



Serious and Organised Crime and GBV

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Query:

1. What evidence is there of the extent to which Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), who are fighting corruption/asset stripping/state capture, face gendered risks, including GBV, by those corrupt Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs)¹ they seek to expose and/or hold to account? Please provide any specific examples.
2. What evidence is there that PEPs, who are also members of Organised Criminal Groups and engaging, for example, in public procurement/budgetary fraud and/or rent seeking, also perpetrating GBV? Please provide any available examples.

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1. Overview

The evidence on the links between serious and organised crime (SOC) and GBV remains at an early stage. This rapid research query has been conducted as systematically as possible, under tight time constraints (three days), and assesses that the evidence on gendered risks facing WHRDs is 'limited' and on Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) engaging in GBV is 'none', according to DFID's (2014) How to Note on Assessing the Strength of Evidence. No systematic reviews were identified on this topic. See table below for assessment of strength of the evidence.

Research into SOC and PEPs remains challenging due to the methodological and ethical difficulties in conducting research on this issue. Organised criminal activities, such as corruption, asset stripping, state capture are mostly hidden and underreported, making it difficult to conduct reliable empirical research. In addition, very few cases lead to prosecution which can constrain the amount of evidence in the public domain. For obvious reasons, investigations and fieldwork can be dangerous for researchers. The links with gendered risks and GBV are also underreported, as are PEP's perpetration of GBV, partly due to women's concerns and fears about reporting their experiences of GBV to authorities more generally as well as the particular power that PEPs and serious organised groups may have over actors in the security and justice sector (Arskova and Allum, 2014). The research agenda has also been shaped by the overrepresentation of male researchers in

¹ The term 'politically exposed persons' (PEPs) refers to people who hold high public office. PEPs - as well as their families and persons known to be close associates - are required to be subject to enhanced scrutiny by firms subject to the Money Laundering Regulations 2007 (Financial Conduct Authority, 2017).

organised crime research, which has tended to ignore the experiences of women (UNODC, 2019). In addition, research on political violence against women typically focuses on particular contexts (in conflict, during elections) and types of violence (physical/sexual non-partner violence, but excluding harassment, threats, or intimate partner violence) (Kishi et al, 2019).

	Strength of Evidence	Assessment of evidence strength	Examples from
Gendered risks facing WRHDs	Limited	Moderate to low quality studies, low levels of consistency. Most studies are low-quality observational studies that only look partially at the links	Azerbaijan, Libya, Ukraine, Iraq, Russia, Malta, South Africa, Guatemala, Brazil
PEPs engaging in GBV	None	No/few studies exist – any that do are low quality. Evidence comes mainly from news reports. Links are hard to establish from evidence.	Honduras, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ukraine

Key findings from this rapid evidence review include:

- **WRHDs face gendered risks, including GBV, from corrupt PEPs they seek to expose and/or hold to account.** Section 3 highlights examples from Azerbaijan, Libya, Ukraine, Iraq, Russia, Malta, South Africa, Guatemala, and Brazil.
- **Threats to WRHD’s safety and security are often gendered or sexualised,** and attacks can be extremely violent. For example, Libyan WRHDs who fight corruption have been subjected to degrading slurs about “immoral” acts, such as having sex outside marriage or engaging in sex work, as well as more violent attacks, abductions and killings.
- **Children and pets of WRHDs fighting corruption can be targets of attacks – often as a form of intimidation or a warning to stop investigating corruption.** In Honduras, female journalist Karol Cabrera was looking into corruption by the state telecommunications company and a congressman close to the former president when her daughter and grandson were murdered and she received a warning: “we’re going to cut off your tongue” (Funes, 2018). In South Africa, former public prosecutor Thuli Madonsela’s children were threatened when she began speaking out and investigated complaints regarding public spending of former President Zuma. In Malta, female journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was investigating corruption related to the Panama Papers when her three dogs were poisoned and had their throats slit - part of a pattern of intimidation before Galizia herself was killed in a car bomb (see Sections 3 and 4).
- **WRHDs that expose corruption are increasingly facing gendered risks and GBV in online spaces.** For example, threats against female journalists reporting on corruption in Azerbaijan have taken on a distinct gendered character, calling them ‘immoral’ with intimate, sexual images shared online (see Section 3). There is also evidence that organised criminal groups are engaging in sexual extortion (so called sextortion), although no evidence was found of PEPs’ involvement.
- **There is limited evidence of PEPs engaging in GBV** in terms of numbers of cases and ability to attribute causality. Very limited evidence could be found linking PEPs’ activity in corruption, including in public procurement/budgetary fraud and/or rent seeking, and their perpetration of GBV. Possible exceptions are the murders of Sherill Hernández and Berta Cáceres in Honduras (see Section 4), although these are still under investigation.

- **There is also some evidence of the interlinkages between corruption by PEPs and organised criminal group activity in the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation.** The extent of the involvement of PEPs varies and is difficult to prove, although case studies from Ukraine and Nigeria (see Section 4) suggest that at the very least PEPs may offer ‘weak protection’ to human trafficking groups either by turning a blind eye or through official complicity.

Particular gaps in the evidence and therefore priorities for future research include:

- **Limited research exploring the connections between PEPs, organised crime and gendered risks including GBV, as well as how gendered norms affect the dynamic.** For example, although there is evidence that PEPs are involved in organised criminal groups and/or engaging in public procurement/budgetary fraud and/or rent seeking, and there is evidence of the links between GBV and organised criminal groups, there is limited evidence exploring the interconnections. No research could be identified on how social norms around gender and power, as well as constructions of toxic masculinities might result in WRHDs being targets or PEPs engaging in organised crime and GBV.
- **Limited research about how PEPs are involved in different forms of GBV,** with studies tending to focus on the most reported type of GBV – the murder of women journalists and human rights defenders. There is little information available on PEP’s perpetration of intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse.
- **Lack of systematic examination of the role of intersecting inequalities** such as gender, race/ethnicity, age, caste, sexual orientation, religion and disability to explore which groups of women and girls are likely to be at highest risk of GBV from PEPs and organised criminal groups involved in corruption/asset stripping/state capture.
- **Few rigorous studies looking at how widespread the issue is or at how it is changing over time,** with most reports providing a ‘snapshot’ of GBV by a particular individual or group, rather than systematically examining the extent of gendered risks and GBV.

2. Methodology

This methodology is described below.

Search strategy: Studies were identified through searches using Google and relevant electronic databases (PubMed, Science Direct, and Google Scholar) for priority sources. Key search terms included: organised crime, criminal gangs, politicians, corruption, fraud, rent-seeking, asset stripping, state capture AND GBV, violence, rape, sexual abuse, sextortion, threats, women, women human rights defenders, women activists, anti-corruption work, gender, trafficking

Criteria for inclusion: To be eligible for inclusion in this rapid mapping, evidence had to fulfil the following criteria:

- **Focus:** Research, studies and grey literature (including blogs and news articles) on GBV and Serious and Organised Crime (SOC), focusing on gendered risks against WHRDs, who are fighting corruption/asset stripping/state capture by those corrupt PEPs they seek to expose and/or hold to account, as well as evidence that PEPs are also perpetrating GBV.
- **Time period:** 2000 – June 2019.
- **Language:** English.
- **Publication status:** publicly available – in almost all cases published online.
- **Geographical focus:** Global, including the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Russia

3. Evidence of gendered risks facing WHRDs

The situation for women human rights defenders (WHRDs) is worsening globally according to a recent report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (UN General Assembly, 2019). WHRDs are recognised as being at increased gendered risks as they are being targets of threats, abuse and violent attacks because of their work promoting and defending not only women's human rights and gender equality, but various human rights issues. This includes women fighting against corruption/asset stripping/state capture.

This rapid research did not identify any systematic evidence review of the extent to which WHRDs are facing gendered risks and GBV from Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) they seek to expose and hold accountable.

However, individual cases have been identified from across the world. The cases cannot speak of the extent to which WHRDs working in this space are facing gendered risks, and in most of the cases the perpetrators of the threats/attacks have not been identified, hence the direct linkages to PEPs are often not officially established.

Nevertheless, the cases illustrate how women seeking to expose corruption and hold PEPs accountable face risks and are direct targets of violent attacks, sometimes with deadly outcomes. As the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders notes, WHRDs face similar risks as male human rights defenders, but in addition they also face **gendered and intersectional risks rooted in gender stereotypes** and norms of who women are and how they should behave in the societies in which they live and work (UN General Assembly, 2019). The gendered risks/violence towards WHRDs in the examples that follows are explicitly visible to various extents; what they have in common is that they are women who are fighting/ fought various forms of corruption in and who have been vocal against politically and economically powerful elites, and they have been targets for threats and violent attacks that can be linked to their work and activism.

Examples of threats/attacks against WHRDs fighting corruption/asset stripping/state capture:

1. Azerbaijan, Sevinc Osmanqizi and Khadija Ismayilova – Sevinc Osmanqizi and Khadija Ismayilova are two Azerbaijani journalists who have reported on issues relating to allegations of corruption in the government and they have both been targeted by similar forms of smear campaigns at different times. The threats and violations have a distinct gendered character, as the smear campaigns target their public images and aim to reveal them as “immoral” women to the public by exposing intimate and sexual videos/pictures of them (Amnesty International, 2019).

In 2012, Ismayilova had been reporting on claimed ties between President Ilham Aliyev's family and a lucrative construction project in the country's capital Baku when she became target of blackmailing. She received a letter containing intimate pictures of her, captured by hidden cameras in her bedroom, and the sender threatened to “shame” her by spreading the pictures if she did not stop her journalistic work (Columbia Global Freedom of Expression, 2019). Ismayilova responded by stating on social media that she would not be stopped by the blackmailing attempts. Soon thereafter, videos of her captured by the same hidden camera were posted online and several newspapers contributed to spreading the videos, claiming them to be proof of her “immoral” character and anti-government stance (ibid.). The videos also caused reactions by some of her family members, and a male family member threatened her with a knife after he discovered the content of the videos (Amnesty International UK, 2019). Ismayilova reported the videos to several authorities but investigations were tampered with and after several unsuccessful attempts to have her case investigated by authorities, Ismayilova was instead herself arrested and charged in 2014 for several criminal offences, including corruption (Columbia Global Freedom of Expression, 2019). She was sentenced to prison for 7.5

years, which was later reduced to 3.5 years and she was released from custody in May 2016 (European Federation of Journalists, 2019). In January 2019, the European Court of Human Rights found that the Government of Azerbaijan had violated Ismayilova's right to privacy and failed to protect her right to privacy by not investigating the case (ibid.).

Sevinc Osmanqizi is another vocal voice against corruption in Azerbaijan who has recently been targeted by similar threats. She lives in exile in the US since 2012 following harassment against her but has continued to shed light on corruption and lack of good governance in Azerbaijan via her a YouTube channel (Amnesty International, 2019). In April 2019, Osmanqizi received messages from pro-government journalists who threatened to release intimate photos and videos of her online if she does not stop her journalistic work and criticism of the Azerbaijani government. Before the smear campaign against her started, Osmanqizi run a series of programmes focused on issues of corruption in Azerbaijan's oil and gas sector (ibid.).

2. Libya, Salwa Bugaighis and Fareeha al Barkwai – Research by Amnesty International (2018) reveals that Libyan women who are vocal against corruption are at risk of GBV (Amnesty International, 2018). The violations range from degrading slurs referring to claimed “immoral” acts by the women such as having sex outside marriage or engaging in sex work, to violent attacks, abductions and killings (ibid.). Two prominent Libyan WHRD who have been victims of such attacks are Salwa Bugaighis and Fareeha al Barkwai. Al Barkwai, a representative of Derna City in the Parliament and former member of the General National Congress, was shot to death in her car in July 2014 (Farhat, 2017). Bugaighis, a lawyer and active protester against Gaddafi's regime, was attacked by five men and shot to death in June 2014 (Hilsum, 2014). They were both described as active protesters and vocal against corruption (Farhat, 2017; Hilsum, 2014).

3. Ukraine, Kateryna Handzyuk – In July 2018, anti-corruption activist and member of the Kherson city council Kateryna Handzyuk was attacked with acid and died from her injuries three months later (Khan, 2018). During the three months between the attack and her death, she continued to be active on social media, calling for continued anti-corruption protests. Handzyuk is one of many anti-corruption campaigners in Ukraine who have been attacked. According to media reporting, a handful of perpetrators of attacks have been arrested but none of the people behind the attacks have been identified (ibid.).

4. Iraq, Saud Al-Ali – WHRDs in Iraq are at risk of harassment, humiliations aiming to publicly shame women, threats, physical and sexual violence, and killings (Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, 2018). Iraq saw an increase of attacks against WHRDs in 2018, with several killings. A report by Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights and Minority Rights Group International (2018) states that assassination of women activists in Iraq is a “phenomenon long-associated with religious inspired militias” (Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, 2018, p. 23). One of the killed activists was Saud Al-Ali who was shot to death on a street in central Basra in September 2018. She had been involved in protests demanding better services and calling for the elimination of corruption. The first police reports stated that her killing was a “private affair”, but activists soon expressed scepticism and following a public outcry, the Prime Minister said he would launch further investigation as the killings as “appeared to be organized” (referring to Al-Ali as well as three other publicly known women who were killed recently) (ibid.).

5. Russia/ Chechnya, Elena Milashina – WHRD and investigative journalist Elena Milashina has at several occasions received threats, as well as been subject to harassment and violent attacks. Milashina journalistic work covers Chechnya and other republics in the Northern Caucasus and focuses on civil society crackdowns and human rights abuses, including issues of corruption in Chechnya (Front Line Defenders, 2016). Following her coverage of Ramzan Dzhaldinov's story, a Chechnyan human rights activists who has been vocal about corruption and misuse of public funds by

Chechnyan authorities, she received several threats in December 2016 from people who claim to be high-ranking Chechen officials (ibid.).

6. Malta, Daphne Caruana Galizia – Journalist and anti-corruption campaigner Daphne Caruana Galizia was killed by a bomb in her car in 2017 after leading an investigation on corruption in Malta following the Panama papers (Ruddick, 2017). The murder is yet not solved, and the Guardian reports that no politicians have been questioned as part of the investigation despite Galizia's reporting on government corruption at the highest levels (Atwood, 2018). Her murder was preceded by threats, online harassment and attacks. For instance, Galizia's three dogs were killed and her house set on fire (ibid.).

7. South Africa, Thuli Madonsela – Former Public Protector Thuli Madonsela was outspoken about corruption during her time in the role and received numerous threats as a consequence. Among other things, she investigated complaints regarding public spending on Jacob Zuma's private home and was behind several reports which presented evidence of widespread state capture in Zuma's regime (England, 2015). Madonsela has received death threats against herself as well as threats of attacks targeting her children (Omarjee, 2017).

8. Guatemala, Claudia Escobar – Claudia Escobar is a former magistrate at the Court of Appeals in Guatemala who now lives in exile in the US. Having observed widespread corruption in Guatemala's judiciary, Escobar became the lead whistle-blower of a corruption case involving many high-level political officials, including the vice-president and the former president of the Congress (Arzaba, 2019). The same people that were accused for corruption then started a campaign against her to destroy her professional reputation, and she received a series of threats, which forced her to leave Guatemala for the US in 2015 (ibid.).

9. Brazil, Marielle Franco – In March 2018, Marielle Franco, a Rio de Janeiro city council member (for the leftist Socialism and Liberty Party) was murdered. As well as an advocate for black women, the LGBT community and youth, Franco was also a campaigner against corruption and police brutality (Arradon, 2019). She spoke out frequently about extrajudicial killings and a police force she believed was excessively aggressive. Before her death, Franco raised public concerns about the President deploying the army in police operations in Rio (Langlois, 2018). In March 2019, two former police officers were arrested and charged with her murder. The case has "highlighted deep corruption in Brazil's police forces, including connections to militias and paramilitary groups that control large swaths of the state" (Prengham and Kaiser, 2019).

4. Evidence of PEPs engaging in GBV

This rapid research did not identify any established evidence or examples of how PEPs who are also members of Organised Criminal Groups perpetrate GBV. However, a gendered form of corruption that has received some attention in the broader literature exploring the linkages between gender and corruption, is **sexual extortion (so called sextortion)**. Sextortion is a form of corruption where instead of demanding money, the person asking for bribes demands sexual acts (Bigio, 2016). Sextortion is believed to be a widespread form of corruption, however, it is difficult to establish its extent and prove who are behind sextortion as it is less likely to be reported compared to other forms of corruption, and very few cases that are reported lead to prosecution (ibid.). Sextortion is furthermore not commonly captured in corruption statistics (ibid.). An example that witness of how common sextortion is in some settings, is that 9 out of 10 women in Tanzania's public sector reported having experienced sexual harassment from senior male officials when applying for a job, looking for a promotion or seeking a service (Makoye, 2015). Online sextortion is also a growing problem, where criminals persuade people into performing sexual acts, and then demand money or coerce people

into further sexual acts by threatening to spread the images or videos they have recorded (NCA, 2019). There is evidence that organised criminal groups are behind online sextortion (ibid.). However, no specific cases of whether and how these groups have specifically targeted WHRDs have been identified as part of this query.

Case study examples of evidence that PEPs are possibly engaging in SOC and GBV are provided in the following section.

Case Studies from Honduras

The complex overlap between politics and SOC in Honduras is well-documented, as are the high rates of GBV and femicide (Nazario, 2019; La Prensa, 2017; Dotson and Frydman, 2017). There is some evidence that PEPs who are also engaged in organised crime have been indirectly engaged in GBV in Honduras. Analysts have called the country a “captive state’ held hostage by organised crime, clandestine power groups and politicians easily swayed by both” (McSheffrey, 2018: 1). Organised crime is deeply woven into the fabric of Honduras’s kleptocracy. Examples of PEPs accused of drug trafficking include the following high profile cases:

- **President Hernández’s younger brother, Juan Antonio Hernández**, was arrested in America for ‘large-scale’ drug trafficking into the United States for over a decade. He was also accused of taking bribes from traffickers, and assuring government contracts for money-laundering front companies (Ernst and Malkin, 2018). There is no evidence that Hernández perpetrated GBV.
- **Former president Lomo’s son, Fabio Lobo**, pled guilty to drug-trafficking charges from 2009-14 with Los Cachiros (Honduran criminal organisation) and Mexican cartels, El Chapo and Sinaloa (Chayes, 2017). Other high-ranking politicians and donor-funded organisations were implicated.² In May 2019, an international anti-corruption mission in Honduras announced it is investigating the former president himself, Porfirio Lobo, on suspicion of involvement in laundering illegal drug money during his 2010-14 administration.³ Prosecutors believe the money laundered went through 21 public works contracts for companies set up by Los Cachiros with the ministry for public works worth an estimated 68.3 million lempiras (£2.2 million), according to an indictment.⁴ **No evidence was found of either President Lobo or his son personally committed GBV. However, Los Cachiros have reportedly conducted smear campaigns** against female journalists investigating them, with smears on the basis of their appearance, age and sexuality, as well as threats and murders. Female journalist Karol Cabrera has reported that her **daughter and grandson were murdered** by “a congressman very close to a former president of Honduras. And she says officials closed down the investigation into the attempt on her life ... Cabrera said she was told “we’re going to cut off your tongue”, with the persecution starting when she began to investigate and divulge alleged cases of corruption in the Honduras State telecommunications company under Zelaya’s government and the gifts of cars, jewellery, trips, and travel expenses from the Presidential Palace.” (Funes, 2018).
- **Honduran politician and businessman Ulises Sarmiento** was arrested in 2015 with suspected involvement in drug trafficking, including allegedly forming a network to transport drugs. His wife and her sister were assassinated in 2013 (Lohmuller, 2015).

² Including the current Security Minister Julian Pacheco, two Congressmen - Congressman Oscar Nájera for the department of Colon and Congressman Fredy Nájera for the department of Olancho - and the LIBRE mayor of Tocoa, Adán Funes. Rivera Maradiaga also mentioned the well-known Facussé family that owns the Honduran World Bank-funded company, Dinant Corporation (<http://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2017/3/10/world-bank-funded-dinant-corporation-implicated-in-drug-trafficking-again>)

³ Reuters (25 May 2019): <https://in.news.yahoo.com/honduran-anti-graft-mission-probes-ex-president-over-234134737.html>

⁴ Australian Associated Press (25 May 2019): <https://www.thesenior.com.au/story/6181592/ex-honduran-pres-probed-over-drug-money/?cs=9265>

Although it should be noted there is no publically available information that these particular PEPs have perpetrated GBV, there are well-established links between money laundering, drug trafficking, and GBV in the region, particularly sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking (Fraser, 2018).

High-profile examples of cases where Honduran PEPs with possible links to serious and organised crime have been accused of committing GBV include:

- **Murder of Sherill Hernández**, a 28-year-old agent for the Agencia Técnica de Investigación Criminal (ATIC), the agency charged with investigating the killings of women in Honduras. The New York Times has reported that Ms Hernández was having an affair with Wilfredo Garcia, the head of ATIC in San Pedro Sula, Honduras's second-largest city, and had concerns he was secretly aiding the MS-13 criminal gang. She was reportedly executed as she was about to share her concerns, although the ATIC agency quickly ruled it a suicide. The women's organisation, 'Women's Forum for Life' has questioned whether the leaders of an agency entrusted with investigating the murder of women are killing women themselves (Nazario, 2019).
- **Murder of Berta Cáceres**, a female indigenous activist, in March 2016. Cáceres won the prestigious Goldman Prize for grassroots environmental activism and her fight against the Agua Zarca Dam — a massive hydro project to be constructed on the sacred Gualcarque River in Río Blanco. An independent investigation by the Center for Justice and International Law into her death has revealed that senior executives of the private Honduran company behind the dam, Desarrollos Energéticos S.A. (Desa), may have been intricately involved in her murder with months of plotting her death. Eight suspects are currently in custody now, including a former Honduran Army lieutenant who directed the company's security until mid-2015 (McSheffrey, 2018).

Case Study from Ethiopia: Fraud, Corruption and GBV by Senior Officials at the State-run Metals and Engineering Corporation (METEC).

In November 2018, Ethiopian authorities arrested 63 officials for **fraud, corruption and human rights abuses**, including high-level officials and intelligence officers from the government-owned industrial enterprise, Metals and Engineering Corporation (METEC). METEC is a key industrial conglomerate linked to the country's military, and is involved in sectors from agriculture to construction. Among those detained was METEC's ex-director general Brigadier General Kinfe Dagne (Manek, 2018).

Investigations revealed that the **state-run METEC had allegedly made international procurements of over US\$2 billion without competitive bidding processes**, with some projects given to relatives of employees (OCCRP, 2018). METEC purchased five airplanes without any formal bid, and two ships from Ethiopian Shipping Lines at a reduced price under the pretext of using to transport heavy metals. The ships were renovated and used to transport contraband and weapons to Iran and other areas illegally (Ethiopia Observer, 2018).

The attorney general, Berhanu Tsegaye, also reported that investigators uncovered **serious abuses by security services at seven secret prisons** in Addis Ababa and elsewhere in Ethiopia. The abuses include gender-based violence, such as **women subjected to gang rape and men to sodomisation** (OCCRP, 2018). It is not clear from reporting whether the same senior officials who engaged in public procurement fraud also perpetrated GBV, or whether it was a culture of impunity where these crimes thrived. The reporting also does not make it clear the extent to which the PEPs are members of Organised Criminal Groups.

Case Studies from Nigeria

Corruption, PEPs and human trafficking networks: Several studies have highlighted how the Nigerian organised crime groups engaged in the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation have penetrated senior levels of the public sector structure in Nigeria as well as destination countries, particularly Italy (Austrian Red Cross/ACCORD, 2017; US Department of State, 2017). Also reportedly involved in trafficking networks are Consular Officers in some Embassies and High Commissions, as well as immigration officers and law enforcement agencies (Austrian Red Cross/ACCORD, 2017). There are reports of Nigerian PEPs benefiting from criminal activities they coordinate or support, including the financial proceeds which they help protect from seizure under money laundering laws (CCARHT, 2017).

Sexual violence and oil bunkering: There is considerable evidence of the links between organised criminal groups, political extortion and corruption in Nigeria (UNODC, 2005). UNODC (2005) have noted that the illegal export of oil, known as 'oil bunkering', is reported to have been facilitated by political authorities at a very high level. Armed criminal gangs competing for 'bunkering turf', stealing oil, and acting as hired muscle for politicians reportedly raped local women in the Niger Delta (BBC, 2009). Nigerian military personnel tasked with tackling the stolen oil business and associated conflict also reportedly committed rapes and sexual violence in the Niger delta (Asuni, 2009). Research⁵ revealed that the Nigerian armed forces viewed sexual violence as a "fringe benefit", as well as a way to "break up organising and protesting against the Nigerian Government and petrobusiness activities in Ogoniland" (Odoemene, 2012: 238). However, there is little evidence that PEPs engaging in oil bunkering have themselves perpetrated GBV.

Case Study from Ukraine: President Yanukovich

Former Ukrainian President, Viktor Fedorovich Yanukovich (2010-2014) has been widely criticised for '**massive** corruption and cronyism, including staffing police, judiciary, and tax services with people from the Donbas region, Yanukovich's eastern home region. During his Presidency, oligarchs controlled the state apparatus, mass media, and whole sectors of industry. Yanukovich and his associates, known as 'The Family', reportedly moved around \$40 billion of state assets to offshore accounts and companies they controlled. The US Treasury Department identified at least a dozen PEPs sending or receiving suspicious transfers. For example, the media has reported that a former minister of fuel and energy, Yuriy Boyko, moved \$400 million of state money through Latvia in order to purchase an oil drilling platform that cost only \$248 million (Kozyreva and Leopold, 2018).

After Yanukovich fled Ukraine, the EU imposed sanctions against 18 individuals, including Yanukovich, his two sons Oleksander and Viktor Jr, other former government members, and Serhiy Kurchenko, the man behind multiple business schemes for the Yanukovich family (Home Office, 2016). In January 2019, Yanukovich was sentenced *in absentia* to thirteen years' imprisonment for high treason by a Ukrainian court for deliberately violated Ukraine's sovereignty by asking Vladimir Putin to deploy Russia's armed forces in the country.

Yanukovich has been personally accused of being a member of a group of individuals who **brutally beat and raped a woman**. However, they allegedly bought off the victim and the criminal case was closed.⁶ More widely, the **trafficking of women and girls abroad for sexual exploitation** was a major problem. During Yanukovich's Presidency, the US Department of State (2014) expressed

⁵ For example, 54 in-person interviews and six focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with Ogoni men and women, including some victims of sexual violence (Odoemene, 2012)

⁶[In Russian] "Мог ли Янукович сесть в третий раз" (12 November 2009): https://gazeta.ua/ru/articles/poltava-newspaper/_mog-li-anukovich-sest-v-tretij-raz/315486

concerns that the Ukrainian government had identified significantly fewer trafficking victims (approximately a third of the number of victims identified in 2011), investigated fewer trafficking offences, and prosecuted fewer defendants. However, no publically available evidence of Yanukovich's or other Ukrainian PEP's involvement in trafficking of women and girls could be found.

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