A silent war on women – ending femicides in the OSCE region

Date: 24 November 2023

Time: 10:00-11:30 CET

Location: Hofburg, Ratsaal, Vienna and online

In 2021 approximately 45,000 women were killed across the world by an intimate partner or other family members.[1] In the OSCE participating states, the number of femicides (or gender-related killings of women and girls) has also seen an alarming increase in recent months sparking growing concerns and protests against the failure of current mechanisms to prevent femicides and end this 'Silent War' against women and girls.

Number of OSCE participating States are collecting separate administrative data on femicide, while some of them have also established national preventive mechanisms such as Femicide Watch, Observatories or Homicide Review Panels. At the same time, reports note number of challenges such as the incoherent approach to terminology, sometimes even within the same country. This translates to a lack of legal definitions and tools, limited ability to collect relevant data, and general lack of accountability.

The OSCE has a strong commitment in fighting violence against women and girls, firmly anchored in the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and three key Ministerial Council Decisions on eliminating violence against women (MC.DEC 15/5, 7/14 and 4/18). They note harmful and deadly consequences of violence against women (VAW), provide specific commitments concerning protection and urge for the improvement of data collection, as key element in measuring the scope of violence and its consequences.

In line with the OSCE framework, in 2016 the OSCE Gender Issues Programme (GIP) organized a conference *Combating Femicide in the OSCE region*, discussing the importance of a systematic collection and documentation of data on gender-related killings of women and girls, which constitutes an important part of tackling the root causes of this issue. In 2020, the OSCE/GIP also commissioned study on *Capacity of National Stakeholders to Combat Femicide in the OSCE region*. The study mapped good practices and trends in participating States on the prevention of femicide and provided recommendations on establishing or improving national and sub-national mechanisms to collect data and to combat femicide and other forms of violence against women. Since then, number of actions have been taken to address the violence against women across OSCE region, aiming to support policy development, raise awareness and strengthen data collection.

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[1] Femicide_brief_Nov2022.pdf (unodc.org)

Objectives of the Event

As part of the 16 days of activism campaign, and in light of the recent events across the OSCE area, the event will bring together OSCE institutions, government representatives, international experts and civil society to discuss challenges, opportunities and best practises to address femicides including through effective legislative changes. The event will aim at:

- Providing a space for sharing experiences, best practices, and tools for effectively addressing femicides
- Discussing the effective mechanisms to prevent and combat femicides, including data collection and establishment of Femicide Watches
- Urging participating States to showcase the importance of implementing legislative measures specifically on targeting femicides

Agenda

10:00-10:10   Opening remarks: **Helga Maria Schmid**, OSCE Secretary General

10:10 – 11:00 Panel:

- **Dubravka Šimonović,** Expert on Violence against Women, former Chair of CEDAW Committee and UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls

- **Gesa Bräutigam** Special Envoy for Feminist Foreign Policy and Director for Human Rights, German Federal Foreign Office

- **Angela Me**, Chief of the Research and Trend Analysis Branch, UNODC

- **Thomas Busch,** Deputy Head of OSCE Mission in BiH

- **Migena Lahi,** Gender Expert, Differenza Donna

Moderator: Elmaja Bavčić, Adviser on Gender Equality

11:00 - 11:25 Q&A

11:25 – 11:30 Closing remarks, Lara Scarpitta, OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues

Format: Blended

Language: English