

## **Vulnerabilities in Armed Conflict:** *Exploring Child Soldiers and Sex as a Weapon of War*

### **Summary Report**

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### **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

#### **Stéfanie von Hlatky – Associate Professor, Political Studies and Director, Centre for International and Defence Policy, Queen's University**

The conference was opened by Associate Professor Stéfanie von Hlatky, Queen's University. Professor von Hlatky welcomed everyone and remarked that the timing of the conference was ideal as the international policy environment has shifted and issues of sexual and gender violence and child soldiers have become a core priority among the international community. After providing opening remarks Professor von Hlatky introduced retired Major-General Blaise Cathcart.

#### **A Military Legal Advisor's Perspective on Child Soldiers & Sexual and Gender Based Violence during Armed Conflict**

##### **Major-General (ret'd) Blaise Cathcart, QC**

General Cathcart addressed sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as well as the use of child soldiers in armed conflict. He noted the existence of a significant body of law that provides protections for both child soldiers and SGBV. On the use of child soldiers, he stated that there was a problem with the belief among the West that all child soldiers are victims. General Cathcart suggested that some child soldiers are not victims and explained that the age of majority is attained at a much younger age in some countries in comparison to our own. He would, however, support a minimum age for criminal responsibility as it would provide necessary clarity. General Cathcart submitted that there are two key issues (1) Whether child soldiers are combatants; and (2) If they are, whether the rules are the same for them as they are for regular combatants. He concluded that the answer is yes to both. He finds that the two key issues are the treatment of child soldiers when they



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are (1) confronted in combat; or (2) detained. The Joint Doctrine Notice is a good way of operationalizing the legal requirements relating to child soldiers.

General Cathcart took issue with the phrase “sex as a weapon of war” and stated that, although it is effective at creating visceral reactions and getting resources, it undermines the effort to reduce or eradicate SGBV. He believes that a better approach would be to describe SGBV as a strategy or a tactic while weapons should be limited to ‘things’. General Cathcart found that sexual assault cannot be categorized legally as a weapon and that no professional army would view it as a weapon. He emphasized the use of Gender-based analysis Plus (GBA+) by CAF and NATO to consider gender in all stages of operations. General Cathcart suggested two ways to promote the operationalization of laws that protect against SGBV (1) ending impunity through the use of the military justice system; and (2) using the United Nation’s Fact Finding IFFC. SGBV is too broad for the military to deal with alone but alongside civilian efforts progress can be made.

Overall, General Cathcart would like to see a focus on operationalizing the current law we have to deal with the issues of child soldiers and SGBV.

## **Introductory Session on International Humanitarian Law**

### **Sabrina Henry – Legal and Policy Officer, CRCS and ICRC, Canadian Delegation**

To set the stage for the panel discussions, Sabrina Henry explained IHL, when it applies, and how it protects people. She noted the different laws which apply when an international armed conflict (IAC) occurs versus when a non-international armed conflict (NIAC) occurs. Numerous legal sources were relied upon to discuss the protections for combatants and citizens and the definition of “sexual violence,” including Articles from the Rome Statute, ICCPR, the Geneva Conventions I-IV, and the Additional Protocol.

## **Panel 1: Child Soldiers – Moderated By: Jonathan Somer**

### **Panel Introduction**

#### **Jonathan Somer – Senior Legal Advisor, IHL, CRCS**

Jonathan Somer, the Senior Legal Advisor on International Humanitarian Law to the Canadian Red Cross, served as the moderator for the first panel on Child Soldiers. Before the panel began, he made some introductory remarks about the topic. Referring to the keynote address by retired Major-General Cathcart, Somer highlighted that while there is an abundance of existing international humanitarian law on the topic of child soldiers, the existing law is neither linear nor clear. He pointed to the difference in outcomes in a number of cases with seemingly similar facts, and how the standards of age and definitions of “use” and “recruitment” of child soldiers varied across the body of international humanitarian law. Somer cited different standards of a state’s obligations surrounding the prevention of the use or recruitment of child soldiers as an example of the lack of clarity in the law. Whether a state has an absolute obligation to prevent the use and recruitment of child soldiers or a “feasible means” obligation can have a marked affect on the outcome of a case against the state or non-state armed groups. The complexity of IHL on child soldiers is further complicated by the distinctions made between individual or criminal responsibility for violations, and state or entity responsibility. The latter category is split into state entities and non-state armed groups. Somer concluded by stating that the numerous



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distinctions and wide variation of standards in the body of IHL as a whole creates confusion, which only serve to promote a higher level of non-compliance to the laws by states and non-state armed groups.

## Child Soldier: How and Why

### Zama Neff – Director, Children’s Rights Division of Human Rights Watch

Zama Neff began her presentation with a story of a former child soldier from Mogadishu, Somalia with whom Neff had spoken after he was reintegrated back into the community. The child was walking home from school with a group of kids one day when he was ten years old. On his way home, a group of fighters from rebel group al-Shabaab drove up and forced all the children into their truck. They were taken to a training camp, and split up into boys and girls. The children were eventually sent to the front lines of war to either feed the fighters, to wash and bury the dead, or to fight as soldiers themselves. This child was fortunate enough to spot an opportunity to run away, but others are not so lucky. Neff recalled the child saying that he didn’t want to kill people; he had just wanted to go to school. This story offered the perspective of the child, but also highlighted that the use and recruitment of child soldiers is just one part of a broader issue of the lack of protection of children from the effects of armed conflict. Neff then went on to state a number of alarming facts and statistics: 18 countries worldwide use and recruit child soldiers into armed conflict; 40% of the recruits in Sri Lanka are young girls; and in 2015, ISIS recruited three times more children as young as 10 to their forces than adults. This all indicates that the use and recruitment of child soldiers in armed conflict are problems that are increasing each day.

At the centre of the issue of child soldiers is the question of why their use and recruitment even occurs. Neff discussed how, for both state and non-state armed groups, children make the ideal soldiers because they are less likely to complain, they do not expect wages, and they are more easily influenced than adults. Armed groups like their soldiers to be cohesive and disciplined, and they believe the optimal time to begin this indoctrination is during childhood. Recruited children are used for a number of purposes, ranging from fetching food and water to being trained for the front lines. Girls are very likely to experience sexual violence and be raped, although Neff mentioned that boys were also raped. While many of these children are recruited by force (at gunpoint, through abduction, or coercion), like the child in Neff’s opening story, many children also enlist either by passive or active choice. The problem is, Neff said, that the law makes no distinction between those who were forced to enlist and those who “chose” to. The term “voluntary” with regard to a child’s enlistment in an armed group is not entirely accurate. Although many of these enlistments are not coerced through threats or violence, there are other complex social and economic factors that force the child’s hand. Some children join armed groups for security in times of armed conflict. Neff illustrated this with an example of children in south Sudan joining armed groups because the protection of a gun gave them the best chance of survival. Other children join for the promise of food and shelter, or to escape abusive family situations. Neff pointed to girls in Nepal joining to escape impending forced marriages. Neff discussed the significance of different factors in recruitment, but stated that the existing law on child soldiers in the body of IHL does not take these factors into consideration.

Neff did state that the existing body of IHL does recognize that much of the recruitment of child soldiers occurs in conjunction with their schooling. Schools are intentionally targeted by state and non-state armed groups as areas with a high concentration of children. Additionally, schools are sometimes used for military purposes both by non-state armed groups and by the state military. This exposes children to armed conflict and makes it more likely for them to enlist or be enlisted forcefully. Neff mentioned that some children are even promised access to education if they enlist. Neff blamed the persistent use of schools for military purposes on



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the fact that, until recently, this was not considered to be a problem. On this matter, there have been international efforts to protect schools in areas of armed conflict in order to prevent this avenue of recruitment from materializing. In 2015, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) enacted the Safe Schools Declaration, which encourages states to express their political support for keeping schools military-free zones. The Declaration aims to improve compliance with the laws of armed conflict, such as refraining from using schools for military purposes. Neff stated that, to date, 73 countries have signed the Declaration. While this effort has mainly been focused on state compliance, Neff stated that there are currently efforts to encourage non-state armed groups to refrain from using schools as well. Jonathan Somer discussed the efforts of Geneva Call, an international NGO, to engage with non-state armed groups in an attempt to foster respect for and compliance with IHL. Geneva Call drafted agreements to this effect that 21 non-state armed groups have signed to date. Both Somer and Neff stated the importance of remembering that these efforts are a few tools among many in an arsenal to protect against the use and recruitment of child soldiers.

## Canadian Armed Forces Joint Doctrine Note on Child Soldiers

### Lieutenant-Colonel Guy Marcoux – G7, Canadian Army Doctrine and Training Centre

Lieutenant-Colonel Guy Marcoux was next to speak, and he outlined the key elements of the Canadian Armed Forces Joint Doctrine Note on Child Soldiers. Among these elements were proposals for addressing the root causes of child recruitment and the recognition of the psychological impact of encountering boys and girls in situations of armed conflict. Marcoux praised Canada's efforts to protect children around the world from violence and he expressed confidence in the Joint Doctrine as an authoritative guide for overcoming the challenges that child soldiers present.

### Panel 1: Child Soldiers – Q&A Period

1. **With respect to protection of schools, using schools seems to be an attempt to target an area where there is a lot of vulnerability. What about getting agreements from state actors not to militarize schools? Is there anything in place to counteract non-state action when it is non-state actors abducting children?**

**Zama Neff:** Targeting schools and using them for military purposes is done by not just non-state actors but also state militaries. For example, in Syria, Ukraine, Sudan, Afghanistan, targeting schools is done by all sides. Until recently, this was not considered a bad thing. Most militaries are well trained enough that if they are trained on how to avoid schools, they will. There was a story about a US military lawyer who was asked if a school could be used. He said, "No, surely that's prohibited" and flipped through the rules to find that there was no such prohibition. This led to the development of guidelines including: (1) if a school is in session don't use it; and (2) even if a school is not in session, try to avoid using it. Normal proportionality analysis also considers the effect of destroying a school. This was the "Safe Schools Declaration" and there have been a range of steps towards implementation. For example, Denmark is changing its military manual. This Declaration is only for states and there are currently 72 countries that have signed on and counting.

**Jonathan Somer:** There are efforts to encourage non-state actors to not use schools. Geneva Call is working through a Deed of Commitment which mirrors international standards. However, political reasons make it difficult to involve non-state actors in dialogue with states. Dialogue & engagement is one tool in the arsenal.



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## 2. What sort of measures are taken after a child soldier is detained?

**Neff:** There is a concern about growing numbers of countries allowing greater scope for people to be detained through overbroad and vague counter-terrorism measures. Children shouldn't be detained without charge. If they are associated with an armed group then they should be released to child protection authorities. Children in Syria are being detained and denied medical care and food and are dying. Education is also an important part; if detained children don't get the services they need to reintegrate, such as education, they will have difficulty reintegrating.

## 3. What are NGOs and the Canadian government doing after these children are detained?

**Guy Marcoux:** It is a quick process - NGOs are contacted. It depends on the situation and set of transfer procedures when they are taken into Canadian Armed Forces custody but, generally, transfer them rapidly. This is discussed in the Joint Doctrine.

## 4. With respect to the Joint Doctrine and the effectiveness of using child soldiers – you can have soldiers coming back from PTSD, and there are news articles of state soldiers killing children, is there any discussions about counteracting that?

**Marcoux:** Not really, it is one of 13 needs listed and it needs to be looked at. Mental experts say reduce the stress risk. There are child soldiers; we know there is that possibility. A set of rules are being put together to help reduce the stresses. Also, putting together a correlation of training and focusing on it can help reduce stress.

## 5. With respect to the Joint doctrine, is the navy considering issues like child pirates?

**Marcoux:** Child pirates are considered in the Joint Doctrine. We are working with the navy, but it will be up to the navy to come up with a plan to address child pirates. Even if it's not specific, it will be a good start and we are waiting to see if they will go into more detail.

## 6. Incidence of child soldiers seem limited to a few countries - 18 or so - while sexual violence is much more widespread. Do people studying this have any thoughts, conclusions, about countries where child soldiers are used? Are there religious, ethnic, cultural connections?

**Neff:** This is an "apples and oranges" question. Sexual violence mostly happens outside the context of armed violence. By definition, the use of child soldiers is something narrower than sexual violence. However, while there are roughly 18 countries where children are used today, in 1998 it was about 30 countries so we are seeing an overall decline. Experts are actively making progress on something that wasn't stigmatized or seen as a problem 30 years ago.



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## **Panel 2: Sexual Violence – Moderated by: Stéfanie von Hlatky**

### **Panel Introduction**

#### **Stéfanie von Hlatky**

After the break, the moderator invited the second panel to share its thoughts on sexual violence as a tactic of war.

### **Accountability for Sexual & Gender based Violence at International Courts**

#### **Sara Wharton – Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Windsor**

Professor Wharton opened her discussion on the importance and relevance of this year's conference topic because it tends to get underestimated and lost in IHL discourse. For women, sexual violence is often framed as attacks on honour and dignity, while for men the discussion is almost completely lost and charged as crimes such as torture.

Even in IHL legal bodies, accountability has taken a long time to develop on matters of sexual violence and rape. While in older bodies, such as the Nuremberg and Tokyo Charters, sexual violence and rape are not mentioned, even among newer bodies such as the ICC and ICTR, sexual violence and rape are not recognized expressly and are still taken up by charges of "outrage on dignity" and crimes against humanity.

Wharton then went on to describe, in detail, the prosecution of acts of sexual violence at the ICC. Wharton outlined the development of increased accountability on those responsible for sexual crimes by starting with cases where crimes have been committed but not charged (Lubenga, Katanga) and moving through Strategic Plans adopted from 2012-2015, and again in 2014 in which the ICC declared its commitment to identifying and prosecuting sexual crimes.

She finished her discussion by showing that, after these Strategic Plans, the court has begun to look at the issue more critically. She cited cases where this has already been demonstrated (Ntaganda, Bemba). She ended her discussion with hope that the ICC will continue this trajectory with upcoming investigations on rape and sexual violence on detainees from the war in Afghanistan. For further information, Professor Wharton recommended a new book entitled *Prosecuting Conflict-Related Sexual Violence at the ICTY* that analyzes every case of sexual violence at the ICTY.

### **Militarized Sexual Violence in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo**

#### **Susan Bartels – Clinician-Scientist and Associate Professor, Departments of Emergency Medicine and Public Health Sciences, Queen's university**

Susan Bartels' presentation looked at sexual violence from a more scientific lens; contextualizing the data she collected from rape and sexual violence victims from her work at the Panzi hospital in Eastern DRC. Bartels' research involved data collected from 4,311 interviewed survivors between 2004 and 2008. An



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additionally 4,709 women had accessed post-assault care in Eastern DRC, but there were insufficient resources to include them in the study.

From the data, Bartels found a number of patterns relating to types of assault, locations, types of perpetrators, and experiences of victims. She offered suggestions to justify these patterns. First, Bartels identified different categories of sexual violence: sexual violence conducted by single perpetrators, usually victimizing civilians; gang rape by two or more attackers; and sexual slavery where victims are held captive. Second, Bartels noted that attacks by civilians tended to be within and around communities (at the market, on the street, at school, etc) while those committed by military and armed groups usually took place in the fields or in individual homes at night. Thirdly, the age or marital status of victims did not tend to matter. However, for many victims, this resulted in similar experiences of shame and terror in which victims were afraid to stay in their homes, and afraid to seek help from their community for fear of stigma and rejection which weakened communities.

Bartels argued that sexual violence was so widely used not only because it is inexpensive and easy, but, because of the widespread fear it instills; it is an effective tool in controlling populations and forcing displacement. For many groups, soldiers are unpaid and poorly supplied often leading them to go into villages. Bartels found that armed groups often attacked as they travelled and their movement can be traced by the large amounts of sexual violence that follows.

Bartels concluded her presentation with hope for current multi-disciplinary projects on issues in Burundi, DRC, Columbia, Mali, South Sudan, CAR, Lebanon and Mexico. In Bartels' view, successful approaches are dependent on: proximity to victims, operating under the assumption that sexual violence is taking place in any armed conflict, and providing a safe and confidential environment for reporting. She categorized 3 stages for successful approaches: assistance, protection, and prevention. Ultimately, implementation is contingent on the commitment of the party in question as sexual violence is more pervasive among non-state armed groups, and in countries where the government structures are weakened.

## **Integrating the IHL Prohibition on Sexual Violence into the Operational Practice of Armed Forces**

**Andrew Carswell – Senior Delegate to Canada, ICRC**

Mr. Carswell began by recounting his work for the ICRC as an armed forces delegate where the aim was to work with armed forces to improve their IHL compliance. He commented that the speakers at the conference had shed light on the tightness of the law and the terrible humanitarian issues concerned while lamenting that there is not much on the table in the form of solutions. Mr. Carswell stated that he was not going to propose solutions but, rather, that he would propose a way of looking at the problems and how to try to change behavior by integrating the prohibition on sexual violence into the operational practice of armed forces and making sure it works in practice.

Mr. Carswell briefly discussed UN mandates to help vulnerable women in certain circumstances, such as when women are fetching water. Women were being assaulted in some latrines so lightbulbs were installed but they kept being taken down. As a response, flash lights were given to the women but they actually acted as a beacon that made them more vulnerable to attacks. He questioned: What approaches best provide assistance, protection, and prevention for vulnerable groups?



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He then moved to discuss the pervasiveness of sexual violence. Sexual violence in armed conflict is a devastating global problem that has severe, long-lasting physical and psychological consequences. Using sexual violence in armed combat goes back to the beginning of warfare, from the Libro de los Jurados and the US Civil code. The 1949 Geneva conventions used the language “outrages on dignity” because they didn’t want to use the word “rape”. Mr. Carswell related that a colleague of his gives a ‘Ted Talk’ about how we all need to talk openly about sexual violence. When this colleague asked Mr. Carswell about his work, it was clear to him that he wasn’t giving a victim’s perspective, because sexual violence often happens in places where it is especially difficult to discuss these issues. In Mr. Carswell’s view, we in Canada are in a privileged position to discuss these issues.

Next, Mr. Carswell discussed the impacts of sexual violence on victims. The silence after sexual violence comes from a couple of underlying causes such as the victims’ fear of reprisal, the victims’ fear that they will not be believed, the victims’ fear that what they say won’t be held in confidence, and, perhaps the biggest issue, the stigma that is attached to sexual violence that can actually exclude victims from society and can lead to financial losses, loss of possessions, and loss of homes. Some of the underlying causes of the use of sexual violence in armed conflict include instilling fear and terror at the individual and community levels, opportunistic use, tactical or strategic means of overwhelming and weakening the adversary, and undermining the fabric of society. In looking at the impact on victims we understand that women and girls are most vulnerable, but men and boys are vulnerable as well; it is important to look at the holistic picture. There are various medical procedures available to deter HIV and pregnancy, and we also have to consider the long term psychological and psychosocial effects.

Mr. Carswell then discussed the state of the law with respect to sexual violence. Legally, sexual violence is a criminal act prohibited in armed conflict by IHL, and it is always generally prohibited by IHRL and domestic law. Sexual violence may also constitute torture, an act of genocide, or a crime against humanity if it is systemic. The problem, in Mr. Carswell’s view, is not the law; it is the implementation of the law. In the 2015 International RC Conference, this concern was manifested as Resolution #3 which is the most successfully ratified of the resolutions. Resolution #3 encourages states to make every feasible effort to ensure that their authorities at all levels, including military and civilian commanders and superiors, adopt a zero tolerance policy towards sexual violence. In implementing the law at a national level, there are lawyers in the field that try to work with states to see that these conventions are upheld but, after you get past this, the most difficult thing is to change behavior. The responsibility is on the armed forces; if you want to change the way that soldiers behave you have to understand how they are receiving orders. You have to look at the operations order, the rules of engagement that focus their use of force and go back to the doctrine of it, then structure a system of discipline that takes it all into consideration.

In concluding, Mr. Carswell stated that all of these developments depend on the commitment of the party or state in question. He questioned how to instill norms of behaviour where, as in the Middle East, structures of government are broken down. When Canada was working with groups in Iraq we had policies that, within x hours of a violation, Canada would cut off support; no support without compliance is absolutely key. Additionally, at the institutional level, we need to be proximate to the victims while understanding that the silence of victims means that they are often unreachable. So, we have to provide a safe route for people to come forward and understand that what they say will be held in confidence. This must be backed by a strategy to protect people and, at the 2019 RC Conference, we will have a chance to review how this is working.



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## Panel 1: Sexual Violence – Q&A Period

1. **Regarding the fact that peacekeepers are committing sexual violence, have you considered perceiving sexual violence as a cultural artifact related to warrior ethos and integrating IHL as a form of cultural change in different armed forces?**

**Andrew Carswell:** We did work with UNDP peacekeeping operations and have a dialogue with them. They started to perceive a question: “do we have leverage over peacekeepers once they are sent out into the field?” They have outstanding policies but, when it comes to peacekeeping, the command comes up to the country. Parties to IHL are the states themselves but this creates a difficult situation when it comes to changing how peacekeepers do business; we need to go to the source of their authority. Doctrine from contributing countries is probably the most important authority. Some contributing countries will have much more leverage over the New York level than vice versa. We are not going to change behaviour without changing the doctrine education programs that underwrite them.

2. **Is there any monitoring in accountability processes to make sure that integration of IHL and rejection of sexual violence in armed forces are not just espoused values?**

**Carswell:** What we do, when you get past prevention, is have bi-lateral confidential communication set up. If there’s a situation that raises concern, frame it in terms of IHL and bring to the attention of troop-contributing countries and New York. It’s at a level that isn’t transparent to most people. Organizations such as Amnesty International expose their abuses but ICRC has to make a compromise to not expose.

3. **Unpaid, uneducated men that you call military seem to me to be men that comprise violent gangs. Why are you calling uneducated, unfunded men military as opposed to violent gangs? What is the distinction between national military and other armed militias?**

**Susan Bartels:** We are using the terms that survivors themselves used in our research. It may not be accurate in terms of how people think of armed combatants. Some people would argue that these informal militia groups are just armed gangs.

**Carswell:** We define parties to an armed conflict as they appear; if you are sufficiently organized as a group, there are overt signs of authority, a chain of command, you carry weapons, and you are party to a conflict then you are classified as a party to an armed conflict. If you want to get to the law of it, it depends on how they are organized according to the definition. IHL was designed to deal with mitigating the situation of armed conflict.

**Comment from Audience:** The Office of Internal Oversight Services publishes information about sexual abuses by mission and whether they were perpetrated by civilians or combatants.

4. **Can we view conflict-based sexual violence from a “lessons learned” perspective; what has the interaction been between the perpetrators? During demobilization processes, for example, are perpetrator’s testimonies incorporated into lessons?**

**Carswell:** We worked a bit with that in DRC as they come back to Rwanda. We will take information we receive. We don’t do DDR – the UN sets that up and it’s political so ICRC stays away – but we have discussions to gain an understanding of aspects of what’s going on in the field. If it’s credible, we bring it to parties confidentially and try to bring sides together for discussions. This information gets brought back to



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Geneva and informs the way these conflicts are approached. Most of this strategy takes part at the delegation level.

**5. It is important to understand motivations if trying to understand why perpetrators engage in certain behaviour. While it is completely contextual, do we have generalizations of motive for sexual and gender-based violence? If so, how can we put that to use?**

**Bartels:** These groups often have arms and can take food or livestock and not rape people. The added sexual violence is strategic because it results in less resistance and people leaving their homes.

**6. Do perpetrators want gratification or terrorization? Where is the data pointing?**

**Bartels:** We didn't speak with perpetrators, but women in other groups have tried to get at motivations. I am not sure I have an answer or that it would be the same for each soldier or armed group.

**7. Do you think there are social paths instead of legal paths considering the stigma surrounding victims and the honour of women? Is there any way we can approach the issue socially?**

**Bartels:** If sexual violence didn't break families apart, didn't break societal norms, it would be less effective as a tactic of war.

**8. The distinction made earlier between direct and indirect participation was helpful. Is indirect participation more difficult to prosecute? Do you have any recommendations on how we might bridge that gap?**

**Sara Wharton:** When looking at people who aren't perpetrators, there are still embedded stereotypes. Even though a lot of other types of violence can be recognized as part of a criminal plan or foreseeable, myths that dissociate sexual violence from other systematic violence carried out often make it harder for judges to make that connection on those extended modes of liability. Understanding how integral rape and sexual violence is to the violence carried out by certain groups and that it isn't just a side consequence may help in prosecuting indirect participation.

## Closing Remarks

### Svetlana Ageeva – Advisor IHL, Ontario, CRCS

Ms. Ageeva began by thanking everyone for attending the conference then touched upon the benefits of hearing from various perspectives (academic, military and aid organizations) in discussing these timely topics that exploit vulnerabilities within populations experiencing armed conflict. She recounted the key points that each speaker presented and reinforced the importance of IHL and promotion of compliance when addressing the issues of child soldiers and SGBV. Ms. Ageeva then thanked the organizing committee, partners, funders and guest speakers for making the conference a success. She concluded by asking the all those in attendance for feedback via the feedback forms contained in the conference packages and invited everyone to gather outside the conference room for an informal reception in which refreshments were served and opportunities for networking took place.



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