

Tehya Blake
Master's Student, Queen's University
Supervised by Dr. Stefanie von Hlatky
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Causes of Conflict Related Sexual Violence: A Look into the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

It has been over 20 years since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 and first called on Member States to take special measures to prevent conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). Canada has subsequently adopted the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda into their foreign policy and operations mandate. However, progress has been slow. Rape and other forms of sexual violence continue to prevail in armed conflict around the world, affecting the most vulnerable groups in society today.

Failure to provide adequate protection perpetuates vulnerability, posing a significant threat to international peace and security. As a Member State, Canada has an obligation to protect civilians from indiscriminate use of CRSV and hold perpetrators accountable. As a first step, it is imperative to address the root causes and complexities of this violence. This project aims to contribute to this objective by examining the question: "what are the underlying causes of conflict-related sexual violence?"

Using the Russia-Ukraine War as a contemporary example, there can be an opportunity to better understand how CRSV is employed toward men, women, and children. In Ukraine, reports document significant evidence of rape, sexual torture and other acts of sexual violence committed by Russian authorities against the Armed Forces of Ukraine and Ukrainian civilians. Understanding the rationale behind this psychological warfare and the use of weaponizing sexual and gender-based violence can better prepare Canadian soldiers to effectively train Ukrainian soldiers within Operation UNIFIER. As part of the operational mandate includes training members and supporting Ukraine's National Action Plan on WPS.

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