**Input for Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women Report on Femicide**

* **Situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina -**

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1. **Status of National Femicide Watch**

On its 176th session held in August 2019, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH level government) adopted decision to establish **a *Committee for Monitoring Implementation and Reporting under the Istanbul Convention and Femicide in Bosnia and Herzegovina*** (hereafter Committee)*.*[[1]](#footnote-1) The Committee has been established based on the initiative of the BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, and has ten (10) women and men members, representatives of the public institutions/civil society, as follows: Agency for Gender Equality of BiH/Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, Agency for Statistics of BiH, Ministry of Security of BiH, Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH, Ministry of Justice of BiH, High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of BiH, Office for Legislation of the Council of Ministers of BiH, Government of Brčko District of BiH, Government of Federation of BiH, and CSO representative – on behalf of the Safe Network of BiH (network of civil society organizations working on prevention and combating violence against women/domestic violence). Representatives of Government of Republika Srpska do not participate in work of a Committee.

Committee’s activities related to femicide are defined with the decision on its establishment and include analysis of data on cases of murders of women from gender aspect (femicide) and providing recommendations for further actions aimed for prevention of femicide, in line with the Recommendations of UN Special Rapporteur for Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences. The Committee (Article 4, Point c). The Decision also indicates that a Committee informs the Council of Ministers of BiH on its activities through reports prepared annually. Unfortunately, these reports are not transparently available to the public.

1. **Measures/Research/Studies**

In February 2021, Agency for Gender Equality of BiH announced public call for consultant to prepare analysis of cases of murders of women (femicide), and establishing Femicide Watch in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a part of the project “Strengthening Capacities of Institutions for Solving Gender Based Violence” supported by USAID. Part of the assignment of a consultant is to collect, systematize, and analyze statistical data on murders of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2018-2020, analysis of a comparative practice in countries of Western Balkan region, and developing proposal for establishing Femicide Watch in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and preparing final report with findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further action.[[2]](#footnote-2)

There are no researches/studies that specifically address femicide in BiH. Some media articles[[3]](#footnote-3) predominantly focus on specific cases of murders of women and girls, present limited statistics, and views of activists from women’s CSOs working on prevention and combating violence against women/public officials from institutional mechanisms for gender equality. In 2016, UNWomen office in BiH commissioned preparation of a research report on media reporting on gender based violence against women in BiH that includes one case study on murder of a young woman in Olovo (BiH).[[4]](#footnote-4)

A network of women’s civil society organizations that are working on prevention/combating violence against women from the Western Balkan region (Autonomous Women’s Centre from Serbia, Kosovo Women’s Network, AWEN Network and Gender and Development Centre from Albania, National Network to End Violence against Women and Domestic Violence from North Macedonia, United Women Foundation from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Centre for Women’s Rights from Montenegro) is working on preparation of a regional report on cases of femicide in 2020 based on data collected through media reporting.[[5]](#footnote-5)

1. **Measures to Improve Support to Victims of Violence and to Prevent Femicide**

Currently there are no systemic measures introduced by authorities at all levels of governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina specifically aimed to prevent femicide in BiH, based on actions/recommendations of a Committee, as the only institutional body whose objectives include working on this issue. In May 2020, the Law on Changes and Amendments of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of Republika Srpska entered into force, and it introduced obligation of police (recognized as one of the subjects of protection from violence) to conduct mandatory risk assessment in relation to reported cases of domestic violence. In November 2020, Ministry of Interior Affairs of Republika Srpska adopted *the Rulebook on Procedure and Way of Conducting Risk Assessment*,[[6]](#footnote-6) together with a form to be filled in by police officers when conducting risk assessment. This measure aims toward improving institutional support to victims of violence and prevention of repetition of violence, including risks of aggravated violence that could lead to murders of women and girls exposed to violence. There are no assessments/reports on its implementation in the practice. Mandatory risk assessment by police in cases of domestic violence is not regulated in relation to the implementation of the domestic violence laws of the Federation of BiH and Brčko District BiH.

1. **Available Data on Murders of Women**

Official statistical data on “intentional killings of women or girls because they are female” in Bosnia and Herzegovina are scarce and lack in depth analysis. Thematic bulletin *“Women and Men in Bosnia and Herzegovina*” published by BiH Agency for Statistics (2020) brings statistical overview of murders in BiH by sex of a victim in period 2014 – 2017. There were fifty-four (54) female victims of murder, as follows: eleven (11) victims in 2014, eighteen (18) victims in 2015, fifteen (15) victims in 2016, and ten (10) of women in in 2017.[[7]](#footnote-7) Presented data were not supported with any analysis of details related to murders, and no data on relationship between victims and perpetrators. Sources of data are relevant ministries of interior affairs at entity level (Federation of BiH, Republika Srpska), and Brčko District of BiH.

United Women Foundation (UWF) collects data from media reports on cases of femicide, intimate partner and family related murders of women and girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina since January 2019. In the period January – December 2019, UWF collected media reports/data on ten (10) cases, while in the period of January – December 2020 media in BiH reported on six (6) cases of murders of women in BiH, which were committed by husbands, former husbands, intimate partners, former intimate partners, and extended family members of victims (e.g. father-in-law, nephew). Six (6) reported cases of murders of women in 2020 happened in the period July – December 2020, while media reported on nine (9) cases of murders of women in the same period in 2019, and one (1) case in March 2019.

1. **Brief Overview of Reported Cases of Murders of Women in 2020 Based on Media Reporting**

Based on data collected by UWF through media reporting in 2020, average age of women victims was 56 years of age – one (1) woman in age category 26 – 35, one (1) woman in age category 46 – 55, three (3) women in age category 56 – 65, and one (1) woman over 65 years of age. Four (4) murders of women occurred in urban areas, while two (2) murders occurred in rural areas (village). Average age of the perpetrators was 52 years of age. Two (2) women were murdered by their husbands, one (1) woman was murdered by her ex-husband, one (1) woman was murdered by her intimate partner, one (1) woman was murdered by her ex intimate partner, and one (1) woman was murdered by her close relative (nephew). Weapons used by the perpetrators/circumstances of death of women victims were, as follows: one (1) woman was poured with gasoline and ignited (she died in a hospital soon after), two (2) women victims were shot with a firearm (gun), one (1) woman victim was murdered with a knife, and one (1) woman was beaten and then murdered with a knife. In three (3) cases, media reported that violence was not previously reported to the institutions, while in three (3) cases it is unknown if a victim or other person previously reported violence to the institutions. In four (4) cases, media reported that a victim and a perpetrator were living together, while in two (2) cases there was no common life between a victim and a perpetrator. In one (1) case the perpetrator committed a suicide after murdering a woman victim, in one (1) case the perpetrator attempted suicide, while in four (4) cases the perpetrator did not committed/attempted suicide.

In terms of circumstances related to previous criminal behavior of the perpetrators reported by media, in one case media reported that the perpetrator was repeating violence continuously over 10 years, and that a woman victim left the perpetrator eight (8) years ago, and under threats returned after he set on fire her mother's house and continued to live with a perpetrator in common law marriage. In the second case, a woman victim recently left the perpetrator, and he was pressuring her to reconcile. In the third reported case, the perpetrator had an argument with a victim prior to a murder, and alleged motive was jealousy. In the fourth case, a woman victim objected to the perpetrator for drunkenness - he beat her to death and stabbed her in a rage. In the fifth case, a woman victim suffered long-term physical and psychological abuse by the perpetrator, he was an alcoholic, and he murdered her in an act of rage. Circumstances of sixth reported case are unknown.

1. The decision on establishing a Committee has been published in the Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina no. 60/19, available online (on local language), at direct link: <http://www.sluzbenilist.ba/page/akt/YJ3YnEDc8FA=> (last access on 27/04/2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Public call for submitting offers for consultant services for Analysis of cases of murders of women (femicide) and establishing „Femicide Watch“ in Bosnia and Herzegovina, published on 8 February 2021 at the web page of the BiH Agency for Gender Equality, direct link: <https://arsbih.gov.ba/javni-poziv-za-dostavljanje-ponuda-za-konsultantske-usluge-analiza-slucajeva-ubistava-zena-femicid-i-osnivanje-femicide-watch-u-bih-u-okviru-projekta-jacanje-kapaciteta-in/> (last access on 28 April 2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For example: <http://www.prometej.ba/clanak/drustvo-i-znanost/femicid-je-drustveni-problem-a-ne-sporadicni-incident-iz-privatne-sfere-4239>, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/fmicid-bih-nasilje-nad-zenama-kazne/30767934.html>, https://www.etrafika.net/drustvo/78276/prepoznavanjem-femicida-do-ozbiljnijeg-shvatanja-problema-nasilja-u-porodici/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “Research on Media Reporting on Gender Based Violence against Women in BiH” (2016), page 30 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This initiative is part of the project “Institutionalizing Quality Rehabilitation and Integration Services for Violence Survivors, supported by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Rulebook on Procedure of Way of Conducting of Risk Assessment, Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, no. 126/20 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Thematic Bulletin “Women and Men in BiH”, BiH Agency for Statistics, Sarajevo, 2020, page 80, available online at direct link: <http://www.bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Bilteni/2020/FAM_00_2019_TB_0_BS.pdf> (last access 28/04/2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)