

# Quote/Unquote

"No woman is exempt from violence and exploitation. During conflict women and girls are attacked because they are related to political adversaries, because they are political leaders themselves, or simply because they were at home when the soldiers arrived. ... During conflict, women and girls experience violence at the hands of many others besides armed group. Women are physically and economically forced or left with little choice but to become sex workers or to exchange sex for food, shelter, safe passage or other needs; their bodies become part of a barter system, a form of exchange that buys the necessities of life ... Police and other civilian officials often take advantage of women's powerlessness even when they are in custody. Women have been raped and tortured as a form of interrogation." ( Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peacebuilding*, p.11).

"On our way back, my friend was telling me how our shared friend Salwa, who is also a gynecologist, helped women to give birth on the phones, the women were in labor while she was giving them directions over the phones on what to do. One of the women was screaming in a hysterical way when she asked her to cut her baby's cord, she was afraid to hurt him, but she calmed her down." (Testimony, Islah Jad, Palestine).

"And yet Palestinian women continue to have babies. Is that a political choice? At the centre of most women's lives are the children. Soha, a nursing student, breaks down and cries in her home in Aida Camp when a rocket whizzes through her kitchen window at supper-time and out through the facing wall into the mercifully empty bedroom. Her mother tells her to buck up and not scare the children. It is sobering to note that the first Palestinian woman to make the political decision to become a human bomb was a nurse, caring daily for children injured or maimed by Israeli bullets. In between these two extremes - the giving and the giving up of life, hundreds of thousands of women go about their business as best they can." ( Ahdaf Soueif, *The Guardian*, March 13, 2003).

"Gendercide ... the deliberate extermination of persons of a particular sex (or gender). Gendercide is a sex-neutral term, in that the victims may be either male or female. There is a need for such a sex-neutral term, since sexually discriminatory killing is just as wrong when the victims happen to be male. The term also calls attention to the fact that gender roles have often had lethal consequences, and that these are in important respects anal-

ogous to the lethal consequences of racial, religious, and class prejudice." ([http://gendercide.org/what\\_is\\_gendercide.html](http://gendercide.org/what_is_gendercide.html)).

"The main regret I have about how I dealt with the war was about my children. I seemed to have put upon them my own feelings of being challenged by this war, or even perhaps excited by it, and did not fully consider whether they felt this way. I didn't consider if I were coping with some things as an adult that they did not have the ability to cope with them as children. I think we did not give them the opportunity to express fully, openly and honestly, what they felt. We just assumed they were doing all right. If someone asked me again would I knowingly put my children through this again, I would say resoundingly 'No.' This is one of the big scars of the war" ( Lamia Rustum Shehadeh (ed.), *Women and War in Lebanon*, p. 239).

"Salma M. [forty-nine-year-old] described what happened after the men forced her into the car: "They made me put my head down between my legs ... [Then they took me into a building where] they were hitting me on the head and arms ... They raped me, in many, many ways ... When I came home my appearance was so bad ... They burned my legs with cigarettes. They bit me, on my shoulders and arms. All of them raped me, there were five or six more than the four who kidnapped me, there were ten of them total and I was raped by all of ten of them." ... Salma M. told Human Rights Watch that she fears the perpetrators will return ... " (*Human Rights Watch Report*, July 2003, retrieved from: <http://hrw.org/reports/2003/iraq0703/1.htm>).

"Women from all areas rushed out to take on a public political function, throwing themselves between soldiers and the young men they were trying to seize. One day in ... a poor village within a small city, women wielding pots and pans attacked a patrol of soldiers in order to release a youth being arrested. On another occasion a man in his early twenties was being beaten by soldiers ... A woman rushed up with her baby in her arms and began shouting at the man, "I told you not to leave the house today, that the situation is too dangerous. But you didn't listen; you never listen to me!" She turned in disgust to the soldiers and, telling them to beat him, cried, "I am sick of you and your baby; take him and leave me alone," pushed the baby into the young man's arms, and ran away. The confused soldiers soon left the scene. In a few minutes the woman reappeared, retrieved her child, and wished the young man safety and a quick recovery. They were total strangers. ..." (Suha Sabbagh, *Palestinian Women of Gaza and the West Bank*, 1998, p.65-66).