

**THE DOUBLE WEAKNESS OF GIRLS: DISCRIMINATION AND  
SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN HAITI**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper presents findings of an empirical research study conducted in the capital of Haiti, Port-au-Prince, exploring the cultural beliefs and criminal justice responses to practices of gender-based violence. Plagued by destitution, political instability and bloody confrontations among rival armed groups, Haiti endures the widespread use of systematic rape as a weapon of war affecting 50% of girls living in the conflict areas of Port-au-Prince. Through an involved fieldwork consisting of face-to-face open-ended interviews with informants from international and national institutions, governmental representatives and a few victims, this study proposes an understanding of the cultural root causes grounding the practices of discrimination and sexual violence against girls in the country as well as shedding light on the untold stories of victims suffering for the dual weakness of being women in a child's body. By means of an engaged analysis of the international human rights standards on the one hand, and the criminal legal responses on the other, this research offers a window to the dim vacuum between international law aspirations and human rights violations, revealing that the extant criminal judicial system remains largely inadequate and profoundly informed by corruption, internal dysfunctions and gender bias. This same analysis serves the purpose of envisaging potential strategies, future preventive approaches as well as legal proposals and policy recommendations aimed at ensuring effective protection for girls in Haiti and honoring the ultimate quest for human rights.

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