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Provisional version

The urgent need to combat so-called “honour crimes”

Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
Rapporteur: Mr John AUSTIN, United Kingdom, Socialist Group

A. Draft resolution [adopted unanimously by the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men on 14 May 2009 in Istanbul]

1. Drawing attention to its Resolution 1327 (2003) on “So-called ‘honour crimes’”, the Parliamentary Assembly notes that the problem, far from diminishing, has worsened, including in Europe. It mainly affects women, who are its most frequent victims, both in Europe and worldwide, especially in patriarchal and fundamentalist communities and societies.
2. All forms of violence against women and girls in the name of traditional codes of honour are considered to be so-called “honour crimes” and constitute a serious violation of fundamental human rights. Such violence takes various forms, such as “honour killing”, assault, torture, restrictions on free association, captivity or imprisonment, and interference in the choice of a spouse or partner. .
3. The Assembly firmly denounces these crimes and dismisses any form of excuse for them: no tradition or culture can invoke any kind of honour to violate women's fundamental rights. There is no honour in so-called “honour crimes”. The Assembly is determined to put a stop to this practice as a matter of great urgency.
4. It consequently asks Council of Europe member States to:
 - 4.1. draw up and put into effect national action plans to combat violence against women, including violence committed in the name of so-called “honour”, if they have not already done so;
 - 4.2. provide quality education and training for all, respectful of girls' and boys' and women's and men's rights, in application of Resolution ... 2009 on “The rights of today's girls, the rights of tomorrow's women”¹;
 - 4.3. introduce relationships, sex and reproductive health education for both girls and boys, particularly with a view to teaching respect for their partners and for fundamental human rights;
 - 4.4. continue to engage or begin a dialogue with religious authorities, in order to clarify with them the fact that their religion requires respect for the life and freedom of every person, and that so-called “honour crimes” have no religious basis, and invite them to condemn them and to co-operate in their prevention;
 - 4.5. conduct awareness-raising campaigns in order to change outlooks and the behaviours which ensue:
 - 4.5.1. among the population in general, so as to make everyone aware of girls' and women's rights and of equality;

1. Adoption scheduled for the Standing Committee on 29 May in Ljubljana.

4.5.2. among young people, not only to inform them of their rights, particularly the right to be open about their sexuality and to choose their partner, and to draw their attention to the existence of so-called "honour crimes", but also to encourage them to report such crimes if need be and to request protection from their country's authorities;

4.5.3. among the communities concerned, particularly minority ethnic communities or communities of immigrant origin, even at national level, including adults, so as to promote girls' and women's rights and to show women's, as well as men's, intrinsic value;

4.6. raise awareness among those who work with children, in education and in the medico-social sector, so as to enable them to detect the risks of so-called "honour crimes";

4.7. raise awareness among journalists of the cruelty of such crimes and invite them to report such crimes and show their inhumanity, while preserving victims' dignity and privacy;

4.8. protect and support victims or potential victims:

4.8.1. by creating an adequate provision of accommodation, geographically located wherever the need exists, so that they can hide from or be protected from their attackers;

4.8.2. by setting up physical and psychological support programmes on a long-term basis, so as to enable them to rebuild their lives physically and psychologically;

4.8.3. by helping them to establish or re-establish financial independence;

4.8.4. by providing them, if need be, with a new identity, as well as police protection;

4.9. set up and publicise a helpline number which will provide answers to any questions about violence against women, and point callers towards emergency assistance facilities;

4.10. introduce either a complete database or statistics which take account of the concept of "honour crimes"; this is needed if the problem is to be understood more thoroughly;

4.11. teach the police and judiciary about the complexity of so-called "honour crimes", and particularly:

4.11.1. teach the police officers responsible for investigations how to deal with victims and teach prosecution staff about the specific nature of these crimes and their identification, so that they collect as much evidence as possible of the specific nature of the offence when the reported facts give reason to believe that the crime may have been committed in the name of so-called "honour";

4.11.2. teach court staff about the specific nature of these crimes, how to conduct questioning and avoid putting pressure on victims and causing apprehension, and how to deal with cases in accordance with the gravity of the violence committed;

4.11.3. set up a specialised unit in the prosecution service to deal with so-called "honour crimes", so that every individual involved is charged and, should any travel abroad, they are the subject of extradition requests;

4.12. support the non-governmental organisations in host countries and countries of origin which play a vital role in prevention and assistance in this field and which can liaise between immigrant communities and their countries of origin;

4.13. support and finance the non-governmental organisations which fight against so-called "honour crimes" and support and accommodate victims.

5. It asks the national parliaments of Council of Europe member States to:

5.1. pass legislation, if they have not yet done so, to make so-called "honour crimes" offences, providing for a penalty commensurate with the gravity of the acts committed both for their perpetrators and for any accomplices or any persons ordering such crimes, either by creating a specific offence or by making provision for penalties to be aggravated;

5.2. provide for fair and equitable compensation commensurate with the seriousness of the damage suffered by the victim, if need be with the assistance of a State-guaranteed fund;

5.3. provide, after having evaluated the risks, judicial protection for victims or potential victims who report such facts, as well as for witnesses, including a prohibition on minors in danger leaving the country;

5.4. provide funding for accommodation, assistance and support services for victims;

5.5. develop policies and programmes to fight female poverty and the feminisation of poverty.

6. It encourages the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre) to strengthen its programmes on gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence and to continue the dialogue between countries of the North and countries of the South about the implications of gender equality and the combating of serious violations of human rights.

7. It resolves to include the fight against the most severe forms of violence against women in its parliamentary assistance and co-operation programmes.

B. Draft recommendation [adopted unanimously by the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men on 14 May 2009 in Istanbul]

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its Resolution ... (2009) on "The urgent need for action on so-called 'honour crimes'" and asks the Committee of Ministers to ensure that it is applied by member States, taking account of the fundamental principles of gender equality and respect for human rights.

2. It asks the Committee of Ministers to devise a comprehensive strategy to put a stop to so-called "honour crimes". This strategy will be based on the elimination of every form of legislative justification for diminishing or removing the criminal responsibility of the perpetrators of "honour crimes". It will aim to eliminate social acceptance of "honour crimes" and will emphasise the fact that no religion advocates "honour crimes". It will include a study to ascertain and deal effectively with the underlying causes of this form of violence against women. It will support the setting up of an international network against "honour crimes".

3. The Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to instruct the Ad Hoc Committee on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CAHVIO) to include in the future Council of Europe convention the severest and most widespread forms of violence against women, including domestic violence and so-called "honour crimes".

4. Drawing attention to its Recommendation 1798 (2007) on "Respect for the principle of gender equality in civil law", the Assembly reiterates its request for a new protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights to be drawn up enshrining gender equality as a human right.

5. The Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to include the fight against the most severe and most widespread forms of violence against women in its assistance and co-operation programmes, and to seek extra-budgetary resources to finance these activities.