

## Sexual assault rates rise in US prisons and military according to 2012 statistical analysis

22.8 PERCENT REPORTED BEING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT OR RAPE WHILE IN A WAR ZONE.

BY HANNAH WALLER  
STAFF WRITER

Sexual violence against women in U.S. jails, prisons and the military has increased according to 2012 statistical reports.

The Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 requires an annual "comprehensive statistical review and analysis of the incidence and effects of prison rape," conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. These reviews include the Survey of Sexual Violence.

A recent release of the SSV reveals that the national estimate of allegations of sexual victimization rose from 6,241 in 2005 to 7,444 in 2008.

In 2012, Tutwiler Prison in Alabama was exposed by the Equal Justice Initiative as one of the most severe cases of sexual violence against women amongst U.S. correctional facilities. According to the EJI, Tutwiler Prison was guilty of under reporting data concerning sexual violence within the facility.

Some attribute the high rates of sexual violence against incarcerated women to the gender dynamics in correctional facilities.

"Having male guards sends a message that female prisoners have no right to defend their bodies," former political prisoner Laura Whitehorn told Truthout. "Putting

women under men in authority makes the power imbalance as stark as it can be and results in long-lasting repercussions post-release."

In many correctional facilities, sexual misconduct may be not be reported due to fear or bribery by correctional officers.

Inmates are often coerced into sexual activity with promises of extra privileges or threats of punishment, such as solitary confinement. If an inmate tries to report sexual misconduct, she may be discouraged from doing so or even threatened.

Under-reporting is also an issue in cases of sexual violence within the U.S. military. Of the sexual assaults in the U.S. military that are reported, less than 6 percent resulted in conviction.

In an anonymous survey of women who served in Iraq or Afghanistan conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs, 22.8 percent reported being victims of sexual assault or rape while in a war zone.

The Pentagon's annual report on sexual harassment released in December showed a 23 percent increase in sexual assaults reported by students at its military academies, making 2012 the third consecutive year of increase.

Nancy Parrish, president of Protect Our Defenders, identified the flaws in the military justice system.

"Every aspect is dysfunctional: from prevention and victim care, to reporting, investigation, prosecution and adjudication," Parrish told The Guilfordian. "The system is encumbered with command bias and conflict of interest, inexperienced and under-trained staff, (and) arbitrary and inconsistent application of the law."

Forty percent of women who reported being victims of sexual assault claimed that their perpetrator held a higher rank in the military chain of command.

"The system elevates an individual commander's authority and discretion over the rule of law," Parrish continued. "Commanders can and do arbitrarily decide to not proceed with prosecutions, or (they) set convictions or sentences aside."

2013 is already emphasizing the fight against institutional sexual violence.

Legislative action is being taken to protect women from assault. The Violence Against Women Act, being voted on by the House of Representatives within the week, contains provisions that could help to protect incarcerated women from being sexually assaulted.

"This is an issue I, as Secretary of Defense, am committed to making sure we confront," said Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta to NBC. His plan recommended placing more women into command positions in the military, improving investigations and educating soldiers about the issue of sexual assault.

Panetta is also against moving military sexual assault cases to civilian courts.

Congresswoman Jackie Speier plans to reintroduce the Sexual Assault Training Oversight and Prevention Act in the coming year. The STOP Act would "take the reporting, oversight, investigation and victim care of sexual assaults out of the hands of the military's normal chain of command and place jurisdiction in the newly-created, autonomous Sexual Assault Oversight and Response Office comprised of civilian and military experts."

Sexual assault within these U.S. institutions has become more prevalent, but with effective legislation and attention, does not need to remain a threat to women within government-run prisons or the military.

## Egypt in state of emergency

BY LAURA HAY  
STAFF WRITER

Egypt's citizens continue to protest the country's policies, leading the government to declare a national state of emergency in late January.

Violence from protests has claimed the lives of more than 60 people in the region.

"Continuing political strife could cause the collapse of the state and threatens the country's future generations," Egypt Military General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi told the BBC.

Three cities exhibiting the most unrest — Port Said, Suez and Ismailiyah — were each assigned a curfew in an effort to curb the chaos.

Still, many residents defied the nighttime curfew and continued to protest throughout the evening hours.

According to Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies Amal Khoury, this violence is not a new, isolated incident but can be traced back to the Arab Spring of 2011 when then President Hosni Mubarak's government was toppled by Egyptian citizens. In 2012, Mohammed Morsi was elected to replace Mubarak.

Egyptians have since expressed dissatisfaction with Morsi, his Muslim Brotherhood — based government, and his policy, the BBC reported.

"After forcing Mubarak from office, the Egyptians were hoping for change and democracy," said Max Carter, director of the Friends Center and campus ministry coordinator.

"They feel they haven't gotten that from Morsi and simply replaced one

dictator with another."

Senior Sara Hussein, a student of Egyptian descent, said that during Morsi's term to date, he "managed to make it clear that he is only interested in consolidating power in the hands of (the) Islamic Brotherhood and not interested in solving people's problems."

Amir Abedrabo, a former Guilford student now living in Palestine agreed.

"Morsi has done nothing to improve the (life of the) average citizen; on the contrary, poverty, illiteracy and crime rates have all gone up, along with unemployment," said Abedrabo in an email interview.

The citizens and Egyptian government cannot seem to come to consensus on the next course of action, making the prospect of peace a distant one, the BBC reported.

Mohamed ElBaradei, who leads the opposition's National Salvation Front, insists that Morsi make concessions before agreeing to talks. ElBaradei aims to "take urgent steps to stop the violence and start a serious dialogue," Al-Jazeera reported.

Visiting Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies Jeremy Rinker hopes for an end to the fighting but sees obstacles in its path.

"There is no easy answer," said Rinker. "There are so many underlying issues fueling this uprising that finding a solution is very difficult. Egypt could employ a third party to help sort out the issues."

It is likely that violence and protests will continue in the region until the Egyptian government compromises with its people.

## Somali rape culture reveals crisis

SHABAB REBELS LEAD SEXUAL ATTACKS ON WOMEN

BY SHELBY SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

Famine. Piracy. Drought. Chaos. Death.

These are a few words that are associated with Somalia. Now, rape is an identifier that can be added to that list.

Since the collapse of the Somali central government in the early 1990s, most communities are left to their own devices, relying on old customs and laws without the support of the central government. This leaves them vulnerable to attack by rebel warlords.

One prominent rebel group is the Shabab, who are committing many of the rapes. The number of rape victims is growing.

Women's rights activist Mama Hawo Haji has seen the rising amount of victims in the hospital where she works in Somali's capital of Mogadishu.

"In the last two days alone, we have taken 32 rape cases to the hospital," Haji said to IRIN News.

Political chaos and famine appear to be major contributing factors to these attacks. Aid and financial support are also limited for humanitarian organizations

In these desperate conditions, women are forced to venture from their homes alone to find food and water. In doing so, they become vulnerable to sexual assault.

The Shabab take girls young as 10 years old and make them brides of their commanding officers. These marriages are neither legal nor ceremonial. The marriages are often compared

to sexual slavery. "He did whatever he wanted with me ... night and day," one former bride told The New York Times. If the women refuse to marry, their punishment is death.

The actions of the Shabab have created an environment of fear in the region. Additionally, the Shabab are using a tool that governs most Somalis: religion.

Ninety-eight percent of Somalis are Muslim, the majority being Sunni, and the Shabab claim that their religious beliefs serve as justification for violence against women. The Shabab believe their actions are a jihad that will restore Somalia to "pure Islam," a concept on which they have not fully elaborated.

However, others see this justification as a religious guise, recognizing the group's need to further their political gains.

Campus Ministry Coordinator Max Carter believes the current unrest a misinterpretation of religious texts.

"You've got to subject theology to critical analysis," Carter said. "There are no free passes."

While the misuse of Islam in rationalizing rape is distressing to many, the fear inflicted upon Somalis by the Shabab has resulted in silence over the issue.

Women who have been raped are considered tainted, leaving their prospects for the future — particularly marriage — limited. In keeping with this fear and embarrassment, a number of rape cases are not reported, making the actual total of rape cases higher than originally recorded.

While the exact number of sexual assaults is unknown in Somalia, it is a certainty that the count is continuing to rise.

Solutions to Somalia's rape crisis have yet to be determined.