

Chapter 4

Structural Violence Against Conflict-affected Females in Syria

Introduction

Wars are being fought on the bodies of women and children. Leymah Gbowee from the Women, Peace and Security Network (Taken from a video clip from the Stop Rape Now Website, n.d.)

Sexual violence is the monstrosity of our century. Dr Denis Mukwege Director of Panzi Hospital (Stop Rape Now Website, n.d.)

Sexual violence in conflict represents a great moral issue of our time and it merits the concerted focus of the Security Council. [It] casts a long shadow over our collective humanity. Statement made by Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (United Nations Office for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict [UN SRSG-SVC], 2015).

The statements above, made by an activist, a doctor and Zainab Hawa Bangura, respectively, reveal two things: (1) wartime rape and sexual violence are prioritised and indeed politicised within international security and (2) women (and children) are regarded as particularly at risk of such violence (Banwell, 2018; see also Aoláin, 2016; George & Shepherd, 2016; Puechguirbal, 2010; Shepherd, 2011; United Nations Security Council Resolutions [UNSCR], 1820, 2008; 1888, 2009a; 1960, 2010; 2106, 2013a). As I argued elsewhere (see Banwell, 2018), this two-part message is reproduced within news media, policy and advocacy.¹ It is

¹This chapter draws on my previous work on the securitisation of wartime rape and sexual violence in Syria. See Banwell (2018).

**Gender and the Violence(s) of War and Armed Conflict:
More Dangerous to be a Woman?, 85–106**

Copyright © 2020 by Stacy Banwell. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited.

This work is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence.

Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this work (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode> Knowledge Unlatched Open Access

doi:10.1108/978-1-78769-115-520201006

the securitisation narrative discussed in the Introduction. Here, as promised, I unpack it in more detail.

Writers from a variety of disciplines have drawn attention to the securitisation of wartime rape and sexual violence against women and girls (Baaz & Stern, 2013; Banwell, 2018; Crawford, Green, & Parkinson, 2014; Henry, 2014; Hirschauer, 2014; Kirby, 2015b; Mackenzie, 2010; Meger, 2016a, 2016b; Mertens & Pardy, 2017; True, 2010). Meger (2016a, 2016b), in her analysis of the securitisation of rape and sexual violence, draws upon Marx's (1867) concept of the commodity fetish to fully explain the processes at work. The commodity fetish, explains Meger (2016b), is where a material object, when it is exchanged for money, gains value that is independent from, and goes beyond, its obvious worth. As Meger (2016b, p. 151) states: '[t]he direct social relations that went into the production of the object become obscured behind the monetary value ascribed to it'. She believes that 'securitization similarly takes the securitized object as an independent material reality, and thereby obscures the underlying social relations that produce and give value to the object'.

There are, as Meger (2016a, 2016b) notes, three stages to the fetishisation of rape and sexual violence. First, sexual violence is homogenised as a discrete thing. It is identified as the most dangerous form of conflict violence. This removes it from the continuum of GBV that takes place during war/armed conflict (Meger, 2016b). It is also '...*generalized* across conflict-affected situations' (Meger, 2016a, p. 23 emphasis in the original; see also Meger, 2016b). Second, it becomes reified within media, policy and advocacy discourses. These influence international security agendas and practices. The third stage is about persuading donors that exceptional measures are required to address rape and sexual violence (Meger, 2016a; see also Baaz & Stern, 2013; Henry, 2014; Kirby, 2015b).

With reference to the securitisation of wartime rape in Syria, and following on from the previous chapter, this chapter examines structural forms of GBV in Syria: denial of reproductive healthcare (specifically a lack of access to safe abortion) resulting in unwanted pregnancy; denial of education, exacerbated by the use of early and forced marriage; and denial of employment opportunities, which leads to coerced sexual activities. Given that coerced sexual activities were discussed in the previous chapter, more time will be spent discussing the first two examples of structural GBV.

Fig. 1 (see page 87) is a perfect illustration of the securitisation of wartime rape. This figure and the press release that accompanied it (provided below) is another example of the visuality of master narratives discussed in the Introduction. The figure also exemplifies the rape-as-a-weapon of war narrative discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. In this figure, the penis and bullet are elided. It, and its ability to penetrate through rape, is presented as a weapon: one that is more effective than a gun. The poster was used by Amnesty International in 2009 as part of their 14-day London Underground poster campaign to draw attention to the use of rape as a weapon of war. The accompanying website stated that: '[t]he objective of the campaign is to highlight the effects of war on women and girls' (Amnesty International, 2009a). This focus on women and girls was reiterated in the Amnesty International press release by Kate Allen (Amnesty International, 2009b) who stated:



Fig. 1. Amnesty – Rape Is Cheaper Than Bullets.²

In previous and current conflicts, such as in Darfur and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, hundreds of thousands of Women's rights [are curtailed] and girls...are subjected to horrific acts of rape and sexual violence by armed forces and their perpetrators regularly go unpunished.

As established, women and girls are often depicted as wartime victims. This equation is often presented – both implicitly and explicitly – in visual form (this idea, and its visual representation, will be challenged in the following chapter when we consider images of women engaging in acts of sexualised violence). At first glance, the poster appears gender-neutral: men and boys can also be victims of wartime rape. However, for many of us – particularly those familiar with the securitisation of wartime rape and sexual violence – the gender of the perpetrator and victim is implied. For those in doubt, see the press statements cited above where women and girls are clearly marked as victims. I will return to the power of the visual within War Studies and International Relations more broadly shortly. First, I will outline the content and main arguments of the chapter.

Outline of the Chapter

The chapter begins with an outline of the terminology used and the analytical frameworks that are drawn upon to examine structural GBV in Syria. This is followed by an overview of the Syrian conflict. In order to redress the security agenda that prioritises rape and sexual violence against women and girls in Syria, I examine three examples of structural GBV. I start by examining women's access to safe abortion in conflict and/or crisis situations, arguing that the denial of reproductive healthcare services violates a number of international instruments that address GBV. Denial of reproductive healthcare will be discussed in relation to the Trump administration's foreign policy on abortion, specifically the defunding of

²This image was designed for Amnesty International UK by Different Kettle (2009a).

the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Syria.³ The chapter then moves on to consider the importance of girls' access to education and how this is being curtailed by practices of early marriage that have increased since the onset of the conflict in Syria. Here, I demonstrate how fathers' use of early marriage forms part of the landscape of violence against women and girls in Syria. In my final example of structural violence, I examine how women resort to selling sex and/or providing sexual services as a means of survival within the informal economy in Syria and beyond. This is in response to increases in poverty and unemployment levels. I argue that both of these phenomena (poverty and unemployment) were exacerbated by the drought in Syria.⁴ While a number of academics and experts alike have attributed the unrest in Syria, which led to the conflict, to the long-term drought (see Femia & Werrell, 2012; Gleick, 2014; Kelley, Mohtadi, Cane, Seager, & Kushnir, 2015), this is not my focus here. In Chapter 6, drawing on my concept of glocalisation masculinities, I explore the causal link between climate variability, extreme weather events (such as droughts) and armed conflict. My interest in this chapter is in exploring how these weather events – and the impact they have on the formal labour market – lead to coping, combat and criminal informal economies in Syria and beyond. While it is not possible to discern a simple cause-and-effect relationship between climate variability and the drought in Syria, research suggests that there is a correlation between these phenomena (Al-Riffai, Breisinger, Verner & Zhu, 2012; De Châtel, 2014; Gleick, 2014; Kelley et al., 2015). It is this research that I will draw upon when examining these issues.

This chapter offers a snapshot of three examples of structural GBV within and beyond the Syrian conflict zone. A chapter alone cannot do justice to each of these topics. Elsewhere I, and others, have written more extensively about these subjects (Banwell, 2018, 2019; Bartels et al., 2018; Foster, 2016; Foster, Arnott, & Hobstetter, 2017; Foster et al., 2016; Freedman, 2016; Mourtada, Schlecht, & DeJong, 2017). My purpose here is threefold: (1) to highlight the implications of the securitisation of rape and sexual violence (2) to broaden what is meant by GBV during armed conflict and (3) to link these examples of structural GBV to broader macro- and meso-level economic, environmental, political and institutional policies, practices and events.

Terminology and Analytical Frameworks

Structural violence, as defined in the previous chapter, refers to women's lack of access to healthcare, education and formal employment. As noted in Chapter 1,

³Elsewhere I have written about Trump's foreign policy on abortion in relation to gender essentialism and structural inequalities between the Global North and the Global South. See Banwell (2019).

⁴While Syria has experienced a number of droughts, the latest, which lasted two seasons, starting in 2006 and lasting until 2011, is considered to be the worst in the country's history (Gleick, 2014). This had a devastating effect, particularly in rural areas, on the country's agriculture, its livestock and its workforce (see Richani, 2016).

the definition of forced pregnancy, as outlined by the International Criminal Court, necessitates that a woman be forcibly made *and* kept pregnant, commonly through confinement. This then, ‘...excludes situations where the victim becomes pregnant by force but is not subsequently confined’ (Grey, 2017, p. 921). I will adopt the term unwanted pregnancy when referring to Syrian women and girls who are raped and impregnated then subsequently denied access to safe abortion. It is my argument that this lack of access to safe abortion – which also denies women decision-making powers – is a form of structural violence that maintains women and girls’ subordinate position (Banwell, 2019, p. 4). In this chapter, I reveal how the Trump administration’s foreign policy on abortion, not only exacerbates females’ experiences of interpersonal violence (wartime rape and forcible impregnation), it is also responsible for their experiences of structural violence (denial of access to safe abortion) (Banwell, 2019).

The feminist political economy approach demonstrates how females’ social, political and economic marginalisation can be linked to macro-level systems and practices. In the context of this discussion, these will include economic globalisation and neoliberalism. The impact of these macro-level policies and practices, as well as State-level cultural and political policies and practices in Syria – patriarchy and neoliberalism – will be discussed in relation to all three examples of structural GBV. Whilst Syrian men and boys are victims of GBV within and beyond the conflict zone – indeed, their stories will be told in Chapter 6 – the fetishisation of rape and sexual violence in Syria occurs in relation to female victims. As such, women and girls’ experiences of structural violence will form the basis of the discussion here.

Before we proceed, I want to return to a concern raised earlier in the book (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of the feminist postcolonial critique). Selective and sensationalist accounts of wartime rape and sexual violence are only part of the securitisation/fetishisation problem. A related issue is the tendency to speak for, or on behalf of victims/survivors. This often forms part of the broader western civilising mission. To redress this, this chapter will draw, as far as possible, on the words and statements of victims/survivors. For each of the examples of structural GBV, in addition to drawing on academic materials, I reference empirical research (in the form of published reports) carried out by NGOs and humanitarian organisations working on the ground in crisis settings. And for my discussion of unwanted pregnancies in Syria, I draw on data gathered by the Women’s Media Centre (discussed in Chapter 1), which includes testimonies from witnesses and survivors.

The Conflict in Syria⁵

What follows, for the purposes of this chapter, is a brief overview of the conflict. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs,

⁵A comprehensive analysis of the origins, nature and current status of the conflict in Syria can be found in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly reports: *The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*.

11.7 million people in Syria require humanitarian assistance. Their 2019 report notes that extreme poverty and displacement continue to be key concerns, further stating: '[t]he widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, depleted savings and limited economic opportunities have forced many to resort to harmful coping strategies. The result is extreme vulnerability' (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, n.d.). The latest figures (for the period March 2011–March 2019) published by *The Syrian Network for Human Rights*, places the civilian death toll at 224,948 (Syrian Network for Human Rights, n.d.).

At the time of writing, 2019, the crisis in Syria had reached its eighth year. It is likely that the conflict in Syria will be ongoing at the time this book is published and that the dynamics and actors involved will have changed considerably. The details provided below are based upon the period from when the conflict started, 2011, to the time of writing, July 2019.

The origins of the conflict can be traced to the Arab Spring pro-democracy demonstrations that took place in the southern city of Deraa in 2011 (BBC, 2019b). These started as peaceful protests against the government, but soon escalated into violent confrontations between government forces and armed rebels (BBC, 2019b). The conflict in Syria is complex. This is mainly due to the sheer number of actors involved. The US Defense Intelligence Agency has recorded as many as 1,200 different rebel groups involved in the fighting (see Schmitt & Mazzetti, 2013).

The situation is further compounded by regional and international support, for both sides of the conflict, in the form of military, financial, material and political assistance. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Turkey provide financial support to oppositional forces in Syria (Gupta, 2016; Richani, 2016). Turkey, for example, provides assistance to Islamic groups (ISIS and the Al Nusra Front) who are competing for control of the border-crossing points between Syria and Turkey (Richani, 2016). The trading of stolen goods, money laundering and arms sales take place within these cross-border points (Richani, 2016, p. 57). Recruitment and rearmament have also taken place in Turkey. For Abboud (2017), the war economy in Syria is facilitated by the rise of this conflict elite. So, although these actors do not have direct control over these oppositional groups, their financial involvement – in the form of transactions and payments that secure the flow of goods and materials into regime areas – has contributed to the continuation of the conflict (Abboud, 2017; Banwell, 2018).

In terms of international support, the UK, France and the US assist groups opposing President Assad. Shia militias, including Hezbollah as well as Iraqi and Iranian militias, provide regional support for the Syrian government, while Russia provides international support (Banwell, 2018; Gupta, 2016; see Richani, 2016, for a more detailed breakdown of how these various actors have funded opposition groups in Syria). Russia was directly involved in the conflict from September 2015. It carried out airstrikes against opposition groups and provided support to soldiers on the ground (Beauchamp, 2017).

In 2014, Islamic State seized large parts of Iraq. Taking advantage of the chaos of the conflict in Syria, they secured land and power in the eastern part of

the country. This meant that Assad and his army, as well as the numerous rebel groups, were then fighting a separate conflict against IS (BBC, 2019a). The latter – who changed their name to Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) – faced resistance from government forces, rebel groups and Kurdish groups. This weakened their stronghold in northern and eastern parts of Syria (BBC, 2019a). In addition, Russia and a US-led multinational coalition conducted airstrikes against ISIS during this time. While ISIS were defeated in Raqqa, a city situated in the northeast of the country, in 2017 they were replaced by the extremist Al-Qaeda-linked group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) (Cockburn, 2017). The latter gained full control of Idlib province and began using ‘re-radicalisation’ propaganda to recruit fighters from rival extremist groups to engage in further ‘jihadist attacks’ (Browne, 2018). Air strikes by the US, UK and France continued in 2018 and in 2019 Kurdish groups seized Baghouz in the eastern part of Syria (CNN, 2019). Despite numerous ‘UN-mediated peace talks’ (BBC, 2019b), confrontations between the different factions continue to this day, with opposing groups refusing to negotiate and agree a ceasefire (BBC, 2019a).

The Securitisation of Rape and Sexual Violence in Syria: What About Other Types of GBV?

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) (as defined in Chapter 2) encompasses a whole range of behaviours, and yet:

[...] both media and policy reports tend to either focus on rape at the expense of other forms of CRSV or, CRSV at the expense of other forms of conflict violence. This creates a hierarchy of victimization, placing rape and sexual violence above all other types of violence. (Banwell, 2018, p. 20)

The two main paradigms within the literature on wartime rape and sexual violence – rape as a by-product versus rape as-a-weapon of war – have already been discussed (see Chapters 1 and 2). Despite numerous critiques of the weapon-of-war paradigm (see Crawford, 2013; Kirby, 2012; Skjelsbæk, 2001), it is reproduced within media and policy documents, resulting in diverse behaviours being dealt with under the same security measure (Meger, 2016a). Here, the homogenising of sexual violence, as part of the securitisation process, leads to its fetishisation (Meger, 2016a).

This securitisation of rape and sexual violence can be applied to Syria. This has marginalised other forms of GBV (Alsaba & Kapilashrami, 2016; Crawford et al., 2014; Freedman, 2016; Meger, 2016a, 2016b). It is important at this point to review the violence(s) committed against women and girls in Syria. This includes: abduction and kidnapping to extract information (FIDH, 2012; The International Rescue Committee [IRC], 2013; UNFPA, 2017b; Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom [WILPF], 2016); forced detention (FIDH, 2012; United Nations General Assembly, 2015; UNFPA, 2017b); forced recruitment (WILPF, 2016); and restrictions on females’ freedom of



Fig. 2. President Donald Trump Signing the Anti-abortion Executive Order, 2017 (Wikimedia.org, 2017).

movement (UNFPA, 2017b). Female political activists, and females who are related to male activists, have been subjected to forced detention and forced disappearance (Alsaba & Kapilashrami, 2016; HRW, 2014c; WILPF, 2016). Women have also been detained by the Syrian government for the purposes of weapons trading (WILPF, 2016). In addition, they have ‘...been executed, tortured and enslaved; denied access to fair trials; and denied access to health-care’ (Banwell, 2018, p.17). To this spectrum of violence against women and girls in Syria, I add my three examples of structural violence. I will begin with the denial of reproductive health care that leads to unwanted pregnancies.

Fig. 2 shows the image of President Donald Trump signing the anti-abortion Executive Order. This reinstates the Global Gag Rule that was introduced by Ronald Reagan in 1984. While this is a partisan issue within US politics – every Democratic president has revoked the policy since its implementation, while every Republican president has reinstated it – the order signed on the 23 January 2017, goes further than any previous Republican-endorsed reinstatement. In brief, this Global Gag Rule withdraws US funding to international NGOs that either perform abortions as part of their family planning services or, ‘provide abortion-related services’⁶ (see Banwell, 2019, p. 1).

⁶As I write this chapter, the US has been criticised for threatening to veto a UNSCR on wartime rape because it offered sexual and reproductive healthcare to survivors. Concerned that this language was in fact referring to abortions, the US only agreed to sign the document once the language had been removed (see Ford, 2019 for more details).

For Rhiannon Cosslett, writing in *The Guardian* (2017), ‘this photograph is what patriarchy looks like – a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded’. For me, the image was a reminder of Schweickart’s essay, entitled *Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading*. In this essay, Schweickart (1986) describes ‘androcentric reading strategies’. This approach identifies texts that reproduce gender hierarchies, ascribing agency and universality to the ‘male’, while objectifying and immasculating [*sic.*] the ‘female’. Here, we have both the text and the image of men authorising that text. Together they signify women’s powerlessness and inferiority within a patriarchal political system. Here, it is useful to draw on the work of Christine Sylvester who uses art metaphors to understand the landscape of international relations. In her chapter, *Feminist Arts of International Relations* (2002), Sylvester (2002) outlines two feminist methods through which theories of the visual arts can be used to understand visual representations within international relations. The first is outlining. This involves ‘inserting women...into the architects of war’ (p. 276). The second is inlining. This recognises the difficulty of adding women into the existing landscape. The task, as identified by Sylvester (2002) and Managhan (2012), is to sight and cite what is marginalised, distorted and excluded from view. In Fig. 2., ‘woman’ is absent yet present. She is *cited*: The Anti-abortion Executive Order is based on women and their reproductive bodies. Yet, she is not *sighted*. She is figuratively and literally absent from the picture. Figuratively, she has no decision-making power in this situation.

In the same year as President Trump reinstated the Global Gag Rule, the US defunded UNFPA. While both are key elements of US foreign policy on abortion under the Trump administration, as UNFPA provides reproductive healthcare to women and girls affected by war/armed conflict, this will form the basis of the discussion here (for a detailed analysis of President Trump’s revised Global Gag Rule, see Banwell, 2019). I included the image of President Trump as yet another example of the visuality of master narratives (see Introduction). Before we unpack the defunding of UNFPA, I will review the various instruments that have been put in place to address sexual GBV.

International Treaties that Address Sexual GBV Against Women and Girls

There are a number of international instruments that set out provisions for tackling sexual GBV. These are *The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women* 1981 (CEDAW) (United Nations General Assembly, 1981); *The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* 1993 (DEVAW) (United Nations General Assembly, 1993); and *The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* 1995. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995, p. 34) states that ‘women have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health’. This right, which is regarded as ‘vital to their life and well-being’, includes access to safe abortion.

Article three of the DEVAW declares that: '[w]omen are entitled to the equal enjoyment and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field'. Among other things these include, '...[t]he right to be free from all forms of discrimination' and '[t]he right not to be subjected to torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment' (United Nations General Assembly, 1993, p. 2). As noted in the previous chapter, violence against women and girls, as defined by the DEVAW, is any type of GBV that results in 'physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering' (United Nations General Assembly, 1993). This is inclusive of physical, sexual and psychological violence *committed or condoned by the State*. These definitions encompass both interpersonal and structural violence.

In terms of UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR), UNSCR 2122 (2013b, p. 2) acknowledges women's right to 'access...the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including...pregnancies resulting from rape, without discrimination.' While UNSCR 1889 (2009b, p. 4) addresses women's reproductive rights, their mental health and their 'access to justice, as well as enhancing [their] capacity to engage in public decision-making at all levels'. In addition, '[t]he Geneva conventions guarantee the rights to non-discriminatory medical care, humane treatment and freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment' (Global Justice Centre, 2011, p. 22). Put simply, these conventions pledge comprehensive medical care for all individuals 'wounded and sick' in armed conflict (Global Justice Centre, 2011, p.1). Denial of access to safe abortion for women and girls impregnated through wartime rape violates their right to access the full and necessary medical care as guaranteed by Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions (Global Justice Centre, 2011).

To reiterate, US foreign policy on abortion has (1) banned new funding to NGOs that either perform abortions or, provide abortion-related services and (2) defunded UNFPA. As this policy marginalises women by denying them full decision-making power, it counts as a form of structural violence. In addition, this denial of access to safe abortion – which violates the international treaties and conventions listed above – is considered a form of torture. To place the defunding of UNFPA in context, let us review existing reproductive healthcare services for conflict-affected populations.

Reproductive Healthcare Provisions for Female Conflict-affected Populations

As the empirical research highlights, reproductive healthcare services for survivors of CRSV (see Onyango et al., 2016; Rouhani et al., 2016), particularly rape, are inadequate (Hakamies, Geissler, & Borchert, 2008; Krause et al., 2015; Masterson, Usta, Gupta, & Ettinger, 2014; Tappis, Freeman, Glass & Doocy, 2016; West, Isotta-Day, Ba-Break, & Morgan, 2016). Indeed, in cases of sexual violence-related pregnancies, there is a link between rape used in conflict and/or crisis situations and high rates of abortion (House of Lords, 2016). In countries that have restrictive abortion laws, the rate of unsafe abortion is high (Foster, 2016). This is also the case in crisis and conflict settings. As Foster (2016) notes, in

such contexts, this has the greatest impact on young, poor, displaced and refugee women. It is estimated that unsafe abortions account for 25% of maternal deaths in crisis settings (Foster, 2016), while globally, every year, 50,000 deaths are caused by unsafe abortions (Foster, 2016; see also Bouvier, 2014; Shah, 2016). According to estimates provided by the World Health Organisation (WHO), 22 million unsafe abortions are performed annually (WHO, 2011 cited by Bouvier, 2014, p. 579). Unsafe abortions are defined as: '[p]rocedures for terminating an unintended pregnancy, carried out either by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment that does not conform to minimal medical standards, or both' (WHO, 2011 cited by Bouvier, 2014, p. 579; see also Foster et al., 2016; Schulte-Hillen, Staderini, & Saint-Sauveur, 2016).

Access to emergency contraception and/or safe abortion are vital resources for those forcibly impregnated as a result of rape (Bouvier, 2014; see also Duroch & Schulte-Hillen, 2015). Unfortunately, in conflict/crisis and post-conflict/crisis settings, where such resources are limited, our knowledge of sexual violence-related pregnancies is compromised (Onyango et al., 2016; Rouhani et al. 2016). While researchers have addressed the issue of women's access to safe abortion in humanitarian settings (Duroch & Schulte-Hillen, 2015; Foster et al., 2016; Foster et al., 2017; Schulte-Hillen et al., 2016; Tousaw et al., 2017), only research by Onyango et al. (2016) and Rouhani et al. (2016) specifically addresses the experiences of raped women seeking abortions in conflict/crisis settings (see Banwell, 2019, for a more detailed review).

For NGOs working with survivors of rape, aside from the chapter on abortion care in the revised Inter-agency Working Group (IAWG) *Field Manual on Reproductive Health in Crises 2010*, and some reference to abortion in the *Clinical Management of Rape Survivors* (WHO, 2004), there are very few guidelines on safe abortion and post-abortion care for survivors. This is also the case for the Minimum Initial Service Package for reproductive health. This package – which outlines the set of priority activities to be implemented at the onset of an emergency – aims to 'prevent and manage the consequences of sexual violence' (see Inter-agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises, 2011). And yet, access to safe abortion following rape is afforded very little attention. It is against this backdrop that I review President Trump's foreign policy on abortion.

As noted earlier, the political economy approach attributes women's social, political and economic marginalisation to macro-level systems and practices. In this example of structural GBV, I consider economic globalisation. To paraphrase Shangquan (2000), economic globalisation, at its simplest, refers to the interdependence of world economics and increases in the international trade of commodities and services (Shangquan, 2000). It is a system that can create barriers for the provision of universal reproductive healthcare. For illustration, I will review the impact of the defunding of UNFPA.

The Defunding of UNFPA and its Impact in Syria

According to their website, UNFPA is responsible for the reproductive healthcare of women and youth in over 150 countries. To put it another way, this translates

to over 80% of the world's population. This provision extends to women and girls in crisis situations (UNFPA, n.d., About Us). Although UNFPA does not promote abortion, it promotes 'universal access to voluntary family planning'. In contexts where abortion is illegal, UNFPA believes women should have access to post-abortion care, particularly when it is needed to save their lives. In countries where abortion is legal, UNFPA advocates for women's access to safe abortion (UNFPA, n.d., FAQ). UNFPA receives approximately \$75m in financial support from the U.S. (Sampathkumar, 2017). During 2016, UNFPA (with this financial support from the US) prevented 2,340 maternal deaths, '[prevented] 947,000 unintended pregnancies' and '[prevented] 295,000 unsafe abortions' (UNFPA, 2017a).

The US is one of UNFPA's largest donors (Banwell, 2019). During 2017 and 2018, the Trump administration implemented the 'Kemp-Kasten amendment' thereby withholding funding from UNFPA. Dating back to 1985, this policy is based on the conviction that UNFPA supports coercive abortion in China. Despite the lack of evidence to support this claim (see Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019), the US State Department still withheld \$32.5m from the 2017 budget (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019; Sampathkumar, 2017). This policy will impact vulnerable women and girls in crisis and emergency situations who require comprehensive reproductive healthcare, including access to safe abortion (Banwell, 2019).

Let us consider the impact of the defunding of UNFPA for women and girls affected by the conflict in Syria. In 2016, UNFPA provided services to victims of GBV both within and beyond the conflict zone (UNFPA, 2017a). Victims included women, men and children. Women and girls of reproductive age, who were victims of child and/or forced marriage, were exposed to forced and unprotected sex (more on child marriage shortly). This also placed them at an increased *risk* of unwanted pregnancies (see Save the Children, 2014). In cases of unwanted pregnancies, the defunding of UNFPA has impacted their access to safe abortion should they require it. The defunding of UNFPA also has implications for female victims of wartime rape in Syria.

Research shows that rape has been used as a weapon of war in Syria (UN General Assembly, 2013b; UN SRSG-SVC, 2015; Human Rights and Gender Justice, MADRE, The WILPF, 2016). The Women's Media Centre has documented 162 stories on rape and sexual violence in Syria between March 2011 and March 2013 (Wolfe, 2013). While other reports have documented the abduction (for purposes of sexual slavery) and rape of Yazidi women by ISIS (see Human Rights Council [HRC], 2016; Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2015a). Details of the impregnation (resulting in unwanted pregnancies) of Yazidi women and girls are also included in these reports. While some women were forced to take birth control during their captivity, this was not the case for all women and some were impregnated following rape (HRC, 2016).

A number of women gave birth while they remained in captivity, some gave birth after they had been released and others gave their babies away (HRC, 2016). Trying to retrieve accurate data on the number of women and girls who were raped and impregnated during the Syrian conflict is challenging. This is due to abortion laws in Syria. In this context, abortion is only permitted if the woman's life is in danger.

For women and girls who do not meet Syrian abortion law requirements, there was a reluctance to discuss pregnancies resulting from rape, especially when survivors wanted to terminate those pregnancies (HRC, 2016). This is supported by Stoter who states: '[t]he women hardly talk about pregnancy. Many pregnant women seek abortions to avoid being stigmatized after spending months in sexual slavery by IS militants' (Stoter, 2015).

Despite the law surrounding abortion in Syria, survivors have sought and undergone abortions. Those working in the medical profession report that they have provided girls with abortion pills or performed abortions themselves (Stoter, 2015). This is corroborated by the UK select committee who interviewed survivors about access to safe abortion following rape and forced impregnation (House of Lords, 2016). The WMC also includes cases of women seeking to terminate pregnancies resulting from rape.

The head of the UNFPA, Dr Babatunde Osotimehin, has voiced her concerns about the number of pregnant Syrian refugees who are displaced (see Spencer, 2016). According to reports, 500,000 pregnant Syrian women remain in the country or neighbouring regions (van der Mensbrugge, 2016). As van der Mensbrugge (2016) points out:

More than ever, access to abortion services is a critical form of medical care for these wartime rape victims, as well as a protected right under the Geneva Conventions. Yet safe abortion services remain woefully lacking.

As a result of the conflict, which began in 2011, the maternal mortality ratio in Syria has increased from 49% to 68% per 100,000 (see Centre for Reproductive Rights, 2017). These maternal deaths are attributed to the delays and overall challenges in accessing necessary reproductive healthcare, including access to safe abortion (Centre for Reproductive Rights, 2017). Those working within and beyond the conflict zone have highlighted the importance of providing contraception as both a safety and survival mechanism. A lack of access to contraception, including emergency contraception, leaves victims dealing with both the physical and psychological consequences of rape and, in cases of forced impregnation, the unwanted pregnancy that follows (see Women on Waves, n.d.).

As a reminder: in 2017, the Trump administration defunded UNFPA. This resulted in a funding gap of \$16 million in Syria (Merelli, 2017). In their annual review of Syria for 2015, UNFPA note that 4.2 million of the 13.5 million people who required humanitarian aid within the conflict zone, were females of reproductive age (UNFPA, 2015). Of the five million women and girls who have been displaced and affected by the conflict, 430,000 require reproductive healthcare. They will be impacted by these funding cuts. The increased risk of unwanted pregnancies for victims of sexual violence-related pregnancies is also addressed in the report and UNFPA explain how cuts to funding impedes their ability to deliver the necessary reproductive healthcare to these female survivors (UNFPA, 2015).

With the support of US funds, UNFPA set up a survivors' centre in Duhok, Iraq. Among other things, it provides reproductive healthcare to Syrian women

and girls who were raped and held captive by ISIS. This centre will be impacted by the defunding of UNFPA (Cauterucci, 2017). Likewise, the maternity hospital in the Za'atari refugee camp in northern Jordan, which is run by UNFPA, will also be impacted by US funding cuts (Cauterucci, 2017). This hospital offers reproductive healthcare to Syrian women and girls who face challenges such as 'lack of proper medical care, poor access to reproductive health services [and]unwanted pregnancies'. In terms of reproductive healthcare, the clinic provides 'family planning, post abortion care and counselling, prevention and management of sexually transmitted infections [and] clinical management of rape'. In addition, the clinic provides services for girls who have been exposed to forced and/or unprotected sex as a result of forced marriage (European Commission, n.d.).

And finally, UNFPA provides support for 19 safe spaces across Jordan. The list of services provided by these safe spaces includes emergency reproductive healthcare, which can include abortion (Sutton, Daniels, & Maclean, 2017). They also ran Minimum Initial Service Package training workshops and distributed reproductive healthcare kits (these were mainly rape kits) to Syrian refugees in Lebanon (Masterson, 2013).

In relation to the conflict in Syria, the defunding of UNFPA has impacted the lives of women and girls who are seeking to terminate sexual violence-related pregnancies. To reiterate, denying females' access to safe abortions, which results in unwanted pregnancies – themselves a result of forcible impregnation – should be considered a form of structural violence. It is a type of violence that is obscured by a security agenda that focuses narrowly on rape and sexual violence.

While UNFPA is a UN agency, it delivers vital reproductive healthcare services in developing countries. In the context of economic globalisation – where world economies are interdependent (Shangquan, 2000) – the defunding of UNFPA has a detrimental impact on developing countries who rely upon this support from UNFPA to deliver requisite reproductive healthcare to their citizens. Indeed, in the context of Syria, as we will see, economic crises, extreme droughts, increasing engagement with neoliberal policies, as well as the impact of the current conflict, have all 'devastated the economy' (Gobat & Kostial, 2016, p. 10). This means that the country continues to rely on foreign aid to deliver, among other things, reproductive healthcare (see Banwell, 2019).

We now move on to consider the second example of structural GBV in Syria: denial of education.

Child Marriage and the Denial of Education

Before we delve into this example, I want to outline the relationship between child marriage and the denial of education. The relationship between these two phenomena is circular; the destruction of education facilities and the chaos of the armed conflict have led to an increase in early and forced marriage in Syria (used mainly as a social and economic coping mechanism). The use of early and forced marriage prevents girls from accessing/completing their education. The importance of education, particularly for vulnerable populations, is included in goal 4

of the UN Sustainable Goals. This includes women and girls in conflict-affected areas. Let us review this in more detail.

At the age of 14 Malala Yousafzai was shot in the head by a member of the Taliban for her beliefs about women's right to education. In 2014, Boko Haram abducted 276 girls from a school in Chibok, Nigeria. This denial of education, and the violence used to achieve this, constitutes both physical and structural violence as outlined in the DEVAW (defined in the previous chapter; see also John, 2016). Visible cases such as Malala and the Chibok girls – which involved direct physical violence and the use of arms – have received international attention. Whilst they draw attention to the global problem of violence against women and girls, they overshadow more subtle forms of structural violence that impact women and girls' access to education (John, 2016). As John (2016, p. 195) highlights:

While such attention is important and necessary, there is an ongoing, less direct and less physical but equally powerful and painful violence that continues to slowly, and less visibly, disrupt and prevent girls and women from their rightful education endeavors – this is the hidden hand of poverty, patriarchy and power struggles which constitute systemic and structural violence.

Here, I broaden what is meant by GBV by examining the impact of both physical/direct and structural violence on girls' access to education within the Syrian conflict zone.

According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (2013), 1,000 schools have been used to detain and torture civilians. Girls' access to education is further compromised by the use of explosive weapons in civilian-occupied zones (UNFPA, 2017b). In their global analysis of attacks on schools between 2011 and 2015, Save the Children reported that over half of these occurred in Syria (Save the Children, 2015). And a report published by the World Bank in 2017 noted that 53% of schools had been damaged in Syria, while 10% had been completely destroyed (as cited in Save the Children, 2018). Various reports detail the level of damage and destruction to Syrian schools since the conflict began in 2011. This information is collated by The International Center for Transnational Justice (hereafter ICTJ) in their 2018 report – *'We didn't think it would hit us': Understanding the impact of attacks on schools in Syria*.

This deliberate targeting of education facilities has implications for GBV. Not only does this destruction to property curtail girls' future career prospects – thereby maintaining their subordinate position, which speaks to the definition of structural violence outlined in this book – it can also be linked with other forms of GBV: early and forced marriage (International Center for Transnational Justice [ICTJ], 2018; Save the Children, 2014; the United Nations Children's Education Fund [UNICEF], 2014; UNFPA, 2017b; Women's Refugee Commission [WRC], 2016).

As a result of the crisis in Syria, practices of early and forced marriage have increased (Bartels et al., 2018; Mourtada et al., 2017; UNICEF, 2014).

Child marriage, in many cases, is used to alleviate extreme poverty among Syrian girls (HRC, 2016; Inter-agency, 2013; The Freedom Fund, 2016; Spencer et al., 2015; WILPF, 2016). Despite these attempts to provide for and protect their daughters, family use of child marriage is problematic. It involves young girls marrying much older men, which increases the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse (Save the Children, 2014). It also, as noted above, impedes access to education (UNICEF, 2014; WRC, 2016). Females who enter into marriage at a young age are required to leave school in order to care for their husbands or to begin their childbearing and childrearing responsibilities. As articulated by a Syrian woman from Daret Azza sub-district, in Aleppo: '[s]ome say that when a 14-year-old girl is made to marry, she must leave school and be controlled by a man who will prevent her from leaving the house' (as cited in UNFPA, 2017b, p. 67).

This denial of education is both situational (resulting from the conflict) and cultural (rooted in patriarchal beliefs about gender roles and gendered divisions of labour). And, as noted above, the relationship is circular. Before unpacking this in more detail, it is important that we clarify what is meant by child marriage.

Child marriage refers to the marriage of a girl or boy under the age of 18. It includes both formal marriages and informal unions (the latter involves children living together as though married; UNICEF, 2016 as cited in Bartels et al., 2018). It is a practice that affects both genders, with girls making up the majority of cases. Broadly speaking, early marriage encompasses child marriage. Forced marriage is a marriage where one, or indeed both parties, have not provided their full and free consent to the union (Bartels et al., 2018). This can and does include children under the age of 18 (Bartels et al., 2018). Forced marriage was a key feature of the 1991–2002 civil war in Sierra Leone where thousands of women and girls were abducted by insurgents and taken into the bush and forced to marry their kidnappers (Haenen, 2013). Referred to as bush-wives, these women and girls were victims of rape, forced impregnation, forced pregnancy and forced abortion (Gong-Gershowitz, 2009; Haenen, 2013; see also O'Brien, 2016). Forced marriage may also involve various forms of productive and domestic labour and may be used to punish and humiliate the enemy as well as reproduce the nation (Aijazi & Baines, 2017, p. 466).

Child marriage and forced marriage are global issues (Girls not Brides, 2017), however, my focus is on Syria. Whilst it is true that child and forced marriage can cause long-term physical and mental harms,⁷ in order to move beyond examples of interpersonal violence, as per the current security framework, my focus is on structural violence, specifically girls' lack of access to education.

Child marriage is considered a human rights violation (this is recognised by a number of Conventions; see Bartels et al., 2018, p. 2 for a detailed list).

⁷This may include but is not limited to, an increased risk in intimate partner violence, sexually transmitted diseases and sexual exploitation and abuse (Save the Children, 2014).

In addition, various UN documents and international conventions provide guidance to States on how they can meet their human rights obligations in relation to early and forced child marriage. These include, but are not limited to, *The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; The Committee on the Rights of the Child; The Human Rights Committee; The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and The Committee against Torture*. To follow on from my discussion of unwanted pregnancy as a form of torture, in a recent statement, the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, argued that child and forced marriage should be considered forms of GBV that amount to torture. Finally, child, early and forced marriages were included under Goal 5 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations General Assembly, 2016).

Early Marriage in Syria

Empirical research has found that early marriage – a long accepted practice in Syria – has increased since the conflict began, changing from a cultural practice to a coping mechanism (Bartels et al., 2018; ICTJ, 2018; UNFPA, 2017b; see also Mourtada et al., 2017). Child marriage is of particular concern for ‘Syrian girls in refugee communities in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey’ (Girls not Brides, 2017). In Jordan, for example, registered marriages involving girls under the age of 18 have increased from 12% in 2011 to 18% in 2012 and from 25% in 2013 to 32% in 2014 (Girls not Brides, 2017; see also UNICEF, 2014). As a result of the conflict, and increasing engagement with neoliberal policies, employment and livelihood opportunities for Syrians have diminished. Let me provide some historical context. During the 1980s, armed conflict and economic crises plagued the Arab region. As a result, Syria experienced a reduction in social spending. This ultimately led to the collapse of the economy and the withdrawal of public services and subsidies (Alsaba & Kapilashrami, 2016; Banwell, 2018). From 2000 onwards, the government adopted the neoliberal model. This involved transferring the control of the economy from the public to the private sphere (Abboud, 2017; Gobat & Kostial, 2016). This facilitated the rise in poverty and unemployment levels (Gobat & Kostial, 2016).

Despite the efforts of host countries, accommodating the influx of refugees fleeing the war in Syria has been challenging. HRW (2016a, 2016b) outlines some of the practical and institutional barriers Syrian refugees face in Lebanon and Jordan when trying to enrol their children in school. In Lebanon, these include: the imposition of additional school enrolment requirements; strict regulations relating to legal residency; employment-related restrictions (which impacts families’ ability to pay for school-related costs, such as travel and school equipment) and classes being taught in unknown languages (HRW, 2016a). In Jordan, these barriers include ‘refugee registration polices’ that require children to provide identification cards to enrol in school as well as ‘certification and documentary requirements’ that many refugees do not have (HRW, 2016b).

Concerns about the lack of access to education, as a result of the conflict, were captured during focus group discussions with Syrian refugees:

We were all pro-education; the priority was education before marriage. We wanted our daughters to reach at least the secondary education level. Things have changed now. Many young girls are resorting to early marriage due to their fear of the ambiguous future. I married off two daughters after the war, one was 18 and the other one was 12.

‘We wished to study and get married, but now the situation is different’ (as cited in Mourtada et al., 2017, p. 58).

During these focus group discussions, many of the participants admitted that they were against child marriage, but with the chaos of the conflict and the displacement that followed, some recognised the potential advantage of early marriage, particularly in relation to protecting a woman’s honour (referred to as al Sutra) (Mourtada et al., 2017, p. 58). In the words of one participant:

Fear of insecurity is a major factor. They are marrying early because of al Sutra. We have war. Many women are afraid of being raped, and if a married woman is raped, she is more likely to be forgiven by her husband but if an unmarried woman is raped, it will destroy her life. (as cited in Mourtada et al., 2017, p. 58).

Research by Save the Children (2014) has found that forced marriage – reportedly taking place in refugee camps – is used to restore family honour following rape. As one GBV expert noted (as cited in UNFPA, 2017b, p. 20):

Forced marriage of a young girl to her cousin at a certain age existed before the crisis, but this practice has increased during the crisis because of the need to seek protection, the lack of men, the worsening economic situation, or because the girls are exploited, or threatened at gunpoint.

In addition to the use of early and forced marriage as a coping mechanism, research has also found that families are also relying on temporary marriages to protect their daughters from abduction. Ironically, however, these temporary marriages expose young girls to sexual exploitation and abuse as many are only married for a few hours before the marriage is annulled. In cases where the girls become pregnant, the lack of official registration of these marriages means that ‘husbands’ are exempted from any parental responsibility for the child (UNFPA, 2017b).

In this example, we move between a macro- and meso-level analysis. Here, using the feminist political economy approach, we can unpack how neoliberalism, at the macro-level informed/informs State-level economic policies and practices

in Syria which, along with State-level cultural and patriarchal practices, heightens girls' exposure to GBV in the form of child marriage. This, and the concomitant denial of education, facilitates structural GBV. Regrettably, the preoccupation with wartime rape and sexual violence occludes this type of violence.

We will now move on to consider the final example of structural violence within and beyond the Syrian conflict zone: denial of formal employment opportunities; resulting in coerced sexual activities.

Survival Sex in Syria

Forced prostitution, trafficking and sexual slavery, outlined and defined in the previous chapter, form part of the landscape of coerced sexual activities in Syria (see The Freedom Fund, 2016; Shaheen, 2017). However, in order to cover the range of coerced sexual activities during war/armed conflict, as well as the multiple and complex causal factors, I will focus on survival sex in the context of Syria. Drawing on my analysis of forced prostitution (see previous chapter) as a form of structural violence, survival sex – which does not include the term ‘forced’, but is the result of poverty and unemployment – will also be understood as behaviour that emerges from a lack of alternative means to support oneself and/or family. It is examined here against the backdrop of a security agenda that constructs women as always and already vulnerable victims. By broadening our analysis of the violence(s) of war/armed conflict – to consider, in this instance, women's use of survival sex – we can begin to see women as three-dimensional characters; both victims and agents, who exercise relative autonomy (discussed in the previous chapter). This is not to underestimate the extreme conditions under which women make these coerced decisions.

As noted above, armed conflict and economic crises have resulted in the collapse of the formal economy in Syria resulting in mass poverty and unemployment. In 2015, poverty levels reached 83.5% in Syria, with extreme poverty reaching 69.3% (Gobat & Kostial, 2016; The Syrian Centre for Policy Research [SCPR], 2015). Exacerbated by the drought (see Gupta, 2016; Richani, 2016), and the increasing engagement with neoliberal policies, these conditions were heightened within the conflict zone (Banwell, 2018). Here, loss of property and employment, as well as the destruction of health and education services, has affected more than two-thirds of Syrians (Gobat & Kostial, 2016). In their review of six cities (Aleppo, Deraa, Hama, Homs, Idlib and Latakia) - which covers agriculture, health, education, housing, transport and energy – The World Bank's Syria Damage Assessment note that '[t]he conflict has set the country back decades in terms of its economic, social, and human development' (as cited in Gobat & Kostial 2016, pp. 21, 23). Here, I want to focus on the impact of the drought in more detail.

As Femia and Werrell (2012) note, the human and economic cost of the drought in Syria is substantial (see Al-Riffai et al., 2012 for a detailed assessment of the impact of the drought). As a result of the impact to livestock and agriculture, thousands of Syrians – particularly those in the northeast of the country, who rely on agricultural farming – have lost their livelihoods (Gupta, 2016;

Richani, 2016; Sohl, 2010). At least a million were left ‘food insecure’ and, as unemployment levels increased, millions of Syrians found themselves living in abject poverty (Gobat & Kostial, 2016; Gleick, 2014; Richani, 2016; Sohl, 2010). Over a million farmers fled to the cities in search of employment, however finding work was extremely difficult (Femia & Werrell, 2012; Gupta, 2016). This influx of people placed an increased strain on Syria’s ‘economically-depressed cities’ where the ‘[p]oor have been forced to compete with poor not just for scarce employment opportunities, but for access to water resources as well’ (Femia & Werrell, 2012; see also Gobat & Kostial, 2016). According to reports, 36,000 households from Al-Hassake Governorate (this amounts to around 200,000–300,000 people), for example, have moved to urban areas such as Damascus and Aleppo (Sohl, 2010). Accommodating this displaced population, as well as the million refugees fleeing from war-torn Iraq, further diminishes access to limited resources, particularly employment (De Châtel, 2014; Kelley et al., 2015; Sohl, 2010; see also The New Humanitarian, 2009).

It is within this context that the illicit economy flourishes (Gobat & Kostial, 2016). Informal economies were discussed in detail with reference to Iraq. Here, I will provide a brief reminder. In conflict zones, illicit economies consist of three types: coping, combat and criminal (Peterson, 2009). Coping economies revolve around survival, while combat and criminal economies are driven by military objectives and profit-making activities (Peterson, 2009). As noted by the Syrian Center for Policy Research (SCPR) in 2015, due to extreme poverty, and the lack of employment options, a huge number of Syrians were forced to work in the informal economy (as cited by Gobat & Kostial, 2016; see also De Châtel, 2014). This can be broken down by gender. Men from the various warring factions in Syria turned to combat and criminal activities (Banwell, 2018). They engage in activities such as kidnapping (HRW, 2015a; United Nations General Assembly, 2013b; WILPF, 2016); trafficking for sexual purposes (Freedman, 2016; The Freedom Fund, 2016; WILPF, 2016); economic and aid blockages (HRW, 2014c; United Nations General Assembly, 2015a); extraction and smuggling of oil (Gupta, 2016; Richani, 2016); trading in weapons (WILPF, 2016); and the smuggling of women and girls (Freedman, 2016; HRC, 2016). Conversely, Syrian women resorted to coping economies in the form of survival sex.

As established, in the absence of their husbands, who are missing or have been killed during the conflict, women become the head of the household. Faced with an increasing lack of employment opportunities, which were exacerbated by the drought, Syrian women have been providing sexual services in exchange for food and accommodation for their families (Amnesty International, 2016; Banwell, 2018; Spencer et al. 2015; The Freedom Fund, 2016; UNFPA, 2017b; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2015). As articulated by a GBV expert working on the ground in Syria: ‘[t]here are many cases of “sex for money”, more than before, because of the economic situation and the absence of the male factor for various reasons’ (as cited in UNFPA, 2017b, p. 30).

As well as the lack of access to formal employment, women are also denied access to the labour market in their host communities. The combination of the conflict, rising unemployment levels and the increased cost of living, resulting

from the drought, has meant that many Syrians have fled to neighbouring regions such as Jordan and Lebanon in order to survive (Banwell, 2018). In these host communities, many female Syrian refugees are forced into the informal economy when restrictions are placed upon their right to access formal employment in these settings (Anani, 2013; Banwell, 2018; The Freedom Fund, 2016; UNHCR, 2015). In Lebanon, for example, many refugees resort to ‘survival sex’ to pay for increased living costs (The Freedom Fund). In 2012, the International Rescue Committee, in collaboration with ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality, conducted a rapid assessment of GBV in Syria (see Anani, 2013). Survival sex was identified as one example of GBV experienced by Syrian women and girls (Anani, 2013). In the words of one focus group participant: ‘... if you want other help from other NGOs you should send your daughter or your sister or sometimes your wife... with full make-up so you can get anything... I think you understand me’ (as cited in Anani, 2013, p. 76). More recently, The Freedom Fund (2016) found that Syrian refugee women were providing sexual favours in return for rent, food and employment in Lebanon.

In addition, empirical research has found that Syrian women seeking refuge in Europe are also impacted by this type of structural GBV (see Freedman, 2016). In this context, women provide sexual services to fund their travel to Europe (Freedman, 2016). Indeed, for women in refugee camps across Calais in France, coerced sex is a common survival strategy (Freedman, 2016). In other cases, women and girls find themselves victims of sexual harassment. Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2015b), for example, reported incidents of sexual harassment of female refugees in detention in Macedonia where women were offered preferential treatment in exchange for sex. Asma, a 20-year-old Syrian woman, shares her experience of being harassed by a police officer:

He tried whatever he could to get me alone in a room with him. He used to approach me and whisper to me that I am very beautiful and that he would help me out, that he would personally look into my case. (HRW, 2015b, p. 17)

Coerced sexual behaviour, in the form of survival sex, relies on an understanding of coercion as a condition of unemployment (see previous chapter) and, as such, conceptualises survival sex as a form of structural violence. In Syria macro- and meso-level exploitative systems such as neoliberalism resulted in an increase in poverty and unemployment levels. These, in turn, were exacerbated by the drought. As a result, both genders were forced into the informal economy. Departing from the other examples in this chapter (and indeed coerced sexual activities in Iraq) the macro-level in this instance, not only takes into account economic and political foreign policy agendas, as well as global drivers, it also considers environmental forces. Indeed, moving beyond the fetishisation of wartime rape and sexual violence – to consider women’s engagement with coerced sexual activities – necessitates that we extend the diagnostic framework to consider how climate variability and the extreme weather events it leads to (in this case, droughts), diminishes employment opportunities which, in turn, leads to coping, combat

and criminal coping informal economies. As demonstrated, these are demarcated along gendered lines. This expansion of the analytical framework enables a holistic analysis of the causes and consequences of the structural and interpersonal violence(s) of war/armed conflict.

Conclusion

This chapter has exposed the shortcomings of the securitisation of wartime rape and sexual violence. By moving beyond examples of interpersonal violence to address structural forms of GBV in relation to the Syrian conflict, the discussion broadens our understanding of the violence(s) of war/armed conflict. All three examples of structural violence – denial of reproductive healthcare, resulting in unwanted pregnancies; denial of education, exacerbated by the use of child marriage (and vice versa); and denial of employment opportunities, leading to survival sex – are linked to broader macro- and meso-level economic, cultural and political policies and practices. In all three examples, we see how these exploitative systems and institutions (economic globalisation, neoliberalism, patriarchy) are exacerbated during conflict, thereby, at the very least, maintaining, but all too often, increasing women and girls' exposure to GBV. In case of survival sex, this form of structural violence can be linked to extreme weather events, such as droughts, caused by climate variability. The political economy approach was utilised to examine these examples of structural violence. In the next chapter, returning to examples of interpersonal violence, we expand our discussion of the use of the visual in representations of armed conflict. Here, focusing on male victimisation – thereby posing a challenge to the title of this book – I unpack female perpetrators of sexualised violence and torture.