

A History of Oppression: How Systems, Tradition and War Breed Gender Based Violence Within
the DRC

Tumaini Johnson
His-254-0 - Unsettled Refugees
May, 8, 2024

The conflict within the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is one of the most prolonged humanitarian conflicts in the world with violence spanning several decades. The strife has seen the DRC government, various armed forces, and neighboring nations including Rwanda, all struggle for authority over the country's natural resources. The most recent tensions can be found in eastern DRC around the regions of North and South Kivu and Ituri.¹ Despite their extensive history with war, the calamitous issues in eastern DRC have failed to garner much attention from the international community through news cycles and social media. As global awareness concentrates on the Russo-Ukrainian war and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the millions of displaced people who suffer in the DRC continue to do so in relative silence. Additionally, the Congolese women in anguish from gender based violence by the actions of armed forces are even less likely to be heard. In 2001, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) noted that “women comprise approximately 51% of ‘persons of concern’, and yet refugee women continue to be disproportionately affected by human and sexual violence with unequal access to humanitarian assistance and procedures for asylum.”² As of the writing of this essay, the United Nations does not necessarily consider incessant acts of gender based violence (i.e. sexual assault, genital mutilation, sex trafficking) as qualifiable reasons for a person to be a refugee. However, they do acknowledge that refugee women face gender violence at higher rates.³ A number of UN officials and news reporters have coined the DRC as “the rape capital of the world” and the crisis within its borders as a “rape epidemic.”⁴ Much of this gender

¹ “UNHCR Warns of Mounting Violence against Women and Girls in Eastern DRC,” UNHCR, accessed May 6, 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-warns-mounting-violence-against-women-and-girls-eastern-drc>.

² Carol Pavlish, “Action Responses of Congolese Refugee Women,” *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 37, no. 1 (2005): 10.

³ “DR Congo Emergency,” UNHCR, accessed May 6, 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/dr-congo-emergency>.

⁴ Bert Ingelaere and Nina Wilén, “The civilised Self and the barbaric Other: ex-rebels making sense of sexual violence in the DRC Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 35, no. 2 (2017): 223.

and sexual violence against Congolese women stems from pre-established socio-cultural standards inside DRC's communities compounded by repressive legal policies and ongoing war that posit unhealthy gender dynamics and contributes to creating refugees.

The precursor to gender based violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo is the perception of women socially. The social structures of the DRC has an ongoing history of discrimination towards women that strips them of their rights and forces them to exist in an explicit patriarchal system. This system is discussed by Bert Ingelaere's and Nina Wilén's article, "The Civilised Self and the Barbaric Other: Ex-rebels Making Sense of Sexual Violence in the DRC Congo," where they directly interview former combatants of the armed group FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda) and their view of gender and sexuality in the DRC: "A woman has almost no rights in the Congo, they are not free. They have no importance in society. You can slap a Congolese woman as you like without any consequence."⁵ This is not an account from someone of Congolese origin, but rather a Rwandan ex-combatant, who is making a distinction between Congolese women and Rwandan women by highlighting the difference in levels of importance within their respective countries. However, their stories remain predominantly depreciative of Congolese Women. Ingelaere and Wilén explain that the Rwandan soldiers', "portrayal of perpetrators is hence one that both accentuates the difference between themselves and the other, but also indirectly points out similarities."⁶ The cultural climate of numerous local communities on gender dynamics trends toward the repression of women, objectifying them into figures to service men in their society. In a summation of their interviews

⁵ Bert Ingelaere and Nina Wilén, "The civilised Self and the barbaric Other: ex-rebels making sense of sexual violence in the DRC Congo," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 35, no. 2 (2017): 230.

⁶ Bert Ingelaere and Nina Wilén, "The civilised Self and the barbaric Other: ex-rebels making sense of sexual violence in the DRC Congo," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 35, no. 2 (2017): 228.

of Rwandan ex-combatants, Ingelaere and Wilén state that “one can create a picture of the victim of sexual violence from the ex-combatant's perspective as, for the most part, a Congolese woman who is highly disrespected in Congolese society, often treated as a tool or an object with little or no understandings of her rights, yet hardworking and productive.”⁷ These direct discussions with the ex-combatants assist in framing the general consensus of the disparate treatment of gender established within the DRC which becomes a necessary foundation for the web of gender violence seen in the country.

The familial standards within Congolese communities are prime exemplifiers of societal ideals where women have a lack of rights and are marginalized into roles akin to tools. As revealed by former combatants, within their family model, the volume of work given to either the husband or wife is heavily skewed to the latter; the wife is responsible for most, if not all of, the household needs including parental care and supplying the necessities for life. In Ingelaere's and Wilén's article, one of the interviewees expresses that “The Congolese woman is the one who is actually in charge of the household, it is she that is taking care of everything. The woman takes the man's role when it comes to the running of the household. The Congolese man doesn't do anything for the household. [...] she's like a house servant.”⁸ There remains an inconsistency in this familial system that could be viewed as a contradiction to other socio-cultural beliefs in the DRC, especially when it comes to who controls the home. In their detailing of the typical Congolese household, the soldiers explain that women are the ones largely maintaining the home, thus attaining a sort of “power”. At its surface, this structure appears to go against the devaluing of women in the community, but the fact that the men are allowed to choose absence

⁷ Bert Ingelaere and Nina Wilén, “The civilised Self and the barbaric Other: ex-rebels making sense of sexual violence in the DRC Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 35, no. 2 (2017): 230.

⁸ Bert Ingelaere and Nina Wilén, “The civilised Self and the barbaric Other: ex-rebels making sense of sexual violence in the DRC Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 35, no. 2 (2017): 229.

in the general upkeep of household needs whereas women are often pushed into the role solidifies the objectification of women as tools for use. In the article, “Making Sense of Violence: Voices of Soldiers in the Congo (DRC),” Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern highlights Congolese soldiers’ view of women and many of the the male and occasionally female soldiers seconded the Rwandan understanding of the inequality apparent in the familial landscape of the DRC:

Here, they explained, women and men were decidedly different, and inequality was the norm. Their ideal notion of femininity was more distinct here and represented through the image of the ‘submissive wife’, who should obey and please her husband. The husband was written as the unquestionable decision-maker in the family, regardless of his work or rank within the military (even if the woman had a higher military rank than that of her husband, which was sometimes the case among the women we interviewed).⁹

The relationship within the family points to minimal instances where women might be viewed as equal to men, nonetheless their supposed equal roles are used to fuel the sovereignty of men in the social climate of the DRC.

While much of the reasoning behind the inequality between men and women in Congolese society is vocalized through the direct words of former Rwandan and Congolese soldiers, their perceptions are reinforced through a number of the DRC’s governmental policies. In the country's legislation and laws, there is a clear separation of authority men can impose upon women. In order for a woman to acquire anything of financial value including accepting a job offer or the distribution of property, the husband must first agree to her endeavor.¹⁰ The law effectively forces Congolese women to be subjects to the will of their husbands and male figures in the communities. In the text, “Rape of the Congo: Understanding Sexual Violence in the

⁹ Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maira Stern, “Making sense of violence: voices of soldiers in the Congo (DRC),” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 46, no. 1(2008): 57-86.

¹⁰ Sara Meger, “Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 129.

Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” Sara Meger affirms that “the Congolese Family Code goes so far as to state that women must obey their husbands as the head of household.”¹¹ This history of highly oppressive rules systematically keeps inequality as the standard between Congolese men and women. The legality of such disparities, in turn, aids in shaping the social norms of the DRC, possibly affecting the interactions women will have with men across the country. Sara Meger explains that “Violence against women is not uncommon in the DRC and in many regions it is perceived as acceptable treatment of women.”¹² This normalcy is chiefly due to the dominion men are given that is embedded into the DRC’s policies where physical aggression from a husband to his wife can be accepted as enacting his legalized power over her.

Both the cultural and legal acceptance of the hierarchy between men and women in the Democratic Republic of Congo has sprouted an adherence to toxic masculinity within much of the DRC’s communities. By extension, the growth in the presence of various armed forces during times of conflict accentuates this toxicity to male dominated militaries. The groups retain rather dangerous beliefs about the traits that men should carry, glorifying dated views of strength including physical prowess and military rank. A Rwandan ex-combatant pointed out this worldview, stating that “Congolese soldiers are heavy consumers of drugs – hemp – and strong, locally made, liquors and when drunk those military guys attack women. In times of war, there are no laws, it’s the law of the strongest that reigns.”¹³ What is continuously considered as valuable expressions of strength are heavily associated with acts of violence. Men with “an

¹¹ Sara Meger, “Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 129.

¹² Sara Meger, “Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 129.

¹³ Bert Ingelaere and Nina Wilén, “The civilised Self and the barbaric Other: ex-rebels making sense of sexual violence in the DRC Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 35, no. 2 (2017): 228.

ability and willingness to commit violence” are likely to be favored by other soldiers around them.¹⁴

Soldiers that failed in their exertion of power, either by engaging in or enduring violence, saw the peer perception of their masculinity diminished and regarded as what they traditionally perceive as feminine. This impression has been exemplified in the first-hand accounts of soldiers in these groups. One interviewee spotlighted in Maria Baaz and Maria Stern’s article expands upon the denunciation of “weak” men, “those who are not able to make it, we call them the inept, also sometimes women, the inept will run away.”¹⁵ Within their social dynamics rife with harmful beliefs of violence and power, recurring terms like “inept” and “weak like a woman” are used to connect femininity with weakness and undesirability. Anyone who fails to display strength within the culture is thus seen as feminine. Classifying strength through violence as a masculine characteristic and weakness as purely feminine in nature further broadens the disparity between men and women within these militant groups. And it is inside this framework of toxic masculinity that gender based violence becomes glaringly apparent. Sheila Jefferys’ article, “Double Jeopardy: Women, the US Military and the War in Iraq” she explains how these militaries manufacture environments that are directly dangerous to women, “this masculinity is deliberately created by militaries ... which enable men to "other" women and understand themselves as masculine’. Thus, the occurrence of sexual violence in warfare is not entirely surprising, as it can be understood as a product of the hyper-masculine climate of abuse and antipathy towards women.”¹⁶ To appear powerful and to avoid any inherent connection to the

¹⁴ Sara Meger, “Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 122.

¹⁵ Sara Meger, “Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 128.

¹⁶ Sheila Jefferys, “Double Jeopardy: Women, the US Military and the War in Iraq,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 30, no. 1 (2007): 16-25.

weakness often attributed to women, some militant soldiers expressed dominance over women through sexual violence. A number of these soldiers, in particular those who felt their value as a man was challenged, used rape as a means to “reassert their masculinity” and claiming their “masculine sexual needs.”¹⁷ Through gender based violence on Congolese women, soldiers used this form of violent power to reestablish and prove their own status as men within their circles.

While many of the soldiers in DRC’s armed forces engage in rape and other forms of gender violence as a way of validating the “power” they have as a man, these groups as a whole also use gender-based violence as a weapon for war. Much of this was exacerbated after conflicts became common occurrences in the country. Highlighting the relationship between targeted aggression against women and war in the DRC, Sara Meger claimed that “Since the outbreak of war in 1998, Congolese women 'have been victims of rape on a scale never seen before' with sexual exploitation of women and girls as young as six months old being committed by all armed groups in the country, including United Nations peacekeepers.”¹⁸ Consequently, the DRC is historically considered the country with the highest accounts of rape towards specifically women and children.¹⁹ War has not only pushed toxic masculinity into extremely violent expressions but effectively used both the status of women and violence against them as a means to attain influence over important regions of the country. Military groups can establish structures that foster gender based violence to impose their will on much of the citizens and communities. Armed forces may use rape as punishment in areas they think support their enemies and as

¹⁷ Sara Meger, “Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 128.

¹⁸ Sara Meger, “Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 126.

¹⁹ Sara Meger, “Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 126.

leverage to acquire the community's resources.²⁰ Gender based violence has become a key factor in military organizations during war to gain authority over the citizens, giving them social footholds, financial affluence, and political advantage. This all comes at the expense of Congolese women. While the threats of these armed forces are potentially lethal to all members of a community through the razing of towns and shootings of innocent people, women who already face an institution of brutality from much of the cultural norms, gender violence from these militaries only embolden "these disadvantages and many women and girls have been forced by the war and poverty into prostitution as a means of survival, making them even more vulnerable to sexual violence."²¹ Sexual assault is a functional war weapon because of the status of women within the DRC. The hierarchical placement of men over women within various Congo villages and their legal code is intensified by the soldiers inside of these groups, making it increasingly effective to implement sexual violence into their war tactics. Sara Meger states that "It is this misogynist focus of militarism that leads to violence against women. Even when this militarism is outside the context of war, women suffer the consequences of the socialised hyper-masculinity, patriarchy, and concern for 'national security'."²² Sexual violence committed during war applies oppression to numerous already oppressed Congolese women. Decades of war in the DRC has created displaced people of which many turn to refugeehood for respite. Gender based violence is an extension of those wars that remains entrenched in the society far beyond their end, heightening the likelihood of women and children becoming refugees because of it.

²⁰ Sara Meger, "Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 129.

²¹ Sara Meger, "Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 127.

²² Sara Meger, "Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 122.

Along with the fear for their lives that war generates, the horror of being a victim of gender violence can force Congolese women into becoming displaced people. Shaped by the harmful standards of the DRC culture, communities may neglect victims of rape, stigmatizing them and their social standings. In their article, “Wartime Sexual Violence, Social Stigmatization and Humanitarian Aid: Survey Evidence from Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo,” Carlo Koos and Summer Lindsay write about how and why rape victims are negatively perceived:

Women are viewed as a form of property, where fidelity is linked to a woman’s value. Victims of rape describe the logic behind stigma that they experience in terms of marriageability, harm to husbands and losing value. The brutality of rape (e.g., public rape, multiple-perpetrator rape, and object rape) directly attacked these norms and combined with fear of HIV/Aids to reinforce stigma and its consequences.²³

There is an interesting dynamic within the communal perception of the victims and their expected role as Congolese women and how sexual violence obscures that, where “Women who have suffered sexual violence and who as a result will not be able to fulfil the reproductive role that society assigns to them often find themselves judged for it.”²⁴ Women are denigrated multiple times by sexual assault, which is then exacerbated (and often defended) by the idea that they are tools of men and are consequently stigmatized and condemned for taints to their “purity”. Additionally, the stigma does not remain solely on the women, but extends to their direct relationships, which can ultimately break apart family security. As the highest authority in the family, “sexual [...] violence perpetrated against a man’s wife or daughter” might make other members of the communities accuse the man of the “failure to protect his family members.”²⁵ To

²³ Carlo Koos and Summer Lindsay, “Wartime Sexual Violence, Social Stigmatization and Humanitarian Aid: Survey Evidence from eastern Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 66, no. 6 (2022): 1037-1065.

²⁴ Sara Meger, “Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 127.

²⁵ Carlo Koos and Summer Lindsay, “Wartime Sexual Violence, Social Stigmatization and Humanitarian Aid: Survey Evidence from eastern Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 66, no. 6 (2022): 1037-1065.

avert the shame from spreading to the entire family, households may oust those who experienced sexual violence away from their homes.²⁶ Though some find other dwellings that are willing to accept them, the stigmatization from rape can force Congolese women, and even their families, to become displaced from their homes and lived communities.

Legally, there are instances where the perceived worth of the Congolese women invalidates and disrupts their case against perpetrators of sexual violence. There are recently formed policies that are intended to crackdown on gender based violence cases, one of which in 2006 states that “both men and women may be victims of gendered abuses and recognized that violence stemming from gendered patterns of behavior may go beyond violence of a sexual nature.”²⁷ However, these new laws do not do enough to support victims of such violence and guarantee a fair case. The judicial structures of the DRC, especially in conflict riddled periods, are rife with bribes that determine the outcome of many cases. It is not uncommon for perpetrators of gender based violence to reduce or even avoid the sentences they are given. Sara Meger asserts that, “impunity persists for crimes of sexual violence in the eastern DRC; despite reforms to legislation aimed at combating the tide of sexual violence, few perpetrators are ever punished.”²⁸ Many of the defendants carry enough financial weight to “influence the outcome of an investigation or trial” within a historically venal court system.²⁹ This corrupt environment has led victims who initially sought solace through the courts to be apprehensive about these

²⁶ Carlo Koos and Summer Lindsay, “Wartime Sexual Violence, Social Stigmatization and Humanitarian Aid: Survey Evidence from eastern Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 66, no. 6 (2022): 1037-1065.

²⁷ Milli Lake, Ilot Muthaka and Gabriella Walker, “Gendering Justice in Humanitarian Spaces: Opportunity and (Dis)empowerment Through Gender-Based Legal Development Outreach in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Law & Society Review* 50, no. 3 (2016): 545.

²⁸ Sara Meger, “Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 127.

²⁹ Sara Meger, “Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 130.

perpetrators seeking revenge. In their articles, Milli Lake, Ilot Muthaka and Gabriella Walker highlighted this fear in multiple Congolese women as they talked about neighbors' houses being burned, and any other responses that could occur "...we were very much afraid of retaliation. When he comes back, if he is arrested...they are going to ill-treat him. But for sure he's going to pay. He's going to bribe. And after bribing, he will come back. So we are afraid that when he comes back from court, or from arrest, he will kill us, or he can do bad things against myself and my family."³⁰ As with an unjust legal system that emboldens gender inequality within communities, the law continues to repress the voices of women and inhibit their chances for justice.

Despite much of the Congolese women's stories being stifled because gender based violence is often considered a questionable part of their refugeehood, Congolese refugees who recount such experiences have found ways to validate themselves and persevere through their suffering. In the article, "War rape survivors of the Second Congo War: A perspective from symbolic convergence theory," Demi Simi and Jonothan Matusitz claim that, "Very few women agree to accept the identity of a victim. In fact, they use 'victimcy' to their advantage by strategically advocating the participation of soldiers in their lives as a means of deterring violence."³¹ In terms of legal cases, simply revealing their stories to others gives many Congolese women the power and freedom they lost in oppression. In detailing the stories of numerous refugee women and their pasts, Carol Pavlish in "Action Responses of Congolese Refugee Women" states that "Another participant demonstrated resistance to social norms by persisting and finally succeeding in her attempts to protect herself and her children from her

³⁰ Milli Lake, Ilot Muthaka and Gabriella Walker, "Gendering Justice in Humanitarian Spaces: Opportunity and (Dis)empowerment Through Gender-Based Legal Development Outreach in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo," *Law & Society Review* 50, no. 3 (2016): 543.

³¹ Demi Simi and Jonothan Matusitz, "War rape survivors of the Second Congo War: A perspective from symbolic convergence theory," *Africa Review* 6, no. 2 (2014): 89.

abusive husband.”³² This all points the attempt to obtain agency for themselves that was culturally held only for men:

Motherhood and family-chief responsibilities were often at the center of resistance and, therefore, provided a significant source of agency for many of these participants. The experiences of violence, conditions of oppression, or lack of education can quiet women's voices, but in this study every woman demonstrated that she had a voice, as well as the capacity to act.³³

Throughout the DRC there are millions of displaced Congolese women who retain these stories of gender violence. Despite their ability to challenge the formed normalities of their disparity and suffering, they largely remain silent to the global populace.

There are multiple structures within the DRC that creates spaces enabling gender based violence, from social and legal norms that establish systems of toxic masculinity to militant groups that exploit these norms to their benefit, Congolese women have faced and are still living a deeply oppressive existence. Similarly to how most wars force people to seek asylum in search of safety because of destruction of their homes and threats to communities, conflicts in the DRC related to the use of gender based violence are also a proponent to the hazardous environment therein. Even after entering refugeehood, many Congolese women continue to face onsets of sexual assault and rape which unfortunately as Halyna Lugova, Nandeeta Samad and Mainul Haque asserts in “Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Among Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Post-Conflict Scenario,” “The harm suffered by survivors has hardly been addressed by any of the agencies, including the United Nations.”³⁴

³² Carol Pavlish, “Action Responses of Congolese Refugee Women,” *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 37, no. 1 (2005): 14.

³³ Carol Pavlish, “Action Responses of Congolese Refugee Women,” *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 37, no. 1 (2005): 14.

³⁴ Halyna Lugova, Nandeeta Samad and Mainul Haque, “Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Among Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Post-Conflict Scenario,” *Risk Management and Healthcare Policy* 16, (2020): 2939.

As stated before, the United Nations does not necessarily see gender based violence as an adequate reason to become a refugee. Even so, there are many victims of gender violence that remain in constant states of insecurity because of the attack on them, losing whatever is left of their already diminutive status in their society and fear of further aggression towards them.³⁵ There is a necessity for global organizations and communities to hear the voices of these Congolese women, not only to help them recognize their worth and know that their experiences do matter but to promote healthy change within the DRC towards Congolese women.

³⁵ Milli Lake, Ilot Muthaka and Gabriella Walker, "Gendering Justice in Humanitarian Spaces: Opportunity and (Dis)empowerment Through Gender-Based Legal Development Outreach in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo," *Law & Society Review* 50, no. 3 (2016): 568.

Bibliography

- Baaz, Maria Eriksson and Stern, Maira. "Making sense of violence: voices of soldiers in the Congo (DRC)." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 46, no. 1(2008): 57-86. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X07003072>.
- "DR Congo Emergency." UNHCR. Accessed May 6, 2024. <https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/dr-congo-emergency>.
- Ingelaere, Bert Wilén, Nina. "The civilised Self and the barbaric Other: ex-rebels making sense of sexual violence in the DRC Congo." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 35, no. 2 (2017): 221-239. DOI: 10.1080/02589001.2017.1311010.
- Jefferys, Sheila. "Double Jeopardy: Women, the US Military and the War in Iraq." *Women's Studies International Forum* 30, no. 1 (2007): 16-25. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2006.12.002>
- Koos, Carlo and Lindsay, Summer. "Wartime Sexual Violence, Social Stigmatization and Humanitarian Aid: Survey Evidence from eastern Democratic Republic of Congo." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 66, no. 6 (2022): 1037-1065. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027211064259>.
- Lake, Milli, Muthaka Ilot and Walker, Gabriella. "Gendering Justice in Humanitarian Spaces: Opportunity and (Dis)empowerment Through Gender-Based Legal Development Outreach in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo." *Law & Society Review* 50, no. 3 (2016): 539-574. DOI: 10.1111/lasr.12215.
- Lugova, Halyna, Samad, Nandeeta and Haque, Mainul. "Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Among Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Post-Conflict Scenario." *Risk Management and Healthcare Policy* 16, (2020): 2937-2948. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2147/RMHP.S283698>.
- Meger, Sara. "Rape of the Congo: Understanding sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 119-135. DOI: 10.1080/02589001003736728.
- Pavlish, Carol. "Action Responses of Congolese Refugee Women." *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 37, no. 1 (2005): 10-17. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1547-5069.2005.00010.x>.
- Simi, Demi and Matisotz, Jonothan. "War rape survivors of the Second Congo War: A perspective from symbolic convergence theory." *Africa Review* 6, no. 2 (2014): 81-93. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/war-rape-survivors-second-congo-perspective/docview/1561739113/se-2>.
- "UNHCR Warns of Mounting Violence against Women and Girls in Eastern DRC." UNHCR. accessed May 6, 2024. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-warns-mounting-violence-against-women-and-girls-eastern-drc>.

