

Press Release

**Gender Symposium: COMBATING FEMICIDE**

**Combating violence against women – bringing security home**

**25/11/2016, Vienna, Austria**

*30 November 2016* The OSCE Gender Section, in co-operation with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Academic Council on the United Nations System, the Office of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, and WAVE organised a symposium that addressed the need to combat femicide and conduct systematic collection, documentation and analysis of such crimes. Ambassador Paul Bekkers, Director, Office of the Secretary General of the OSCE, opened the event, stating that the OSCE is committed to combat gender-based violence in conflict and non-conflict situations.

Aldo Lale-Demoz, Deputy Executive Director UNODC, drew attention to the urgent need to further expose, monitor and understand femicide, in order to eradicate this scourge. UNODC data indicates that violence frequently escalates into the killing of women and girls, whereby intimate and family related violence is on the rise. UNODC research also points out that in 2012 more than 43,000 women were killed by an intimate partner or family member worldwide – representing almost four times the number of people killed by terrorism worldwide that same year.

Dubravka Šimonović, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, mentioned in her keynote address that violence against women is a human rights violation and type of discrimination rooted in inequality. Tackling femicide represents a priority for her mandate, and further emphasized that accurate and systematic data collection in this field, disaggregated by age, sex, and the relationship between victims and perpetrators, is urgently needed. Recalling her reports published earlier this year, she once again called on states to establish Femicide Watches, whereby these bodies should be given a clear mandate to analyse and collect data in order to identify gaps and failures in existing national support systems. Collection of accurate data is also one of the priorities set by the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. Last but not least, the Femicide Watch should be used as a prevention mechanism.

Karen Ingala Smith, CEO of NIA (WAVE member), presented a best practice that she developed in partnership with Women's Aid Federation England (WAVE member) –the Femicide Census. This represents a database of femicide cases from the UK and includes a wide range of information about women who have been killed by fatal male violence. The data that has been collected since 2009 showed the ability to break down femicide cases into several variables that took into the motives behind the murders. Data used for this purpose had been gathered from publicly available sources, primarily press articles.

Ani Jilozyan, from the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women, presented the findings of a landmark report that investigated femicide in Armenia. A significant obstacle that was often encountered in exposing such cases was the prevalent culture of impunity and the decision of law enforcement authorities to label such cases as 'suicides' or 'accidents'.

Anna Costanza Baldry, Professor at the Second University of Naples and member of COST Action "Femicide across Europe", started her intervention by pointing out that a total of 116 women have been killed so far in Italy in 2016 because of femicide. She further drew attention to the orphans of femicide, this being the focus of the research she is currently undertaking in this field. Some practical recommendations she put forward include the need to undertake risk management after the more common procedure of risk assessment is carried out. Furthermore, practitioners, representatives of the justice system and other relevant stakeholders should speak the same language, i.e. use the same



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definitions and have a similar understanding of this phenomenon. This way, when reviewing cases and conducting qualitative analyses, identifying ‘red flags’ will be much easier.

Biljana Branković, Member of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) stressed that the Istanbul Convention can make a significant contribution in eliminating femicide, particularly through the provisions of Article 11.

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