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Strengthening the fight against so-called “honour” crimes

Report¹

Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

Rapporteur: Ms Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo, Monaco, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

Summary

So-called "honour" crimes may take the form of murder, kidnapping, abduction, torture, mutilation, burning, forced suicide and forced marriage. They are all manifestations of control and deeply rooted gender inequality. In most cases, they are perpetrated by those close to the victim or ordered by their family who do not accept a life choice, a desire for emancipation, the refusal of a marriage, a relationship outside marriage, sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Istanbul Convention clearly states that the defence of so-called "honour" cannot be considered as a justification for violence and calls on States Parties to commit themselves to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. It is high time to reaffirm political support for the Istanbul Convention.

Council of Europe member states should intensify their efforts to prevent and combat violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI persons, denounce a system of oppression linked to so-called "honour" and strengthen their actions to combat so-called "honour" crimes.

¹ Reference to Committee: Doc. [14821](#), Ref. 4439 of 12 April 2019.

A. Draft resolution²

1. Throughout the world, violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people are the tangible expression of a desire to control and an indicator of gender inequality. They are serious human rights violations which must be systematically and firmly condemned.
2. The entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS n. 210, Istanbul Convention) in 2014 laid down a major marker by setting out fundamental principles and calling on the States parties to do everything in their power to put an end to violence against women and domestic violence. The Parliamentary Assembly recognises that this Convention is a key instrument for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence that has the Assembly's unwavering support. The Convention offers a tool to reign in "honour"-related violence perpetrated against women and girls and States parties can decide to apply its provisions on domestic violence in relation to men and boys in all their diversity.
3. The Istanbul Convention unequivocally asserts that customs, tradition, culture, religion or so-called "honour" cannot not be put forward as justification for violence. No mitigating circumstance on grounds of so-called "honour" may be enshrined in national legislation or tolerated by courts when passing judgment. The Assembly stresses that so-called "honour" constitutes no ground, excuse or explanation for violating physical integrity and human dignity. Reiterating its Resolution 1681 (2009) entitled "Urgent need to combat so-called honour crimes", it emphatically condemns these crimes.
4. So-called "honour" crimes are most often perpetrated or ordered by members of the victim's family who refuse to accept their gender identity, sexual orientation, fashion or lifestyle choice, desire for emancipation or refusal of marriage. These crimes may take the form of murder, sequestration, abduction, torture, mutilation, burning, forced suicide, forced marriage, conversion therapy, interference in the choice of a partner or assault. They are often premeditated and organised. Large-scale awareness-raising initiatives must be carried out in order to have a tangible impact.
5. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in an increase in gender-based violence, including acts aimed at upholding "honour". Significant progress made in gender equality has been slowed and even set back in certain sectors. Referring to its resolution 2339 (2020) "Upholding human rights in times of crisis and pandemics: gender, equality and non-discrimination", the Assembly emphasises that an effective response to the Covid-19 pandemic must include a gender dimension, be inclusive, take an intersectional approach and make preventing and combating violence a priority. It asserts that the education system has a fundamental role to play in promoting gender equality from the earliest age, deconstructing stereotypes and encouraging the development of critical thinking.
6. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on the Council of Europe's member and observer States, as well as on all states whose parliaments enjoy a partner for democracy status, to :
 - 6.1. ratify and implement the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, if they have not already done so, and implement Resolution 2289 (2019) "The Istanbul Convention on violence against women: achievements and challenges";
 - 6.2. abolish from their criminal code any justification of crime linked to the upholding of so-called "honour" or any mitigating circumstance linked to the upholding of "honour";
 - 6.3. adopt a clear definition of so-called "honour" and recognise the upholding of so-called "honour" as an aggravating circumstance of any form of violence, take into account the aggravating circumstances established by the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence;
 - 6.4. firmly condemn violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people, ensure that the sentences passed are carried out and condemn a system of oppression based on so-called "honour";
 - 6.5. punish any public statements inciting violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people, including in the name of so-called "honour";

² Adopted unanimously by the Committee at its meeting on 18 May 2021.

- 6.6. recognise that LGBTI persons are vulnerable to so-called "honour" crimes and include them in all action plans aimed at preventing and combating this violence, and also ban conversion therapy;
 - 6.7. make the collection of data on violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people a priority and log cases of violence committed to uphold so-called "honour";
 - 6.8. adopt action plans aimed at preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people, comprising a section dedicated to so-called "honour"-based violence, and provide adequate funding for them.
7. The Assembly also calls on them, where protection and assistance for the victims are concerned, to:
- 7.1. open telephone helplines, available in several languages and with trained staff, for individuals looking for advice after being subjected to violence, including so-called "honour"-based violence, or seeking protection;
 - 7.2. ensure the protection, including through protection orders, of persons at risk of or having been subjected to gender-based violence;
 - 7.3. train police officers and members of the judiciary in the identification of violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people, including so-called "honour"-based violence, and in the reception of, support and assistance for victims;
 - 7.4. guarantee a sufficient number of places, with adequate funding, in facilities for the reception of persons having fled such violence and offer care appropriate to their situation;
 - 7.5. offer refuge and support for victims of gender-based violence, including so-called "honour"-based violence, or potential victims of so-called "honour" crimes who have fled their own country, in reception centres for asylum seekers, include a gender dimension in asylum policies and accept their requests for asylum;
 - 7.6. support national human rights institutions and equality bodies, civil society and non-governmental organisations working to promote the rights of women and to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, as well as those providing assistance to them, by guaranteeing them a space in which to operate, enabling them to carry out their work without hindrance;
 - 7.7. provide support for national human rights institutions and equality bodies, civil society and non-governmental organisations dedicated to protecting the rights of LGBTI people as well as those providing them with support and assistance;
 - 7.8. adopt an intersectional approach in combating gender-based discrimination, violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people.
8. In the area of prevention, the Assembly calls on them to:
- 8.1. run campaigns to prevent violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people, and raise awareness of so-called "honour" crimes, as well as communication initiatives aimed at parents;
 - 8.2. launch campaigns or awareness-raising programmes to promote gender equality aimed at the general public;
 - 8.3. carry out activities to promote gender equality within education establishments, from the earliest age, and offer training on the prevention and detection of gender-based violence for teachers.
9. The Assembly also asks national parliaments to:
- 9.1. carry out awareness-raising activities aimed at promoting gender equality and preventing violence, including so-called "honour"-based violence;
 - 9.2. organise debates at regular intervals on the action taken at national level to combat violence against women and domestic violence, the implementation of the Istanbul Convention or its ratification, and engage actively in its promotion.

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10. The Assembly encourages the organisations involved in preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people to continue their work and expresses its full support for them.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo, Rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. So-called “honour” crimes are the tangible expression of a desire to control and an indicator of gender inequality that is deeply rooted in our societies. These crimes are reported to claim hundreds of victims in Europe every year and are not a distant phenomenon. Murders, unlawful confinement, abductions, torture, mutilation, burns, forced suicides, forced marriages and conversion therapy are some examples of so-called “honour” crimes, which are committed with the intention of enforcing a code of honour or restoring the so-called “honour” of a family. In most cases, these crimes are perpetrated by relatives of the victim or ordered by his or her family. Violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people are human rights violations and cannot be justified. Putting forward the defence or restoration of so-called “honour” as justification is not only unacceptable but also illegal and contrary to human rights.

2. Although the Parliamentary Assembly and its committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination have been working relentlessly on preventing and combating all forms of violence against women, the last report to deal specifically with the issue of so-called “honour” crimes was debated over ten years ago. In 2010, Navenethem Pillay, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, estimated the annual number of victims of so-called “honour” crimes worldwide at 5 000,³ which could be an underestimate.

3. Article 42 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS n. 210), which we tirelessly promote and whose implementation we closely monitor, addresses the issue of the unacceptable justification of criminal offences, including crimes committed in the name of so-called “honour”:

1. *Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that, in criminal proceedings initiated following the commission of any of the acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called “honour” shall not be regarded as justification for such acts. This covers, in particular, claims that the victim has transgressed cultural, religious, social or traditional norms or customs of appropriate behaviour.*
2. *Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that incitement by any person of a child to commit any of the acts referred to in paragraph 1 shall not diminish the criminal liability of that person for the acts committed.*

4. The Convention, which to date has been ratified by 33⁴ Council of Europe member States, is the most advanced international instrument to combat violence against women and makes it very clear that customs, traditions or so-called “honour” cannot justify violence. It is important to note that the Convention does not call for the establishment of a separate criminal offence for so-called “honour” crimes. These crimes fall within the sphere of criminal law and have as their ulterior motive “the restoration of family “honour”, the desire to be seen as respecting tradition or complying with the perceived religious, cultural or customary requirements of a particular community”.⁵ The Convention provides the necessary clarity regarding the concept of so-called “honour”. Its definition is complex.⁶ It is closely linked to the social norms within a group or community.

5. The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women requires the States Parties “to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women”.⁷ In General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women,⁸ the United Nations Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW) recommends that the States Parties repeal “discriminatory evidentiary rules and procedures, including (...) legal defences or mitigating factors based on culture, religion or male privilege, such as the defence of so-called “honour”, traditional apologies, pardons from the families of victims/survivors or the subsequent marriage of the victim/survivor of sexual assault to the

³ Impunity for domestic violence, ‘honour killings’ cannot continue – UN official, UN News, 4 March 2010.

⁴ Turkey has announced its withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, which should take effect from 1 July 2021. The number of states that have ratified the Convention thus drops from 34 to 33.

⁵ Crimes committed in the name of so-called “honour”, leaflet published by the Council of Europe.

⁶ According to Dr Ermers, so-called “honour” could be linked to a person’s moral reputation, and any attack affects the members of the group (the family). He also distinguishes between an external “honour” crime, involving, for example, a father killing a man who has raped his daughter, and an internal one, involving the radical “removal” of a person who has violated the “honour” of the group or the family, for example by having pre-marital sexual relations.

⁷ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by the General Assembly in Resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979.

⁸ Updating General Recommendation No. 19, 26 July 2017.

perpetrator (...). There is a legal apparatus for this at international level but it has not yet been transposed into domestic law in all countries.

2. Scope of the report and methods

6. The motion for a resolution that led to this report states that the Assembly must take up the issue of so-called “honour crimes” and evaluate the implementation of Resolution 1681 (2009) entitled “Urgent need to combat so-called honour crimes”.⁹ We have studied the extent of the problem in Europe, analysed the responses to it and kept abreast of the latest developments thanks to the reports published by the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO). This issue is closely linked to the question of forced marriages, which I have already been able to address in the Assembly, and also to the continued existence of deeply patriarchal societies.

7. This report also focuses on the issue of so-called “honour” crimes that may have been committed against certain individuals after they had revealed their gender identity and sexual orientation. I do not wish to limit the scope of this report to so-called “honour” crimes committed against women and girls only, but I would also like to extend it to crimes against LGBTI people. I have therefore spoken to representatives of LGBTI rights organisations, including Cianán B. Russell, from ILGA Europe (23 March 2021), and individuals who have been at risk owing to their sexual orientation or gender identity.¹⁰

8. So-called “honour” crimes are often associated with Islam, but I wish to emphasise that there have also been such crimes in Hindu, Sikh, Druze, Christian and Jewish communities¹¹ and that so-called “honour crimes” are not systematically linked to religion or culture. This report will not seek to stigmatise a particular religious community but, rather, to study what can be done to combat these crimes more effectively.

9. Forced suicides may be considered a new form of so-called “honour” crime. Young girls or young men are said to be encouraged or forced for the sake of so-called “honour” to commit suicide to cleanse the family honour because of the alleged relationships they have had or their behaviour, whether this is in refusing to agree to a forced marriage, wishing to get a divorce or engaging in an extramarital relationship.

10. This report will enable us to make GREVIO’s work on preventing and combating so-called “honour” crimes better known. During the 2019 October part-session, I was able to speak to the GREVIO Secretariat and was informed about the difficulties which GREVIO has encountered in its search for quantitative data on so-called “honour” crimes. The underlying rationale of the Istanbul Convention is that protection orders should be issued to protect women from all forms of violence, including the risk of “so-called honour” crimes, but in many cases, these cover only domestic violence.

11. I have also looked at the United Nations work on the elimination of discrimination against women. I spoke to Mr Roland-François Weil, former Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to the European institutions in Strasbourg, during the 2019 October part-session.

12. I held a bilateral meeting with Ms Jacqueline Thibault, Chairperson of the Foundation Surgir (Switzerland) by videoconference on 15 May 2020. The Foundation regrets the lack of specific data on these crimes due to the fact that they are most often assimilated to domestic violence. I was also able to attend the virtual conference “Combating crimes perpetrated in the name of “honour” held on 16 September 2020 by the Surgir Foundation.

13. The Committee held its first hearing in connection with the preparation of this report at its meeting in Paris on 10 September 2020 with the participation of Mr Nazir Afzal,¹² a former Chief Crown Prosecutor in North-West England. He was involved in the investigation of several archetypal cases in the UK and has become a spokesperson for men involved in action to combat violence against women, including so-called “honour”-related crimes.

⁹ Resolution 1681 (2009): Urgent need to combat so-called “honour crimes”.

¹⁰ Virtual bilateral meeting with Inaya Zarakhel held on 19 March 2021.

¹¹ Combating ‘honour’ crimes in the EU, European Parliament Briefing, December 2015. During our hearing of 10 September 2020, Mr Nazir Afzal said he had looked at cases of so-called “honour” crimes in Sikh, Hindu, Traveller, Orthodox Jewish and Catholic families.

¹² A Muslim Prosecutor in Britain, Fighting Forced Marriages and Honour Crimes, *The New York Times*, 27 September 2013.

14. Owing to the health situation, I was unable to travel to Turkey, but I did hold virtual bilateral meetings with Turkish interlocutors on 28-30 September 2020. I would like to thank Mr Yildiz, Chairperson of the Turkish delegation to the Assembly, for his support and am also grateful to the delegation secretariat.¹³

15. I have been able to speak to Dr Robert Ermers, who has carried out research on the concept of so-called “honour” (25 March 2021), to Natasha Rattu, director of the Karma Nirvana charity in the United Kingdom (19 March 2021) and to Tanya Lokshina, director of the NGO Human Rights Watch in the Russian Federation (18 March 2021). I have received a written contribution from the Humanists International NGO.

16. Finally, the Committee held a joint hearing on 14 April 2021 with the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence on the prevention of so-called “honour” crimes and on assistance for victims, with the participation of Ms Jasvinder Sanghera, CBE, Founder of Karma Nirvana and Survivor of Honour Abuse, United Kingdom, Ms Rachel Eapen Paul, GREVIO member in respect of Norway, and Ms Isabelle Gillette-Faye, member of the High Council on Equality between Women and Men, France, Sociologist, General Director, GAMS (Women's group for the abolition of sexual mutilations, forced marriages and other practices affecting women's and children's health), France. I wish to thank all the persons who spoke at the hearing and agreed to share their testimony in connection with the preparation of this report, as well as the members of the Committee and the Parliamentary Network for taking an active part in our discussions.

3. GREVIO's work on so-called “honour” crimes

17. The drafters of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. focused particular attention on the issue of so-called “honour” crimes. They wanted to put an end to sentence mitigation for such crimes and to call on States to take firm action to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women and not to accept any justification or motive. The Convention entered into force in 2014 and GREVIO, its monitoring mechanism, has already carried out several assessments of how it is being implemented. States parties can decide to apply its provisions on domestic violence to men and boys in all their diversity.

3.1. Awareness-raising and assistance

18. GREVIO¹⁴ has expressed its satisfaction in general with States that have clearly condemned all forms of violence linked to so-called “honour” and taken steps to raise awareness (notably in Belgium and Sweden) and calls on the States not yet having done so to make efforts in this direction.

19. Some States have adopted specific plans to prevent and combat so-called “honour”-based violence. An action plan on honour-related conflicts and negative social control was adopted in 2016 by the Danish authorities for the period 2017-2020 and €10 million euros have been allocated to this plan. However, GREVIO expressed regret that it focused on cultural aspects and not on gender, which could help to perpetuate stereotypes regarding certain communities.

20. In Sweden teachers are provided with educational material on sexuality, forced marriage and manifestations of “honour-related violence”. Moreover, teaching staff are trained to spot children who might be victims of violence, including “honour-related violence”.

21. In Denmark there is a 24-hour telephone helpline for victims of honour-based violence. In addition, two shelters take in young people aged 16-30 at risk of forced marriage or so-called “honour”-related violence. In Sweden specialised counselling services have been set up to help victims of honour-related violence, and associations take in girls who have had to leave their families because they risk falling victim to a so-called “honour” crime.

22. One good practice identified by GREVIO in Finland is a website available in 12 languages (Infopankki.fi) which provides information on domestic, sexual and so-called “honour”-related violence. The Dutch government also has an information page on so-called “honour”-related violence on its website. It states that the reasons most frequently given for honour-related violence are conflicts of so-called honour, loss of virginity outside marriage, adultery, rebellion against traditional forms of behaviour/traditions, insults to a family

¹³ Conclusions and programme of the meetings: AS/Ega (2020) 35.

¹⁴ This section refers to the GREVIO (Baseline) Evaluation Reports on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) concerning Belgium (26 June 2020, [GREVIO/Inf\(2020\)14](#)), Sweden (21 January 2019, [GREVIO/Inf\(2018\)15](#)), Denmark (24 November 2017, [GREVIO/Inf\(2017\)14](#)), the Netherlands (20 January 2020, [GREVIO/Inf\(2019\)19](#)), Spain (15 October 2020 [GREVIO/Inf\(2020\)19](#)), Finland (2 September 2019, [GREVIO/Inf\(2019\)9](#)), Italy (13 January 2020, [GREVIO/Inf\(2019\)18](#)), Monaco (27 September 2017, [GREVIO/Inf\(2017\)3](#)), Portugal (21 January 2019, [GREVIO/Inf\(2018\)16](#)), Turkey (15 October 2018, [GREVIO/Inf\(2018\)6](#)).

member, refusal to agree to forced marriage, homosexuality and refusal to take part in honour-based violence against another person. This page also gives details of a telephone helpline and a WhatsApp group which can be contacted by persons who suspect that a so-called "honour" crime has been committed.

23. GREVIO reports that "[d]ata on honour-related violence are [...] scarce". In Spain it appears that they are only collected in the context of intimate partner violence. The collection of data is central to combating violence.

3.2 Importance of the commitment of police forces

24. GREVIO also looks at the work of police forces. Both the Danish police and the Swedish police use the "Assessment of Risk for Honour-Based Violence" (PATRIARCH) tool. In the Netherlands the police are given training on combating domestic violence and "honour"-related violence. Two national centres have been set up to provide expert advice on and deal with so-called "honour"-related violence. Since 2013, professionals have had a legal obligation to report suspicions of abuse, FGM and honour-related violence. Women threatened with so-called "honour"-related violence in the Netherlands and their country of origin may apply for a one-year temporary humanitarian residence permit.

3.3 An unequivocal call to step up the fight against so-called "honour" crimes

25. GREVIO does not hesitate to call on the States parties to do more to combat so-called "honour crimes" and to strengthen awareness-raising efforts to "convey the notion that on no grounds whatsoever should violence be tolerated, including harmful practices often claimed to be justified through concepts of religion, tradition or so-called honour". In Italy the defence of so-called "honour" is now recognised as an aggravating circumstance (Article 61 of the Criminal Code). In its baseline evaluation report on Monaco GREVIO points out that Monaco's criminal law provides for a heavier sentence "if the offender has committed an offence with intent to punish or redress misconduct allegedly related to honour".

26. GREVIO examines court decisions in detail. Among other things, it has expressed concern over the invoking of "hurt feelings" and "disappointment" as mitigating circumstances in certain courts in order to obtain lighter sentences in Italy, and it considers that a thorough review of the case-law and the criteria for mitigating circumstances would be useful. In its report on Portugal, GREVIO stresses the importance of enshrining in law that "in no case whatsoever can 'honour', including the 'honour' of a man allegedly wronged by a woman, justify a crime". In its report on Turkey, GREVIO urged the Turkish authorities to "dismantle the concept that the honour and prestige of a man or the family are intrinsically associated with the conduct or presumed conduct of women related to them, which is based on patriarchal attitudes and serves to control women and curb their personal autonomy". GREVIO points out in that report that "honour" continues to be considered as a justification for extreme forms of violence, including murder, in cases of real or perceived marital infidelity and for other real or perceived transgressions of women's roles. Women are frequently blamed for causing violence because of their "disobedience". It notes that reduced sentences for tradition-related crimes were abolished with the revision of the Criminal Code in 2005.

27. At our hearing, Ms Rachel Eapen Paul, GREVIO member in respect of Norway, stressed that the States parties to the Convention were under obligation to ensure that culture, customs, religion, tradition or so-called "honour" were not regarded as justification for any of the forms of violence covered by the Convention. Violence against women could not be justified. Reducing sentences on the basis of so-called "honour" should be a thing of the past.

4. CEDAW's work on so-called "honour" crimes

28. I have examined the work of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Committee underlines and welcomes above all the commitment of most of the States to combating so-called "honour" crimes and encourages them to step up their efforts in partnership with their authorities and the grassroots stakeholders. Like GREVIO, it reiterates that so-called "honour" crimes must be regarded as a human rights violation and that these crimes form part of a broader spectrum of violence against women. Traditions, customs, religion or so-called "family honour" do not constitute any acceptable grounds for such acts. The United Nations Committee also points out that certain population categories (migrant women,

women from minority backgrounds¹⁵) or certain (rural¹⁶) areas of a member State may be more at risk¹⁷ from so-called “honour” crimes.

4.1. Preventing so-called “honour” crimes

29. In line with the Committee’s recommendations, a number of States now provide training for professionals working for the police or educational services. One example is Austria, which, in response to the Committee’s observations in 2013, has developed and incorporated the theme of (sexual) violence against women and girls and in particular so-called “honour” crimes in its National Strategy on Violence Prevention in Schools, aimed at pupils, students and key stakeholders in the school environment.¹⁸

30. In Sweden, between 2012 and 2014, the National Board of Health and Welfare produced training material on particularly vulnerable groups of persons who may be subjected to violence such as older women, women with disabilities, women with substance misuse problems, women with foreign backgrounds and people subjected to “honour”-related violence and oppression.¹⁹ Raising awareness of so-called “honour”-related violence can use channels other than training, such as the setting up of a mediation body, information campaigns and campaigns aimed at changing mindsets or the setting up of a hotline.

31. All stakeholders and staff in contact with women who are victims or at risk must be mobilised to combat so-called “honour” crimes. Co-operation between local or regional authorities and stakeholders on the ground, particularly the NGOs, must be geared to more cohesive and more effective action against so-called “honour” crimes and better care for victims.

32. In Denmark, a national body has been set up with the task of advising municipalities on so-called “honour”-related violence. In a 2016 revamp of the plan, a working group and a team of security consultants were set up to advise local authorities in specific cases of “honour”-related conflicts or the adoption of strategic measures to prevent this type of conflict. In Sweden, there is a real national network of institutions tackling so-called “honour”-related violence and oppression. This network is also tasked with mapping out preventive measures in the form of universal, targeted support for parents aimed at preventing violence and oppression linked to “honour” issues. For the Government, it is about having access to methods that produce results which can be rolled out to the rest of the country.

4.2. Assistance for victims

33. Assistance for victims may take a number of forms. The States may create reception facilities or shelters for victims (individuals or couples) of any form of violence committed to uphold the so-called “honour” of a family, as in Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden. Telephone helplines have been created in Denmark and Sweden either to advise parents, young people, young adults and professionals on the issue of so-called “honour” crimes or to provide support for staff dealing with victims.

4.3. Asylum policy

34. The Committee²⁰ is concerned that migrant women are particularly vulnerable to various forms of violence, including so-called “honour” crimes. In Finland, there has been a special focus on the safety of migrants and other vulnerable groups, particularly with a view to identifying cases of violence committed on grounds of “honour”, as part of the internal security programme.

35. In several member States, the gender dimension forms part of the asylum policy, and the needs of certain groups of migrants such as women or individuals having fled their country because of gender-related persecution and “honour”-related violence in particular are taken into account.

36. In Switzerland, the Asylum Review Board has developed a practice on gender-related persecution in line with the notion of “belonging to a specific social group”, and one of the grounds listed is so-called “honour”

¹⁵ Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Sixth periodic report of States parties, CEDAW/C/ITA/6, 16 September 2010.

¹⁶ Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Albania, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/4, 25 July 2016.

¹⁷ Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Finland, CEDAWC/FIN/CO/7, 10 March 2014.

¹⁸ Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention, Ninth periodic report of States parties due in 2017, Austria, CEDAW/C/AUT/9, 15 May 2017.

¹⁹ Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention, Eighth and ninth periodic reports of States parties, CEDAW/C/SWE/8-9, 3 September 2014.

²⁰ Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Finland, CEDAWC/FIN/CO/7, 10 March 2014.

crimes.²¹ In Belgium, around 19% of the asylum requests lodged in 2013 cited gender-related grounds, and 105 people who feared becoming a victim of a so-called “honour” crime were granted refugee status.²²

37. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) does not have statistics on so-called “honour” crimes and the asylum requests from individuals who believe that they are at risk of falling victim to such a crime. The UNHCR does not have specific statistics either on gender-based persecution, beyond more general data on membership of a specific social group. It can be stated, though, that asylum requests have been lodged by individuals at risk from so-called “honour” crimes.

4.4. Combating discrimination and so-called “honour” crimes

38. In the report it submitted in connection with monitoring of the United Kingdom, the Sisters for Change NGO²³ estimates that 95% of BME women are at risk from so-called “honour”-related violence. For its part, the Rights Watch NGO²⁴ explains that the British government has chosen to tackle the issue of violence against BME women, particularly so-called “honour”-related violence, within the framework of the strategy to combat terrorism, which could result in discrimination or prejudice in dealing with the victims. In this respect, the Committee recommends that the State party strengthen efforts to protect women, especially BME women, from all forms of violence, including violence in the family and so-called “honour” crimes.

39. Some NGOs report that domestic violence (including so-called “honour” crimes) against foreign-born women appears to be stereotyped in mainstream Swedish society and the reports on this subject as occurring at the hands of same-culture foreign-born men.²⁵

4.5. Prosecution and punishment of perpetrators

40. Some States parties opt not to include so-called “honour” crimes in their criminal code. The Russian government said in this connection that it was not planning to incorporate additional articles in the Criminal Code imposing harsher penalties for “honour-related” murder or assault committed against women or girls or for forced marriage.²⁶

41. The Committee recommends that judges and law enforcement officials are systematically given training as regards the criminal nature of so-called “honour” crimes.

42. Like GREVIO, the Committee has expressed concern that mitigating circumstances are taken into account or milder sentences are handed down in such cases in certain States.²⁷

43. In general terms, the Committee has deplored the lack of statistical data on so-called “honour” crimes in the state reports it has reviewed. Belgium has provided the CEDAW with some data on the number of cases of “honour”-related violence registered by the country’s public prosecutor’s offices: 17 in 2016, 94 in 2017, 101 in 2018 and 88 in 2019.²⁸

44. Between 30 and 60 so-called “honour” crimes are logged each year in the Netherlands as a particular type of violence against women. The Centre of national expertise on honour-based violence provides support for the police, allowing them to intervene safely in suspected cases. In 2014, the centre received 460 reports of “honour”-related violence and participated in 11 prosecutions for murder or manslaughter.

45. In its state report, the Russian Federation notes that “(s)ince no specific instances of violations of the rights of women and/or girls in the North Caucasus are cited in the concluding observations, it is impossible to verify the assertion that such harmful practices as child and/or forced marriage, abduction of women and girls

²¹ Responses of Switzerland, List of issues and questions in relation to the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Switzerland, CEDAW/C/CHE/Q/4-5/Add.1, 14 June 2016.

²² Summary record of the 1257th meeting, Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (continued), Seventh periodic report of Belgium, 4 November 2014, CEDAW/C/SR.1257.

²³ Sisters for Change, 26 January 2019.

²⁴ Shadow report of Rights Watch UK, 2019.

²⁵ International Organization for Self-Determination and Equality, “Silence is violence, A shadow Report to UN CEDAW re Sweden”, 22 January 2016.

²⁶ Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention, Eighth periodic report of States parties, CEDAW/C/RUS/8, 4 August 2014.

²⁷ London Legal Group, Alternative report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, June 2016.

²⁸ Annex – Police and judicial statistics relating to gender-based violence (in French), 18 November 2020.

for forced marriage, crimes in the name of so-called honour, female genital mutilation and polygamy are becoming increasingly prevalent in the North Caucasus".²⁹

46. The Committee also recommends that an effort be made to take due account of so-called "honour" crimes and advocates their systematic criminalisation. It also calls on the States to effectively apply action plans, to provide training to law professionals, law enforcement staff and medical staff with regard to the criminal nature of so-called "honour" offences and the harmful impact of these practices on women's rights and to ensure that women who are victims of so-called "honour" crime are able to file a complaint without fear of reprisals or risk of being stigmatised and that they have access to legal, social, medical and psychological assistance.

5. Forced suicides and so-called "honour" suicides

47. Forced suicides can also be placed in the category of so-called "honour" crimes. The former lawyer, Yaël Mellul,³⁰ has fought for the recognition of forced suicide in France. "Suicides of women who are victims of bullying occur when their mental deterioration is fatal; the act represents the culmination of the process, a release and the only solution to escape this hell".³¹ She also points out that "victims commit suicide as an ultimate act of release from all the suffering they have endured and also because the shame and guilt become unbearable".³² In 2018, 217 women are reported to have taken their own lives following intimate partner violence.

48. Some NGOs have pointed out that, owing to the risk of higher sentences, women and girls are sometimes encouraged to commit suicide in order to save their family's reputation³³. Accordingly, so-called "honour" crimes are rarely reported or often go unnoticed, as some believe that so-called "honour" can provide justification for a crime, and furthermore these murders are often passed off as suicides.

49. However, not all forced suicides can be equated with so-called "honour" crimes. As a result, the expression so-called "honour" suicide is also used. At a colloquy in the French Senate on 8 March 2010,³⁴ Ms Jacqueline Thibault, Chair of the SURGIR Foundation, stated that the number of suicides by women had increased substantially in Turkey after the revision of the Criminal Code in 2005. These suicides are said to be committed under pressure from families and could be regarded as so-called "honour" suicides. GREVIO has also expressed concern over reports of cases where women and girls have been encouraged or forced to commit suicide. If there is a suspicion of provoked or forced suicide, an investigation is conducted. The Turkish Criminal Code describes forced suicides as murders.³⁵ The Turkish government has adopted a national action plan to combat violence against women for the period 2016-2020, providing for research to be undertaken regarding "fatal cases of violence against women, suspicious suicides of women and murders committed in the name of tradition and "honour"". ³⁶

50. We must also make a distinction between forced suicides or so-called honour suicides and murders disguised as suicides. It is difficult to obtain detailed figures or even an idea of the scale of this problem but it seems appropriate to check whether training for judicial staff gives them the necessary tools to detect such acts and whether the authorities in any Council of Europe member States have taken measures to prevent them.

6. So-called "honour" crimes against LGBTI persons

51. LGBTI persons can also be victims of so-called "honour" crimes committed by family members or close relatives because they cannot accept their sexual orientation or gender identity. These crimes are a form of gender-based violence, which cannot be accepted or tolerated in the name of any culture or tradition. To my knowledge, there has not yet been a large-scale study on this question. The information available to us is based on individual accounts.

²⁹ Ninth periodic report submitted by the Russian Federation under article 18 of the Convention due in 2019, CEDAW/C/RUS/9, 26 September 2019.

³⁰ Ms Mellul was heard by our Committee in 2011 as part of our work on psychological violence. She welcomed the inclusion of forced suicides in the law on combating violence against women, adopted on 29 January 2020.

³¹ *Intimate partner violence: what is "forced suicide", which some would like to see included in the Criminal Code?* France Inter radio, 29 October 2019 (in French only).

³² *Idem.*

³³ *Ibid*

³⁴ *Forced marriages, so-called "honour" crimes* (proceedings of the colloquy of 8 March 2010), French Senate (in French only).

³⁵ *Criminal Code, Law no. 5237, Article 84.*

³⁶ *Idem.*

52. In its report for 2019, the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) reported on the bullying and beating of a homosexual man by his family because they believed he had tarnished their so-called “honour”. He was reported to have been expelled from his village in Azerbaijan for the same reason.³⁷

53. The case of Roşin Çiçek³⁸ was front-page news in Turkey and beyond. 17-year-old Roşin was killed by his father and his uncle because of the supposed affront to his family’s so-called “honour” caused by the fact that he was homosexual. The father and uncle were sentenced to life imprisonment. Ahmed Yıldız, a young Turkish homosexual, was killed by his father in 2008 after revealing his sexual orientation. He had told the police he was in danger. His father is still on the run.

54. It has undoubtedly become more difficult for NGOs that protect and promote the rights of LGBTI persons to do their work in Turkey in the last few years. I was told that perpetrators of crimes against LGBTI persons knew they would not be punished. LGBTI individuals were obliged to adopt a low profile in order to be able to continue their activities and no longer or rarely used the rainbow flag. A situation that is not conducive to promoting LGBTI rights is not generally conducive to protecting women’s rights.

55. I would also like to make reference to the work of Piet De Bruyn on the persecution of LGBTI people in the Chechen Republic in recent years.³⁹ This persecution, ordered at the highest level, is reported to have been carried out with family involvement. According to Amnesty International and the Russian LGBT Network, a second wave of persecution began in January 2019. The police have “reportedly demanded that families of gay and lesbian people commit ‘honour’ killings against their relatives and provide evidence of their murders”.⁴⁰

56. In his report, Mr De Bruyn emphasises that “being LGBTI means contravening the so-called traditional society where a couple is composed of a woman and a man. In the Chechen Republic, coming out often means being shunned by the family. Homosexuality is considered a disease and a provocation. LGBTI people are forced to hide their sexual orientation and are obliged to live a secret life. They fear being rejected, beaten up, tortured, abducted or even killed if they come out. When the police or security forces discover that a person is LGBTI, they threaten systematically to tell the family if the person does not give them a certain sum of money”.⁴¹ Ramzan Kadyrov has called directly on families of LGBTI people to deal with the situation within the family circle. These attacks on LGBTI people have taken place in a context of oppression for women, who are required to follow a dress code and adopt so-called righteous behaviour.

57. According to Human Rights Watch, in the Republic of Chechnya “homosexuality is generally viewed as severely tainting the so-called “honour” of the family. High-level Chechen officials fuel that attitude by publicly condoning “honour killings” of gay and bisexual men”.⁴²

58. Transgender people may also be in danger. I have received information from Inaya Zarakhel, a transgender woman who left Pakistan because of threats to her family after revealing her gender identity. Her mother supported her but she left owing to the risk of becoming a victim of a so-called “honour” crime. She spoke about her experience as a transgender woman in Pakistan and told me that “by transitioning to my true gender I brought shame on my family”. After a year in a reception centre for asylum-seekers, her application for asylum in the Netherlands was granted. During our interview, she said “honour” was a fluctuating concept and could mean something different depending on the location. She recommended that a system of support for people who have fled “honour”-based violence be set up at centres for asylum seekers and that the safety not only of all their residents but also, more generally, of those who have fled gender-based violence be ensured.

59. I would also like to mention the conversion therapies to which some people are subjected because their family wants to have them change their sexual orientation or gender identity. These therapies are traumatic and violent and should be banned. Their aim is supposed to be to preserve the so-called “honour” of a family or relative but they are in fact humiliating and intolerant. Victor Madrigal-Borloz, UN Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity, called on States to “work together to institute a global ban on practices of conversion therapy” when he presented his latest report to the Human Rights Council in July 2020. He described these practices as being “inherently discriminatory (and) cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and [...] depending on the severity or physical or mental pain and suffering inflicted to the victim and [...] may

³⁷ Annual Review of the Human Rights situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people in Azerbaijan covering the period of January to December 2019, ILGA-Europe.

³⁸ Remembrance on April 23: Roşin Çiçek, LGBTI News Turkey.

³⁹ Resolution 2230 (2018) on Persecution of LGBTI people in the Chechen Republic (Russian Federation), adopted by the Assembly on 28 June 2018.

⁴⁰ Putin has given Chechnya free rein to persecute LGBTI people, Amnesty International, 17 January 2019.

⁴¹ Persecution of LGBTI people in the Chechen Republic (Russian Federation), Explanatory memorandum, Doc. 14572.

⁴² Russia: New Anti-Gay Crackdown in Chechnya, Human Rights Watch, 8 May 2019.

amount to torture”.⁴³ I received the deeply distressing report of a man whose partner was forced by his family to undergo brain surgery aimed at making him heterosexual. The violence to which LGBTI people may be subjected because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity is intolerable and we must take action so that everyone is allowed to live an untroubled and violence-free life.

60. Forced marriages are said to be organised to conceal the sexual orientation of one of the spouses and paint a picture of a heterosexual couple to society. In the United Kingdom, out of 1 142 forced marriages in 2019, 2% of victims identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.⁴⁴

61. We cannot dissociate attacks on women’s rights from discrimination and violence targeting LGBTI people. It is my view that all of this is intrinsically linked and so-called “honour” crimes occur in societies where gender equality has not been achieved. Strengthening the fight against so-called “honour” crimes means working in depth and in a cross-cutting manner on gender equality issues. Promoting and protecting LGBTI rights enables so-called “honour” crimes to be combated more effectively.

7. United Kingdom

62. The United Kingdom has not yet ratified the Istanbul Convention, so it is not yet covered by GREVIO reports. However, one feature of the country is the particular attention it pays to this topic. The NGO, Karma Nirvana, estimates that there about 12 victims of so-called “honour” crimes in the UK per year, although this figure is thought to be an underestimate. So-called “honour” crimes reportedly committed in other countries are not counted and can be equated to a form of organised crime that could be exported.

63. The tragic story of Banaz Mahmood is the subject of a documentary⁴⁵ broadcast throughout the world. The police officers in charge of the investigation explain very clearly that the family quite simply wished to remove all trace of her existence. There was not a single photo of Banaz in her parents’ home and her parents showed no desire to find her again or pursue her murderers. Her family, who were supposed to protect her, had ordered her killing because she had tarnished their so-called “honour”.

64. She grew up in a Kurdish family which came from Iraq in 2005, living a life between two different cultures, Kurdish and British. She was the victim of female genital mutilation, like the other girls in her family. Her parents arranged an early marriage for her and Banaz resolved to marry the husband who had been chosen for her. Her spouse raped her and beat her on several occasions, telling her that he would kill her if she talked about this to anyone. “I was like a shoe, at his complete disposal to be put on at any time he wished”. She left and took refuge with her parents but they encouraged her to return to her husband, whom they seemed to hold in great esteem. She was told that a divorce would bring great shame on the entire family. Nonetheless, Banaz ran away, as she was unable to bear her husband’s violence anymore. She went to the police station several times to report the violence to which she was being subjected, which included marital rape, but no protection measures were set up.

65. She met a man called Rahmat shortly after leaving her husband and they had a secret affair. One day, however, they were seen kissing on the street and when Banaz’s family found out about this, they decided to organise her murder. When the first attempt was made, she managed to escape and told her story at the hospital where she had her injuries seen to. Her statement was filmed by her boyfriend, Rahmat, and she left a letter for the police clearly stating who was most probably going to kill her. She was killed by three men in her parents’ house and her body was put in a suitcase and buried. Two of the three men got away to Iraq, where they celebrated the murder. The British team in charge of the investigation succeeded in obtaining their extradition and they were sentenced to life imprisonment in the United Kingdom.

66. In this documentary, I was particularly struck by the statement by the victim’s sister, who had fled her family and had been living in hiding since she had given evidence against her family in the course of the investigation. The police officers and investigators state that they did not carry out the investigation for Banaz’s family but for the victim herself and her memory. They regretted that she had not been placed under protection despite the many warning signs. What happened to Banaz has clearly had a very profound effect on people.

67. We also heard Jasvinder Sanghera tell her story during our hearing. When she reached the age of 14, her father gave her a photo of a man far older than her, whom she was to marry. She refused because she wished to continue to go to school. Her dream of independence was out of the question, an independent woman would bring dishonour on the family. Even so, she dared to say no to her father. Consequently, she was taken out of school and locked up in her own home. She escaped from the house at the age of 16. She

⁴³ ‘Conversion therapy’ can amount to torture and should be banned says UN expert, 13 July 2020.

⁴⁴ Forced Marriage Unit Statistics 2019, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 25 June 2020.

⁴⁵ Documentary, “Banaz, a love story”, Deeyah Khan, Fuuse Films, 2012.

explained to her family that she had to be able to decide whom she wanted to marry but her family did not agree and considered that their daughter had brought dishonour on them. Her parents broke off all contact with her. She also told the story of her sister, a victim of violence whose views had not been listened to.

68. She gave some examples of situations which "tainted" a family's honour: refusing an arranged marriage, having an extramarital relationship, integrating, being on social networks, seeking help, leaving home or divorcing. She set up the Karma Nirvana association in 1993 to give victims of so-called "honour" crimes a voice, protect them and save lives. Her association emphasises the role of the families which commit so-called "honour" crimes. The victims are not listened to enough when they report what is going on to the authorities, which are too inclined to refer to the families, who are the perpetrators of the crimes. According to Ms Sanghera, so-called "honour" crimes are very much a consequence of the patriarchal structure of our societies. But the fact that women help to perpetrate and cultivate "honour" crimes is not to be underestimated". She stressed the fundamental role of schools: "when we are young, we are largely conditioned by our family. It is the family that educates us in part and gives us the codes governing what we can and cannot do. There is no book that teaches us what honour is. This is drummed into us by our parents, the people we love the most. And if we transgress the "code of honour", we learn that there are sanctions (...) The key to combating so-called "honour" crimes is education. Critical thinking has to be developed in young people and it must be ensured that professionals realise that "honour" crimes exist".

69. Nazir Afzal, who has prosecuted over a hundred so-called "honour" crimes in the United Kingdom, stressed that these crimes reflect a desire for control. "You can't just say come back tomorrow. There'll be no tomorrow. The first contact is the most important. When a person asks for help, you must be able to help them and report the incident straightaway. Otherwise, you'll just be adding to the risks that person faces". He believes it is impossible to rationalise what some people do in the name of so-called "honour". In most of the cases he has dealt with, the perpetrator of the crime felt no guilt or shame. He or she was supported by his friends and family, which does not happen in the case of domestic violence, for example.

70. Mr Afzal said the perpetrators of so-called "honour" crimes did not think they would have to face the consequences and answer for what they had done. Often, those crimes were a form of organised crime. One case in eight in the United Kingdom involved resorting to hired killers, who apparently were not paid, as they believed it was the thing to do in order to restore so-called "honour". Victims were of all ages and various reasons were given, such as propriety, sexuality, gender identity or sexual orientation. The crimes were strongly linked to cultural factors, which strengthened so-called male power and aimed to prevent women from making choices. A 21-year-old man born and raised in England had told him that a man was like a piece of gold which you could clean if you dropped it in the mud, whereas a woman was like a piece of silk, which would be stained forever. The concept of so-called "honour" was very strong, and a brother who loved his sister could even go so far as to kill her in the name of "honour". The aim of that crime was to control women. He pointed out at our hearing that if we tackled the question of masculinity and a male-dominated society, we would reduce the incidence of so-called "honour" crimes and murders.

71. In the United Kingdom, 120 000 police officers have been trained in the detection of so-called "honour"-based violence. Specialist staff are attached to the social and child welfare services and the police. The police can now record, on a voluntary basis, whether a crime has been committed in the context of the preservation of a family's or a community's so-called "honour".

72. Throughout the world the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in an increase in violence against women, particularly in the context of lockdowns. I managed to obtain some information on its specific impact as regards victims of so-called "honour"-based violence in the United Kingdom when speaking to the representative of Karma Nirvana. According to the data in her possession, the number of people having fled so-called "honour"-based violence or forced marriages increased by 35% between 2019 and 2020. The number of calls to their helpline relating to new cases also increased, by 16%. With the heavy restrictions on movement, there were more people seeking assistance via helplines. The situation remains brittle to date.

8. Strengthening the fight against so-called "honour" through concrete measures

73. Strengthening efforts to combat so-called "honour" crimes is part of the more general stepping up of the fight against violence at all levels. This will take place through the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention (where that is not already the case) and the strengthening of national legal provisions relating to the prevention of and the fight against violence against women and domestic violence. We need to further promote the Istanbul Convention and countering the attacks and disinformation concerning it. It is crucial to have a clear definition of so-called "honour" crimes in domestic legislation in compliance with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.

74. Action by the police, the courts and education systems can help to combat so-called “honour” crimes effectively. The vulnerability of LGBTI people to these crimes must also be recognised and the protection of LGBTI people should be included in action plans aimed at preventing and combating them. We must employ an intersectional approach in our efforts to combat discrimination and violence in order to recommend effective, non-stigmatising actions.

75. It is also important to train police officers to ensure that victims are treated sensitively, effective assistance is provided and future violence is prevented. Proper training could help in detecting risks of so-called “honour” crimes and taking appropriate measures. Investigators should also receive training. Consideration could be given to setting up special units dedicated to combating so-called “honour”-based violence. So-called “honour” based violence should be unequivocally condemned.

76. Protection orders are a concrete means of enabling a potential victim of a so-called “honour” crime to be moved away from those who might put them in danger, and the use of these orders should be encouraged. So-called “honour” is cited by some people as justification for a crime but it can also make it harder for a potential victim to leave.

77. It is essential to invest much more in awareness-raising activities and prevention. The media should support the launch of information campaigns aimed at preventing violence, including so-called “honour”-based violence, and at promoting gender equality. Press coverage of acts of violence often sums up violence perpetrated against a woman in a family of immigrants as a so-called “honour” crime. Awareness-raising programmes specifically aimed at men should be set up. This will help to change mentalities so that men no longer see their wife, daughter, sister or cousin as property that they own. According to the Humanists international NGO, the concept of so-called masculine “honour” has its origins in the objectification of women, who are seen as passing from their father’s control to their husband’s control.

78. Educating children about gender equality from an early age plays a key part in the achievement of equality in adult life. Programmes to promote gender equality should be on the curriculum and must help to embed equality firmly in people’s minds.

79. The reception of victims or potential victims in specific facilities should be guaranteed. Preventing and combating so-called “honour” crimes has a gender dimension and the need for assistance can vary, according to the victim’s gender. Adequate funding should be provided for creating and operating these facilities, and making them secure, and for staff training, including training in the detection and prevention of so-called “honour” crimes, as well as the monitoring of victims. The authorities should support the installation of a telephone helpline in several languages.

80. Some political leaders have called directly on their communities to protect their so-called “honour” and the “honour” of their families, and such remarks should be emphatically condemned and no longer tolerated. A call to violence is in itself a form of violence. In no case can failure to respect certain traditions justify the slightest violence. Refusal to accept a family member’s gender identity or sexual orientation should not be a source of violence.

81. The role of mothers should also be emphasised. They may call for so-called “honour” crimes to be perpetrated or perpetrate them themselves, and they may also do nothing to prevent such crimes from being carried out, so they should not be forgotten when organising awareness-raising and prevention activities.

82. Victims of so-called “honour”-related violence or potential victims of “honour” crimes should be able to find refuge in another State if necessary and their asylum applications should be granted.

83. It is not possible to combat so-called “honour” crimes effectively without collecting the relevant data. Ensuring the systematic gathering of data on violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people and recording cases of “honour”-based violence constitute a vital component of such efforts.

9. Conclusions

84. Looking into the question of so-called “honour” crimes means also taking an interest in a more general environment which tolerates this kind of violence. Growing up in families where movements, appearances and behaviour are supervised and controlled, or where homosexuality is not accepted or gender identity is denied, is complicated. The collective reputation of families and the community in the broader sense is still an extremely important issue. This report is dedicated to the question of so-called “honour” crimes but, more widely speaking, it enables us to highlight a system of oppression linked to the system of “honour”.

85. In these cases of so-called “honour” crimes, the focus is more on the behaviour of the victim who is considered to have brought shame, embarrassment and dishonour to his or her family rather than on the violent, cruel and unacceptable nature of the crime. So-called “honour” violence and crimes are often collective, organised and collaborative offences, most of which are prepared and premeditated. In some cases, they are even celebrated. The media coverage of so-called “honour” crimes should also change.

86. Some researchers contest the use of the expression “so-called ‘honour’ crime” because there is no honour in such crimes.⁴⁶ When he was UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, talked of shameful crimes rather than so-called “honour” crimes.

87. Most of our governments describe preventing and combating violence against women and girls as a priority but have not made the necessary resources available for doing so effectively. I believe that strengthening the fight against so-called “honour” crimes will depend on a political decision to make this a priority and to grant the funds required for prevention and for helping victims, whatever their profile.

88. Without collective awareness, we will not achieve lasting change. The perpetuation of patriarchal cultures, in which so-called “honour”-based violence against women or men is tolerated, is incompatible with the progress brought about by the Council of Europe, since its foundation, on human rights protection. It is our duty to condemn all gender-based discriminatory practices or violence and not accept any attempt to justify them, whether on grounds of so-called “honour”, “tradition”, a code of custom or religious practice. We must renew our commitment to preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence along these lines and continue to promote the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention as vigorously as possible.

⁴⁶ [Let's stop talking about 'honour killing'. There is no honour in murder](#), Dexter Dias and Charlotte Proudman, The Guardian, 23 June 2014.