

**Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Vienna
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Theme: The responsibility of effective, fair, humane and accountable criminal justice systems in preventing and countering crime motivated by intolerance or discrimination of any kind

Statement from Soroptimist International, Zonta International, and International Association of Applied Psychology

Numerous human rights treaties, including for example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women have addressed the issue of gender motivated killings of women and girls. Moreover, approaches and recommendations of the United Nations treaty bodies on gender-motivated killings of women in the context of honour crimes, femicide, violent murders, ritual killings, killings of women accused of witchcraft, lynching and extrajudicial killings have also been based on an analysis of concluding observations of the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights since 2000

Soroptimist International, Zonta International, and International Association of Applied Psychology are committed to end all forms of violence which affect women and girls disproportionately. Gender-based violence occurs in the family, in the general community, and through actions perpetrated or condoned by the State. Whatever form it takes, gender-based violence is deeply rooted in historical inequalities, power imbalances, and gender based discrimination. Gender based violence is a violation of human rights and affects the ability of women and girls to reach their full potential and participate in society.

As early as 1995, the Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing expressed its deep concern regarding the global prevalence of different manifestations of the gender-related killing of women and girls reaching alarming proportions. At that time, it specifically acknowledged that one of every two women victims of homicide was killed by her intimate partner or a family member. In 2018, violence against women and girls continues to be widespread, systemic and culturally entrenched; the United Nations Secretary-General has described it as reaching pandemic proportions.

In 2018, a global study conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime regarding gender-related killing of women and girls, determined that gender-related homicide continues to represent the most extreme form of violence against women, a lethal act on a continuum of gender-based discrimination and abuse. According to the 2018 global study, gender-related killings of women and girls remain a grave problem across all regions, in countries rich and poor.

The 2018 global study conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime regarding gender-related killing of women and girls, studied the various types of gender-related homicides that involved women or girls.

The 2018 global study determined that women are far more likely to die at the hands of someone they know. In fact, this study revealed that women killed by intimate partners or family members account for 58 per cent of all female homicide victims reported globally last year, and in certain countries, particularly in Europe, between 40 and 70 per cent of female victims of homicide may be killed by an intimate partner. Little progress has been made in preventing such murders.

Honour-related killings of women and girls are usually committed by family members when they consider that the behaviour of female family members has brought shame on the family and needs to be sanctioned. Although available data on honour killings are scarce, as such crimes often go unrecorded and unreported, existing studies indicate that honour killing remains a practice that is encountered in parts of Asia, in particular.

Dowry related killings of women in which brides are killed or driven to commit suicide after being subjected to continuous harassment and abuse by the groom's family in an effort to extort or increase dowry payments are still widely reported in South-Asian countries. A common manifestation of this practice is the burning of the wife.

The practice of targeting women in an armed conflict and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war has been documented in several reports published by the United Nations. The study also observed that it was important to acknowledge that sexual violence, kidnapping and enslavement accompanied, or preceded, by intentional killing has been systematically used against women in times of conflict. For example, mass rapes and killings of women and girls were documented in the conflicts in Rwanda in 1994 and more recently in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, mass killings of Yazidi women by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) are reported to have taken place in recent years in Iraq's Sinjar province, after several mass graves were discovered.

Aboriginal and indigenous girls may experience much higher levels of violence than non-aboriginal women, both in terms of victimization and lethal violence. Examples of these type of murders included the murder and disappearance of large numbers of aboriginal women which prompted the Government of Canada to launch a national public inquiry in 2015 to investigate such case. Victimization of aboriginal women and girls was also encountered in other regions, such as Central America and Oceania. In Guatemala, for example, during the Civil War in the 1980s large-scale violent killings of indigenous Maya women were perpetrated.

Extreme violent killings of women also take place in the context of phenomena such as organized crime, drug dealing, gangs, massive migration and human and drug trafficking chains. It also takes place as a form of controlling behavior where sexual orientation or gender identity is in conflict with existing heterosexual norms.

Intentional killings of women due to sorcery or witchcraft-related accusations have still been reported in Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands. Existing studies analysing witchcraft killings in countries in Africa point out that while young women, including girls, are targeted by witchcraft accusations and killed, women face an increasing risk as they reach old age. Women in rural areas who live alone, which is often the case of widows, are particularly exposed because of their increasing financial dependency on male family members.

According to the 2018 global study, across the world, certain cultural norms and beliefs have also often been used to justify harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, child marriage and infanticide, which have often resulted in the death of these victims.

Finally, although it should be noted that not all homicides of sex workers are gender related, female sex workers have the highest homicide victimization rate of any set of women ever studied. Moreover, due to the lack of attention given to their disappearance, they constitute easier targets for serial homicide. For example, conservative estimates in the United States suggest that serial killers account for one third of all homicides of female sex workers, with nearly all serial perpetrators being clients.

Soroptimist International, Zonta International, and International Association of Applied Psychology commends those Member States which have begun to address the issue of gender-related homicides through for example the establishment of specialist national bodies for the protection and safeguarding of women and girls.

Soroptimist International, Zonta International, International Association of Applied Psychology calls on Member States to:

- ratify and implement without reservation all international conventions and treaties which directly and indirectly address gender-based violence including femicide, and actively engage in accountability mechanisms contained therein;
- without delay enact or reform legislation to criminalise all forms of gender-based violence including femicide and enforce legislation with appropriate prosecutions of perpetrators;
- reject any differentiation between the public and private sphere as a justification for gender-based violence including femicide;
- ensure that front line responders have adequate resources and training to respond quickly to all incidents of gender-based violence with gender specific compassion, understanding and respect;
- recognise that gender based violence including femicide poses significant financial costs to society and that prevention of violence has real economic benefits;
- invest in initiatives to make public spaces safe, particularly for women and girls;

- adequately fund effective resources and appropriate support services to victim/survivors of violence, including safe shelter, access to legal services, and medical and psychological treatment at no cost to the victim/survivor; recognise that some groups are at particular risk, including migrants, refugees, indigenous women and girls, rural women and girls, women and girls living with disabilities, HIV positive women and girls, women and girls living with mental health challenges, and women and girls facing multiple discriminations (such as sexual orientation and gender identity, race, and ethnicity);
- take all necessary steps to ensure that gender-based violence including femicide is never used as a tool of war, and that women and girls living in conflict affected areas are fully protected;
- address any increased risks of gender-based violence including femicide in areas affected by natural disasters;
- ensure robust systems are in place and utilised to collect reliable data and statistics disaggregated by sex relating to violence including femicide, and ensure that the collection of this data does not endanger women or girls in any way.

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