

**Providing Holistic Care
for Survivors
of Sexual Violence and Torture**

First International Conference of the Polish Center for Torture Survivors

The conference **Providing Holistic Care for the Survivors of Sexual Violence and Torture - Ukraine**, dedicated particularly to the topic of sexual violence during wartime, will be held on 24 and 25 November 2023 in the Polish town of Leszno and is organized by the Polish Center for Torture Survivors, in cooperation with the Foundation Medecins du Monde, SEMA Ukraine, WAPP Support Project Association Leszno and Association Defense de la Democratie en Pologne.

Since February 24, 2022, and the full invasion of Ukraine, the Polish Center for Torture Survivors and other organizations have been working tirelessly to support survivors from Ukraine. Unfortunately, sexual violence and torture keeps on being reported. It is crucial to take more action to support Ukrainian Survivors of torture and sexual violence; however, it is also essential to build awareness around this complex topic.

For this reason, the conference is built around strong Ukrainian participation, with SEMA Ukraine co-organizing the event and its ten members taking an active part in the proceedings. As survivors, activists against sexual violence, witnesses documenting the abuses, they will share their knowledge on the care and procedures in progress in Ukraine. Joining them will be a large number of Ukrainian participants representing survivor support organizations, as well as a group of psychotherapists from Ukraine who work continuously with people struggling with war trauma.

Polish Center for Torture Survivors is based on the multilayered trauma centered approach. As a multidisciplinary team, we build a holistic approach to deliver all the support needed with the cooperation of other organizations.

The first International Conference of Polish Center for Torture Survivors “Providing Holistic Care for the Survivors of Sexual Violence and Torture - Ukraine” organized in cooperation with the Foundation Médecins du Monde, SEMA Ukraine, WAPP Support Project Association Leszno, the Association Défense de la Démocratie en Pologne – ADDP, Nomada and UNHCR Polska.



November 24, 2023 – The first day

Round tables

Discussion with international experts regarding :

1-Legal challenges - any form of sexual violence, when committed in the context of an armed conflict, either international or non-international, constitutes violations under international humanitarian law (IHL). All parties to an armed conflict must abide by the prohibition of sexual violence. All states must prosecute the perpetrators. During the first panel, we would like to discuss the reality in Ukraine and Poland related to the crimes against humanity committed during the current war in Ukraine. Additionally, to take action to start proceeding with the testimonies from the survivors and offer them an appropriate legal support system. Debate with the experts from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Ukraine and Poland.

2-Social problems: War does not speak with just one voice, "UN representative Ms. Patten cautioned, pointing to "countless" stories shrouded in silence and leaving off the historical record. Diverse life experiences must inform policy, operational, and funding decisions. "If these decisions are not gender-based in their design, they will be gender-biased and exclusionary in their effect," she assured.

Ms. Patten also drew attention to the problem of underreporting, which is often linked with fear of stigmatization and reprisals, lack of access to the justice system, and harmful social norms around honor, shame, and victim-blame, a family killing, social ostracism also related to the children born as results of war.

Sexual violence by armed groups is common in civil wars. Research studies have shown that victims and their families after war rape experiences are revictimized by social stigmatization. Stigmatization is a central social exclusion and disintegration mechanism impeding post-conflict social, political, and economic recovery. During this panel, we would like to discuss what must be done to prevent secondary victimization. We want to focus on Ukraine and the Polish social background to explore as much as possible the roots of social stigmatization related to sexual violence during war.

3-Psychological trauma consequences The list of the consequences of wartime sexual violence is long and distressing. It includes depression, fear, anxiety, low self-esteem, sexual dysfunctions, unwanted pregnancies, children born due to rape, eating problems, obsessive-compulsive disorders, complex post-traumatic stress disorder, permanent physical dysfunctions, headaches, chronic pelvic pain, miscarriage, AIDS, suicide, and more. During this panel, we would like to discuss the above with specialists from Ukraine, Poland, France, Ethiopia, and the USA and focus on the most effective approach to providing the best psychological support system.

4-Journalism challenges around trauma related to sexual violence- trauma-informed journalism:

What it is, why it is important and how to practice it especially when working on sexual violence during the war topic?

Experts and journalists who have researched and worked with trauma survivors say that practicing trauma-informed journalism leads to better, more accurate stories and helps protect survivors from further harm. Our aim is to build awareness around the Trauma Centered Approach and Ethics when reporting sexual violence. The group of journalists will answer questions on the obstacles and challenges when communicating about sexual violence.

November 25, 2023 – The second day

Workshops

- Legal procedures - how to build cases for international courts after sexual violence in line with the Murad Code principles.
- Education - how to change social perception around survivors of sexual violence in traumatized societies.
- War Rape Survivors Syndrome- working as a therapist with survivors.
- Journalism - Darfur Trauma Approach and Murad Code /reporting sexual violence.

Conference Program

November 24-25 2023, Leszno, Poland

Friday, November 24

Round Tables

Schedule and location : 9.00 – 18.30 [Leszno Book Gallery The Main Library](#), 45 Jan Metzsig Square, Leszno

9.00-10.00 **Opening of the conference, welcoming guests**

10.00-11.30 **1- Legal challenges, best practices and the current situation of survivors based on the experience of Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Poland and Ukraine**

Hosted by barrister Aleksandra Nędzi-Marek, Cracow Bar Association, Poland

Participants:

Dr. Feride Rushiti, Kosovo Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims (KRCT), Kosovo

Ajna Mahmić, legal coordinator, TRIAL, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Dr. Kateryna Ilikchiieva, Attorney-at-law, Ukraine

Volodymyr Shcherbachenko, Eastern-Ukrainian Center for Civic Initiatives (EUCCI), Ukraine

Barrister Danuta Wawrowska, Pomeranian Bar Association, Poland

11.30 -12.00 **Coffee break**

12.00-13.30 **2- Social challenges after sexual violence in war/social shame and ostracism,short and long consequences for the survivors**

Hosted by Dr. Jakub Galeziowski, University of Warsaw

Ewa Dobiála, MD, president of WAPP Support Project, Leszno, Poland

Iryna Dovgan, president of SEMA Ukraine

Vasfije Krasniqi-Goodman, SEMA Kosovo

Olena Suslova, Senior Analyst, Women's Information Consultative Center, Ukraine

Sarah Collins, Programme Manager for Holistic Care at Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation, the Hague, Netherlands

Yuliya Cherova, European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual & Reproductive Rights

13.30-15.00 **Lunch break**

15.00-16.30 3- Psychological panel: What is the trauma of war rape, and why is it not wanted to be understood?

Hosted by Wiola Rebecka, psychoanalyst, USA/Poland

Solomon Adebe, psychologist, president of Ethiopian Association for Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy, Ethiopia

Vlodymyr Voloshyn, PhD Director of the Public Organization Institute of Health Psychology, Ukraine

Jacky Roptin, clinical psychologist, Centre Primo Levi, France

Véronique Nahoum-Grappe, anthropologist and writer, France

16.30-17.00 Coffee break

17.00-18.30 4- Journalistic panel: Ethical journalism based on Nadia Murad's 8 principles

Hosted by Natalia Waloch, journalist, Wysokie Obcasy/Gazeta Wyborcza, Poland

Tomasz Słomczynski writer, reporter TVN24

Liudmyla Huseinova, SEMA Ukraine

Audrey Lebel, independent journalist and writer, France

Florence Hartmann, journalist and writer, France

Serbeze Haxhijaj, journalist, Kosovo

18.30-22.00 Reception dinner for all participants

Saturday, November 25

Workshops held simultaneously in four thematic groups

Schedule and location : 10.00 – 14.00 [Antonińska City Hotel](#), 8a Jana Ostroroga Street, Leszno

Legal workshop How to build a survivor's case based on Nadia Murad's 8 principles • hosted by Aleksandra Nędzi-Marek and Ajna Mahić

Social workshop Experience of centers in Leszno and Kraków in organizing residential stays for people with war trauma/survivors • hosted by Ewa Dobiała, Agnieszka Kontek, Wolno Nam Foundation, Aurelia Kotkiewicz, literary historian, translator, Poland

Psychological workshop What is war rape survivor's syndrome, and how not to retraumatize survivors. Psychologizing of trauma • hosted by Izabela Trybus, President of PCTS, psychotherapist, psychotraumatologist, Poland and Maryana Savytska, psychologist, Ukraine

Journalism workshop

Ethical journalism, how to report, write, talk about the trauma of war based on the principles of Nadia Murad • hosted by Olena Apchel, theater artist and director, SEMA Ukraine

14.00-15.00 Summary and closing of the Conference