



PRIO

The Political Psychology of War Rape

New book based on studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina

PRIO Gender, Peace
and Security Update

Issue 1 2012

The PRIO Gender Peace and Security Update is an electronic newsletter launched by PRIO's Gender Team in response to growing interest among the public for information about women, peace and security issues. The newsletter will keep readers informed of the latest developments both internationally and in Norway in relation to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security and subsequent resolutions.



Book author Inger Skjelsbæk, Senior Researcher and Deputy Director at PRIO.
Photo: Jørgen Carling.

We spoke to Inger Skjelsbæk at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), about her new book *The Political Psychology of War Rape. Studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina*, where she explores the use of rape in war and the effects it has on its victims, specifically examining the case of Bosnia.

What is the background for the work on this book?

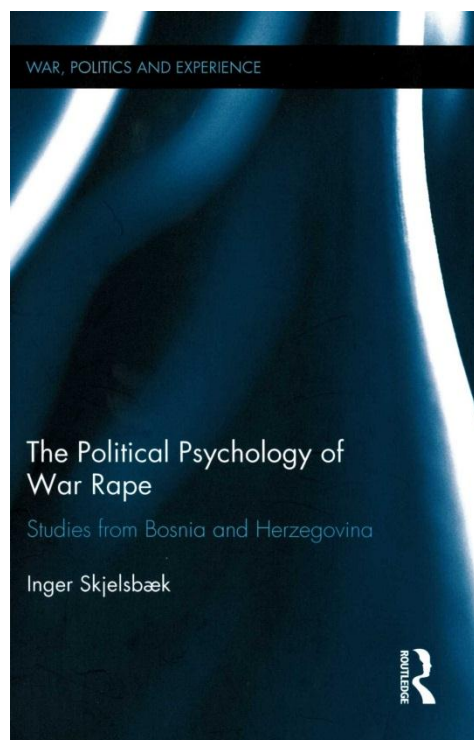
The book builds on the work of my doctoral thesis, although some chapters have been added and rewritten for the book. The project itself was an effort to map what happens after a war where sexual violence has been used systematically. When I started working on this topic, there was not a lot of literature – and in 1998 it took me one year to gather 140 articles that explored the

systematic use of sexual violence in war. It was a form of violence that was not subjected to systematic political analysis. But literature started popping up during the 1990s, especially within international law, but very little within international relations or political science. So you can say that the world looks quite different now. In 2000 we got UNSC Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, but the first time you really had any binding language or document was with UNSC Resolution 1820 in 2008.

Can you tell us a little bit about what the book is about?

The book is an effort to map what happens after a war where sexual violence has been used systematically and how it affects individuals, families and com-

munities. I am a social psychologist so my approach is a dual view on individuals and social structures. Another central theme in the book is how to study rape in war. I have only interviewed 5 women who were raped. But I have interviewed a lot of people around these women, among them over 30 health workers who in different ways worked with women who were raped and traumatized during and after the war. I have also done focus groups with young people between 20-40 years old, about gender relations in Bosnia after the conflict. The result is a framework on how to understand the experience of rape, and on how to go in and try to understand a phenomenon; not only what happened during the war, but also how it affects gender relations both during and after conflict.



I started working on this in 1996, and back then it was very hard to get funding for a project that involved travelling to Bosnia to speak to victims of rape. With the sensitivity of the issue, much lies in how you can study rape in war with the starting point that victims may not want to talk about it, because you should respect that. First of all, while

recognizing that many women choose to remain silent, many actually want to talk. Secondly, I try to show in my book that there are a number of other people you can talk to who can provide crucial information even if the victims do not wish to talk, for example local health workers, psychologists, doctors, social workers, and young people who have experienced the changes in society as a result of the war. Speaking systematically with health workers was very important for my research. You can learn so much from local health workers, doctors, and social workers because they know best how the violence acts out in the local context, and they can, in contrast to international personnel, interpret how stigma plays out. They are therefore an invaluable resource in both understanding the phenomenon locally, and in helping.

How can you say that sexual violence is a weapon in war?

My conclusion is that rape is a weapon in the way that the perpetrators' gender identity and ethnic identity becomes masculinized, and perpetrators gain power through abuse. In a conflict situation like in Bosnia, the ethnicity of the perpetrator becomes a part of this power structure: The victim becomes extremely inferior, and so does her ethnicity. Survivors have also explained that through what was said, and the words that were used, they became ethnic subjects the moment they were raped. Thus, it resulted in other identities than gender being put in a hierarchical relationship with each other through the act of rape, and these identities were linked to the general structure of the conflict. This makes it a weapon in the war in Bosnia. It also reflects that there are political implications of rape in war, and that these are rooted in the relations between men and women. This also changed gender relations, but with different outcomes, for example, for Serbian and Croatian women.

So what were the implications for women?

First of all, you can say that it has had an unintended consequence that those behind it probably did not anticipate: a new kind of awareness of women's rights and women's right to exercise control over their own body, especially because of the large international focus. Now you have rape centers, and new laws, and these things were more or less unthinkable before the conflict.

That being said, you got an increased religious interpretation of women's identity that you didn't have during the socialist regime. Although the perpetrators were men, there were also many men who were protectors. It was widely assumed that women coming back to their husbands after the war would be rejected, but the men also had a large need to protect the women, and the way they then were protected was through religious norms. I find it interesting that on the one hand you can observe an increased 'Westernization' through legislation and rape centers and new rights for women, but at the same time you have this opposite development with larger restrictions through religious norms.

Another example is how many Serbian women experienced that the war changed social relations in society. Before the war many Serbs in urban settings considered themselves as a sort of elite, but suddenly there was a focus on Serbs as perpetrators followed by a loss of status. Several interviewees in the focus groups said that a substantial number of women solved this during the war by so-called sponsorship with international personnel, a grey zone between having a boyfriend and prostitution. These men paid the woman and her family, giving her clothes etc. In some cases the woman might even be married, and her husband would accept this arrangement. Gender relations changed in the aftermath, but there was nothing automatic in these developments, and you cannot say that rape

leads to this or that. But it tells us something about how gender relations become very central in the political development. In other words, the political development is expressed through the regulation of women's sexuality and ownership of women's bodies.

The issue of sexual violence has become a very hot topic internationally over the past years. How would you situate your book in this context?

The response to the issue of sexual violence in Bosnia was very limited; even though they had doctors and psychologists, they did not work on rape. There were no rape facilities, and violence against women was not widely reported. But the capacities were there, and we saw many efforts to build on this capacity. So I think that it is very strange now, and this is my impression, that you don't invite people from Bosnia as experts. They have a lot of experience, but it's like you're supposed to learn all over again. Of course the DRC is a different place and a different context, the same with many other places, but I still think that there must be some experience to draw on, especially from local people who have lived with these issues over several years. It seems that we are now done with Bosnia. But remember that we wouldn't have the language that we have today in the UN, or the awareness that we have today, had Bosnia and Rwanda not happened, and gotten the attention that they got at the time.

I find it disturbing that the issue of war rape is so consensus driven; everybody agrees that women have to be protected. But the logic behind sexual violence and the way it is used in war, whether as a weapon of violence or part of a general escalation of violence, builds on inequalities in power relations between men and women. A way to fight sexual violence is to work on women's rights and the status of women. I think we are losing this perspective, of course, because this is more controversial. The

idea of gender equality is often seen as Western, or even Nordic, and the idea that you are forcing that on to other societies and cultures is controversial. I also fear that the intense focus on sexual violence contributes to a continued conceptualization of women as victims and as passive, politically interesting only when they are in need of protection. With this perspective it is easy to forget that women are actually a resource, and that as a victim of rape you are actually a survivor. You may be traumatized, but you are a survivor. It can also have a very therapeutic effect for survivors to be able to do something. So I think that insisting on treating women solely as victims can have a very devastating effect. ■

Launch of US Peace Research Endowment: Supporting the Best in Peace Research

The Peace Research Endowment (PRE) was launched 12 March at the residence of the Norwegian Consul General in New York, Sissel Breie. The Peace Research Endowment is established with a grant by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), one of the world's leading research milieus on peace and conflict.

The reception honored Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Leymah Gbowee, and the two prize-winning documentary filmmakers who helped to get her message across, Abigail Disney and Gini Reticker. Their film "Pray the Devil Back to Hell" documented Gboweh's mobilization to end the Liberian civil war. We came away inspired and exhilarated by Leymah Gbowee's remarks at the reception on the resilience and power of women and her challenge to combine knowledge and real time, on-the-ground engagement in the cause of peace.

PRE supports original, world-class academic research on peace and war, with the aim to stimulate debate and inform policy, and ultimately to contribute towards the creation of a world in



PRIO Director Kristian Berg Harpviken, Nobel Laureate Leymah Gbowee and Chairman of the PRE Board Joe Reeder at the PRE Launch event. Photo: Royal Norwegian Consulate General New York.

which violence is the exception and conflicts are resolved peacefully. The Endowment is a non-profit organization based in the US and is independent of political, religious, or national interests.

The Endowment aims to stimulate research cooperation internationally, supporting first and foremost initiatives from PRIO. This is in recognition of the institute's leading position in the field. PRE facilitates contact between donors and grant recipients, inviting donors to support, and hence be part of, innovative, exciting research. Prioritized activities include:

- Research projects
- Endowed professorships and centers of advanced study
- Conferences and research exchanges
- Facilitation of dialogue and learning experiences that promote peace

The PRE Board of Directors brings together energies and leadership talents from diverse spheres – from public service to the private sector, academia and civil society.

To read more on the Peace Research Endowment visit

<http://www.prio.no/peace-research-endowment> ■

Swanee Hunt visits PRIO

PRIO's Gender Team invited Swanee Hunt, Chair of the Institute for Inclusive Security, Washington DC, to PRIO on 21 March to talk about her new book *Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security*. The book tells of a well-meaning foreign policy establishment often deaf to the voices of everyday people. Its focus is the Bosnian War, but its implications extend to any situa-

tion that prompts the consideration of military intervention on humanitarian grounds.

The attending crowd included scholars, diplomats and NGO representatives. The seminar was chaired by Helga Hernes, Senior Adviser, PRIO. Inger Skjelsbæk, PRIO Deputy Director, acted as discussant.

Ambassador Hunt served in Vienna during the Bosnian War and was intimately involved in American policy toward the Balkans. The book builds on her personal notes from this time, of daily life as ambassador in Vienna, and experiences from her trips to the former Yugoslavia. These accounts reveal a disconnect between two worlds, a disconnect which is reflected in the construction of the book. In "Worlds Apart", Hunt's eighty vignettes alternate between those living out the war, and "the internationals" who were deciding whether or how to intervene. From these stories, most of which she witnessed firsthand, she draws lessons applicable to conflicts throughout the world: test truisms, question stereotypes, find out-of-power allies, appreciate domestic dynamics, find fault, and embrace responsibility. "These lessons cannot be learned from afar", Hunt says, "with insiders and outsiders working apart. Only by bridging those worlds can we build a stronger paradigm of inclusive international security". The case of Syria was discussed among the audience as an applicable case, brought up by US Ambassador White.

On the issue of women in war, Hunt talked about the effects of sending a large international staff into a war zone and the consequences this had for women in Bosnia. She further emphasized the participation of women and the important work women did to stabilize the country. ■

Security Council Open Debate on Conflict-related Sexual Violence

Conflict-related Sexual Violence was the topic for the open debate in the Security Council convened by Togo on February 23, 2012. Statements were made by the Special Representative for the Secretary General on Conflict-related Sexual Violence (SRSG) Margot Wallström, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous, Amina Megheirb on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (NGOWG), and member state representatives. The gallery was open to representatives from civil society and NGOs, including a representative of the PRIO GPS.

Setting the agenda for the debate was the latest report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-related Sexual Violence (S/2012/33). The report highlights the ongoing incidence of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations relevant to the reporting period (December 2010 to November 2011), and also includes for the first time an annexed list of parties responsible for patterns of rape in conflict (as requested by the Security Council in Security Council Resolution 1960), often referred to as the "naming and shaming mechanism". The report was the main focus of the debate, which resulted in a presidential statement S/PRST/2012/3.

SRSG Margot Wallström opened the debate, and highlighted important issues including militarization and participation and their links to sexual violence. She expressed concern that the proliferation of small arms enables acts of sexual violence, and that rape reduces women's participation.

Among the issues under discussion was the mandate of the SRSG, which was heavily endorsed by many member states, while criticized by some. Among the countries that were critical to the report and the mandate of the SRSG were China, Egypt, Pakistan, Russia, Sudan, and Syria. An issue brought up on several occasions was mandate creep, and some member states accused the SRSG of having overstepped her mandate in looking at cases of sexual violence in countries not defined as conflict zones by the Security Council. Some also questioned the validity of some of the accounts in the report.

Prevention and early warning in combating conflict-related sexual violence were repeatedly mentioned and perceived as important by almost all member states was. The SRSG stressed the need for prevention of sexual violence to be made an operational priority in the prevention of conflict. In the face of the criticism raised against her office and the above-mentioned report, SRSG Wallström responded that prevention cannot happen when sexual violence or conflict is already taking place. In this regard she also replied that she was not looking to expand her mandate but simply to do a good job.

Impunity for perpetrators and the request for the Security Council to take firm action was another issue repeatedly mentioned. Member states such as Italy and Botswana noted that inaction could send the wrong message that sexual violence is tolerated. The “naming and shaming mechanism” also plays a central role in this regard. Several member states also pointed at the importance of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the prosecution of perpetrators.

The majority of speakers endorsed the mandate and the report and encouraged SRSG Wallström to continue her work. The final Presidential Statement reflects this.

You can read the Presidential Statement on http://www.stoprapenow.org/public_html/uploads/files/sprst20123.pdf.

For the latest report of the Secretary General on Conflict-related Sexual Violence, see http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/UNSC_ReportoftheSecretaryGeneral_ConflictRelatedSexualViolence_A66657.pdf. ■

“We will talk to the Taliban, but we do not want to go back to the past”

Wazhma Frogh, Afghan women's rights activist visiting Norway

Wazhma Frogh, Afghan women's rights activist and board member of the Afghan Women's Network, recently visited Norway. She was invited by the Amnesty International student group at the Faculty of Law, University of Oslo, FOKUS, and the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee's Women's Board. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also hosted her visit. During her stay in Oslo, she participated in a number of public events and had meetings with the MFA, Norad, NGOs and research institutions.

Frogh is now promoting her latest initiative, the Research Institute for Women Peace and Security – Afghanistan (RIWPS). It is a women-led initiative that focuses on increasing women's leadership and inclusion in bringing peace and security to Afghanistan. The rationale of the RIWPS is the belief that Afghan women at the grassroots and community levels have important contributions to make to stability and communal peace. The institute will have an evidence-based approach

to its research. “We don't know how many women are involved, or how many are sitting on panels. We need a system-wide approach and a mapping of women's involvement on the ground”.

At a breakfast seminar convened by Norad's Gender Equality Team on Monday 19 March, Frogh talked about Afghan women's experiences in promoting women's rights.



Wazhma Frogh. Photo: Helle Ganestad, Universitas.

Frogh spoke about her own experiences as an Afghan woman and activist, and efforts to include women in the peace and reconciliation process. She admitted that her work has been a constant battle, and that the next two years will be especially critical.

On the reconciliation process, Frogh stated that every person on the streets wants reconciliation. The clear message from Afghan women, which she passed along, was that “we will talk to the Taliban, but we do not want to go back to the past”. Frogh asserted that it is never a good idea for another country to take control of a country's peace process. On the question of what Norway could do, she replied that asking the question “where are the women?” would be one step. Frogh also requested a stronger advocacy role for UN Women in Afghanistan, and a more focused effort on women's empowerment.

The Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program has focused very much on the insurgents, the actual fighters, Frogh explained. One of the achievements of

the Afghan Women's Network has been that the support offered to ex-combatants is now a family package, instead of only targeting the individual. Frogh also emphasized the importance of having a parallel process to the political process on the ground. "There is a lot of frustration in the communities, and it is not only the Taliban, but also warlords, military gangs, and armed non-state actors. Many of these are fighting because it is the only way to gain an income".

Protection was also highlighted as a main challenge by Frogh. She stated that protection is a prerequisite for participation, and gave examples from her own life to support this. She further stated that the feeling of security is more important than the physical aspect of it, and that the current talk of withdrawal of the international forces has created uncertainty and fear.

The pressing issues for the next two years, according to Frogh, are to find a place at the negotiation table for women, and also in the processes that lead to negotiations. She also highlighted the need to press for elections, and that there can be no reconciliation without the Afghan women. She highlighted solidarity as a way forward, and that concerned countries should come together for a joint campaign. She also requested solidarity from women leaders around the world to support her cause for the inclusion of Afghan women in the peace and reconciliation process.

Read Wazma Frogh's blog on: <http://wazhmafrogh.blogspot.com/> ■

Launch of UN Guidelines for Mediators

The UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) launched its *Guidance for Mediators on Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements* at a **high-level event** in New York on Friday, 9 March. The launch was organized by DPA and hosted by the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN. The launch was co-chaired by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Mr. Lynn B. Pascoe and the Special Representative to the Secretary-



Under-Secretary for Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe and SRSG Margot Wallström at the launch of the DPA Guidelines for Mediators. Photo: UN Photo.

General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Ms. Margot Wallström.

Lone Jessen, DPA's Gender Advisor, explained that the publication of these guidelines represents a milestone for the UN, since it, for the first time, provides mediators and their advisors with a framework for how to address conflict-related sexual violence in ceasefires and peace agreements. Mr. Pascoe and Ms. Wallström expressed great satisfaction with the process and the result, which was a collaborative effort under-

taken by DPA as part of the UN Action Network on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Lynn Pascoe said "We realize that we have to go now from words on paper into practice. The first step is to get this guidance into the hands of those who can put it to good use. Our plan is for the guidance to be issued to all UN mediators and mission chiefs and incorporated in training and briefing materials for envoys and their teams. This is already happening."

Gina Torry, who finalized this work for DPA, said "I think the real strength of the guidance lies in the fact that it was created in close consultation with venerable mediators, such as Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah." With these guidelines as a blueprint, newly appointed mediators will, from now on, have a very valuable tool for bringing questions of sexual violence to the table.

The guidelines can be downloaded from [this link](#). ■

International News

UN Women celebrated its one-year anniversary on 2 February 2012. For Michelle Bachelet's statement and press conference see

<http://www.unwomen.org/2012/01/press-conference-with-under-secretary-general-and-executive-director-michelle-bachelet-on-the-one-year-anniversary-un-women/>

The UN Security Council open debate on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence took place on 23 February 2012 (see related article in this issue). For the Security Council statement see www.stoprapenow.org/public_html/uploads/files/sprst20123.pdf

The Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations was opened in Sweden on 24 January 2012. The center has been established to increase efforts to implement UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions, and is intended to be a hub of knowledge and expertise when it comes to Gender Perspective in military operations. The center will work in close cooperation with all relevant organizations such as the UN, NATO, EU, AU, as well as with nations working in the same direction. See <http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/Swedish-Armed-Forces-International-Centre/Centre-for-Gender/>

The UK and Portugal hosted an Arria Formula meeting on women's role in conflict mediation and resolution on 8 March 2012, International Women's Day.

DPA and Finland co-hosted a women/civil society consultation on the Secretary-General's guidance for more effective mediation, as requested by the General Assembly in resolution (A/Res/65/283, July 2011) on 9 March 2012. ■

News from Norway

The Norwegian Refugee Council held a breakfast seminar on the occasion of International Women's Day. The topic was the importance and role of women in international peace operations, as well as issues of including women in peace processes and women's concerns in peace agreements. <http://www.flyktninghjelpen.no/?did=9135220>

The Norwegian Refugee Council and *Dagsavisen* showed the film "The Whistle Blower" on International Women's Day, 8 March. The film builds on a real story of the role of UN staff in trafficking and abuse of women in the Balkans after the war.

Partnership for Change organized a two-day conference on "Dignity and Empowerment – a prerequisite for a sustainable world" in Oslo on 20-21 March. The conference was kicked off with a greeting from US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Other prominent speakers included former president of Iceland Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, Liz Bernstein, Founding Director of the Nobel Women's Initiative, Nobel Laureate Mairead Maguire, and former US Ambassador Swanee Hunt. <http://partnershipforchange.net/>

The Human Rights Week 2012 took place on 19-23 March at the Faculty of Law, University of Oslo. The conference was organized by Amnesty at the Department of Law, and this year's topic was "Women and Human Rights".

<http://www.menneskerettighetsuka.no>



News from PRIO

PRIO's Gender Team organized a seminar with Kristin Scharffscher, University in Tromsø on Thursday 9 February. At the seminar Scharffscher presented her new report commissioned by Norad on 'Making Gender Matter in Humanitarian Operations'. The seminar was chaired by Senior Advisor Helga Hernes. Senior researchers Cindy Horst and Kristin B. Sandvik (both PRIO) served as discussants.

PRIO's Gender Team held a seminar with Swanee Hunt, Chair of the Institute for Inclusive Security, Washington DC, on her latest book "Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security" on Wednesday 21 March (see related article in this issue).

New PRIO project: Making Women Count for Peace – Gender, Empowerment and Conflict in South Asia.

PRIO recently launched a new project on women's participation in governance and peacebuilding in South Asia. The project is a collaborative effort by PRIO and Indian partners, including Malaviya Centre for Peace Research (MCPR) at Banaras Hindu University, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG), Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP) and North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC). The project leader at PRIO is senior researcher Åshild Kolås.

Ragnhild Nordås

Participated at the *Scientific Research Planning Meeting: Sexual Violence and HIV Transmission* organized by the US Social Science Research Council (SSRC) at the Greentree Foundation, New York, 19-20 March. The meeting was organized to help to provide key

background, frame key questions, and identify potentially productive scientific studies to clarify this potentially important issue. Nordås gave a presentation on “Sexual violence in armed conflict and the spread of HIV”.

Inger Skjelsbæk

Participated at the launch of the *Peace Research Endowment* (PRE) in New York, 12 March. While in New York she did video interviews with Nobel Laureate Leymah Gbowee and film producer Abigail Disney. The interviews will soon be posted on the PRE website.

Helga Hernes

Participated at the launch of the *Peace Research Endowment* in New York, 12 March.

Torunn L. Tryggestad

Was interviewed about recruitment of women to international operations in the magazine *Perspektiv* (No 1, 2012) which is published by the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Gudrun Østby

Presented the paper ‘Gender gap or gender bias in peace research? A study of publication patterns and citation rates for Journal of Peace Research, 1989-2008’ at the National Political Science Conference, University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim 4-6 January 2012. The paper is co-written with Håvard Strand, Nils Petter Gleditsch & Ragnhild Nordås. ■

Recent Publications

DARA (2012). “Humanitarian Response Index 2011: Addressing the Gender Challenge”, Madrid: DARA.

Katherine Magraw (March 2012). “Philanthropic Investments in the Emerging Field of Women, Peace and Security”. Charlottesville, VA: Peace and Security Funders Group.

Ingvill C. Mochmann and Ingeborg K. Haavardsson (2012). “The Legacy of War Time Rape: Mapping Key Concepts and Issues. Report from the Conference”. *PRIO Paper*, Oslo: PRIO.

Scharffscher, Kristin (2012). “Making Gender Matter in Humanitarian Operations” Oslo: Norad.

Security Council Report (2012). “Second Cross-Cutting Report on Women, Peace and Security”, New York: Security Council Report.

Skjelsbæk, Inger (2012). *The Political Psychology of War Rape. Studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina*. War, Politics and Experience Series, London and New York: Routledge.

Social Science Research Council (2012). “A Roundtable Discussion on Women, Peace and Security: Meeting Report”, 1 August 2011, The Rockefeller Foundation, New York City. New York: SSRC.

The UN Department of Political Affairs (2012). “Sexual Violence in Conflict: Guidelines for Mediators”

UN Women (2012) “First Annual Report 2010-2011”.

UN Women (2012) “Women in Politics” Map.

Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (2012). “Global Report on the Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders”. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia).

The World Bank (2012). “2012 World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development”. The World Bank, Washington, DC. ■

Coming Events

Book Launch Seminar for Inger Skjelsbæk’s new book “The Political Psychology of War Rape. Studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina” will take place at PRIO on 11 April 2012, at 10am.

<http://www.prio.no/Events/Event/?oid=3287793> ■



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