

COMMISSION *on the* STATUS OF WOMEN



CSW - TOPIC 2 - MEASURES TO ELIMINATE FEMICIDE GLOBALLY

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INTRODUCTION:

The term 'Femicide' represents the far end of all types of violence against women and the intentional murder of women because of their sex. This violence is driven by a number of factors such as discrimination towards women, unrealistic gender roles, the unequal power balance between men and women and out-dated social norms.

Femicide can be broken down into multiple types, depending on the context, providing more in-depth definitions and a key understanding of the phenomenon.

The interpersonal context of femicide refers to a killing within an intimate partnerships or a family, when a power imbalance exists between the perpetrator and the victim. Studies conducted by the World Health Organization show that more than 35% of all murders of women are conducted by intimate partners, whether as only 5% of murders of men are conducted by their partners. Intimate femicide is fuelled by domestic violence, marginalisation, a position of subordination of the woman, and prolonged periods of verbal and physical abuse. This type of violence has extreme consequences on a woman's surroundings, such as her children, and is the most frequent type of femicide.

The political context of femicide refers to killings of women that are committed by state authority, take place during armed conflicts, or are tolerated by the state in health, social and religious contexts, such as unsafe abortion-related deaths. In many cases, these killings occur in the context of impunity, where the perpetrators are not held accountable and go unpunished.

Other types of femicide include those taking place in a criminal context, relating to organised crime and human trafficking, or due to societal norms, where women are killed because they overstep traditional gender norms and beliefs.

KEY ISSUES:

Femicide stems from a variety of key issues that are essential to understanding the problem as a whole. Cultural, social and economic factors result in many women being at risk around the globe in the modern world, and in combination with weak judicial systems, provide the context in which violence and discrimination have peaked and become what we see today. The root causes of femicide globally include:

1. Practices that encourage male superiority and control over women:

Strict gender roles enforced over hundreds of years dictate the patriarchal society today which limits women's opportunities in the work field and their ability to provide, therefore forcing them to depend on the men in their lives and placing them in a position of inferiority and vulnerability.

Furthermore, these erroneous views instigate violence and abuse against women as a method of maintaining dominance over them, a behaviour which has been normalized in past decades. Domestic violence has seen a drastic increase and has severe consequences, resulting in psychological conditions, behavioural and emotional struggles for children, isolation and can ultimately even escalate to the murder of women because of jealousy or a lack of control over them. More often, when women reach out to report their abuse and seek justice, they are blamed for entering and staying in these dangerous situations, or even criticised for overstepping their caregiver and subordinate role.

Studies across 161 countries published by the WHO have found that 1 in 3 women have been physically or sexually abused, while 1 in 4 women in an intimate partnership have been abused by their partner, with the data still being restricted.

2. Cultural beliefs:

In many countries, harmful cultural norms contribute to femicide by degrading women, limiting their autonomy and decision making, while deeming aggression against them trivial. This practice results in women being perceived as expendable, making consequences for violence less severe.

In certain cultures, the practice of honour killings prioritizes a family's integrity and public image over a woman's life. Cases of adultery, premarital sex or rape are considered to bring shame to a woman's family, and in order to repair their image, the relatives must take the woman's life to restore their honour. This type of violence often goes overlooked by the authorities and community, being viewed as a common practice.

Other cultural practices include that of dowry, a payment that families offer when marrying a woman. When an insufficient dowry is brought to a family, many young women are killed, with the number of deaths and other dowry-related incidents being estimated at 25,000 each year.

Rituals are also performed on women to ensure faithfulness and submission, such as female genital mutilation, a violent practice which typically results in long term complications and death.

3. Organized Crime:

Zones in which trafficking networks operate report increased violence and mortality towards women. Women are exploited and forced to enter prostitution while facing continuous threats and abuse to make sure of their compliance. Women who have precarious financial situations, have been abused in the past or who struggle with mental health are most often targeted by these networks under false promises. When women part-taking in these networks are perceived as unprofitable, they are oftentimes sold or even murdered to hide their involvement and clear consequences for the criminals. Indigenous women are usually the first to be abducted or forced into this life due to their marginalized stance.

In the world of organized crime, women are used as tools in intimidation tactics, being murdered to exert dominance or control over a specific area. Impunity, stigma and threats often prevent the just apprehension of

perpetrators and deter women and their families from obtaining justice and safety.

4. Areas of Armed Conflicts:

Women caught in zones of conflict are most at risk of facing brutalities in order to instil a sense of fear and terror in the civilian population. Sexual violence and other forms of abuse such as mutilation are used to gain control by terrorist organizations resulting in severe trauma for women and in many cases murder, as women are already vulnerable and targeted in these situations.

5. Institutional Discrimination:

As most cases of violence against women are overlooked because of judicial biases, femicide cases are not investigated properly. Traditional gender roles also have a part in unfair rulings, as twisted perceptions of women's roles and motives may result in more lenient punishments for those committing crimes against them and greater sanctions for the women. In most cases, when a report is filed for domestic abuse or the violation of other women's rights, their credibility is questioned and most perpetrators of these crimes are freed without any form of trial.

MAIN REGIONS AFFECTED:

Manifestations of femicide globally depend on the region, cultural practices and opportunities for women, with rates of femicide being unclear for most countries due to unreliable data. However, most cases of femicide and general abuse towards women take place in Africa, South-East Asia and Latin America, due to poor economic conditions, restrictive legal protection, criminal activity, reduced mental health resources or conflicts.

India

The femicide in India has been fueled by numerous factors, such as illegal sex trafficking, infanticides, dowrys and honour killings. A very common phenomenon in India is that of sex-selective abortion, where more than 90% of abortions are female fetuses, as they are considered less economically desirable, being a burden for low-income families who can not face the payment of a dowry. Honour killings are also very present in the north of the country, with many brutal attacks

taking place on women in their own families. Modesty related assaults made up 14.7% of attacks in 2012, with acid throwings also being frequent lethal occurrences towards women. Gender based violence is rooted into Indian culture, with girls typically having little access to education and being forced into child marriages, reinforcing discrepancies between males and their female counterparts.

China

In China, a preference towards male children has existed for thousands of years, as they can work for their family from a young age. Female infanticide because of the One-Child Policy has increased, as girls are not desirable to have in a family and are either killed or abandoned at birth. This choice of policy led to an increasing gap between the number of men and women, aided prostitution, sex trafficking, and kidnappings. In 2013, the UN Population Fund published a study stating that 52% of Chinese men admitted they had engaged in physical or sexual violence against their partner. Rates of femicide between women pertaining to high-income households and low-income ones were similar. These cases are portrayed as being one-time incidents, with the government focusing on maintaining order instead of fighting these patriarchal norms.

Turkiye

The Justice and Development Party in Turkiye is criticized to have protected men by offering them impunity in cases of violence and abuse against women, standing behind the increase of femicide across nations. Since their withdrawal for the Istanbul Convention, which held legislative measures to sanction perpetrators of crimes against women, cases of femicide have only increased resulting in many violent incidents. In light of public criticism and backlash, measures to protect women through legislation need to be enforced.

Mexico

The topic of femicide is of very high concern in Mexico, the country leading in the rank of most killings of women, made in particular by misogynistic men. One reason why the United Mexican States is differentiated from other Latin American countries is the "machismo" phenomenon, which is part of the culture and encourages male dominance in the house, as well as violence against partners and wives. Although feminist movements are occurring in the country, the

government brings fear to the women by ignoring this major issue. Statistics show that 10 women are killed daily in Mexico as a result of femicide. Moreover, data collected from the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System highlights the fact that the average number of femicides has increased since 2015.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS AT SOLVING THE MATTER:

Countries in Latin America have also introduced departments which focus on investigating only femicide cases. Other approaches to the issue of femicide include laws that protect women in Latin America, providing them with legal assistance, restriction orders, while assuring access to emergency shelters and hotlines. International organizations facilitate dialogue in the region and coordinate efforts to bring an end to violence against women. In the case of many countries, the definition of femicide has been adopted at a national level and in their penal code. Sentences for crimes against women due to their gender have also been increased, alongside legal reforms that include femicide as an aggravating circumstance in cases of homicide.

In African countries support systems have been established, which offer aid and refuge for women in abusive households, increase their protection and actively seek legal reforms. Education and awareness campaigns have been set up in countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Kenya and within the African Union, with activism against unjust treatment gaining momentum. Sexual assault referral centres that provide medical services and counselling also work to reduce gender based violence. The African Union has adopted the Maputo Protocol to protect women and continues to aid African countries in developing national plans, while also campaigning for the end of child marriage.

North America faces extremely high and disproportionate rates of crime and femicide of indigenous women, being six times more likely to be murdered than non-Indigenous women according to statistics. High levels of poverty and systemic racism limit access to education and adequate legal representation. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) initiated in Canada investigated crimes against indigenous women and provided educational, welfare and legal recommendations, while raising awareness to the pressing issue of femicide in the region. It emphasized the need for support systems and legal representation, drawing attention to cases which had never been properly investigated. In the United States of America, laws such as

Savanna's Act or the Not Invisible Act collect data and response capacities for women in distress, provide support for families and conduct efforts in law enforcement to resolve the crisis.

The European Union has drafted various directives that impose standards on countries and assure the fight against femicide. In addition, they coordinate information campaigns and research to collect accurate data and provide support for victims. Countries such as Italy and France provide national information campaigns and helplines, present in most public spaces. Violence protection centres in northern countries of Europe also provide women with legal advice and mental health resources.

Asian countries face numerous issues in the fight against femicide, however the implementation of new measures have been essential for preventing and responding to the threat of gender based violence. India has established a National Commission for Women which advises the Government on all matters affecting women and investigates the deprivation of women's rights, divided into various cells to handle the issue. Pakistan has also established a National Commission on the Status of Women and implemented laws that stand firmly against honour killings and hold punishments for this practice, while Bangladesh has also implemented laws that protect children and women from violence. Public initiatives in the region have had a positive impact on the matter, while holding leadership accountable in the fight against femicide. NGOs and programs aimed at educating and raising awareness have also helped ease the suffering of those affected and have provided refuge for women.

All in all, the United Nations entities have had a great impact across all continents, focusing on collaborating with countries and NGOs, conducting studies, collecting data, organizing campaigns, distributing information on femicide, and continuing the fight for protection and empowerment. The UN CSW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women represents the fundamental bill of rights for women globally, detailing methods to achieve fairness and equality, while also developing the adequate framework for countries to guarantee its implementation. The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women grants funding and support to initiatives in over 140 countries, and has so far allocated 215 million USD to 646 initiatives aimed at protecting women's rights. The Global Database on Violence against Women, also administered by UN

Women, provides data on measures adopted by Governments and strengthens policies to prevent and address violence against women. The UN runs tailored programs within each member country, aimed at supporting legislative measures, strengthening reporting mechanisms and encouraging international cooperation.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

Coordinated efforts, legal and justice reforms, educational empowerment, training and targeted interventions are all part of the solution to femicide globally. The root causes of gender based violence, such as cultural norms and social stigma, need to be challenged and overcome by modern leaderships, while zero tolerance policies towards violence and discrimination against women need to be adopted around the globe.

A possible solution to this issue could be the establishment of fast-track justice systems, dedicated courts that prioritize cases of gender-based violence in affected regions, in order to systemically reinforce existing justice systems, offer just and timely trials for victims of violence and discrimination alike, and resolve cases of abuse against women before femicide occurs.

Comprehensive training for judicial officers, law enforcement, medical professionals and social workers through specialized curriculums would improve not only the victim care, preventive measures, and collaboration within the system, but also the handling of cases, investigations and the prosecution processes, providing trust and transparency for women to reach out and obtain justice.

Another way of preventing femicide is through education, collaborating with NGOs and initiatives that could intervene in schools and discredit harmful stereotypes and cultural norms. By raising awareness through the means of education, providing information about the reality of abuse against women, and teaching values that uphold women's rights, society can reduce gender-based violence and prejudice in new generations.

Last of all, laws that condemn femicide and provide comprehensive trials, punishments and support for victims are essential to dealing with the effects of femicide and preventing further incidents.

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