

Fempower

Magazine published by WAVE network & European Information Centre Against Violence – supported by Vienna Municipal Department for Women's Affairs

FOCUS

Forced marriage and honour crimes

FOCUS

Hunted in the name of honour Honour crimes in Germany

by Sibylle Schreiber

Jolted into action by a newspaper article about honour killings, a small group of motivated women decided to found a woman's rights organisation and TERRE DES FEMMES, Human rights for Women Inc. was born. Today, almost 25 years later, honour crimes are a burning issue – now more than ever.

"Honour killings" are the extreme cases of crimes in the name of honour, but forced marriages, forms of domestic violence, as well as vendettas are part of these crimes.

They exist all over the world but no religion stipulates them. Outdated traditions and alleged honour violating behaviour are the motive for these crimes. The victims are almost always female. Young, unmarried women can "dishonour" their families easily. Sometimes even a rumour of a discussion with a foreign man is enough. The assaults are justified in order to restore the family honour.

These crimes also exist in Germany and the majority of the families affected have a migrant background. Nevertheless it must be made clear that this is not just the problem of a minority group. Violence against women takes place in almost all societies. But violence in the name of honour has particular characteristics >



"Forced marriage costs you your freedom. Life long"
The Austrian women's counselling centre "Orient Express" is using a poster campaign to push for more awareness and sensitisation to the topic of forced marriages. www.gegen-zwangsheirat.at.com

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial page 2

FOCUS

Hunted in the name of honour
Honour crimes in Germany
by Sibylle Schreiber page 1

Mobilization of professionals
A strategy for combating forced marriages
by Latifa Drif and Françoise Imbert page 4

Tradition is no justification for violence
Marriage practices in Georgia
by Alexandra Delemenchuk page 5

Protecting youth and controlling immigration
Danish Action Plan on forced marriages and its impacts
by Farwha Nielsen page 7

Problem not yet identified
First research on Honour Related Violence in Bulgaria
by Genoveva Tisheva page 9

Honour is no excuse
Combating Honour Related Violence in Cyprus
by Alexia Panayiotou page 10

NETWORK INFOS

page 12

I READ...

Nhela Kelek: Die fremde Braut
by Maria Rösslthumer page 14

POINT OF VIEW

The reproductive autonomy of women in the international law
by Juana María González Moreno page 15

Editorial

The United Nations describes the practice of forced marriages as a "contemporary form of slavery". It refers to a tradition in which young women (also some young men) are forced against their will to marry a partner that the parents have chosen. When they refuse a family member threatens them of harsh consequences, even of death. The wealth of articles on this subject makes it clear that these human rights violations are a major problem throughout all of Europe and this is the reason why we chose this theme. We have learned something in preparing this issue of Fempower: Forced marriages and crimes in the name of honour cannot be separated from one another. Both practices are forms of violence which primarily affect girls and women and are based in a patriarchal image of family honour. The breach of honour is caused, for instance, by girls refusing to be married off by their parents.

The articles in this issue describe how woman's organisations in various European countries are fighting against these human rights violations. Contributions reached us from Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, France, Georgia and Cyprus and we thank all of the authors for their collaboration! Unfortunately the article by Deborah McIlveen from the United Kingdom was not able to be published in Fempower due to space limitations but the article is available online at www.wave-network.org.

We were particularly pleased by the mail from Spain: the researcher Juana María González Moreno wrote us a commentary on the article by Brita Neuhold in the last issue of Fempower. The shortened version of the text is available in the column "Point of view" and the full version is available online at www.wave-network.org.

We wish you an informative read and we look forward to your suggestions and comments.

The Editorial Team

Publisher: WAVE Office / European Information Centre Against Violence, Bacherplatz 10/4, A-1050 Vienna, +43-1-5482720, office@wave-network.org, www.wave-network.org, Editorial team: Daniela Almer, Maria Pohn-Weidinger, Martina K. Steiner, Translation: Mathilde Sengölge, Translation assistant: Martina K. Steiner, Layout: Maria Pohn-Weidinger, Design: Pia Moest, Cover picture: Orient Express

and particular consequences for the victims. Again and again women and girls call our organisation and ask for help. Their families threaten them and do not agree with young women having a say in their own lives. The family itself and the loved parents become the enemy. Some families have been in Germany for many generations and often appear to the outside world as being fully integrated. However, some of these families do not tolerate an individual and self-determined life for their female family members. Young women live with an internal conflict: on one hand they want to live up to the expectations and wishes of their family, but on the other hand they would like to live their own life like other girls in Germany. This dichotomy begins for many at the start of puberty, triggered by strict rules which they have to obey to in contrast to their school friends.

In the case of a forced marriage the rupture with the family is often the consequence. Some girls guess or know for many years that their family plans to pick a husband for them, or that they have been promised to someone since birth. But often the approaching event is repressed or the girl hopes for a sudden change of fate. They dream that perhaps the man will meet their expectations. If that is not the case and she is not able to convince the family, few options are left for these young women. There are not enough counselling centres, the employees of youth associations and the police do not even know about the explosiveness of the situation and this leaves the girls open to threats and in the worst cases to "honour killing". It is an exhausting bureaucratic "hurdle race" till they gain access to the few specialised woman's crisis centres. Only the strongest manage this. A life in isolation without the support of the family is unimaginable for many. Some accept the family wishes after some time and return while others live their entire lives on the run. Even after years of living in anonymity it has happened in certain cases that due to carelessness by the authorities they are hunted down and confronted with new threats, making it necessary for them to relocate elsewhere.

The often repeated question by politicians and journalists "how many honour killings are there" remains unanswerable. There are no national statistics, but a collection of press releases provides a clue. The Berlin crisis centre for young migrants, Papatya, collected and analysed all the press releases related to honour crimes from 1996 to the middle of 2005¹. Within this time period 68 women and men were injured in the name of honour and 53 killed. Twenty percent of honour killings were connected to a forced marriage. An average of two persons per month dies in

Germany due to these old traditions. And it is clear that not all persons were included in the collection from Papatya as many cases are not reported as such due to family honour or are not officially reported at all. Many are secret, with honour killings disguised as accidents or suicides. It is also typical to bring the victim in a foreign country where they disappear without a trace.

Since November of last year we are working at TERRE DES FEMMES, Human rights for Women Inc. on combating this type of violence within the framework of a campaign titled "NO to crimes in the name of honour". Through our continuous media work we aim to put political pressure on the topic so that it is recognized that this phenomenon is deeply rooted in misogynist traditions, and can only be removed from society by long term changes in attitude. It is not only necessary to create laws against honour crimes, but also indispensable to create the awareness in society that these crimes on women will not be tolerated, neither in the society nor within the communities themselves.

Sibylle Schreiber is a consultant for "violence in the name of honour" in the organisation TERRE DES FEMMES Inc. in Tübingen, Germany.



Contact:

TERRE DES FEMMES Inc.
Tübingen, Germany
phone: ++49 7071 797 30
ehrverbrechen@frauenrechte.de
www.frauenrechte.de

¹ Verbrechen im Namen der Ehre in Deutschland, Zeitraum 1996 - 2005, Ehrmorde, versuchte Morde und Körperverletzungsdelikte von Papatya Kriseneinrichtung für junge Migrantinnen. (= Crimes in the name of honour in Germany from 1996 - 2005, honour killing, attempted murder and bodily injuries by the crisis centre Papatya for young migrants.) To order send an email to: info@papatya.org

Mobilization of professionals

A strategy for combating forced marriages

By Latifa Drif and Françoise Imbert

The French Movement for Family Planning (MFPF), a popular educational movement, fights for a person's rightful access to information and permanent education in the field of sexuality. Our association is considered a place people can seek out to get help when family life is disrupted because of pregnancy, abortion, birth given by X¹, or forced marriage.

Setting up a help network

In May 2000, seven young women, who had just come of age, came to MFPF, asking for help to get them out of marriages their parents had forced them into. Faced with their distress and difficulty to find a solution, MFPF called out to some of the association's partners to deal with this problem and to think about actions that could be taken together. The result of this partnership is a network that, for the past four years, has been working towards helping young women of age that are faced with violence and family break-ups following a forced marriage. In our department (Hérault), young men are equally victims of forced marriages, albeit less frequently.

The network called "Young Women Faced with Violence and Family Break-Up" includes several institutions and associations. It creates an open space for exchange, reflection and suggestions concerning violence within the family. Its goal is to create approaches for prevention, housing, financial support and follow-up for young women.

Violence within the family

Our partnership has led to the realization that forced marriage is a tangible problem and that this kind of situation is far from being an exception. This recognition has forced us very quickly to clearly define what forced marriage is. In our opinion, forced marriage is a type of orchestrated violence within a family. It is different from a marriage of convenience, which is a crime, and from arranged marriage, for which the consent of both partners is a prerequisite. Forced marriage is arranged by the family which shows no consideration whatsoever towards consent and even less towards their child's resistance. Once consummated, a forced marriage creates the basis for sexual relations that lack consent. This means it is practically rape.

To deepen our understanding of this issue, MFPF asked a student to compile victims' accounts for a study. The goal of this study was two-fold: to show that forced marriage is a type of violence; and to make sure that young women have a say in this matter².

The legal complexity of this issue takes up a large part of the network's activities. The partner organizations take part in the network's reflection and also take charge in matters of counseling and legal support for victims during divorces and the annulment of marriages.

Guide of procedures

In order to facilitate the communication among professionals, the network has developed a guide of procedures including a repertoire of structures in use in the département of Hérault³ (France). The group effort has also created an awareness of the need to standardize the procedures for receiving young women and men and to examine the different options that would allow them to be taken in charge. For that reason, the network developed an admission protocol which was distributed to all the departmental structures likely to receive young women and men living in the aforementioned situations. This protocol is a necessary means to understand the situations and to analyze them regularly. A first analysis brought two major elements to our attention. The first concerns professionals whose main task is to guide young women towards other colleagues after having provided them with some initial counseling. This highlights the importance and the need for help in a network setting. The second analysis discusses the obstacles that both, young women and men, and professionals are facing. The problem is first and foremost housing, followed by a lack of financial resources. In fact, the housing question is a real concern for all social workers who go to any lengths to find solutions that in many cases are often makeshift. >

1 In France, The Legislative Decree on the Protection of Births (1941) allows mothers, when admitted to a medical institution, to have their identity kept secret. Women will be admitted under the name of "Mrs X" hence the appellation of "birth given by X" (accouchement sous X; birth by an unidentified person).

2 Professional guide. Delphine Sené : DESS Intermédiation Sociale et Conception de Projet. Université P. Valéry-Montpellier. 2002 MFPF, Montpellier-Hérault 34 (in French)

3 Support for young women confronted with violence and family break-ups. Coping after the break-up. Foster family project. Patricia Soler : DESS Prévention Sanitaire et Sociale Université P. Valéry-Montpellier, Octobre 2003. (in French)

Foster families

The departure of young women is often on the spur of the instant and requires an immediate response. Access to existing facilities is difficult, and not all of them are suitable. The network has focused on making housing in foster families an alternative solution to that already in place. This type of housing allows young women to breathe freely, sheltered from the threats and blackmailing of their parents. It also provides the young women with a social support network that helps them build their lives and to start off in a positive and independent way.

With the participation of the network's partners and the financial support of several institutions, MFPF started the "foster home" initiative in June 2004. Six families have joined us in this project; the need remains great and we are looking for other foster homes. To this day, we have secured 15 foster placements. Furthermore, working with the families that

4 Building work structures with families: how to recreate connections and to prevent break-ups in forced marriage situations in France. Aurélie Léo : DESS Intermédiation Sociale et Conception de Projet- Université P.Valéry-Montpellier 2004

5 Young women confronted by violence and family break-ups. Day of reflection : Network for young women confronted by violence and family break-ups (in French). June 7, 2001. Montpellier. MFPF Hérault. The risk of break-up, drifting towards ostracization or progressing towards autonomy? And, Network for young women confronted by violence and family break-ups, October 16, 2003. MFPF, Montpellier, Hérault (in French).

perpetuate this project also represents one of the main concerns of the network: the families must be made partners in the fight against this problem. Guidelines for work have been suggested in a recent study compiled in cooperation with the Université Paul Valéry in Montpellier.⁴ The work group started in the département of Hérault has generated a dynamics in other départements which in turn have taken action to mobilize professionals around this issue.

The next step of the network's activities is the sensitization of professionals, launched in 2005, and the reflection on the possibilities of engaging the families where the violence originated in the work. This reflection was launched during two days organized in 2001 and 2003.⁵

Latifa Drif is prevention facilitator of the "Young Women Confronted with Violence and Family Break-Ups" Network (Jeunes filles confrontées aux violences et aux ruptures familiales).

Françoise Imbert is coordinator of the association départementale du Mouvement Français pour le Planning Familial – Hérault.

Contact:

MFPF Mouvement Français pour le Planning Familial
M-F-P-F.montpellier@wanadoo.fr
www.planning-familial.org

Tradition is no justification for violence

Marriage practices in Georgia

by **Alexandra Delemenchuk**

Georgia is one of three Trans-Caucasian countries and without no doubt part of the "wider Caucasus" with its peculiarity and age-old burden of traditions, some of which are good and some, sad to say, serve as a source of emerging prejudices and inequalities, promoted by such traditions.

Georgia is an ancient nation of Transcaucasia. Georgians were occupying different parts of the Caucasus as tribal nations and consolidated as one nation only after the appearance of common literacy and baptizing. Existing on the cross-road of invasions and migrations, Georgians formed a unique cultural identity by taking in certain trends, beliefs and rites from their neighbors – present and past.¹

A nucleus family was the main form of the family in Georgia. Extended families (didi odjakhi, ertsakhli dzmebi) gradually disappeared, especially in the second half of the 19th century. The family relations were strictly patriarchal and were regulated by a system of taboos (elusions). The spouses were forbidden to call each other by name, to pronounce the names of the father-in law and the mother-in law, and the wife was forbidden to talk to the elder relatives of the husband without permission. In their marriages Georgians followed strict exogamy; marriages were forbidden between the relatives including cousins (7–8 generations), between people that shared the >



same family name, or between "named" relatives – blood brothers and children adopted following the traditions of "ataluchestvo". Two forms of marriage were common: on mutual agreement of the parents of the bride and the bridegroom with a payment (in some mountainous districts – ransom) and marriage through kidnapping. The Georgian wedding cycle included the match-making (machankloba), the inspection of the bride, the betrothal (nishnoba) and the wedding itself (kortsili).²

Rules and guidelines of behaviour emerged as a result of practices (adat tsebebi) which served for ages as an important source of law (tacit law) and as additional regulators of relations in the community. Nowadays these regulations of course lose much of their influence, but nevertheless play an important role as the background for the Georgian mentality, and in modified way remain rather strong in rural areas (in particular in the Svan communities³).

Georgia today

The situation is rather controversial and several important points should be stressed. First of all Georgia is a country that experienced armed conflict with all of its consequences, such as post-conflict social tensions, outbursts of violence, changing of gender roles, disruption of family, social and economic ties, as well as deviations in the value system of the society. Secondly, economic crisis deprived significant parts of the population (especially in rural areas) of basic social services of appropriate quality, such as social insurance, medical care and education.

Article 14 of the Constitution of Georgia⁴ states that: "Everyone is born free and is equal before the law, regardless of race, skin colour, language, sex, religion, political and other beliefs, national, ethnic and social origin, property and title status or place of residence." Additionally, Article 142 of the Penal Code punishes the violation of human rights based on a protected class, including sex. Punishment for breach of this offence ranges from twelve months of correctional labour up to twenty-four months imprisonment.

The 2005 United States Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices found that pre-arranged kidnapping of women for marriage continued to occur in rural areas, although the practice

is in decline. Most often police failed to take action in such cases, despite the fact that kidnapping is a criminal offence according to the country's criminal code.

Crimes even without honour

The problem of forced marriages and honour crimes seems not to be crucial for Georgian society, as it is not a trend for a modern community; nevertheless this kind of practice exists in Georgian history for a long time. Today Georgian women suffer of "crimes even without honour", mainly domestic violence, trafficking and other forms of kidnapping and exploitation. Nevertheless, forced marriages and honour crimes still exist (random acts) caused by low levels of human development, poverty and inequality.

The very term "crime of honour" demonstrates how such crimes can be misrepresented and misunderstood. They represent fundamental breaches of human rights, especially women's rights. However, because they have been allowed to become shrouded in, and excused by a perverse definition of honour, many of these crimes have been allowed to go unchecked, unreported, unchallenged and, frequently, without prosecution. The victim and the crime itself are seen to be less important than the maintenance of honour as defined by the perpetrator and, unfortunately, sometimes the community. It is also very important to stress precisely the perverse definition of honour, which affects the perpetrator himself and causes not only violation of law and human rights but also a deviation from one's value system and the social and cultural roots of the community.

Alexandra Delemenchuk is an international adviser of the Women's Information Centre in Tbilisi, Georgia

Contact:

Women's Information Centre Tbilisi
wicmika@caucasus.net
www.ginsc.net

1 Bardavelidze V.V.: Ancient religious beliefs and ritual drawing of Georgians. Tbilisi, 1957; Volkov N.G., Javakhishvili G.N.: Culture of Georgia: traditions and novelties. Moscow, 1982

2 Ibid.

3 Svan – ethnic group of Georgians settled in remote mountainous region of the country

4 www.parliament.ge

Protecting youth and controlling immigration

Danish Action Plan on forced marriages and its impacts

by Farwha Nielsen

The aim of the article is to look at the practice of forced and semi-forced marriages among ethnic minorities in Denmark. The article seeks to give an idea about the laws and regulations, which are designed to protect the youth against this traditional practice. Furthermore, it also tries to illustrate the impact of these societal interventions on the ethnic minorities by showing the dilemmas that the youth experiences.

Denmark like many other Scandinavian countries received their first immigrant groups towards the end of the 1970s. The majority of the immigrants originate from countries such as Turkey, Pakistan and ex-Yugoslavia. Although immigrants constitute the majority of the minority groups, there are however many refugees within the group too. In the beginning the number of the ethnic minorities was not very large but due to family reunification the figure has increased. The common denominator for most of the ethnic minority groups is that they are Muslims but this indeed does not mean that the minorities are homogenous.

Before looking at rules and regulations and their impact on the young ethnic minorities, it is essential to look at the definition of the terms forced and semi-forced marriages. This will be based on the official definition used by the Danish government.

Definition

In August 2003 the Danish government issued a document called "The Government's Action Plan for 2003–2005 on Forced, Quasi-forced and Arranged Marriages". The document contains an official definition of a forced marriage, which is as follows: "A forced marriage is one in which one of the parties feels he or she has been subjected to coercion or duress and has had no real choice in the matter. Parents may use threats, physical violence or psychological pressure to coerce young people to enter into marriage."

¹ The practice of arranged marriages itself constitutes an unfair framework within which the rights of the youths and especially of women are undermined. Having said this it is also important to mention that normally they function more or less to the satisfaction of many youths. Since the topic of arranged marriages can be vast and thereby require expanded writing space, it will not be dealt with in this article.

While the document defines a forced marriage it fails to come up with a clearer definition for a semi-forced marriage. A semi-forced marriage is often the one in which the young person has been involved in the decision-making process. For example in arranged marriages¹ it is often the young person her/himself that chooses one of the eligible persons that the families introduce to her/him. One of the reasons why it has been defined as semi-forced is the fact that the young person's choice is, in some cases, extremely limited. What this means is that the youth being brought up so strictly feel obliged to say yes to one of the parents' choices. Thus semi-forced marriages are very difficult to identify because most of the young people feel responsible for their participation in the marriage process.

Legal and societal interventions

Lack of a clear integration policy in the 1980s and 1990s has led to marginalisation of the ethnic minorities, which in turn has led to many social and employment problems in the Danish society. Media and political debates have resulted in some legal changes. This has happened despite a lack of statistics, on forced marriages for example. It is important to mention that the article cannot look at all these changes in detail but will mostly be constrained to one legal amendment to marriage and immigration acts, since this was passed in order to both protect youth against forced marriages and control immigration.

Impact on the minority youths

The government increased the age requirement from 18 to 24 in cases of family reunification of marriage partners (The government's Action Plan for 2003–2005 on forced and semi-forced marriages). This means that family reunification permits will not be granted to the marriage partners of youths who are under the age of 24. The change was introduced on the grounds that increased age is supposed to have a positive influence on reducing the risk of being subjected to forced and semi-forced marriages. The assumption is that age has a bearing on the >



possibility and the strength of the young people to say no to a proposed marriage. The amendment had the political goal to reduce the number of immigrant cases, which has been more or less achieved. Thus there is still a constant debate about whether the real intention was to protect youths or rather to undermine their rights for family reunification in order to reduce immigration to Denmark.

While the state intervention in those cultural practices that are oppressive towards citizens can be considered positive it does have some foreseeable and unforeseeable consequences both for the youth and their families. The most pressing outcomes of the 24-year amendment for the youth, especially for the young women, have been:

- They are now forced to migrate to other Scandinavian countries where it is not as difficult to obtain family reunification permits. Thus young women are still forced into marriages but the difference is that now they have to leave their network and families and live in an entirely different country with a man that they have not chosen.
- In some cases young women are forced to go back to the country of origin in order to get married to the person who had been chosen for them. This can mean deterioration in the social position of these young women.
- Finally, Danish citizens who fall in love in other countries cannot be joined by their partners in

Denmark until they are 24 and fulfil many other difficult immigration requirements.

As mentioned before the Action Plan has focused on other areas such as giving help to the youth when they have problems with their families. However most of the social services have difficulty coping with these cases because they lack expertise in the area and often the youth are left to solve their own problems. This in turn results in drastic consequences, such as running away from their families without the proper support and thus being subjected to violence. Inadequate help by social services places the young people in a dilemma. They are often faced with two choices: either they leave their families for good and live in fear for their lives, which can be extremely destructive for them, or they stay with their families and embrace their destiny of marrying a person of their parents' choice.

Although changes in legislation is essential in combating oppressive practices it must be combined with other methods in order to achieve sustainable social development e.g. mediation and negotiation with the parents.

Farwha Nielsen is multicultural advisor and project coordinator for LOKK.

Contact:

LOKK - National Organisation of Shelters for Battered Women and their Children, Denmark
pfn@lokk.dk
www.lokk.dk

Problem not yet identified

First research on Honour Related Violence in Bulgaria

by Genoveva Tisheva

In 2004 the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (BGRF) carried out the first research on potential interventions of honor related violence (HRV) in Bulgaria, which was part of a joint project with Kvinnoforum in Sweden and many other NGOs in Europe.¹

The main conclusion that can be made on basis of the interviews is that, as expected, the concept of HRV is generally unknown and new for Bulgarian organizations and institutions. HRV is not being distinguished; it is being accounted for as a part of the broader problem of domestic violence. This can also be illustrated by the general reaction of the persons interviewed, successfully described by a BGRF partner interviewer as "feeling of discomfort, provoked by the high level of specialization and focus of questions". It also gives raise to the issue that general awareness raising and training should be the first step in a future strategy for combating HRV.

The main findings and trends are:

- No NGOs/institutions treating the HRV phenomenon specifically have been identified.
- Existing experience, skills and knowledge accumulated, traditions in interaction as well as willingness of NGOs for joint work and cooperation with other actors have been identified as a strong basis and good potential for combating HRV in the future.
- NGOs are relatively prepared and experienced but cannot be expected to work only on their own.
- Cooperation is necessary not only between NGOs where networking is more developed, but also with local and national authorities. The institutions declared their willingness to work with NGOs.
- The national and local authorities have to become aware that this is a specific problem and HRV should become part of the public agenda.
- Schools represent a possible way to facilitate access to risk groups, through special classes and meetings with parents.
- Information and educational campaigns should be developed for specific groups and communities in the Bulgarian society.
- The issue of HRV has not yet been identified as a problem in the Bulgarian society and therefore no

specific legislation for effective protection or interventions are supported by the state.

Based on the findings of this first research, further research on the characteristics and incidence of HRV in Bulgaria should be carried out.

The representatives of the Foundation firmly believe in civil means for protection, policies and strategies, and that protection and prevention should prevail upon punishment. Victims are in very delicate situations and relationships, the cases are underreported and criminal law can be used only to a limited extent. "The consolidation of effort into the criminal prosecution shifts the focus from the necessity to protect (...) to the necessity to protect society from the abuser. This is how resources are exhausted into the wrong direction (...)."²

The Law on Protection against Domestic Violence contains an extensive definition of domestic violence which includes all forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence between family members, persons in intimate relations or persons living in the same dwelling. The law provides for a quick civil procedure for issuing protection orders and for the enhanced role of the court, the police and the NGOs in the protection of victims of violence. Therefore, the law for which the BGRF worked so hard for in the process of elaboration, campaigning and lobbying can hopefully be used for assisting with HRV as well.

Genoveva Tisheva is a lawyer and managing director of the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation.

Contact:

Bulgaria Gender Research Foundation
bgrf@fastbg.net
www.bgrf.org/en/

¹ www.qweb.kvinnoforum.se/projects/heder/hrveng.html

² Velina Todorova in a study on child abuse in Bulgaria.

Honour is no excuse

Combating Honour Related Violence in Cyprus

by Alexia Panayiotou

The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) is partner to the project "Prevention of Violence against Girls and Women in Patriarchal Families" coordinated by the Swedish organisation Kvinnoforum, and funded by the European Commission within the framework of the Transnational Exchange Programme Phase II.

In this project honour related violence has been defined as the "violence occurring when families with 'honour-norms' violate girls', women's and boys' rights". (UN Convention on Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and laws in the country of immigration).

The case of Cyprus

Within the framework of this project, MIGS produced a report¹ that became part of a resource book on honour-related violence entitled "Honour Related Violence – European Resource Book and Good Practice". The survey aimed to:

- map existing prevention and support services from different actors in society
- describe the extent to which cooperation exists between these actors
- identify and describe at least one example of best practice concerning work against honour related violence
- form a network of those working with these issues in Cyprus² (experts, front-line staff, NGOs etc).

The survey includes an important discussion on the term Honour Related Violence, which in Cyprus gains a different meaning and importance. "Honour" is a complex and important term in the Cypriot culture. Reputation and a good standing in the community are of fundamental importance. "Honour" is the excuse for much of the violence in Cypriot society, although it is not named as such, particularly within the family. Honour is invoked in the case of socially

"unacceptable" behaviour (eg. sexual relationships: either a wife who has an affair, a daughter who has a boyfriend without the approval of the father or a sister who has a boyfriend without the approval of the [older] brother).

Despite this, the term Honour Related Violence (HRV) was virtually unknown to the agencies that participated in our survey, and crimes often committed in the name of honour are not classified as such. The results of extensive interviews and questionnaires show that the term HRV is not used as such by the relevant actors that deal with similar issues, and, as a result, the term generated considerable confusion and perplexity. In most cases, HRV is seen as domestic violence and, in this respect, the working terms for such crimes are domestic violence, violence against women, child abuse, sexual abuse, rape, and trafficking in human beings. Most organisations claim to be guided by the 2000 Law on Domestic Violence (Law 119(1)/2000) which does not incorporate or make any special reference to HRV. As a result, violence occurring due to family honour that cannot be classified as either domestic violence or child abuse is ignored and as a result no special treatment is provided to the victims.

Consequently, the report focuses on domestic violence, violence against women, and child abuse as these are the three most frequent terms encountered in the course of the interviews. These crimes can still be classified as HRV, especially since the most often-given excuse for such violence is the protection of family honour". While the researcher acknowledged the important difference between domestic and other forms of violence and HRV, these distinctions do not exist in Cyprus and, thus, one of the major goals of the report was to make the relevant actors aware of these distinctions.

The report attempts, for the first time, to document the occurrence of HRV in Cyprus describing existing research and recorded figures, with references to statistical data and their findings. However, it was very difficult to draw conclusions on the occurrence of HRV from the figures provided by NGOs, public bodies, and existing research. Statistics in Cyprus are poorly kept both by public bodies such as the police (who have been collecting data only since 1997) and NGOs (only one NGO provided MIGS with >

¹ The full text of the report can be downloaded from the following website: <http://www.kvinnoforum.se/PDF/HRV2005.pdf>

² The report in question only covers the southern part of the island, which is controlled by the officially recognized Cypriot government.

figures). Furthermore, data is not analysed or utilised in any way, however insufficient this data might be. Moreover, the obvious lack of research on HRV or related issues indicates the immense need for such projects and quantitative data to provide a more accurate picture of the extent of these crimes in Cyprus.

Using the only existing law for combating domestic violence in Cyprus as its reference point, the survey identifies and describes the existing support and prevention services provided by different actors such as the police, social services, schools, legal service, health service and various NGOs. During the course of the research, it soon became obvious that the services provided, in many cases, do not correspond to certain guidelines laid out in public policy. Even more importantly, it becomes obvious that the policy itself is in need of upgrading and reinforcement. Several recommendations are made to this effect by MIGS in the report such as the incorporation of HRV in the Law on Domestic Violence, and the introduction of minimum limits in sentencing for HRV crimes. Another important finding is the serious lack of funding for government social services and NGOs dealing with these issues, creating difficulties both in support provision but also in much needed prevention programs.

Overall, the support offered in Cyprus for victims of HRV is extremely limited due to certain financial obstacles, a fact which is, indeed, a result of the Cypriot culture and its assumption that domestic violence, violence against women and children, and HRV are not priority issues. Also, the fact that there is no clear distinction between HRV and domestic violence means that victims of HRV crimes may not be receiving adequate support. The survey documents existing support measures such as social, financial, legal and psychological support, health services provided to victims, and sheltered housing.

Prevention programmes were extremely difficult to locate, as they are almost nonexistent and are considered second priority after support to the victims. The report suggests that prevention should be given equal weight to victim support as HRV constitutes a vicious circle that needs to be addressed in a comprehensive manner for effective results to be achieved.

National Action Plan needed

Cooperation in Cyprus among different actors is still underdeveloped. Although interviewees claimed that cooperation exists, it is poorly coordinated and not adequately supported or even encouraged in some organisations. It is the recommendation of this report for the state, in cooperation with organisations working on this issue, to create a National Action Plan for the fight against HRV.

Finally, the report clearly demonstrates that legislation in Cyprus, despite recent improvements, is in need of upgrading, renewal and close monitoring as current laws do not adequately cover the combating of HRV and are poorly implemented.

Alexia Panayiotou is a lecturer at the University of Cyprus and member of the board of the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies.

Contact:

Susana E. Pavlou
Project Administrator
Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies
susana@medinstgenderstudies.org

New Focal Points

Amnesty International Moldova

Veaceslav Balan, Ina Coropceanu
 PO Box 209
 MD-2012, Chisinău, Republic of Moldova
 phone: (+373-22) 27-41-22
 fax: (+373-22) 277-034
 info@amnesty.md
 www.amnesty.md

CPE - Center for Partnership and Equality

Camelia Stanciu
 33, Caderea Bastiliei St.
 1st District, 010613
 Bucharest, Romania
 phone: (+4021) 212 1196
 fax: (+4021) 212 1035
 info@cpe.ro
 www.cpe.ro

WAVE Conference 2005

The conference will take place in Copenhagen (Denmark), from December 1 to 3, 2005 and will focus on women and ethnic minorities. See programme and registration form at the WAVE website

Information: WAVE office
 phone: +43 1 54 82 72 020
 office@wave-network.org

How does one become a Focal Point?

Non-governmental women's organisations throughout Europe have the opportunity to become a WAVE Focal Point if there are not yet enough contacts in the country and if the following requirements are met: the organisation must be active in the field of combating violence against women and children and be well linked with other women's organisations in the country. The main role of Focal Points is to be in contact with the WAVE Office in Vienna and to forward information to local organisations in their own country.

Information: WAVE Office, office@wave-network.org, www.wave-network.org

Visit in the WAVE Office: On July 12th 2005 the WAVE team welcomed staff members from crisis intervention centres from four different Russian cities. During an intensive information exchange the guests received numerous details about the Austrian Protection from Violence Act, the women's shelters and the WAVE Network. This study trip was organised in cooperation with Caritas Austria.



Isadora Bergami has been a trainee in the WAVE Office in Vienna since July 2005. The Italian contemporary history student is doing a EU Leonardo Study Programme funded internship and will be assisting the WAVE team till the end of the year.

Many thanks to Isadora!

WAVE Office News

DAPHNE: Bridging Gaps

Models of co-operation between women's NGOs and state authorities to prevent violence against women and children are the subject of this project. The objective is to exchange experience and knowledge on co-ordinated co-operation between women's support services and public authorities (the police, the judiciary etc.) to tackle domestic violence. The project aims at developing a catalogue of guidelines and standards for good co-operation.

Bridging Gaps is a 12-month DAPHNE project and was submitted by WAVE. It is financed by the European Commission and co-financed by the Chief Executive Office for International Relations of the City of Vienna, by the Municipal Department for the Promotion and Coordination of Women's Affairs of the City of Vienna and by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection.

Information: www.wave-network.org

CARHV

The Co-ordination Action on Human Rights Violations (CARHV) addresses human rights violations in the context of interpersonal relationships. Major goals of the project are to integrate parallel research discourses on violence: unify the theoretical and empirical basis for policy; stimulate new, interdisciplinary and trans-national research and support practitioners, policy-makers and scientists by facilitating the dissemination of knowledge and expertise. CAHRV is a collaborative effort of research institutions, policy networks and individual researchers.

Information: www.cahrhv.uni-osnabrueck.de



Links

UN Convention on Human Rights

<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

The practice of forced marriages violates Article 16(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

UN Resolution Working towards the elimination of crimes

against women and girls committed in the name of honour
http://www.wunrn.com/reference/crimes_honor.htm

I READ...

Necla Kelek: Die fremde Braut

Publisher: Kiepenheuer & Witsch
(The book is not available in English)

Necla Kelek is Turkish and lives in Germany. In her book she explores, based on her own life experience, why women living in Turkey and in Germany are sold against their will and forced into marriages by their own families. The novel contributes to our understanding of the Turkish-Islamic culture and its traditions, in which family honour and patriarchal values play an important role.

Maria Rösslhuber, managing director of the Association of Autonomous Austrian Women's Shelters (Verein AÖF)

Nadeem Aslam: Maps for lost lovers

Publisher: Faber and Faber

"Nadeem Aslam portrays in her family novel the situation of Pakistani women immigrants in a small town in England. The way the first and second immigrant generations live differs and collides with one another. While the parents are still tightly connected to their past cultural ties and Islam, the younger generation has for a long time nothing more to do with these moral values. Forced marriages are a typical practice, from which not even English immigrants escape from. Young people are married off quickly, as their negative behaviour threatens the reputations of their families.

A young couple dares to live together without being married, which provokes a strong opposition by those around them. One day both disappear and there is a terrible suspicion that they are victims of an honour crime committed by the brothers of the woman."

Alexandra Fugger is responsible for the library and documentation archiv of the Association of Autonomous Austrian Women's Shelter

POINT OF VIEW

The reproductive autonomy of women in the international law

Summary of the commentary
by Juana María González Moreno

In her commentary to the article "Beijing + 10 - no milestone for women's rights" by Brita Neuhold (Fempower No. 10) the Spanish researcher Juana Mara González Moreno highlights that neither the Beijing Conference nor international documents could be regarded as a panacea for women's rights.

This applies especially to issues such as family planning and forced maternity. In CEDAW no concept of family planning can be found, which causes its reduction to the matter of contraception. As far as forced maternity is concerned the author wants for a clear distinction between sexual violence that causes unwanted maternity and the right of a woman to decide whether to have a baby or not.

González Moreno appeals to the women's movement to scrutinise international documents regarding the reproductive autonomy of women and to lobby for the best possible safeguard of women's rights.

The original version of the commentary in full length can be read on the website: www.wave-network.org

SAVE: Sisters Against Violence Europe

SAVE is an initiative of the Austrian Women's Shelter Network (AÖF Association) that aims to support women's organisations in Eastern and South Eastern Europe.

This year SAVE would like to help in maintaining the service of the women's refuge ARTEMIS in Rumania – please donate!

Account holder	Verein AÖF / WAVE
Account number	610 782 047
Bank	BA-CA
Bank code	12000
IBAN	AT52 1200 0006 1078 2047
BIC	BKAUATWW