Sexual Violence

and its Migration Aftermath

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Abstract

Before the armed conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, sexual violence had been regarded as a side-effect of war. During that war, sexual violence became a weapon of ethnic cleansing. Women were raped publicly or in private, in masses or individually. The ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992-5, resulted in a mass flow in refugees who did not wish to return.

This study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how sexual violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina was conducted and systematized so that it would contribute to ethnic cleansing, and on what bases sexual violence has affected female victims when it comes to migration. The study is of a qualitative character and is based primarily on secondary data and an expert interview with Barbro O’Connor of the Red Cross in Malmö.

Due to the honor–shame culture in former Yugoslavia, sexual violence was an effective weapon to destroy the lives of the victims as a stigma of shame would be attached to them. Women who survived sexual violence and became refugees or asylum seekers could not face to return to their country of origin due to the community’s lack in condemning the perpetrators and providing the women with accurate rehabilitation in accordance with health support and help. Thereby the atrocities are indirectly legitimized and the women are condemned.

*Keywords: Sexual violence, rape, female victim, migration, stigma, health.*
Dedicated to Mina Muranović