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Internal Displacement in the Aftermath of the December 2007 Post Electoral Violence in Kenya: A Gendered Perspective

(Abstract)

Raped and murdered women do not die as heroines. No monuments rise for them. Raped and survived women bear shame. They become heroines only for us—women who look at the world with women identified eyes. (Lepa Mladjenovic).

Sexual violence against women is widespread in all crisis situations globally, Kenya is no exception. In the aftermath of the December 27, 2007 post election violence women uprooted by the crisis were the worst affected. On January 23, 2008 the admissions for rape had doubled since the beginning of the month in the Nairobi hospital. In fact in the Nairobi Women's hospital and the Coast General Hospital in Mombassa there has been a three fold increase in the number of women and children seeking treatment for sexual assault in the turmoil that followed the elections. (BBC, January 2008).

Sexual assault and rape against children and women, often by more than one aggressor, was reported by the victims in the Rift valley and the western parts of the country as supporters of Odinga Odinga and Raila clashed. (UN News Service, January 27, 2008). There were reports of women being shared by men who were not spouses, of young girls in the camps being forced to exchange sex for food or clothing. (The Nation, January 27, 2008)

According to Michael Foucault, *it is a power technique, one form of power among others.* (Discipline and Punish, 1979) Sexuality plays an important role in controlling and punishing those who threaten the systems boundaries and how it affects women who are sexually abused in prison, during flight or armed conflict. Sexual abuse is about power relationships between the perpetrator and the victim. It is morally traumatic because it violates the person's feeling of moral integrity as it contaminates them and thus disgraces the women and the men in her family. (A. Heller, *The Power of Shame: a Rational Perspective*, 1985)

Rape of an enemy women and as a tool of ethnic cleansing is a means by which differentials of power and identity are defined specially in a conflict situation.

This paper attempts to analyse the violation of women's physical being in the theoretical framework of the concept of 'shame'. It tries to show how 'shame' is manipulated in the context of rape in situation of ethnic cleansing/conflict by using the work of Inger Agger in his book titled '*The Blue Room*'. The Blue Room is a metaphorical space, a room with blue walls in a women's house of exile in Denmark where Agger hears the narratives of women whose sexual boundaries have been transgressed and how they experience shame as a consequence of the evasion of their private space.