious from the outset ensures effective addressing. Engaging men in addressing sexual violence is essential for a comprehensive understanding and effective prevention and response strategies.

Overall, the future of international criminal law in addressing male-targeted sexual violence in conflicts will involve a multifaceted approach that integrates legal, policy, and programmatic responses, with a focus on accountability, prevention, victim support, and gender equality. By recognizing the experiences of male survivors and addressing the root causes of sexual violence, international criminal law can contribute to creating a more just and peaceful world for all.

How has working on such intense cases shaped your perspective on justice and human rights?

Immersion in cases involving serious international crimes offers a deep understanding of the complexity and gravity of human rights violations, highlighting their historical, political, social, and cultural contexts. It also allows for a recognition of the profound impact of these crimes on victims and communities, emphasizing the importance of seeking accountability and redress. The rule of law and accountability are emphasized, emphasizing that no one is above the law. The limits of justice are also questioned, raising questions about the efficacy of legal mechanisms and the role of transitional justice processes. Exposure to cases of serious international crimes can fuel a commitment to human rights advocacy, inspiring individuals to work towards preventing future atrocities and promoting respect for human rights. Justice processes empower survivors and affected communities by providing opportunities to share their stories, seek truth, and participate in efforts to achieve justice and redress. Engaging with such cases may also pose challenges to personal and professional values, such as ethical dilemmas, emotional distress, and burnout.

Working on intense cases of serious international crimes can be a transformative experience that shapes our perspective on justice and human rights, deepens our empathy and understanding, and motivates us to contribute to positive change in the world. It reinforces the importance of upholding human dignity, promoting accountability, and striving for a more just and humane society. It also shapes our perspective on justice and human rights by emphasizing accountability, preventing the recurrence of crimes, advocating for effective justice mechanisms, promoting truth and reparation, and striving to ensure the non-recurrence of atrocities through a commitment to upholding human rights principles globally.

How do you maintain resilience and hope in the face of such grave human rights abuses and what advice would you give to upcoming legal professionals interested in international criminal law, especially in cases of conflict-related sexual violence ('CRSV')?

Maintaining resilience and hope as a Prosecutor in the face of grave human rights abuses can be challenging but crucial for upholding justice. As Prosecutors, we can find resilience by connecting with fellow human rights defenders, lawyers, and activists who share similar values and goals. We can find strength and motivation by the knowledge that we are standing by the principles of human rights and justice. Advocating for accountability mechanisms, such as fair trials for serious international crimes, can also provide resilience. But it is important for Prosecutors to prioritize their self-care, engage in activities that promote mental and emotional well-being, seek counseling or therapy when needed, and take breaks to recharge. The workload can be intense and heavy and Prosecutors need to continuously be mindful of the stress that the work can engender. Self-care practices include regular exercise, healthy eating, sufficient sleep, and relaxation techniques. Seeking support from colleagues, mentors, friends, and family can provide emotional support and encouragement. Establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life can prevent burnout and maintain a sense of balance. Focusing on long-term goals and objectives can help maintain perspective and remind oneself of the impact of their efforts.

Celebrating victories and milestones in their work can also provide strength and inspiration. At the ICTR, this became something of a tradition as the Prosecutor engaged with the Team in celebrating victories and milestones for the Office. Engaging with survivors and communities can also provide a source of hope and motivation in the face of adversity. Seeing the hope of the victims and their belief in the justice process can be very humbling and can help ground the Prosecutor on the importance of the justice mechanism.

Therefore, in the face of grave human rights abuses, a Prosecutor can employ a combination of personal coping strategies, professional support systems, and a commitment to justice values. By adopting these strategies and approaches, a Prosecutor can cultivate resilience and hope in the face of terrible human rights atrocities and the pressure to hold individuals accountable for the crimes, sustain their commitment to the pursuit of justice, and contribute to positive change in the world.

> "Overall, the future of international criminal law in addressing male-targeted sexual violence in conflicts will involve a multi-faceted approach that integrates legal, policy, and programmatic responses, with a focus on accountability, prevention, victim support, and gender equality."

ADESOLA ADEBOYEJO

INES YAGI

Registered Psychotherapist and Professor

Can you please introduce yourself and elaborate on how your experience working as a registered psychotherapist has prepared you to work with and understand survivors of sexual violence?

My name is Ines Yagi. Depending on the setting and context, some people call me Dr. Yagi, Professor Yagi, or simply, Ines. I have diverse experience and wear multiple hats. First and foremost, I am a registered psychotherapist with the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario. I provide individual, couples, and family therapy working from an integrative systemic, emotion-focused, evidenced-based, trauma-informed, and male-centred approach. I have great competence in men's issues, trauma, mood disorders, and complex relational issues. I am also providing a clinical supervisor for qualifying and registered therapists, a researcher, and a part-time professor at Saint Paul University's Faculty of Human Sciences, Counselling, Psychotherapy, and Spirituality.

I completed an M.A. in Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality, focusing on individual therapy. My M.A. research project reviewed the literature on the importance of integrating spirituality in psychotherapy as part of the unique journey to healing and recovering from child sexual abuse and preventing revictimization. Even though my M.A. project didn't specify the gender of victims, the essence of the literature on the subject portrayed women as victims and men as perpetrators, which became the tone of my research project.

When I decided to pursue a Ph.D. program, I initially wanted to work with female victims of rape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). As I dove into the literature while preparing my research proposal, I found that male victims were briefly mentioned as passing comments.

That caught my attention and influenced my decision to shift my Ph.D. research project towards the following title, "Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Against Men in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Lifting the Veil of Secrecy Around a Controversial and Taboo Subject". The research project investigated the intersection between conflict-related sexual violence against me in the DRC and the male code.

The deep desire to work with grief and trauma victims initially attracted me to the profession. I have spent extensive time working on myself as part of the safe and effective use of self in therapy. While completing the M.A. program in Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality, I made it clear that I was interested in working with victims of sexual violence and trauma. My training, clientele, and clinical supervision were tailored to this population. I spent countless hours journeying with victims and survivors of sexual violence. I further explored the subject matter through my Ph.D. research project to deepen my understanding of the literature and different treatment modalities. My research project gave me the unique opportunity to hear directly from male victims of conflict-related sexual violence in the eastern region of the Congo to understand their experience and needs better. My endless thirst for knowledge, personal and professional development continue to influence my decision to participate in different workshops and trainings to deepen my understanding of how to accompany victims of sexual violence safely. For example, I am currently completing a Somatic Experiencing Professional training to continue enhancing my competence in working with trauma.

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What is your approach in healing the trauma of sexual violence survivors? Is there a different approach between women and men? Is it harder to heal the trauma of people who have experienced sexual violence at a young age?

First, it is important to acknowledge that there is still a lot of stigma, shame, and secrecy around sexual violence. Often, secrecy prevails, and traumatic memories surface as symptoms. Regardless of gender, victims of sexual trauma sometimes come to therapy for another symptomology. It is important to be aware of this and to complete a thorough assessment.

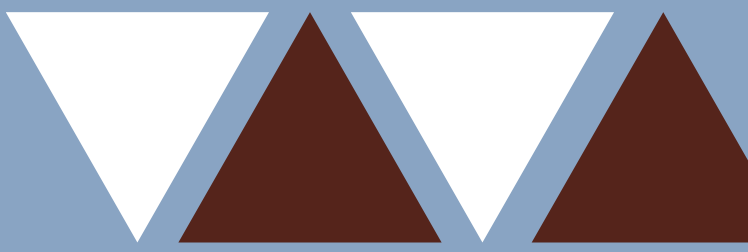
Regardless of gender, the first healing and recovery stage must focus on safety and stabilization. As part of the client-centred approach to therapy, it is important to provide unconditional positive regard, understanding, and empathy. The therapist must provide acceptance and take a non-judgemental stance to help clients feel safe and secure to share freely. The therapeutic space is sacred, and the relationship is deeply intimate and vulnerable and must be treated with care. For victims/survivors, asking for help is a big deal and disclosing it to anybody can be difficult. It is important to validate, honour and respect clients' stories, life experiences, resources, gifts, and perspectives. In a healing relationship, victims/survivors can experience intimacy, develop the ability to trust, challenge shame, and rediscover an individual or social identity. Within the first stage, the therapist can spend much time identifying and installing resources (e.g., internal or external) as part of stabilization. For example, you can help clients learn to track themselves (e.g., notice themselves in the moment, what is happening inside, what the sensations are, notice something comforting or pleasant, etc.).

The feeling of safety and stability will lead into the second healing and recovery phase, where the victim/survivor can share a detailed story of their traumatic experience. There is healing in telling the story in depth. For example, what are they seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling, thinking, etc. Working with the nervous system and integrating bodily sensations is important; otherwise, we are missing a big part of their traumatic experience. We also work on exploring the meaning of the event.

Retelling the story in a safe and non-judgmental space can help transform traumatic memories. For example, it is an opportunity to process the impact of the trauma. There are lots of misconceptions and cultural delusions about sexual violence committed against men and women. Consequently, there is a lot of internalized shame. Retelling the story can help tease apart healthy versus unhealthy shame. Trauma shame attaches to the victims/survivors' sense of self instead of being attached to someone else's behaviour. This type of work goes beyond talk therapy alone. Getting in touch with experiences beneath the stories being told is important. This can happen by integrating somatic approaches (e.g., working with the body and nervous system, such as working with sympathetic and parasympathetic responses, working with feelings, emotions, and sensations, etc.) to deepen the work and create new experiences and more capacity. There is mourning that takes place during this stage as well.

If the work is done well, it leads to the final stage of integration and reconnection. For example, integration can lead to developing a new sense of self beyond the traumatic event. Integration also entails building resources that victims/survivors can use in their daily lives. This is where the sexual violence no longer defines the person. It is important to know that the stages aren't linear.

The three-phase model can be applied to both genders. It is also important to have general knowledge about the context, gender and population being served. It is also recommended that interventions be adapted based on the clinical needs of the victims/survivors. There are other factors to keep in mind when working with male victims. I touched on a male-centred approach to psychotherapy in my Doctorate thesis and a book I recently published. The book is titled "*Conflict-Related Sexual Violence against Men in the Democratic Republic of Congo*". The book is based on my doctoral thesis, and it investigates the intersection between conflict-related sexual violence against men in the DRC and the male code.



The healing or integration of male sexual trauma requires a male-centered approach that;
(a) challenges the myths and cultural delusions about male sexual victimization;
(b) counters the shame about male sexual violence found in a larger society;
(c) provides a welcoming space for male victims to express themselves;
(d) gives male victims permission to discuss a variety of difficult issues and experiences and
(e) identifies unhelpful defences.

To better understand male victims/survivors' experiences, it is important to understand the concept of masculinity, gender, and manhood and how it plays into the way the trauma is internalized and the journey toward healing and recovery. Both individual and group therapy are highly recommended.

> Regardless of gender, victims of sexual trauma sometimes come to therapy for another symptomology.

How do the experiences and healing process of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence differ from people who have experienced sexual violence not related to conflict?

To better answer this question, I'll highlight the experiences and healing process of male survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in conflict versus outside of conflict. First, I'll highlight the similarities. For example, the concepts of a traditional male as a protector, provider, producer, and impregnator exist at varying degrees across different cultures. These values of masculinity don't align with men's experiences of sexual victimization. Victimhood is often associated with vulnerability, disempowerment, and weakness. Most men abide by male gender role socialization and believe in harmful myths and cultural delusions about male sexual victimization experience. This influences how the trauma is internalized, ultimately influencing the healing and recovery process.

INES YAGI

For example, physically responding to sexual assault is often synonymous with consent and wanting it. Women also experience victim blaming across cultures. For example, women victims are sometimes blamed for how they dress and the assumption that they "asked for it." The consequences of CRSV are more complex in a war zone as the sexual assault is often committed with extreme atrocity. For example, sexual violence is often combined with other forms of violence imposed on the victims, such as the death of loved ones, extreme poverty, looting, limited/zero support system, and limited/zero medical and therapeutic care.

As an author of "*Characteristics and Impacts of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence against Men in the DRC: A Phenomenological Research Design*", what has inspired you to write this article?

What ultimately inspired me was the desire to bring awareness to the subject matter and to stop the culture of shame and stigma that reinforces the silence and forces male victims to suffer alone. The subject of male sexual victimization experience in the armed conflict is still considered a taboo subject, especially in Congo. I chose the Congo because it is my way of giving back to my people. Even though I was raised abroad most of my life, Congo is my home and is close to my heart.

> First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge that there is still a lot of stigma, shame, and secrecy around sexual violence. Often, secrecy prevails, and traumatic memories surface as symptoms.

INES YAGI

What are some immediate and long-term impacts psychological and psychosomatic impacts on men and boys survivors of CRSV? Is there any notable difference in the impacts on male adults and young boys victims of sexual violence? Is it true, that men who experienced sexual violence at a young age are more likely to become perpetrators of such crimes when they grow up?

Most of the data I am sharing comes from the result of my research conducted in DRC and is consistent with the literature. Male victims of conflict-related sexual violence often describe sexual trauma as a turning point after which nothing is ever the same. Male victims/survivors of CRSV testify to persistent and ongoing psychological and psychosomatic impacts, including symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). For example, the trauma is re-experienced through nightmares, flashbacks, unwanted upsetting memories, difficulty sleeping, intrusive thoughts, memory loss, etc. Some male victims/survivors have shared the systemic psychological impact of not being able to provide for their families. For example, the lack of employment and being incapacitated due to physical and psychological health-related issues force male victims/survivors to take on different roles in their homes and communities. For example, there is a role reversal from being a provider, protector, and procreator to 'vulnerable' and dependent, all attributes linked to feminine qualities. This redesigns the whole family system. Psychological consequences are linked to the lack of sexual force, which interferes with men as providers, producers and lovers due to physical health-related issues. Male victims/survivors of SGBV have shared multiple physical health-related issues. The issues mentioned include headaches, back pain, body aches, ongoing pain, weakness, loss of balance, loss of strength, bloody noses, sensitive stomach, loss of appetite, incontinence of urine, blood in urine, hemorrhoid, reduced strength for sexual activities with their wives, genital mutilation, and more. Male victims use words such as "broken" and destroyed to describe their current and ongoing struggles. Due to limited resources, stigma and the silence around the subject matter, there is persistent suffering.

I am not able to comment on the difference in the impacts on male adults versus young boys' victims of sexual violence. Most of my work and research focuses on adult males. Very limited research has focused on assessing the direct impact of CRSV on young boys or identifying therapeutic needs for their healing and recovery journey. There are lots of misconceptions and misinformation about sexual violence. Ignorance is a real problem.

There is a 'traditional male code' in many African and non-African countries, imposing how a man should be. Usually, this entails being the protector, and the provider, and never showing weakness. What role do these traditional masculine norms and gender expectations play in shaping the psychological response of male survivors?

I touched on the intersection between the traditional male code and male sexual victimization experience in the previous questions. Male socialization is depicted as "the internalizing or cultural inscribing of certain gender role norms that together make up the traditional 'male code'" (Fisher et al., 2008, p. 16). These commonly held values and standards influence people by determining what is considered acceptable or unacceptable, right or wrong, important or unimportant, and workable or unworkable in various situations. In a traditional sense, men are considered invulnerable, impenetrable, aggressive, sexually active, etc. Unfortunately, these dysfunctional representations of masculinity don't align with victimhood. This dynamic can lead to internalized blame and shame, minimizing and dismissing one's experiences. It can also interfere with help-seeking behaviour and reinforce the culture of silence.

INES YAGI

In your article you mentioned that for the victims, "being known as a victim of rape is a source of humiliation, it deconstructs their social identity as men". In what other ways does CRSV impact the self-esteem and self-identity of male survivors, and what strategies can be employed to help them rebuild a positive sense of self?

As mentioned earlier, a "real man" must meet certain expectations, such as providing, producing, protecting, and procreating. These attributes are central to male victims/survivors' personal and social identity. Male victims' experiences expose the fragility of masculinity. As a social construct, it appears that the concept of the male code can be increased, decreased, or even lost. It isn't a final state of being. Different cultures have derogatory words to challenge, undermine, and maintain uncertainties of manhood, such as pussy, whipped, sissy, girly-boy, wimp, effeminate, weakling, putz, pansy, schmuck, and more. A man without the ability to produce, procreate or protect themselves, their family and their community is not a "real man." The individual is reduced to a "de facto female." The lack of resources and ongoing symptoms of sexual violence prevent most victims/survivors from regaining their full potential as men. Some physical health-related issues prevent male victims from working, and this financial impact makes it difficult for them to live up to their duty to provide. Suddenly, they are having to depend on others for survival. There are also issues of sexual impotence, which makes it difficult to engage in sexual activities and can ultimately prevent them from fulfilling their duty as procreators. The male body that once represented virility, strength, force, and self-sufficiency has been rendered weak and helpless. Losing one's manhood is an existential crisis and a form of revictimization because masculinity is a great source of pride and meaning in life for many male victims/survivors. Following the aftermath of trauma, some male victims do not know themselves anymore. They cannot trust their bodies and their emotions. They cannot even trust their environment.

Rebuilding a sense of self is a multifaceted issue and a journey that requires multiple players beyond individual victims/survivors. How do male victims start rebuilding their individual and social identity when they are often excluded from the campaign against CRSV?

How do you rebuild one's identity when most male victims in a war zone still live in fear of re-victimization, rejection, judged, isolated, stigmatized and criticized? There is no rebuilding when male victims are condemned to suffer alone in silence. How do you rebuild when there aren't many resources around? There is no rebuilding when male victims are condemned to suffer alone in silence.

At the same time, we can't underestimate men's desire for meaning in life, even in the most difficult circumstances. According to Friedrich Nietzsche's words, "He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how" (Nietzsche, 1889). The quote suggests that a man with a source of meaning and purpose in life, a 'why,' can endure almost any suffering, the 'how.' According to the traditional male code, most men find the 'why' meaning and purpose in their daily lives through their ability to live up to their full potential as men. In my doctoral research study, most participants shared the experience of feeling emasculated and no longer considering themselves as "real man" in their eyes and that of the community. In the book "'Man's Search For Meaning,'" Viktor Frankl describes pain and suffering as an inevitable part of people's lives as finite beings. According to Frankl, "Man's freedom is not freedom from conditions but rather freedom to take a stand on whatever conditions might confront him." In my research study, one or two participants were able to redefine their trauma and hold on to their individual and social status as 'real man' based on their previous actions as community leaders and bravery during the attack while trying to protect the community. These two individuals were able to redefine masculinity in a way that integrates the trauma in a functional way. This is an important step in the journey towards healing and recovery. I am currently working on an article on redefining masculinity after sexual trauma. There is more to come on this aspect of healing after trauma. Stay tuned.

INES YAGI

In your article, you mentioned that the impacts of CRSV on men and boys "reach far beyond the victims themselves." In what ways can it impact the mental health and well-being of their intimate partners, families, friends, and local community?

I touched on this in previous questions. To simplify things, in many African societies, man is considered the head of the household. Men are the head of the community. The best way to destroy a whole community is to cut off the head.

> "There is no rebuilding when male victims are condemned to suffer alone in silence."

In your article it is mentioned that at least in the DRC there is a lack of medical facilities for people. Male victims describe the need for medical care as most important in their healing journey since that is a fundamental need for them to pursue their mental healing journey. A great barrier that prevents male survivors from seeking help and support is the lack thereof. What are some other barriers that prevent them from seeking help and support?

There are many other barriers that prevent male victims/survivors from accessing support, such as lack of money and extreme poverty. How do you access medical services without funds? Consequently, most victims/survivors seek medical services when their symptoms worsen. They tend to rely on traditional medicine to alleviate symptoms temporarily. There is also the issue of the lack of safety. Some victims/survivors fear stepping out of their homes due to fear of being re-victimized. Other male victims/survivors identified displacement dislocation as an obstacle that prevents help-seeking behaviours. For example, some people flee their homes and communities and seek refuge in the bushes. The stigma, myths and cultural delusions around the subject also create a barrier against help-seeking behaviour. The culture of silence doesn't help the situation. It is a multi-layer issue.

What measures can be implemented to reduce the stigma surrounding male survivors of Conflict-Related sexual violence and create a more supportive environment for disclosure?

Multiple measures can be implemented on the state level to reduce stigma, such as legislation, assistance and services to victims/survivors, training and sensitization of responders and awareness raising. For example, domestic legislation can be reviewed to ensure that protection against sexual violence and access to appropriate care are included without discrimination based on gender and other factors. Assistance and services to survivors can lean towards establishing and sustainably funding survivor-centred, evidence-based, and inclusive healthcare and social services programs for all victims/survivors of SGBV without discrimination based on gender and other factors. There also needs to be an investment in the training and sensitization of service providers and responders on the protection of all victims /survivors of SGBV. A lot of work needs to be allocated toward raising awareness in the general public and local communities that any person can be a victim/survivor of SGBV and that all victims/survivors have the right to protection, appropriate care and unhindered access to justice. These are just a few examples of things that can be done at the state level. The measures to reduce stigma must also involve humanitarian actors and the internal community.

What challenges are faced by mental health professionals working with male survivors of CRSV and addressing the psychological impacts?

Many villages in targeted areas in the DRC have physicians, nurses and community health workers trained on SGBV by local and international NGOs to meet the clinical care for women and girls specifically. Historically, counselling for sexual abuse-related issues has been aimed at meeting the needs of women and girls using models originating from structural feminist theories. The growing area of research that exists on male victims of sexual violence tends to focus on acknowledging the existence of invisible victims, discussing the prevalence and effects of their victimization experiences. Although this has helped to highlight the existence and challenges faced by male victims, there is currently no general agreement or best practice guideline for agencies that deliver services to this population.

INES YAGI

HOW SHOULD *CSRV* BE DEALT WITH OPTIMALLY?

Based on your experience with this issue, what policy changes do you deem as necessary to ensure adequate support and services for male survivors of CRSV?

It is important to review domestic legislation to ensure protection against sexual violence and access to appropriate care for all victims/survivors without discrimination based on gender and/or other factors.

> "the lack of visibility for male victims of gender-based violence impedes access to support services and obstructs justice."

Finally, how do you believe that raising awareness about CRSV against men can contribute to breaking the cycle of violence and promoting healing?

Conflict-related rape against men in the Congo is considered taboo and controversial. The secrecy around the topic can create invisible victims with no voice or platform to share their stories. Additionally, the lack of visibility of male victims of gender-based violence impedes access to support services and obstructs justice. The lack of visibility for male victims, acceptance of male rape myths and the norms of essentializing women as victims and males as perpetrators are major factors that influence the lack of compassion for male victims.

What does it mean to be compassionate? The Oxford English Dictionary defines compassion as a word that derives from the Latin term "compati," which means "to suffer with." For the sake of the conversation, we can identify three key components in the development of compassion as experienced among people. The first one is noticing, or the ability to cognitively see the pain and suffering of another and emotionally reacting to the sufferer's pain. Noticing requires a certain degree of awareness, openness, and receptiveness to our surroundings and the people involved in our daily lives.

The second component of compassion is "feeling." "Feeling" is the emotional reaction to a person's suffering by sharing some of their pain, worries and concerns. For example, feelings of compassion towards male victims of war-related sexual trauma involve fighting for the inclusivity of male victims of gender-based violence alongside female victims of sexual violence in legal frameworks and internal law. Feelings also entail experiencing 'empathetic care' through the adaptation of the sufferer's perspective through imagining and feeling their painful conditions. Developing empathy towards people requires holistically understanding their experience (e.g., their thoughts, feelings, behaviours, coping, etc.).

The final component is "responding," which is similar to taking actions in response to the sufferer's pain with the intention of alleviating their distress. Raising awareness is an important step in the fight against CRSV against men and boys because knowledge is power.

MESSAGES FROM THE TEAM

Ubuntu and feminism: I am because we are

Feminism is a complex, ever-evolving philosophy that causes dissensus, even within the feminist school of thought. Although there is no one feminist ideology, all feminisms are based on the same model of equality of genders and sexes. This short reflection will consider the importance of including a sense of community when approaching feminism.

The circumstances under which we live now cannot be fought using an individualistic mindset. The conditions resulting from the current system, patriarchy, involves everyone by design or unconsciously. This idea of social interdependence is central to the African moral theory of *ubuntu*, generally translating to humaneness, personhood, and morality. Another translation of *ubuntu* is "I am because we are". This approach argues that we must care for the community in order to care for ourselves, as the individual is nothing without the group. To treat each other with a sense of community is to be sensible to the rest, consider the group with respect and overall care about everyone for the greater good.

For the case of feminism, it is meaningful to treat each other with *ubuntu*. It is about fighting a system that victimizes us all. It is about condemning any form of violence no matter the victim's characteristics. Feminism is about community because none of us can truly be free until everyone is free. None of us can be free until sexual violence stops altogether, and it is important to remember and care for all victims. Men and women are subject to a violence that can never stop until we consider and support each other. Feminism cannot advance until we also consider male victims of sexual violence and care for them as "I am because we are".

by Lenaïg Veerasamy

A Reflection on CRSV

Cultural and social norms contribute to the prevention of acknowledgement and lack of support for male survivors who fall victim to conflict-related sexual violence. Many male survivors experience shame, fear of being seen as weak, and emasculation which leads to unwillingness to seek help. These factors contribute to cycles of trauma and they also hinder post-conflict healing for the survivors. To encourage recovery and justice, these stigmas must be challenged in order to create safe space for male survivors to heal and feel empowered to share their experiences without any kind of judgement.

by Hajara Mahdi Mohamud

CLOSING REMARKS

BY TEAM LEAD, VISHNU PRIYA KOTLO

The Centre for African Justice, Peace, and Human Rights (CAJPHR) stands firmly in support of male survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence through its initiatives by the committed and ambitious Sexual Violence (SV) team against the male gender. The objective of the SV team is to raise awareness about sexual violence committed against men and boys in conflict and domestic settings. The SV team is incredibly grateful to the Centre's founder, Ms. Sophia Ugwu, a lawyer who was admitted to the Supreme Court of Nigeria in 2008 and has a strong interest in international criminal law, human rights, and commercial law. The SV team also thanks the Centre's board members, Takeh Sendze, a lawyer from Cameroon, who has gained many years of experience from working at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and is member to the Pan African Lawyers Union, the New York Bar Association, and the Cameroon Bar Association, and Adesola Adeboyejo, a lawyer who has also gained many years of experience working at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and as a Trial Lawyer at the Office of the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court. The SV team and its devoted members are working towards the achievement of its goal by supporting and advocating for a crucial cause of standing on behalf of male survivors of sexual assault, thanks to the passion and dedication of the Centre's founder and board members.

The Sexual Violence team from the Centre for African Justice, Peace and Human Rights would like to take the opportunity to thank you for joining us in exploring the difficult yet crucial topic of sexual violence perpetrated against men through its magazine, '*The Cost of Silence: Examining the Impacts of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence on Male Survivors*.' For innumerable survivors whose experiences have too often gone unrecognized, addressing this issue openly is not only a step toward justice but also a necessary component of healing. Your willingness to read, consider, and advocate with us sends a strong message: speaking up about the pain experienced by male survivors is no longer an afterthought. Every reader who interacts with this subject joins an expanding movement aimed at eradicating stigma and establishing environments where all survivors are valued and empowered.

The SV team is immensely grateful to esteemed contributors who have shared their knowledge, experiences, and insights to these pages. In order to better understand the experiences of male survivors, the team is very grateful to Rick Goodwin, a co-founder and Clinical Services Director of Men & Healing, and former co-founder and Executive Director of The Men's Project. In addition to the U.S. and other countries, Rick conducts trainings on male sexual trauma, family violence, and trauma healing throughout Canada. Additionally, he facilitates trauma recovery sessions for men both virtually and in person. He currently works for the Department of National Defence as a Subject Matter Expert on sexual misconduct-related concerns.

The team would further like to express its heartfelt thanks to Robert O' Mochain, who teaches at Ritsumeikan University's College of International Relations in Kyoto, Japan. His work on sexual violence, particularly male-directed sexual violence, which is still a severely under-researched topic, was part of his years-long investigation of gender and sexuality issues in Japanese social and cultural contexts.

We would like to once again express gratitude to Adesola Adeboyejo, based on her experience in the International Criminal Court's Office of the Prosecutor, who provided insights on the well-known case of The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen. The importance of this case in the context of international criminal law and other challenges during the trial proceedings regarding conflict-related sexual violence was covered by Adesola in her remarks.

Dr. Ines Yagi, a prominent contributor, shed light on the sensitive topic of sexual violence against men and boys in conflict and domestic settings. The SV team is extremely grateful to Dr. Yagi, an Assistant Professor in Saint Paul University's Faculty of Human Sciences, Counselling, and Spirituality. She is also a registered psychotherapist with the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario. With her distinct expertise, she provides services of support, counselling and therapy sessions to individuals, couples, and families, including sexual violence and trauma, regardless of gender, employing an integrative systemic, emotion-focused, evidence-based, trauma-somatic informed, and male-centred approach.

Distinguished contributions illuminated on the severe physical, psychological, and social effects of sexual violence on men in conflict situations— effects that go well beyond the individual to harm families, communities, and the stability of entire countries. We are now better able to comprehend the particular obstacles that male survivors encounter, such as stigma, restricted access to resources, and the requirement for more inclusive justice systems, because of their bravery and commitment. Victims' testimonies serve as a reminder that actual healing and peace in impacted areas depend on tackling sexual violence associated with conflicts from all angles.

In conclusion, we would like to express our gratitude to you, the readers, for realising that this problem merits empathy, our consideration, and our action. By discussing this pertinent issue, you help bring about a global change that will not ignore anyone impacted by sexual assault. Your dedication to spreading knowledge, advocating for inclusive laws, and encouraging candid discussion has the capacity to turn inaction into support. Together, let us continue to advocate for a world where no survivor is left unheard, and where the path to healing and justice is available to all, regardless of gender. We appreciate your support of this vital cause.

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