

The Opinion Pages | LETTER

Rape as a Weapon in Syria

MARCH 20, 2014

To the Editor:

“3 Years of Strife and Cruelty Put Syria in Free Fall” (front page, March 18) paints a devastating picture of the Syrian civil war and the toll that it is taking on civilians.

While the article highlights the inhumane and illegal use of chemical weapons, deliberate starvation and torture, it doesn't mention the use of rape as a weapon of war against civilians, particularly women and girls, which is no less intolerable and no less widespread.

A pervasive pattern of rapes has been documented in Syria that is leading not only to the destruction of communities and families and displacement, but also to incalculable despair on the personal level. Frequently, women and girls who are raped face familial and social rejection, severe and sometimes incurable injuries, and unwanted pregnancies.

Further, the ability of impregnated rape victims to receive all necessary medical care is thwarted by United States abortion restrictions on humanitarian aid to Syria and surrounding countries. This results in the denial of safe abortion services, and victims sometimes resort to unsafe abortion and even suicide.

The media can help by pointing out the use of rape as a weapon of war wherever it occurs.

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New York, March 18, 2014

A version of this letter appears in print on March 21, 2014, on page A28 of the New York edition with the headline: Rape as a Weapon in Syria.

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