

Medical care for victims of sexual violence

DR RAPHAËL PITTI

ANAESTHETIST, RESUSCITATOR, HUMANITARIAN
DOCTOR AND MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF STAND
SPEAK RISE UP!

« Channels and protocols must be put in place »

Rapists have many different motivations. Their victims can be an object used to satisfy impulses, through to sexual violence being a means of spreading terror among a population. Rape – an act synonymous with destruction or degradation for the purpose of ethnic cleansing – is thus a weapon of repression, a weapon of war. As such, it constitutes a war crime, a crime against humanity.

Indeed, the victims (women, men, children, the elderly) carry within them a physical and psychological trauma. **Such may be the response of a victim's body to the stress suffered, it can even cause genetic modifications** which will be transmitted to future generations.

The pain is additional, both physical and psychological, as a result of the rape itself and of the grief caused in the case of the loss of a loved one. This is why these victims are called "survivors".

The rapid identification and treatment of these rape victims is a determining factor in the efficacy of post-psycho-trauma care. Channels and protocols must be put in place so that victims can, in one place, receive physical care, be taken care of by a dedicated and trained psychological unit, obtain basic human needs (security, housing, food, income) and be able to start legal proceedings against their aggressor(s). **Media coverage of the different consultation modalities is very important;** be this in strategic places such as checkpoints, refugee reception centres, via helpers, and on the internet/social media networks.

Particular emphasis is placed on the training of medical and paramedical staff who will take care of these victims for early detection, facilitated by an empathetic and respectful gathering of information. The aim is to help restore the dignity of survivors.



Dr Raphaël Pitti at the Stand Speak Rise Up! forum in 2019