

Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and the Gender Perspective

What is it?

Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) has been defined by NATO as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict. It is a violation and abuse of human rights and is rooted in gender inequality and discrimination.



Military Implications of Gender in CRSV

- A critical constraint to addressing CRSV is the lack of knowledge and operational guidelines among personnel.
- Establishing robust policies and guidance is essential to empower the military, who often are “the eyes and ears on the ground”, with the necessary tool and frameworks to prevent violence and support resilience within communities.
- Engagement with victims and survivors must take into account the setup of appropriate support mechanisms to avoid the risk of retraumatization.
- External stakeholders to conflict shall include capacity building efforts in their mandates to support the host countries in enhancing their local ownership in the eradication processes of CRSV.

Case Study: CRSV Against Men and Boys in Ukraine

In Ukraine, the UN OHCHR has documented that the number of victims who identify as men more than doubles that of those who identify as women. Most of these cases occurred in context of detention and took different forms, including forced nudity, genital mutilation, electric shocks to genitals, rape, attempted rape and rape with instruments.

Cases of CRSV as of mid-April 2024



Source: ASP

Preventing and Responding to CRSV for NATO

- is a legal responsibility, a moral imperative and a question of international peace and security
- strengthens force's mandate, increases capacity and capability, and positively affects mission outcome

So what for NATO?

NATO's mission and mandate require to act towards prevention and response to CRSV, which is a legal responsibility, a moral imperative and a question of international peace and security. NATO's Military Guidelines on CRSV (2021) aims to provide guidance to prevent and respond to CRSV by integrating these aspects in the E&T, exercises, operations, planning, conduct of operations and evaluation of NATO led operations and missions. They can be found on the IMS GENAD's topic site. Including men and boys in advancing an intersectional understanding of CRSV is relevant because it supports gender-responsive analysis of the structural causes of CRSV and the factors that facilitate them. It is also important to break silence and dispel myths fueled by hypermasculinity in light of CRSV being a violation of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Due to the close linkages to warfare and prolonged conflict, preventing and responding to CRSV needs to be considered in all phases of operational planning and execution. CRSV has significant long-term consequences for individuals and may impede the restoration of peace and security, as it destroys the social fabric of communities.