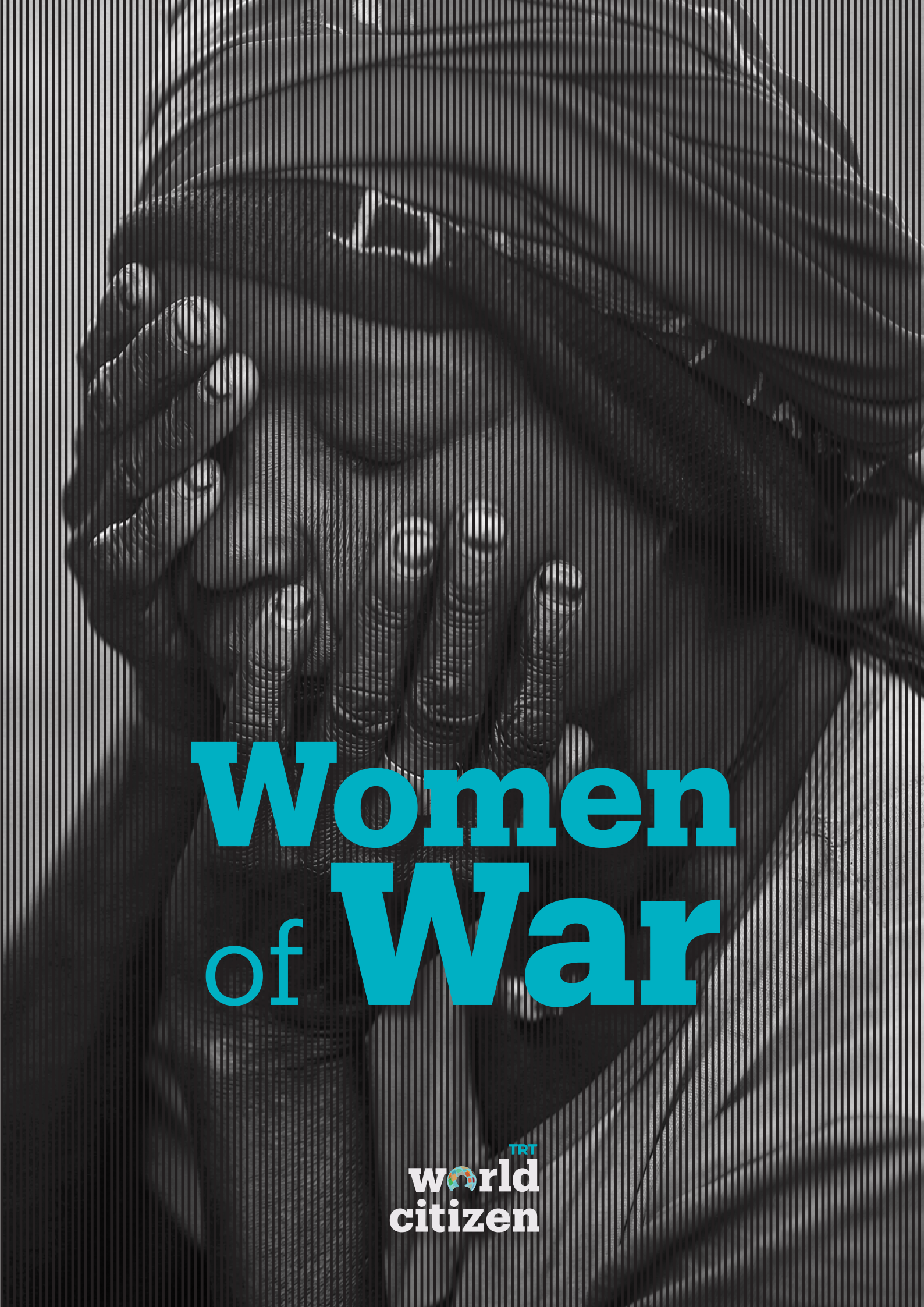
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Preface

İbrahim Eren
Director General and Chairman, TRT

The world order is going through a time of great turmoil, and the international community is facing both old and emerging challenges. Our world is in turmoil with rising insecurity, growing inequality, and conflicts that continue to rage unabated. Wars and ethnic cleansing campaigns have led to frequent and systematic violations of international humanitarian law. More often than not, women are the most persecuted and exposed groups to the horrors of war and conflict. In war, women and girls pay the highest price, and face systematic violence and oppression, which can have life-long repercussions for survivors, and devastate their physical, psychological, economic, and social security.

In the past three decades, women have suffered countless abuses in numerous wars ranging from Bosnia to Syria and Myanmar. Often long after the guns have fallen silent, women remain traumatised and scarred by the brutalities of war. In January 2018, the U.N Security Council passed a resolution directly referring to conflict-related violence inflicted on women and calling on the Security Council members and all Member Nations to unite in fighting these abuses and employ all means at their disposal to influence State and non-State parties to comply with international law.

As Turkey gains its rightful place as a force for good in a troubled world and has become renowned in the region, and beyond, as a nation pursing a principled and humanitarian-driven foreign policy, TRT World as a leading news organisation is also doing its part to make a difference in the world we live in.

The 'Women of War' campaign, organised by TRT World Citizen, is the opportunity for our organisation to renew its commitment to peace and justice. As a leading news organisation, we take it upon our shoulders to give a voice to underrepresented groups in society. Last year, we successfully implemented the 'Am I not a Child?' campaign, which highlighted the plight of over 170,000 unaccompanied minors of refugee backgrounds living under duress in the European Union. This year, we will shed light upon the role of women in war, highlighting atrocities they face, as well as the instrumental role they play as peacebuilders and problem solvers in a world filled with violence and conflict. We aim to spread awareness about the unique role they play in war, and encourage audiences to support women who are at risk of gender based violence and those who set up initiatives to challenge this very issue and play crucial roles in the formation of their societies after conflict.

Among the priorities of this campaign is to highlight the recent situation of the Rohingya women, who have faced unspeakable atrocities perpetrated by Myanmar's military and rampaging mobs. More than 625,000 refugees have fled Rakhine State into Bangladesh, a majority of whom are women. Therefore, the campaign will not only support the right for women to live in safety and dignity, but will also aim to work with different civil society organisations who are seeking to rebuild their confidence, ensure their well-being, and encourage their reintegration into society.

By working together to raise awareness of these women's stories who have faced the most difficult of situations, we hope to increase hope and positively impact the lives of millions of women who continue to bear burden of conflicts around the world.

Let us push ahead for justice in our world.

Introduction

Women and children in conflict zones are among the most vulnerable populations who are adversely impacted. Women specifically are both victimised and utilised in the atrocities of war zones. Their children have to suffer in a similar vein. Women's bodies have been made into battlefields in and of themselves through the use of sexual violence, becoming targets of rape and sexual assault in a systematic process of repressing political activities. In other cases, women's bodies are politicised as targets as part of intercommunal conflicts, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

All these tactics are based on premises that politicise the bodies of women. However, as conventional wisdom dictates women are the carriers of the cultural and ethnic makeup of the society, birthing and fostering it. It is within this capacity that many of them carry the weight of societies whilst men are at war, responsible for the home, maintaining and building new livelihoods and creating initiatives which prioritise the healing of women who have directly faced sexual violence and other traumas through the impact of war. Many women have played an active role in resisting war and pushing for peace and conflict resolution in the midst of violent crises. In many violent conflicts, when women are involved in peace-making discussions, they establish a permanent role in the political process, seeking to form stable countries and societies. "Conflict-related sexual violence" entails the systematic use of rape, sterilisation, or even forceful prostitution, pregnancies and abortions in conflict (U.N Docs, 2018, p.6). Systematic rape has been strategically employed as a political tool for different political goals in numerous cases. In January, the U.N Security Council adopted a resolution referring to rape as a tactic of war that not only has adverse effects on an individual level but also collectively (U.N Docs, 2018, p.1). In addition to the trauma inflicted upon those who have been subjected to rape as a tactic of war, it is also a tactic that has implications for international security (U.N Docs, 2018, p.6). It provokes a reciprocation of violence in retaliation, leading to the displacement of peoples across borders as refugees.

In 2008, under resolution 1820, the U.N Security Council affirmed the issue of conflict-related sexual violence as a threat to security and an impediment to peace (U.N Docs, 2018, pp.3-6). The Security Council also declared later that "women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence… as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instil fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group" (U.N Docs, 2018, p.1). Further to this, on the 18th of October 2013, UN resolution 2122 was passed in order to reiterate the importance of women's involvement in conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building. It calls for focusing more attention on women's leadership and participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, including by monitoring progress in implementation.

When women are given the opportunity to lead and contribute to decision making during conflict, the peacebuilding process can be sped up and becomes more inclusive. Achieving gender equality helps prevent conflict and the probability that violence will end increases 34% (Women Conflict Peace and Society, 2014). Women often bring a more comprehensive peace plan to the negotiating table and address societal needs as a whole, ensuring that society will thrive in the long term. It is essential that the successful examples of this are highlighted, in order to ensure that women are no longer solely viewed as victims of conflict and war.

This report, will attempt to discuss the different dimensions of the implications of sexual violence on women in order to present opportunities for mitigation of its aftermath, both on the individual and societal level. It will also discuss the various implications and instances of female involvement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in order to present opportunities of integrative solutions to war where women are agents of change.

This report presents different cases of the sexual violence and peacebuilding where women have played a variety of significant roles in conflict resolution and mitigation. It also draws from these cases some implications to be taken into account by international, local, governmental and non-governmental actors. It is important to note that ending sexual violence is a matter of political will and is intrinsically linked to giving a seat to women at the peace-making table and allowing them to take on leadership roles. However, both of these require a collective responsibility to take action in order to mitigate and counter the systematic use of violence against women in war.

The report will start by discussing several cases in which women have been victims of sexual violence, followed by a discussions regarding the wider role they have played in combating this very issue in societies ravaged by war. The second section will include examples of policymaking that involved women, leading to their successful reintegration into society. The third section will focus on the role women play as peacebuilders and leaders in divided societies, showing successful cases of the re-development of war torn societies. To conclude, the report will highlight the broader implications and present recommendations for the different actors who can actively play a role in the mitigation systematic sexual violence in war and ensure women are given agency to build peace and counter this very violation in future conflicts.

(Mohammed Elshamy - Anadolu Agency)

"**90%** of all **victims** of **sexual violence** in conflict and **war** are **female**"

Durbach, A. and Chappell L. (2014) International Feminist Journal of Politics, vol. 16(4), p. 544.

Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War

(Orhan Çiçek - Anadolu Agency)

The cases presented in this section are not the only examples of the different ways women face sexual violence in politically troubled areas. The section focuses on sexual violence perpetrated in different situations and for various political reasons. The cases in which this violence occurs are varied, - some have been labeled as ethnic cleansing, genocides, or even as revolutions. The idea is that in these different cases, and beyond them, different political actors have employed sexual violence as a means to fulfil their political agenda. The cases presented here include political turmoil that took place in Syria, Myanmar, Bosnia, Kashmir, South Sudan, and Afghanistan. These examples are not exhaustive however, they are presented in this discussion in order to provide context to the significance of the issue. Moreover, these cases will situate the implications examined in the final sections of the report.

Prevalence of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence against Women

Country	Date	Women Victims of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
Liberia	1989-2003	More than 40,000
Sierra Leone	1991-2002	More than 60,000
Bosnia	1992-1995	Up to 50,000
Rwanda	1994	At least 250.000
D.R. of Congo	1998-2018	At least 200,000
Columbia	2001-2009	More than 480,000
Myanmar	2016-2018	More than 400,000

- According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, women comprise 49 per cent of the refugees worldwide
- More than 75 per cent of displaced people are women and children
- Maternal mortality rate is 2.5 times higher on average in conflict and post-conflict countries
- As of 2013, more than half of all peace agreements signed included references to women, peace and security.

Syria

The year 2011 witnessed several uprisings in the Middle East and the North Africa region (MENA). In Syria, massive peaceful protests against President Bashar Al-Assad took over different parts of Syria endeavouring to end the dictatorship that has been in place for decades. Women took an active role in the protests, and related political activities, meaning they were not excluded from the subsequent crackdown by the Syrian regime. Women were targeted by the regime regardless of whether they directly participated in political activities or protests or whether on the basis of belonging to the households of activists. Women were used by the regime in order to threaten and 'discipline' political opposition.

Since the beginning of the war, more than 400,000 are believed to have been killed (Kahf, 2014, pp. 556-563), while more than 6 million Syrians are internally displaced, and more than 5 million Syrians have fled the country in seek of refuge (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Three-quarters of these refugees are women and children (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Several UN bodies and civil society organisations have confirmed and recorded the systemic use sexual violence during the Syrian conflict.

Sexual violence has been used "as a weapon of war to intimidate parties to the conflict, destroying identity, dignity and the social fabrics of families and communities" (UN News, 2013) by the Syrian regime. A significant portion of captives have either been massacred or tortured, raped and humiliated. The government-backed militia often attack houses, gang-raping and killed women in front of their families (U.N Security Council, 2014). The Syrian regime's militias target any women – even loosely - associated with the opposition (U.N General Assembly 22nd Session, 2013). There were accounts in Karm Al-Zeitoun of women threatened and forced to undress in the streets as a statement of humiliation for them and their households (U.N General Assembly 21st Session, 2012).

Insofar the regime was aware of the cultural stigma of its tactic, they continued this battle on, and via the bodies of women. The individual trauma inflicted on women transcends to the collective domain affecting communities as a whole. The publicity of systematic rape and the social stigma seems to have been part and parcel of the political message plotted by the regime. One can think that such acts would rather be veiled by the regime to avoid international confrontation. However, it seems that terrorising the masses in the country was the bigger endeavour to 'discipline' anyone who thought of protesting.

It is in the propagation of the incidents internally that the regime is able to control and tame those who oppose them. In late 2012, it was reported that the regime forces raided a private family household near the city of Aleppo seeking to arrest a man. When they did not find the man at home, they aggressively searched the residence and threateningly interrogated the man's wife. They threatened to kill her children if she did not reveal her husband's location (MADRE, 2014). The situation ended with the sexual assault and murder of the woman before the eyes of her six children. Such political practices of sexual violence in Syria, unfortunately, continue to be perpetuated not only by the regime but also by other non-state actors seeking to assert control over the social fabric of Syrian society as part of their respective political agendas.

(Ibrahim Ebu Leys- Anadolu Agency)

Myanmar

(Zakir Hossain Chowdhury-Anadolu Agency)

The Rohingya, described as the world's most persecuted minority, are an ethnic group, the majority of whom are Muslim, who have lived for centuries in majority Buddhist Myanmar. The Myanmar government does not recognise them as citizens and deems them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Only 40,000 out of the 1.3 Million Muslim Rohingya have citizenship rights in Myanmar. Tensions between the community, the state, and the majority Buddhist population have often resulted in violence (U.N Docs, 2018). They are both prosecuted and persecuted by the government and Buddhist nationalists.

In 2012 the tensions between the Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims escalated in the wake of news of the alleged gang-rape of a Buddhist woman at the hands of Muslim men. The subsequent unrest resulted in the death of 57 Rohingya Muslims and 31 Buddhists followed by an army crackdown in which 140 000 Rohingya were expelled from their homes. The number of expelled Rohingya later swelled to 700 000 as the crackdown expanded. Ashin Wiathu, the leader of this campaign, sought to 'free' the country from the Rohingya and said, "Muslims are only well behaved when they are weak. When they become strong, they are like a wolf or a jackal; in large packs, they hunt down other animals" (Fisher, 2013)"

"In situations of conflict and particularly those involving religious identities, **women and children are targeted** in specific ways."

Hall, M. (2012), Preface, in: Kane. S. M and Yohe. G. W. (Eds). Societal Adaptation to Climate Variability and Change. Kluwer Academic Publishers.

In 2018, the office of the U.N. Secretary General, declared the Myanmar Armed Forces as "credibly suspected" of conducting sexual violence operations (UNSG, 2018, p.55). Medical and humanitarian staff operating in Bangladesh reported that the Myanmar Armed Forces, known as Tatmadaw, carried out a series of sexual assaults leaving brutal physical and physiological scars in the population (p.4). This was part of a military "clearance" operation that took place in 2016 and 2017 that was declared by the United Nations High Commissioner to constitute "ethnic cleansing" of the Rohingya (p.4). The U.N Secretary-General António Guterres said, "The widespread threat and use of sexual violence were integral to their strategy, humiliating, terrorising and collectively punishing the Rohingya community and serving as a calculated tool to force them to flee their homelands and prevent their return" (p.5).

The use of rape and other forms of sexual violence are perpetrated by the Myanmar military to instil fear as a key state terror tactic against the Rohingya. They seek to rid Myanmar of the Rohingya on the basis of a nationalist pretext - even if that is at the expense of their death or expulsion. The military campaigns included killings, looting, violent intimidations in addition to sexual violence against women (U.N Docs, 2018, pp.1-5). The use of sexual violence was a potent weapon of intimidation. The vicious and widespread attacks against women are thought to take place because women are the originators of the ethnic identity, and children are its demographic continuum. There have been fears among the Buddhist nationalist pertaining to the high fertility rates of the Rohingya community, which they deem to be an existential threat to whom they deem to be an unsolicited minority population.

Bosnia

(Samir Yordamoviç - Anadolu Agency)

The systematic use of sexual violence in the Bosnian case was a tactic used by the Serb militias as part of an effort to exterminate and expel the Bosniaks from Bosnia. The UNHCR deemed the 1992-1995 conflict to have been one of the most complicated and urgent humanitarian situations since WWII (Young, 2001). Similarly to the other cases presented in this report, the UNHCR documented multiple cases of sexual violence against Bosniak women and girls (Brubaker & Rebecca, 2013).

Bosnian-Serb forces sought to expel the population from regions in which Muslims were demographically dominant. On the premise that women are reproducers, Serbian forces sought to target women so that no pure Bosniak bloodlines would remain, in addition to killing much of the male population. According to Sharlach (2000), over 50,000 people were expelled out of their homes, and 100,000 people were massacred. Some of the most documented massacres took place in Srebrenica, which was supposed to be protected by the Dutch peacekeeping mission, but the latter failed to act accordingly. Consequently, the Serbian militias were able to control Srebrenica. The Bosniak men were killed (at least 8000) while women were detained and there were reports of systematic rape (Young 2001). Academics considered that Serbian militias employed sexual violence as an instrument of terror and humiliation (Leydesdorff & Selma, 2015). Up to 50,000 women and girls are estimated to have been assaulted (Brubaker & Rebecca, 2013).

Moreover, sexual violence was used as a means of disintegrating kinship ties, and dividing families. This was done by humiliating women before close family members, or by physically separating them from their counterparts (Brubaker & Rebecca, 2013). The Bosnian-Serb leadership wanted to ensure that the displaced population did not attempt to return, and for that reason, they also confiscated and destroyed Bosniak properties.

> "It has now probably become **more dangerous to be a woman** than a soldier in an armed conflict."
>
> *(Patrick Cammart, former commander of the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – MONUC)*

Kashmir

The history of the Kashmiri conflict dates back to 1947 when the Jammu and Kashmir states were denied advancement in the State Assembly. In this conflict, sexual violence has been long employed as a weapon of war and a means of terrorizing the population (Eck, K., Sollenberg, & Wallensteen, 2004). The Indian forces, the Indian Army, Central Reserved Police and the border patrol personnel, employed sexual violence as a tactic to punish women for their resistance.

According to Eck, K., Sollenberg, and Wallensteen, P. (2004), rape cases in Kashmir were not the result of the indiscipline of the army, but rather of a systematic effort to terrorize and humiliate Kashmiris (Eck, K et al., 2004). Approximately 882 women were raped in 1992 alone, and many others cases of rape were not reported (Eck, K et al., 2004). Similar to other cases, the security forces stationed in Kashmir have employed rape as an instrument of terrorising, politically 'disciplining' and retaliating against the Kashmiri civilians deemed to be antagonistic to the Indian military presence. Most cases of sexual violence were reported as having taken place during search operations carried out by the Indian security forces (Misri and Deepti, 2014). The reports included that security forces forcefully entered the households and properties of civilians in search of women and the girls in order to rape and sexually assault them in the presence of their families (Eck, K., Sollenberg, & Wallensteen, 2004). The tactic was systematically and repeatedly employed in reprisal attacks against civilians who attempted even to protest the tactic itself (Misri and Deepti, 1977, 2014).

"It's estimated that, since 1990, on a **global scale**, from all deaths related to armed conflicts, **90%** have been **civilians** and **80%** of this percentage is represented by **women and children.**"

(Olara A. Otunu, Special comment on children and security, Forum du désarmement, no. 3, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva, 2002, pp. 3-4

(Ahmer Khan - Anadolu Agency)

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