

Open Event

Hidden Victims: Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys in Conflict

1330-1500
10th September 2018
Room XXIII
Palais des Nations

The Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein to the UN, All Survivors Project, the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN, and the Delegation of the European Union to the UN would like to invite you for a panel discussion on the issue of sexual violence against men and boys in the context of armed conflict within Syria, risks and vulnerabilities to sexual violence of men and boys fleeing from Syria.

Speakers

- **Professor Manfred Nowak**, Secretary General of the European Inter-University Center for Human Rights and Democratisation (EIUC) in Venice; Independent Expert, UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty.
- **Ms. Louise Aubin**, Deputy Director, Protection Operational Support Service, Division of International Protection, UNHCR.

Moderator: Charu Lata Hogg, Founder Director, All Survivors Project.

Concept Note

The armed conflict in Syria has resulted in a human rights and humanitarian crisis of staggering proportions in which the civilian population suffers daily threats to life, dignity and wellbeing. Humanitarian needs far outstrip the capacity to respond, and access to aid is routinely denied by all sides. The conflict has also given rise to massive internal displacement and an unprecedented refugee crisis in which millions of people have fled the country. Conflict-related sexual violence is among the many human rights violations that have characterized the armed conflict in Syria. While disproportionately impacting women and girls, sexual violence against men and boys has also been documented by the UN and by international and national non-governmental organizations.

Research conducted by All Survivors Project shows sexual violence against men and boys in Syria is considered more prevalent than has previously been documented and that the vulnerabilities of men and boys to sexual violence there are insufficiently understood. Consistent with existing documentation, almost all of those interviewed considered Syrian government detention to be the site of greatest risk of sexual violence for men and boys, although some also recounted incidents that had taken place in armed group detention. Interviewees also referred to cases of sexual violence that had occurred during house searches or at checkpoints and during forced recruitment by armed groups.

Key informants told ASP researchers about widespread rape and other forms of sexual violence against boys in Syrian government detention. In the words of one, *“age is no barrier: from children to young men are targeted. There is a pattern that young men in their late teens or early twenties are specifically targeted although it can happen to everybody”*. Whether sexual violence occurred, interviewees attested to the devastating consequences for male survivors, their families and communities. They described physical injuries, and the short- and long-term psychological impacts on survivors including shame, loss of confidence, sleep disorders, feelings of powerlessness, confusion and suicidal thoughts.

This discussion aims to facilitate thinking on how humanitarian and human rights stakeholders can coordinate strategies to prevent sexual violence in detention sites Syria with particular consideration to the hidden nature of this violation against men and boys. Panellists will urge the humanitarian community to intensify efforts to ensure

that free, quality and confidential medical care is available to all survivors of sexual violence in the broader response within and outside Syria which includes the needs of male survivors.

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All Survivors Project conducts research and advocacy to improve the global response to every victim/survivor of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and forced displacement. We document cases of abuse against men and boys to complement work on women and girls to inform and support global responses that include all victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. All Survivors Project is an independent, international research and advocacy organization working with survivors and with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to strengthen national and international responses to conflict-related sexual violence and to ensure that the rights and dignity of all victims/survivors is respected and protected.

For further details about the event, please contact Claudio Nardi (Claudio.Nardi@ilv.li)