



Alliance for Protection against Gender Based Violence

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Alliance for Protection against Gender Based Violence:

Gender based murders of women in Bulgaria – research

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The present research is issued by lawyer Elena Krasteva – human rights lawyer and coordinator of Alliance for Protection against Gender Based Violence.

The Alliance for Protection against Gender Based Violence is an Alliance of 11 organizations, working in the field of the protection of women human rights, and namely:

- Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation;
- PUSLE Foundation – Pernik;
- Women's association “Ekaterina Karavelova” – Silistra;
- Bulgarian Fund for Women Foundation;
- Association NAYA – Targovishte;
- Open door Foundation – Pleven;
- Фондация „SOS – Families at risk“ Foundation- Varna;
- „Demetra Association - Burgas“
- Dynamic Center Association – Ruse;
- “Knowledge, success, change Association” - Dupnitsa;
- H and D gender perspectives Foundation – Haskovo

Introductory notes:

The present research is the first of a series of studies of the Alliance for Protection against Gender Based Violence relating to gender-based violence against women (so-called gender-based/related violence). Due to the lack of statistics kept by the country, the figures presented in the research are not accurate and definitive.

The research covers the period 2011 - 2019.

"Gender-based violence against women" means violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or which affects women predominantly. The term "gender" is a well-established term in the academic fields, as well as a term of public international law.

The term has been used for years in acts, including UN practice. The term has its legal definition in the first ever international legal act regulating the protection of gender-based violence, and namely Council of Europe Convention No. 210 on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, signed by the Republic of Bulgaria in April 2016 (Convention is formally opened for signature and ratification in 2011 in Istanbul, which is why it is also called the Istanbul Convention).

Explanation of some terms:

Gender-based violence against women (so-called gender-based/ related violence)

The term has been used for years in acts, including UN practice. The term has its legal definition in the first ever international legal act regulating the protection of gender-based violence, namely Council of Europe Convention No. 210 on Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence, signed by the Republic of Bulgaria in April 2016 (Convention was formally opened for signature and ratification in 2011 in Istanbul, which is why it is also called the Istanbul Convention). Pursuant to Art. 3, b. "C" of the Convention "gender" means the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and characteristics that a particular society deems appropriate for women and men. The term "gender" complements the concept of biological sex. The two concepts are interpreted together and come to show that men and women carry socially determined roles, stereotypes and stigmas based precisely on their biological characteristics. The legal definition of the term "gender-based violence against women", "gender-based violence against women" or "gender-based violence" is given in Art. 3, b. "D" of the Convention. According to this definition, gender-based violence against women means violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or which mainly affects women.

Domestic violence

Domestic violence, as a legal concept, is also well-known in public international law, as well as in national law. According to Art. 3, b. "B" of the Istanbul Convention "domestic violence" shall mean all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence occurring in the family or in the household, or between former or current spouses or partners, despite whether the perpetrator lives or lived with the victim. It should be considered that domestic violence is a form of gender-based violence against women. This is so because most victims of domestic violence are female citizens. Gender-based violence, in turn, is a form of direct discrimination against women on the basis of "gender".

In the practice of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at the UN, domestic violence is determined as one of the most severe forms of discrimination against women. The term is also widely used in the practice of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, which increasingly considers domestic violence as discrimination against women based on their gender too.

As it is explicitly stated in the Istanbul Convention, men can also become victims of domestic violence but on a much smaller scale (see Preamble to the Convention).

Pursuant to Art. 2, par. 1 of the Bulgarian Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, domestic violence is any act of physical, sexual, mental, emotional or economic violence, as well as the attempt of such violence, forced restriction of personal life, personal freedom and personal rights committed against persons, who are in a family relationship, who are or have been in a family relationship or in a factual marital cohabitation.

Pursuant to Art. 2, par. 2 of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act physical and emotional violence against a child is considered any domestic violence perpetrated in his/her presence.

Femicide

The term femicide is also widely used in the frames of the international community, but no legal definition of this concept has been given yet in the international normative acts.

According to the definition of the World Health Organization femicide means any deliberate killing of a woman or a girl committed due to the victim's gender. This serious crime is also an extreme form of hate crime against women. In a broader sense, any murder of a woman or a girl should be considered as femicide.¹

Types of femicide

The most common form of femicide is the murder of a woman by her former or current intimate partner. The data shows that most murders of women are namely committed by their former or current intimate partners. In almost all of the cases, the victim was a victim of prolonged mental and/or physical abuse by the same partner. As it can be seen, the murder of a woman by her former or current partner, legally speaking, is the most serious form of domestic violence.

The next form of femicide is the deliberate killing of a woman by a blood relative or by a relative by marriage. In these cases, most often the perpetrator of the crime is the father of the woman, her grandfather or brother. It should be considered that in most cases the perpetrators of the crime femicides are males. In rare cases, as a perpetrator or in the context of complicity, women are also involved in the crime.

The third form of femicide involves the killing of women by persons with whom the victim has no intimate or family relations. Since the most common cause of these crimes is pre-existing or subsequent sexual abuse, these types of crimes are known as sexual femicide. In many of these cases, the victim does not know the perpetrator. In other cases, it is found that before being sexually abused and killed, the victim was observed, watched or otherwise chased by the perpetrator.

¹ See.

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=D0E1937DCD96191119ADEC38D6500941?sequence=1.

There are also two forms of culturally considered femicide – these are the murders of women for their dowry and the murder of women "in the name of honor" of the perpetrator and/or his family. Culturally considered murders of women due to dowry are most common in Indian regions, and the murders in the name of honor- mostly in Middle Eastern countries but also in a number of European countries. It should be considered that the murders in the name of honor can be perpetrated by any person, regardless of cultural background, as long as the motive for committing the crime is rooted in the perpetrator's belief that the victim has in one way or another defamed his honor, which is why the latter should be 'punished'.

Femicide Worldwide:

There is no exact data on the number of women murders worldwide, as not every country collects such statistics. According to the UN, two women are killed there each day in Guatemala.² In 2017 in India were reported 7,000 cases of female murder for dowry. In Australia, Canada, the US, Israel and South America, between 40 and 70% of women's murders are committed by the intimate partners of the victims. In 2017, 139 women were killed by men in the UK. 105 of these 113 women were killed by men known to the victims; 30 of the other women were killed by strangers as 21 of them died in the terrorist attacks.³

Femicide in Bulgaria:

The Bulgarian authorities do not keep statistics on the number of victims of femicide. According to NSI data, in 2017, 71 homicides were committed in Bulgaria, but information on the gender of the victims was not provided. It should be considered that according to official data of the Ministry of Interior, in 2017, 34 murders of women were committed in Bulgaria.

According to the NGO Bulgarian Helsinki Committee in the period 2012-2017, the district courts in Bulgaria have ruled at least 102 convictions for premeditated murder of women by men. In 95% of the cases, the murderers were acquainted with the victims, in 70% they were in close relations - relatives, former or current partners, and in 44% of the cases examined, the perpetrators were former or current partners.⁵

- **Murders of women in the period 2017 - 2018 (according to media reports)**

- **Murders in 2017**

- • On January 25, 2017, in Kelyavitsa region near Ruyno village, Dulovo, a man kills his 22-year-old girlfriend. The body of the victim was accidentally found thrown into a ravine. It was found that the woman died of asphyxiation, craniocerebral trauma and hypothermia.⁶
- • On January 30, 2017, in Plovdiv, a man beats his girlfriend to death, with whom he lived on a family basis. The perpetrator stripped the victim naked and severely beat her. He was sentenced to 13 years and 4 months imprisonment after an expedited procedure.⁷
- On March 13, 2017, a man killed a woman in the village of Turian, Smolyan. The murder was committed with extreme cruelty. The perpetrator was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment by the First Instance court after an expedited procedure. The sentence was confirmed by the Supreme Court of Cassation.⁸
- • On May 20, a man kills a 40-year-old in Sofia for robbery. The perpetrator beats the victim extremely severe and she dies of traumatic brain injury. The man was found repeatedly convicted of robberies, attempted murder and threat with murder.⁹
- On June 23, 2017 in Sofia, a man kills a 29-year-old woman with whom he lives on a family basis in a particularly violent manner. The perpetrator tortured the victim for 50 minutes, striking her with a metal stick and an elbow and strangled her. Finally, he slit her throat with a knife. The neighbors of the couple heard the cries for help of the woman but did not call the police. Neighbors told the police that the offender harassed the young woman almost constantly. After the murder, it became clear that the ex-wife of the perpetrator had repeatedly signaled to the police about domestic violence by the man, but the state had not taken any measures. The perpetrator was sentenced to 25 years in prison after an expedited procedure.¹⁰

- ² See. <http://lac.unwomen.org/en/donde-estamos/guatemala>.

- ³ See. <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigning-and-influencing/femicide-census/>.

- ⁴Decision of the Ministry of Interior under the order of the Access to Public Information Act.

- ⁵See. <https://ubita.org/bg/doklad>

- On August 18, 2017 in Sofia, a man kills his 42-year-old wife with a firearm. The victim had a restraining order and repeatedly appealed to prosecutors and police that her husband threatens her with murder and harassed her. The woman had been beaten by her husband for many years. The crime was committed during the day at a cafe where the woman was with a friend. The perpetrator was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment after an expedited procedure.²
- On August 20, 2017 in Burgas, a 15-year-old boy kills an 11-year-old girl, with whom he had a recent relationship. The killer stabbed the victim with a knife in the neck.³
- Again, on August 20, 2017 in the village of Gabrovnitsa, Montana, a young man kills his 16-year-old girlfriend, with whom he lived on a family basis. The victim was beaten and stabbed with a knife in the neck.⁴
- On September 1, 2017 in Peshtera, a man kills his wife by stabbing her repeatedly. The woman was attacked on the street in front of witnesses, but no one helped her. The victim was found to have been a victim of domestic abuse by her husband.⁵
- In the beginning of November 2018 in the village of Lesново, Sofia, a 37-year-old man murdered his 50-year-old girlfriend, with whom he lived on a family basis. The victim's corpse was found in her own house.⁶
- Again in November 2017, two minor brothers beated to death and raped a 77-year-old woman in Provadia. The murder was committed for robbery. The crimes were committed in an extremely brutal manner.⁷
- On November 7, 2017 in Varna, a man beats to death his 18-year-old girlfriend, who gave birth just ten days ago. Many traces of injuries have been found on the victim's body.⁸

⁶ See for example <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/dobrich/32-godishen-myzh-e-zadyrzhan-za-brutalnoto-ubijstvo-na-momiche-kraj-dulovo-2010534>.

⁷ See for exampl <https://trafficnews.bg/plovdiv/obviniha-ubiistvo-mazha-prebil-smart-zhena-plovdiv-67683/>.

⁸ See for exampl <http://smolyanpress.net/?p=79691>.

⁹ See for exampl <https://dariknews.bg/novini/bylgariia/razkriha-podrobnosti-za-shokirashtoto-ubijstvo-na-zhena-v-liulin-2026020>.

¹⁰ See for exampl <https://www.dnes.bg/temida/2017/06/29/50-minuti-ujas-viola-kreshti-stefan-koli-sysedi-mylchat.345784>

- On December 17, 2017 in Momchilgrad, Kardzhali region, a 25-year-old man kills his 7-year-old cousin by strangulation. According to prosecutor's office, the man killed the girl to conceal her unlawful entry into the home where the child lived with relatives.⁹

It is seen that in 2017 according to the information reported by the media, 13 women were killed by men. Ten of these women were killed by their intimate partner/spouse. A woman was killed by unknown men as the murder is accompanied by rape. One woman was killed for robbery. A girl was killed by a relative. However, it should be considered here that according to official data of the Ministry of Interior, the number of women murders in 2017 is much higher - 34.¹⁰

Murders in 2018

- In January 2018, a 67-year-old woman was killed in a particularly brutal manner by her husband in the village of Okorsh, Dulovo municipality. For many years, the woman has been an object of domestic violence, for which she has repeatedly signaled to the City Hall. The perpetrator was arrested and pre-trial proceedings were instituted against him. There is no information on whether the person has already been convicted.¹¹
- On January 13, a 22-year-old man killed his 18-year-old girlfriend in the town of Tvarditsa. The man takes his girlfriend to a local pub, where he begins to insult her and hit her in the face. Later, on his way home, he hits

¹¹See for example <https://www.dnes.bg/temida/2018/01/05/prizna-si-i-13-godini-zad-reshetkite-za-ubieca-na-elena.364184>.

¹² See for example <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/bugas/sled-zhestokoto-ubijstvo-na-11-godishno-momiche-v-bugas-arest-i-razkritiia-2043656>.

¹³ See for example <http://bnr.bg/vidin/post/100864897/mlad-maj-ubi-jena-si-v-gabrovnica>.

¹⁴ See for example <https://nova.bg/news/view/2017/09/03/192019/%D1%81%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%B8%D0%B9%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%B2-%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%89%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B9-%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0>

¹⁵ See for example <https://dnes.dir.bg/obshtestvo/prokuratura-ubiystvo-lesnovo-26665024>.

¹⁶ See for example <https://www.vesti.bg/bulgaria/bratiata-ubijci-i-iznasilvachi-v-provadiia-izvyn-zakona-6076584>.

the victim very hard in the face, who later died from her injuries. The murder was committed in a particularly violent manner. The perpetrator was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment after an expedited procedure.¹²

- On January 14, 2018, in Haskovo, a man beats to death a 38 years old woman, with whom he lives on a family basis. The victim was killed after a brutal beating in which the perpetrator crushed her skull.¹³
- Again in January 2018 an elderly man beats his wife to death in Veliko Turnovo village. The victim was hit with a wooden log and then strangled.¹⁴
- On January 28, 2018, a 38-year-old man stabs his 35-year-old wife to death. The murder was committed in the town of Troyan. The perpetrator inflicted about 26 stab wounds to the victim.¹⁵
- On February 4, 2018, a man rapes and kills a woman in Kermen, Sliven. The perpetrator strangled the victim, pressing her mouth with his hand to silence her cries. The man was sentenced to 15 years in prison by Sliven Regional Court.¹⁶
- On February 13, 2018, a man kills his 41-year-old girlfriend with three gunshot wounds and then killed himself. The act took place in Pamporovo.¹⁷
- On March 3, 2018, in Sofia, a man killed a 24-year-old woman with whom he lives on a family basis. The perpetrator beaten up the victim for hours. The neighbors of the couple have repeatedly signaled to the police about domestic violence, but no actions were taken. From the competent district administration to the Ministry of Interior replied to the neighbors

¹⁷ See for example <https://www.vesti.bg/bulgaria/bratiata-ubijci-i-iznasilvachi-v-provadiia-izvyn-zakona-6076584>.

¹⁸ See for example <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/kyrdzhali/prokuratura-povdigna-obvinenie-za-ubijstvoto-v-momchilgrad-sreshtu-bratovched-na-ubitoto-dete-2068387>.

¹⁹ Decision of the Ministry of Interior under the order of the Access to Public Information Act.

²⁰ See for example <https://www.flashnews.bg/zhestoko-ubijstvo-v-silistrenskoto-selo-okorsh-mazh-prebi-zhena-si-do-smart/>.

that the case is "for the municipality". On the night of the murder, no one reported the beating, despite the disturbing noise.¹⁸

- On March 9, 2018 in Burgas, a son beats fighting and strangles his 76-year-old mother. Neighbors of the deceased stated that the woman has often been the victim of harassment by her son.¹⁹
- On March 15, 2018, a man kills his girlfriend in Plovdiv, stabbing her repeatedly and then killed himself. The murder took place while the couple's 13-month-old baby was in the next room.²⁰
- On April 6, 2018, a 58-year-old woman was killed with a knife in the village of Gavrailovo, Sliven. The murder was committed for robbery and the perpetrator was arrested.²¹
- On May 2, 2018, a man kills his 27-year-old girlfriend near Branitsa village, Harmanli. The perpetrator stabbed the woman with a knife in front of the eyes of her 7-year-old child, who tried to protect her. The mother died in the arms of her child.²²
- Again in May 2018, a man shoots his 44-year-old girlfriend in the village of Kozlets, Haskovo. Two lived on a family basis. The perpetrator also killed a neighbor he suspected of having an affair with the deceased woman.²³
- On May 13, 2018, a man kills a woman with whom they have a close relationship. The woman is beaten and stabbed with a knife.²⁴
- In May 2018, a man attempted to kill a 48-year-old woman with whom he had lived for many years on a family basis and from whom he had a child.

²¹ See for example <https://www.24chasa.bg/novini/article/6924815>.

²² See for example <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/haskovo/syprug-ubi-zhena-si-v-haskovo-zaradi-zabelezhka-za-visoka-muzika-2072466>.

^{23B} See for example <http://www.velikotarnovo.utre.bg/2018/01/26/474792-ostaviha-v-aresta-dyado-ubil-zhena-si-ot-revnost>.

²⁴ See for example <https://www.mediapool.bg/zhestoko-ubiystvo-na-zhena-v-troyan-obvinen-e-saprugat-news274861.html>.

²⁵ See for example <http://www.bta.bg/mobile.php/id/1809336>.

²⁶ See for example <https://www.dnes.bg/notifikacii/2018/02/14/ubitite-v-pamporovo-bankerka-i-muzikant-tia-e-prostreliana-tri-pyti.368006>.

²⁷ See for example <https://dariknews.bg/novini/bylgariia/mlada-zhena-e-bila-ubita-v-apartament-v-stolicata-2083007>.

After the attempted murder, the perpetrator shot himself in the head. The crime was committed in St. Vlas in the store where the victim worked.²⁵

- On June 9, a 17-year-old man beats to death a woman in the village of Lyatno, Shumen. The victim and the perpetrator were visiting a friend. Initially the young man turned the woman out of the house, but after she returned, he took her outside and beaten her severely, which caused her death.²⁶
- On June 16, in Aytos, a man kills his 19-year-old girlfriend, with whom he lived on a family basis. The woman was killed as a result of a severe beating in the presence of the young couple's small child. The woman was a victim of systematic domestic violence by the perpetrator.²⁷
- • On June 26, 2018 in the village of Makariopolsko, Targovishte municipality, a man stabs in the heart and kills his girlfriend. The victim was 32 years old.²⁸
- Again in June, a man beats his wife to death in the village of Paskalevets, Veliko Tarnovo District. The woman was beaten with wooden cudgel.²⁹
- In July 2018, in Blagoevgrad, a man cuts the throat and kills his ex-girlfriend's mother. Days before the murder, he beats the daughter of the murdered woman. After absconding but besieged by police, the perpetrator commits suicide.³⁰

²⁸ See for example <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/bugas/myzh-e-zadyrzhan-v-burgas-za-ubijstvoto-na-majka-si-2083754>.

²⁹ See for example

<https://nova.bg/news/view/2018/03/16/210013/%D0%B7%D0%B4%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BC-%D0%B5-%D0%B2-%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B4%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B9%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE-%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%B8%D0%B9%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%B2-%D0%BF%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%B2>.

³⁰ See for example <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/sliven/zadyrzaha-ubieca-na-zhenata-v-selo-gavrailovo-2089990>.

³¹ See for example <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/haskovo/myzh-ubi-zhena-pred-deteto-j-2094661>.

³² See for example <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/haskovo/myzh-zastrelia-zhena-si-i-syseda-si-vnushil-si-che-sa-liubovnici-2100202>.

³³ See for example <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/kiustendil/izvyrshiteliat-na-ubijstvo-na-zhena-v-kiustendil-ostava-v-aresta-2102072>

- In September 2018, a man beats a 31-year-old woman with whom he lives on a family basis. The murder was committed in a particularly brutal manner in the village of Varbitsa, Vratsa. The woman died of severe chest trauma and cerebral hemorrhage.³¹
- Also in September 2018, a man murders a 33-year-old woman with whom he lived on a family basis, her son and her nephew. The triple murder was committed in Samokov, after that the perpetrator commits suicide.³²
- On October 4, 2018, in the village of Bryastovo, Nova Zagora municipality father kills his 17-year-old daughter in a particularly violent manner and then killed herself.³³
- On October 6, 2018, a 30-year-old woman was raped and brutally murdered by an unknown man in the pier in Ruse. The victim is disfigured and strangled³⁴
- On October 19, a man kills his wife in Burgas in a particularly brutal manner. The 71-year-old woman was hit in the head with a hammer.³⁵
- • On October 29, a man shot and killed his 23-year-old ex-girlfriend and their 1-year-old girl in Sofia. The perpetrator had a legally owned gun.³⁶
- On November 10, 2018, a man beats his girlfriend to death in Gorna Oryahovitsa. Numerous traces of fists and kicks were found on the woman's body.³⁷

³⁴ See for example <https://www.vesti.bg/bulgaria/incidenti/strelba-v-sveti-vlas-myzh-i-zhena-sa-v-bolnica-6082071>.

³⁵ B See for example <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/shumen/zadyrzhaha-nepylnoleten-za-ubijstvo-v-selo-liatno-2108865>.

³⁶ See for example <https://dnes.dir.bg/krimi/zhestoko-ubiystvo-na-mlada-zhena-v-aytos>.

³⁷ See for example <https://offnews.bg/112/32-godishna-zhena-e-ubita-ot-mazha-si-v-selo-makariopolsko-683367.html>.

³⁹ See for example <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/veliko-tyrnovo/zadyrzhaha-za-72-chasa-myzha-kojto-ubi-zhena-si-v-selo-paskalevec-2030778>.

³⁹ See for example <https://www.vesti.bg/bulgaria/incidenti/izdirvaniiat-za-ubijstvoto-v-blagoevgrad-se-e-samoubil-6084891>.

⁴⁰ See for example https://www.webcafe.bg/newscafe/kriza/id_388028999_Jena_na_31_g_pochina_sled_tejak_poboy.

- On December 2, 2018, a son kills by his mother in the Tervel village, Chestimensko. The mother of the perpetrator tried to get involved in a conflict between her son and his wife, as a result of which he hit her. The victim was 51 years old and died from a craniocerebral trauma.³⁸
- On December 4, 2018 in Pazardzhik, a man kills his 36-year-old girlfriend. The perpetrator tied woman's limbs and neck to a parapet at her home, as a result of which she died from suffocation.³⁹
- • In early December 2018, a man kills a woman in Plovdiv in a particularly brutal way. It was found that the perpetrator and the victim knew each other, but it is unclear if they had an intimate relationship.⁴⁰
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- • In early December, a man kills a 72-year-old woman in the villa zone of Pleven. It was found that the perpetrator and the victim knew each other. The man beat the woman and then set her on fire.⁴¹
- • In the first decade of December 2018, a 18-year-old man raped and murdered a 70-year-old woman in White Church.⁴²
- • In the second half of December 2018, a man kills a 24-year-old woman in a particularly brutal manner at a hotel in Sofia. The victim was hit on the head with a bottle of whiskey.⁴³

⁴¹ See for example <https://www.dnes.bg/notifikacii/2018/09/06/revnost-razhodka-i-ubiistvo-ubiistvoto-v-samokov.387102>.

⁴² See for example <https://sliveninfo.bg/%D0%B1%D0%B0%D1%89%D0%B0-%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%B8-%D0%B4%D1%8A%D1%89%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%8F-%D1%81%D0%B8-%D0%B8-%D1%81%D0%B5-%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%B8/>.

⁴³ See for example <https://nova.bg/news/view/2018/10/07/228598/%D0%B1%D1%80%D1%83%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BD%D0%BE-%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%B8%D0%B9%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%B2-%D1%80%D1%83%D1%81%D0%B5-%D0%B6%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%B5-%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%89%D0%B0-%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BE>.

⁴⁴ See for example <https://offnews.bg/temida/sadat-ostavi-v-aresta-mazha-ubil-zhena-si-s-chuk-v-burgas-690456.html>.

⁴⁵ See for example <https://www.mediapool.bg/mlad-bashta-e-zadarzhan-za-ubiystvata-na-privatelkata-i-dashterichkata-si-v-sofiya-news285606.html>.

⁴⁶ See for example <https://dariknews.bg/novini/bylgariia/sydyt-ostavi-v-aresta-obvineniia-za-ubijstvoto-na-zhena-v-gorna-oriahovica-2131817>.

The information published in the media shows that in 2018, 32 women and three children were killed. In one of the cases, there was an attempted murder. Twenty of the victims were killed by their intimate partners/spouses. Three women were raped before murdered. Two women were killed by their sons. A woman was killed by her father. One woman was killed for robbery. Another four women were killed by men they knew, but it is not clear from media reports whether they had an intimate relationship with the victims. In one case, the mother of a woman who was a victim of systematic domestic violence by the perpetrator was killed.

According to official data of the Ministry of Interior, 37 women were killed in Bulgaria from the beginning of 2018 to 29.11.2018⁵³. Considering that according to the media reports, at least six women were killed in December 2018, it must be concluded that in 2018 at least 43 women were killed in Bulgaria.

According to data of the Interior Ministry, in 2018, 138 premeditated murders were committed in Bulgaria. Against this background, women killed by their partners during this period represents about one-third of the killings. This is an extremely high proportion of murders and clearly outlines the profile of femicide in Bulgaria.

Murders in 2019 (up to March)

- In the beginning of January 2019, a 25-year-old woman was killed by her husband in Stara Zagora. The woman was stabbed in the heart with a knife; she had an 8-month-old baby by the perpetrator.⁴⁴

⁴⁷ See for example <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/dobrich/sin-ubi-majka-si-v-bitov-skandal-v-selo-chestimensko-2134949>.

⁴⁸ <http://telemedia.bg/bg/sinja-lampa/ubijstvo-v-pazardjik-74-godishen-udushil-36-godishna-jena>.

⁴⁹ https://www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2018/12/08/3358824_bivsh_reindjur_e_zadurjan_za_ubijstvo_na_jena_v/.

⁵⁰ <https://trud.bg/%D0%BC%D1%8A%D0%B6-%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%8A%D0%B6%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%B8%D0%B9%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8-%D0%B2%D1%8A%D0%B7%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%81/>

⁵¹ See <https://darikradio.bg/razkriha-podrobnosti-za-zverskoto-iznasilvane-i-ubijstvo-na-vazrastna-zena-v-balacherkva.html>.

⁵² See <https://www.mediapool.bg/politsiyata-razkri-podrobnosti-za-ubijstvoto-na-momicheto-v-stolichniya-hotel-news287642.html>.

- On January 16, 2019, a 25-year-old woman was murdered in Sofia by her boyfriend, with whom they lived together. Numerous traces of violence, including suffocation, were found on the victim's body.⁴⁵
- Again in January 2019 an elderly woman was killed by her son in Vratsa. The woman was a victim of systematic domestic violence by her son.⁴⁶
- In the beginning of February, a man kills his wife in Shumen with a firearm. The man committed suicide after the murder.⁴⁷
- On February 24, 2019, a 40-year-old woman was killed by her husband in Varna, as the cause of death was a massive brain haemorrhage. The woman has repeatedly submitted complaints about domestic violence against her husband, but then withdrew them.⁴⁸
- At the end of February 2019, a man beats his grandmother to death in Velingrad. According to media reports, the killer beaten his mother before killing his grandmother.⁴⁹
- On March 10, 2019, a man kills his mother by stabbing her with a knife. 15 puncture wounds were found in the chest and abdomen of woman's corpse.⁵⁰

⁵³ Decision of the Ministry of Interior under the order of the Access to Public Information Act.

⁵⁴ See. <https://www.dnes.bg/notifikacii/2019/01/08/ot-revnost-myj-namushka-mladata-si-jena-v-syrceeto.398547>.

⁵⁵ See.

<https://nova.bg/news/view/2019/01/17/237774/%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%B8%D0%B9%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BC%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B0-%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B2-%D1%81%D0%BE%D1%84%D0%B8%D1%8F-%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%BE-%D0%BE%D1%82-%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82-%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%BA%D0%B8>.

⁵⁶ See. <https://24novini.bg/bulgaria/criminal/item/14819-vazrastna-zhena-be-ubita-ot-sina-si-vav-vratsa?fbclid=IwAR1apb-UhNZ88NqFPfcOxOeFfKH3wbkuk1YKQ-oHV4HQYhtg2vPJ2NaWaBl>.

⁵⁷ See. <https://www.24chasa.bg/novini/article/7285973>.

⁵⁸ See. <https://www.dnes.bg/obshtestvo/2019/02/27/myj-prebi-do-smyrt-syprugata-si-a-predi-tova-poboi-jalbi-i-nishto.403243>.

⁵⁹ See. https://www.webcafe.bg/id_1026150729_Ubiystvo_sled_semeen_skandal_vav_Velingrad.

⁶⁰ Вж See <https://dariknews.bg/novini/bylgariia/sled-zhestokoto-ubijstvo-na-zhena-v-sofiia-zadyrzhaha-sina-i-razkriha-podrobnosti-2153540>.

It is clear that according to media reports only seven women were killed in Bulgaria from the beginning of 2019 to mid-March.

Urging to suicide through violent treatment

With Conviction № 79 dated 13.12.2010 on the criminal proceedings No. 347/2010 of the V Composition of the District Court - Devnya the Court finds the defendant guilty that in the period from the beginning of 2004 to 03.11.2009 in town of Suvorovo, region Varna, led the person M. to comit suicide on November 3, 2009 through cruel treatment and systematic humiliation of the dignity of the latter, who was materially and emotionally dependent on him, as he allowed this, which is why pursuant to Art. 127, par. 3 Art. 54 par. 1 of the Penalty Code the Court imposes a sentence of imprisonment for two years, the execution of which is postponed with four years of probation.

The Court finds on the case that at the end of 2003 the victim started living with the defendant on a family basis as in 2004 a daughter was born to them. Since the beginning of their life together, the perpetrator abused with alcohol, often beat his partner, burned her clothes. The perpetrator often bieten M. calling her "You ain' t nothing!", sexually abused her in front of their minor child. One night the perpetrator tight M purely naked to a tree in the yard of their house and kept her there all night, even though the weather was very cold. Despite, M. did not want to separate with the defendant because they had a child and she did not want the child to grow up without father. M. was also financially dependent on the defendant because meanwhile she was out of work, relying solely on the defendant for her and child's support. One day in the spring of 2009, M. went to her acquaintance's house and showed her back, which was all scratched up. M said that her husband stripped her naked and tied her to a tree in the yard, having previously beaten her with an iron. She also shared that her bouyfriend sexually abused and beaten her in front of their daughter.

After a few days, M. ran away from her home and after she was found by the police she was hopsitalized in a psychiatric hospital with diagnosis "bipolar affective disorder." After being discharged from the hospital, the woman returned to the father of her child, who continued to abuse her sexually, physically and mentally. On November 3, 2009, the woman was found hanged. According to the assigned complex forensic psychiatric and psychological expertise, the victim developed bipolar affective disorder due to the systemic violence that her partner done against her.

The case further revealed that the man was prone to acts of cruelty adopting this behavior by his father, who also beat and abused his entire family, incl. and the defendant.

With Judgement No. 84 dated 24.04.2012, criminal proceedings of general nature No. 628/2012 of the VIII Composition of the District Court - Stara Zagora, finds the defendant R.I.K, guilty that on August 26, 2011 in the town of Stara Zagora, by cruel treatment of his son - G.R.K, who was relative blood and materially dependant on him, led him to attempt suicide and sentenced him to "imprisonment" for two years, with a probationary period of four years.

With Judgement No. 218 dated 22.10.2013, under criminal proceedings No. 3816/2013 of the XI Compositon, the District Court - Burgas found the defendant A.TS. S. guilty that on 13.10.2012 in Burgas, by cruelly treating and systematically humiliating the dignity of TS.D.S., being materially and otherwise dependent on him, led her to attempt suicide, by taking poisonous substance and sentenced him to “imprisonment” for a period of three years, postponing the punishment imposed for a period of five years.

The court finds under the case that the defendant and the victim had been spouses for about 40 years. The defendant S. systematically abused with alcohol, as a result of which his wife S. was a victim of constant scandals and beatings over the years. The defendant S. turned his wife out of the house many time. The defendant S. had repeatedly beaten her and S, beaten and afraid for her life, fled from her family home to find salvation for herself as she went to relatives (brother, sister, children).

On September 22, 2012, at about 6.00 pm, during another scandal, the defendant grabbed his wife by the shoulders, lifted her up, made her admit whether she is having a relationship with another man and threatened to take her eyes off with fork and stab her with a knife. The woman managed to get out of him, ran outside and went to her brother's home where she stayed to live. In this case, the victim appealed to the Court with a petition under the Domestic Violence Protection Act. With an immediate protection order dated 2 October 2012, the court ordered the defendant to refrain from committing domestic violence against his wife and forbade him to approach the home, workplace and places for social contact and recreation of his wife at less than 100 meters and obliged him to attend a specialized program for perpetrators of violence at the Center for Prevention of Violence and Crime in Burgas. After the incident on

September 22, 2012, the victim lived in her brother's home, but so as not to disturb his brother's family after the defendant repeatedly asked her to return home, promising that henceforth there will be no such behavior towards her and that they would live in harmony, she believed him and returned to their family home.

On 13 October 2012, the defendant returned to his home after alcohol consumption, he started shouting at the victim to go to hang or poison herself, just to die. The defendant offended his wife by calling her "ugly", "whore", "black" and told her that she was unworthy to live and insinuated once again that she had to end her own life and that the Lord should take her. Since such scandals throughout the family life of the victim were a daily routine, on October 13, 2012 at about 1 pm after another such family scandal with her husband, she tried to commit suicide by drinking half a bottle of poisonous substance.

With Judgement dated 30.3.2010 under criminal proceedings No. 2523/2010, Sofia District Court found the defendant B. B. Y. guilty that on an unspecified date, between 04.11.2009 and 18.11. 2009 by systematic humiliation of P. C. P. - repeatedly had sex with her, insulted her, followed her, she being materially dependent on him, finally let her to a suicide attempt - drank 15 pcs. medications valerian and tried to jump from the apartment terrace, as he assumed that, and therefore, pursuant to Art.. 127, par. 3 of the Penalty Code sentenced him to one year and eleven months' imprisonment, which would be served under an initial strict prison regime.

With Judgement No. 8 dated 13.01.2009 on criminal proceedings of general nature No. 826/2008 Pazardzhik District Court upheld in its entirety the Judgment No. 494/17.10.2008, issued pursuant to criminal proceedings of general nature No. 2886/06 of Pazardzhik District Court, as the defendant P.R. K was found not guilty that through cruel treatment and systematic degradation of his wife, M.P.K, who is in spouse and material dependence on him, led her to suicide and followed such on 02.03.2005. in Pazardzhik, assuming this, due to which he was found not guilty of committing a crime under Article 127, par. (3) in connection with par. 1 of the Penalty Code.

Under the case, the District Court accepted as being ascertained the following circumstances: The defendant and the injured M. had contracted a civil marriage on 06.06.1999. M.K. was pregnant from the defendant before the

marriage, and in 08.1999 gave birth to a child who was dead. In the following year - 2000 M. became pregnant again and gave birth successfully, but the child was often ill. The victim took to heart the illness of her child, at times she blamed herself for being guilty for his health problems. In 2000, the defendant's sister started living in the family's home, which required a record of expenses to be kept in order to divide the same between the family and the sister. Subsequently after witness K. left the apartment of the family they stopped keeping the diary. In 2001, the witness A. Ch. was hired as a housekeeper over the idea of the defendant who remained there until Christmas. In 2003, M. became pregnant again but was not ready for a new birth and had an abortion. In 2004, the victim became pregnant again and gave birth to her second child on January 18, 2005. Since the conclusion of the marriage in 1999 to the second successful birth in 2005, a number of conflicts arose in the family, most of the time for objective reasons - pregnancy and childbirth, M. was in motherhood, was at home, and her personal income was low. Both the prosecutor and the private prosecutors underlined that during this 4-year period of cohabitation, the spouse limited the victim financially, did not give her personal funds, made her do immediately after the birth of her first and second child heavy physical- housework, and he himself went skiing without her. However, all of these are allegations that are based on the evidence gathered under the case. It is true that a notebook was kept for their expenses in 2000, but it is not for the reason alleged by the private prosecutors and the prosecutor, but because defendant's sister lived with the young family. Witness I. claims to have seen her niece with traces of a fight, which the victim claimed to have been caused by her husband. The same alleges that Mariya complained that the defendant was cheating and wanted to divorce him. The allegations that the defendant physically abused the victim do not correspond with the rest of the testimonies of neighbors and friends of the family, who found that the family had normal and harmonious relationships, that M. had money and was not humiliated by her husband in their presence. Witnesses questioned under the case found uncoditionally that the family went on vacation together, sometimes together on skiing, never quarreled in front of them, and M.K. showed in no way that she had been physically or mentally abused by her husband. Even assuming that the defendant abstained outside the family environment from humiliating his wife in front of strangers, then if the allegation in the indictment was true the same would have shown in the victim's behavior. On the contrary, all witnesses find that she had normal behavior before them. Both spouses behaved perfectly normal to each other. It is

undisputed that M. did not have enough money of her own, but it is established in the case that she was supported by her parents and there is evidence that the defendant's uncle also bought her gifts that the victim had chosen herself. One group of witnesses claimed that M. wanted to divorce, but did not because the defendant have told her to go but to leave the children. The careful reading of the evidence shows that the victim was young and intelligent woman. Assuming that M. wanted seriously to divorce her husband, nothing was stopping her from consulting a specialist who would calmly tell her that at this age of children and providing she is a good mother, there is no reason any court to rule that these children should be provided to the father. After the birth of the second child on January 18, 2005, it turned out that this child was born untimely and is premature. The court finds that the mother M. worried and blamed for having the baby prematurely and that he/she has problems. In this condition, on March 2, 2005, M. called her husband to go home for lunch not to be alone. The defendant returned home. The mother of M. D.H. was with her until lunchtime. From here on, for what happened, the court drew a conclusion only from the defendant's explanations. The victim, the defendant and their newborn baby were in the apartment. According to the defendant's explanations, it was found that M. had gone out to the terrace and said she would smoke. Previously, he repaired the stove and accidentally saw notes from M. written in a hurry, in which she said goodbye to her loved ones. K. went out to her and pulled her to stay out of the balcony railing. M. told him that she wanted to jump, which made him angry and hit her with an open palm in the face. Then M. said that she would go down to the other terrace to smoke and that she would not jump. She went forward, and after a while the defendant walked after her and saw that she had stepped across the barrier of the balcony, immediately went and grabbed her by the arms, beginning to exhort her not to do this. These actions of the defendant were noticed by the witness G.P. However, M. broke off, crossed with the other leg, i.e. with both legs, and hanged with all her weight in the hands of the defendant. K. failed to hold her due to which she fell from the 9th floor of an apartment block, which caused her death.

No evidence was gathered on the case for any cruel treatment and systematic degradation of MK's dignity by the defendant. Even if there were times when the defendant was selfish, treated his wife coolly and had family scandals, they were not systematic and cannot be said to have degraded M. and that they showed cruel treatment on the part of the defendant. There was definitely an emotional connection and dependence between the spouses. In the letters enclosed in the

case which we proved undoubtedly to be written by the victim, the said stated that she loved her children first and foremost, she listed her mother, her father, her brother and her husband. She also wrote "Forgive me, I wanted a home and children, and I got them, but I didn't deserve them." In no way can it be concluded that M.'s suicidal experience is due to her husband's attitude towards her. The claim that she was confined meeting relatives and friends does not correspond with the evidence collected on the case. The fact that very few phone numbers are entered in the enclosed personal notebook does not itself prove that it was the defendant who restricted his wife to meet with her girlfriends. It is for these reasons that the court finds the arguments presented in the protest and the claim of the private prosecutors unfounded. The case is completed with all relevant evidence, which has been collected in accordance with the procedure prescribed by law.

With Judgement No. 19 dated 26.2.2010 under criminal proceedings No. 13/2010 of the III Composition the District Court - Yambol upheld in full the judgement No. 104/18.11.2009, enacted pursuant to criminal proceedings of general nature № 131/2005 of District Court - Elhovo, by which the court finds the defendant R.D.R. guilty that inadvertently through cruel treatment and systematic degradation of P.I.R's dignity., who is in a marriage dependence on him, led her to suicide - a crime under Art. 127, par. 3 of the Criminal Code, failing to punish due to the expired limitation period. With the Judgement the courts finds the defendant R. not guilty of committing the crime under Article 127 (3) of the Criminal Code, which is why he acquitted him of the indictment thus raised by the EPC.

The Court finds from the factual and the legal point of view the following: The data on the case show that the defendant R. has twice objectified cruelty and humiliation of his wife, as both cases are prior to the date of her attempted suicide, namely - before September 8, 2001. The statement of the experts on the appointed complex court- psychiatric-psychological expertise is that the manifestation of this behavior by the defendant R. is the result of a serious psycho-traumatic event, as the revealed infidelity of his wife. This, in turn, led the defendant to a state of "disorder in adaptation" that affected his ability to manage his actions. For the victim R. the infidelity revealed by her husband was an unexpected and stressful situation, which along with the two cases of physical and mental abuse by the defendant led to "post-traumatic stress disorder with expressed anxiety, depression and ideas of suicide." Correctly, in

view of the evidence collected on the case, the District court found that the two cases of cruelty and degrading treatment of his wife on behalf of R. described above remained isolated over time and did not establish durability and systematic nature of this behavior of the defendant in relation to the completed suicide implemented by R. on October 12, 2001. Providing this, the appellate court fully shares the conclusion of the adjudicating court that it is not proven under the case that the defendant by his behavior towards his wife intentionally inclined her to commit suicide. The two cases mentioned above are of real relevance and are of direct causal link to the suicide carried out by R. on September 8, 2001, but a charge of such criminal act committed by the defendant. R. is missing - as the District Court correctly stated in its reasoning. On the other hand, for the period from 08.09.2001 to 12.10.2001, i.e from the day R. attempted suicide to the date on which she committed the suicide, there is no definitive data on the case the def. R. to have carried out abusive or degrading acts against R. However, in view of the fact that R. has attempted suicide and that the said was known to the defendant, the latter should have taken the necessary steps and to be persistent enough in his attempt to consult his wife with a specialist in order to carry out the necessary treatment. Therefore, the District Court correctly accepted that R. had acted negligently and had carried out the composition of the crime under Art. 127, par. 4, connection with par. 3 of the Penalty Code, the said has not envisaged, but was obliged to, and could have foreseen the occurrence of the harmful result - the suicidal act committed by his wife.

Femicide factors

The World Health Organization (WHO) points out the following factors that authorities should consider as increasing the risk of having a femicide:⁵¹

From the perspective of the perpetrator, the following factors are risky: unemployment, possession of a firearm, launching of threats of murder with a weapon, sexual abuse of a partner, abuse with alcohol or drugs, the presence of mental problems. However, it should be taken into consideration that often the perpetrator of a femicide is in good financial condition, has no dependencies, nor suffers from another mental problem. The latter should be insisted on as the percentage of crimes committed by people with mental disorders is very low.

⁵¹ See Understandingandaddressingviolenceagainstwomen, Femicide:

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=EC73273FCF696EF27D6B5903C89BBA79?sequence.

It should be taken into consideration that murder threats is a criminogenic factor not only when the perpetrator threatens with a weapon, but also when the threat is otherwise done - with gestures, words, images, objects, etc., especially when the victim has already been subjected to violence by the same partner, and when the threat, although carried out without a weapon, is accompanied by another type of violence.

Every complaint and every signal about a murder threat should be carefully investigated by the authorities, especially if there is evidence of domestic violence, harassment and persistence in the behavior of the potential perpetrator.

The WHO report cites the following examples of circumstances that heighten the risk of killing a particular woman - from her point of view: pregnancy, previous abuse during pregnancy.

Of course, at the determination of the femicide probability it should also be taken into account whether the victim has already been subjected to violence by the person concerned.

¹ See. Understandingandaddressingviolenceagainstwomen, Femicide:

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=EC73273FCF696EF27D6B5903C89BBA79?sequence.

Institutional answer

Review of the national legislation

Due to the high rate of female killings in 2018, the National Assembly passed a bill amending the Criminal Code, criminalizing various types of crimes committed in the context of domestic violence, as well as some other forms of criminal assault against women.

First, in Art. 93 of the Criminal Code, a new paragraph 31 was created, according to which the crime was committed "in the conditions of domestic violence" if it was preceded by the systematic exercise of physical, sexual or mental violence, economic dependence, forced restriction of privacy, personal freedom and personal rights and is exercised against an ascending, descending, spouse or ex-spouse, a person from which she has a child, a person with whom he or she is or has been in actual spousal cohabitation, or a person with whom they live or have lived in the same household. Thus, according to the law, the murder, personal injury (mild, moderate or heavy), kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, coercion, execution and follow up shall be considered "committed in the condition of domestic violence" and will be subject to more

severe penalties, if they are preceded by a systematic, that is, at least three times before the domestic violence committed against the victim by the same perpetrator. It is clear that the Penalty Code criminalizes domestic violence as a model of behavior not the single act of such abuse.

The new provisions of the Penalty Code have led to the criminalization of following as a form of unlawful behavior. In accordance with the provision of par. 1 of the new Art. 144a of the Penalty Code, a person who systematically follows another person and this could give rise to a founded fear for her life or health, or for the life or health of her relatives, if the offense does not constitute a more serious crime, shall be punished by imprisonment of up to one year or probation. Pursuant to par. 2 "following" under par. 1 is any conduct of a threatening nature against a particular person, which may result in the persecution of the other person, showing the other person that they have been observed, entering into unwanted communication with them through all possible means of communication.

The following is an extremely common crime against women against which criminal justice has not been provided so far. This abuse is often committed against women who have been victims of domestic violence. It is for this reason that par. 3 of Art. 144a of the Penalty Code provides a sentence of imprisonment of up to five years when the following is carried out in the context of domestic violence.

It is of the utmost importance that, according to the law, all types of personal inquiries (mild, moderate, grievous personal inquiries) committed in the context of domestic violence will now be prosecuted in the general order - that is, even in the case of minor personal inquiries (in the context of domestic violence), the prosecution will be obliged to initiate pre-trial proceedings and support the prosecution in court. We consider this amendment a significant contribution to the fight against domestic violence. This is so because, very often, in the case of assaults that continue overnight or recur for several days, the injuries are minor injuries within the meaning of the Penalty Code. So far, in these cases, the police have refused to detain the perpetrator and the prosecutor's office has not been able to intervene. For the victim, the only option left was to file a lawsuit before the District Court and again to defend her rights alone in the courtroom, which often proved impossible due to the fact that the victim of domestic violence was often materially dependent on the perpetrator and is an object of threats on his part.

Another significant change in the legislation concerns amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code and the Implementation of Penal Sanctions Act, pursuant to which the authorities will be obliged to notify the victim when the

perpetrator leaves the arrest or prison. The lack of such an obligation of the authorities put the victims of gender based violence at great risk.

Review of police and prosecutor's office policy

Authorities within the system of the Ministry of the Interior do not have, and accordingly do not apply, a scale to measure the risk of murder when reporting an attack on a woman.

On the other hand, it is a lasting practice of the Prosecutor's Office to initiate pre-trial proceedings under Art. 144, par. 3 of the Penalty Code (Murder threat) in cases where the threat is accompanied by physical violence against the victim. This is the main way at the moment for the Prosecutor's Office to prosecute perpetrators who made a murder threat in the condition of domestic violence. The practice of the Prosecutor's Office and the court on the new texts of the Penalty Code concerning cases of domestic violence is to be analyzed. **It should be considered that there are already cases in which the Prosecutor's Office refuses to initiate pre-trial proceedings or terminates the same, since no evidence is collected that the victim was a victim of systematically perpetrated domestic violence by the same perpetrator.**

It should be considered that the incidence of female murders in Bulgaria is close to one hundred percent, but the prevention of these crimes is practically lacking. Cases where police authorities do not assist women victims of domestic violence are still known, indicating that this is a "private" problem.

Recommendations to national authorities:

Reporting of femicide factors;

The Alliance for Protection against Gender Based Violence considers that it is necessary to introduce in the Ministry of Interior system a unified instrument for measuring the risk of murder or other violence against the personality, which to use in every case of gender based violence of a woman.

Introducing qualified compositions

The Alliance for Protection against Gender Based Violence supports the bill on amendment and supplement of the Penalty Code, envisaging the criminalization of criminal acts committed under the conditions of domestic violence, as well as other crimes against as well as crimes of general nature. However, the organization considers that more supplements needs to be made in the penalty

code in the future so that all acts of gender based violence to be criminalized as a crime of general nature. This can happen, as in the qualified compositions in the system of the Penalty Code, especially in the hate crimes and in their most serious forms - when they escalate into murders, is entered the "gender" recognition. The amendments shall by necessity cover without discrimination two more features too, namely "gender identity" and "sexual orientation".

A future look of the effectiveness of the considered new norms in the Penalty Code and their possible amendment is necessary, if they prove to be ineffective.

We also consider that in the future it is necessary to involve qualified compositions for inciting a suicide through domestic violence towards the victim.

When reviewing the court practice it makes the impression that a large number of cases conclude with reduction of the sentence due to the application of the summary proceedings at the request of the defendant. In this regard, we consider that it is necessary the institute of summary proceedings to be removed regarding all intentional crimes against personality.