

# What the Spiritual Caregiver Should Know While Dealing with Survivors of Ethnic Violence

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## Introduction

The phenomenon of ethnic cleansing was common throughout the 20th century, but it increased in the 1990s. We can consider the number of events such as the West Bank, the Golan Heights and the Gaza strip in Israel after the 1967 war, or the dilution of Western Poland by Germans after conquest by the Nazis during World War II, or German deportation from Poland and Czechoslovakia, or the expulsion of Jews from a number of European countries, the expulsion of the Azerbaijanis from their ancient lands in Armenia, and the genocide of the Azerbaijanis in Karabagh, especially in Khojali.

All these events have forced scholars (Bates, 1983; Hardin, 1995; Fearon, 1999; Fearon and Laitin, 2000; Berman, 2000, 2003; Chandra, 2003; and Glaeser, 2005) to introduce ethnic conflict theories to understand this phenomenon. The field in itself is relatively new and emerged at the end of the 80s and beginning of the 90s, although the ethnic conflicts are not new in history. They have occurred in different parts of the world in history and “many powerful nations have attacked and chased off their lands less powerful nations and groups they deemed subordinate and alien” (Naimark, 2001, p. 5). However, it was not conceptualized until the 20th century when Andrew Bell-Fialkoff (1999), a Boston sociologist, wrote a scholarly book on ethnic cleansing where he focused on the Assyrians and Babylonians.

Ethnic conflicts in the last decades have put forward important questions before political and social science scholars. Researchers have been trying to answer questions such as “what is an ethnic conflict,” “what are the reasons of the ethnic conflict,” “how to support the survivors of ethnic conflicts,” etc.

The empirical literature has two main approaches in ethnic conflict theories: the rational choice approach and the emotion-based approach. The rational choice approach emphasizes the actions of elites and political actors, the structural factors and territory. The second approach focuses on the emotions of people who actively

engaged in the process. In light of these theories I tried to answer questions such as why the Armenian nation organized the expulsion, torture, rape, and murder of the members of the Azerbaijani nation, why individuals chose to perform to such savagery against their own lifelong neighbors, how the victims continue their lives with the trauma, and how a spiritual caregiver can help the victims of such incidents.

Based on this initial approach my questions are as follows:

1. What were and are the main factors that kept the women who were abused during the Azerbaijani genocide and ethnic cleansing alive and give them hope to live? Was spirituality important for them?
2. How can the spiritual caregiver support the female survivors of the Azerbaijani genocide and ethnic cleansing?

### **Relevant Literature**

Ethnic cleansing is an action “to remove a people and often all traces of them from a concrete territory” (Naimark, p. 3) and genocide is “the intentional killing off of part or all of an ethnic, religious or national group...” (Naimark, p. 2). A UN report indicates that the purpose of ethnic cleansing is “to instill terror in a civilian population, in order to cause them to flee and never return” (Bassiouni, 2008, p. 423). The case of Azerbaijanis in Armenia and Karabagh is an example of such a definition of ethnic cleansing. Azerbaijanis were a majority in Armenia and Karabagh until 1988. The purpose of ethnic cleansing by Armenians against them was to stop the increase in number among Azerbaijanis and force them to leave their homelands.

Ethnic cleansing always involves violence because people do not leave their homes willingly. They leave if they are forced out, sometimes in most brutal fashion, and hunger, disease, and the pains of displacement take many lives. The method of ethnic cleansing includes coerced departure, harassment to induce departure, cultural cleansing, payment for expulsion, etc. Ethnic cleansing is closely related to war, because many ethnic cleansing events have taken place during war or during the chaotic transition from war to peace.

Another aspect of ethnic cleansing is the eradication of the historical monuments and traces of memory of the presence of the nation which is afflicted with the ethnic violence. It is true that the physical remnants of the nation are the first to be destroyed. There are numerous examples in the last decades in Armenia and

occupied regions of Azerbaijan such as the Armenians' eradication of the Azerbaijanis' graveyards, the central architectural heritage of the people, etc. Ethnic cleansing also involves crimes of both individuals and states against property, including theft and stealing.

According to the rational school, ethnic conflict is largely conceptualized as a matter of cynical politicians who mobilize people by creating fear and greed for personal advantages. In many ethnic cleansing events, including the ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijanis in Karabagh and Armenia, the Russian and Armenian elites encouraged or pushed Armenian people to use violence against other groups. They are the main people who bear responsibility for such manifestations.

The political institutions and state, including but not limited to state officials, including police forces, militaries, and paramilitaries, and different professionals – lawyers, doctors, professors, engineers – often supported the elites in the ethnic cleansing and genocide in Armenia and Karabagh. This raises an important question of whether the ethical codes are enough to stop them from misusing their professions for such purposes. The Armenian elite “have held the power to stop the ethnic violence if they wished, and they did not” (Naimark, 2001, p. 10), instead they emotionally provoked ethnic war in order to create a domestic political context in which ethnicity is the only politically relevant identity (Kaufman, 2001). Their behavior could be explained by the fact that they felt endangered, therefore they fended off domestic challengers who would seek to mobilize the population against the status quo, and could better position themselves to deal with power (Kaufman, p. 2) but still not enough research has been done on how Armenian leaders managed to arouse such violent passions against other groups, mainly against Azerbaijanis and Turks. Such methods can only work in an environment where hostile attitudes and prejudices already existed (Kaufman, 2001). Besides that, it is difficult to apply the elite-driven ethnic conflict approach to many cases in the world, especially in the regions where the ethnic conflict started from below and spread towards the upper strata of the society. Thus, the historical and situational effects are important to explain why manipulative leaders arise in some times and places but not others (p.6).

Armenian elites influence the course of ethnic relations in several ways, e.g. by controlling information through media and using nationalist myths as a reference to act as reminders of past and present victimizations (Petersen, 2001).

Ethnic cleansing and genocide against Azerbaijanis was different from the war that Armenians led against Azerbaijan. War in general sets men against men, while the former more often finds men attacking women (Naimark, 2001). The ideology of

integral nationalism identifies women as the carriers, quite literally, of the next generation of the nation. Not only do women constitute the biological core of nationality, but they are often charged with the task of passing on the cultural and spiritual values of nationhood to their children. The result is that ethnic cleansing often targets women (p. 195). Men are also the first to take up arms, go to the hills, seek to resist, or join a foreign brigade, if that is a possibility. Once again, the women and children are left behind and in harm's way. In Karabagh, Azerbaijani men went to the army to defend their lands against the occupation and many of them died, leaving mostly women, children, and old people behind who then were the main victims of Armenian soldiers. Azerbaijani women suffered at the hands of the Armenian military forces and gangs during the Armenian occupation and offensive. Women and girls were harassed, humiliated, and raped individually, serially, and by gangs. Women were stripped and forced to submit sexually to the sexual-sadistic fantasies of their persecutors, warders, and guards. They were forced to dance a gauntlet naked and defenseless. Such "sexual crimes are used to humiliate as many people as possible, to destroy the fabric of the family, and by extension the fabric of society... Rapes committed in public effectively terrorize communities and convince people to flee. The nature of conflict is changing. Wars are no longer military-to-military conflicts. Ethnic conflicts and ethnic cleansing lend themselves to sexual violence" (Manuel Carballo, cited in Minh, 2000).

Thus, rape was one of the tools of ethnic cleansing, a way to terrorize the Azerbaijani population and make sure that they did not come back to Armenia and Karabagh. Rape was a form of punishment to wound the pride of Azerbaijanis and insult them. The women raped in Khojali refused to return to Azerbaijan and preferred to die in Armenian prisons. Most of them were pregnant, but it is hard to know what happened to these women and children. Thus, rape was an integral part of ethnic cleansing in Karabagh as carried out by Armenians; it became an emblem of the Karabagh war and a shameful part of the history of Armenia.

What helped these women to survive is worth discussing. According to some scholars, "spirituality or God was a source of strength or comfort for them" (Gillum et al., 2006, p.245) and is a shield of protection against adverse outcomes for trauma survivors (Constantine, Lewis, Conner, & Sanchez, 2000; Parappully, Rosenbaum, Van Den Daele, & Nzewi, 2002). Spirituality helps the survivors to overcome the tragedy and acts as a buffer in the relationship between stress/trauma and resulting emotional problems or mental illness (Reinert & Bloomingdale, 1999). Victor Frankl (1984) questioned what makes people survive in their suffering when writing about concentration camp victims, and he concluded that survival itself might depend on seeking and finding meaning: "*Man is not destroyed by suffering; he is destroyed by suffering without meaning.*" He means

that suffering people cope with their destiny by finding meaning in their suffering. This meaning is rooted in spirituality, which plays a critical role in finding meaning and purpose in the sufferings.

Spirituality plays an important role for these women in building a new relationship with God. It may express itself in trusting God for a better future or blaming God for the destiny and silence in their suffering. The survivors blame “God” for what has happened and the experience can devastate their belief systems by “...violating [their] faith in a natural or divine order...” (Herman, 1997, p. 51). For them, “a belief that this life does not matter” (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2003, p. 688) is strong. Their spiritual and religious convictions may be strengthened as a result of trauma, and those spiritual and religious beliefs and behaviors can be beneficial to survivors during post-trauma recovery (Shaw, Joseph and Linley, 2005). The positive spirituality also helps the survivors to cope during traumatic stress (Fowler & Hill, 2004) and “fosters resilience and an ability to move forward” (Fowler & Rountree, 2009).

The empirical evidence of the positive role of spirituality for the survivors of ethnic violence suggests that spiritual and religious support may help professionals to reduce the experience of depressive and posttraumatic stress symptomatology for trauma survivors (Chen and Koenig, 2007; Connor, Davidson, & Li-Ching Lee, 2003). That was also supported by Campbell & Soeken (1999), Roberts, Williams, Lawrence, & Raphael (1998), Walker (1984), and Larson & Larson (2003) who mentioned that spirituality is an important aspect in mental health in other samples, including survivors who suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is important to use the service of religious institutions because survivors very often turn to spiritual or religious leaders for guidance and support (Gillum, Sullivan, and Bybee, 2006). Their role is tremendous by emphasizing forgiveness. However, spiritual and religious caregivers need to be careful in treatment and not force their clients to forget about the abuse or promise the hope that things will get better (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001; Richie, 1996). The result may get worse.

## **Methodology**

I used an observation approach in this case study. This case study has one unit: how the spiritual caregiver can support the female **survivors** of the Khojali genocide. The purpose is to develop a rich description of the situation of the female victims of the Khojali genocide and specific characteristics, and investigate how the spiritual caregiver can support them. Qualitative data including both primary

(interviews in media) and secondary sources (works of experts in the field) were collected in this study.

*Data Analysis:* The analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection for the purpose of developing explanations for a phenomenon such as the how the spiritual caregiver can support the **survivors** of the Khojali genocide. As an analytical task, analytic deduction was possible in this case study: constant comparison together with explanation-building strategies were used to acquire a phenomenological understanding of the processes involved in support of the **survivors** of the Khojali genocide.

### **Victims of Khojali**

Khojali was an Azerbaijani populated town in the Karabakh (Qarabag in Azerbaijani) region of Azerbaijan with a population of seven thousand people, where Armenian militants accomplished a brutal massacre of the hundreds of peaceful Azerbaijani civilians (Human Rights Watch, 2004) on the night of February 25-26, 1992. The gruesome statistics indicate that 613 people were killed, of which 106 were women and 83 were children; 1275 taken hostage, 150 went missing; 487 people became disabled and invalid, 76 of whom are teenage boys and girls; 8 families were entirely destroyed; 25 children lost both of their parents, 130 children lost one of their parents; and 56 people were killed with extreme cruelty and torture. Sharing the fate of its population, the town of Khojali was completely destroyed as well. Congressman Ed Whitfield mentioned in U.S. Congress discussions that “during this bloody incursion, nearly 2,000 civilians—mostly women, children and the elderly— were brutally killed, wounded or taken hostage by the Armenian military forces as they seized the town. This resulted in the largest massacre of modern times in the Caucasus and Caspian Basin” (Extensions of Remarks from Congressional Record E463)

According to T.N., a refugee and executive secretary of Khojali committee, there were more than 500 girls and women in captivity. Most of them were teenagers. Up to now the Azerbaijani government has managed to release only 50 persons. Many of them have obvious mental deviations. According to the State Committee of the Azerbaijan Republic on refugees and hostages, today there are 4,600 hostages in Armenia. There is a one-month old baby and toddlers of different ages and 109 old people (APA, 2006).

An inhabitant of Khojali, D. O., also provided information on the many victims, chiefly women and children. His 16-year-old son was shot, and his 23-year-old

daughter with her twin children and another 18-year-old daughter who was pregnant were taken hostage.

Another resident of Khojali, S. A., said she would never forget the mountains of corpses of women, children and old people near Nakhichevanik, where they fell into an ambush: in the carnage, her mother and her two daughters, S. and K., were killed, and she herself was wounded. Faced with this mass shooting of unarmed people, some of the group made for the village of Gyulabli, but there the Armenians took some 200 people hostage. Among them was Jamil Mamedov; the Armenians tore out his nails, beat him about the legs and head and took away his grandson, and his wife and daughter vanished without a trace.

S. T., who witnessed the bloody tragedy as it unfolded, watched as four Meskhetian Turks, refugees from Central Asia, and three Azerbaijanis were beheaded on the grave of an Armenian soldier, and children were tortured and killed before their parents' eyes; two Azerbaijanis in national army uniform had their eyes put out with screwdrivers.

While researching the interviews of the Khojali female **survivors**, I tried to find out how they found spiritual strength to continue their lives in the brutal hostage regime and after being hostages. According to my findings, I divided the interviews into three parts: the interviews of **survivors** who very often used the word of "God" to express their fear, grief and loss; the interviews of the **survivors** who talked about the rape in captivity; and the interviews of the **survivors** who found strength in hope. Among the interviews of the fifteen victims, three used the word of "God" to express their fear, grief and loss; seven needed to talk about the rape of the Azerbaijani women from Khojali in the Armenian captivity; and three talked about hope as a main factor of their continuation of their lives in the brutal regime of their captivity.

*The survivors who used the word "God" to express their fear, grief and loss:*

8-year-old O. K., who lost her 26 year old mother, father and siblings, cries to "God" in the context of extreme fear, surprise, grief, and in declaring her own weakness to prevent those happenings and asking God's help. She has a deep pain of gun wounds in a shoulder and breast with her lung damaged, hemorrhage in pleural cavity, and ribs broken by a bullet, as well as fear and longing for her parents. The current care she has will never replace her mother's only one tender touch, word and kiss.

A twenty-one-year-old Azerbaijani woman and her brother were seized while fleeing Khojali and brought to the Askeran militia. The woman witnessed the

beating of her brother: “They wanted to exchange me but I didn’t want to go because my brother was still a hostage. He was beaten for four days. I could hear voices crying. Then I stayed in a cell with my brother. They beat him in front of me with metal rods and bashed his lip with a machine gun. I was released March 4 with my brother and four other people.”

A 24-year-old mother who witnessed the rape of many women and girls calls to God in the context of sadness.

K. A. witnessed how the Armenian insurgents had taken all her family in hostage. They shot mother, 7-year-old sister E., and aunt G. They demanded her father to declare that Karabagh was an Armenian land. When he refused to say that, the Armenians poured gasoline over him and burnt him.

A twenty-year-old Azerbaijani woman who received a bullet wound in her left foot at Nakhichevanik was reportedly captured along with twelve other people (among with them, five women) by seven or eight Armenians. According to her account, no members of the defense forces were with her. Her captors ordered the group to give up their valuables, mostly rings, chains, and earrings worn by women. The woman told Helsinki Watch, “We were taken by foot to the Askeran militia and put in one cell. All the men were taken away. Then I was put in a cell with thirty or forty other women from Khojali. The militia chief came and told us not to be afraid, that we would be exchanged.... Long-haired men with beards and bullet-proof vests would come by [and threaten us].”

*Rape, the most feared side of the war*

24-year-old mother testifies: “there were a lot of girls there, bearded men and soldiers sneered at them...”

K. S., a 19-year-old girl, says:

“An Armenian man approached me and seized me. I cried, began to beg him to release me, but he silently continued to drag me on the ground. As we crossed through corpses on the way, I begged him more persistently to kill me, to not withdraw alive. At last, having gathered my strength I fell to legs of this Armenian man and begged: ‘Oh Brother, may I be your victim, kill me...’ Unexpectedly he threw me and ran in the other direction. I then decided to lie down among the dead and pretend to be dead. Then the shooting began to move away gradually. I quietly crawled away and began to move ahead a significant distance. And at last, voices came to me; I had reached Azerbaijanis. I only shouted:



‘Mother!’ and lost consciousness. When I regained my consciousness, I saw the Azerbaijani man who bore me on his hands to Aghdam...”

E. O., whose husband was killed and son was in captivity and daughters and grandsons were taken hostage, says that “these [Armenian] monsters raped not only adult women, but also girls of thirteen, ten....” She prays that “indeed the Lord will punish them for this!”

M. H., 33, mother of four children whose daughters were taken hostages, says that “in Karabagh women learnt not to be afraid of death. They were afraid of only one thing – of being taken hostage, since those wild bandits, who did not have the fear of God, cruelly scoffed at girls, young girls and women.”

A witness testifies that it is impossible to express all this horror that faced those women, just as it is impossible to reimburse their loss and their casualties with all this attention that they are surrounded by now.

S. A., whose three children were killed in the cold in temperatures as low as minus 10 degrees, could not talk from extreme grief, but her eyes full of infinite woe expressed everything.

56-year-old S. A. also expressed his experience in silence. He just said: “It is hard to talk about this violence.”

When Azerbaijanis tried to save the lives of seven Khojali girls held hostage by Armenians, they answered through a portable radio set: “You had better exchange corpses or for the stolen cattle. After those mockeries we have suffered here, we can not live in any case.”

G. H., born in 1940, says that when he was in hostage in a cellar there were four women and two children, and the corpse of the woman laid in a corner. It was visible that she was pregnant, and her stomach had been cut and scratched. Women said that Armenians had adhered a live cat to her stomach. And while she was alive, Armenians stood and laughed.

#### *Hope, the main strength of the survivors*

M. H., 33, mother of four children, whose daughters and husband were taken hostages, says that hope allowed her to survive. She says that “anyway we hoped that we would not be forgotten...”

M. A. ran hundreds of kilometers from the Armenian soldiers to save her toddler daughter in Aghdam, an Azerbaijani city. Hope was the main reason for how she survived from the bitter February cold and fear of being taken hostage.

M. K., who lost her children, says that while running for about five days from the Armenian soldiers in cold nights in the forest, though bullets whistled everywhere and brought death, they did not stop running because otherwise it meant death or being taken hostage. They had to survive and save live ones... However, on the fifth day, only she and her brother were alive and managed to reach Aghdam out of the group.

M. A. was among the Khojali captives who had to constrict her one year old daughter to stop her howling which would mean death for many people hidden in the forest. She did not leave the breathless body of her baby in the forest. When they were caught by Armenian soldiers, she witnessed a miracle of God who granted life back to her “dead baby.” From the joy she experienced in the captivity she wanted to breastfeed her child; however, there was no milk because she had been hungry for three days. She lived in joy and fear at the same time. The Armenians usually separated mothers from children. Although the little Salatyn was in a sorry plight and lost her sight because of starving for four days, the Armenians did not separate her from her mother. Then they were discharged. Today, Mushgunaz lives with her disabled legs which were frozen in that horrible February night.

Some victims survived because of their hope of saving the lives of other victims. They crawled to each other under the bullets and pulled the weakest to a safe place, or took care of children whose parents were either killed or were taken to other prisons.

### **What Should the Spiritual Caregiver Know While Dealing with the Survivors of Genocide?**

The findings suggest that while dealing with the female **survivors** of the Khojali genocide the spiritual caregiver should regard the fact that women who are raped suffer extremely from the act of the rape. Prior to flight, these victims faced a wide variety of traumatic events and witnessed fighting and destruction, observe violent acts perpetrated against loved ones, or were subjected to or witnessed sexual violence. In the findings we see that the most commonly reported traumatic events were forced isolation (e.g., imprisonment, separation from others) and incidents of torture from being close to death, rape, or having a friend or family member

brutally killed. It suggests that the effects of these types of trauma are immeasurable, long lasting, and shattering to both inner and outer worlds.

The interviews show that the survivors experience intense and sometimes unpredictable emotions and severe, highly disruptive symptoms. They may have repeated strong memories of the event that are difficult to ignore. These women may have Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) symptoms which include:

1. Emotional symptoms: shock, intense fear, tearfulness, anger, shame, helplessness, nervousness, numbness;
2. Psychological symptoms: confusion, disorientation, unwanted memories, decreased concentration, self-blame;
3. Physical symptoms: bodily injury; sexually transmitted diseases; muscular tension; fatigue; edginess; change in sleep, appetite, and sex drive; gastrointestinal problems; racing heart; bodily aches and pains.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is also a common experience. The symptoms of PTSD are:

1. Reexperiencing the trauma in memories and dreams, avoiding anything reminiscent of the event, memory loss, emotional numbing, sleep disturbance, anxiety;
2. Depression: loss of hope, self-worth, motivation, or purpose in life; fatigue; decreased pleasure in previously enjoyed activities; changes in sleep and appetite; suicidal thoughts or actions.

The spiritual caregiver may observe that the survivors blame themselves for what has happened or feel shameful about being an assault victim. Shame and guilt can also get in the way of a woman's recovery by preventing her from telling others about what happened and getting assistance. The spiritual caregiver can provide individual or group care to survivors who have experienced broadly similar events, which is the most preferable way to provide care.

In the case of women of Khojali who witnessed violence by Armenian soldiers, they may repress their feelings to the point of numbness, become reactive in expressing their emotions, may not be able to identify or deal with their emotions, use fight or flight behaviors as coping mechanisms in order to feel safe and even dissociate from truth (Dayton, 1994). The spiritual care giver may need to reveal the "truth process" which goes beyond narrative or historical truth because a deeper level of truth emerges after getting more information. Therefore, it is important to move toward gratification or self-protection to self-negation (Siegel et al, 1987). Sullivan (1962) called it a "truth in process."

The duty of a spiritual caregiver is to rewrite a client's history in order to simulate their history and to respect the fantasy while assisting the client in recognizing that the truth hiding within the fantasy is paramount to their recovery (Siegel et al, 1987). This requires extra 'time' which means more time to reflect on the meaning of life and values that extend beyond material goals (Thoresen, 1998).

The Khojali witnesses reported that in God and hope, they found meaning for their suffering. They sought explanation for their tragedy and imbalances through talking or calling out to God. Such spirituality may help the abused women have greater emotional stability, less alcohol and drug use, lower suicide rates, and less anxiety and depression. However, a supportive community is important to achieve more positive health outcomes among Khojali survivors. Spiritual caregivers are the main sources of such a supportive community.

Thus, spirituality and religion form an important dimension of the healing paradigm because “they are determinants of health and they are factors in recovery, wellbeing and longevity. Importantly they are one of three central pillars of naturopathic philosophy (mind/body/spirit)” (Grant, 2007).

It is important to remember that we can never find an answer to their question “why should humans suffer?” The purpose is not to find an answer but share their vulnerability. Spiritual caregivers like other professionals will always feel powerless in finding an answer to the suffering of humanity because we also wonder whether God is just a “watcher” over us, a “victim” like us, or both. Spiritual caregivers, however, “reach beyond religious and spiritual concerns and include family problems, social needs, and psychiatric symptoms” (Ali, Milstein, & Marzuk, 2005, p. 204).

## **Conclusion**

Ethnic cleansing and genocide mostly target women for different purposes. A spiritual caregiver may witness mainly four stories, or models, each describing a process motivating individuals to commit violence against others. These models are fear (based on security dilemma theories), hatred (built on an ancient hatred approach), rage (based on psychological theories) and resentment. The Armenian soldiers who targeted Azerbaijani women in war rationally chose to act as carriers of sexual violence to violate the dignity of the Azerbaijani nation and complete an ethnic cleansing task. Some Khojali women suffer from rape in ethnic violence and war because it was used by Armenian soldiers as one of the tools of ethnic cleansing, a way to terrorize the Azerbaijani population and make sure that they did

not come back. Rape was also a form of punishment. By raping their women, the Armenian soldiers sought to wound and insult the pride of Azerbaijanis. Some women raped in Khojali refused to return and preferred to die in Armenian captivity.

The findings of this research, which involved interviews of fourteen survivors of the Khojali genocide, suggest that the Khojali survivors suffer from the deep emotional, psychological and physical problems. They experience loss of hope, self-worth, motivation, or purpose in life, etc. Depending on cultural differences, the issue is more sensitive than the researchers understand it to be. Many women refuse to talk about the issue in detail. The main problem is how to keep information confidential and protect raped women from the wounds which can be caused through this process. Thus group treatment is the most preferable way to provide care to survivors of ethnic violence.

The findings also suggest that God was a main symbol of hope for Khojali women whose spiritual and religious beliefs have a great deal to do with their health outlook, their coping mechanisms, etc. Despite the intensive emotional turmoil of rape and its effects, the Khojali women maintained a relationship between themselves and the divine. This relationship has taken different forms, including but not limited to prayer, practices such as holding of symbolic tools and objects, etc. This is a strong evidence of their desire for healing, help and succor.

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## SUMMARY

### **What the Spiritual Caregiver Should Know While Dealing with Survivors of Ethnic Violence**

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Ethnic cleansing and genocide are different terms but both involve violence as a main tool, and many women and girls suffer from this kind of violence. The challenge for the spiritual caregiver is to define the major emotional turmoil of the patient and offer a helping hand. The main terminology involves the words ‘ethnic cleansing’, ‘genocide’ and ‘violence.’ The case study is the Khojali genocide, which was recognized in the US Congress as the “biggest tragedy of the year” (Extensions of Remarks from Congressional Record E463).

The paper discusses the role of spirituality and the major spiritual challenges of the spiritual caregiver and the patient, and suggests some helpful hints in the relationship between the spiritual caregiver and such clients. The deductive method has been used in this research. The participants involved in the project are from the survivors of the Khojali genocide in Azerbaijan.

**Key words: ethnic cleansing, counseling, spirituality, religion, Khojali**