

In Darfur as elsewhere, systematic rape is used as a means of ethnic cleansing. Recent reports have called attention to the widespread rape of Sudanese women and girls in Darfur by janjaweed militiamen intent, according to some of the women, on populating the western region with Arab babies. Rape is often seen as a side effect of war, a function of the chaos created by conflict, and an individual, personal tragedy. But, as this example shows, rape on a large scale can function as a weapon of war - in this case a tool for ethnic cleansing; a war crime.

Darfur is not exceptional. Rape has been used before as a tool of demoralization and of physical and cultural genocide. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, Pakistani soldiers are known to have raided Bengali villages, taken their women to their barracks, and raped them repeatedly. An estimated 200,000 women were raped, resulting in 25,000 pregnancies. A Council of Europe report in 1974 found that, during the occupation of Cyprus, Turkish soldiers and officers frequently raped women and girls. Human Rights Watch has documented high incidences of rape by security forces in Peru and in Jammu and Kashmir in the 1990s, with strong evidence that orders were given from above to use this tactic. During the Burmese government's campaign to drive the Rohingya Muslims out of the country in 1992, Rohingya men were systematically rounded up into forced labor, and the women were gang-raped and driven out of the country to Bangladeshi refugee camps where, incidentally, they were raped and abused again, this time by the Bangladeshi military forces running the camps.

More recently, Amnesty International reports that the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda systematically abducted girls and forced them to become their "wives" and to serve as rewards for obeying orders

In a rare instance of justice in the face of wartime sexual assault, responsibility for what happened in Foca has been traced back to the Karadzic leadership, and three Bosnian Serb men were convicted of crimes including the rape of women and girls in Foca at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

Much less reported on is the physical and cultural genocide in Tibet by the Chinese authorities

Rape has been recognized and implemented by its perpetrators as an effective means of breaking down a society and as a strategic means towards achieving military ends. While provisions in the Geneva Conventions and other United Nations treaties such as the Torture Convention and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights prohibit cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment, and while mass rape on an institutional scale could be considered a crime against humanity, the crime of rape in war as such often eludes legal retribution, and seldom gets the level of media coverage it deserves.

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