



DOCTORAL CLINIC  
AIX GLOBAL JUSTICE

Legal Clinic for International  
Human Rights Law

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**Uncovering the Silence: Exploring Sexual  
Violence Against Men in the Context of  
the Russian War in Ukraine**

**September 2023**

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## **Abstract**

This paper delves into the harrowing and often overlooked issue of conflict related sexual violence against men during the Russian war in Ukraine, shedding light on the complex dynamics surrounding this underreported phenomenon. While conflict related sexual violence remains a pervasive concern in conflict zones worldwide, the experiences of male survivors in Ukraine demand a distinct and nuanced examination. This study unravels the multifaceted challenges faced by male victims, including barriers to reporting, societal perceptions of masculinity, and the impact of conflict-related trauma. It also explores the intersection of sexuality, gender norms, and the unique vulnerabilities of the LGBTIQ+ community within the Ukrainian conflict context. Drawing from a wealth of research, the report offers insights into the complexities of addressing conflict related sexual violence against men and underscores the need for a more inclusive and empathetic approach. By raising awareness and fostering understanding, this paper advocates for urgent support and intervention to alleviate the suffering of male survivors and contribute to a more just and inclusive society in the midst of conflict.

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## **Table of Abbreviations**

CSRV	Conflict related sexual violence
ICC	International Criminal Court
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
ILGA	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
POW	Prisoner of war
WHO	World Health Organisation
WRC	Women's Refugee Commission

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1 Introduction

Sexual violence in conflict zones is a distressing reality, with consequences that ripple through societies and communities long after the conflict has ceased. The horrors endured by survivors of sexual violence are often hidden beneath layers of silence and stigma, perpetuated by societal taboos and the overwhelming shame associated with such experiences. Yet, as the world confronts the devastating human cost of armed conflicts, it is essential to acknowledge that sexual violence knows no gender boundaries. While much of the discourse and attention has rightly focused on female survivors, a significant and often overlooked population bears the scars of this heinous crime: men.

Ukraine's prosecutor general, Iryna Venediktova, echoed these concerns during a separate press conference. She underscored the stark reality that reports of sexual violence have encompassed not only women and girls but also men and boys of varying ages, from children to the elderly. The disturbing revelations present an urgent need for justice, accountability, and comprehensive efforts to address the deeply troubling reports of sexual and gender-based violence that have marred the ongoing conflict.<sup>1</sup> These shocking revelations bring to the forefront the need for comprehensive international attention and intervention. The UN's ongoing investigation into numerous cases of alleged sexual and gender-based violence against men in Ukraine during the conflict with Russia has uncovered deeply distressing truths. The reported instances might only scratch the surface, with the documented cases likely representing just the "tip of the iceberg."<sup>2</sup> The Russian war in Ukraine, which erupted in 2014 but has now become reignited in 2022, has been marked by a complex and protracted conflict, resulting in significant humanitarian and human rights concerns. Amidst the chaos and violence, sexual violence against men has emerged as a hidden crisis, one that demands

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<sup>1</sup> Emma Graham-Harrison, 'Men and Boys among Alleged Rape Victims of Russian Soldiers in Ukraine' (*The Guardian* 3 May 2022) <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/03/men-and-boys-among-alleged-victims-by-russian-soldiers-in-ukraine>> accessed 15 September 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Snezana Farberov, 'Ukrainian Men and Boys Allegedly Raped by Russian Soldiers: UN Probe' (*New York Post* 4 May 2022) <<https://nypost.com/2022/05/04/ukrainian-men-and-boys-allegedly-raped-by-russian-soldiers-un-probe/>> accessed 15 September 2023.

our unwavering attention and commitment. This report embarks on a journey to unveil the shadowed experiences of male survivors during the Russian war in Ukraine, offering a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted aspects of this deeply disturbing issue. Sexual violence against men in conflict zones is a subject shrouded in silence, misconceptions, and societal expectations. While sexual violence against women has gained global recognition and support in recent years, men who have endured similar horrors have often remained hidden and unsupported, battling not only the psychological and physical aftermath of violence but also the weight of societal norms that question their masculinity and, in some cases, deny their victimhood altogether. This report is born out of a collective commitment to rectify this injustice and advocate for male survivors in the context of the Russian war in Ukraine. We aim to unearth the stories of resilience and courage that defy stereotypes and bring to light the unique challenges faced by these survivors. We recognize that sexual violence against men is not a monolithic issue; it takes various forms, affects diverse communities, and carries distinct consequences within the context of this ongoing conflict.

## **2 Structure of report**

Chapter 2 of this report sheds light on a hidden aspect of the Ukraine-Russia conflict: sexual and gender-based violence. Amidst geopolitical discussions, it highlights the suffering experienced by survivors, whose voices have often been silenced. The chapter delves into the prevalence of sexual assault and gender-driven violence, exposing the complex interplay of cultural norms, societal factors, and historical context that enable these acts. It emphasizes the urgent need for justice mechanisms, reparations, and empowerment measures for survivors, particularly focusing on sexual violence against men in this conflict.

Chapter 3 tackles the practical and psychological challenges associated with reporting sexual crimes, emphasising two key areas: the obstacles in reporting these offenses and the profound effects on survivors' mental and physical well-being. In terms of reporting challenges, it explores how wartime conditions can hinder healthcare providers from offering support and accessing resources for survivors. It also delves into the stigma and shame that often prevent male survivors from coming forward. Shifting to the consequences of sexual violence, the chapter examines the psychological toll it takes on survivors, particularly men who face unique challenges when seeking help. It also analyses the physical repercussions,

highlighting the lasting impact on survivors' bodies. Overall, this chapter aims to highlight the practical barriers to reporting sexual violence and underscores the significant psychological and physical consequences that are often overlooked. The goal is to advocate for comprehensive support systems that address the needs of survivors.

Chapter 4 explores the pressing significance of addressing sexual violence against men in Ukraine, especially in the context of ongoing conflict. While sexual violence is a global concern, the unique challenges faced by male survivors in Ukraine demand a dedicated and nuanced approach. The chapter introduces the report's focus on exploring various facets of this issue, including the lack of protection afforded to male victims of CRSV and the distinct challenges presented by wartime conditions. Its ultimate goal is to shed light on these critical aspects, raising awareness and crucially, to discuss prevention measures and recommendations to support male victims.

Finally, Chapter 5 will provide an in-depth and thorough conclusion to the report, highlighting the key arguments outlined through this research.



## **Chapter 2: Uncovering Disturbing Realities: Conflict related violence against men in the Ukraine-Russia Conflict**

### **2.0 Introduction**

In the backdrop of historical conflicts, beyond the headlines of geopolitical struggles, there exists a realm of suffering often obscured but undeniably real. The Ukraine-Russia conflict, a complex and internationally significant dispute, carries within it an unsettling dimension that demands our focused attention. This chapter sets out to examine a critical aspect of the conflict that has largely remained hidden from view: the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence, inflicting profound harm upon numerous individuals. Amid discussions of political strategies and territorial claims, the voices of survivors - often silenced by stigma and fear - are now poised to be heard. From the testimonies of those who have endured sexual assault and gender-driven violence, to the calculated use of these methods as instruments of warfare, this chapter uncovers the stark realities that have long lurked beneath the surface. It dissects the intricate interplay of cultural norms, societal factors, and historical context that have enabled the perpetration of these deeply disturbing acts, revealing the power dynamics at their core. This chapter will uncloak the alarming narratives of conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) against men within the context of this conflict. Discussing CRSV against men is vital for breaking the silence, challenging stereotypes, and ensuring that all survivors receive support, recognition, and justice, regardless of gender. It emphasises the imperative need for justice mechanisms, reparations for victims, and measures to empower survivors.

### **2.1 Sexual violence against men in armed conflicts**

Sexual violence is inflicted upon men more frequently than commonly perceived. A working definition can be described as the following: “Sexual violence against males involves non-consensual sexual contact of any type performed against a man or a boy”.<sup>3</sup> It occurs

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<sup>3</sup> The Reality About Sexual Violence Against The Male Gender (Unseen, Unheard & Unspoken), ‘The Reality about Sexual Violence against the Male Gender. (Unseen, Unheard & Unspoken) – Centre for African Justice’ (Centre for African Justice, Peace and Human Rights 2023)

within domestic settings, communities, and even in carceral environments—perpetrated by both males and females. This phenomenon is prevalent both during periods of conflict and in times of tranquillity.<sup>4</sup> Instances of CSRV perpetrated by men against other men ('male sexual violence') surface in numerous conflict scenarios. While these accounts might be overshadowed by a plethora of other information, they exist. The inclusion of men and boys in Resolution 2467<sup>5</sup> signifies the increasing global focus on addressing sexual violence inflicted upon males in conflict and post-conflict scenarios, encompassing situations within detention facilities and perpetrated by non-state armed entities. The Security Council's acknowledgment of sexual violence against men and boys represents a significant stride in confronting the shame and societal stigma that typically surrounds this matter. The UN's acknowledgment of male victims is in response to growing evidence that men suffer from sexual violence. The Kyiv Post report that Russian soldiers have been involved in 225 instances of criminal sexual violence against Ukrainian civilians, with 79 of these cases targeting men.<sup>6</sup> Discovering such accounts can be challenging, as survivors often recount what they observed rather than explicitly detailing their own experiences.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, reports from investigative bodies often classify these atrocities under the broader category of torture rather than sexual violence.<sup>8</sup> This categorisation is often the result of men who deem their own treatment to be more linked with torture than sexual violence, playing into a wider sense that men do not report sexual violence committed against them in the same way women do, something this report will explore further in Chapter 3. Despite the presence of these accounts, there is relatively limited material on this subject, resulting in uncertain figures. Although acknowledgment of its existence has happened, the full extent of male sexual violence remains unknown.

On a global scale, while women and girls do encounter sexual violence at higher rates compared to men and boys, it's important to acknowledge that sexual violence also affects males especially in the context of war. According to the OHCHR report from March 2023 on

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<<https://centreforafricanjustice.org/the-reality-about-sexual-violence-against-the-male-gender-unseen-unheard-unspoken/>> accessed 15 September 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Sandesh Sivakumaran, 'Sexual Violence against Men in Armed Conflict' (2007) 18 *European Journal of International Law* 253 <<http://www.ejil.org/pdfs/18/2/224.pdf>> accessed 15 September 2023.

<sup>5</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2467, S/RES/2467(2019).

<sup>6</sup> Stefan Korshak, 'Russian Army Rape and Sex Violence Prosecuted by Ukraine Only the Tip of the Iceberg' (*Get the Latest Ukraine News Today - KyivPost* 2023) <<https://www.kyivpost.com/post/21245>> accessed 15 September 2023.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine covering the period from 1 August 2022 to 31 January 2023,<sup>9</sup> there were 133 documented cases of CSRV. Among these, the majority (85 individuals) were reported by men, while 45 were women, and 3 were girls. 109 of these cases were attributed to the Russian armed forces, law enforcement authorities, or penitentiary staff.<sup>10</sup> These acts occurred within the Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine or even within the Russian Federation itself committed against Ukrainians.

However, it's crucial to recognise that due to various factors such as stigma and limited reporting access, the actual prevalence of sexual violence is likely much higher. This is not to say that sexual violence committed against men is a rarity, but access to support and streamlined approaches to help male victims is not widely place, as Chapter 4 will discuss. Instances of sexual violence against men and boys are largely committed by men, though it's worth noting that women can also be perpetrators at times.<sup>11</sup> Similar to women and girls, some males face specific risks associated with factors like age, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The presence of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia heightens the risk of violence, including sexual violence. In all of this discussion, it is vital to remind oneself that rape and other forms of sexual violence are prohibited under international humanitarian law (IHL) in international and non-international armed conflict. Within the context of an international armed conflict, severe violations of human well-being, physical wholeness, and personal dignity are deemed grave breaches according to the Geneva Conventions. These Conventions expressly mandate nations to pursue legal actions against individuals, regardless of their nationality, who engage in acts like "torture or inhuman treatment" and "deliberately causing significant suffering or serious harm to the body or health" of any individual.<sup>12</sup> It is beyond dispute that most manifestations of sexual violence intentionally perpetrated by military forces against any individual fall within one or both of these categories. In fact, the Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly calls for the safeguarding of women from "rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault", notably however this excludes men. Article 8(2) of the Statute of the International Criminal Court

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 'Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine 1 August 2022–31 January 2023' (2023), <<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2023/23-03-24-Ukraine-35th-periodic-report-ENG.pdf>> accessed 15 September 2023. Hereinafter, the 'OHCHR Report'.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> [n] 4.

<sup>12</sup> Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War 75 UNTS 287, adopted 12 August 1949.

includes rape and some other forms of sexual violence in the list of war crimes and in the list of acts that constitute crimes against humanity when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population. Moreover, rape and other forms of sexual violence may also constitute other international crimes when committed under specific circumstances, for instance the crime of torture or a constitutive act of genocide.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.1.1 The OHCHR Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine

Delving more closely into the OHCHR Report makes for very grim reading. Indeed, 81 people who were held captive under the Russian forces were interviewed by the OHCHR after being released. Through its conducting of these interviews, the OHCHR concluding with these stark findings:

“Victims stated that prison guards punched them; beat them with batons and rifle butts; slashed them with knives; threatened to shoot their hands and legs, mutilate or execute them; deprived them of sleep; exposed them to freezing temperatures, sometimes after pouring water on them; electrocuted them; and subjected them to mock executions or sexual violence, including threats of rape and deliberate infliction of force or electrocution on sexual organs.”<sup>14</sup>

A range of methods, adopted by the Russian forces were used in order to punish and terrorise their victims, sexual violence is a crucial method that was identified in the report. Whilst the data extracted from these interviews does not indicate the gender of victims and their specific experiences, the report does state that 91% of men and 100% of boys that were victims, agreed to discuss their experiences.<sup>15</sup> From the data available, one can assume with weighted confidence that some men and boys who were included in this report, given its focus on sexual violence, were subject to some form of sexual violence, all at the hands of Russian soldiers.

The majority of these documented incidents took place either in situations where individuals were deprived of their freedom or in communities under the control of Russian armed forces.

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<sup>13</sup> Bailey Fairbanks, ‘Rape as an Act of Genocide: Definitions and Prosecutions as Established in Bosnia and Rwanda’ (2019) 23 Santa Clara University Undergraduate Journal of History <<https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1170&context=historical-perspectives>> accessed 15 September 2023.

<sup>14</sup> [n] 4, 14.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

In cases where deprivation of liberty was involved, sexual violence was shockingly employed as a means of torture or cruel treatment. The methods used to commit CRSV against men encompassed heinous acts like rape, electrocution, burning, genital mutilation, forced nudity, coercing someone to witness or engage in sexual violence against another person, unwarranted body cavity searches, and strip searches.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, victims were subjected to homophobic insults and threats of sexual violence directed at them or their loved ones. While male prisoners of war (POWs) were the primary targets of sexual violence, even detained civilian men did not escape such atrocities. For men, sexual violence in detention mainly manifested as unjustified strip searches or threats of sexual violence. Illustrative cases were provided to shed light on the gravity of the situation:

“OHCHR documented a case where a man POW was tortured during an interrogation in a so-called ‘prosecutor’s office’ in Donetsk in July 2022. The interrogator told guards to take the POW to the toilet, where the guards taped his mouth with duct tape, beat him and tasered him in the genitals. In a separate case from July 2022, penitentiary guards from Russian-affiliated armed groups tortured a POW in the penal colony near Olenivka, including by stripping him and burning his genitalia with a lighter. Both of these cases were documented during the reporting period through interviews with POWs who were exchanged in September 2022.”<sup>17</sup>

This presented narrative underscores the egregious human rights violations and instances of sexual violence that transpired during the specified timeframe within the context of the conflict involving Russian entities in Ukraine. This report contributes to a much wider discussion being had about sexual violence towards men in Ukraine. Pramila Patten, the UN special representative on sexual violence in conflict, revealed during a press briefing in Kyiv that she has received reports, which cannot all be verified, concerning instances of sexual violence targeting men and boys in Ukraine.<sup>18</sup> Patten highlighted the unique challenges faced by male survivors in reporting such heinous acts. She underscored that while women and girls find it difficult to report rape due to societal stigma and other factors, the ordeal is often

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Emma Graham-Harrison, ‘Men and Boys among Alleged Rape Victims of Russian Soldiers in Ukraine’ (*The Guardian* 3 May 2022) <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/03/men-and-boys-among-alleged-victims-by-russian-soldiers-in-ukraine>> accessed 15 September 2023.

even more daunting for men and boys. Patten emphasised the necessity of establishing a secure and empathetic environment where all victims can courageously come forward and share their accounts of sexual violence. Patten also issued a cautionary note, asserting that the ongoing investigations into several cases of sexual violence merely scratch the surface of a profoundly pervasive issue. She appealed to survivors, urging them to step forward and share their experiences, while simultaneously calling on the global community to actively identify the perpetrators behind these acts and ensure they are held accountable for their actions.

### 2.1.2 Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe Report

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) published a report on 17 July 2023.<sup>19</sup> The report offers a concise summary of violations within the armed conflict context since November 1, 2022. The primary section of the report delves into particular issues reported by 119 witnesses during the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) four monitoring missions conducted from February to May 2023. Additionally, the report draws on remote monitoring, which employs open-source investigation methods and information provided by various entities, including institutions in the Russian Federation and Ukraine, as well as civil society organisations. These sources and actors are duly cited and referenced throughout the report. The report provides a brief summary of infractions within the framework of the armed conflict post-dating 1 November 2022. The ODIHR conducted interviews with 27 witnesses who disclosed instances of sexual violence related to conflicts. Among these, 16 individuals (11 men and five women) were survivors of such acts.<sup>20</sup> Both survivors and witnesses recounted allegations of rape, threats of sexual violence, sexual harassment (including verbal abuse through derogatory name-calling), genital electrocution, and forced nudity.<sup>21</sup> These incidents of conflict-related sexual violence were reportedly inflicted upon both women and men, encompassing civilians and POW. Significantly, the majority of these acts occurred while individuals were in detention. This gathered evidence provides further information specifically on sexual violence committed against men in Ukraine, contributing greatly to not just research on this issue but the wider discussion about male victims.

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<sup>19</sup> ‘Third Interim Report on Reported Violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law in Ukraine’ (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2023) <<https://www.osce.org/odihr/548629>> accessed 15 September 2023.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

## 2.2 Sexual violence under international law

Understanding the extent of these testimonies is crucial in the effort of pursuing justice, however one must become familiar with the application of international law in assessing the severity of these claims. Sexual violence under international law is comprehensively addressed by various treaties and agreements, reflecting the global commitment to combating this egregious crime. The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols<sup>22</sup> establish protections for all individuals, regardless of gender, during armed conflicts. These treaties prohibit “outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment”<sup>23</sup> and explicitly recognise that men can also be victims of sexual violence.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)<sup>24</sup> defines sexual violence as a war crime, a crime against humanity, and a form of genocide. This statute covers both men and women as potential victims of sexual violence, ensuring that gender is not a barrier to protection or justice. The Rome Statute defines sexual violence in Article 7(1)(g) and Article 8(2)(b)(xxii) as including:

"For the purpose of this Statute, 'sexual violence' means:

(a) Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity;"<sup>25</sup>

While the Rome Statute does not specify gender, its gender-neutral language indicates that sexual violence is a crime that can affect individuals of any gender. The inclusion of acts like enforced pregnancy and enforced sterilisation further reinforces the understanding that both men and women can be victims of sexual violence, making it applicable to the situation in Ukraine. It's important to note that the interpretations and applications of legal texts can evolve over time through court decisions and legal analysis. The ICC has addressed cases involving sexual violence where both men and women were victims. For instance, in the ICC's prosecution of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo,<sup>26</sup> a former Congolese militia leader, charges

<sup>22</sup> 'PROTOCOLS ADDITIONAL to the GENEVA CONVENTIONS of 12 AUGUST 1949' (ICRC2023) <[https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/icrc\\_002\\_0321.pdf](https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0321.pdf)> accessed 15 September 2023.

<sup>23</sup> The Geneva Convention III, art 3.

<sup>24</sup> International Criminal Court, 'Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court' (1998) <<https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf>> accessed 15 September 2023.

<sup>25</sup> Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court 1998, art 7(1)(g).

<sup>26</sup> The Prosecutor v Thomas Lubanga Dyilo (ICC-01/04-01/06), Judgment, Trial Chamber I, 14 March 2012.

included enlisting and conscripting children for use in hostilities, including forced sexual slavery for both girls and boys.<sup>27</sup> This recognition of sexual violence affecting both genders underscores the statute's gender-neutral application.

UN Security Council resolutions further emphasise the inclusion of men in efforts to address sexual violence. Resolution 1820 (2008)<sup>28</sup> explicitly acknowledges that both women and men can be victims of sexual violence in conflict situations and calls for measures to prevent and respond to such violence against all individuals. Subsequent resolutions, like Resolution 2106 (2013),<sup>29</sup> underline the importance of ensuring that male survivors have access to medical, psychosocial, and legal support services, recognising that they too can suffer long-lasting trauma. While the focus has often been on women and girls due to their disproportionate nature in which they are affected by CRSV, the legal framework and international efforts have progressively expanded to recognise that men and boys can also be targeted and affected by sexual violence. The goal is to ensure that all survivors receive the support they need and that perpetrators are held accountable, irrespective of gender. This approach aligns with the broader principles of human rights, dignity, and equality that underpin international law and the global fight against sexual violence.

### 2.3 Conclusion

In reflection, this analysis has unravelled a troubling facet of the Ukraine-Russia conflict that often remains obscured amidst geopolitical discussions: sexual and gender-based violence. It sheds light on the hushed narratives of survivors who have endured sexual assault and gender-driven atrocities. Amid the overarching discourse of political strategies, territorial disputes, and power dynamics, this chapter unearths the concealed, distressing realities that lie beneath the surface. While the prevailing narrative tends to focus on political dimensions, it is crucial to acknowledge that sexual violence against men within armed conflicts is a grave concern, too often overlooked. The OHCHR report substantiates documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence against men, women, and young girls. However, the true extent is likely far greater due to stigma and limited reporting avenues. Despite challenges in

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008) SCOR, 63rd sess, 5914th mtg, UN Doc S/RES/1820 (19 June 2008).

<sup>29</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2106 (2013) SCOR, 68th sess, 7014th mtg, UN Doc S/RES/2106 (24 June 2013).



data collection, instances of male sexual violence perpetrated by Russian forces are brought to the forefront. This underscores the importance of addressing these issues not only to secure justice for survivors but also to challenge the impunity of perpetrators.

Pramila Patten's insights emphasise the difficulties men face in reporting these crimes due to societal stigma, stressing the urgent need for creating safe spaces for all survivors to come forward. Moreover, it echoes the call for accountability and justice, recognising that today's documentation can pave the way for tomorrow's prosecution. In summary, this chapter unveils a disquieting reality concealed within the layers of the Ukraine-Russia conflict—a reality characterised by widespread suffering due to sexual and gender-based violence. It underscores the urgency of addressing this issue, amplifying the voices of survivors, and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. By illuminating the experiences of those affected, the chapter compellingly advocates for a more compassionate and just response to the deeply troubling issue of sexual violence in conflict.

## **Chapter 3: Challenges with reporting these crimes and the psychological consequences**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter centres on the practical challenges inherent in reporting sexual crimes, alongside the profound psychological impacts endured by survivors. Our focus will delve into two primary domains: the barriers confronted when reporting such offenses, and the extensive aftermath experienced by survivors in terms of their mental and physical well-being. Within the context of reporting challenges, an examination will be conducted regarding how wartime circumstances can impede healthcare providers from extending support to survivors and accessing necessary resources. Furthermore, it will investigate the stigma and shame surrounding male survivors, factors that frequently hinder their willingness to come forward and report the offenses they have endured. Shifting our attention to the repercussions of sexual violence, a close exploration will be undertaken into the psychological toll it exacts on survivors, particularly men who frequently encounter distinctive challenges when seeking assistance. Additionally, an analysis will be conducted of the physical consequences of such violence, thereby illuminating the enduring impact it can have on survivors' bodies. Through an enhanced understanding of these challenges and outcomes, the advocacy for support systems capable of comprehensively addressing the needs of survivors is enriched.

### **3.1 The difficulties of reporting these crimes for boys and men**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has classed sexual violence against men and boys as a “significant problem”.<sup>30</sup> Reporting sexual violence crimes during times of war presents significant challenges that hinder effective response and support. The conditions of wartime create obstacles that impede the ability of health-care providers to access and offer essential resources to those affected by such crimes. The upheaval caused by armed conflict disrupts the functioning of essential services and infrastructure, making it difficult for survivors to access the necessary medical and psychological support required for their recovery and well-being. Amidst these challenges, men as survivors of sexual violence in wartime face

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<sup>30</sup> Etienne Krug Krug and others, ‘World Report on Violence and Health’ (World Health Organisation 2002), 154.

unique and layered difficulties. Societal attitudes and ingrained taboos surrounding masculinity complicate their willingness to report their experiences.<sup>31</sup> The traditional construct of masculinity can lead to feelings of shame, embarrassment, or even fear of being perceived as weak if men acknowledge their victimhood. This fear of being stigmatised further deters them from disclosing incidents of sexual violence, resulting in underreporting. Consequently, this underreporting perpetuates the invisibility of male survivors and their needs:

“Sexual violence against men is likely to be especially under-reported, perhaps due to the minimal focus on male victims by NGOs and the policy community, as well to the severe stigma associated with reporting such violence”<sup>32</sup>

Accessing data surrounding sexual violence against men, when it is reported, is complex too. Even when data is available, the quality of the information might be insufficient for research purposes and for devising prevention strategies.<sup>33</sup> Given that agencies and institutions maintain records for their specific needs, adhering to their internal protocols for record-keeping, the data they possess could be incomplete or lacking the essential details needed for a comprehensive grasp of violence.<sup>34</sup> For example, data collected from healthcare facilities primarily intend to offer optimal patient care. While the medical records could encompass diagnostic particulars about the injury and the treatment course, they often omit the circumstances surrounding the injury. Moreover, these records could be confidential, rendering them inaccessible for research pursuits. In contrast, surveys furnish more intricate insights into an individual's background and involvement in violence. However, these surveys are constrained by an individual's capacity to recall events, admit to certain behaviours, and the manner in which questions are formulated, who poses them, and the conditions under which the interview takes place.<sup>35</sup> Knowledge and understanding of sexual violence against males is considerably inferior to that of sexual violence against women: "It is estimated that the help and support for male victims is over 20 years behind that of female victims".<sup>36</sup> This

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<sup>31</sup> Dara Kay Cohen and Ragnhild Nordås, 'Do States Delegate Shameful Violence to Militias? Patterns of Sexual Violence in Recent Armed Conflicts' (2015) 59 *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 418, 421.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> [n] 30.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> John C Thomas and Jonathan Kopel, 'Male Victims of Sexual Assault: A Review of the Literature' (2023) 13 *Behavioral Sciences* 304, 306. <<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-328X/13/4/304>> accessed 15 September 2023.

reveals a profound gender disparity in the provision of assistance and support services. This discrepancy suggests that, in various contexts such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and mental health, male victims may not be receiving the same level of attention and resources as their female counterparts. The persistence of this gap over two decades underscores a pressing need for societal awareness and policy changes. Addressing this disparity requires a concerted effort to challenge stereotypes, allocate resources equitably, and ensure that all victims, regardless of gender, have equal access to the help and support they need to recover and heal.

### 3.1.1 Reporting these crimes in present-day Ukraine

In a conflict zone, reporting crimes and relying on the court system to function is no easy task, regardless of the crimes concerned. In Ukraine, where vast territories have been taken by Russian forces, the functionality of courts in these regions have had to change drastically. In an interview with Bohdan Monich, chairman of the Ukrainian Council of Judges, details surrounding these changes in formalities were addressed. Monich said the following:

“Courts operate in the regions where hostilities are underway but remain on the territory controlled by our troops and our government. At the same time, they work even under artillery fire; for example in Nikopol, which is constantly under fire. Judges work and do not go anywhere. In addition to considering cases, the courts prepare for a possible evacuation, deciding whether certain case records need to be digitised.”<sup>37</sup>

This highlights the Ukrainian authorities steadfast commitment to continuing their judicial duties despite working in territories controlled by the government and enduring hostile conditions, even artillery fire in places like Nikopol. This underscores the dedication of judges who remain in place to dispense justice and maintain normalcy in the midst of conflict. Additionally, the reference to digitising case records reflects a practical approach to preparedness, as it acknowledges the potential need for evacuation while ensuring the

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<sup>37</sup> Daniel Gleichgewicht, ‘Despite the War, Ukraine’s Courts Continue to Function’ (*New Eastern Europe* 30 November 2022) <<https://neweasterneurope.eu/2022/11/30/despite-the-war-ukraines-courts-continue-to-function/>> accessed 15 September 2023.

preservation of essential legal documentation. This narrative emphasises the importance of the judiciary's role in upholding the rule of law during turbulent times and their adaptability in the face of adversity. Whilst this is positive in the sense that reporting crimes, particularly sexual violence against boys and men can still be carried out, the effectiveness of the Ukrainian judiciary overall is not uniform. When asked about wider access to justice for Ukrainians, Monich acknowledges that in occupied territories justice can be heavily restricted, leading to underreporting:

“There is still access to justice. At certain points, its volume may have slightly decreased, but this only applies to those regions that are occupied because the region was occupied and the court stopped working. Of course, this led to an access problem. In the occupied territories, people have other priorities, namely the preservation of life and health, so I associate the decrease in the number of cases with this, and not with the fact that the courts are underperforming somewhere. People in these territories clearly have no time for courts.”<sup>38</sup>

This implies that in conflict-affected areas, legal issues might take a backseat to basic survival needs, resulting in underreported cases. This is particularly concerning when it comes to addressing sexual violence against men and boys. The complexity of reporting such crimes is exacerbated by the damaged infrastructure and the absence of Ukrainian authorities in these regions. The combination of occupation, damage to infrastructure, and the absence of authorities creates a challenging environment where accessing justice for victims of sexual violence, especially men and boys, becomes significantly more difficult. This report has analysed the complex nature for men and boys reporting crimes of sexual violence, these complexities are only worsened in the context of war. It is challenging enough, notwithstanding the absence of authorities and effective remedies. Monich acknowledges that regions, such as the Donbas, are occupied and so victims are unable to report these crimes to their occupiers. It underscores the urgency of addressing these issues to ensure that all victims have access to support and justice, even in conflict-affected regions.

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3.2 The consequences of such violence for male victims

Men who have undergone sexual abuse and assault might exhibit pronounced psychological symptoms that don't neatly align with a single psychiatric diagnosis. For instance, male survivors of sexual assault frequently grapple with intense anger that simmers beneath the surface. This anger remains persistent in their lives, often surfacing particularly during moments of perceived threat or betrayal within social relationships, leading to weakened stability in their personal relationships with others.<sup>39</sup> Another manifestation is the disruption of sexual functioning, which can encompass diminished sexual desire or erectile issues. This not only impacts self-esteem and the sense of masculinity but also creates obstacles in forming intimate connections.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, they might experience challenges in expressing or experiencing emotions such as love and happiness, with these effects rippling into every facet of their lives. According to a study conducted in Australia,<sup>41</sup> men who have experienced sexual abuse exhibit significant differences compared to a general population sample:

- They are four times more likely to meet clinical diagnostic criteria (with 65.8% of sexually abused men qualifying, as opposed to 17.2% of men in the general community).
- They are ten times more likely to receive a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- They are five times more likely to engage in the misuse of alcohol and drugs, highlighting the coping mechanisms often employed by survivors of abuse.
- They are ten times more likely to report experiencing thoughts of suicide, reflecting the profound psychological distress and despair that can result from such experiences.
- Furthermore, the study found that 46% of men who had experienced childhood sexual abuse had made suicide attempts at some point in their lives. This underscores the urgent need for comprehensive support and intervention for this vulnerable population.

The provided data underscores the profound impact of sexual abuse on men, revealing substantial disparities when compared to a general population sample. The statistics reveal

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<sup>39</sup> Joan Cook and Amy Ellis, 'The Other #MeToo: Male Sexual Abuse Survivors' (*Psychiatric Times* 2020) <<https://www.psychiatristimes.com/view/other-me-too-male-sexual-abuse-survivors>> accessed 15 September 2023.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Patrick J O'Leary and James Barber, 'Gender Differences in Silencing Following Childhood Sexual Abuse' (2008) 17 *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 133, 136.

alarming trends. A more recent study, conducted this year, found that alcohol abuse is a key response men have displayed in relation to the stress of the war:

“Increases in anxiety, depression, and loneliness were higher for women, while increases in hazardous drinking were higher for men, highlighting potentially important differences in how the sexes are responding to the war.”<sup>42</sup>

Two studies reflect similar themes for men, in response to sexual violence committed against them, deterioration of mental health and alcohol abuse are both very prevalent. In response to war, specifically the war in Ukraine, men have been found to fall victim to the very same outcomes. It is vital to highlight the effects of both as coupling these two traumatic events together demonstrates not just the immense stress placed on men but moreover the dire help they need.

### 3.3 Conclusion

This comprehensive examination of the challenges surrounding the reporting of sexual crimes, especially for boys and men, and the psychological consequences endured by survivors illuminates the multifaceted nature of this issue. The hurdles faced when reporting such crimes are exacerbated in the context of war, where the preservation of life and health often takes precedence over legal matters. This results in underreporting, particularly concerning sexual violence against males. The consequences of such violence are profound, as male survivors grapple with complex psychological symptoms, including anger, disrupted sexual functioning, and emotional challenges. Disturbingly, the provided data indicates a significant disparity in the impact of sexual abuse on men compared to the general population, with higher rates of clinical diagnoses, PTSD, substance misuse, and suicidal ideation among survivors. Furthermore, recent studies reveal that the stress of war compounds these challenges, leading to alcohol abuse and further mental health deterioration. The cumulative effect of sexual violence and wartime trauma underscores the urgent need for comprehensive support systems and interventions that address the unique needs of male survivors.

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<sup>42</sup> Philip Hyland and others, ‘Psychological Consequences of War in Ukraine: Assessing Changes in Mental Health among Ukrainian Parents’ [2023] *Psychological Medicine* 1, 2.

## **Chapter 4: Addressing sexual violence against men in Ukraine**

### **4.0 Introduction**

Addressing sexual violence against men in Ukraine is an issue of paramount importance that demands our unwavering attention and commitment. While sexual violence is a pervasive concern globally, the specific challenges and complexities faced by male survivors in Ukraine, particularly in the context of ongoing conflict, require a dedicated and nuanced approach. This introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted aspects of this issue, delving into the lack of protection for men as victims of CRSV and explores the wider concept of masculinity. By shedding light on these critical aspects, this report aims to raise awareness, foster understanding, and advocate for the urgent support and intervention needed to alleviate the suffering of male survivors and pave the way for a more just and inclusive society.

### **4.1 Protection of men as victims of wartime sexual violence**

In times of war, men often face insufficient protection from sexual violence under international law, with a disproportionate focus on safeguarding women and girls.<sup>43</sup> This gender disparity highlights the need for a more inclusive and equitable approach to addressing the unique vulnerabilities of all individuals affected by CRSV.

The issue in addressing sexual violence against men lies with a common misconception that men are impervious to sexual violence, stemming from gender stereotypes portraying women as vulnerable victims and men as either dominant protectors or potential aggressors.<sup>44</sup> The conventional masculine image appears incongruous with the notion of victimhood, leading to the misguided belief that men, in contrast to women, should have the capability to defend themselves. This misconception is further perpetuated by many healthcare professionals, aid

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<sup>43</sup> Obaje Enemaku, 'Violence against men: The need for gender symmetrical in the provisions of Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015' (2020) 6 Commonwealth Law Review Journal 227, 229 <<https://thelawbrigade.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Obaje-Enemaku-CLRJ.pdf>> accessed 15 September 2023.

<sup>44</sup> Major Héloïse Goodley, 'Ignoring Male Victims of Sexual Violence in Conflict Is Short-Sighted and Wrong' (*Chatham House* 10 January 2019) <<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/01/ignoring-male-victims-sexual-violence-conflict-short-sighted-and-wrong>> accessed 15 September 2023.



workers, and responders who tend to overlook the possibility of men falling victim (or women being potential perpetrators) of sexual violence.<sup>45</sup> The pervasive shame and social stigma associated with this issue often compel victims to remain silent. Even when they do come forward, many men use language like 'torture' instead of 'rape' to describe their experiences, adhering to more masculine terminology, something that was explored previously in Chapter 2's discussion of the OSEC Report. Moreover, in numerous nations, domestic legal frameworks fail to acknowledge men as potential victims of sexual violence, with legal definitions of rape exclusively applying to females. In countries where same-sex acts are illegal, survivors who do report their experiences face the risk of criminalization and the threat of homophobic backlash. Whilst this contentious issue is widespread in today's world, it is crucial to explore how this manifests directly within Ukrainian society and particularly, for the lives of Ukrainian men.

#### 4.1.1 Masculinity and sexuality in Ukraine

Life for men in Ukraine, notwithstanding the ongoing war, is plagued with a harsh concept of masculinity and what it means to be a man. In the Post-Soviet climate, Ukraine has emerged as an independent nation but one that has carried over key values from the Soviet Union. Not unlike in Russia, negative social attitudes towards homosexuality remain widespread in Ukraine. For example, according to the 2013 GFK Ukraine poll, almost 80% of respondents opposed any sexual relations between people of the same sex, and the Ukrainian Gay Alliance and Ukrainian State Sociological Institute poll indicated that 63% categorized homosexuality as a "perversion" and a "mental disease".<sup>46</sup> In the present day, there is a growing problem of LGBT hate in Eastern Europe. From countries having openly homophobic governments<sup>47</sup>, to the revival of religious freedom and the increased popularity of various religious institutions that preach hate and messages of intolerance towards homosexuals,<sup>48</sup> this region of Europe can be immensely volatile for an LGBT individual.

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Maryna Romanets, 'Virtual Warfare: Masculinity, Sexuality, and Propaganda in the Russo-Ukrainian War' (2017) 4 East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies 159, 170.

<sup>47</sup> Ronald Holzhaecker, 'National And Transnational Strategies Of LGBT Civil Society Organizations In Different Political Environments: Modes Of Interaction In Western And Eastern Europe For Equality' (2011) 10 Comparative European Politics 23, 34.

<sup>48</sup> 'Religious Belief And National Belonging In Central And Eastern Europe' (*Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, 2021) <  
<https://www.pewforum.org/2017/05/10/religious-belief-and-national-belonging-in-central-and-eastern-europe/>>  
accessed 15 September 2023.

Ukraine, like many Eastern European states, does have a general population hostile to LGBT individuals, with a growing demonstrated sense that for men, masculinity cannot coexist with homosexuality.

In the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)'s 2023 Annual Report, it provides a disturbing finding that highlights the increasing forms of hate speech being observed:

“Hate crimes were common in the occupied territories as well, where LGBTQ people reported cases of extortion, torture, kidnapping, harassment, imprisonment, and violence, including sexual violence at the hands of Russian soldiers.”<sup>49</sup>

Reports such as ILGA's Annual Report are incredibly important, they provide the latest and reliable information surrounding LGBTQI+ rights and in today's climate these resources are hugely beneficial to both inform people and also offer solutions to these emerging problems. These informative reports demonstrate beyond any form of doubt that LGBT rights in Europe are indeed fragile and that there is an increase in homophobia and other forms of hate. In the context of Ukraine, deep-rooted contentions surrounding masculinity are being exacerbated by the conflict too. The targeting of men in an attempt to weaken their masculinity or destroy it entirely helps one to appreciate the much wider issue of addressing sexual violence in Ukraine. It provides a context in which men feel weak, defeated and ashamed to discuss their experiences of sexual violence for fear of not being listened to and helped. Whilst views on sexuality is a contributing factor in the problem with addressing sexual violence against and indeed the wider issue of masculinity in Ukraine, there are other factors too. Lifestyle decisions can pose concerns as well, given that 20% of Ukrainian men engage in alcohol abuse.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, male fatalities surpass female fatalities at a ratio of 6 to 1 due to a rise in violent deaths, such as drowning, homicide, and accidents, along with stress-related ailments like stroke, heart attack, and high blood pressure, in the post-communist era.<sup>51</sup> Among military personnel, male suicide stands as the primary cause of mortality, while in the broader

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<sup>49</sup> 'Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People In Europe and Central Asia' (ILGA-EUROPE 2023) 1, 150.

<sup>50</sup> Bradley Janey and others, 'Masculinity in Post-Soviet Ukraine: An Exploratory Factor Analysis' (2009) 1 Culture, Society & Masculinity 137, 138.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

population, male suicides outnumber female suicides by about five to one.<sup>52</sup> All on this contributes to a wider understanding that for men in Ukraine, conclusively there are significant factors that impact their life trajectory in a negative sense, these struggles coupled with a strong cultural sense of masculinity impact their decision on reporting crimes of sexual violence committed against them.

#### 4.2 Prevention, representation and understanding of male victims of sexual violence in wartime

The WHO has outlined three steps to prevent sexual violence against men which could help in the effort to address the plight of men in Ukraine. This encompasses: (i) regulatory measures, encompassing policies and legislation aimed at safeguarding the rights of patients and individuals while also prohibiting discriminatory practices; (ii) organisational strategies that integrate gender considerations across all aspects of the healthcare system, including budgeting, integration, evaluation, and ensuring equitable health outcomes based on gender; (iii) informational strategies, involving the utilisation of gender equity indices and health metrics within a nation's healthcare information infrastructure.<sup>53</sup> These approaches can assist men who have experienced sexual violence in Ukraine by establishing legal protections and support systems through regulatory measures, integrating gender considerations into healthcare systems to better identify and address their specific needs, and utilising gender-specific data to inform targeted interventions, ultimately ensuring that male survivors receive appropriate care, support, and legal protection.

The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) outlines also the important the need for capacity building in addressing sexual violence against men. In a 2021 report entitled "Addressing Sexual Violence against Men, Boys, and LGBTIQ+ Persons in Humanitarian Settings"<sup>54</sup>, it is highlighted that there was an identified need to alter how authorities approach male victims of sexual violence, particularly around capacity building and integrating a soft approach to

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Sarah Payne, 'How Can Gender Equity Be Addressed through Health Systems?' (World Health Organisation 2020) 1, 20.

<sup>54</sup> Sarah Chynoweth and Dale Buscher, 'Addressing Sexual Violence against Men, Boys, and LGBTIQ+ Persons in Humanitarian Settings' (Women's Refugee Commission 2021).

listening to and support male victims.<sup>55</sup> Some of these recommendations include the following:

- Raise awareness among protection personnel regarding the needs of male and LGBTIQ+ survivors.
- Ensure that those conducting interviews for asylum-related claims are well-informed about sexual violence against men, boys, and LGBTIQ+ individuals, including forced witnessing, coerced rape of others, and "corrective" rape, as well as the specific nuances of such violence in the country of origin.
- Provide access to specially trained staff for interviews related to refugee status determination and resettlement for LGBTIQ+ individuals
- Implement oversight and supervision to guarantee that consultations with LGBTIQ+ individuals are conducted with respect, confidentiality, and appropriateness.
- Sensitise all staff members, including security personnel, drivers, administrative staff, and others, to LGBTIQ+ issues and encourage the use of rainbow flag pins as a signal of LGBTIQ+ inclusivity.
- Promote the employment of LGBTIQ+ individuals at various organisational levels, including security personnel, outreach workers, and protection experts.

These recommendations prove to be an integral link, and acknowledgement, that male sexual violence can affect both heterosexual men as well as men from the LGBTIQ+ community. An effective means of helping these men in encompassing the strategies listed above to make them feel not just comfortable but recognised individually for who they are. When supporting these men, the WRC further highlight the importance of referral pathways to help ensure men are supported and referred onto pathways designed for them, calling authorities to “Develop response and referral pathways to sensitised referral points for men survivors that do not rely on women and girl safe spaces.”<sup>56</sup> Whilst this guidance was not provided by the WRC in the context of men in Ukraine, it lends an insightful view on authorities that can support men affected by sexual violence as a result of the conflict.

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

### 4.3 Conclusion

It is evident that a common misconception about male vulnerability to sexual violence, exacerbated by societal expectations of masculinity and prevalent negative attitudes towards homosexuality, has contributed to the underreporting of cases. This problem is further compounded by the conflict's impact on Ukrainian men's mental health and lifestyle choices. To address these challenges effectively, a multifaceted approach is needed, as outlined by the WHO and the WRC. This approach includes regulatory measures, organisational strategies, and informational initiatives to protect the rights of male survivors, improve healthcare responses, and raise awareness. Additionally, capacity-building efforts, sensitivity training, and referral pathways must be established to recognise and support male survivors, regardless of their sexual orientation. By exploring these recommendations and fostering understanding, this report seeks to advocate for the urgent support and intervention required to alleviate the suffering of male survivors in Ukraine and promote a more just and inclusive society.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

In a conflict landscape dominated by geopolitical discussions and power dynamics, this report has delved into the silent suffering of male survivors who have endured sexual violence and gender-based atrocities in Ukraine. Sexual violence, a grave violation of human rights and international humanitarian law, knows no gender boundaries and respects no societal narratives. It is a dark stain on any society, regardless of the prevailing discourse. This report has underscored the imperative of recognising and addressing sexual violence against men during times of conflict, emphasising that the principles of humanity and non-discrimination must prevail even in the most tumultuous of circumstances.

Our journey through this report has revealed the prevalence of this issue, documenting cases and acknowledging the unfortunate reality that many incidents go unreported due to stigma and the limited avenues available for survivors to share their experiences. The insights we have presented, drawn from credible sources and first-hand accounts, have laid bare the horrifying experiences of male survivors, especially those subjected to sexual violence as a means of punishment and terror. The urgency of addressing these issues cannot be overstated. We must secure justice for survivors and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. Our report echoes the call for accountability and justice, emphasising that the documentation presented here can serve as a foundation for future prosecutions. It is imperative that we create safe spaces for survivors to come forward, dismantle societal stigma, and offer unwavering support to all individuals affected by sexual violence, irrespective of their gender. In essence, our exploration into sexual violence against men in the context of the Russian War in Ukraine serves as a clarion call for a more compassionate and just response to this deeply troubling issue. It underscores the urgent need to amplify the voices of survivors, challenge the culture of impunity, and work collectively toward a future where such atrocities are not just condemned but prevented. By breaking the silence surrounding sexual violence against men, we can pave the way for a more equitable and humane society—one that upholds the dignity and well-being of all its members, regardless of their gender.

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