

# What do we know about sexual violence against men and boys?



Sexual violence in war, conflict, and during migration is a human rights violation.

The serious physical and psychological consequences that these violations have on those affected, may destroy not only their lives but often also the lives of their families.

To strengthen the focus on the psychological needs of survivors, Mental Health and Human Rights Info has developed a manual to assist helpers who meet male survivors of sexual violence with a focus on war, conflict, and migration.

A number of refugees and asylum seekers have undergone torture, sexual assault, and other types of traumas. Other stressful life events can lead to re-experiencing these traumas and some might experience mental and physical reactions. Sometimes this can happen long after the initial assault.

## What do we know about sexual violence against men and boys in war?

- Sexual violence against men is used as a form of torture in armed conflict.
- Male survivors rarely report sexual violence incidents immediately, and usually do so only when the physical effects of attacks require urgent intervention.
- Stereotypes about men keep many from reporting sexual violence.
- Many become worried about what others may think about their sexual orientation and the fact that they were unable to prevent the abuse. Some men find that not only their physical and psychological integrity has been attacked, but also their masculinity. «Men are strong and can't be raped» is a common misconception.

# How can we support men who have experienced sexual violence?

## For helpers:

- An important step is to acknowledge and raise awareness about the problem.
- Rape is rape, regardless of the survivor's sex, presumed or real gender identity, or sexual orientation.
- Meet all survivors with respect and dignity.
- Allow the survivors the time and space they need to talk about their situation and needs.
- Never push anybody to tell their stories before they are ready to speak.
- If the survivor prefers not to speak, this must not stop the helper from providing support.
- It is important to know that while not all countries have criminalized male rape, it is always a violation of international human rights.



## For survivors:

- You have been subjected to severe human rights violations and it is not your fault.
- It is your right to receive help and support.
- You can be helped without telling all the details of the story – unless this is needed when seeking protection.
- You are not alone in these difficult experiences.
- The reactions you may be having, are reactions to be expected after serious trauma, bear in mind that not everyone will develop mental health problems because of this.
- Remember not to blame yourself, the blame is on the perpetrator who is responsible for the crime – accountability is important.
- You can ask for help, and you can be supported in your struggle against trauma memories, sleep problems, sadness, and anxiety.

**YOU CAN FIND MORE  
INFORMATION ABOUT THE TOPIC  
AND WHERE TO SEEK HELP HERE:**

