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UNWOMEN

17-18.10.2026



Agenda Item: Addressing Femicide Through Legislative Reform and International Cooperation

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1. Letter from the Secretary General

Dear Delegates,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to UNWOMEN of KFLMUN'26.

As one of the largest committees of our conference, UNWOMEN will bring together a diverse group of delegates with different perspectives, experiences and approaches to one of the most serious issues on the international agenda.

Our agenda, "Addressing Femicide Through Legislative Reform and International Cooperation," asks us to examine how governments and international institutions can respond to gender based killings through stronger legislation, effective institutions and meaningful international cooperation.

This is not an issue that can be approached from a single perspective. Legislative reform, judicial accountability, prevention mechanisms, international cooperation and the protection of those at risk all form part of a much larger discussion. As delegates, your task will be to understand these different dimensions and work towards solutions that can be implemented beyond the conference room.

I encourage you to approach the committee with an open mind and a willingness to listen. With a large and diverse committee, disagreement is inevitable but that is precisely what makes diplomacy meaningful. Your ability to negotiate, compromise, defend your position and find common ground will shape the quality of the debate.

More than anything, I hope UNWOMEN becomes a committee where every delegate feels that their voice has a place. Whether you are an experienced delegate or attending your first conference, your contribution can influence the direction of the committee.

KFLMUN'26 has been a dream of mine for years and seeing a committee of this scale become part of that dream is something I am genuinely proud of.

I wish you all a thoughtful, engaging and memorable committee experience.

The floor is yours. Make your voice count.

Sincerely,

Tufan Kaan Karagöz

Secretary General

KFLMUN'26

2. Letter from the Under Secretary General of UNWomen

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the UNWomen committee.

As your Under Secretary General, I am honored to welcome you to this committee and to the discussions surrounding our agenda, “Addressing Femicide Through Legislative Reform and International Cooperation.”

Femicide is a complex issue shaped by gaps in legislation, institutional responses, social attitudes, and access to protection. Throughout this committee, you will have the opportunity to examine these challenges from different national perspectives and discuss how legislative reform and international cooperation might strengthen prevention, protection, investigation, and justice. I encourage you to approach this agenda with an open mind and a strong understanding of your country’s position. Research your country’s existing laws, policies, challenges, and previous actions related to gender-based violence and femicide. At the same time, remember that successful debate requires you to listen to other perspectives and look for areas where different countries share common concerns.

As delegates, your role goes beyond identifying problems. I encourage you to bring practical and realistic solutions to the committee, especially solutions that consider differences in legal systems, resources, and national circumstances. Help each other come up with solutions to this global, active and horrifying problem. My trust in each and every one of you is endless.

I hope this study guide gives you a strong starting point for your research. The quality of our debate will depend on the preparation, cooperation, and effort each of you brings to the committee. I look forward to seeing your ideas, discussions, and resolutions throughout the conference.

If you come to have any questions, feel absolutely free to contact me. Best of luck, and I wish you all a productive and memorable committee experience.

Sincerely,

Betül Ece Altun

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Under-Secretary-General

3. **Key Words and Their Definitions**

1. ***Femicide***: the crime of killing a woman or women; an occasion when this happens
2. ***Gender-Based Violence***: violence aimed at someone because of their gender identity
3. ***Legislative***: relating to laws or the making of laws
4. ***Gender-Based Homicide***:
5. ***Intimate Partner Violence***: a situation in which someone is attacked and hurt by their husband, wife, boyfriend, or girlfriend
6. ***Coercive Control***: control of another person's behaviour by using force or threats, or by causing fear
7. ***Gender Discrimination***: a situation in which someone is treated less well because of their sex, usually when a woman is treated less well than a man
8. ***CEDAW***:
9. ***Femicide Watch***:
10. ***Victim Protection***:
11. ***Legal Aid***: a system of providing free advice about the law and practical help with legal matters for people who are too poor to pay for it
12. ***Prevention***: the act of stopping something from happening or of stopping someone from doing something
13. ***Accountability***: the fact of being responsible for what you do and able to give a satisfactory reason for it, or the degree to which this happens
14. ***Data Collection***: the activity of collecting information that can be used to find out about a particular subject
15. ***Prosecute***: to officially accuse someone of committing a crime in a law court, or (of a lawyer) to try to prove that a person accused of committing a crime is guilty of that crime

4. Introduction to the Committee

a. What is UNWomen?

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

b. History of UNWomen

For many years, the United Nations faced serious challenges in its efforts to promote gender equality globally, including inadequate funding and no single recognized driver to direct UN activities on gender equality issues. In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to address such challenges. In doing so, UN Member States took an historic step in accelerating the Organization's goals on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The creation of UN Women came about as part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact. It merges and builds on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system, which focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment:

- Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
- International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)
- Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

5. Introduction to the Agenda Item

a. What is Femicide?

Femicide refers to all types of intentional killings of women and girls committed for gender-related factors. As outlined by UNODC and UN Women, this can include the belief that men are entitled to more power or privilege than women, social expectations about how men should act, and the desire to maintain power or control, enforce traditional gender roles or punish women for so-called unacceptable behavior.

b. Femicide and gender-based homicide

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 457.946 people were killed in homicides worldwide in 2021, 87.995 of the victims were women or girls. In Germany, the rate of female and male victims of completed (not attempted) homicides in 2022 was almost balanced (46.6% male, 53.4% female), so that country-specific influences appear to play a role in these felonies (e.g. organized crime like gang crime). Within homicides, more than 90% of murder suspects worldwide are men. A similar distribution can also be seen in Germany.

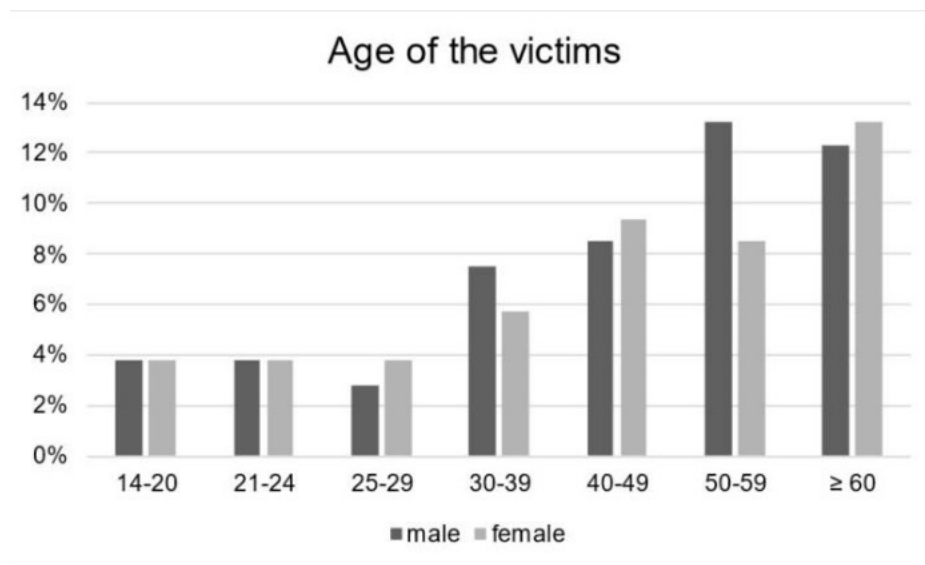
Most studies comparing differences between male and female victims focus on intimate partner homicides, which affect women more often than men. The prevalence rates suggest that homicide is also subject to a gender-specific phenomenon, emphasizing the need to investigate such cases by separating male and female perpetrators and victims. In this way, structural backgrounds of homicides in general and specific gender-related characteristics can be analyzed. The high prevalence rates also highlight the importance of examining potential risk factors to establish prevention strategies.

In a retrospective cross-sectional study, a file analysis was conducted of homicides from 2012 to the end of 2019 in which victims aged 14 years and older were autopsied at the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Mayence. The lower age limit was set at 14 years, since homicides of children are based on different problem situations compared to juveniles/ adults, which also requires an individual consideration of these offenses with regard to protective concepts. In addition, judicial information on further prosecution and, when possible, related court decisions were evaluated. Demographic data, information on the previous history with special emphasis on the perpetrator-victim relationship, aspects of the injuries and the type of violence, and influence of alcohol and drugs on the crime were recorded. Furthermore, aspects of law enforcement data and conviction of the perpetrators were evaluated. A gender-separated statistical evaluation was conducted, whereby the biological sex of the victims was differentiated. There were no transgender or intersex people among the victims in this collective.

Data were evaluated using the “IBM SPSS Statistics” software package. Frequencies, mean values, and medians were determined for descriptive analysis of the total collective. Furthermore, selected variables were evaluated by the chi-square test, respectively, the exact Fisher-test, to analyze significant gender differences in the offenses. A p-value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

The Institute of Forensic Medicine autopsied 106 homicide victims between 2012 and 2019. The victims were 51.9% (n = 55) male and 48.1% (n = 51) female. On average, male victims were 48.2 ± 19.4 years (median 47 years), and female victims 48.5 ± 22 years (median 44 years) old.

The victims were predominantly German (64.2%; n = 68), 34.9% (n = 37) were non-German citizens, and in 0.9% (n = 1) citizenship was unknown. Male victims were more often non-German than female victims (male 40.0%, n = 22; female 29.4%, n = 15), but the difference was not statistically significant.



Female victims (96.1%, n = 49) were statistically significantly more likely to be killed by perpetrators they knew before than male victims (80.0%, n = 44), ($p = 0.039$). New acquaintances immediately before the crime were assigned to the category “unknown to each other”. In 3.8% (n = 4) of the total collective, perpetrator and victim were unknown to each other.

In the total collective, the victims were killed in 34.0% each by acquaintances/ friends and intimate partners. Gender separated analysis showed, that male victims were most often killed by acquaintances/ friends (male 54.5%, n = 30) and female victims by intimate partners (62.7%, n = 32). In 15.1% (n = 16) of the total collective, the victims were killed by family members (without intimate partners), the gender distribution in these relationships was nearly equal (male 14.5%, n = 8; female 15.7%, n = 8). In the majority of these cases (n = 11), the perpetrators were adult (step)children.

Perpetrator-victim relationship

Perpetrator and victim known to each other	80.0%	12.7%	96.1%	3.9%	$p = 0.039$
Acquaintances/ friends	54.5	-	11.8%	-	$p < 0,001$
Intime partners	7.3	-	62.7%	-	(Related to intimate partners and other acquaintances or relatives)
Family members	14.5	-	15.7%	-	
Other	3.6	-	5.9%	-	
Perpetrator unknown to the victim	7.3%	-	0.0%	-	

Number of injuries

One to five injuries	52.7%	0.0%	25.5%	0.0%	$p = 0.029$
Six to fifty injuries	23.6%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	

Crime scene

Victims' home (or office)	36.4%	0.0%	76.5%	0.0%	$p < 0.001$
Other crime scenes	63.6%	0.0%	23.5%	0.0%	

Substance influence of the victims (from criminal history) 56.4% 10.9% 25.5% 11.8% $p = < 0.001$

Positive blood alcohol concentration of the victims 40.0% 10.9% 17.6% 15.7% $p = 0.015$

Positive blood alcohol concentration of the perpetrators 32.7% 43.6% 21.6% 27.5% $p = 0.019$

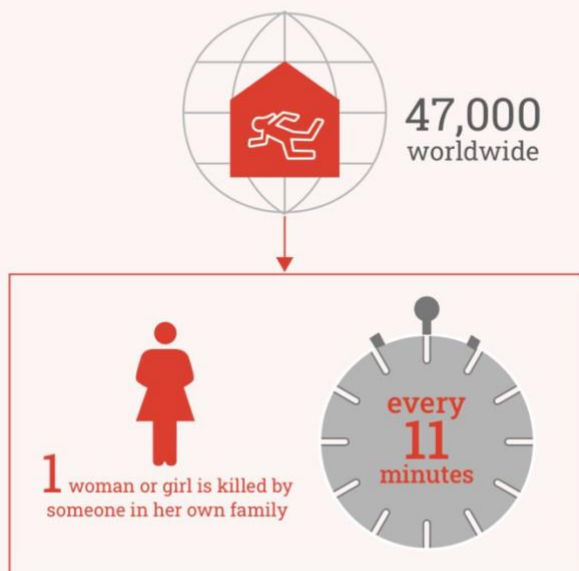
Addictive diseases of the perpetrators 49.1% 18.2% 27.5% 19.6% $p = 0.017$

24.5% (n = 26) of the final verdicts were ruled as manslaughter by the court, and 27.4% (n = 29) were ruled as murder. In 5.7% (n = 6), the court ruled bodily harm resulting in death. Robbery resulting in death (1.9%; n = 2) and intentional intoxication (cases in which the offender intentionally intoxicates themselves so that their criminal responsibility is limited or excluded at the time of the offense, section 323a StGB) (0.9%; n = 1) were rare verdicts, just in cases of male victims.

In 22.6% (n = 24), criminal cases were dismissed due to suicide of the perpetrator, unidentified or fugitive perpetrators, and total exemption from criminal responsibility. In 13.2% (n = 14) of the cases, murder, manslaughter, or bodily harm resulting in death was determined due to total or partial exemption from criminal responsibility, and placement of the perpetrators in a psychiatric hospital was ordered. In 3.8% (n = 4), criminal proceedings were still ongoing. There were no significant differences in the court decisions regarding male and female victims.

Total number of women killed by intimate partners or other family members

In 2020, approximately 47,000 women and girls were killed worldwide by their intimate partners or other family members. This means that, on average, a woman or girl is killed by someone in her own family every 11 minutes.



Gender dimension of homicide

Homicides within the private sphere affect both sexes, but women and girls bear the largest burden of lethal violence perpetrated within the home, accounting for approximately 6 out of every 10 homicide victims killed by intimate partners or other family members.

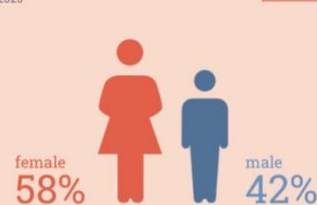
Total homicides
2020



Non-Intimate partner/
family-related homicides
2020



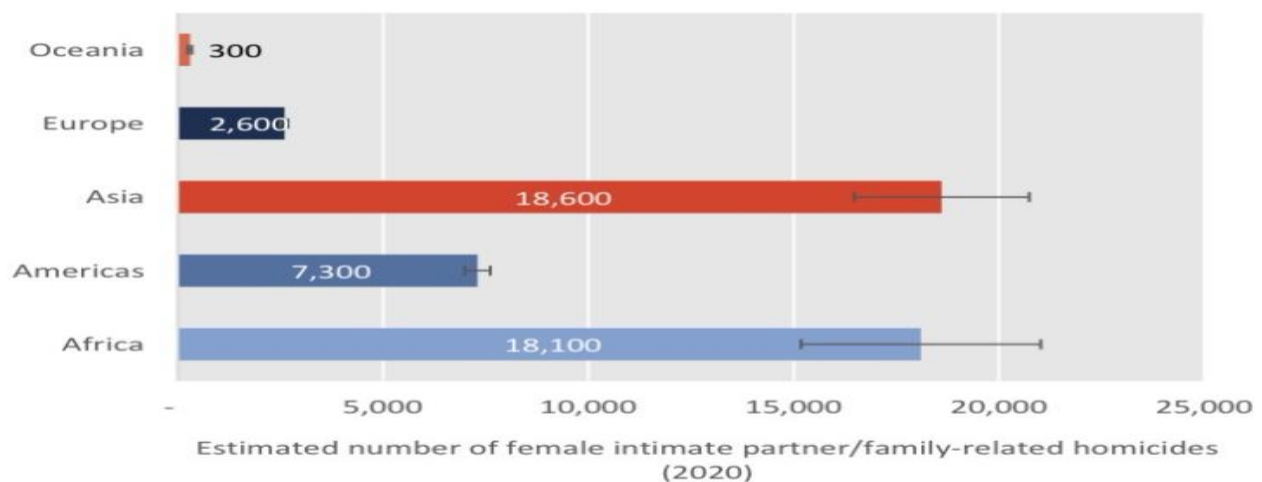
Intimate partner/
family-related homicides
2020



The killing of women and girls at the hands of intimate partners or other family members – people whom they would normally be expected to trust – represents one of the most extreme manifestations of gender-based violence. Such killings are often the culmination of prior experiences of gender-based violence, which can include psychological, sexual and physical abuse. Female homicide perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members is not the only form of gender-related killing of women and girls. This type of homicide can also be perpetrated outside the private sphere, for example, in the case of intentional homicides of female sex workers, killings of women related to various forms of trafficking and organized crime, and killings of women accused of witchcraft. Several types of female homicide are committed on the grounds of gender-related motivations but there is not yet a standardized approach to define and count all forms of gender-related killings of women and girls. When available, statistical data on this type of homicide are often based on national definitions, practices or specific legislation that are not comparable at the global level. To address this issue, the United Nations system has held a series of consultations aimed at developing a new statistical approach to improving data on gender-related killings of women and girls. This research brief is focused on female victims of

intentional homicide perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members. This is because – based on available evidence – intimate partner/family-related homicide accounts for the largest proportion of gender-related killings or “femicides”.

Furthermore, data on this type of homicide are more readily available and comparable than data on gender-related killings that take place outside the family sphere. Internationally comparable data on female intimate partner/family-related homicide remain patchy, but are available for a large enough number of countries to enable the production of global and regional estimates, thanks also to the implementation of the framework provided in the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS). Although still affected by limitations caused by poor coverage, in particular in Africa and Asia, these data provide useful information on the magnitude of the problem and, in some cases, information on trends. Data on gender-related killings perpetrated outside the family sphere are more limited and, to date, do not meet the same level of standardization and geographical coverage.



c. The Legislative Reforms Help with Femicide

Example: The Bill

On December 9, 2025, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada introduced Bill C-16, the Protecting Victims Act. Bill C-16 proposes legislative reforms to the Criminal Code, the Canadian Victim Bill of Rights and other laws to address the longstanding, pervasive sexual and intimate partner violence that disproportionately impacts women, especially those who face systemic barriers.

Changes to the Criminal Code under Bill C-16 will classify homicides involving hate, controlling behaviour, sexual violence or exploitation as first-degree murder. These types of homicides will be defined as femicide when the victim is a woman.

Femicide is defined as the killing of females, primarily by men, because of their gender or sex. According to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women report, femicide is “the most extreme form of violence against women, girls, and gender-diverse people” that is “intricately related to misogyny, the position of women in society, gender roles, unequal distributions of power based on gender, and other gender-based beliefs and misogynistic systems.”

Myrna Dawson, the founder and director of the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability at the University of Guelph, and other experts, have advocated for the creation of a femicide law in Canada. Dawson says classifying femicide in the Criminal Code “makes visible an already existing pattern, allowing the state to recognize, investigate, record, and prevent this specific and recurring form of lethal violence.”

The Bill will also create a new offence that prohibits coercive or controlling behaviour against an intimate partner. Coercive control is a form of intimate partner violence that is a risk factor for femicide. It is a repeated pattern of behaviour used by an abuser to establish and maintain power over the survivor through tactics such as intimidation, threats, manipulation, surveillance through technology, harassment, jealousy and isolation that makes it extremely difficult to escape the cycle of abuse.

Criminalizing coercive control can help protect survivors from further harm, hold the offender accountable and increase societal awareness.

Femicide in International Law

Femicide is not only a personal tragedy but also a societal issue that reflects broader structural inequalities and systemic failures to adequately protect women. The international community has recognized the severity of gender-based violence through various legal instruments, such as the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, considerable gaps remain in terms of the protection of women’s rights, especially when it comes to addressing femicide.

Manjoo and Jones argue that the current international legal framework on VAW is woefully insufficient, fragmented, and outdated. In particular, it lacks specific provisions that expressly recognize and criminalize femicide as a stand-alone offense, leaving a significant gap in women’s protection under international law. Normative voids like this result in inconsistent and vague definitions, uneven protection regimes, and inadequate enforcement mechanisms across jurisdictions.

At the UN level, CEDAW is the only legally binding instrument addressing discrimination against women, but as mentioned above, it sadly fails to directly address VAW, let alone femicide. While the CEDAW Committee, which monitors the treaty’s implementation, has

provided evolutive interpretations of the Convention through its thirty-nine general recommendations, these are not legally binding and do not fill the treaty's gap regarding explicit protection against femicide.

Further complicating the issue, as Latino points out, several state parties formulated a high number of reservations to CEDAW that are in sooth incompatible with the object and purpose of the treaty, thereby dampening its preceptive potential to advance women's rights. Other states, such as Iran and the United States, have not even ratified the Convention. States such as Egypt and Libya have filed reservations to the CEDAW, claiming that provisions on gender equality in marriage overtly clash with their interpretation of Islamic rules that already provide a balance between the rights and duties of spouses.

Outside of the human rights sphere, other branches of international law fail to address femicide as a specific, gender-based crime. Among others, international criminal law usually addresses VAW only when related to core international crimes, namely crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes. Although femicide could theoretically be prosecuted under each of these categories, their definitions and contextual elements render them inconsistent with the legal nature of femicide.

For instance, the definition of crimes against humanity in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court requires that the crime occurs as part of a "widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population." Besides there possibly being an additional and different discussion on whether women could constitute a civilian population in the sense of crimes against humanity, femicides are rarely committed in such a "widespread or systematic attack". Therefore, the categorization of femicide as only an underlying offense for a crime against humanity would exclude most femicides, as they typically occur in intimate-partner or familial contexts rather than as part of large-scale attacks

d. Root Causes and Risk Factors of Femicide

Most relevant risk factors for becoming a perpetrator and a victim of femicide

Level	For perpetrating femicide	For being a victim of femicide
Individual	Abuse of alcohol and drugs Violating protection order Mental health problems Witnessing domestic abuse in family of origin Unemployment	Attempted strangulation Being a rape victim Pregnancy (during a violent relationship) Witnessing domestic abuse in family of origin Low level of education
Interpersonal	Prior violence against partner Obsessive jealousy Coercive control over partner	Prior violence by perpetrator Estrangement, divorce Presence of child from previous relationship Conflict with in-laws (over dowry, land property, behaviour)
Community	Celebration of aggressive masculinity (as in <i>macho</i> culture) Loose social ties in neighbourhoods	Devaluation of women's roles Isolation Lack of multi-agency coordination for victims' protection Patterns of behaviour transgressing gender norms (in patriarchal settings)
Society	Perception of impunity Lack of measures redressing gender inequality War and conflict settings	Low access to justice Lack of women's rights recognition War and conflict settings

Types of exposures to be included, observational studies must describe data on risk factors associated with femicide. Whenever possible, risk factors will be further categorized in victim-related and perpetrator-related factors. Examples of specific risk factors to be systematized:

- Age
- Race/ethnicity
- Immigrant status
- Educational level
- Employment
- Socioeconomic status
- Previous violence relationship
- Victim or witness of domestic violence during childhood (<14 years)
- Victim of rape or sexual violence in childhood (<14 years)

- Daughter of a mother battered by her partner
- History of depression
- History of mental illness
- Manic or psychotic symptoms
- Personality disorder
- Suicide attempt
- Firearm access
- Alcohol/drugs use
- Age difference of woman and partner
- Relationship between woman and partner
- Relationship duration
- Cohabitation
- Type of violence perpetrated by partner
- Type of violence perpetrated by women
- Increased frequency of physical violence over the past year
- Attempted femicide
- Previous of aggression of woman with a firearm or white arm
- Nonfatal attempt to strangle/hang woman by partner
- Rape or forced sex by partner
- History of murder of a relative
- Desire/attempt or separation by woman
- The woman had a new relationship
- Woman denounced violence to authorities
- Attempts to drop charges or going back on the decision to leave or report the aggressor to the police
- Woman with protective measure
- The woman had children
- Woman had nonbiological children with the abuser
- Woman had biological children with the abuser
- Physical aggression during pregnancy (from beginning to 12 months postpartum)
- Aggression to children by the partner
- Aggression of children with a firearm or white arm
- Violent behavior against people without inbreeding specification
- Violent behavior against people with inbreeding
- Violent behavior against people with no inbreeding/unknown ties
- Commit previous crimes
- Arrest history
- History of violent behaviors with previous partner
- Previous detention or history for domestic violence
- Jealous or controller behavior
- Cruel behaviors directed at the victim and lack of remorse
- Justification of violent behavior due to aggressor's own state (alcohol, drugs, stress) or victim's provocation
- Son of a mother raped by her partner

Femicide is driven by discrimination against women and girls, unequal power relations, gender stereotypes or harmful social norms. It is the most extreme and brutal manifestation of violence against women and girls which occurs on a continuum of multiple and related forms of violence, at home, in workplaces, schools or public and online spaces, including intimate partner violence, sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence, harmful practices and trafficking.

e. Types of Femicide

We can classify femicide cases into different types, according to: the perpetrator's behaviour; the relationship with victims, and the broader context of this crime's occurrence. Context and gender are the two key determinants to look at when analysing femicide.

1. Intimate partner femicide. This type is currently the best documented internationally. A woman is killed by her partner or former partner, very often in the context of a prior abusive relationship. Studies show that trying to escape from an abusive relationship, or seeking divorce or estrangement are events placing the woman at the highest risk of being killed by an intimate partner. The perpetrator's motivation is rooted in a sense of ownership over the victim, based on unequal and rigid gender stereotypes sometimes the perpetrator is also emotionally incapable of conceiving life without her. In killings perpetrated by an intimate partner, 82 % of the victims are women, while 18 % are men.

2. Family (non-intimate) femicide. Committed by family non-intimate relatives, this type can be subdivided into different forms:

- Femicide in the name of honour. This is usually committed by relatives (including women), when the family considers that the victim's behaviour has transgressed rigid patriarchal norms, in a way that undermines the honour of a family. The victim is a young adult who refuses to marry the husband chosen by her family, or who has or is suspected of having pre-marital or extra-marital sexual relations. In some cases, the woman killed has been a prior rape or sexual assault victim. High numbers of femicide cases in the name of honour are documented in countries such as Afghanistan, India, Palestine, Tunisia (UNESCO, 2019), as well as in ethnic communities residing in various European and North American countries. Often this type of femicide remains unreported and unrecorded.

• Dowry death. As recently as 2019 in India, official statistics recorded more than 7 000 crimes against women as ‘dowry deaths’ and more than 5 000 ‘abetments to suicide’ under the Indian Penal Code (National Crimes Records Bureau, 2019). In the social system of arranged marriages, ‘dowry’ is the money and valuables that the bride’s family gives to the groom’s family. Wives whose family of origin has allegedly not delivered the expected amount may be subject to lethal domestic violence, such as arson. These practices remain embedded in the cultures of many South-Asian countries. Dowry customs are also perpetuated through the traditional preference for a male child, which affects: the country sex ratio; female infanticide rates, and the status of women who give birth to daughters.

• Femicide-suicide. Intentional murder of a woman followed by the perpetrator’s suicide is an incident reported in almost all European countries, as well as Australia, Ghana, Moldova, Turkey, the United States (US) (Balica, 2016) and South Africa. Research in Romania detailed the characteristics of this incident: up to 67 % of all femicide-suicide cases are committed by male intimate partners and up to 97 % of cases by relatives; almost 50 % are committed in the victim’s house, after she has been divorced from her would-be perpetrator. When she has children, in 30 % of the cases they are also targeted by the perpetrator (Balica, 2016). This type of femicide is insufficiently recorded and highlights the need to focus on special preventative measures for perpetrators with mental health problems and adult women walking out of violent and abusive relationships, a time when the risk of femicide is very high.

3. Femicide in war and conflict settings. During times of war, genocide and armed conflict, the systematic targeting of women and mass rape are employed to annihilate local communities and humiliate opponents. Victims of rape may subsequently be marginalised and killed. The Academic Council on the United Nations System reports femicide in conflict settings as diverse as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, ISIS groups and Rwanda. UNODC has recognised that ‘these unrecorded gender-based killings of women and girls may substantially elevate the global number of [femicide] victims’.

4. Female sex selection. In 1990, Nobel prize laureate Amartya Sen called international attention to the fact that more than 100 million women were missing globally, because of female pre- and post-natal sex selection occurring in countries of Asia and North Africa, as well as, to a lesser extent, Latin America. More recently, researchers have estimated that the number rose steadily to 126 million by 2010, with China and India accounting for most of the sex ratio deficit at birth. The United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA) points to the deliberate elimination of girls and women through infanticide, starvation and neglect rooted in an ingrained gender discrimination,

in other words a preference for sons over daughters. Post-natal excess female mortality is now increasing even faster and will possibly reach 150 million by 2035.

5. Witch-hunting. Journalists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) report how more than 200 people, mostly women, have died from witch-hunting in rural areas of Assam (India) over the last 20 years. The killing of witches is also practised *inter alia* in Nepal, the Pacific Islands and Tanzania. While men who practise traditional healing are held in high regard, women may be hunted, ultimately facing violence and eventually death. The government of Assam passed a Bill against witch-hunting in 2018 and NGOs now report that the number of deaths is slowly decreasing. Superstition is not the only reason for witch-hunting, with both young and older women being targeted when they acquire land/property. Assam activists report that most of them are single, assertive and ‘dare to say no’.

6. Other types, in a human rights-based approach. The intentional killing of women as a result of gender discrimination also occurs in other contexts, which emerge if we take a human rights-based approach to femicide, that is if we look at the most marginalised and excluded women. By way of example, in 2018 the number of detected victims of human trafficking and forced prostitution was 49 032 globally. For every ten victims, five were adult women and two were girls, many of whom have disappeared, are unregistered and thus fall into the ‘obscure figure of femicide’. Women belonging to ethnic minorities and aboriginal groups may be discriminated against because of their ethnicity, language and religion. They may face additional barriers because they are women, thus in greater risk of: starvation; not having access to appropriate health care; or being killed by strangers. More precise information on the share of femicides in these cases would undoubtedly increase the annual femicide rate, but this could be compiled only piecemeal, by cross-referencing a myriad of official reports and grey literature.

f. Certain Significant Nations

Spain

In spite of the growing evidence of the importance of violence against women for women's health, the response of the health sector has been limited. In Spain, however, an important initiative to raise awareness in the health sector about gender-based violence was spearheaded in November 2003 through the establishment of an epidemiological surveillance system to document women's health problems. Every month the index of deaths (ratio of deaths that month and median of deaths occurring during the previous five years) due to intimate partner violence is published on a women's web page. The purpose is to give visibility to the problem of violence against women, including through the media, and in this way to work towards making it unacceptable. This work is grounded on an understanding of the need to integrate gender dimensions into research and data analysis and the Women's Health Observatory has been instrumental in collecting data and raising awareness of women's health problems. In September 2004, the Spanish National Health Service (NHS) approved the creation of the Commission Against Gender-based Violence. This was the first step towards coordination of programmes and health care actions that were already being undertaken in some of Spain's regions (autonomous communities).

Subsequently, and over time, the NHS took action to implement the specific commitments made in the 2004 Law on Gender-based Violence. It was approved by parliament at the end of 2004.

The law included, among other things, training for health professionals.

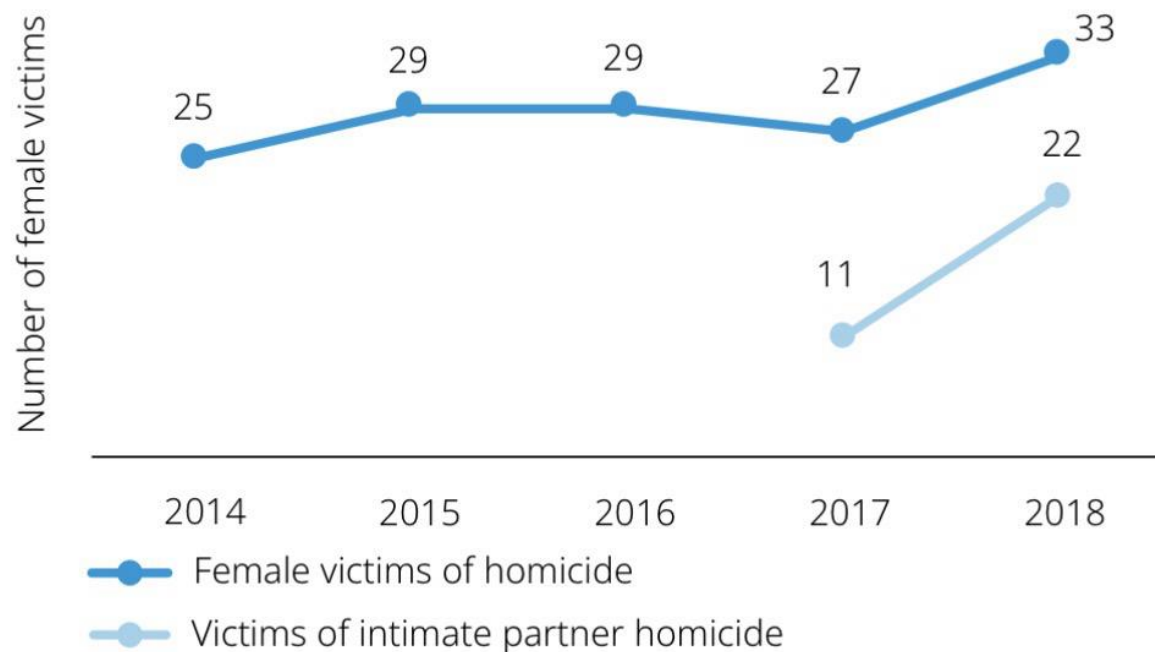
Concha Colomer played a critical role in moving these issues forward within the Ministry of Health, and more recently she had put in place the strategy for the identification of, and response to, violence against women in the health system. She brought to this a sound public health approach based on surveillance/data collection coupled with a firm commitment to a gender equality perspective and to equity. As the Head of the Women's Health Observatory and later as Deputy Director of Health Planning Quality and Healthcare of the Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality she oversaw the production of yearly reports on Gender and Health and on Gender-based Violence starting in 2007. Reducing gender-based inequalities in health was the goal, through generating and disseminating knowledge that could enable a gender analysis of health problems and promote the integration of equity and gender equality in health policies and systems. In relation to violence against women, important steps were taken to harmonise actions across all of the autonomous communities through the development of a common protocol for a health care response to gender-based violence.

Similarly, a set of common indicators on health care provision in cases of gender-based violence were developed in the NHS. Indicators included, for example, the number of cases detected within primary and specialist care levels, and others relating to the demographics of abused women and the type of care received. These served to: facilitate planning of the health care provided, promote improvements in quality and equity in health care provided to survivors of gender-based violence, and to facilitate the exchange of experiences and good practice among those involved in providing health care for women suffering from violence.

Sweden

The official administrative data used in Figure 1 is collected by Brå, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. Although the police collect data about everyone who is found dead (including those deaths resulting from suicide, disease and accident), the council manually examines and analyses all the reported offences, to distinguish homicides and disaggregate data by the sex and age of the victim, the relationship with the perpetrator and whether a firearm was used. EIGE has gathered data on homicide and intimate partner femicide for 2014 to 2018. Brå, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, provides data on female victims of homicide for 2014 onwards, but for intimate partner homicide used as an approximation for femicide it provides data only for 2017 onwards. Figure 1 includes data regarding female victims of homicide and intimate partner femicide. The data regarding female victims of homicide is

Figure 1: Female victims of homicide and intimate partner homicide, as a proxy for femicide, in Sweden



fairly stable between 2014 and 2017; however, an increase can be observed in 2018, which is reflected in the increase in intimate partner femicides during the same period. It should be noted that a few cases in which the relationship status could not be established for different reasons are

missing in each year. Type of relationship between the victim and the perpetrator Brå, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, collects data on homicide and manslaughter cases in which the victims and the perpetrator were or had been in an intimate partnership. Intimate partners include people who are or were married, cohabiting or living apart, with or without common children, and persons who are or were in a dating relationship. Short-term dating or sporadic sexual relations are not included in the definition. Same-sex relationships are also included in this classification, although they are very rare in cases of fatal violence against women in Sweden.

Canada

As of now, Canada has not made any changes to its legal framework concerning femicide. However, recently, several organizations in Canada including the CFOJA have been calling on the Government of Canada and other leaders to recognize femicide as a distinct crime or in specific legislation. In Canada, one of the first organizations to do so was the London Police Services Board, Ontario. This request was followed by Recommendation #70 from the inquest into the circumstances surrounding the femicides of Valerie Warmerdam, Carol Culleton, and Anastasia Kuzyk, for the Government of Canada to explore adding the term “femicide” and its definition to the criminal code. In addition, there have been numerous Calls for Justice from Indigenous groups, activists, and non-governmental organizations, to address the epidemic of extreme violence against Indigenous women and girls, but the Canadian government and the criminal justice system have been slow to respond. One of them calls upon the federal government to consider violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people as an aggravating factor at sentencing, and to amend the Criminal Code accordingly. Canada still has a long way to go to effectively respond to femicide, beginning with the recognition that femicide is a human rights and public health crisis, and we can learn from those jurisdictions that have taken the lead in addressing femicide in their own jurisdictions.

Effective legal responses to femicide are crucial because past efforts targeting male violence against women and girls have fallen short and women and girls continue to bear the greatest burden of sex and gender-based violence globally. This lack of progress has been intensified by COVID-19, which has profoundly impacted the lives of women and girls and increased the levels of violence and femicide. In addition, the legal classification of the sex/gender-related killings of women and girls as femicide will increase public awareness and recognition of the ‘how’ and ‘why’ women and girls are killed, a crucial step to reducing femicide. Furthermore, appropriate legal responses to femicide would begin to address the persistent sex/gender inequalities entrenched in society and enhance the capacity of states’ legal systems to prevent, investigate, prosecute, punish, and eradicate femicide. Ultimately, states must take action to respond to femicide and to uphold their obligations under international law to end male violence against women and girls, support the strengthening of women’s rights and freedoms, and ensure

that all women and girls have equal access to justice. They cannot do that until they recognize the problem for what it is – femicide.

El Salvador

While much of the country's escalating violence over the past decade can be blamed on street gangs and drug traffickers, the most risky place for girls and women is still at home. In January alone this year, police received 243 complaints of domestic violence – a 23 percent year-on-year rise. Information gathered by the feminist organisation Ormusa (the Organisation of Salvadoran Women for Peace) reveals that most sexual assaults involve girls aged between 12 and 17 and take place at home. Sexual crimes are usually committed by a close relative or family acquaintance while the mother is out working. One in three pregnancies in El Salvador involves a teenaged girl, often the result of abuse, according to NGO Plan International. Too many girls end up in relationships with much older men in order to escape poverty or violence at home, Roxana Ramos, a primary care nurse working with pregnant teens in Chalatenango, told Al Jazeera.

'Tip of the iceberg'

Women and girls also bear the brunt of kidnappings – another violent crime which blights the country and causes huge anxiety among the population. In the first four months of 2013, almost 500 kidnappings were reported – 60 percent involved girls and women, according to the National Civilian Police (PNC). It is widely believed that PNC figures represent only the “tip of the iceberg” of actual crimes committed, as fear, mistrust of authorities, social stigma and a lack of awareness among many women about their rights keeps many from speaking out. Conviction rate figures are not publicly available. A prevailing machismo attitude among the police, prosecutors and judiciary in particular continues to be a huge obstacle to justice for women. In 2012, six women were murdered by partners who were serving police officers, according to the Observatory of Gender Violence against Women.

Rodrigo Bustos, director of Plan El Salvador, said: “Violence against girls and women is one of the biggest challenges facing the country, and we know for a fact that it is not getting better. Adolescent girls are at huge risk of sexual abuse from older men within the family... in some cases the mothers know but are too powerless or scared to do anything.” Bustos added: “The roles assigned to women are very fixed: take care of the home and family, and be submissive to all men in all relationships. Violence occurs when women won't submit to this. Our only hope is working with young people, boys and girls, to change these beliefs.

Iran

Saeid Dehghan, a prominent human rights lawyer who has defended numerous individuals in the courts of the Islamic Republic and who is director of the Parsi Law Collective, told CHRI:

“In the overwhelming majority of such cases, whether involving murder or other forms of violence against women, the real weapon is the existing laws of the Islamic Republic. These laws, rooted in religious doctrine and medieval perspectives, enable men in Iran—both within families and in positions of power in the government—to perpetuate such atrocities.”

Iran’s laws not only fail to provide women with the necessary protections against violence, they encourage the killing of women through lenient or sometimes nonexistent penalties for femicides. Article 630 of Iran’s Islamic Penal Code states: “Whenever a man sees his wife committing adultery with a man and knows that the wife has consented to it, he can kill both of them.” In an earlier interview with Deutsche Welle, Dehghan, explained, “According to this article, this kind of ‘honor killing’ is not punishable and the presiding judges usually use the phrase ‘the existence of an honorable motive to preserve honor’ during trial of such murders.” Article 302 of Iran’s Islamic Penal Code states that a man can legally kill a person for committing a crime that is punishable by death under Sharia (Islamic) law, such as adultery. (A woman in Iran, however, could never walk free after killing her adulterous husband and could be executed.) Male family members are also shielded from the punishment of qisas (retributive justice) for their murders of daughters or granddaughters. Article 301 of Iran’s Islamic Penal Code stipulates that the killing of a child by its father or paternal grandfather is exempt from qisas (which allows retribution in kind and thus a death sentence). Judges can still sentence a murderer to up to 10 years in prison, but in most femicide cases, the families and the prosecutors do not seek the harshest penalties, and judges often release the perpetrators after only a few years in prison. Other aspects of Iran’s laws undermine preventative measures that could protect many women from their subsequent murders. Iran’s Civil Code forbids a woman from leaving the matrimonial home without the husband’s permission unless she is able and willing to go to court to prove she is endangered (Article 1114). This leaves women deeply vulnerable to violence, especially given the requirement of witnesses, the fact that a female witness’s testimony is worth half that of a man’s, and the stipulation that if a woman leaves the marital home, she forfeits her right to financial maintenance.

The Islamic Republic’s divorce laws also increase the potential for femicides. According to Article 1133 of the Civil Code, a man can divorce his wife whenever he wishes. Yet divorce rights for women are highly restrictive and, under Article 1130, if a woman desires a divorce she has to prove she is living in conditions of severe hardship that make marital life intolerable. As put by Amnesty International, the “highly patriarchal judicial system that pervades Iranian courts means that in many cases women may not be permitted to divorce, even if they meet the requirements under the law. If they are allowed to divorce, the husbands invariably receive custody of their children.” In such a context, many women stay in dangerously abusive domestic situations.

Egypt

The new Egyptian constitution¹ adopted in 2014 makes reference to non-discrimination and equal opportunities (article 9, 11 and 53). Article 11 is the only article that mentions violence against women, stating that: "...The State shall protect women against all forms of violence and ensure enabling women to strike a balance between family duties and work requirements..."

Article 11 states the right of women to political representation as well as equality between men and women in civil, political, economic, social and cultural matters. Article 53 prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, and makes the state responsible for taking all necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination. Egypt has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), although with reservations to Article 2 on policy measures and Articles 16 regarding marriage and family life. The reservation to Article 9 concerning women's right to nationality and to pass on their nationality to their children was lifted in 2008. Egypt has signed but not ratified the Rome Statute on the ICC and is not yet a party to the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women.

Articles 267, 268, 269 and 289 of the penal code relating to crimes of rape, sexual assault and harassment fail to address the wave of sexual assault and rape in Egypt following the 2011 revolution. For instance, article 267 of the penal code defines rape as penile penetration of the vagina and does not include rape by fingers, tools or sharp objects, oral or anal rape. The two last forms of rape are defined in Article 268 as «indecent violation». While the penal code re-defined and addressed sexual harassment in the new amendment to Article 306 introduced in 2014, the amendment is insufficient and limited in nature as it only considers sexual harassment a crime if the intent of the perpetrator is to obtain sexual benefits. Several human rights organizations convened in 2010 and began constructively working on a draft law with amendments for crimes of sexual violence in the penal code. This draft law was presented to successive governments, including in 2010 and August 2013, but was shelved both times. Furthermore, women trafficking is criminalized in article 64 of the penal code for 2010 yet not sufficiently defined in the law. Domestic violence against women is largely tolerated, and no efforts have been made by the government to combat it. On the contrary, several articles of the penal code can be used to downplay the gravity or even justify this kind of violence.

For instance, article 17 can be used to lower the sentence as an act of mercy often used in cases of rape and honor crimes. Article 60 allows the perpetrator to be pardoned if he acted in "good faith". This article is mostly used to justify domestic violence as "the husband's right to discipline his wife" and to justify so-called "honor crimes". Moreover, marital rape is not recognized as such in the penal code. Although female genital mutilation (FGM) was criminalized in 2008 by virtue of article 242 bis of the penal code, it can be circumvented by making reference to article 61 which allows for harmful actions in case of necessity to protect oneself or others. Medical necessity is therefore used as a reason for performing FGM. Thus, this practice has become medicalized instead of being banned or eliminated. In 2014, the case of a young girl who died as a result of the intervention has been taken to court, and after an acquittal in first instance, an appeal court sentenced the doctor to two years in prison for manslaughter and three months for performing the FGM procedure, while the girl's father was given a three-month suspended sentence. In 2016 after a 17-year-old girl died, the law criminalizing FGM was amended to consider this crime a felony instead of a misdemeanor, with a maximum punishment of 7 years in prison.

Russia

There are no official statistics on femicide in Russia, while the information about the proportion of women affected by other crimes, where both women and men may become targets according to the Criminal Code, is blurred within the general data.

According to data for 2019, in the Far East Federal District of Russia the femicide rate per 100,000 women reached 4. In some other regions of the country it reached 7. In 2020, the femicide rate was 12 in one of Russia's regions. By comparison, UN Office on Drugs and Crime data for 2016 indicates that in Spain the femicide rate was 0.5, and in Germany it was 1.1. The statistics show that the greatest danger for women comes from intimate partners, both present and former; familiar men. It is not customary to talk about this, but sons and grandchildren are also dangerous to women. In 2021, 135 women were killed by their son and 19 by their grandson.

We don't know anything about most of the killed women. When we know details, the victims are most often pensioners, saleswomen, schoolgirls, businesswomen, unemployed, involved in prostitution, homeless women, students and medical workers. Their killers are unemployed, pensioners, drivers, policemen, homeless men, students, servicemen and schoolchildren. Of the 1761 documented cases of femicide in 2019, we found that girls are killed from birth, with 26 below the age of 6, while males are dangerous at any age, with 21 between the age of 7 and 18. We know the method of murder for almost all the cases. Beatings and murders with a knife are typical for Russia. They are followed by strangulation. Murders with occurrences of arson, dismemberment and the use of firearms are the most socially dangerous, and get presented by the news as big sensations which shape the culture of femicide in Russia. If a Russian woman is killed, it likely happens in her home or in the home of her intimate partner. Women are killed less often on the street. It is often believed that anyone who kills women is crazy. However this is a silly generalization and a justification for femicide. Mental illness is not the cause of femicide, but it can release the patriarchal attitudes of society. A typical stereotype in Russia is that women are killed by strangers and drug addicts in the forest. In reality it is men familiar to them that kill them at home, and they are not drug addicts, but alcoholics.

Crime and Punishment

According to the report *Crime and Punishment: What to do with Russian Prisons* (2019), by Olga Shepeleva (Head of the Law and Rulemaking in the Digital Environment project at the Center for Advanced Management Decisions), 93% of released prisoners are sent to prison again. We have found cases when the killer was in prison 10 or more times. The law in Russia can be interpreted very broadly, and some murderers receive fines and suspended sentences, and some receive life sentences. It depends more on the corruption and passivity of society than anything else. The Russian prison is now a femicide factory. By placing a rapist or a killer there, he learns even more cruel ideas. Then he is released from the prison without any socialization and without any kind of support or supervision. We need a reform of justice. I think the punishment for femicide should be life imprisonment. However, it shouldn't be a prison, but more like a restricted territory without women.

6. National Legislation and Legal Frameworks

The vast majority of economies that have enacted femicide legislation are located in Latin America and the Caribbean—17 out of 29 globally. This momentum has been fueled by strong public advocacy and the influence of the Inter-American Convention of Belém do Pará. Not only does the region have the highest number of femicide laws, but it also features the most comprehensive legal provisions: clear definitions, tiered penalties, and sanctions that include both imprisonment and the loss of parental or inheritance rights. In contrast, most OECD high-income economies—such as Belgium, France, Portugal, and Spain—do not explicitly criminalize femicide. Instead, they aggravate penalties for homicide when it is motivated by discrimination based on the victim's sex or gender. In Europe and Central Asia, as well as the Middle East and North Africa, progress has been uneven. Only a few countries—including Cyprus, Morocco, North Macedonia, and Türkiye—have recognized femicide as a separate offense or introduced harsher penalties for gender-motivated killings.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Gabon stands out. Its national law on violence against women imposes life imprisonment for various forms of femicide, including killings by a spouse or partner, or murders committed solely on the basis of the victim's gender.

Latin America has emerged as a global leader in advancing legal recognition of femicide, pioneering some of the most comprehensive and influential laws on the issue. In 2012, Mexico became the first country to adopt a standalone federal law on femicide, building on legislation passed at the district level the previous year. The law introduced a clear legal definition, established severe penalties, and included protocols for implementation—along with sanctions for public officials who obstruct justice in femicide cases. Ecuador followed in 2014, incorporating femicide and aggravated femicide as distinct crimes under its newly adopted penal

code. Peru first criminalized femicide in 2013 and has since amended its criminal code multiple times, most recently in 2020, to expand protections, introduce tiered sentencing, and apply additional consequences such as the loss of parental rights and the disqualification from holding public office. Together, these laws have laid critical groundwork for defining, prosecuting, and preventing femicide, while also serving as legislative models for other countries pursuing similar reforms.

While no binding treaty explicitly uses the term femicide, several international and regional frameworks have played a key role in promoting its legal recognition.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Convention of Belém do Pará has been the most influential, obligating states to prevent, punish, and eradicate violence against women. The convention has been widely interpreted—especially by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights—as encompassing gender-related killings, and it has directly influenced legal reforms in countries like Mexico, El Salvador, and Argentina. At the global level, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), through General Recommendation 35, identifies lethal violence as a form of discrimination and urges states to strengthen laws on femicide and improve data collection. Additionally, UN resolutions and reports—including those by the General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, and UN Women—have repeatedly called on states to explicitly recognize femicide in law, ensure accountability, and enhance enforcement.

7. The Role of UNWomen and Other International Organizations

UNWomen

UN Women has played a key role in developing evidence-based policy and programming guidance on prevention of violence against women and girls. As part of its prevention strategy, UN Women focuses on early education, respectful relationships, and working with men and boys, especially through, and in, the media, sports industries, and the world of work. UN Women helps conduct research on attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours of men and boys, as well as young people, related to various forms of violence, and supports advocacy, awareness-raising, community mobilization, and educational programmes, as well as legal and policy reforms.

In Asia and the Pacific, for example, UN Women works with other UN agencies on the Partners for Prevention programme that aims to reduce the prevalence of gender-based violence in the region through behaviour and attitudinal change among boys and men, as well as increased institutional capacity and policy enhancements. In partnership with the World Association of

Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, and with inputs from young people, UN Women has also designed a curriculum—Voices Against Violence—for those aged 5–25 years. The curriculum includes tools to help young people understand the root causes of violence in their communities, and to help educate and involve their peers and communities in preventing violence against women and girls.

UNODC

Mexico City (Mexico), 11 September 2020 – The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Mexico, has designed the very first online module on femicide prevention and police action, in collaboration with the Secretariat of Citizen Security and Protection, the Merida Initiative and the UNODC Global eLearning Programme. This special module now is part of the framework on “Strengthening Program for the Security of Vulnerable Groups”. The module is aimed at police personnel from different security institutions and is now a key part of the curriculum for the “Diploma in Prevention, Investigation of Femicide and Police Action”.

Its launch was a clear indicator of the ongoing work of the Programme, despite the contingencies presented by COVID-19. In addition, not only has it elaborated on pedagogical elements to the content on femicide prevention already imparted in the classroom; the module has also introduced new topics of study within the field, while continuing to raise awareness on gender-based violence and femicide. The primary learning objective of the module is to identify both the duties and tools that security institutions have at their disposal when preventing violence against women, with particular emphasis on femicide. It also integrates a joint ethical and professional approach to victim-care; and addresses topics such as the use of anthropological expertise, work stress among security institution staff and the impact it has on interaction with victims.

Through the use of technological tools, UNODC continues to reinforce its commitment to strengthening the response capacity of security institutions towards gender-based violence. Through ongoing training and capacity-building, the Mexico offices is contributing to the fulfilment of one of the main objectives in the “Strengthening Program for the Security of Vulnerable Groups”, which focuses on endowing public security actors who act as first-responders with sufficient tools for the investigation and prevention of femicide, in accordance with national and international standards. This initiative contributes an essential part of the curriculum for the “Diploma in Prevention, Investigation of Femicide and Police Action” and to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 5: Gender Equality and 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. The UNODC Executive Director, Mrs. Ghada Waly, has been clear that the protection of women is a priority for the organization: "In each of our countries, societies and families, there is a mother, a daughter, a sister who needs

us to defend her more than ever. We must fight for their rights in the midst of a global crisis that threatens to destroy the achievements of the past."

UNODC offers specialized assistance in strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice system responses to violence against women. The Office is currently assisting 18 countries, providing legislative and policy support and developing the capacity of criminal justice systems to more effectively prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish related crimes, to provide access to legal aid and to empower and protect victims, survivors and witnesses.

OHCHR

In 2015, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Simonovic, called for a "femicide watch" and/or observatories on gender related killings of women. Her subsequent report of 2016 (A/71/398) laid out the modalities for establishing such a mechanism.

The Femicide Watch initiative aims to focus on femicide prevention through the collection of comparable data on femicide rates at national, regional and global levels. Data on femicide cases is analyzed by national multidisciplinary bodies, from a human rights perspective. This is done in order to identify shortcomings within national laws and policies, including their lack of implementation, and to undertake preventive measures.

Since 2015, a growing number of States have embraced this initiative by establishing femicide watches, developing measures to collect data on gender related killings of women, or by undertaking research on femicide and other measures for its prevention. In an increasing number of countries, independent human rights institutions, civil society organizations, women's groups and/or academic institutions are being mandated to establish femicide watches/observatories. Positive steps have also taken place regionally. For example, in March 2019, the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) adopted the Model Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of the Gender-Related Killing of Women and Girls. The Beijing+25 regional review, organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in October 2019, also supports the Special Rapporteur's initiative. The meeting report calls on all countries to "establish multidisciplinary national bodies such as 'Femicide Watch' with the aim to actively work on prevention of femicide or gender-related killing of women" (ECE/AC.28/2019/2, annex I). In his statement to the High-level meeting on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women on 1 October 2020, the UN Secretary General called for affirmative action to prevent violence against women and girls, including femicide.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, Ms. Simonovic presented a report to the General Assembly on 9 October 2020, on the intersection between the Covid-19 pandemic and the pandemic of gender based violence against women and girls, in which she highlights the dramatic increase globally in cases of domestic violence. While national prevention systems often lack reliable data in so-called “normal” times, the current Covid-19 context has made it even more difficult to get a clear picture of the potential increase in femicide as a result of the pandemic and the related lockdown measures. The report emphasizes the importance of tracking femicides during the COVID-19 pandemic, and stresses that preexisting gaps in response to domestic violence and femicide are being compounded by gaps caused by this pandemic. States that have already started collecting data on femicide will be in a position to compare such data in the COVID-19 context, and to evaluate the extent of the increase in femicide during the pandemic. Read more on the report page.

WHO

WHO’s work on violence against women is led by the UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP). WHO’s (which includes HRP’s) response to address violence against women prioritizes: generating data on the prevalence and health impacts; conducting research to identify promising health sector interventions; setting standards on the health sector response, including guidelines and implementation tools; supporting Ministries of Health to provide quality, survivor-centred services including sexual and reproductive and mental health services; and strengthening evidence on prevention.

To achieve lasting change, it is important to enact and enforce legislation and develop and implement policies that promote gender equality; allocate resources to prevention and response of violence against women and girls; and invest in women’s rights organizations.

8. Victim/Survivor Protection

The first priority when responding to gender-based violence must be to respond to the needs of victims/survivors, and ensure that they are properly protected.

A number of different institutions and organisations may play a role in offering this protection – e.g. social services, the police, and the courts. The state officially has a responsibility for support services, but in many communities, they will be provided by third parties such as civil society organisations and in particular by women’s organisations.

Responses to gender-based violence need to ensure:

- A victim-centred approach;
- Accessibility for all victims;
- Confidentiality and privacy for victims and survivors;
- The safety and well-being of victims/survivors (and any accompanying children)
- Full accountability for perpetrators;
- Effective access for victims/survivors to legal remedies and legal aid, free where possible;
- That power imbalances and gender inequality are taken into account when designing further support systems for victims/survivors, including possible empowerment strategies.

Some practical measures to respect these principles might include:

- Round-the-clock free telephone lines providing information, support and counselling;
- Immediate points of contact so that victims/survivors can easily access medical and legal services;
- Provision of safe accommodation, for example: safety houses and shelters, opportunities for victims to keep using their home, with continual assessment of risk, relocation support for long term needs, etc.;
- Access to gender sensitive primary health care and specialist gender-based violence services;
- Advocacy and legal support, including free legal assistance, advice, advocacy, and court support services for victims/survivors;
- Accessible information about rights and entitlements, including free access to qualified and impartial interpreters and the translation of legal documents, where necessary or where requested;
- Emergency barring orders in cases of domestic violence;
- Access to counselling, both short and long term, including access to support groups;
- Facilitating the economic independence of victims/survivors from their abusers;
- Support for the professional and social reintegration of victims/survivors, focusing on ensuring their capacity to make decisions about their lives. This may include training, support finding work, support finding long-term accommodation, and assistance building a social network of support.

Prosecution of perpetrators needs to be built into policy measures to address gender violence. However, in addition to prosecution and punishment – where appropriate -work with the perpetrators of gender-based violence can also help to reduce the chances of their returning to patterns of violence. It is worth noting that in some cases of domestic violence, victims choose to

return home and resume relationships. In such cases it is important that there are services available which work with perpetrators to reduce violent behaviour.

Such services might include the provision of counselling to address the root causes of violence, or training and education on gender-based violence. Work with men only groups is often helpful.

9. Case Studies

The Cotton Field Case

The Femicides of the cotton field (Spanish: *Feminicidas del campo algodonnero*) is the media name for murders committed by two Mexican serial killers, Edgar Ernesto Álvarez Cruz and José Francisco Granados de la Paz (born 1979). Both were active between 1993 and 2003 in the city of Ciudad Juárez. According to his own statements, Granados kidnapped, tortured, raped, and murdered at least 8-10 young women, but according to the Attorney General of the State of Chihuahua, they murdered at least 14 women. This corresponded to the 8 corpses found in cotton fields in the city's outskirts and 6 more found in Mount Cerro Negro, also adjacent to the city.

While in the custody of the Texas police in 2006, Granados confessed to having participated in at least 10 murders of women, perpetrated between 1993 and 2003. In his statements, he indicated that he was not fully aware of what he did, as he committed his crimes while drugged:

"...I told some cousins, a cousin bought me a pizza and asked me what I had, I told him it was because of the deaths in Juárez, that I felt used and that I was threatened as a minor and drugged with benzos twice. I told him that I had killed two women, he looked at me and said 'It's not true, do not tell me anything...'

—Francisco Granados during a press conference in 2008

He identified Edgar Ernesto Álvarez Cruz as the alleged mastermind of between 10 and 17 murders. He also mentioned the participation of a third man, Alejandro Delgado Valles, known as El Calas, who was later exonerated. He indicated that Álvarez used to provide him with drugs during the crimes, so he did not remember the exact events.

The intervention of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights was based on requests from victims' relatives, who filed a complaint against the Mexican State, motivated by the lack of response from the same.

In 2005, the Inter-American Court approved and admitted the case, and in January 2007, it accumulated the files of González, Monrreal, and Mónarrez, whose bodies were found in Juárez's cotton fields.

On November 16, 2009, the court issued a judgment against the Mexican State. From the sentence that was issued, the following recommendations were highlighted:

1. Conduct the criminal process properly
2. Publicly acknowledge their international responsibility
3. Unveil a monument in memory of the victims

The Murder of Chiara Paez

The discovery of a pregnant schoolgirl's body under the patio of her boyfriend's family home in northeast Argentina has led local rights groups to condemn her killing as a femicide, shining a spotlight on an invisible scourge in the South American nation.

A post-mortem examination carried out on the victim, 14-year-old Chiara Paez, after her body was unearthed on May 11 showed she died from beatings to the head, face and body, local media have reported.

The post-mortem also found traces of a drug used in abortions, fuelling speculation that Paez's killing could have been the result of an argument with her boyfriend and his family over her pregnancy.

Media reports say the 16-year-old boyfriend has been charged with aggravated murder, femicide and forced abortion, and that he confessed to the killing when questioned by prosecutors, in a case that has dominated headlines in Argentina for weeks.

"The evidence comes from Manuel's (the boyfriend) own statements, who accepted responsibility as being the perpetrator of the crime," Argentina's La Nacion newspaper quoted prosecutor Alejandro Sinopolis as saying. The boyfriend's mother and stepfather have been charged with being accessories to the same crimes, La Nacion reported.

Although femicides- the killing of a woman by a man because of her gender- are most common in Central America, Argentina reported 277 femicides last year, according to The Meeting House, a local women rights group.

"The deplorable case of this young girl has triggered a reaction in society and has raised awareness about femicides in Argentina. People are saying that's enough, not one more femicide," said the group's head, Ada Beatriz.

In the town of Rufino, 400 km (250 miles) northeast of Buenos Aires, where Paez was killed, around 7,000 residents marched and held a vigil on May 12, holding photographs of Paez and placards saying "Rufino is in mourning."

Across Argentina, there have been 1,808 femicides since 2008 and the problem shows little sign of abating, according to The Meeting House. There have been more than 250 femicides every year since 2010, with a peak of 295 in 2013.

"We're saying femicide is not a private, hidden matter but something that affects all of society because when a woman is killed it affects the whole family and children," Beatriz said in a telephone interview with the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Paez's killing has prompted women's rights groups to organise marches across Argentina on June 3 to protest against femicide.

The Velásquez Paiz Case

On 12 August 2005 Claudina Isabel Velásquez Paiz, a 19-year-old student, went to a party. At about 11:45 pm she contacted her family by phone for the last time – after which they lost contact with her. Two hours later, Claudina's parents were informed that their daughter might be in danger. They called the police, who came to their house. Upon arrival, the police told Claudina's family that they would patrol the area, but, despite the high rates of femicide in Guatemala, they had to wait at least 24 hours to report Claudina's disappearance. With the help of family and friends, Claudina's parents continued their search throughout the night. Around 5 am, they went to the police station to report her disappearance but once again were told to wait— It was 8:30 am when the police finally took formal notice of Claudina's disappearance.

Information provided by an anonymous caller helped firemen and police find a woman's body – an examination revealed injuries including a bullet wound on the forehead, as well as signs of sexual violence. Claudina's parents were asked to visit the morgue to identify the body. After confirming that the unidentified body was Claudina, her parents were told they could recover the body around noon. At the funeral home where Claudina's body was being veiled, police arrived to take her fingerprints. Claudina's parents objected and were threatened with obstruction of justice.

There is no evidence that the Public Ministry or the police had undertaken any action following information of Claudina's disappearance – except for the report made at 8.30 am on 13 August 2005. No criminal investigation was initiated until after the finding of the body.

The Court concluded that the state violated the personal integrity of Claudina's family by the form in which the investigation was conducted. In particular, qualifying Claudina as a person whose death did not deserve to be investigated, in addition to the irregularities and deficiencies

throughout the investigative process, subjected Claudina's family to further suffering and re-victimisation. This constitutes a violation of Article 5.1 of the American Convention, in conjunction with Article 1.1.

The Court also determined that the care of a person's remains and respect for the family of that person is a form of observance of the right to human dignity. In this case, Public Ministry officials arrived at Claudina's memorial service and demanded access to her body. After threatening to arrest Claudina's parents for obstruction of justice, her coffin was removed from the memorial service and the officials took fingerprints and nail clippings. In this instance, the state had interrupted the family's grieving and tribute to Claudina, violating their rights to honour and recognition of their dignity. Therefore, the state had also acted in violation of Article 11 of the American Convention, in conjunction with Article 1.1 with regard to Claudina's family.

The Case of Uyinene Mrwetyana

Uyinene "Nene" Mrwetyana (20 April 2000 – 24 August 2019) was a South African student at the University of Cape Town. On August 24, 2019, she was raped and murdered in the suburb of Claremont, Cape Town. Her murder highlighted the broader national problem of gender based violence and femicide in South Africa, and is credited with "shifting the South African collective consciousness" and "igniting a movement".

On 24 August 2019, Mrwetyana had been told by a post office attendant and her future killer, Luyanda Botha, that her parcel was not ready for collection and that she should come back later in the afternoon, despite the post office closing at 1pm. Botha had planned his attack in advance, arranging with his post office colleague, Soraya Abdullah for her to leave work earlier. When Mrwetyana arrived after the official closing time, Botha locked the door behind her and began to violate her. He raped her and attempted to strangle her, before ultimately bludgeoning her to death with a two kilogram weight targeting her head and eventually knocking her unconscious. He returned the following day to retrieve her body and drove to a nearby field where he doused her body with petrol and set it on fire.

Mrwetyana was last seen in Claremont leaving a minibus taxi outside Clareinch Post Office soon before her death. She was missing for nine days and received a large amount of media coverage and public attention in Cape Town. It was during this time that the hashtag #BringNeneHome started trending on social media. Mrwetyana's body was found in a hole beside an unused railway track in the township of Lingeletu West in Khayelitsha. It was discovered on the 26th but was only identified as hers a few days later.

On 29 November 2019, The Uyinene Mrwetyana Foundation was founded in Makhanda, Eastern Cape in celebration of her life. The Uyinene Mrwetyana Scholarship was also founded for female students in the Humanities faculty at the University of Cape Town, and was later first awarded to Luhlanganiso Majebe in July 2021. Following protests and uproar after Mrwetyana's death,

President Cyril Ramaphosa announced reforms such as harsher punishments for sex offenders and the public disclosure of the National Register for Sex Offenders to stem sexual and physical violence against women and children.

10. What a Resolution Should Address

1. What measures should states take to recognize femicide in their laws without creating gaps in existing homicide laws?
2. Which systems could governments establish to identify warning signs before gender-based killings occur?
3. How can ensuring that the needed precautions are taken after receiving reports of repeated threats or violence against women get more effective?
4. Which protections could states provide to victims who fear reporting their abusers?
5. What actions could governments take to prevent cultural or social attitudes from affecting femicide cases?
6. How should police, prosecutors, judges, and healthcare workers receive specialized training on femicide and gender-based violence?
5. What additional protections could be provided to women facing higher risks due to their social or economic conditions?
6. How could states close legal gaps that prevent femicide cases from being properly prosecuted?
7. How should legislation address harmful practices and social norms linked to gender-related killings, including honour-based killings and dowry-related violence?

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