Rape in the Media:
Case Summaries of High-Profile Rape Attacks & Analysis of the Societal Factors Surrounding Them

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Introduction

When women between the ages of 15 and 44 are at a greater risk from rape and domestic violence than from cancer, car accidents, war and malaria combined; there is no question that violence against women poses a sizeable threat to women worldwide. Part I of this memorandum strives to contextualize that threat through the analysis of six rape cases; high profile attacks that swept the news in their respective countries and around the world. After presenting an overview of each case, Part II of the memorandum provides commentary on the societal commonalities surrounding these individual instances of violence against women and concludes with a discussion of crosscutting issues impacting each of the cases, which includes topics such as social norms, underreporting and public outrage.

Part I

Case #1, Brazil:

What Happened: A 21-year-old American student was raped in a transit van by a group of men, beating her and her male companion on March 30th of 2013 in Rio de Janeiro. The attack lasted six hours, with the perpetrators stopping at gas stations for fuel and refreshments in between stints. This same group of men was responsible for the rape of a working-class Brazilian woman the week before.

Public & Media Reaction: The first rape of the Brazilian woman committed by these men went unpublicized. Only after the group raped an American woman did the media pick up the story. Many blame class divisions for this selective coverage. Societal tensions, provoked by a general sentiment that the Brazilian government is more dedicated to the protection of its wealthy
citizens than its poor, run rampant in Rio. “We’re living in a schizophrenic situation, in which important advances have been made in women reaching positions of influence in our society. At the same time, the situation for many women who are poor remains atrocious,” Rogeria Peixinho, director of the Brazilian Women’s Network, said of the class divide situation. Experts cite these “extreme class divisions” as the reason for the total lack of discussion regarding the initial assault until after the rape of the second victim.\(^1\)

**Government Action:** Mayor Eduardo Paes incited public anger by placing a ban on transit vans in the more affluent South Zone of Rio, just days after the American student’s rape. Although the Mayor’s spokespeople denied that the ban was related to the rapes, many accused him of giving “priority to the safety of the wealthy seaside areas over grittier parts of the city where the vans are still allowed to operate.”\(^2\)

Eleonora Menicucci, Brazil’s minister for women’s affairs, vehemently denied this opinion that the Brazilian government protects its wealthier citizens to a greater extent than its poorer citizens, stating that Brazil encourages women to report rapes and perpetrators of rape are prosecuted without regard for their socioeconomic status or that of their victims.\(^3\)

The two policemen responsible for investigating the first rape were eventually fired for their discrepancies.\(^4\)

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Case #2, Egypt:

What Happened: A Dutch reporter was gang-raped by five men during a protest she was covering in Cairo in late June of 2013. Her injuries required surgical procedures, but she has since been released from medical care. The attack was strikingly similar to the assault against American journalist, Lara Logan, in 2011.

The issue at hand, however, is larger than just the rape of two foreign journalists. Egyptian women who choose to participate in protests take on a very real risk of sexual assault every time they enter Tahrir Square, a central space for public protest in Cairo, and the location in which the rapes of both journalists occurred. For instance, on June 30th of 2013 alone, 46 mob assaults against women occurred, and this figure does not include any additional unreported instances.

The attacks seem to happen in a common fashion, in which men pull the female victim away from the protest group and then surround her in a tight circle, making it hard for rescuers to reach her.

Public & Media Reaction: Men and women alike have taken to the streets during the protests to attempt to deter these raping sprees. Non-profit organizations are striving hard to do their part. One such organization, Op Anti-Sexual Harrasment/Assault (Opantish), intervenes during reported attempted assaults and works to promote awareness of the sexual violence issue in the Square. Additionally, Opantish operates Harassmap, a site that allows victims and witnesses to

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Individuals as well are banning together to help prevent sexual violence. For example, groups of men have formed “human shields,” to block attackers from entering all female sections of the Square. Individuals have also organized smaller protests in the neighborhoods of Cairo in order to give women and children a safer place to express their political sentiments.

Nevertheless, cross sections of society deny that these attacks are occurring or claim the attacks are only happening to those women dressing or acting promiscuously. Some cite the public efforts to prevent attacks as evidence that no sexual assaults are taking place. One Egyptian man, referencing the male barriers protecting women protestors asked, “Look, they’re protecting the women. What sexual harassment are they talking about?”

**Government Action:** Those victims who are brave enough to attempt using legal channels to prosecute their attackers confront many legal obstacles. Very few reports lead to arrests. Of the 173 sexual assaults reported from Tahrir Square and in front of the Presidential Palace between June 30th and July 9th of 2013, only one arrest was made as of July 9th. Moreover, legal professionals often discourage victims from pursuing their case. One sexual harassment lawyer told Amnesty International that frequently police officers registering the complaints, as well as prosecutors investigating the cases, encourage plaintiffs to drop the complaints and “forgive” the perpetrators.

When in danger of provoking international criticism, the Egyptian government has spoken out.

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11 Rape in Tahrir: The Frightening Reality Women Face at Egypt Protests, supra note 7.
12 Egypt’s women watch protests from sidelines amid fears of sexual violence, supra note 8.
with promises of reform and future legislation. “Sadly, these steps by the authorities seem to be nothing more than an attempt to deflect criticism,” writes Amnesty International’s Egypt researcher, Diana Eltahawy. A drafted law on violence against women was sent to the President and Prime Minister in June of this year, but it has since stalled out. Additionally, the Ministry of Interior’s newly established unit to address sexual harassment and violence has been relatively absent and inactive during this crucial time.

Some government statements appear to even bolster the common practice of victim blaming. A Shura Council (Upper House of Parliament) statement on the rapes in Tahrir Square reads: “Girls who join [the protests] do so knowing that they are in the middle of thugs and street types. She must protect herself before asking the Ministry of the Interior to do so. Sometimes a girl contributes 100 percent to her rape because she puts herself in those circumstances.”

Case #3, India:

What Happened: A 23-year-old female student was gang-raped and beaten after boarding a bus home from an evening at the movies in New Delhi, India. After the attack, the young woman and her male companion, who was beaten as well, were thrown from the bus and left naked and helpless on the side of the road. The pair was stranded for about 45 minutes before the police finally arrived. After two weeks of battling her severe injuries, the woman passed away.

Public & Media Reaction: The Indian public was enraged by the attack and many public

15 Egypt: Sexual assaults on women protestors continuing amid the political turmoil, supra note 14.
protests ensued, with protestors demanding strengthened punitive measures for rapists, such as the death penalty and even chemical castration. In a country where crimes against women affect 41% of the female population, the public response to this single case signaled that a tipping point had been reached. Protestors took to the streets, demanding that their voices be heard. Frustration and feelings of hopelessness were rampant. “I’m now beginning to feel that my government is not capable of understanding the situation, let alone solving it,” said one protester, Abhijit Sarkar, “During the candlelight vigil, policemen were actually laughing at us.”

**Government Action:** A week after the attack, a committee was formed by the Home Ministry to make suggestions for legislative changes to “improve Indian women’s safety.” The committee’s proposal was submitted to the legislature that passed a version of that legislation in March of 2013. The law, which makes stalking, voyeurism and sexual harassment a crime, allows repeat rapists and rapists whose attacks lead to the victim’s death to receive the death penalty and also criminalizes police neglect to register allegations of sexual attacks, was signed by the President in April of 2013.

There is, however, an adamantly dismissive segment of society (and government leadership) that continues to blame rape victims instead of the perpetrators of the crime. In reaction to the attack, politician Botsa Satyanarayana stated, “Do we roam in the streets at midnight as we got

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21 India Panel Seeks New Penalties for Sex Crimes, supra note 18.
Independence at midnight? It would have been better if the girl did not travel by a private bus at that time.” The women protesting the rape were “highly dented and painted” women who go “from discos to demonstrations,” said the son of India’s president, Abhijit Mukherjee. This cultural norm of victim blaming and trivializing the protests on behalf of the victims could be a sizeable obstacle to the success of any governmental reform efforts.

**Case #4, South Africa:**

**What Happened:** 17-year-old, Anene Booyson, was gang-raped, disemboweled and then dumped at a construction site in Bredasdorp, South Africa in February of 2013. Her severe injuries, the details of which her family asked authorities not to disclose, led to her unfortunate death.

**Public & Media Reaction:** Sexual violence is rife in South Africa, with 71% of women reporting to have been victims of sexual abuse. Research studies have shown 28% of men “reported having perpetrated rape.” This particular rape case, however, has provoked an unusually fervent response from both the media and the public. Albert Fritz, Western Cape provincial minister of social development, described the crime as a “tipping point,” prompting community response. Public protests broke out after the crime, as members of the small rural community chanted: “No violence! No Violence!” during a march to the crime scene, and community members drew together for memorial activities, such as one group of women that

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24 Amid Rape Fiasco, India’s Leaders Keep Up Insensitive Remarks, supra note 23.


27 Outrage grows over gang rape, slaying of girl in South Africa, supra note 25.
buried a cross where the attack occurred.\textsuperscript{28} Media attention also surged in response to the case, as newspapers worldwide covered the issue. One local radio station broadcasted a chime sound every four minutes, as an eerie reminder to listeners about the frequency of rape in South Africa.\textsuperscript{29}

**Government Action:** President Zuma addressed the tragedy in his State of Nation speech, calling for “unity in action to end the scourge of rape.”\textsuperscript{30} Describing the attack as “shocking, cruel and inhumane,” Zuma urged the courts to assign the “harshest sentences” for sexual violence crimes.\textsuperscript{31} While these statements in support of drumming up deterrence have been appreciated by the public, experts are skeptical as to what these government statements alone can do to combat the current societal norms. Rachel Jewkes, head of the Women’s Research Unit of South Africa’s Medical Research Council, conducted research confirming that there is widespread belief throughout South Africa that rape is a nonviolent crime. Jewkes’ interviews revealed that 62\% of boys over age 11 believed that “forcing someone to have sex was not an act of violence” and one-third of those interviewed felt that girls “enjoyed being raped.”\textsuperscript{32}

**Case #5, Ukraine:**

**What Happened:** A 29-year-old woman from Vradiyevka was thrown into a car, gang-raped and assaulted by two policemen. The woman suffered multiple skull fractures and numerous

\textsuperscript{28} Outrage grows over gang rape, slaying of girl in South Africa, *supra* note 25.


bruises on her body. While one of the policemen, as well as the man driving the vehicle, were quickly detained, the second policeman remained free due to his falsified alibi. At this time, all three suspects are under investigation.\textsuperscript{33}

**Public & Media Reaction:** The people of Vradiyevka were outraged by the suspected corruption among police authorities that could potentially impede the punishment of the law enforcement officials who allegedly committed the rape. Protesting outside the local police station, residents stormed the premises, broke doors and windows and ultimately set fire to the building.\textsuperscript{34} Protests also broke out on a national scale, with groups of activists rallying in the capital of Kiev, protesting police abuse and impunity.\textsuperscript{35} Some attribute the continued investigation of this case to these public protests. “I am 100 percent sure that had the people not risen up, this Dryzhak guy (one of the police officers accused of perpetrating the rape) would have come out clean, he would be investigating this very case,” local opposition activist Sehiy Maksimenko said.\textsuperscript{36}

**Government Action:** Attempting to counter the public’s accusations of police impunity, police chief Valery Koba stated that if the two police officers were guilty, this case would be, “an exception rather than the rule, if you look at the police as a whole.”\textsuperscript{37} Nevertheless, Ukrainians seem to disagree and feel that the police institution in Ukraine is highly corrupt. In a public

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} Maria Danilova, Ukraine Protestors Storm Police Station After Alleged Brutal Rape by Policeman, Huffington Post, (July 2, 2013), available at (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/02/ukraine-protestors-storm-police-station_n_3533814.html).
\item \textsuperscript{35} Associated Press, Brutal rape draws outrage over culture of corruption, impunity, Washington Post, (July 21, 2013), available at (http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/brutal-rape-draws-outrage-over-culture-of-corruption-impunity-in-ukraine/2013/07/21/00144ba4-f1d0-11e2-b2e0-0ecd9d3227c0_story.html).
\item \textsuperscript{36} Brutal rape draws outrage over culture of corruption, impunity, supra note 35.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Brutal rape draws outrage over culture of corruption, impunity, supra note 35.
\end{itemize}
opinion survey, the police authorities were rated 4.3 on a 1 to 5 corruption scale.\textsuperscript{38}

The government reacted in a dismissive nature towards the protests. The Interior Minister stated, “the forms of protest (chosen by the protestors in Vradyievka) are unacceptable,” and the Interior Ministry has filed charges against the protestors for hooliganism.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Case #6, United States:}

\textbf{What Happened:} A 16-year-old girl was raped on August 11\textsuperscript{th} of 2012 by two high school football players, Ma’Lik Richmond, 16, and Trent Mays, 17. The attack occurred at a high school party in Stuebenville, a small town in Ohio. Witnesses testified that the victim was in a drunken state and had been vomiting throughout the evening of the attack.\textsuperscript{40} Photos of the victim in various states of nudity were shared on Facebook and further distributed on Twitter, accompanied by hashtags like “#drunkgirl” and “#rape.”\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{Public & Media Reaction:} The local community split along a fault line of either siding with the football players, stating that the victim had put herself in a position to be violated, or siding with the victim, disturbed that the young athletes were protected from punishment due to their local fame as football stars. Media outlets across the nation picked up on the case immediately and covered it all the way to the verdict in March of 2013.

The national public chimed in with their opinions online. Students at the University of Oregon

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\textsuperscript{39} Ukranian Week, Beyond Tolerance, (July 8, 2013), available at (http://ukrainianweek.com/Society/83795).


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produced an anti-rape video depicting a young man taking care of an incapacitated young woman and stating that, “real men treat women with respect.”

The video went viral and, to date, has almost 2.5 million views. Even celebrities commented publically about the case, such as Serena Williams, who insensitively stated in an interview with Rolling Stone that, “she [the victim] shouldn’t have put herself in that position.”

Furious responses to Williams flooded Twitter, with replies like, “By your words, @serenawilliams, you aligned yourself with rapists today and crushed victims everywhere.”

**Government Action:** While no official statement from the President is available on the White House website (www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-and-releases), the Ohio Attorney General did make a statement, directing attention to the fact that rape is a nation-wide issue in American society. “What happened here is shocking, and it is appalling. But what's even more shocking and appalling is that crimes of sexual assault are occurring every Friday night and every Saturday night in big and small communities all across this country.”

Societal norms will need to be addressed in order to combat issues of rape in the U.S.. With only 1 in 10 rapes being reported, patterns that fail to criminalize rapists have become the norm.

Evidence of this desensitization to the issue of rape is seen in the conduct of witnesses to the

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43 The Huffington Post, Serena Williams: Steubenville Rape Victim ‘Shouldn’t Have Put Herself in that Position’, (June 18, 2013), available at (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/18/serena-williams-steubenville-rape-victim_n_3462519.html).
44 Serena Williams: Steubenville Rape Victim ‘Shouldn’t Have Put Herself in that Position’, supra note 43.
Steubenville rape. Videos of witnesses joking that the victim was “dead” and laughing that she was urinated on were recorded and eventually broadcast on YouTube.48

Part II

Analysis:

While surface level similarities amongst these cases are apparent (i.e. two of the cases occurring on public transportation), this memorandum will assess the greater common societal circumstances surrounding these attacks, such as the norms that provide for their occurrence, public outrage regarding the way authorities handled the case and issues of underreporting.

a. Social Norms of Victim Blaming & Justification

The high profile rape cases discussed in this memorandum have spawned serious governmental efforts to combat sexual violence. These efforts, however, are sometimes thwarted by social norms affirming the fallacy that rape is the fault of the victim, or another outside force, instead of the perpetrator. This ideology can poison a society’s ability to seriously battle sexual violence. In fact, research shows that societal views about rape can influence the prevalence of rape, by either working to combat it, or reinforcing views about gender that encourage violence against women. “The predominant underlying factors for rape perpetration are environmental, and central among them are gender attitudes,” writes Rachel Jewkes, Director of the Gender and Health Research Unit of the Medical Research Council.49

An example of problematic beliefs regarding the causes of rape can be seen in South Africa,

where research shows 70% of male perpetrators of rape justify their actions with sentiments of sexual entitlement. Sexual entitlement, or the idea that women are obligated to provide men with sexual satisfaction, plagues societies, leaving male rapists feeling entitled to the sexual acts that they force upon their victims. This ideology, like that of victim blaming, allows the perpetrator to redirect blame for the crime, justifying their actions through the identification of a stimulus for the crime outside of themselves. While President Zuma’s response to the Booysen Case (Case #4 in this memorandum) attempted to encourage governmental efforts to curb the rape epidemic in South Africa, underlying norms of sexual entitlement and views that rape is a nonviolent crime could impede any on-the-ground changes that reformatory measures may try to bring about.

Social norms pose a threat to future reforms striving to eradicate rape in Egypt as well. For example, one study found that 53.8% of men view sexual harassment as a consequence of women’s indecent public attire. These men noted that going unveiled in public is the primary cause of sexual harassment. This justification directs blame away from perpetrators and encourages victim blaming, perpetuating societal feelings that women who are sexually harassed are getting what they deserve. Only 0.1% of men from that same study reported having intervened when they witnessed sexual harassment. This statistic quantifies the general feeling of ambivalence toward victims. In light of the entrenched social norms to which these figures nod, the ability for surface-level efforts, such as establishing units to address sexual harassment and violence, to decrease sexual harassment without dealing with underlying societal sentiments

51 Zuma addresses rape in State of Nation speech, supra note 30.
52 The Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights, Clouds in Egypt’s Sky, (2008), (18), available at (http://egypt.unfpa.org/Images/Publication/2010_03/6eeeb05a-3040-42d2-9e1c-2bd2e1ac8cac.pdf).
53 Clouds in Egypt’s Sky, supra note 52 at 18.
54 Clouds in Egypt’s Sky, supra note 52 at 18.
surrounding the issue, is questionable.

In order to deter sexual violence, India will also have to wrestle with deeply engrained societal tendencies to engage in victim blaming as an explanation for rape and other forms of sexual harassment. As a UN Women study in New Delhi (India’s capital and second most populated city) found, “Men and boys from across the socio-economic classes pointed out that ‘women bring [sexual harassment] on themselves by their behavior and dress.’”55 There is a subculture in India that sees rape and sexual harassment as the victim’s fault and these beliefs affect how women handle their attacks. Female respondents to the same UN Women study felt that, in the event that they were harassed, it was best not to involve their families or authorities. “If we tell our parents about boys harassing us, they would blame us only and say that it is our fault; even the neighbours would start pointing to our faults. Our parents might even stop us going out of the house,” one group of girls said. A governmental response to the gang-rape described in Case #3, however, depends upon proper reporting, which is a prerequisite to the legislation’s harsher sentencing provisions actually taking place.

Social norms that encourage victim blaming and justification of rape can counter governmental efforts to deter sexual violence. Legislation, as well as other actions on behalf of the State, will need to target these underlying ideals in order to successfully address the many factors at the root of this problem.

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b. Public Outrage Regarding Government Response

On one hand, while social change is needed to overcome gender-based violence, on the other hand, there are segments of society in many countries that are highly disturbed by the epidemic of violence against women. In this sector of society, we see another common factor amongst the cases presented in Part I of this memorandum: community outrage. Often, high-profile rape cases spark frustration with a government’s current method of preventing and prosecuting rape attacks. In these cases, the public sometimes seizes the chance to sound off about rape issues in their area. On the surface, this public frustration may seem to be merely reactive in nature, however, protests like those in the cases earlier noted can sometimes lead to greater reform.

In the Ukrainian Case #5, public outrage manifested itself in a large protest, during which community members stormed a police station after learning that the police officers responsible for the recent rape were going unpunished. As noted before, some experts feel this public refusal to stand for police impunity is the main reason that the accused police officers will face a full investigation and trial in the future, instead of being able to utilize their status as law enforcement to exempt themselves from criminal prosecution. In this case, civic uprising played an important role in the process of bringing the accused perpetrators to justice.

As previously mentioned, protests also broke out on a wide scale after the gang-rape in India, Case #3. The public took to the street, calling for strengthened punishments for rapists. These demonstrations were met with government response and new legislation, which increases the penalties for sexual violence crimes, was pushed forward and signed into law. Regardless of whether this new legislation has made great strides in decreasing the prevalence of rape and

56 Ukraine Police Unit Stormed After Brutal Rape, supra note 34.
57 Brutal rape draws outrage over culture of corruption, impunity, supra note 35.
58 India Rape Law Passes Parliament, supra note 22.
sexual violence in India in general, it has served as a formal statement that the Indian
government is willing to work with the public on this issue that protests and outrage have shown
to be a matter that they care greatly about.

Conversely, the public outrage in Case #1 from Brazil did not physically manifest itself in
protest. As noted above, the class divide in Brazil is a salient political issue and, when reacting to
the gang-rape, many Brazilians viewed the attack through this lens of class division. Disturbed
that the perpetrators had previously raped a working-class Brazilian woman with no
repercussions, the public was further enraged because governmental solutions directly targeted
more affluent areas in Rio and seemingly ignored locales with lower income residents.59 There
was no media coverage, however, of large protests like those in India or a burst of community
rage seen in Ukraine. Government officials, instead of being forced to answer to a public
uprising, mitigated the situation with rhetoric, citing a rape case involving a lower class 14-year-
old girl whose perpetrators were brought to justice as proof that the government does not only
serve the wealthy.60 Nevertheless, critics remain unconvinced, pointing to the location of that
crime (Leblon, an exclusive area in Rio) as the deciding factor in the prompt investigation of the

case.61

Public demonstrations are important to note when assessing high profile rape cases. These
displays of community outrage can sometimes force governments to keep a close eye on
instances of corruption and or implement legislative changes. Without a mobilized public,
governments have greater freedom to delay reform and continue conducting anti-sexual violence
strategies in the same status quo manner that they were before.

60 Public Rapes Outrage Brazil, Testing Ideas of Image and Class, supra note 1.
c. Underreporting

In a number of the countries referenced in this memo, a large percentage of rape cases go unreported. The ability of law enforcement and governmental authorities to make informed decisions about policies and programs to prevent rape and sexual assault, however, is dependent upon having access to data that gives them a solid understanding of the problem that they are trying to solve. For this reason, the underreporting of rape attacks affects more than just the individual victims and perpetrators involved in specific undocumented crimes. A large number of unreported rapes creates an obstacle that stands in the way of policy makers and law enforcement, forcing them to hypothesize about the scale of the situation they are trying to resolve.

One study highlights serious issues of underreporting in South Africa, showing that only one in 25 rapes in the province of Guateng (which contains Johannesburg, South Africa’s largest city) is reported.62 Some point to prosecution issues as the rationale for this low reporting rate in South African rape cases. In the year 2000, only 45% of reported cases were taken to court and, of those cases, 47% were withdrawn, with only 16.5% resulting in a guilty verdict.63 “A woman, man or child laying a rape or indecent assault charge only had a one in 13 chance of seeing their rapist convicted,” states the National Management Guidelines for Sexual Assault.64

In Egypt, victims are sometimes directly dissuaded from reporting their rapes. For example, as noted before, Amnesty International found that, on numerous occasions, law enforcement officers attempted to “pressure the plaintiff not to ‘create a scandal’ or blame her for the incident

64 National Management Guidelines for Sexual Assault, (8), supra note 63.
based on her choice of attire or her ‘inappropriate’ presence in public.” 65 Tied to norms of victim blaming, these behaviors convince victims that it is better to remain silent than to report their attackers.

The United States is not immune to underreporting issues either. As cited earlier in Case #6, only 1 in 10 rapes in the U.S. are reported. 66 Fears surrounding how a reported rape would affect one’s reputation appear to be paramount to victims in determining whether or not to formally report their attackers. Research from the National Women’s Study found that 58.7% of victims do not report their rape case due to a concern for being blamed by others. 67 Furthermore, victims reported concerns about those close to them find out about the rape as deterring them from reporting their attackers. 55.5% of respondents said they did not report their cases due to concerns that family members would find out about the rape and 53.2% cited a fear of other non-family members finding out about the rape as the rationale for not reporting their attack. 68

This problematic tendency to forgo reporting calls into question the yearly rape statistics distributed by countries, as well as the ability for countries to meaningfully address a phenomenon that they have yet to quantify in its entirety. Countries experiencing epidemics of violence against women should strive to eliminate the underlying factors that result in women not reporting their attacks. Doing so will not only increase the levels of accurate data collection, but also begin to shift the societal norm of silence and give voice to victims of sexual violence.

65 Gender-based Violence Against Women Around Tahrir Square, supra note 13 at 10.
66 American Society Doesn’t Deter Rapists, supra note 47.
68 Is Reporting of Rape on the Rise?, (815), supra note 67.
Conclusion

Part I of this memorandum briefly summarized six high profile rape cases that swept the media in their respective countries and abroad. Part II proceeded to analyze three common societal factors surrounding those cases: social norms of justification and victim blaming, public outrage linked to government action and underreporting leading to inaccurate statistics.

These common social dynamics played an active role in the outcome of the cases assessed in this memorandum. Social norms of justification and victim blaming advance a false belief that rape is the fault of external forces, whether that be the victim or a cultural custom, instead of the perpetrator, creating a commonly embraced fallacy that can counteract governmental efforts to curb sexual violence. Moreover, while some may view the public as merely a reactive force in the arena of global politics, public outrage expressed through powerful protests can influence governments to take action on particular issues, such as violence against women. Additionally, underreporting is a phenomenon that precludes reform efforts, creating incomplete crime statistics and impeding the ability of strengthened penalties in legislation to have much of an effect, resulting in numerous perpetrators going unpunished.

It is important that the public is aware of the atrocious acts of violence against women that occur in every corner of the world. It is also imperative that the general public acquires the tools to see these cases as a cohesive narrative, rather than as independent and separate phenomena. In this age of globalization, we have an opportunity to assess violence against women, not only in terms of single incidents in our own communities, but in the terms of an international trend as well.

This memorandum set out to serve as a tool for awareness-building, creating an opportunity for general conversation concerning the reality that incidents of violence against women occur
around the world in similar circumstances, and surrounded by similar societal factors. The selected cases included in this memorandum provide a brief overview of a few horrendous attacks. While many readers may have a firm grasp on the details of these cases of violence against women, it is important to expand considerations to include broader societal factors that breed this type of violence, with the ultimate goal of encouraging government action to prevent sexual violence. The realization that sexual violence is an issue in every country will spawn the much-needed conversation to encourage countries to learn from each other as they strive to eradicate violence against women.