

Book Notes

Allen, Beverly, 1996. *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*. London & Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 180 pp.

Despite increasing data and general awareness about the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, relatively few academics have conceptualized and analysed the phenomenon. This book is therefore a valuable contribution to a field which needs further exploration. *Rape Warfare* is divided into six main themes: identity, representation, facts, analysis, remedies and implications. Allen aims to show how rape warfare can be conceptualized as genocide. She makes a strong case for the argument that rape, when used to make the conquered woman pregnant, is compatible with the psychology of genocide. Her argument is that rape as a weapon of war is aimed at the destruction of a people. When used as a means of forcing pregnancy, it seeks to negate the cultural identity of its victims, reducing them to mere sexual containers. She recognizes that the concepts of genocide and pregnancy are contradictory, but underlines that it is the symbolic obliteration of the women which constitutes the genocide. Allen's book is a personal account: her motivation for writing it was based on her friendships with people from the region. The first two chapters (Identity and Representation) are devoted to her personal life: her upbringing, friends and family. At times the personal aspects are disturbing and are not properly linked to the theme of the book. Most informative are Chapters 3 and 4 (Facts and Analysis), where she presents excerpts and interpretations from UN reports, Serb military documents and testimony. She also presents facts and estimates of the number of rapes in camps and elsewhere, based on newspaper articles from the United States and information from women's NGOs. The last two chapters (Remedies and Implications) are, as the titles suggest, Allen's suggestions regarding how international law, international organizations and policy-makers ought to respond and react to rape warfare.