



Burundi

No protection from rape in war and peace

Rape and sexual violence were endemic to the years of armed conflict in Burundi and were perpetrated by both government forces and armed groups. Despite the end of the hostilities, levels of rape in the family and community remain high. An average of 1,346 women a year reported rape to Médecins sans Frontières between 2004 and 2006. Young women and girls are particularly at risk.

Many women fail to report rape because of the resulting social stigma or the fear of reprisal. Social attitudes apportion blame to the victim rather than the perpetrator. Some women are isolated, cut off from psychosocial and legal services and may be simply unaware that they can take legal action. A climate of impunity where rape victims are unwilling or unable to pursue legal proceedings means that perpetrators often escape prosecution. Reports of rape committed by both law enforcement officials and military officers also compound mistrust among victims towards the authorities.

Discriminatory attitudes within the Burundian police force contribute to women's reluctance to report rape. The authorities also regularly fail to prioritize rape and ensure that thorough investigations are carried out. A clear message must be delivered to the government: violence against women is a violation of human rights which cannot be tolerated, rape is a crime, perpetrators must be brought to justice and victims offered help and compensation.



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