

**Source:** Make Every Woman Count (MEWC)

War time sexual violence has been called a hidden epidemic, in part because of the lack of clarity about its actual magnitude and impact. This lack of clarity about sexual violence in wartime is hardly surprising; it is violent and brutal. Because of stigma, shame and perceived immunity of the perpetrators, very few victims report their assaults. During war moreover, murder can follow rape; in such cases, the victims story is buried with her. Reports of rape are increasingly common in countries wrecked in conflict, for example DRC, Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire...Patterns of where, when and whom rape is committed, not to mention why, are less clear. As a result, estimates of rape in prominent conflicts are often unreliable.

Its against this background that [UN Security Council Resolution 1820](#) was adopted in 2008 as a follow up to UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security and it addresses, among others, the issue of rape in war.

UNSCR 1820 reiterates that women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, install fear, disperse, and or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group and tends to continue even after cessation of hostilities. This has become systematic and widespread, reaching appalling levels of brutality. (see DRC, Sudan, Guinea...)

UNSCR 1820 aims to create awareness about sexual violence in armed conflicts and post conflict situations and calls for an end to it. Rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity and member states are called to comply with their obligations for prosecuting persons responsible for such acts, and ensure that all victims of sexual violence, especially women and girls, have equal protection under the law and equal access to justice. It stresses the importance of ending impunity for such acts as part of a comprehensive approach to seeking sustainable peace, justice, truth and national reconciliation.

UNSCR 1820 also calls for state specific sanctions against regimes that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in armed conflict.

The Secretary General and the Department of peace keeping operations are responsible for developing and implementing appropriate training for all peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel deployed by the UN missions to help them better prevent, recognize and respond to sexual violence and other violence against civilians.

UN zero tolerance policy on sexual violence in UN peace keeping missions was set out by Resolution 1820. Troops and police providing countries are charged to take appropriate preventative action including pre\_deployment and in\_theatre training, and where possible the deployment of a higher percentage of women peacekeepers and police.

Resolution 1820 provides for the Secretary General and UN Agencies to consult with women and women led organisations as appropriate for providing protection from violence especially sexual violence in and around UN managed refugee and internally displaced persons camps.

Regional and subregional bodies in particular are to consider developing and implementing policies, activities and advocacy for the benefit of women and girls affected by sexual violence in armed conflict and all parties to ensure the collection of timely, objective, accurate and reliable information on use of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict including through improved coordination of UN activities on the ground and at headquarters...to protect women against all forms of violence.

To read the UNSCR 1820, please click [here](#)