



*Rapporteur: Liza Cordeiro*

On June 28, 2023, CNA held the fifth Inclusive National Security event of this year under the theme “intersectionality.” This event ([recording here](#))—*From the Battlefield to the Home: Violence Against Women & Girls in Crises*—explored the lives of ordinary civilians during wartime, focusing on how armed conflict shapes violence against women, youth, and children off the battlefield. The event featured keynote speakers Dr. Ilana Seff, research assistant professor at the Brown School of Public Health at Washington University in St. Louis, and Cyril Bennouna, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science at Brown University. The event discussant was Alina Potts, a research scientist at the Global Women’s Institute and a principal investigator of the Empowered Aid project.

### Reflections from Dr. Ilana Seff, Cyril Bennouna, and Alina Potts

- The speakers started the conversation by noting that intersectionality can be the basis for analysis, for intervention, and for collective action. Analysts must understand the intersecting identities as well as the systems of power that elevate and dominate differently on the basis of those identities. Unfortunately, intersectional data (such as data on religion and ethnicity) rarely exist, so researchers are often unable to use an intersectional lens when looking at gender-based violence (GBV).
- Cyril Bennouna helped attendees gain a clear picture of the type and frequency of violence faced by women and girls off the battlefield, explaining that conflicts such as the wars in Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Ukraine have become more fatal in recent years.
- Cyril noted that indirect violence is the most fatal and affects every aspect of quality of life, and Dr. Seff shared the following results from a selection of studies:
  - 40 percent of adolescent girls in conflict-affected Liberia had experienced physical intimate partner violence (2013)
  - 27 percent of girls in South Sudan had experienced nonpartner sexual violence (2019)
  - 60 percent of adolescent girls in the Democratic Republic of Congo had experienced at least one form of violence (2017)
  - 90 percent of Yazidi women forced into sexual slavery had PTSD
- Dr. Ilana Seff discussed the components of a good humanitarian response, which should include the following: ensuring the voices of women and girls from diverse backgrounds are present from the onset of an emergency, designing programs that are survivor-centered, ensuring that safe spaces are provided, and making efforts to work with men and boys to dismantle systems of oppression against women with diverse backgrounds.
- Alina Potts stressed that humanitarian efforts put in place to protect individuals must not simultaneously erase the agency of women and girls, noting that their voices need to be heard through multiple feedback opportunities.
- Everyone involved in a humanitarian response is responsible for mitigating the risk and impacts of GBV, not just those directly responding to GBV. Some simple best practices to keep women and girls in a war zone safe include the following: ensuring latrines are close to living areas, have locks, and are separated by gender; ensuring services, firewood, water, and other resources are not too far from living areas; providing access to nonfood items; and advocating against gender-blind policies.

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