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## **INTOLERABLE IMAGES: WOMEN'S PROTEST AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN UKRAINE WAR**

During the war in Ukraine, activists have protested against the war and European countries supporting Russian Federation in war economically all over Europe, finding performative ways to express their position. In April 13, a group of women gathered in front of embassy of Russian Federation in Tallinn. They stood still in a row, heads in black plastic bags, hands tied behind their backs, bare legs and backsides covered with red paint, marking blood. A few days before, first photos of massacre in towns of Kyiv outskirts in Ukraine, had spread over the world media, including images of dead people lying down, hands tied behind their backs, heads in black plastic bags. A few days after the protest in Tallinn, women repeated the acts against war rape in Vilnius, Riga and other cities around Europe.

As performative acts these protests are 1) actual bodies that bring a sign of the most stigmatized crime into the public sphere; 2) re-enactments of actual victims; 3) sources of new bodily and visual representations and re-enactments in public sphere; 4) media images. Ukraine war is also a media and information war and as transgressive images, the photos of protesting women create a zone of disturbance both in the public space and sphere.

Jacques Rancière's essay "Intolerable image" states: only the one who does not want to witness, is the witness. Rancière discusses in the essay the ethics of being a spectator of war images or political art of photography, and ask questions of acceptability, the visible and the invisible. An intolerable image is in a complex relation to the intolerable reality. I'll discuss in the paper, what the protest acts can make, and how do they make us witness the war crimes against women.

## **Biography**

Riina Oruaas is Lecturer and PhD candidate in theatre research at the Institute of Cultural Research, University of Tartu. Her research is focused on transforming aesthetics in Estonian theatre since 1990s, including dramaturgy, performing, scenography, and intermediality. She gives courses on theatre history, textual and performance analysis, has also taught in Estonian Academy of Arts and Tallinn University Baltic Film, Media and Arts School. Oruaas has worked as a visiting scholar at University of Surrey in 2015, has been chairing and board member of the Estonian Association of Theatre Researchers and Theatre Critics (2012–2015, since 2020) and co-edited the book *Views on Contemporary Estonian Theatre* (original title: *Vaateid Eesti nüüdisteatrile*, University of Tartu Press 2016), and co-curated arts festival *Tartu Interdistsiplinaar* (2022).