

Fempower

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Focus

Femicide

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The present issue of Fempower is focusing on the topic of femicide, a contemporary issue which has received little attention so far.

Femicide is the systematic killing of women and an outgrowth of domestic violence and can thus be seen as gender-based murder of women. It is a form of hate crime targeting the victims not by race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation but by gender. The most widespread forms of femicide are the sex-selective infanticide, which occurs most frequently in cultures where the male offspring is preferred and so called honour-killings.

Although there is a longstanding history of violence and discrimination against women simply because of their sex, the media-related discourse has been characterized by ignorance and therefore a lack of timely reports. Criticism needs to be expressed about the lack of data and statistics even in European countries, which makes it hard to access the current situation. It was only



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due to the terrible cases in Mexico and in Guatemala that the burning issue of femicide has at least captured some public attention and finally brought this extreme form of gender-based violence into the spotlight.

The roots of femicide, like any other form of violence, lie in a culture dominated by patriarchal structures. Any form of violence is part of male backlash against feminism. Whether unconscious or not, the goal of any form of violence against women is to persevere unequal relations of power. It is therefore a must to take on the urgent task of formulating strategies of resistance to femicide.

In this way the present issue of Fempower provides articles about femicide and other forms of gender-based violence by experts working in this field coming from Austria, Slovakia, Italy, Switzerland and France.

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FÜR FRAUEN UND ÖFFENTLICHEN DIENST



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On a Thursday in September in the entrance hall of the Vienna University of Technology everyone is busy: A lot of people are on their way in the vast university premises – students, university staff and many others. Today something is different to usual in the entrance hall: In the remotest corner of the hall there are shiny red figures. Many people going through the hall are attracted by the life-sized figures, stop by and take a closer look at the wooden silhouettes of women: They enter into contact with the silent witnesses.

For this first exhibition in Austria hosted by the WAVE Conference 2009, we chose 15 Silent Witnesses figures. On their front they were wearing a label trying to tell the woman's life story in a few words: Name (anonymous), age, children, a phrase, a comment aiming at making these wooden figures seem alive. These women were murdered during the past years (2000 to 2008) in Austria. Nearly all of them had been in the process of separation or divorce. The murderers are their former husbands or intimate partners. Amongst the figures were two women whose cases had been brought before the CEDAW Committee by filing two individual complaints; a further woman was victim of an honour killing.

These 15 women represented by the Silent Witnesses figures were full of life, they had families, friends, work – and they had dreams. We couldn't make them alive again with their diversity, their personality, their individuality, with all the characteristics that had belonged to their persons. It wasn't easy for us to accept this fact and many a time during the phase of preparations, this circumstance threw us back in our working process. Last but not least we

had to acknowledge that Elisabeth, Olga and Fatma¹ aren't able to tell us their stories themselves. They will be silent forever. It is upon us, not to forget their stories and to remember them.

Back at the University building: A lot of different people came to see the Silent Witnesses figures: WAVE-conference participants, students, persons passing by, tourists who happened to visit the beautiful old building. Some of them shared their thoughts with us in a guest book: "We were shocked when reading these sad stories", just to bring an example, someone wrote: "I was very touched when walking through the exhibition. The Silent Witnesses figures tell more than words can say."

The next public appearance of the Silent Witnesses is already in the process of preparation: In the context of the campaign 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence, the Austrian Federal Minister for Women's Affairs will exhibit the figures in the ministries' premises. We are hoping that this attention from the very highest political level will result in some kind of support, enabling the campaign to expand. This involves on the one hand the financing of the exhibition as well as the accompanying activities. On the other hand we would like to expand our lobbying strategies on a long term base by means of this exhibition, using it as an advocacy tool to lobby for better statistics on femicides in Austria and for more transparency in this sector, Austria having, like many other countries very limited or no data collected on femicides.

For your information: The CEDAW Committee has issued its views in the two above mentioned cases. It noted that Austria had

1 The names have been made anonymous.

failed to fulfil its obligations to protect the two women from violence. The Committee also noted that Austria has implemented important laws to protect women from male violence but that it isn't sufficient to have good laws, these laws need to be executed by state authorities in order to protect victims. The Committee further noted that "the perpetrator's rights cannot supersede women's human rights to life and to physical and mental integrity".

The Silent Witnesses campaign is focusing on exactly these goals:

Protection from violence is a human right and each woman has a right to be protected from violence.

We would like to express our thanks to all Violence Protection Centres and Domestic Abuse Intervention Centres in Austria that contacted their relatives and recorded the histories of these women. We are grateful to the relatives of the murder victims: we appreciate their courage and their readiness to take part in the Silent Witnesses campaign. We express our thanks to Ecker&Partner for their financial support.



From left to right: Rosa Logar of WAVE; Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek, Federal Minister for Women and Public Administration, Austria; Dubravka Šimonovic, Council of Europe, Ad Hoc Committee on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CAHVIO); Carol Hagemann-White, University of Osnabrück, Germany. The picture was taken during WAVE's Silent Witnesses exhibition at the WAVE conference 2009 in Vienna, Austria.



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Femicide is the most grievous consequence of domestic violence against women as well as a consequence of the failure of governments and societies to provide adequate protection and support to women.

The following article attempts to share our experiences gained in using the Silent Witnesses exhibition as an advocacy tool for raising awareness of both the general and professional public on the issue of femicide. It is written out of an expert's perspective working in the context of Slovak legislation.

We first heard of the Silent Witnesses initiative in 2003. It was started in Minnesota, USA in 1990. A group of women artists wanted to do something in order to commemorate 26 women who lost their lives in 1990 as a consequence of domestic violence. In 1994, a national initiative dedicated to the elimination of domestic violence murders was created. You may find out more about the initiative at www.silentwitness.net.

The first important changes in the legislation of Slovakia concerning domestic violence occurred in 2002, whereby a specific provision on DV was introduced in the Slovak Penal Code. In the immediate aftermath of these legislative changes a particularly brutal instance of domestic violence occurred, involving the murder of two children¹. It was this case that had triggered our decision to take action and do

1 In 2007, the European Court of Human Rights, issued its decision on the domestic violence case, Kontrova vs. Slovakia, mentioned at the beginning of this article. It ruled that the Slovak Republic failed to protect the lives of Mrs. Kontrova's children who were shot by her husband. The police had not only modified the complaint filed by Mrs. Kontrova prior to the shooting, but failed to act despite having known her husband had a shotgun and had made threats to kill his wife and children before. The court found that there had been a violation of Articles 2 and 13 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

something. As there were no specific statistics on femicide available in the country by then, we had been monitoring the media for nearly two years and had collected eleven media reports on women murdered as a consequence of domestic violence. Subsequently, we contacted the Silent Witnesses Initiative in Minnesota and informed them that we would like to organize the first Silent Witnesses Exhibit in Slovakia. We obtained the scale drawings of the figures together with their size and height. We then had 15 figures and shields with the murdered women's individual stories made - eleven of them represented the murdered women, one represented all the uncounted women murdered as a result of domestic violence and the remaining three figures provided information on the Silent Witnesses exhibit and its history.

Next, we tried to find the best location and time for the exhibit and also came up with the idea of a theatre performance accompanying the exhibit. We contacted the director Iveta Skripkova of The Theatre at the Crossroads in Banska Bystrica with whom we had already worked before; she suggested a theatre performance in the main square of our town, Košice. This idea and the whole event were financially supported by the Open Society Foundation¹.

The whole event was a very creative and stimulating experience, at times funny and at times also excruciating. We were supported by the fantastic energy of all the volunteers, donors and partners who worked with us to make the exhibit and the performance happen. After a few months of preparations, we were ready to launch the very first Silent Witnesses exhibit and theatre performance in Slovakia. On the 18th of June 2004, an ambulance car's siren cut through the peaceful Friday afternoon atmosphere in the Košice main square and hundreds of people ran out of the sur-

1 <http://www.soros.org/about/foundations/slovakrepublic>

rounding shops to see what was happening. The ghostly white face of the actress playing a murdered woman appeared in the ambulance car's window and a group of actresses, representing different archetypes of women whose role was to pass the last judgement on the dead woman's life, got out of a hearse on the other side of the stage situated in front of the Košice „singing fountain“. They were accompanied by the beautiful voice of a young and very talented opera singer from Prague, Helena Zaoralova, and by the music of our friend, Mirek Vodrazka, a feminist and musician, also from the Czech Republic¹.

There were two performances taking place that day and the Silent Witnesses figures were exhibited in the park surrounding the stage. We saw a multitude of people reading the stories, some of them even crying, and stopping by asking us questions and talking to us and to each other. The media were there making the event the main story of the day in the whole country. We had also engaged a well-known journalist and brilliant photographer, Andrej Ban, taking pictures. Some of our clients, women and their children as well as our families and friends came to support us.

The evening performance was recorded and it was then edited by Elena Patoprsta who was, like many others, willing to work for free. In the last part of the performance, the actresses read the stories of women describing the violence they had experienced:

„He would beat me every day and then would go out and yell in the street – Come and have a look at the damn whore I have here – I was ashamed and then I only remember waking up covered in blood.“

The rest of the cast then reacted to the story and mostly reflected the myths on domestic violence and the role of women:

„See, all you did was wrong. You are to blame for all this. As if you didn't know, that one word that irritates him, that makes him angry, could kill you.“

These reactions were followed by a group of young musicians singing, who had

altered the reactions of the police, the courts and doctors to domestic violence incidents to a rap song. The last one to tell her story was the actress playing a woman murdered as a result of domestic violence. At the very end of the performance, the stories people could read on the shields of the figures of women were read aloud and burnt one by one. Then, the murdered woman will eventually find her peace:

„I met her in the valley of silence, there were no tears, and there was no screaming. Her voice ran through me like water and said: Don't say anything, don't say anything, each word you say will cost you your life. I met her in the valley of silence where it was cheerful without singing, where it was bright without sunshine, where there was no shadow. Don't beg for the sunshine, the voice said. I'm looking at the colours, I can see my children's hands, and they're washing my body with love. I know you love me. I met her, God with the face of a woman, an entity who could heal my wounds just by looking at me. She said: „It hurts to see you like this.“ I said: „I can't help it, I don't want it.“ She said: „You're so strong“. I said: „I'm weak.“

In the last scene, all the actresses enter the fountain and disappear behind streams of water.

Within the following two years, a few more figures of women murdered as the result of domestic violence were added to the original number and the Silent Witnesses exhibit took place in the gallery of the U.S. Steel Košice, the biggest employer in the region of Košice, as well as in a shopping centre in Bratislava (in a campaign lasting for 16 days, funded by the Slovak and Czech Women's Fund), and in the streets of the towns of Martin, Vrútky, Turčianske Teplice, Ružomberok, Čadca, Žilina a Dolný Kubín – a Silent Witnesses exhibit travelling to different regions was organized by our colleagues from the town of Martin. Last year, the Silent Witnesses were exhibited in the buildings of two ministries as a part of the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women.

The theatre performance was a unique experience tailored not only to the Silent Witnesses exhibit, but also to the physical space of the Košice's main square, its park and fountain, and it has, therefore, not been performed again. However, the DVD was shown a few years ago during the

¹ We want to thank the director, the actresses, all the volunteers (supporting actresses, our friend who performed the fire show, the music author, Mirek Vodrazka, and the opera singer, Helena Zaoralova), our friends and donors who made this event possible once again for their enthusiasm, commitment and support.

"One World film festival"¹ and was followed by a discussion with the audiences. To sum up, we consider the Silent Witnesses exhibit and initiative a good tool for advocating women's human rights and raising awareness on the consequences of domestic violence. In Slovakia, a lot of work still needs to be done in the field of

1 <http://www.wiam.ca/programs/one-world-film-festival/>

prevention, protection and provision at all levels as it is not adequate at the present time. We believe that it is crucial for all the relevant institutions, as well as for society as such to be fully aware of the real consequences of domestic violence on the lives of women and their children so that there will be no more women whose screams end in silence.

Femicide in Italy Research & Campaigning

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The article was written in cooperation with CRISTINA KARADOLE.

Femicide in Italy is a very remarkable and pervasive phenomenon, but it remains a silent issue that often goes uninvestigated. Only a small number of investigations delve into this issue¹, and governments do not provide statistics about femicide.

Furthermore, criminal statistics do not provide gender specific data.

According to the South American movement of women, 'femicide' refers not only to the murder of women, but to any violent behavior against women by men. Its goal is keeping women in line, treating them like objects, not like persons, like bodies that lack the worth of a human being. Unfortunately, in many cases, this violence can end in a murder, and while it will be noticed by the press, gender violence remains a silent issue, out of public discussion and politicians' interest.

In fact, murder is mostly the outcome of a violent intimate long term relationship, in a climate of generalised violence and discrimination against women.

Therefore, the meaning of the term "femicide", which has also been employed by Italian women's movements and policy agencies, should encompass the cultural and social environment of discrimination and misogyny rather than being used to describe violence as an unrelated and extraordinary episode acted by a mad man. So femicide tells us about sexual relationships, and about the imbalance of power between men and women, both in society and in couple's intimacy.

This is what arises from the study carried out by "Casa delle donne per non subire violenza", an Italian NGO, based in Bologna, that has run a Counselling Center and Shelter for battered women since 1989. The project about femicide began with collecting data from press reports between the years 2005 and 2008, on gender based murders of women¹. This work is the first only one of its kind in Italy and it has been conducted by a group of young volunteers, without the support of authorities and without the governmental institute of research.

The report reveals that every year in Italy

1 An important work is the recent essay of Barbara Spinelli, *Femminicidio. Dalla denuncia sociale al riconoscimento giuridico internazionale*, Franco Angeli, 2008 ; see also: <http://femminicidio.blogspot.com/>

1 The researches are published on the web of our NGO: "<http://www.casadonne.it>"

more than one hundred women are killed at the hands of a male (84 in 2005, 101 in 2006, 107 in 2007 and 113 in 2008), and shows that the vast majority of the time, these men are in intimate relationship with the women murdered: in 2005, 78% of the perpetrators were either the husband or the partner, and 20% a former lover; in 2006, the 63,4% of murders were carried out by the husband/partner and 10,9% by a former partner/husband; in 2007, 43,7% of perpetrators were the husband or partner and 14,2% of perpetrators were a former partner/husband; and in 2008, 38,1% of perpetrators were a husband or lover and 15,9% of murders were committed by a former husband/partner. The percentage of murders carried out by men unknown to the victim was far lower (1, 8% in 2005, 9,8% in 2006, 11,1% in 2007 and 9,7% in 2008).

The results of this study are extremely significant, because in Italy the mass media only pay attention women's murders when the perpetrator is a migrant. Furthermore, the press will seize upon a story if it involves a woman being murdered in public, but not when it occurs in the home, by the husband or a relative of the woman.

Likewise, politicians take care about women's safety when a murder or rape is committed by a migrant, as they wish to promote laws against immigration. However, they aren't concerned with violence against women that occurs in the domestic environment. The public is informed that crimes committed by migrants against women constitute an emergency situation, and paint the migrant as the enemy. This ignores the fact that violence against women is a cultural and social question regarding our gender based society as a whole.

Furthermore, our research shows that the majority of perpetrators are regular Italian men, from regular families (81, 2% in 2006, 70,6% in 2007, and 62% in 2008). Despite the fact that the level of crimes committed by foreigners is rising, due to a growth of immigration, the data confirms that the most common perpetrator is an adult, white Italian male .

The research suggests that the biggest risk for women of being killed is mostly at the

moment of divorce or breaking up: in the 2006 data, 49,5% of cases were motivated by a break up, in 2007, the figure was 41,2% and in 2008, the figure was 29,2%. It's clear that men are scared by the notion of the freedom of women, and the development of violence into murder is a response to those women who refuse to continue living with physical or psychological injuries.

This aspect is also consistent with data about men's suicide after femicides; we have this data for the period between 2006 and 2008 and have found that 32,7% and 20,4% respectively, decided to kill themselves. It's an interesting aspect of the phenomenon, because we can argue that a man who kills his wife or ex-wife is a very fragile person, he hasn't resources outside the family, and he does not have the will-power to continue living if a woman stands her own ground.

Another result of the research is the age of men at the time they commit murder. In 23.7% of cases in 2006, they were over 60 years old; the figure was 19% in 2007 and 24,8% in 2008. It's a huge range and leads us to suppose that violence had been ongoing through the woman's life.

Like we said in opening, these topics aren't at the centre of political agenda in Italy, and they are noticed only when it's necessary to gain support for policy against immigration, they interest the public debate for a few days and then are forgotten. It is only women's movements and grass roots organizations that continue to struggle against it daily, aware that a change in sexual relationships, in culture and education of the youth could stop gender violence.

Every year, the "Casa delle donne" promotes research on femicide, published close to 8th of March's celebration, not just to study the situation but also to inform citizens and institutions about violence against women. On the 25th of November every year, our NGO launches a campaign called "Silent Witnesses" a traveling exhibition that publishes the long list of women killed by their violent partners. Each figure represents a story of a woman whose life has ended in tragedy and silence. These women can never tell us what has happened. Our aim is to increase awareness of

domestic violence and public debates mark the day of remembrance of the 25th of November. Bologna was the first town in Italy that organized the Silent Witness campaign but now the exhibition has moved around different Italian cities to say 'stop violence against women and femicide'.

The misogyny in our country is worrying because it feeds a culture in which women are seen as inferior to men, and promotes the reification of women's bodies, making them mere sexual objects, rather than human beings, with human rights. Such a culture is counter-productive in helping the struggle against violence against women.

Relationship Homicide Cases

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Hanna Meier holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Zurich and studied Social Pedagogy and Italian Linguistic in Zurich. She is a research fellow at the Social Psychiatry service of the University Hospital Zurich.

A close look at the limited available data shows clearly: Relationship homicides mostly affect women and are committed mostly by men. According to a five-year survey carried out in Switzerland, 67 percent of victims of relationship homicides that were reported to the police were women and the percentage of male suspects was 80% (Zoder 2008, p.33, own calculations). However, data on relationship homicides isn't collected on a routinely year-to-year basis. The study mentioned is an exception and merely contains data for the period 2000 to 2004. There is still no information on the period before and after concerning the number of homicides occurring each year in the near social environment or the number of women assassinated by their partner and on the types of relationships affected. The number of children involved also remains unknown. Neither the criminal statistics issued by the police nor the statistics by the law enforcement authorities contain such information. This is also the case for countries like Germany and Austria. Other countries in turn like England, Wales, the US or Australia disclose information on the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator in their official statistics on homicides.

The existence of such statistics shows, that homicides in the near social environment are not taken seriously. They are neglected as social phenomenon and there is no awareness about the origin of such homicides and the context in which they are embedded. This situation again renders impossible a targeted prevention.

We have been analysing the question about how the authorities as civil society's representatives –in particular the police – are dealing with the presentation of homicides in the near social environment¹.

The main issue hereby is to find out what is being considered by the police in its investigations and how it reports on the cases in the final police reports. The police authorities have a huge interpretive authority because of their role as the first public authority to deal with a case when it comes to homicide. The authorities at the next level in the authority hierarchy dealing with homicides, such as the Public Prosecution Service and courts refer to their work.

¹ The research was carried out as a thesis project at the Gender Studies' Department of the University of Basel under the direction of Andrea Maihofer and supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation for promoting scientific research (SNSF) (Gloor, Meier 2009).

Police investigations have a formative effect on the further evaluation process, making it necessary to analyse this work. The reports by the police answer the following fundamental questions: What happened? Who is/are the perpetrator(s)? Who is/are the victim(s)? What are the circumstances of the crime? And: Why did this capital crime occur?

The result of the qualitative analyses of files brings up interesting findings¹. Domestic violence plays no role in the police's conception and presentation of homicides. This clearly clashes with the survey's findings whereupon a clear relation between femicides by current or former intimate partners and previous outbursts of domestic violence can be established (e.g. Campbell et al. 2007, Dobash et al. 2007). How can this fact be explained? The analysis of the police reports that we have been evaluating, shows that the violence that occurred previous to the murder is often mentioned in these reports. The acts of violence were mostly directed against the woman. In the meantime these incidents are in fact mentioned by the police but aren't – and this is the crucial point – seen and categorized as incidents of "domestic violence". In summary, it can be stated that domestic violence as a possible motive for action and as an important context in which the act itself is embedded is mostly ignored in the police's reporting of facts. Instead, other links are established: In order to explain the act of violence the police draws on traditional relationships, the personality or the "foreign culture" of the persons involved.

What does this mean for our practical work? Firstly, it still remains vital for the police to get acquainted with the domestic violence issue. The findings prove that there is an important lack of knowledge in this respect. Sex role stereotypes dominate and impede on the identifying and conception of domestic violence and its correlation with the fatal incidents which mostly affect women.

1 The files were analysed regarding attempted and committed homicides in the near social environment that took place in the canton of Aargau, Switzerland during a period of ten years, from 1995 to 2004. This is a total of 38 cases.

Secondly, in the investigation process the inclusion of various information persons is needed in order to create a large body of evidence. The reporting by the police is characterised, especially regarding the background of the perpetrator, by the statements of the mostly male perpetrator. Their declarations dominate and are adopted, often unfiltered, as the description of the "actual situation". This is all the more troubling as the victim can't make any statement in a committed homicide. However, analyses of attempted homicides paint no better picture. Remarkably, victim's statements are barely taken into consideration in the police's reporting. This aspect should be improved.

Thirdly, violence that occurred previous to a homicide should be adequately documented in the police's reporting. This is the only way to make sure the situation is assessed correctly. In the UK, the process of collecting information on homicides is already being changed, and in this new approach, concerning the documentation of domestic violence is at the centre (Home Office 2001). On a legislative and proceedings level we suggest that previous incidents of domestic violence should be explicitly taken into account when judging the act and the perpetrator and be seen as an inculpatory element. To produce the accordant legal foundations is a future challenge. Such an approach is being used successfully in other states like Canada. In these countries previous domestic violence is being accurately investigated and seen as an aggravating fact in the determination of penalty. All in all, the survey allows a closer insight into the work of the police concerning relationship homicides. This leads to the awareness that there is still a need for change in order to allow that domestic violence – that often affects women and is perpetrated by men – is being adequately considered by state authorities when it comes to homicides.

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Mortality due to Domestic Violence in France

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1. Figures on violence, an important challenge

The figures concerning the extent of violence against women are hard to produce and are at the centre of debate across Europe and in France. One knows, that only a small number of violent incidents occurring in the private sphere are being reported, that the figures released by public authorities are only reflecting the tip of the iceberg and that population surveys alone can give a picture of reality.

Yet, during the past years networks of researchers have accomplished constant work in order to discuss the methodological differences and let the figures speak for themselves¹. Thus, it can be believed that annually at least 10% of adult women from different European countries, and at least 25% of women during their lifetime fall victim to domestic abuse committed either by intimate or ex- intimate partners.

Figures and indicators of violence against women help to render the debate more objective, enable to share findings and facili-

tate the commitment of public authorities, professionals and activists with determining policies or action plans. They help measure tendencies and results, comparing, sensitizing. Their determination and interpretation represent important challenges for the public actors as well as for the different associations and researchers¹.

When it comes to homicides, which represent an extreme form of violence, the discussion shouldn't be as complex, the result being objectively statable and each violent death having automatically to undergo intervention by authorities and thus be subject to an investigation. In fact, debate isn't that simple, due to the fact that despite information being basically available in the police's and the justice's files the conditions for data collection, their nature, their access rights and their interpretation are to a great extent depending on the level of sensitization of society and authorities on the issue of violence against women.

For the associations defending the rights of women victims of violence on a day-to-day basis the interest in creating reliable, intelligible statistics and the discussion on

1 Jaspard Maryse, article in publication CARVH, Nommer et compter les violences envers les femmes, séminaire de la Sorbonne 2005.

1 Sylvia Walby, WAVE colloque, septembre 2009

definitions are new.

However, initiatives are arising either aiming at discussing the official figures, if existing, or at producing alternative figures and collecting qualitative information, mostly from the national or regional press. These initiatives are at the same time serving to create a social and collective consciousness on the issue and to put pressure on authorities in order to claim a greater awareness of the issue or an amelioration of the definitions and the protection of data.

2. In France, the impulse was given by the health sector

In its campaigns against domestic violence the FNSF¹ has estimated the annual number of deaths of women victims of intimate partner violence to be 400. But these figures are an estimation that isn't based on official statistics.

In 2001, a national working group on the impact of violence on women's health² issued a first "estimate" of the Ministry of the Interior: they speak about 6 women per month, a figure published in the media and diverse documents. A study by the medico-legal service of Paris states that more than 50% of female victims of homicide are killed by their intimate or ex-intimate partners. The report underlines the fact that these figures do not include those women who were murdered several months after the attempted homicide or those who committed suicide.

3. The more attention is given to the subject, the more the figures increase

From 2003 to 2005, different events had an impact on the situation in France: The murder of the actress, Marie Trintignant by her intimate partner of the moment (a well-known singer), the Spanish legislation: a national plan and a new legislation which include the ex-husbands and intimate partners in the definition of perpetrators of domestic violence. The Ministry of the Interior established a victim services unit (Délégation aux Victimes) entrusted with

1 Fédération Nationale Solidarité Femmes, réseau national des centres d'accueil et d'hébergement de femmes victimes de violences, point focal de WAVE en France (National network of women's shelters, WAVE focal point in France).

2 Conducted by professor Henrion.

the conducting of annual surveys on police services. The first survey, which was published in 2006, discloses 11 women murdered per month, namely approximately 150 per year. In 2008, 156 women died of the consequences of domestic violence perpetrated by their intimate partner of the moment or ex-intimate partner, namely 13 women per month.

This report by the Ministry of the Interior is now being awaited each year. It is a careful work based on the study of reports by the police and Gendarmerie units. Each situation is being analysed before being integrated into the statistics.

The survey also includes other situations:

- homicides with male victims committed by women (27 men were murdered in 2008)
 - homicides in homosexual couples (one or two, either male or female couples)
 - collateral victims, namely children (sometimes without the mother being murdered), parents, friends, intimate partners
 - homicides ending in the suicide of perpetrators (25% of cases)
 - homicides or suicides committed by partners (not covered by the legislation on domestic violence in France): lovers, ex-intimate partners, ancient or actual rivals.
- The total number of deaths related to male violence amounts to 304 persons.

4. Specialised services are needed in order to assemble different sources

In France the figures originate from two systems: the urban police force (national and Paris police force) and the rural police force (Gendarmerie, which is a military body). Their merger is being planned. The figures of the Ministry of Justice are unimpressive given that not all homicides are being solved and that the creation of statistics on trials and convictions is very slow. The figures of the Ministry of Health identify homicides as causes of death, basing themselves on the medical certificates. These figures are inferior to the figures issued by the police given that the transmission process of medical reports isn't satisfying. The combination of these different sources enables to get close to reality but the decisive factor is the specialising of people in the issue, and the existence of an organ being allowed to collect and evaluate

the information issued by the police, the Health and the Justice Sector. Considering the total number of cases, the conducting of an accurate study of each case should be possible, namely concerning the motive of the killing and also regarding the relation between the perpetrator of the crime and the victim and their respective sex.

5. The role of the press and of specialised institutions

The press has been identified as a source of information by the researchers, the activist associations and even by the Institutions. In France, the cases recorded from 4 national and regional newspapers and from the French news agency "Agence France-Presse (AFP)" represent 50% of the survey carried out by the Ministry of the Interior. The information issued by the press enables a qualitative survey, especially when there is a process and an analysis without an inclination towards sensationalism.

6. And what about men?

The study by the Ministry of the Interior emphasizes the great quantitative and qualitative dissymmetry in homicides on intimate partners committed by men and women. Women represent 81% of the direct deaths cases, but it is mainly the motive of the killing and the type of relation which are dissymmetric. At least 50% of women having murdered their intimate partner have been victim of repeated violence, even of evident attempted homicide, which isn't the case with male perpetrators of crimes. A study on so called "passionate"¹ crimes revealed that men

1 Houel Annick, Marcader Patricia, Sobota Helga: *Crime passionnel, crime ordinaire*, PUF 2003, recherche sur 337 crimes dits «passionnels».

killed women who «wanted to escape from them »while criminal women had killed men to «escape from them». It is the gender-sensitive analysis of their relation that renders possible to understand this violence and to include it or not in the statistics on gender based violence.

7. Deepen the connection between suicides and homicides

According to the Henrion report, depressive illnesses affect more than 50% of women victims of intimate partner violence. Depressions are characterized by a loss of self-esteem, social withdrawal, sleep and eating disorders, suicidal ideas and/or suicide attempts. Many surveys confirm that the danger for women, victims of intimate partner violence, to commit suicide are five to ten times higher than for those women who haven't experienced DV. In the ENVEFF study, the percentage of suicide attempts during the last twelve months increased with the frequency of the violence suffered. The suicide causes are multifactorial, but Sylvia Walby evaluates these causes: it is assumed that in the UK, 12, 6% of women who committed suicide did it because of recent and reported intimate partner violence. This percentage comes close to the annual prevalence rate of intimate violence in Europe.

In 2005 in France, 2.884 suicides of women have been recorded. If we add 10% of those women who committed suicide to the homicides in order to measure the mortality rate of women due to male violence, the number of women murdered annually wouldn't be 150 any more, but almost 450 women. This hypothesis should be enlarged on the European level.