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Domestic violence against women and the human trafficking problem in the Faroe Islands

Summary: In the Faroe Islands, the authorities see violence against women as a limited problem. There are no official statistics which can document domestic violence and there is no action plan to end gender based violence despite previous criticism from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

The Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings has not been ratified by the Faroe Islands government despite Denmark ratifying it in 2007. Territorial reservation was taken by the Faroe Islands and the treaty has not been ratified since. Although trafficking has not been documented in the Faroe Islands, the problem is common in neighbouring countries.

Violence against women

Respect for human beings, their dignity and their moral and personal integrity is a fundamental principle underpinning Amnesty International's human rights mission.

In the Faroe Islands, violence against women is only to a limited extent seen as a problem which the political authorities are responsible for. There are no official statistics indicating how often violence against women is committed and the Faroe Islands has no action plan to end gender-based violence.

Violence against women is not seen as an issue in the political parties agendas. There is a lack of policy that would ensure that victims of domestic violence have access to immediate means of redress and protection, including protection orders, access to state-funded safe shelters and legal aid.

Kvinnuhúsið (The Women's House) is the only women's shelter in the Faroe Islands. It provides shelter for women who have experienced violence and has a phone hotline that women can call and get guidance and information. Kvinnuhúsið is partly state-funded.

These funds are, however, so limited that the shelter is dependent on voluntary work to provide the necessary help and guidance for the women who call the hotline and visit the shelter. There is limited information available about the shelter and the protection against

gender-based violence in either Faroese or other languages. Thus for women in the Faroes Islands, it is difficult to obtain information about the possible help they can get if they experience violence.

In the concluding observations of the forty-fourth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women which took place between July 20 and August 7 2009, the Faroe Islands was highly criticised. The report read:

“The Committee is concerned about the lack of legislation providing for effective protection of victims, including restraining orders and about the insufficient data on the prevalence of all forms of violence against women.

The government of the Faroe Islands should pursue efforts to prevent and combat violence against women and to adopt a coordinated policy on violence against women that would ensure that victims have access to immediate means of redress and protection, including protection orders, access to a sufficient number of state-funded safe shelters and to legal aid.”

However, no measures have been introduced to meet these recommendations. We at Amnesty International and Kvinnuhúsið are calling for a recognition of the fact that violence against women is the responsibility of the political authorities in the Faroe Islands and they are obliged to implement an action plan to end gender-based violence.

The Faroe Islands does not have any official statistical information about gender-based violence. However, this is crucial in order to fully understand the complexity of the problem.

Trafficking in human beings is violation of human rights

More than 600,000 people are sold to Europe each year. Trafficking has not been officially documented in the Faroe Islands as it is seen as a problem for neighbouring countries.

In 2007, Denmark ratified the Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings. Territorial reservation was made for the Faroe Islands.

We at Amnesty International and Kvinnuhúsið are calling on the authorities of the Faroe Islands to ratify the Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings.