

DESPAIR AND DISDAIN: A TALE OF SEXUAL ABUSE AGAINST INTERNALLY DISPLACED WOMEN IN NORTHERN UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

The war in Northern Uganda has had a more devastating effect on the lives and dignity of women and girls than of their male counterparts. There is deliberate gender-based violence and discrimination. Women and girls have become the soft targets of sexual violence, with rape and assault being used as weapons of war. These gender-specific threats have compounded the challenges to their protection. This article brings to light the fact that gender-based violence within the Internally Displaced People's (IDP) camps is the common, yet silent, affliction. The perpetrators include male family members, security personnel, leaders and agency officials. The risk factors that have perpetuated gender-based violence are notably the IDP situation itself, redundancy, sharing of housing units, general moral decay, ignorance, and poverty. It is shown that despite the presence of several local and International NGOs, there is no programme targeting this vice in the area. The government has failed to mobilize an effective strategy for humanitarian protection. The international community has also failed in its obligation to protect the vulnerable people by failing to close the protection gap faced by civilians. The article urges the government and the international community get seriously committed to the effective resolution of the conflict through peaceful negotiation, national reconciliation and the construction of a just and lasting peace.