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Brief Abstract of Proposed Research Assignment

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Refugees and IDP's camps as sites of insecurity for women

Under the Module **Gendered nature of forced migration**, I intend to research more deeply the violence that women face in camps where they found shelter. Refugee women are extremely vulnerable to sexual violence, as well as other forms of violence, in various ways. From the moment they decide, or are forced to, leave their homes, they may be assaulted by the military, by gangs, by border guards or smugglers. In many cases, in their flight, they are unaccompanied; they are separated from male members of their families and have to travel through unsafe areas, being exposed to any kind of violence.

This violence do not cease when they find shelter in a refugee or IDP camp. Political and ethnic disputes may still take place in the camp and the women can be raped as a method of persecution. While in camp, the women find themselves dependents on others for water, food and assistance. This situation can lead to abuse of power and women turn vulnerable to demands for sexual access in order to get any assistance.

Also the camp location or the camp layout can lead to sexual assaults. Some camps are located in dangerous areas, where conflicts are taking place, and might be attacked. When camps are not well lit, when toilets are far from sleeping facilities and isolated in the camp, when there are not night patrols, or when women need to leave the camp to look for water and food, women are exposed to insecurity and might face violence.

Due to the stigmatization of rape inside the communities, women survivors of sexual violence often do not denounce the crime and do not look for assistance, which causes an intense physical and psychological trauma to the victim and make it difficult to quantify and identify the cases of violence inside a camp.

Women in this situation have no voice. They cannot represent themselves and depend on others who should represent them. When they have no voice, they are not able to access the rights they are entitled to. While in camps, women have their privacy, individuality and identity ignored. When a woman cannot speak for herself she is denied her right to make her decisions and to take care of her life.

The objective of this research is to find concrete examples of violence towards women inside refugee or IDP camps worldwide and observe how camp managers have dealt with these situations. Also this research will propose a set of recommendations in order to avoid any kind of violence towards women living in camps.