

**The Political Economy of Rape:  
An Analysis of Systematic Rape and Sexual Abuse of Women  
During Armed Conflict in Africa**

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In the opening chapter, Caroline Moser outlines three categories of violence, citing political and economic violence in addition to the more commonly reported social or interpersonal violence.<sup>1</sup> This expanded definition is a significant advance in thinking about gender violence during armed conflict. It opens the way to disaggregating information about rape and sexual abuse during conflict and to reaching for a more refined analysis. In the first phase of putting rape during wartime on the international agenda, women's rights activists found it important to emphasize the massive scope of the problem by compiling all the evidence and presenting it together. Hopefully we are now in a second phase when it is possible to differentiate the many circumstances of rape and to present a more nuanced analysis of this violence.

This chapter pursues Moser's ideas about the several types of violence and explores the political economy of rape and sexual abuse of women during civil conflicts in Africa in which rape and forcible abduction were systematic, deliberate strategies of the wars. Most authors analyze rape as an act of social or interpersonal violence; what Moser's analysis suggests is that rape is also an aspect of political and economic violence. We know that in the course of civil war there are transfers of assets from the weak to the strong — whether large assets such as mines and plantations or personal assets such as labour power and possessions (ultimate control of large assets depends on who wins the war). The new thesis proposed here is that systematic rape and sexual abuse are among the strategies men use to wrest personal assets from women.

Concern for women who were victimized and impoverished by conflicts has overshadowed analysis of women's value to men in civil wars. Because women have sought-after assets and because some of those assets are needed for the prosecution of the war or are among the reasons for it, women are central to civil war strategies. The argument made here, which has important policy implications for women, is that, in civil wars, armies use rape systematically to strip women of their economic and political assets. Women's assets reside in the first instance in their productive and reproductive labour power and in the second instance in their possessions and their access to valuable assets such as land and livestock.

The chapter opens with a brief overview of the conflicts in Rwanda and Mozambique, the case studies that ground the theoretical arguments and provide detailed descriptions of the role of rape in the extortion of assets. Section two explores the first of two themes: the construction of women *as* property, in which the assets available for transfer are women's productive and reproductive labour. The next section examines the second theme: the

connections between women *and* property, in which land and livestock are the primary assets coveted. Both sections focus on systematic rape and assume that rape during armed conflict is a socially constructed experience, that it is produced by a series of deliberate policy decisions, and that it is therefore neither inevitable nor unchangeable. After locating systematic rape during armed conflict in specific, historical, social, political, and economic contexts, the final section tries to identify the kinds of policies likely to protect women or mitigate some rape experiences.

## **Background to the conflicts in Mozambique and Rwanda**

### *Mozambique*

Led by FRELIMO, Mozambicans fought a decade-long war of liberation and in 1975 gained independence from Portugal, which had ruled the country for 400 years. The civil war that followed lasted from 1976 to 1992. In 1977, the white Rhodesian government created and armed a rebel band known as RENAMO, ostensibly to counter the threat from the Zimbabwean independence movement operating out of Mozambique. After Rhodesia became the independent nation of Zimbabwe in 1980, South Africa took over the sponsorship of RENAMO, providing weapons, training, and logistical support. South Africa's purpose was to destabilize the FRELIMO regime, which embraced socialism and opposed apartheid. Imminent change in South Africa, coupled with a devastating drought in 1991-1992, gave both sides an incentive to negotiate an end to the military stalemate. An agreement was signed in 1992, and multiparty elections took place in 1994.

The civil war cost the country US\$15 billion and claimed one million lives; virtually every Mozambican family has at least one member or acquaintance who was killed, mutilated, or who 'disappeared' (Harsch 1993:5). In this destructive war fought in the villages of the poorest provinces of the country, RENAMO destroyed or forced the closure of nearly half of all primary schools and a third of the rural health network. Mozambican women fought in both wars, and on the home front, through the *Organizaçao da Mulher Moçambicana*, they lobbied for the family law project, which was never enacted. The war uprooted over five million Mozambicans, and it is estimated that most peasants were forced to flee at least once during the war (Hanlon 1996:99). Some 200,000 children were orphaned and another 250,000 separated from their families (Harsch 1993:3). Tens of thousands of girls and boys were kidnapped mainly by RENAMO and pressed into service. Boys younger than eight years old helped in base camps until old enough for military training; girls were kidnapped for the sexual amusement of the men, or to cook, clean, and do the laundry. In Mozambique, as in Uganda and Zimbabwe, rape and forcible abduction were systematic, a deliberate strategy of the wars.

### *Rwanda*

The conflict in Rwanda evolved and culminated rather differently. From the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, Rwanda was a centralized kingdom, with one language, one culture, and no ethnic divisions. The introduction of administrative structures under Rwabugiri (who reigned from 1860 to 1895) led to social differentiation and ethnic identification. With the arrival of Europeans in the 1890s (Germany conquered Rwanda and Burundi and ruled them as part of German East Africa to the end of World War I), the Tutsi rulers learned to manipulate new material resources, which reinforced and structured ethnicity. After the German defeat, the League of Nations mandated the two small, landlocked, central African nations to Belgium, which had already colonized neighbouring Congo. The Belgians entrenched the monarchy of ruling Tutsi and gave them access to administrative posts, education, and jobs in the modern sector; they relegated the majority of Hutu subjects to forced cultivation and corvée; and they issued cards that recorded these political divisions as ethnic identities (Newbury 1995:12). Rwanda regained its independence in 1962 before the Hutu social revolution, begun in 1959, could resolve these problems. By the late 1980s, however, 40 per cent of the population had intermarried, and in some regions of the country this figure attained 75 per cent (David Newbury, personal communication, 1 March 2000).

Four economic and political factors played havoc with the society in the 1980s: 1) the abrupt drop in the price of coffee, the principal income source for 60 per cent of Rwandan families, coupled with a 40 per cent currency devaluation in 1989 and rapid inflation after 1990; 2) a structural adjustment program that curtailed or reduced social services and charged for health care, schooling, and water, combined with a drought in the southern regions, which turned into a famine; 3) from 1990, the war in the north, which drained government resources and led to rapid army recruitment, and which created huge refugee camps just north of Kigali — the displaced came from Rwanda's 'breadbasket', exacerbating the external factors contributing to inflation; and 4) the paradox of democratization, which encouraged opposition to the already embattled government (Newbury 1999).

The civil war started in October 1990 when the Rwandan Patriotic Front, dominated by Tutsi who had fled the country in earlier pogroms, invaded from Uganda. The war uprooted half of the country's six to eight million people and displaced two million within the country; another two million fled to neighbouring states. In April 1994, Hutu extremists turned the struggle for power among the government, its opposition, and the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which was on the verge of resolution following the signing of the Arusha Accords in August 1993, into a vicious and bloody genocide. From April through June 1994, the military, militias, and civilians murdered between 500,000 and one million people. In July the Rwandan Patriotic Front won the war and took power. Hutu and Tutsi killed each other as well as members of their own group, but this was primarily a genocidal attack on the Tutsi. Women and men were implicated in the killings, but women bore the brunt of the civil war.<sup>2</sup> Sexual violence occurred on a massive scale: the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights (1996:7) initially estimated that 250,000 women were raped, but a recent Human Rights Watch publication says 'tens of thousands' (des Forges 1999:215); the World Health Organization (2000:3) issued a revised figure of 15,700 women and girls between the

ages of 13 and 65. More men than women died — there are now 100 women for every 87 men; and more women now head households — 35 per cent in 1998 as opposed to 21 per cent in 1992 (Coomaraswamy 1998b:7). Illiteracy still handicaps 57 per cent of the women and 50 per cent of the men (Coomaraswamy 1998b:7). Violence against women continues in overt, brutal, subtle and ambiguous ways.

### **The political economy of rape: women as property**

A number of authors (e.g., Rhonda Copelon, Cynthia Enloe, Radhika Coomaraswamy) usefully describe the different kinds of rape and men's motivation to rape. Enloe (2000:109), for example, describes rapes of women held in military prisons by male soldiers serving as guards, rape by a group of invading soldiers to force women of a different ethnicity or race to flee their home regions, and rapes of captured women by soldiers of one communal or national group aimed at humiliating the men of an opposing group. I agree with Enloe (2000:110) that militarized rape is a distinctly different act because it is perpetrated in a context of institutional policies and decisions. Militarized rape is directly related to the functions of a formal institution such as the state's national security or defense apparatus or an insurgency's military arm.

The cultural significance of raping 'enemy' women — women of a different race, ethnicity, religion or political affiliation — is prominent in analyses of rape in sectarian conflicts: 'ethnic cleansing rape as practiced in Bosnia has some aspects particularly designed to drive women from their homes or destroy their possibility of reproducing within and "for" their community' (Copelon 1995:205). We can take this analysis of cultural significance, which rightly decries the instrumental use of women in the struggle for power, another step and recognize that combatants mobilize ethnic, national or religious sectarianism as justification for such extra-legal activity as asset transfers. Duffield (1994:52) suggests that the more direct or coercive the transfer of assets, the more likely is sectarianism to be mobilized as justification.

Of course wartime rape may be an end in itself, a random act of brutality as in this example from Rwanda, where rape was a gender issue that crossed political lines. As the numbers of Tutsi were reduced, assailants directed their violence against other Hutu. 'The young men who hung around the [road] barriers, often drunk or under the influence of marijuana, plundered, raped and even killed Hutu passersby. Sometimes they confiscated identity cards from victims so that they could claim that they were Tutsi. They paraded through the sectors with the firearms meant for use at the barriers, extorting what they wanted from unarmed neighbors' (des Forges 1999:572). The militias were a law unto themselves, and the military were unruly and undisciplined. Hutu soldiers raped Hutu women and girls in the immediate vicinity of the buildings where they were quartered. 'Although some soldiers were arrested for their abuses, the prosecutions were too few to affect behavior' (des Forges 1999:570).

In the context of genocide in which asset stripping is systematic, even these random acts have a meaning greater than 'war booty'. The unpredictability of rape serves to terrorize the community and warn all people of the futility of resistance — those targeted as

victims as well as those who might wish to protect the intended targets. Behind the cultural significance of raping 'enemy' women lies the institutionalization of attitudes and practices that regard and treat women as property. Consider these customs as examples: some societies require grooms to pay for brides, compensating the wife's family for the loss of their daughter's productive and reproductive labour value; some societies recognize only male heads of household and give men exclusive control of the family's assets, including control of wives' labour and the products of that labour; and some societies encode (in customary or statutory law) women's lifelong status as minors under the guardianship of fathers, brothers, husbands or sons.

Women who survive rape are acutely aware of being stripped of their assets and their worth. Ntewasse Gavuno recounts the story of her rape in wartime Mozambique:

The soldiers liked to punish us. They would select girls aged 12 to 14 and ask them to take off their clothes and then rape them while all of us stood watching. Oftentimes we turned our faces away and they spanked us or spat and made us look at gun point. On another occasion they made a 16 year [old] boy rape his own sister and their mother was also being raped at the same time. Sometimes we were raped by 10 men. I felt I wanted to die because felt I wasn't worth anything anymore (quoted in Franco 1999).

A Mozambican woman interviewed in a South African refugee camp said:

They [Renamo] were killing our people — we were seeing them. Then they were coming to us as husbands. Can you afford to face such a thing? At the camp I was chosen to be the 'wife' of the commander. And others together with my children were given as 'wives' to other soldiers. We feel it because the Renamo were showing us guns that if we don't do these things — sleep with them and cook for them — they will kill us. We did these things. So that was a terrible thing to happen to us. What has happened to us — our properties have been damaged, our bodies have been damaged. Everything — our life has absolutely changed because of Renamo. The spirit has been damaged (quoted in Sideris 1999).

Rwandan soldiers regarded women as property, as these reports confirm. At a nursing school, soldiers ordered the directress to give them young women students as *umusanzu*, a term meaning a contribution to the war effort. 'The directress, a Hutu, Dorothee Mukandanga, refused and was killed' (des Forges 1999:215). At a seminary, soldiers looted and took as *umusanzu* a couple of young women who were there caring for orphans. 'They raped them. Shortly after other soldiers came for the same purpose' (des Forges 1999:494).

The leaders of the genocide were also aware of the importance of women's productive and reproductive capacities. In some communities, local authorities worked to keep the Tutsi wives of Hutu husbands alive, particularly if their husbands were men of some importance. They reasoned that the interests of a man deprived of his wife's productive

and reproductive capacities were harmed ‘and a man injured in this way might demand punishment for the murderers or some other form of satisfaction’ (des Forges 1999:296).

The abduction of women and girls to serve as porters, farmers, cooks, cleaners, launderers, tailors and sex workers is perhaps the crudest form of asset transfer in civil war, in this case women’s productive labour. In guerrilla warfare, soldiers live off the land, and women’s agricultural labour is a critical asset, especially in the absence of mechanization. Farmwork raises the taxes that armed forces regularly collect in areas they occupy. Control of women’s productive labour is one of the gains from rape and abduction in civil conflicts. Aida describes what she endured during the war in Mozambique:

It was in 1992 when they [Renamo bandits] took me and my husband to Matsequenha where we stayed for three days. They had stolen food and clothing from my house and did the same in the neighbourhood. Afterwards they compelled me to carry everything and follow them. They were eight armed men. We walked for hours and mid-way they forced us to have sexual relations with them and they repeated it on the way to the base in front of everybody, including my husband. They beat me on my head with the butt of the gun because I was refusing to have sexual relations with them and because I didn’t want to talk (quoted in Abreu 1998:76).

Women’s productive labour was also alienated by denying the benefit of women’s work to the enemy. This could be accomplished by amputating limbs (which has its parallel in the alienation of women’s reproductive labour, discussed below). In Mozambique, mutilations and amputations, particularly of arms, hands, legs and other parts of the body, were widespread. Soldiers used knives, axes, and machetes to maim thousands of women, children, and elderly people. Guezane Djanne, a Mozambican woman, said,

I am amputated in both arms because when they attacked our village the rebels killed my husband and uncle and wanted me to drink their blood which I refused, they raped me and took a very heavy stick made me lay down and pounded my arms on the floor: during the war rape was always the motto of the soldiers (quoted in Franco 1999).

Women’s reproductive as well as productive labour is alienated in civil war. There are two aspects of reproductive labour to consider: rape to impregnate, making women bear children for the ‘enemy’ community, and rape to prevent women from becoming mothers in their own community, by making them unacceptable to their community or by so injuring them physically that they are unable to bear children. The inability to bear sons jeopardizes a woman’s land rights under customary law in many societies.

[In Rwanda] women of childbearing age were especially targeted, both during and after the genocide itself. During the genocide, Tutsi women

were targeted as reproducers of society. But women were not killed simply as a 'by-product' of war, as 'collateral damage'; instead, targeting women was a policy specifically encouraged and directed to further the goal of the leaders of the genocide: to destroy all Tutsi as a social group (Newbury 1998:92).

### **The political economy of rape: women and property**

The relationship between the rape of women and the theft of property is complex because most African women do not own property outright. Urvashi Butalia (1998:135), in her probing account of the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan, notes that many women were abducted by men of the same village, older women in their fifties and sixties. 'According to social workers, this wasn't uncommon: because abductors often knew the circumstances of the women they were picking up, they would take away older women, widows, or those whose husbands had been killed, for their property. They would then ask to become their "sons" — a short cut to quick acquisition of property.' This passage led me to investigate women and property in Rwanda and Mozambique.

#### *Women and property in Rwanda*

Many Rwandan families had access to less than a hectare (2.5 acres) of land.<sup>3</sup> I wondered about women's property rights and how land confiscated from Tutsi was to be distributed after the genocide. Whereas the political project of extremists in the Habyarimana government propelled the genocide, the prospect of acquiring land and goods figured in some village massacres. As in the situation described by Butalia, many of the militiamen were neighbours of the families they assaulted. Prunier (1995:231-232) implies that the genocide was a class issue for the militiamen. Embittered and desperate young men with no land, jobs or schooling — and without land or job, no prospect of marriage and family — made up the majority of militia and army recruits (Newbury 1998:91). 'While the young men engaged in theft and pillage, their elders were busy appropriating fields left by the Tutsi or cutting the trees in their afforestation plots. Men apparently seized the property of Hutu widows of Tutsi husbands' (des Forges 1999:427). The government ordered an inventory for eventual auction of all property confiscated from Tutsi who died or were driven away. Some Hutu did not wait; they moved into empty homes and began cultivating fields. Disputes arose. 'Authorities often discussed disputes over women at the same time as they considered problems of property. This was not just because issues of marriage and inheritance were often related, but also because men were thought to have an interest in their wives or female relatives comparable to their interest in property' (des Forges 1999:564).

The Kinyarwandan word used (ironically) for rape during the genocide was *kubohoza*, which literally means 'to help liberate'. Politicians first used the word to describe the coercion that led people to change political parties; people later applied it to the forcible taking of land and resources (Human Rights Watch 1996:39). Virginie, 23 years old, married, mother of three, from Rusatira commune, Butare prefecture, told this story: 'Other Interahamwe came. They stripped me naked and took all my money. Then they

told me that they were going to take me to my house so that they could loot it. At the house they killed the [five-month-old] baby on my back and then five of them raped me' (quoted in Human Rights Watch 1996:51).

The militia disguised rape as sanctioned intercourse between husband and wife by performing bogus weddings; they then used the 'marriage' to legitimate the seizure of land. Jeanne, a nineteen-year-old from Kibungo prefecture in southeastern Rwanda, told how Bonaventura Mutabazi, head of the local militia, 'married' her: 'I began a new life. I worked in the fields and in the house...We [she and her sisters] were told that our family's land would be split among our husbands' (Human Rights Watch 1996:60).

Soldiers of the Rwandan Patriotic Front targeted Tutsi women married to Hutu, forcibly taking other men's wives as well as their property. Once in power the Rwandan Patriotic Army asked Tutsi women to quit their Hutu husbands, saying that those marriages must have been the consequence of rape and not love matches. When there was any resistance, the husband was put in jail, where he would soon find death. This is the case of A. R. from Kinyamakara Commune in Gikongoro. He was imprisoned in Ririma prison where he died a few months later. The same happened to R. A. who was also imprisoned. His wife, a Tutsi, was forced to marry a young soldier; and the twins of her first marriage with R. A. were given to R. A.'s sister (Twagiramariya and Turshen 1998:112). Such forced marriage entitled the rapist to his 'wife's' property.

#### *Women and property in Mozambique*

In Mozambique, the civil war interrupted FRELIMO's project of legal and agrarian reforms and, combined with the structural adjustment program imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, heightened competition for land in some areas. The war made many peasants landless, although absolute landlessness is not the problem in Mozambique that it is in Rwanda. Tens of thousands of young men, who might once have invested earnings from migrant work in their own homes and farms, joined FRELIMO or RENAMO as soldiers. Their departure meant that they forfeited their land claims because where tenure is communal, the development of land markets is prohibited and claims depend on continuing use. At the same time, FRELIMO's legal and political innovations were giving new legitimacy to women's land claims (O'Laughlin 1995).

In the areas where RENAMO had bases, the civilians — who were indigenous local populations as well as people abducted from other areas — were forced to work six days a week to provide food, supplies, portage and, for women and girls, sex (Nordstrom 1997:97). In other areas, RENAMO levied taxes of food, goods, money, women and porters (Nordstrom 1997:103).

Anna was captured by RENAMO soldiers, raped, beaten, and taken to their base camp. One night she escaped with her child and walked until she reached a town with a refugee center. Center administrators encouraged people to make and farm their own plots, but the townspeople were embittered by the arrival of so many displaced people competing



for resources; 'fights over rights to farmland often became bloody. The townspeople usually won — they had rights that spanned generations and bureaucracies, and they had the force of family and friends to back them up' (Nordstrom 1997:120). Many abducted women who survived to return home met with rejection, especially if the rapes led to a pregnancy and an 'enemy' child; such women lost all rights to the land and property they had previously shared with their husband.

Girls abducted to serve as sexual partners and domestic slaves did not benefit from demobilization or tracing programs created to reunite kidnapped boys with their natal families, nor are there any data about how many girls were attached to RENAMO soldiers, how many remained with these men after the war, or how many were abandoned (Thompson 1999:201).

### **Protecting women in conflict and the aftermath**

The examples of women losing property rights and of girls not benefiting from reinsertion or tracing programs illustrate the underlying gender biases that make women vulnerable during conflict and in the aftermath to a loss of assets. Rape exacerbates women's vulnerability because of the many social and cultural issues related to women's 'cleanliness' and 'good behavior'. These underlying gender biases, which existed in society prior to the conflict and are exacerbated by violent conflict, have important policy implications.

Concepts of virtue and family honour objectify women, as does the need to protect a woman's chastity or virginity for the reputation of her family in a community and for the successful arrangement of a girl's marriage. The premise that women are autonomous, an interpretation of human rights promoted by women's rights activists, is an idea alien to most customary and colonial legal codes in Africa. Those codes do not acknowledge women's individual rights as their inalienable property or recognize that such rights provide structure to women's interpersonal interactions in communal life. This discrimination is changing: in recent years, South African courts, for example, have interpreted individual rights to include, among other things, women's control of their own bodies, which includes the right not to be bartered, traded or sold like chattel, as well as the right to have one's bodily integrity respected, free from unwanted battery and rape.

Recognizing the practice of regarding women as property makes it possible to explain a widely observed paradoxical phenomenon: on the one hand, communities will fight to protect their women, and families see rape as so awful that in some cases the family's honor can be restored only by killing the woman who was raped; and on the other hand, rape was, until very recently, invisible in national and international courts and the law afforded little legal redress for this crime. In Rwanda, as of February 1998, there were no cases of sexual violence before the national courts; the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda issued the first indictment on grounds of sexual violence only in August 1997 (Coomaraswamy 1998b:10).

Rwanda is an overwhelmingly monogamous society, dominated by the Roman Catholic Church; Rwandan women are socially and legally limited in their control of resources. Men have rights over any surplus women generate, which leads to gender conflicts. 'The language of public morality and stereotype is one weapon in the struggle. The stereotypes of women as loose women, virtuous wives or timid virgins are used by both men and women to interpret, manipulate, validate or negate control over labour, resources and surplus' (Jefremovas 1991:379). Rwandan women lost their rights to land and labour by the beginning of the colonial era, and laws passed after independence did not improve their status. Any control women have over land and income depends on their personal relationships with individual men. 'Most women try to enforce their claims by asserting that they have behaved in an appropriate manner, as upright wives, virginal daughters, good mothers, and virtuous widows' (Jefremovas 1991:382). Bearing an illegitimate child classifies a woman as 'loose', frees the family from any responsibility to provide for her and protect her, and carries considerable social stigma (Jefremovas 1991:383). In this context, surviving rape and bearing the rapist's child means loss of family, community and livelihood. Women have strong incentives to mask or hide their experiences of sexual assault if they can.

Rwandan widows enjoy higher status as head of household and can use their husband's land if they have a son and show that they can farm it; a mother of a son is secure as long as she can claim custodianship of his inheritance or her adult son is willing to protect her. Widows' vulnerability to expropriation and extortion in the wake of the genocide is clear. To cope with this situation, the Rwandan government adopted a new law on matrimonial regimes in December 1999 (number 22/99 of 12/11/99 published in the Official Gazette

of the Republic of Rwanda). This law gives the surviving spouse, married under the regime of community of property, administration of the entire patrimony while assuming the duties of raising children and assisting needy parents-in-law. It also permits both male and female children to inherit their parents' property.

In Mozambique, property arrangements differ in the south, center, and north of the country, which complicates the picture of women's rights. In the south, property belonged to the male head of the family. In marriage, after the lobolo ceremony in which bridewealth is paid, the woman becomes the property of the husband or his family. If the male head of the household dies, his wives are inherited by the husband's eldest brother. In the center of the country, landownership does not exist among the Sena; men and women have use rights. Individual property is confined to the house and a few items and is limited to the male head of the family. In the north, among matrilineal societies, fixed assets are held in common but the woman's individual property is inherited by her maternal uncles. Single women have their own fields. When the male head of the family dies, the assets that make up his estate include personal objects, cattle and money. Land is not divided up, except among the Angoni (Women and Law in Southern Africa Project 1992:48-49).

Scholars and planners have yet to explore the effects of refugee movements and internal displacement on land tenure and land values anywhere in Africa; such studies are needed, with particular attention paid to women farmers. In Mutarara District, Tete Province, Mozambique, which saw heavy fighting, an estimated 90 per cent of the inhabitants were not pre-war natives of the area (Robert Marlin, personal communication 9 February 2000). Changes in land values may lead to changes in women's ability to exercise customary rights in land. Changes in marriage practices in Rwanda have led to reductions in the incidence of women exercising rights to land from their husbands: women married without inkwano (customary dowry payment) have reduced bargaining power (Gray and Kevane 1999:20-21).

Women's rights to land are diminishing throughout Africa. Privatization, formal registration and titling are part of the process of expropriating women while giving new rights to men and multinational enterprises. 'In the titling process, express norms against women "owning" land trumped their rights to the use of land through marriage or kin' (Gray and Kevane 1999:20-24). Women lose because 'land is no longer available through customary channels and women are severely restricted in their financial and social ability to gain land through government or market routes' (Gray and Kevane 1999:20-24). In the poverty of post-conflict situations, women's ability to fight back as individuals is limited. Women's rights activists should challenge blanket prescriptions of land privatization, and the women of countries that have weathered conflicts should participate politically in finding resolutions of claims to land and livelihood.

Some final points may be made about rape specifically, and how to alleviate some of the economic and political suffering caused by rape and forcible abduction. With timely and sensitive medical treatment, including, crucially, the option to abort safely, most women can heal from the social, interpersonal violence of rape. The political and economic

dimensions of rape are harder to address. The economic consequences of the loss of current assets and of the ability to generate future assets resonate for a lifetime. The political consequences of loss of status or standing in one's community, which is the first instance of women's citizenship, are not well studied or understood. For African women whose economic self-sufficiency is tied to their community standing, the political and economic consequences of rape are inextricably intertwined.

The UN Secretary-General wants warring parties in Africa held accountable for their actions; he recommends that combatants be held financially liable to their victims under international law when civilians are made the deliberate target of aggression and that international legal machinery be developed to facilitate efforts to find, attach, and seize the assets of transgressing parties and their leaders (United Nations 1998:12). In this respect, it would be useful for the special rapporteurs of the Human Rights Commission to document specific losses when recounting stories of sexual violence. The Secretary-General also calls for ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women without reservations, and the equalization of laws for men and women, particularly those relating to property, inheritance and divorce (United Nations 1998:21).

African and European governments, notably South Africa, Malawi and Italy, and private commercial interests, principally Lonrho, which owned mines and plantations in Mozambique, paid millions of dollars to RENAMO during the war and as part of the peace process (Vines 1997). In light of these revelations, the Secretary-General's recommendations on reparations are feasible and should be implemented.

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<sup>1</sup>. Much has been written on the culture of violence, see Rupesinghe and Rubio 1994.

<sup>2</sup>. Women also participated in the genocide, as African Rights (1995) sensationally reported in *Not So Innocent: When Women Become Killers*.

<sup>3</sup>. The Habyarimana government had refused to repatriate Tutsi refugees, estimated to number between 400,000 and 600,000, on the grounds that Rwanda could not accommodate large numbers of additional people (Newbury 1995:13).

Civilians in Africa's conflict zones—particularly women and children, but also men—are often vulnerable to sexual violence, including rape, mutilation, and sexual slavery. This violence is carried out by government security forces and non-state actors, including, rebel groups, militias, and criminal organizations. Some abuses appear to be opportunistic, or the product of a larger breakdown in the rule of law and social order that may occur amid conflict. Other incidents of sexual violence appear to be carried out systematically by combatants as a strategic tool to intimidate and humiliate civilians. The "Rape of Nanking" and the use of "comfort women" during World War II provide examples of such a strategy.<sup>5</sup> Sexual violence can also be a tool of retaliation and revenge. In Sudan, rape and other forms of sexual violence have been perpetrated, mainly by government forces, to destroy family and community networks and to force dwellers out of resource-rich areas by instilling fear.<sup>8</sup> In our times, the world is still impaired by military conflicts in which sexual violence remains a natural consequence.<sup>9</sup> In Libya, an outbreak of armed conflict in Tripoli, Benghazi and elsewhere across the country since the 2011 revolution, increased occurrence of sexual violence, which has been reported to be a driver for displacement into neighboring countries.<sup>10</sup> In Syria and Iraq Gender Violence and Military Rape, *Sexual Violence Against Women in Armed Conflict*. La Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación de Sierra Leona: un primer paso hacia el análisis de género en la búsqueda de la verdad (2020). Understanding such collective responsibility is crucial to our capacity to help future survivors of systemic violence.

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