

HUMAN RIGHTS INDEX

Prepared by the University of Iowa Center for Human Rights (UICHR)*

The price of war is commonly assumed to be paid primarily by men. Yet, as soldiers themselves, as victims of sexual violence, as refugees, and in other ways, women are also greatly harmed by armed conflict. A recent recognition of this truth, adopted unanimously and legally binding on all states, is UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of 31 October 2000, calling for the adoption of “a gender perspective” in conflict and post-conflict settings and reaffirming “the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.” The following facts, drawn from current and recent armed conflicts worldwide, suggest that Resolution 1325 and other legally binding instruments intended to safeguard human rights in wartime and postwar situations are honored more in their breach than in their observance.

- 1: Minimum number of 42 female detainees raped at Iraq’s Abu Ghraib prison pre-2004 while being interrogated by male US military personnel, many of them also having been videotaped or photographed naked—all in violation of the human right to security of the person and 1949 Geneva Convention No. III requiring the humane treatment of all prisoners of war, including the right of female prisoners to be “under the immediate supervision of women” (*The Guardian*, 2005; UNIFEM, 2006; Physicians for Human Rights, 2005; International Committee of the Red Cross, 1998)
- 50: Percentage of Iraqi girls who, as of late 2003, stopped attending school for fear of sexual violence and abduction, a reality directly implicating their right to education and having long-term effects upon the rights of women in Iraq generally (Human Rights Watch, 2003; Refugees International, 2003; Save the Children, 2003)
- 140: Number of Afghan women who, in September 2005, were forced to withdraw their candidacies for political office because of security concerns resulting from mounting insurgency since the fall of Afghanistan’s Taliban government (Amnesty International, 2005; Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, 2005)
- 400: Number of reported rapes (some of eight-year-old girls) during or immediately after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003—likely a minimum number, the stigma of sexual assault being so severe that about half of the 400 women and girls became victims of

- “honor killings” by family members claiming retribution for shame (PeaceWomen, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2003; UNIFEM, 2003)
- 763:** Number of maternal deaths for every 100,000 births in war-torn southern Sudan (among the highest rates in the world), due partly to available health centers being unequipped for even the most basic health services and generally dominated by male workers who tend to discount women’s needs and focus on treating male soldiers (UNIFEM, 2006; UNICEF, 2006; UNDP, 2005)
- 4000:** Number of “lost boys” driven from their families and villages during the Sudanese civil war and resettled across the United States for security and education while at least 3000 “lost girls” remain essentially forgotten, some taken into foster families, some indentured as household servants, some likely sold to sex-traffickers (UNIFEM, 2006; *Lost Boys of Sudan*, 2006)
- 12,500:** Estimated number of girls participating in armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where, even with large numbers of female combatants, women often are unable to find health care and become victims of sexual violence, and thus are deprived of their human rights to health, life, and security of the person, prescribed in the 2003 African Union Protocol on Women’s Rights in Africa (UNIFEM, 2006; Amnesty International, 2005)
- 40,000:** Estimated number of women widowed due to decades-long civil war in Sri Lanka, creating a new demographic of female-headed households serving as breadwinners and caretakers simultaneously, many of them struggling to survive while waiting for aid given traditionally to male-headed households (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2005; UNIFEM, 2003)
- 700,000:** Minimum number of Lebanese displaced since the onset of the July 2006 Israeli–Hezbollah conflict, a reality that will likely halt women’s development and progress while other national needs are prioritized (BBC, 2006; PeaceWomen, 2000; ILO, 1997)
- 2,000,000:** Number of people displaced in the Colombian civil war, among the largest of post–World War II displacements, i.e., 5% of the 40 million refugees worldwide, 80% of whom are women in refugee camps facing dangers often as fierce as war itself—as in Darfur where, in 2004, up to 16 women were each day raped en route to collect water (UNDP, 2005; Common Dreams, 2004)

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