

REPORT

KYRGYZSTAN:

Sexual violence amidst ethnic conflict

December 2011, France

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- Archives of the International News Agency «Fergana.Ru»;
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I. Introduction

“How can I go on living?” was the question posed by almost every woman who suffered from sexual violence during the ethnic conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan.

Following the ousting of Kyrgyzstan’s president Kurmanbek Bakiyev on April 7th 2010, a new violence between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks sparked off in the city of Jalal-Abad. By June it had spread to the southern city of Osh. While the conflict between the two ethnic groups was not the first one, this turned out to be the most serious outburst of violence over the past two decades.

According to official data, prior to the events of April 2010, ethnic Uzbeks made up approximately 14.7% of the population of Southern Kyrgyzstan, while according to independent sources – up to 30 %. Most of them were urban residents.



*Osh, June 12, 2010
Photograph: Inga Sikorskaia (IWPR)*

The media and the international community followed and reported on the Osh conflict. However, much about this tragedy has been left untold, including the sexual violence. This report only presents the stories of a few of the victims, who are in serious need of help.



Photograph: author unknown

This problem affects and concerns many people in southern Kyrgyzstan. We want to do all we can to help the victims resume a normal life.

The tremendous cruelty that characterized the events of June in southern Kyrgyzstan has shocked us all. A large number of people have suffered. The chronicle of these events will continue reminding us of these crimes that cannot be forgotten or justified. Today, the victims of this ethnic conflict don’t feel protected, especially women and children who were involuntary witnesses and victims of these abhorrent acts.

Both sides of the ethnic conflict have committed crimes against helpless women and children as a revenge tactic against one another. These women and children were tortured, raped, and murdered. Their relatives and loved ones have to continue living amongst us, with a heavy weight of pain and suffering.

II. Our Observations

Gang rape

Throughout the duration of the conflict women from both sides have been widely subjected to sexual violence, in many cases leading to their death. Gang rape was the most common type of sexual violence. It often happened in front of victims' parents, who were under death threats, and were unable to protect their children.

“There were many Uzbek young men lying in the basement. I was dragged there on purpose: to be raped in front of their eyes (crying).”

(Excerpt from video recording, Osh, June 2010)

“12 people were humiliating me. They inserted a champagne bottle into my sexual organ. They undressed me, dragged me to the Uzbeks, and said: “These are your sisters; and you will be treated the same way” [crying].»

(Excerpt from video recording, Osh, June 2010).

«Men were raped right in front of me (crying). All the men were lying down; they were raped one by one, and then slaughtered with knives. And then I was raped next to their bodies again (crying)».

(Excerpt from video recording, Osh, June 2010).

Our research and interviews showed time and again that very few women are willing to talk about the crimes committed against them. The women often do not give out their real names, or share details of what has happened to them. It's apparent that victims feel shame and guilt about not having been able to protect themselves from the crowds of aggressive men. They feel the urge to speak out, yet at the same time they only find safety in silence. The patriarchal education and traditions of the local society



Osh, June 12, 2010

Photograph: Inga Sikorskaia (IWPR)

force many women to feel ashamed about everything that happens to them.

I have four grown-up sons, the eldest is forty years old, and the youngest is seventeen. They know that I have been raped. I am suffering not only because I've been through so much, but also because they are suffering, too. I can no longer hug my children like I used to. I am dirty now... And they have become even dearer to me! But they are ashamed of me now. Even when cooking, I now use gloves...

[Interview AHRCA, August 2010].

These women's fears are justified. In nine out of such cases, after a woman has been raped or kidnapped with the intention of rape, her husband typically abandons her. For this reason many women try their best to hide what has happened to them, or live with an overwhelming sense of guilt towards their loved ones.

My husband was working in Russia. His relatives know what happened to me. I am suffering from pain in my lower abdomen, and I'm still bleeding. My husband's relatives have refused to be related to me in any way. They brought me to my parents and told them: «treat her yourself», after which they would not let me back in their house. My parents' home is ruined. I am living with kids in a tent. For as long as the kids need me, I will continue to live. [Interview AHRCA, September 2010].

I am walking, and I hear people behind my back talking about me having been raped...How can I continue living? I have small children. They will also judge me later...(crying). [Interview AHRCA, September 2010].

"I was kidnapped by two men and one woman, about 40 years old, whose looks resemble those of a Kyrgyz woman. A car approached me, and this woman called me over from the car. I came to the car, and the woman sprayed some unknown substance into my face, and I fainted. I cannot remember where I have been, and how much time I have stayed there. I was beaten up, especially by this woman, and was forced to consume unknown medicine." (There is hematoma on Iroda's head, traces of beatings on her shoulders, and knife wounds on her neck). (Press release AHRCA, based on materials collected by human rights activist from Osh, Ravshan Gapirov, November 2010).

Sources of information about the victims of sexual violence

From the very first days of the conflict, there were some accounts of rape victims appearing on-line. Shortly after, corresponding medical reports were also published on the Internet. But these victims were the ones getting the least attention, while they continue living alone with their pain and suffering.

The Osh Headquarters of Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Public Health

During the night from the 10th to 11th of June 2010, two hours after the tragic events, a temporary headquarters of Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Public Health was established in Osh. Within a few hours a group of legal and medical experts was created, which included specialists from Bishkek and Osh. All the information about the victims of ethnic conflict was coming through to this headquarters. It was located in one of the hospitals. Moreover, some branches of it were also established in other hospitals. The information about all the dead,

Photograph: author unknown

Victims remain silent about their traumas for a multitude of reasons, while they are in acute need of psychological and psychiatric care. Their family environment is often the opposite of supportive: we are aware of cases where after suffering these ordeals, young women are married off in a rush by their parents.

I am constantly afraid. I am afraid of everything. I am afraid of being alone, afraid that my husband will insult me or humiliate me. And I am afraid that my children won't love me. I am afraid of everything...I am afraid...(crying). I won't go to the office of public prosecutor, and I won't go to the hospital. Nobody will marry me then...(crying). [Interview AHRCA, August 2010].



Photograph: author unknown

wounded, and victims of sexual violence was registered in special journals. When the dead were found on the streets, their surnames were usually impossible to establish. The first journal recorded the total number of those who requested medical help and were hospitalized. The second journal indicated the information about victims of the ethnic conflict. The third journal recorded the information about those who received ambulance assistance.

Victims of sexual violence are not numerous on these lists because they were registered as wounded. A group of legal and medical experts and emergency doctors detected victims of rape and other sexual violence. Those who could still be helped were immediately transferred to birth clinics and gynecological departments.

In the first days the legal and medical experts inspected 5-6 young women, aged between 17 and 18, physically resembling ethnic Uzbeks. The inspection by experts revealed that they had various body injuries: ruptures, scratches by the anal opening, minor ruptures in the crotch area, and other injuries. A body of a raped five-year-old girl was delivered to her relatives. Shortly after, a 40-45 year-old Uzbek man, a victim of rape and sexual humiliation was brought in for examination. During surgery, doctors took out a glass bottle from his rectum. The immediate surgery saved his life. We collected numerous witness accounts from residents of the «Cheremushki» neighborhood and of the Osh district. They claim that dozens of murdered men were raped before they died. Various items were uncovered in the anal opening of the dead victims. Some men were missing testicles.

The statistics from the headquarters in Osh were hardly reliable. For instance, the raped and murdered 5-year-old girl mentioned above was recorded 3 times: first as Kyrgyz, then as Uzbek, and later she was recorded under a different name. For some time, the headquarters' records contained three girls instead of one, with the same diagnosis and the same address of residence. This helped to uncover the mistake.

But the inaccuracies in statistical records were not only due to mistakes but also to forgeries to cover up inconsistencies. For instance, in June 2010, there were 60-70 unidentified bodies (unrelated to the Osh conflict) in the morgue of Osh regional hospital. At the same time, 53 new bodies were delivered into the same morgue. The list of names of the dead, however, only contained 40 names. The information about

13 bodies was missing, and they were registered as unidentified corpses found on a street. Nameless corpses weren't always counted as victims of the ethnic conflict.

The same modus operandi of the headquarters prevailed in other cities, including Dzhalal-Abad, Nookat, Suzak, etc. The information about the victims recorded by departments was sent to the Ministry of Public Health, and to the commandant's office of these cities. Based on the received information, authorities determined the provision of medications and humanitarian help, trying to ensure its even distribution.



*Photograph: the murdered resident of Osh.
Author unknown.*

From July 2010 onwards, those coming in for medical treatments were registered under the normal procedure. We didn't find evidence of the fact that victims of rape and kidnappings during the ethnic conflict were separated into a special group.

Private clinics

Many of the dead were brought to private clinics by their relatives, where doctors recorded the deaths, but this information did not reach the Osh headquarters of Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Public Health. Several private clinics did not have access to any information about the developments of the conflict because phone lines were disconnected in some in some districts of southern Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, 3-4 days before the tragic events, some telephone operators were completing a digital switchover. For this reason many phone numbers in these districts had changed, and communication became even more challenging. Local



Photograph: author unknown

residents were rushing to bury their relatives and flee the conflict zone. Among these residents of southern Kyrgyzstan there were also victims of rape, but working out how many there were has become impossible.

Materials from criminal cases

The materials from criminal cases show that during the Osh events, women and girls were subjected to torture in the form of rape. They were left with serious injuries to their sexual organs and rectum. Various objects were used to hurt these women, including metallic objects, sticks, and bottles. Rapists were often neighbours and acquaintances who threatened to murder the victims if they objected to sexual humiliation. They were often mutilated and then murdered or left to die on their own. Under-age girls were often raped and tortured in front of their own mothers.

Stories of the victims

One of the victims of sexual violence, who was living in one of the suburbs of Osh at the time, told us that the residents in her community had no way of communicating with the city. The road to the center of Osh was located on territory controlled by the conflicting sides. Moving around these territories was equally dangerous for Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. Humanitarian help did not arrive there straight away, which is one of the reasons for people abandoning the area. Many wounded died en route, including women with various physical injuries, many of which were the result of rape. Information from the hospitals in these districts did not reach the Ministry of Health offices in Osh.

It is doubtful that the information about victims from the rural district of Kyzyl-Kyshtak Karasuiskiy reached the Osh department of Public Health Ministry. People were hurriedly fleeing their homes; at best they managed to reach Narimanski hospital. In the attempt to save their lives, many moved closer to the border with Uzbekistan, hoping to go to their relatives in Uzbekistan. Close to the border there are 2-3 localities with an Uzbek majority. All the refugees from Osh were staying in these localities. Some raped women were assessed by gynecologists at homes. These victims did not go to any other medical institutions for help.

Statistics

It is difficult to establish the exact number of victims of sexual violence during the ethnic conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan. Different sources present different numbers. The NGO “Citizens Against Corruption” has received 7 claims from female victims.¹ Aziza Abdrasulova, the head of the human rights center Kylym Shaly, declares that she is aware of 60 cases of rape, with most victims being ethnically Uzbek.² Kyrgyz living in the south claim that most of the victims were Kyrgyz women. A UNIFEM re-port notes that among those who have crossed the border into Uzbekistan, 25 were women victims of rape occurred during the conflict. Twelve of these women were raped by military personnel. Most of the victims of rape are identified when they seek out medical help. Some need surgical operations. The seriousness of these women’s injuries is demonstrated by the fact that many of them subsequently died as a result of these injuries.



Photograph: author unknown

There are different statistics on the numbers of dead during the ethnic conflict. Shortly after the events, the former deputy Prime-Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Azimbek Beknazarov, stated that there were 893 dead.³ It is unclear how many of these people were also victims of sexual violence. The Association has acquired data from the office of the public prosecutor of Osh in July 2010, which claimed that there were 2089 dead and 115 missing. But the office of the public prosecutor does not have the full name list of the dead. In December 2010, the human rights center, “Kalim Shami” has published a list of names of the dead in the June

conflict.⁴ This list contains 435 names, 320 out of which are Uzbeks, including 29 women; 111 are Kyrgyz, including 14 women; four people on the list hold other ethnicities. According Aziza Abdurasulova, the list gets updated based on the numbers of missing and unidentified corpses. The number of unidentified corpses, according to this organization, can range from 50 to 60, but not higher. Abdurasulova says that 36 missing were found amongst the unidentified corpses, almost all of them were Kyrgyz. In the lists of the dead, victims of sexual violence are not separately identified. The information stemming from rape claims, which led to court cases, only partially reflects the situation. Overall, the lists of the dead and especially the lists of victims of sexual rape are not complete.

So far the victims who died in emigration or after some time as a result of the received injuries have not been counted.

According to the Independent International Inquiry Commission on the events in the south of Kyrgyzstan, about 470 persons died in June 2010. About 1,900 persons received medical help. About 111,000 persons were displaced to Uzbekistan and 300,000 persons were internally displaced. About 2,800 units of private property were destroyed. The majority of victims were ethnic Uzbeks.⁵

¹ Kumsanbai Saliev, representative of «Citizens against corruption,» Osh, October 24, 2010.

² Phone interview of journalist Janyl Jusupjan Chytyrbaeva, October 19, 2010.

³ <http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=15182>

⁴ <http://bit.ly/gtewP1>

⁵ Report of the Independent International Inquiry Commission on the events in the south of Kyrgyzstan in June 2010. Executive Summary p. ii

The barriers to bringing the perpetrators to justice

A criminal case for rape can only be initiated by a victim. If she is under-age, her relatives can file a claim on her behalf. Such claims are rarely sent to courts/ Some do not want to go public about becoming victims of such crime because under patriarchal traditions, every girl should marry, others conceal the fact from their husbands and brothers.

In the first days of the conflict the priority was given to examining corpses. Only on the 7th and 8th day of the conflict they started attending to live victims. However, a few days after the rape, the traces of rape became less noticeable. By then, the victims have already undertaken various gynecological hygienic procedures, which made it more difficult to establish rape. Many victims have gotten rid of the material proofs, including clothes, bedding, and other objects. Many survivors naturally simply fled their homes and only thought about saving themselves and their children.



Photograph: author unknown

“SART” – is a contemptuous word for Uzbeks living in the South of Kyrgyzstan. Such inscriptions were marked on the houses of Uzbeks in June-August 2010.

As a result, the judicial organs can no longer start criminal procedures. Therefore, this category of victims of sexual violence, who have suffered as a result of ethnic conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan, cannot be included in the official statistic.

The investigation of claims submitted to the office of the public prosecutor by a few rape victims (we are only aware of five cases), has been stalled as law enforcement officers do not want to investigate them.

More than 40 persons accomplices in rapes were recognized by just one victims. She recognized them by photographs in the archives of the Internal Affairs Department of the Osh city. All these persons committed crimes in the café “Nostagie” during the days of the mass disorder.

Both sides of the conflict have engaged in falsification of criminality statistics for political purposes. Ethnicity and numbers of victims were often incorrectly noted in official accounts. Victims were often refused immediate medical help based on their ethnicity. Accounts from witnesses and some video footage show that wounded Kyrgyz could freely visit any medical institutions and receive help, whereas Uzbeks were often refused the same help.

In the first few days a number of medical facilities in town were controlled by armed police guards from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Later, the safety of patients came under the responsibility of armed individuals, who did not hide the name of their patron the mayor of Osh, Melis Mirzakhmatov.

One of our witnesses, an Uzbek, claimed to be Kyrgyz and was placed in one of the local hospitals. He witnessed how strong men, resembling Kyrgyz, wandered around the wards every day in search of Uzbeks. They were especially interested in entrepreneurs of Uzbek origin. When found, they were taken out of hospital rooms. What happened to these people remains unknown.

Various assessments show that investigations of rape cases proceed ineffectively. In August 2010, there were registered cases of refusal, following the initial confessions. Courts have been hearing criminal cases on murder; there are cases of

victims having been subjected to sexual violence. Separate criminal proceedings were instituted against persons who committed such crimes and they were advertised in search.

Most often victims do not trust local judicial organs. They are convinced that courts' decisions are influenced by the mayor of Osh, Melis Myrzakhmatov, whose policies have been openly discriminatory against Uzbeks.

III. Recommendations

Only together can we change the attitudes towards the victims of sexual violence in Central Asia, and the victims' attitudes towards themselves. It's extremely important that they stop being outcasts in their own countries.

We think it necessary to create a public committee, based on trust and mutual understanding, to address the issue of women's rape in ethnic conflicts. Civil society representatives and the international community should partake in setting up this committee.

We are calling on international organizations and donors involved in financial programs to help victims of torture in southern Kyrgyzstan should establish a separate long-term program to help victims of sexual violence. This program could include legal, psychological and medical projects to induce faster recovery of the victims.

Law enforcement bodies in Southern Kyrgyzstan must conduct a training program for its employees to train them in investigating cases of sexual violence.

There is an urgent need for the establishment of help and treatment centers for rape victims, including those ensuring anonymity in person and on the phone. This could be done with the help of NGOs, local authorities, and international community.

It is necessary for human rights organizations to follow the developments of criminal cases, concerning women's rape.

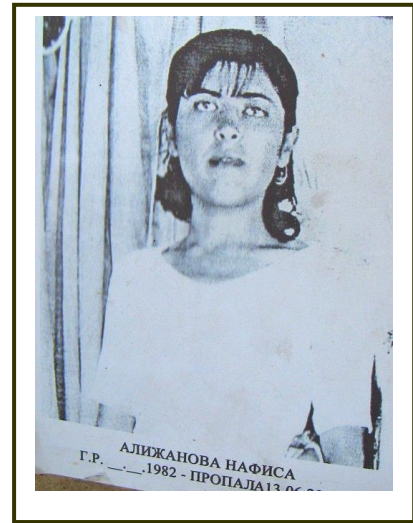
Victims of sexual violence have to be provided with access to fair legal process.

We are calling on cooperation from:

- the government of Kyrgyzstan;
- the social organizations;
- donor countries helping Kyrgyzstan;
- international organizations;
- women's movement.

IV. The Stories of Victims of Sexual violence

Nafisa Alimdzhanova is the only victim, whose name we are openly mentioning in this report. Let her name symbolize the victims' call for help. There is only one photo remaining of Nafisa, which we found in criminal investigation department. The rest burned down when the criminals destroyed her home. In memory of her and those with similar stories, we are commencing this difficult conversation.



NAFISA

Not all of the female victims of the Osh conflict live to tell their stories. Many died during the conflict. Nafisa was one of them.

On June 16, 2010, Nafisa Alimjanova, a 28 year-old Uzbek woman living in Osh, was reported missing. On that day, perpetrators broke into her house, attacked her family members, raped her, and took her away as a hostage. Her remains were found only many months after her death. Nafisa is outlived by her daughter, who was just 9 months old when Nafisa was killed, and by her husband Yusuf.

While on that day many people were still fleeing the conflict zone, Yusuf decided to stay, as the fighting seemed to quiet down. The sister of Nafisa's husband, Mutabar, recounts the details of their tragedy.

On that day, they thought that the situation was calmer, so they stayed at home, while their neighbours left the village. My mother, Nafisa and Yusuf were in the house with my niece in her cradle. Armed men broke into the house. They wore military uniforms (white shirts), and their faces were covered. They first attacked Yusuf — they beat him up, hitting his head with stones.

Mutabar is tearless when she starts recounting the worst part

of Yusuf's nightmare — having to witness his wife being raped in front of him.

They undressed Yusuf's wife, raped her and did all sorts of other horrible things to her. They raped her right in front of him! Then they took her outside saying they were bringing her to their headquarters. We found her blood-soaked pants and her shoes in the toilet later. Our neighbours told us she screamed until she fainted and collapsed. After the men left the house with the unconscious Nafisa, they set the house on fire....

Neighbours called the police, but by the time they arrived it was too late.

They arrived after everything was finished. The emergency services took my mother to the hospital. She was hit, while attempting to defend her children. My niece was taken to the orphanage. All of this happened around three in the afternoon. My mother died in the hospital two days later. I believe it was mostly because of the grief she could not endure.

Yusuf himself, while appears to have somewhat recovered, is still psychologically unstable, according to his sister.

His mind is in a poor shape because he was hit badly on his head and he

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speaks as if confused. When he drinks a bit he pleads for his daughter to be brought back to him. He was beaten up by twenty men.

No wonder Yusuf is unable to recover completely. He had a peaceful life before the conflict: his own home, a beautiful wife, a stable job, a caring mother, and a young daughter. He lost all of it within a couple of hours. And he cannot provide for his daughter because he is out of work. Nafisa's parents are taking care of her.

Yusuf's sister wishes she could adopt his daughter. She lost her husband and her purpose in life during the conflict, shortly after Yusuf's tragedy. Her husband was stabbed to death on his way to the local market. His aggressors cut his ears and testicles off.

Mutabar is missing documents necessary for adoption that were lost when Yusuf's home burned down. Mutabar has lost hope of



Nafisa's destroyed home

Photograph: Janyl Jusupjan Chytyrbaeva

winning the legal battle. She has recently managed to rebuild her brother's home, but Yusuf rarely returns there. Without his wife and child, it will never feel like a home again.

Janyl Jusupjan Chytyrbaeva

Original Source: Azattyk.kg (February 14, 2011)
<http://bit.ly/efisnB>

KANIET

On the morning of June 18, a group of soldiers carried a pale 16-year-old Kyrgyz girl, Kaniet, into the regional children's hospital of Osh. She could barely stand, holding her arms around the soldiers' shoulders. When Kaniet began to recover, her doctor asked her about what happened.

It turned out Kaniet was kidnapped and kept hostage for five days with two other girls. They were subjected to unimaginable humiliation. This happened during the outburst of the most intense fighting in Osh, and while the evacuation was under way, Kaniet and two other girls did not manage to escape. Her doctor, Dastan Jolboldieva, recounts the story of Kaniet's kidnapping:

“On June 14, people were being evacuated from Osh to Ak-Tillek and other Kyrgyz districts. First, children and women were brought to a cotton factory, which rapidly became too dangerous to stay at. During the evacuation from the cotton factory, there was not enough space in the minibusses for three of the girls. Kaniet was one of girls left behind. They were told they would soon be picked up by another car. Shortly after, a car pulled up with three Kyrgyz-looking men telling the girls to get into the car. They girls though they were rescuers, and followed their orders. As soon as they entered the car, they realized that the men were Uzbek. This marked the beginning of their tragedy.”

Kaniet claimed that she, along with the other two girls, were kept hostage inside of an airplane, located on the main road leading to Osh's airport. When she was able to speak, while still in the hospital, Kaniet has shared some of the horrific details of her sufferings/ Excerpt from the transcript of the video recording from the archive of doctor Jolboldieva:



Photograph: author unknown

The men simply spread our legs, tied our hands and raped us. They said: “This is how you (Kyrgyz) kill our sisters.” The two other girls were passed around – the men held the girls by their hair and forced them to suck (their penises), <...> Torture continued for long time. .. When I refused to comply, they extinguished a cigarette on my foot. After that I was raped by multiple men. <...>.”

The two other girls died under torture. On her last night as a hostage, Kaniet was forced to lie awake next to their corpses. The following morning, when the men stepped out to dispose of the girls' bodies, she managed to escape through the window.

Kaniet's medical diagnosis revealed multiple physical and psychological traumas. They include internal brain concussion, multiple abrasions, cigarette burns in different parts of the body, vaginal bleeding, situational psychosis, and sexually transmitted diseases! This 16-year old teenager was most likely innocent and healthy just five days prior to being kidnapped.

After ten days at the hospital, Kaniet filed a rape claim to the prosecutor's office. But after a short while, she withdrew her application. Though Kaniet still remembers the perpetrators' names and faces, these criminals have not faced any punishment.

Seven months after Kaniet's kidnapping, the vice president of the Main South Prosecutor's Office, Ryskul Baktybaev, claimed in an interview that Kaniet withdrew her case out of confusion about the facts of her story:

An investigation was conducted into the girl's case but now she is taking back her statement. I do not know what her mental state is right now. At that time she was hospitalised. I was told back then that she was beaten up by a mob. However, she kept saying "It happened inside of an airplane." The plane was inspected immediately. A special squad was sent. Her claim was not proven.

We still don't know whether Kaniet was pressured to withdraw her case. Her current

condition and location are unknown, but what's evident is that it will take her a long time to recover. We still do not know whether she withdrew her complaint under duress.

While the fact that Kaniet was held inside of an airplane might be difficult to prove now, the fact that the rape and torture did happen is impossible to deny. There are no signs from the local government or from the prosecutor's office that they intend to investigate this crime further, or other gang rapes committed against both Kyrgyz and Uzbek women. With over sixty rape victims recorded on the Uzbek side alone, only one case so far has been brought to court.

"She will feel insecure and have an inferiority complex. Healing such a trauma is very difficult and needs a lot of time," commented Dr. Jol-boldieva.

"I remember asking Kaniet why she didn't beg the rapists not to touch her," continued the doctor. "She responded that she pleaded with them saying that they must have young sisters like her. The response of Uzbek aggressors was uncompromising: 'An eye for an eye — Kyrgyz men have done

the same to our girls".

Janyl Jusupjan Chytyrbaeva

Original Source: **Azattyk.kg** (January 17, 2011)
<http://bit.ly/h7QU1P>

KAMILLA

It was an unusually hot summer evening in the southern Kyrgyzstan's city of Osh. Kamilla, a young Uzbek woman, made her way to nearby *Cheremushki* District to visit a friend. Accompanied by her children, she settled into the house of her friend's neighbour for the night. The husband of the friend's neighbour was working in Russia. After a lengthy talk and a movie, the women fell asleep peacefully. It seemed just like another ordinary day in Kamilla's life.

At 4:30 in the morning Kamilla and her female friend were awoken by rowdy male voices. The two women shivered in panic, thinking that these strangers were trying to enter their home.

"I can't remember the number of men I heard at first, maybe ten, or seven, or eight...All I know, I could hear many different voices right outside of our home. I heard them shouting in Kyrgyz, 'There is nobody here! Open the door! Go inside!'"

They finally kicked the door open. Kamilla and her friend were completely unprepared for the attack.

"It was a hot night and we were in our underwear and light robes. Since there were no men in the house we were lying around freely. Children were sleeping in a separate small room with the other kids," she continues.

The men immediately assaulted the women. Taking advantage of the absence of male protection, they raped both Kamilla and her younger friend. Kamilla lost consciousness during the attack, but can still recall the overall appearance of the perpetrators and the first moments of their aggression:

"They all looked alike: broad shoulders, dark skin, all wearing similar caps....they looked like athletes. I remember one of them particularly well, as he spoke to me in Kyrgyz when he saw me, saying that he knows me. I started to scream. They hit



Photograph: Janyl Jusupjan Chytyrbaeva

me right above my throat and on the elbow....that's when I think I lost consciousness because I can't remember anything after that."

Kamilla regained consciousness only later in the morning. She woke up in deep pain, covered in blood and bruises. She lifted up her stiff body and found herself surrounded by older women, possibly neighbours:

"When I opened my eyes there were older women in the house. Our bodies were covered with blood, skin torn...These women were helping us: wiping our faces and providing us with wet towels and fresh clothing. I am not sure who they were, but they must have heard the noises and have arrived after the rapists deserted us."

When Kamilla finally managed to go out of the house with her friend and her children, the streets were deserted and quiet, although some shouts could be heard at a distance. The fighting between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz had died down for now, but would reignite again in the afternoon. Kamilla was lucky to escape during the small window of relative calm.

"We heard distant voices, telling us to run, and we ran...A young man putting his life at risk drove us to our homes in his Starex car."

KYRGYZSTAN: sexual violence amidst ethnic conflict

Albeit Kamilla was in serious need of medical help, she did not go straight to the hospital. Part of it was due to her fear of losing her dignity, with the sense of shame overwhelming her. Kamilla did not really have the time to think about this for long, as she had to join the thousands of other residents of Osh who were fleeing the intense fighting taking place there.

“It was not the right time to go to the hospital, it was impossible. I couldn’t even disclose the whole truth about what had happened to my family. How could I tell them I was raped at my host’s house? When I got home after this horrendous night, everyone was already getting ready to leave. We drove away all together, and hid ourselves in different places. In this

chaotic time, it was impossible to share my fate with any family members...”

Fearing a sexually-transmitted disease, Kamilla did finally get checked. Doctors didn’t find an infectious virus, but found her reproductive organs to be severely damaged.

The psychological trauma she is continuing to relive to this day, however, is even more tragic than the physical pain. Being unable to share her ordeal with her loved ones, she is facing the past all on her own. Kamillastill remains in serious need of medical and psychological treatment.

Janyl Jusupjan Chytyrbaeva

Original Source: [Azattyk.kg](http://azattyk.kg) (December 19, 2010)
<http://bit.ly/fuD9Vn>

ASYLKHAN

This Kyrgyz family was temporarily living in an Uzbek neighbourhood, Shejit-Tobo. They moved there from Dzhahalabada a year before the tragic events. They were living on Muminova street, where a Kyrgyz family was a rarity. Fifty year old Asylkhan always wanted to live close to her relatives in Osh. When her brother left to work in Russia, she moved into his house with her family. She was busy raising kids, while her husband, Rakhim, was working in a rehabilitation center in Osh.

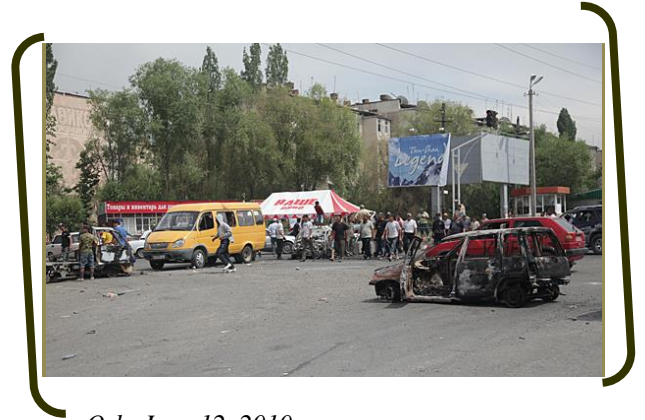
On the morning of June 11, 2010, her husband Rakhim left for work.

Asylkhan stayed home with her two other children: her daughter Zhyrgal — 8th grade student; and her son Azimbek — 4th grade student.

When Rakhim reached the bus stop Dom Bita, he noticed the emerging panic in the city. He immediately phoned his wife and told her to gather her things and get ready to leave. But he never managed to reach his home in Shejit-Tobo, because local residents blocked the road and didn't let anyone through.

Asylkhan's relatives also did not have any means to get to her home and to help her leave with the children. In the beginning, there was at least a telephone connection with the husband and relatives. They talked her into hiding in the basement of the house, and wait out till the end of these events. Asylkhan calmed her relatives down and told them they would see each other soon.

On the 12th of June, 2010, the situation in this neighbourhood, as in many others, was not controllable by authorities. Rakhim decided to call his Uzbek neighbour, Aziza.



Osh, June 12, 2010

Photograph: Inga Sikorskaia (IWPR)

On the 12th of June, 2010, the situation in this neighbourhood, as in many others, was not controllable by authorities. Rakhim decided to call his Uzbek neighbour, Aziza. He was begging her to temporarily hide his family in her home. But at that moment Aziza was far from her home; she was walking towards the Uzbekistan border among many others refugees.

On June 23, 2010, Rakhim managed to find out through an Uzbek acquaintance that the door of his home was wide open. Everything was turned over, and there were blood stains. Neighbours were silent, but they still told Rakhim on the phone that Asylkhan and kids were taken out of the neighbourhood, and were in a safe hiding place. He was hoping he could find them, or at least exchange them for Uzbek hostages.

Later, when the sister of Asylkhan was able to enter the house, she found the traces of the horrific pogrom that had taken place there. All their belongings were scattered around the house, there were soiled torn clothes, and blood-stained murder tools — sticks, axes, knives, shovels.

Only on June 28, 2010, after the referendum, the bodies of Asylkhan and Zhyrgal were found. They were naked,

their hands and legs bound together. Rakhim immediately recognized Asylkhan by her birthmark, a scar, and her wedding ring. Her body was badly dislocated. He could not recognize his daughter. The body of Zhyrgal was bloated, and resembled that of an older woman.

When the relatives were cleaning up the house where Asylkhan, Zhyrgal and Azizbek were murdered, they found the same earring that was on the body of the girl that Rakhim was shown earlier. The same day he went to pick up the body of his daughter, Zhyrgal, but she was already buried in a common grave number 280. Rakhim did not want to disturb his daughter and left her in the common grave. Three days later, the body of his son, Azimbek was found in a town called Shark.

According to a neighbour, around 8:00pm, approximately 10 men of Uzbek ethnicity broke into the house where Asylkhan was hiding with her children. The criminals broke the locks of the gate and the entrance door. When

they did not find anyone in the rooms, they went down to the basement and found the family. Four-year-old Azimbek was murdered immediately. They cut his throat. The daughter, Zhyrgal, was gang raped in front of her mother, despite the incessant pleas from both of them to take pity on her. The mother saw how her daughter was raped and murdered but had no way of protecting her. She then had to undergo the same suffering herself.

The mother and daughter were murdered with a special cruelty. Their faces were smashed by the shovel. The criminals payed 300 som to a local resident to bury Azimbek. It seems they were 'kinder' to him. After all, he was a man...

8 December 2010 Osh city criminal court tried the murder case of Asylkhan, Jyrgal and Azimbek (names of victims are changed). It became known that three men committed this crime. They are advertised in search and a separate criminal case was opened against them. 5 men and one woman were sentenced as accomplices.

This story is based on the research conducted by the Public fund "Open line" (Kyrgyzstan).

V. Arif Yunusov. Sexual violence in conflict zones

Throughout human history, one of the most repulsive elements of wars and armed conflicts has been sexual violence inflicted on women. Up to the nineteenth century, soldiers have thought about their adversaries' populations as their enemy, with all the consequences that it entailed in terms of losing their rights as a result of a battle's outcome. Women have always been perceived as trophies during wars.⁶

But later, during the first half of the twentieth century, the situation did not change significantly. During the Second World War, soldiers of fascist Germany were committing rape against women in the occupied territories, especially in those of the Soviet Union. When the battle moved to the German territory, German women in turn became victims of rape from Soviet troops. The women in Eastern Germany suffered especially, during its control by Soviet troops. According to recently published statistics, up to 2 million women in Germany were raped in 1945.⁷

This pattern existed in other parts of the world. Japanese troops forced women into prostitution in their occupied territories. Over two hundred thousand young Chinese and Korean girls were turned into sex slaves for the Japanese troops during Second World War. Japanese soldiers raped even married and pregnant women in the occupied territories.

But when the Allies liberated the territories occupied by Japan, the so-called 'military



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rape" did not stop. American soldiers raped Japanese women during the occupation of Okinawa in 1945. During the first 10 days of American occupation alone, there were 1,336 cases of rape registered. More cases were still being registered after. The witnesses recorded that in the beginning of 1946, Australian soldiers and officers "grabbed women, dragged them into their jeeps, brought them to the mountains and raped them, with screams heard every night..."⁸

The international community's disregard of war crimes against women is evident by the fact that upon the ending of the Second World War, none of the international war tribunals looked into rape against women.

The situation has not changed much since, although some steps have been taken in the direction of addressing this issue. For example, under the Fourth 1949 Geneva Convention (Article 27) about protection of civilian persons in times of war clearly states: "Women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution,

⁶ For details on this, please see: Victor H. Matthews, Bernard Malcolm Levinson, Tikva Frymer-Kensky. *Gender and law in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East*. – London: T&T Clark International, 1998; Askin Kelly Dawn. *War Crimes Against Women: Prosecution in International War Crimes Tribunals*. — The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1999.

⁷ Siobhán Dowling. *Sexual Violence in World War II*. New German Study Looks at Rape Trauma 60 Years On. <http://bit.ly/f0yM7i>

⁸ Eiji Takemae, Robert Ricketts. Robert Ricketts, Sebastian Swann. *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation of Japan and Its Legacy*. – New York, 2002, p.67; Michael S. Molasky. *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory*. London: Routledge, 1999, p. 16; <http://bit.ly/eg18YE> Allan Clifton, «Time of Fallen Blossoms». Australian Military Gang Rape of 'Fallen Blossoms'. - <http://bit.ly/fnMHik>

or any form of indecent assault.”⁹ However, rape and sexual harassment were not included into the list of serious crimes under this Convention, required to be addressed by states in courts. Similar formulations are included in two additional protocols of the Convention regarding protection of victims of international and internal armed conflicts adopted in 1977.¹⁰



Victim's Breakthrough, 2011
Author: Sergey Ignatyev

But none of them have seriously affected the situation of women in armed conflicts. Moreover, since the late 1980s, the situation appears more threatening than ever. In step with the rising number of conflicts, the number of raped women in conflict zones has dramatically increased. Regardless of whether we are talking about conflicts in Europe, Africa, or Asia the situation was similar in all these places. There were many

⁹ <<http://books.google.com/books?id=RMDt86cokDUC&pg=PA16&sig=VuiPIUPz6S3fHL8zNnLjaLJyZn#g#PPA17,M1>> Allan Clifton, «Time of Fallen Blossoms». Australian Military Gang Rape of 'Fallen Blossoms'. - <http://bit.ly/fnMHik>

¹⁰ <http://bit.ly/efAVFm>.

reports about large-scale rape taking place during and after armed conflicts, in most conflict zones. In particular, much was reported from Afghanistan, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra-Leone, Chechnya (Russian Federation), Darfur (Sudan), Northern Uganda, and the former Yugoslavia. The difference was only in the scale of rape. For example, according to reports from the UN and other international organizations, during genocide in Rwanda in 1994, over half a million women were raped. During the war in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the number reached 60,000. In Sierra Leone, between 1991 and 2001, 64, 000 women were raped; in Liberia—40,000.¹¹

For those who embrace terror as a war tactic, women's bodies have become the bridgehead of their assault. During military conflicts, women were raped, kidnapped, humiliated, subjected to forced pregnancies and sexual harassment, and turned into slaves. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were often done openly, in order to further humiliate the victim and her community. Basically, large-scale rape of women was used a terror tactic, to scare the enemy and weaken its slightest ability to resist.

Finally the violence of women in conflict zones became so grave and widespread that it attracted attention of international organizations, primarily of the United Nations. In 1992, in light of the numerous rape cases reported in former Yugoslavia, the UN Security Council looked into this issue. On December 18, 1992, it declared “massive, organized and systematic detention and rape of women, in particular Muslim women, in Bosnia and Herzegovina” an international crime, which

¹¹ For details on this, please see: Vlachova, BIASON (editors). Women in an Insecure World. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. 2005; Vesna Nikolić-Ristanović. -Women, violence and war: wartime victimization of refugees in the Balkans. – Central European Universities Press, Budapest, 2000; Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. - <http://www.womenwarpeace.org/>; Women's rape: numbers and facts. <http://bit.ly/grNtjF> ; Sexual rape as a weapon in wars <http://bit.ly/hw0wM2>

needs to be addressed and taken measures against.¹²

Following that, the Charter of the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia included a provision for rape constituting a crime against humanity, on equal foot with other war crimes, such as torture and extermination, when committed in wartime against the civilian population.¹³ The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda followed shortly after, and after a few years passed the first guilty verdicts in this area.

Specifically, in 1998, the Rwanda War Tribunal was the first international court to state that rape was a crime against humanity, and part of genocide. Moreover, the Tribunal broadened the definition of slavery as a crime against humanity, to include sexual slavery. Prior to that, the only type of slavery, which was considered a crime against humanity, was forced labor.

On October 31, 2000, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1325--the first Security Council resolution addressing the influence of armed conflicts on women, as well as the women's input in prevention and settlement of conflicts, and their contribution to creation of a more stable world.¹⁴

Finally on June 19, 2008, the UN Security Council has passed its most important resolution, UN Security Council Resolution 1820, acknowledging for the first time that these actions and their consequences pose a threat to our world and our security, and require a serious response from a wide range of actors. One year later, the Security Council has passed Resolution Number 1888, which mandates peacekeeping missions to protect women, girls from sexual violence in armed conflict. More importantly, it has appointed a Special Representative "to provide coherent leadership on combating sexual violence and

to strengthen coordination of UN bodies in this respect" among other responsibilities.¹⁵

Thus, today, mankind has finally come to a realization that we must put an end to rape and terror against women in conflict zones. It has also accepted these crimes as crimes against humanity, for which the criminals will be held judicially liable. We are now entering a new phase in our fight against this barbarism. While international tribunals

have had some success in holding responsible those guilty for rape in war time, courts in many countries are still far from reaching this goal. It is no secret that often a woman raped in a conflict zone becomes subject of persecution by her family and local community. The raped woman, on top of having suffered immense humiliation, suffering, physical and psychological pain, is often perceived as a shameful outcast, and is expelled from her community. Therefore, our key challenge now is not only to support these women with the appropriate legislation, but also to impose certain social sanctions. It's important to make sure that victims are supported by public opinion, and that the male rapist is marked with shame and is driven out and criticized by the community. Only then can we stop such crimes. Social sanctions would be much more effective in stopping such crimes from happening, than the judicial process on its own.

For that to happen we need to speak out about all these rape incidents against women in conflict zones. We have to pay special attention in our reports to those who committed these crimes, and to the ways in which legislative organs, which are required to protect civil populations in war times, have addressed them.

¹² <http://bit.ly/ffphVQ>

¹³ <http://bit.ly/ffphVQ>

¹⁴ <http://bit.ly/gcCOy1>

¹⁵ <http://bit.ly/gcCOy1>

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The Association “Human Rights in Central Asia” was registered on November 8, 2006, at the prefecture of Le-Mans, France (number 0723012215). It was included in the official list of non-governmental organizations in France, under the number 1458 on December 2, 2006 (<http://www.journalofficiel.gouv.fr/association/index.php>).

The Association defends the rights of those making claims, using national and international law. It also monitors how the governments of Central Asia fulfill their international obligations regarding human rights.



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