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The impact of guns on women's lives: Testimonies

"He was very angry and he took his Kalashnikov. The neighbours said: 'Leave her alone' But then he didn't stop; he shot my legs, I could not feel them, they were numb. The sun was setting, I was looking at the sky, I said to the men: 'I don't want to die.' They took me to the hospital." Nineteen-year-old Fatima (not her real name) was shot in the legs by her husband in front of his family and their neighbours in Iraq on 21 May 2003. Married at the age of 12, she was treated as a servant and regularly beaten in her husband's family home. She tried to run away to her own family, but her husband came and said she should go back. When she refused he became very angry and took a piece of wood to beat her. It broke, so he grew even angrier and took out his gun and shot her. Despite the number of eyewitnesses and the seriousness of the crime, neither the family nor the hospital reported the case to the police and her husband was not arrested. The family said it was a matter to be solved within the tribe.

"I was 14 years old then. One of the policemen came one night around 10pm, pointed a gun at me and ordered me to follow him to see the other men... The Commander... pointed his gun at me and raped me. I suffered pain and bleeding."

A woman from the Solomon Islands

"You call the police... And they tell him, 'Oh come on, you know. Women get cranky.'... blah blah blah. And to me, they were saying, 'Why don't you stop upsetting him? Make him a nice dinner and get off his back'... And so they'd leave you with a wild man."

A woman in Hawaii

"I've learned that there's really little difference between violence in war and violence in peace -- for women it's just the same. We need to continue our own battle until these women can join the rest of our society and enjoy a life without violence."

Duska Andric-Ruzicic, Director of Medica
Infoteka, Bosnia-Herzegovina

"From one day to the next, my dreams were shattered – all because of the irresponsibility of supposedly civilized men who only feel brave with a gun in their hands."

Camila Magalhães Lima, Brazil

"At night the other soldiers raped me. They came almost every night. They said that the more they raped me, the more they would be men, and the higher up the ranks they would rise."

Sange, who enlisted as a child soldier in the DRC with one armed group when she was 10, and was then abducted by another group

"Each morning, noon and evening, [the soldiers] would put us in the same house, force us to lie on the ground and then they would rape us, all in the same room. While they were doing this, they were hitting and kicking us in the stomach, back and face. My mother's hand was broken; it is still swollen and she can't use it. My buttocks are still painful and I can't use my arm any more. There were twelve soldiers."

Caroline, 15 years old, from DRC. She and her mother were abducted on the way to their fields and held captive for two months in 2003.

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