

**A CRITIQUE ON THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL
STANDARDS PERTAINING TO DISPLACED WOMEN
IN THE CONTEXT OF ARMED CONFLICT**

*Wasantha Seneviratne **

ABSTRACT

Displacement creates numerous problems for women and exposes them to enormous risks. The main objective of this article is to identify the special vulnerability of displaced women engendered by armed conflict and to examine the applicable international legal standards which protect women in the context of conflict related displacement. This article focuses on their particular vulnerability considering the gendered dimension. Unlike refugee women, internally displaced women cannot apply for the protection embodied under international refugee law. Consequently, all internally displaced persons (IDPs), including women, have to look for the protection of the international law.

In discussing the legal standards pertaining to displaced women, relevant principles of international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law will be examined. Special emphasis will be devoted to discuss the relevant provisions included in the United Nations Guiding Principles pertaining to Internal Displacement, the London Declaration of International Law Principles on IDPs, UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women and its Protocol, four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and two Additional Protocols of 1977.

It will be concluded that since the Sovereign State is primarily responsible for the protection of its civilians, local authorities must safeguard the rights of displaced women. Displaced women, too, should be made aware of their legal rights and responsibilities.

* LL.B. (Hons) (Colombo), M.Phil in Law (Colombo), Attorney at Law, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of Colombo.