



Advocacy Report

OSCE Gender Symposium – Combating Femicide

25 November 2016, Hofburg, Vienna

Subject of Meeting:

Femicide is one of the gravest violations of human rights and gender-based killing is the most serious form of gender-based violence. Every day, women and girls worldwide are murdered because of their gender. As the UN states, 'gender-related killing occurs in all our societies, be it in the name of 'honour', in connection with accusations of sorcery or witchcraft, or in the context of armed conflict. In many cases, the killing is the final step in a continuum of violence against women and girls. Too often, perpetrators are not held accountable and impunity prevails.' The number of women killed by an intimate partner or a family member worldwide in 2012, according to figures from the UN Office for Drugs and Crime, is 43,600. That is almost four times the people killed in terrorist attacks that year.

This symposium was organized by the OSCE (The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), in co-operation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Academic Council of United Nations (ACUNS), the Office of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, and Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE). It was held on 25/11, the International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women and the first day of the yearly 16 Days of Activism to combat gender-based violence.

Participants included stakeholders from government (policy makers and law enforcement agencies), international organizations, OSCE institutions and field operations, academics as well as civil society, including women's organizations (GWI was represented by the undersigned), to identify ways forward and provide guidance for governments to prevent Femicide.

Keynote speaker was Dubravka Šimonović, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. She said that "governments have an obligation to protect women and girls from violence and femicides. My proposal is to establish a 'femicide watch' or observatory at the national level, for collection and analysis of data, case by case, that reveals gaps in criminal justice and other services or protection mechanisms. It is an important and practical way forward to prevent gender-related killings of women and girls."

Presentations were made on the situations in Georgia, Armenia and Serbia, with heart-breaking portraits of some of the women who had lost their lives. There was a discussion on what needs to be done to monitor, understand and combat Femicide. Ambassadors from various countries including Austria, the Netherlands, Serbia and the UK participated.

The symposium concluded that systematic collection, documentation and analysis of data on gender-based killings is necessary in order to address the root causes of this scourge.

Refers to SDG No

Multiple

Relevant treaties/conventions/resolutions:

UN Resolution A/RES/70/176 on taking action against gender-related killing of women and girls, encourages Member States to promote strategies to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls, including gender-related killing of women and girls.

What needs to be done:

Raising awareness - because gender-based violence often happens within the confines of the home, every day, and in all our communities, cases of such violence don't make the headlines in the same way that terrorism does. As the symposium concluded, 'it is therefore time to raise awareness of this scourge and mobilize efforts to end it.'

Many recommendations have been made to promote action against gender-related killing – including on data collection and analysis, on prevention, and on investigation, prosecution and sanctions. A key recommendation on prevention is to counter harmful attitudes and gender stereotypes by promoting changes in social norms and attitudes harmful to women through early and continuous educational programmes and to raise awareness by conducting or encouraging work with schools and local communities.

Should members wish further information, the following link may be helpful.

<http://unstudied.org/about-unsac/acuns/acuns-vienna/projects/femicide>

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