



6 May 2014 – Rape committed during war is often intended to terrorize the population, break up families, destroy communities, and, in some instances, change the ethnic make-up of the next generation. But contrary to common belief, men and boys are victims of sexual violence as well.

In conflict situations, men can be deliberately targeted “in part, to attack males as leaders and protectors [to] diminish their masculinity”, a [working paper](#) by the Makerere University’s Refugee Law Project finds. “Stigma and discrimination is one of the major challenges male survivors continue to grapple with. Much as xenophobia is a common to all refugees and asylum seekers, the situation is worse for male survivors because male rape is a taboo in many cultures”.

Landlocked Uganda shares a border with the DRC and South Sudan and is not far from the Central African Republic. The surrounding and neighbouring regions suffer from internal conflicts that have created a large influx of displaced people seeking refuge in Uganda. Amongst these are male survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

Yet due to the bigoted laws vis-à-vis homosexuality in Uganda these men are not receiving the medical attention that they need.

Earlier this year, the Ugandan Parliament has voted a new Anti-Homosexuality Act, which makes homosexuality a crime punishable with harsh sentences, including life imprisonment. However, the ramifications of this law have an impact beyond the Ugandan LGBT community.

According to one humanitarian official working in the field who preferred anonymity, “many survivors have medical needs due to the assault and have undergone a series of surgeries. However, due to limited medical services available in Uganda, the assault still affects their

physical and emotional health. Some of the medical conditions expressed include back pain, leg pain, STI and STD [sexually transmitted infections and diseases] and bleeding.”

The [official response](#) by Uganda’s Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, Musa Ecweru, to IRIN News when asked about the topic was: “Just ignore it”.

“Our basic concern for the refugees is food, shelter, water, health and their safety,” he continued. He then proceeded to underline that, “Male rape, homosexuality, is not an African issue”.

The [Uganda Penal Code](#) (UPC) does not recognize male rape as a crime, defining rape simply as “unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl”. Many protocols are in place to protect women and children from acts of sexual violence but due to the taboo nature of homosexuality, many organisations do not have the capacity to support or care for male survivors of sexual violence.

Furthermore, Minister Ecweru scorned the issue by leveling accusations that, “It’s (treatment of male victims of rape) a minor issue. It’s being promoted and made prominent by the whites and NGOs who want funding.” Because homosexuality is shunned, the male victims of sexual violence are dismissed and ignored.

This attitude is pervasive in Ugandan society and amongst leading politicians. “Public hospitals say they don’t have the budget for male rape victims”, Men of Hope’s president, Alain Kabenga, told IRIN. In addition, there often is confusion as well, as “community members can’t distinguish between male rape and homosexuality. The confusion is due to lack of knowledge on male rape,” said Kabenga.

For the men who have experienced sexual violence, options remain extremely limited. Many male rape survivors fear returning to their countries to face the perpetrators of the sexual violence as well as the possibility of being ostracized.

For the large majority, the only option is silence.

Source [IRIN News](#)