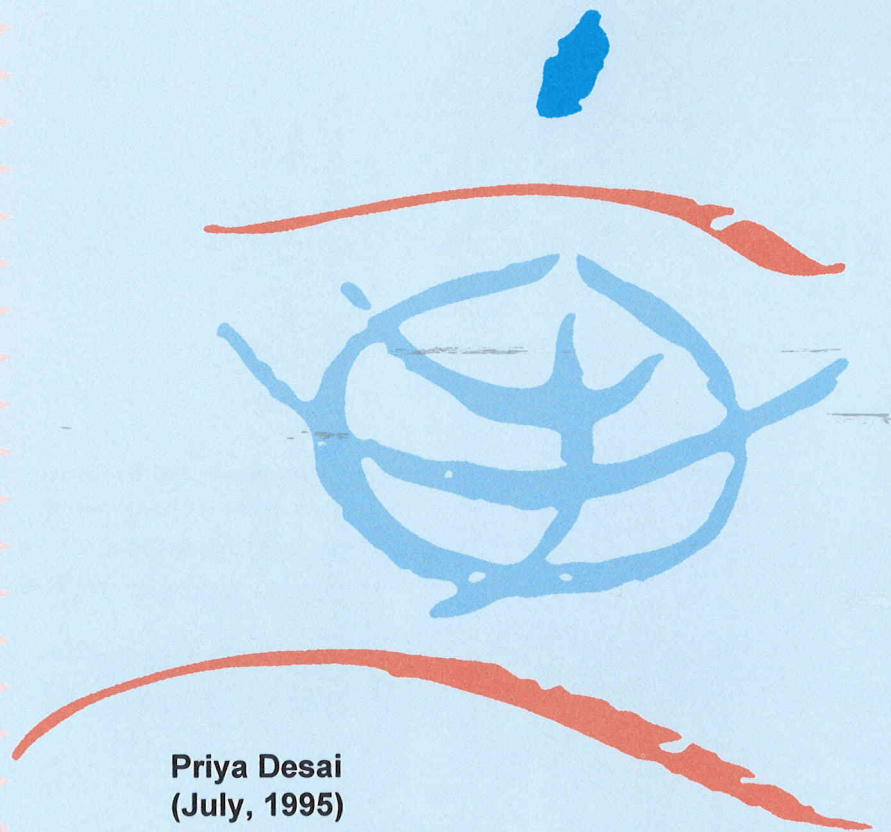




RAPE OF WOMEN IN WAR: A CASE STUDY



Priya Desai
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Education International / Internationale de l'Education / Internacional de la Educación
Boulevard Emile Jacqmain 155
1210 Brussels / Bruxelles / Bruselas
Belgium / Belgique / Bélgica

Tel : + 32.2.224.06.11
Fax : + 32.2.224.06.06

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The Raping of Women and Girls in the former Yugoslavia.

In her article "Universal Soldier: rape in war", Lepa Mladjenovic discusses three characteristics of rape in war.

The first one of these characteristics is that **war rape is a public event**. The idea here is that the enemy should see what is being done to his "property".

In the former Yugoslavia when a woman is raped it is not intended to be an act of aggression against the woman as an individual, but instead it is the symbol of one nation's abuse of another. A number of reports confirm that rapes are carried out in public in the former Yugoslavia and that when, for example, a woman is raped in front of her home or in front of her entire village the act is targeted against her family and her entire ethnic group and is perceived as a victory for the perpetrator. In addition "third party rapes" are usually accompanied by the most horrific and cruel treatments (setting her hair on fire, cutting off parts of her body, tying her in ropes and chains...).

In the former Yugoslavia the raping of Muslim women may have considerable social repercussions and may even raise the question as to whether these women will be accepted back by their husbands and families.

The second feature of war rape characterised by Lepa Mladjenovic is that it is a **mass rape**.

By raping in numbers soldiers prove their loyalty to their own group and, at the same time, they bear witness to one another's obedience to the morale code of war. Several sources underline that when rape is carried out in the former Yugoslavia there is almost always more than one perpetrator and that Serbian soldiers are constantly encouraged to rape women by slogans such as "raping is good for a soldier's morale".

The third characteristic of war rape is the **killing of the woman** who has been raped.

Firstly, by killing a woman after raping her the soldier does not make her a heroine. Soldiers also claim to kill their victims either because "she was disgusting", because "shootings fun" or because there was no reason not to. Lepa Mladjenovic quotes one federal army soldier to having admitted in December 1991 that

"I only remember that I was twentieth, that her hair was a mess, that she was disgusting and full of sperm, and that I killed her in the end."

To quote Lepa Mladjenovic **"Four bullets in her stomach...**

and nothing changes in the world".

¹"Universal Soldier: rape in war" Peace News. March 1993 (p.6)

