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SNAPSHOT

Rape Reporting During War

Why the Numbers Don't Mean What You Think They Do

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Reports of sexual violence during the ongoing unrest in Libya have captured headlines across the world. Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi's forces, some have alleged, were given Viagra to facilitate their rape of hundreds, if not thousands, of victims. Recently, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the chief prosecutor at the International Criminal Court, and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton both expressed outrage at what was apparently a purposeful campaign. Yet recent [reports](#) [1] by the U.N. and by advocacy groups shed doubt on these claims. Amnesty International, for example, has been [unable](#) [2] to locate a single rape victim, or even anyone who knows a victim.

As the veracity of stories about sexual violence in Libya came into question, the *American Journal of Public Health* published a study estimating that the prevalence of rape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was far worse than previously documented. The article [estimated](#) [3] that between 2006 and 2007 more than 400,000 women between the ages of 15 and 49 were raped during the war there -- 26 times the U.N.'s official count.

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- [1] http://www.vancouversun.com/story_print.html?id=4928382&sponsor=
- [2] <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/amnesty-questions-claim-that-gaddafi-ordered-rape-as-weapon-of-war-2302037.html>
- [3] <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21566049>
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