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Liberia: Thousands raped - no one prosecuted

I was pregnant and running away from the camp near St. Paul bridge. Three government soldiers caught me and raped me. They beat me and my unborn baby died. All my belongings were stolen.

Testimony given to Amnesty International by a 29-year-old woman from Bomi County.

Amnesty International today insisted that the perpetrators of widespread and systematic rape during Liberia's civil war must be brought to justice.

"Thousands of women and girls have suffered rape and other forms of sexual violence, yet, more than a year on from the signing of a peace agreement, no one has been prosecuted and it remains unclear if, how and when those responsible will ever face justice. This impunity is a disgraceful betrayal of the victims of what are crimes against humanity and war crimes," Amnesty International said.

In a new report, *Liberia: No impunity for rape - a crime against humanity and a war crime*, Amnesty International describes through harrowing testimonies the sexual violence which is believed to have affected around two-thirds of the population. The report also shows the physical, psychological and social consequences of such violence.

"Lasting peace will not be achieved in Liberia unless those responsible for crimes under international law are held criminally responsible, truth is established and victims obtain full reparations," Amnesty International said.

"The National Transitional Government of Liberia currently has no policy to bring to justice the perpetrators of crimes under international law. Neither has there been any expression of resolute commitment by the international community to end impunity for such crimes in Liberia."

"A long-term action plan to restore justice and the rule of law must be developed and implemented," Amnesty International said. "This must be a priority for the government, working in cooperation with the United Nations and the wider international community and non-governmental organizations."

The report describes:

widespread and systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence, including gang-rape the rape of

pregnant women and children, committed by combatants of all three parties to the conflict: the former government of Liberia, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia;
health facilities unable to cope with the physical injuries and psychological trauma resulting from rape and other forms of sexual violence on a massive scale;
the need for donor governments to honour fully the pledges made at the International Reconstruction Conference on Liberia in February this year; about half of the funds promised have still not been made available;
the continued vulnerability of women to sexual violence and exploitation as a result of extreme poverty and vast numbers of internally displaced people remaining in camps.

"The protection of the rights of women and girls must be at the centre of all efforts to rebuild Liberia. Full and meaningful participation of Liberian women in their country's recovery is essential," Amnesty International said.

For a copy of the report, *Liberia: No impunity for rape - a crime against humanity and a war crime*, please see:<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf340172004>

Public Document

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