

Femicides in International and European Law

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INTRODUCTION

Ni Una Mas.

A cry of anger becomes increasingly familiar in a world where machismo still kills every day. A world where sexual violence is finally recognised as a scourge after millennia of tolerance, or at least ignorance. A world where patriarchal oppression continues to shape social relations, giving men the impression that they must still dominate to reign.

The 21st century marks a turning point in the fight against these systemic violences, echoing the cries of women who no longer allow these brutalities to flourish without a fight. The fight for eradication of sexual and gender-based violence sparks the rise of new movements. Among the words displayed on every wall is femicide. Femicide, the gender violence at the end of the violence chain, becomes the spearhead of feminist struggles. While the word is on everyone's lips, the term femicide is far from unanimous. The democratisation of this term is recent and continues to divide as much as it unites.

Yet, the need to continue the fight is illustrated by the figures gathered around femicide. According to a 2022 United Nations report, nearly **48,000 women and girls** are intentionally killed worldwide by their intimate partner or a family member. Every day, approximately 133 women perish at the hands of a member of their own family. Every hour, around six women and girls are murdered by a spouse or family member. While these figures are particularly alarming, they only account for the tip of the iceberg. Documenting femicide is still particularly difficult because in 2024 we still do not know exactly what this word truly signifies (UNODC & UN Women, 2022).

Consensus is still far off. Despite this, there is some agreement concerning the definition of this form of sexual violence. This understanding defines femicide as the murder of a woman by a man because of her gender. In other words, femicide would essentially amount to the misogynistic murder of a woman by a man. But the reality is much more diverse and complex than this brief definition.

Femicide operates at multiple levels, so much so that we still do not know how to make visible the process by which these violence acts occur. Indeed, this phenomenon would not be explained, like some other violences, by an ordinary urban context, but by the very existence of women. Femicide is a social, cultural, legal, and political phenomenon based on gender motivation reflecting unequal power dynamics (Bodiou L, et al 2019).

The social constructions that continue to support the walls of our society foster a culture of domination. Femicide, as old as patriarchy, flourishes in the maintenance of the culture of inferiority. Women have long been shaped to submit to men. Throughout their lives, they are prepared to be mere subordinates to the male gender. The habitus of this predisposition of women to subordination reinforces the legitimacy of male domination. Tolerating violence

against women is not a new thing in 2024. It is, in fact, only the continuity of an androcentric order in which women are perceived as utilities, mere means of reproduction, whose lives have no social, economic, or symbolic value. Women's lives continue to be presumed meaningless if they do not satisfy the desires and aspirations of the men around them. Resorting to femicide allows them to attack the integrity and lives of these women, who are judged unsatisfactory, useless, and disloyal, and this has been the case for centuries. The reality is that femicide as a term is something new, but misogynistic murder of a woman by a man is one of the oldest forms of violence in humanity (Bejarano Celaya, 2014).

This report focuses mainly on femicide in International and European law. Chapter One scrutinises the history of a phenomenon unnamed and the controversies around the naming of femicide. Chapter Two focuses on the categorisation of an intersectional phenomenon, in the continuum of violence. Chapter Three analyses the international instruments agreed norms and standards addressing violence against women, and especially femicide. Chapter Four examines one of the most famous cases regarding femicide, the Ciudad Juarez case. Chapter Five details the limits to the recognition of femicide. Finally, Chapter Six encompasses the measures around the prevention and repression of femicide.

1. HISTORY OF AN UNNAMED PHENOMENON

This chapter offers a comprehensive analysis of femicide by exploring two crucial aspects. First, we will examine the “archeology” of femicide, tracing its historical origins and revealing its deep connections to patriarchal systems. Next, we will address the debates surrounding the terminology used to describe femicide and consider the implications of these debates for understanding and addressing gender-based violence. Together, these sections provide valuable insights into both the persistence and evolving nature of femicide.

1.1 ARCHEOLOGY OF A PHENOMENON AS OLD AS PATRIARCHY

Femicide is a contemporary concept. However, the modernity of this word does not erase the history of a multifaceted gender crime that spans through the ages. Our past is filled with murders of women. The diversity of forms taken by femicide has made this phenomenon an invisible crime that is so vast and widespread that it has long been impossible to name it.

1.1.1 The Ancient Greek era

Ancient Greece is a great example of how old the intentional elimination of women is. During this era, a significant number of women were missing for various reasons. Firstly, the early erasure of women happened a lot because of the practice of infanticide. It is reported that one out of two girls was missing by the age of puberty in Ancient Greece. This is not surprising considering that for a very long time and even today, in some parts of the world, giving birth to a girl rather than a boy is perceived as a weakness or a symbol of shame. Many methods were established to influence the sex of the child. Contraceptive and sometimes deadly abortive methods were used which could explain this phenomenon. At that time it was also common to abandon the newborn in a basket a few hours after birth. Favouring male offspring was and is still today, in some regions, synonymous with a better life investment (Bodiou L, et al 2019).

In fact, as few young girls reached puberty, Greek men used to marry girls twice as young as them. A premature marriage for young Greek girls often implied an early pregnancy, which could be followed by death in pregnancy or labour. While this mortality was mostly due to a lack of hygiene, it shows how social norms favouring the birth of the male gender could lead to the death of half the young female Greek population. These invisible femicides are part of other phenomena of violence against women that have gone unnoticed until now. Certainly, Ancient Greece represented a period marked by a significant number of “mysterious” suicides among women within the marital chamber, as well as instances of women being sacrificed in the name of war interests or the prosperity of their city (Bodiou L, et al 2019).

However, this widespread violence against the female sex was not shocking. In fact, violence was a part of everyday life. So much so that it was often the subject of ancient theatrical plays. Violence was shown in dramatic plays where the sacrifice of women was

freely consented to. A woman was killed if she dishonoured the man. A woman committed suicide if her husband was killed because she lived for and by her husband. But a man did not commit suicide, he was defeated, and his death was a sign of virility (Bodiou L, et al 2019).

Furthermore, the multiple forms of invisible femicide, including foeticide, early marriage, premature pregnancy, forced suicide following adultery, or even sacrifice, reveal the widespread acceptance of misogynistic murder of women by men. In ancient Greece, femicide is almost romanticised, symbolising women's loyalty to the almighty man. Ancient Greek society thus conveyed the message that domination is normal and is exercised by the masculine over the feminine to the point of deciding her death. The elimination of the feminine is for the good of the masculine (Bodiou L, et al 2019).

1.1.2 The witch-craze era

Following the Middle Ages, the witch-craze which took place in Europe unveils yet another manifestation of implicit social control over women.

During this tolerated massacre episode, women were almost exclusively accused of practising witchcraft. According to Diane Russell, pioneer of the concept of femicide, in Europe 90 percent of people burned for practising witchcraft were women. The remaining 10 percent were linked to women as well, as men accused of consorting with witches were also burned.

In "Femicide, the politics of women killing", Diane Russell and Jill Radford highlight the sole reason for the democratisation of a witch hunt: the resurgence of male dominance, which had been gradually diminished by the significant changes of this era (Radford J. & Russell .D.E.H.R, 1992).

In fact, just before the witch hunts were instituted, the Inquisition was the one that acted as divine police. For women who underwent the Inquisition, the main and almost exclusive accusation was "sexual deviation", highlighting the perversion with which women were depicted in the Catholic ideology. For some, the inception of entrenched male dominance traces back to the biblical genesis, where women, depicted as sinful and seductive, were created for and by man. Thus, from the opening lines of the Bible, woman becomes synonymous with temptation and, consequently, with evil. This Catholic ideology of women has shaped the perception of them as potential threats to the general well-being of the population who therefore must be controlled. During this time period, the witches burnt were often young or elderly women linked by a common factor, their social status. In particular, they were unmarried, which was synonymous with being uncontrollable (Radford J. & Russell .D.E.H.R, 1992).

The witch hunts, serving as a means of social control, demonstrate the strategic implementation of legal mechanisms designed to curtail the empowerment and independence of women. It constitutes a form of violence as it was directed towards an undeniable majority

of women. The complexity of this almost fantastical phenomenon prevents the contemporary era from acknowledging that this form of repression, orchestrated by a wealthy class of men, is indeed a form of femicide. Witchcraft, a whimsical death penalty, has long obscured the real reasons behind this hunt (Radford J. & Russell .D.E.H.R, 1992).

These incidents demonstrate how sexually deviant women were erased from society, merely because of their refusal to marry, raising a child alone, or having a non-heteronormative sexual orientation. The pre-existing social constructs were so rooted in the society that an accusation of witchcraft against women was tolerated, perceived as reasonable, and deemed necessary to imprison or burn them alive. These arbitrary accusations and the threat posed by the witch hunt allowed men to control the number of single women for several centuries, and the looming threat allowed them to protect the society from those “unpredictable creatures” (Radford J. & Russell .D.E.H.R, 1992).

In modern times, femicides have also come to light, increasingly garnering public attention and accountability.

1.1.3 The French contemporary era

Under the Second Empire, the name Dumollard left a mark. More than a dozen women’s bodies killed by his hand would be found in Lyon. Naked bodies, bones exposed, and body parts torn off, the cruelty and violence around these repeated murders of women was absolutely shocking. In collective memory, Dumollard is the first killer of women in France. However, the fascination with unravelling the perpetrator’s actions in these femicides completely overshadowed the victims’ suffering (Bodiou L, et al 2019).

A few years later, public opinion was inflamed by another sordid murder story, the Pranzini affair. The Triple Assassination of Montaigne Street would gain a lot of public attention but, once again, the question of a series of exclusively female murders would be set aside. Female victims are always forgotten, drowned in the fascination of the author of their death. Between 1895 and 1898, Joseph Vacher made his entrance into the list of sadistic killers of women who find pleasure only in making them suffer.

While once again, the common characteristic of Vacher’s crimes was gender, neither justice nor the specialists who worked on this case seemed to have noticed it. These sordid criminal stories are the first among an endless list. Yet, after World War I, the mystery remains intact. It is still not entirely clear why men take the lives of women. It seems that the historical extreme male domination is ignored in this context. These forms of femicide remain invisible, drowned in popular enthusiasm around charismatic killers and “fascinating evil geniuses” (Bodiou L, et al 2019).

Contemporary Canadian society also demonstrates this ignorance surrounding the evident condition of female murder. In 1989, 14 students were shot in a classroom at the École Polytechnique in Montreal by Marc Lépine. Shot under the slogan “I hate feminists”,

this story would particularly move public opinion. The violence of an attack entirely directed towards women, however, did not make the headlines in such a form.

The intentions of the author, who also took his own life after the shooting, were revealed. In a letter written before the massacre, the author proudly claimed his intention to compile a list of 19 women deserving death for being feminists. The author's objectives, written in black and white, were not enough to shift public opinion, which long minimised feminist interpretations of such a massacre. Women who dared to describe the shooting as a femicide were laughed at, humiliated, and belittled in the press. These anti-feminist terrorist attacks are forms of femicide, driven by a crisis of masculinity specific to our century. They symbolise the killing of a woman simply because they are a woman, and because of what they represent (Bodiou L, et al 2019).

All these examples show how femicide is a crime that lacks a set pattern. Femicide, as we may see it, can take the form of a city's inclination to sacrifice women for the glory of men or of a completely fantastical hunt favouring the demographic control of a female population. Femicide can also be as simple as a news that the public takes pleasure in reading for its sordid details. Femicide is also a terrorist attack towards women. History demonstrates that femicide is not solely the silent crime on a woman by her spouse. Femicide is a multifaceted and complex crime that our era still seems incapable of naming.

1.2 A NEW WORD FOR AN OLD PHENOMENON: CONTROVERSIES AROUND THE NAMING OF THE MISOGYNISTIC KILLING OF WOMEN BY MEN

Nowadays, the absence of consensus regarding the terminology used to describe femicide exacerbates the challenge of addressing this issue effectively. Various terms coexist to describe and name the killing of a woman by a man because of her gender, such as Femicide, Feminicide, Gendercide, or Uxoricide, reflecting differing cultural, legal, and ideological perspectives. These different words set out to describe the same phenomenon, but a closer examination reveals that they have differences:

01

Femicide

Typically denotes deliberate killings of women by men due to misogyny, encompassing gender-related violence. It usually refers to the intentional murder of women by men because they are women. These gender-related killings are motivated by “hatred, contempt, pleasure or a sense of ownership of women”, or are considered misogynistic killings of women by men (WHO Pan American Health Organization, 2012).

02**Femicide**

Extends beyond individual acts to encompass broader societal structures and state accountability. It is a term which intends to capture the element of impunity and violence. It encompasses more than the term femicide because it holds the state responsible for the commission of the killing, toleration of the perpetrators' acts of violence, normalisation of misogyny or incapability to ensure the safety of those women within its jurisdiction (WHO Pan American Health Organization, 2012).

03**Gendercide**

Another word used to describe the systematic killing of members of a specific gender. The European Parliament introduced this term in an attempt to reconcile people, emphasising that homicide is a universal term, distinct from femicide. 'Gendercide' emerged as a proposed compromise by this institution, aiming to describe the targeted killing of a particular gender, rather than solely focusing on females (European Parliament, 2013).

04**Uxoricide**

Employed to depict the killing of a woman by her husband exclusively. Indeed, uxoricide is one of those words that can describe aspects of the femicide, but does not include all of it (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024).

This divergence in terminology complicates efforts for unified action and obscures nuanced distinctions within the phenomenon. Moreover, discrepancies in definition impede international cooperation and hinder progress towards combating femicide collectively. Without standardised terminology and a shared understanding, the global response to femicide remains fragmented, underscoring the urgent need for cohesive strategies and cross-border collaboration to address this pervasive issue effectively.

2. UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTIONALITY, CLASSIFICATION AND CONTINUUM OF VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF FEMICIDE

As has been outlined above, femicide is a general concept that refers to the killing of a woman due to her gender in various contexts, including political, societal, criminal, sexual, and interpersonal. A hierarchical classification of femicide can be proposed, which includes both intentional and unintentional types identified. The classification not only targets measurement but also allows recognition of all types of femicide, gives order to the phenomenon, and provides a perspective on the phenomenon and its manifestation (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

The criteria for femicide classification refer to variables that determine the context and motivations for femicide, such as acts, aggressor, circumstances, and victim. Gathering evidence improves awareness of the phenomenon at social and institutional levels and aids in designing prevention and protection policies. However, the conceptual framework varies from case to case, and gathering evidence improves awareness at social and institutional levels (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

Contextual mapping of femicide types and their context can be complicated by overlapping categories. Mapping should allow for the identification of meaningful categories for analysis, resulting in a tool to assess legal and policy implications. Any statistical classification should also target complete and exhaustive categories, supporting the proposal and implementation of preventive and regulatory policies, including criminal legislation (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

The proposed variables for the classification and measurement of femicide need to be tested and periodically updated to ensure consistency and validity over time. Overlapping categories can affect the classification proposal based on the conceptual mapping of femicide, as they may overlap with other types of femicide. In cases of overlapping categories, statistical classifications are used to resolve ambiguities using the concept of predominance (based on relevance) (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

Overlapping is best resolved by improving the definitions of different types to be mutually exclusive. This can only be explored once a classification system has been accepted and consolidated at an international level. The statistical implementation of the classification system is a long process that requires the establishment of a roadmap, with some categories being easier to complete depending on the availability and quality of the database and data collection system in use (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

The categorisation of femicide includes three types: intentional killing of a woman by an intimate partner, which is the most important and frequent femicide. This type of femicide is based on key variables such as the sex of the victim, the sex of the perpetrator, and the victim-perpetrator relationship. Other variables may also characterise the intentional killing

of women by intimate partners, such as core variables like suicide of the perpetrator, recent separation, prior domestic history of violence, protection order, possessiveness, and controlling behavior. These variables contribute to identifying the killing of women by intimate partners as gender-related and contribute to scientific and political debate on victim protection and violence prevention (United Nations office on Drugs and Crime, 2022).

Intentional killings of women by family members are similar to intentional intimate partner killings, but differ in the victim-perpetrator relationship. Honour killings are linked to other types of femicide, such as harmful practices, FGM, and dowry-related killings. Honour killings are illegal killings for reasons of honour, defending family reputation and religious beliefs, and alleged “disobedience”. They can affect specific target groups, such as migrant women and racial or ethnic minority minorities. Identifying an honour killing requires determining gender motivation, modus operandi, and the victims and perpetrators’ characteristics (United Nations office on Drugs and Crime, 2022).

Dowry-related killing is also a form of femicide prevalent mainly in South Asia that involves the unlawful killing of a woman associated with the giving or receiving of a dowry, which is any property or asset provided by one party to a marriage to another. This type of killing can affect specific groups, such as migrant women and racial or ethnic minorities, often occurring within the family or community (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

Intersectionality is an analytical tool and method of practice that challenges the idea of ‘sameness’, recognising that women are not all navigating the same version of ‘womanness’. It takes into account that differently situated women encounter inequality in different ways. The concept of intersectionality was first coined in 1989 by Black feminist activist and academic Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, who argued that existing frameworks did not recognise that Black women’s experiences of inequality occurred at the intersection of racism and sexism. Since then, the term has been used to understand women’s experiences at the intersection of various simultaneous oppressions, including race, class, caste, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, nationality, immigration status, geographical location, religion, and more.

Intersectional approaches to violence against women and girls (VAWG) include a consideration of where gender intersects with other inequalities/oppressions (sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, indigeneity, immigration status, disability) to produce unique experiences of violence. By understanding the different ways in which violence is perpetrated and experienced, an intersectional praxis can design and develop appropriate context-specific responses when addressing VAWG.

There is no hierarchy of inequality and oppression for women within an intersectional framework of analysis, meaning that women cannot be made to choose which oppression comes first or is higher up in the hierarchy when they approach support services for VAWG. Intersectional approaches recognise that all oppressions exist simultaneously and that

categories of oppression mutually construct each other to create unique experiences of violence for women and girls.

Policy and practice that seeks to prevent and combat VAWG that is only willing to engage with domestic violence fail to comprehensively address violence as experienced by women and girls, especially minoritised survivors, since they ignore other aspects of VAWG such as sexual violence, ableism and racialised street harassment. Policy and legislation that recognises the need to support survivors of domestic violence without also ensuring provision is available for survivors of other forms of abuse that disproportionately affect minority women. It fails to recognise Article 4.3 of the Istanbul Convention, which obliges states to take necessary measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence without discrimination on any ground.

An intersectional approach is necessary in all areas of work relating to ending violence against women and girls. The term ‘multiple discrimination’ refers to the various inequalities women face due to their multiple identities, such as race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, geographical location, marital status, and immigration status. However, intersectionality emphasises that these oppressions cannot be viewed within an additional framework and must be contextualised within an understanding of simultaneous, intersecting inequalities.

A notional understanding of women facing multiple oppressions does not always translate into an intersectional framework. A combination of ‘intersectionality’ with ‘multiple discriminations’ risks reducing women’s experiences of multiple forms of oppression to be understood as a manifestation of various inequalities, which in turn engenders an inability to assess the needs of different communities and respond accordingly. For example, an understanding that Dalit women in India will face multiple marginalisations based on their identity does not necessarily ensure that VAWG services respond appropriately and in context-specific ways of women’s intersectional needs.

An intersectional understanding of the multiple marginalisations that Dalit women are subject to would lead to designing a service that specifically meets these reciprocally constructed needs. This service would typically be designed by Dalit women themselves or in meaningful partnership with Dalit women and include appropriate responses to the intersecting oppressions that these women face. This might take several forms, including longer-term advocacy against structural inequalities such as denial of access to quality housing, education, and healthcare for such communities, as well as attending to more immediate needs of Dalit women facing violence.

In order to meaningfully address violence faced by women and girls, it is critical that VAWG services understand that intersecting inequalities not only define women’s specific experiences of violence but also need to be designed in specific ways so that they respond to these intersecting oppressions. The vision, mission, and ways of working of such

organisations are framed by minority women's needs and unique experiences of oppression, and their presence is reflected in staffing, management, and governance structures.

Role of Intersectionality in Femicide:

- **Intersectionality** plays a critical role in femicide, as it magnifies the vulnerabilities of certain groups of women and exacerbating factors that contribute to their victimisation;
- **Race and Ethnicity:** Women of colour, particularly Black, Indigenous, and Latinx women, are disproportionately affected by femicide due to the intersecting forces of racism, sexism, and economic marginalisation. Structural inequalities and systemic racism place them at a higher risk of violence and limit their access to resources and support services;
- **Socioeconomic Status:** Women living in poverty or facing economic hardship are more vulnerable to femicide due to limited access to legal protection, economic independence, and social support networks. Economic disparities intersect with gender-based violence, trapping women in cycles of abuse and exploitation;
- **Immigration Status:** Immigrant and migrant women face unique challenges that increase their risk of femicide, including language barriers, limited access to healthcare and legal resources, and threats of deportation. Intersectionality amplifies the vulnerabilities of immigrant women, particularly those with precarious immigration status, making them more susceptible to exploitation and violence; and
- **LGBTQIA+ Identity:** Lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer women experience heightened risks of femicide due to intersecting forms of discrimination based on both gender and sexual orientation. They face higher rates of intimate partner violence, hate crimes, and social marginalisation, exacerbating their vulnerability to lethal violence.

3. INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN INSTRUMENTS TO TACKLE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

There have been numerous internationally agreed norms and standards addressing violence against women, each playing a significant role in advancing the rights and protections of women and girls worldwide. Among these conventions and declarations are:

- The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, which, while not explicitly mentioning violence against women and girls, extends its provisions to address such violence through General Recommendations 12, 19, and 35;
- The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, which recognises violence against women as a human rights violation and calls for the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on violence against women;
- The 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the first international instrument explicitly addressing violence against women, providing a framework for national and international action;
- The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, which highlights the links between violence against women and reproductive health and rights;
- The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, identifying specific actions for governments to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, making it one of 12 areas for priority action; and
- The 2006 Secretary-General's In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women, the first comprehensive report on the issue.

While each of these instruments has contributed significantly to the global effort to address violence against women, two stand out as particularly crucial: the 1994 Belém do Pará Convention and the 2011 Istanbul Convention. The Belém do Pará Convention is the only binding international instrument specifically addressing violence against women in the Americas. The Istanbul Convention sets legally binding standards specifically aimed at preventing gender-based violence, protecting victims, and punishing perpetrators. These two conventions represent pivotal milestones in the ongoing fight against violence directed at women and girls.

3.1 THE BELEM DO PARA CONVENTION

The Inter-American Convention on Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women known as the Belém do Pará Convention is an international treaty of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) of the Organization of American States, signed during a conference held in Belém in Brazil, on June 9th, 1994. It is the first intergovernmental agreement to legally bind the signatory states. It provides a political and strategic framework for the adoption of coordinated laws and policies as well as the

criminalisation of all forms of violence against women, particularly sexual violence (OAS, 1994 June).

The Belém do Pará Convention stands out with unique features that set it apart from other international agreements. First, it holds the distinction of being the convention with the highest number of ratifications among countries in the American region. Second, it is the only binding international instrument in the world specifically addressing the issue of violence against women. (Amnesty International, 2004).

This convention firmly establishes women's right to live a life free from violence and serves as an Inter-American human rights treaty. It provides the basis for the adoption of laws and policies on the prevention, eradication, and punishment of violence against women in its state parties. Moreover, it promotes the formulation of national plans, organisation of campaigns, and implementation of care protocols and services, making a significant contribution to strengthening the Inter-American Human Rights System (OAS, Folleto, nd).

Defined in Article 1, violence against women encompasses any act or conduct, based on gender, causing death or physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering, whether in the public or private sphere. Beside that, Article 2 recognises three types of violence: physical violence, sexual violence, and psychological violence (OAS, 1994).

The Convention highlights three spheres where this violence occurs: in private life, within the family or domestic unit; in public life, perpetrated by any person in the community, workplace, educational institutions, health facilities, or any other place; and violence perpetrated or condoned by the state or its agents, regardless of location (OAS, Folleto, nd).

State parties have committed to recognising violence against women as a violation of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, impeding the observance, enjoyment, and exercise of such rights. They acknowledge it as an offence against human dignity and a manifestation of historically unequal power relations. Moreover, the Convention outlines extensive obligations for states parties, including refraining from engaging in violence against women, adopting legal measures for protection, ensuring access to justice, promoting awareness, modifying social and cultural patterns, providing specialised services, and fostering international cooperation.

Recognised rights include the right to be free from violence in both public and private spheres, freedom from all forms of discrimination, and the entitlement to the free exercise of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Mechanisms contemplated by the Convention include national reports, advisory opinions from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and avenues for denunciation or complaints (OAS, Folleto, nd).

However, despite its significance, the Convention's full implementation remains a challenge, underscoring the ongoing need for concerted efforts in addressing violence against women globally. Additionally, the mechanisms designed to monitor and follow up what States have done or failed to comply seems to be lacking from independence. The Belém

mechanism also lacks a greater involvement of civil society organisations and experts. Finally, there still are concerns about the insignificant funding granted to support the implementation of such mechanisms (Amnesty International, 2004).

3.2 THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION

The *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence* (Istanbul Convention) has been signed by all European Union Member States, with 20 having ratified it. It stands as the first instrument in Europe to establish legally binding standards specifically aimed at preventing gender-based violence, protecting victims, and punishing perpetrators (Council of Europe, 2011).

Unlike other international treaties addressing gender-based violence, the Istanbul Convention emphasises the implementation of comprehensive and coordinated policies among national and governmental bodies involved in prevention, prosecution, and protection activities. The Convention defines and criminalises various forms of violence against women encompassing physical, sexual, and psychological violence, as well as stalking, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion, and forced sterilisation. It also emphasises prevention through awareness-raising campaigns, education, training for professionals, and treatment programs for perpetrators (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2018).

Furthermore, the Convention mandates the establishment of support services such as national hotlines, shelters, medical and legal counselling, and assistance with housing and financial issues for victims. It requires parties to collect data on gender-related crimes and addresses asylum and migration by recognising gender-based violence as a form of persecution in refugee status determination (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2018).

The Convention takes a cross-border approach, extending jurisdiction to cover crimes committed abroad by nationals, and provides a broader definition of ‘gender’ as socially constructed roles and attributes, encompassing both men and women as possible victims (Council of Europe, nd).

A two-pillar monitoring mechanism has been established, consisting of an independent expert body (GREVIO) and a Committee of the Parties. GREVIO prepares reports and conducts country-by-country evaluations, along with initiating special urgent inquiry procedures when necessary (Council of Europe, nd).

Both of these instruments stand apart from each other, yet neither is flawless. Remarkably, the term ‘femicide’ is conspicuously absent from either of these conventions. In an era where femicide is frequently highlighted as an urgent issue in the battle against

violence, the glaring omission of its mention in the list of violence against women, a list intended to guide states in their obligation to protect women, remains deeply problematic.

4. CIUDAD JUÁREZ: THE CITY SYMBOL OF FEMICIDE

Ciudad Juárez, a town in the state of Chihuahua close to the US border, is the city where from 1993 to 2009 hundreds of women were kidnapped, tortured, raped, murdered, and whose naked or half-naked bodies were then dumped in desert areas (Bettinger-Lopez, 2012). The spiral of violence is so high and constant that the expression “capital of women’s murders” is used when referring to the city (Tiroch, 2010).

To date, it is known specifically for the *González et. al. v. Mexico* case (2009), an emblematic case of violence against women committed by private actors. The case is also known by the name “Cotton Field”, or “Campo algodonero”, echoing the place where the bodies of Claudia Ivette González, Esmeralda Herrera Monreal and Laura Berenice Ramos Monarrez were found in 2001 in Ciudad Juarez (Tiroch, 2010). The individual facts of the case are not isolated but are part of a larger context of violence against women.

Already from previous years, Mexico is experiencing a very deep economic, social and institutional crisis and a growth in violence due to the fight against drug trafficking. In a general framework of growing inequality, violence and impunity, it is clear that women’s rights cannot advance. On the contrary, they are eroded.

The economic crisis in the country leads women to seek work to provide for themselves. However, this element represents only an apparent achievement of independence, because the status of working women makes them more vulnerable. They find themselves isolated from their support and care networks, and the urban infrastructure is inadequate to provide a safe environment. There are no services, lighting or transportation; therefore, when they leave work women are forced to walk through dark streets in areas where there is no police or protection. In addition, there is strong discrimination against women in Mexico as a cultural phenomenon that promotes the idea that women should stay at home. All these elements create the situation in Ciudad Juarez, characterised by an inordinate number of killings of women, the brutality of the crimes and the indifference of public authorities, consequently leaving crimes unpunished.

The crimes have certain particularities, starting with the profile of the victims, who are mainly young women, precarious workers, workers in foreign-owned assembly or processing factories, or schoolgirls. The circumstances of the crimes include the disappearance of women and the discovery of their naked or half-naked bodies in public places with obvious signs of extreme violence, including sexual violence, and in many cases mutilation.

In the period between the disappearance of the victims and the discovery of the bodies, the victims’ families report the disappearance of the victims to local authorities and the police. However, the responses are always disappointing, and mainly downplay the extent of the cases. Basically, the authorities do not initiate any concrete action to find the missing

women. On the contrary, they try to justify the killings, attributing them to the way the women were dressed, the places they frequented, or the times when they were moving around alone. This pointedly reproduces the victim-blaming mechanisms in which women find themselves accepting the restriction of their freedoms and autonomy.

This lack of interest and complicity of border authorities not only poses an internal security problem for the country, but also fuels the spiral of violence. The *Cotton Field* case is placed in this context, involving the disappearance, abuse and subsequent killing of Claudia Ivette Gonzalez, Esmeralda Herrera Monreal and Laura Berenice Ramos Monarrez. In 2001, the mothers of three victims brought the case before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which issued a landmark ruling on December 10th, 2009. For the first time, a court applied a gender approach to its decision and enshrined the state's responsibility for the femicides that occurred on its territory.

The *Cotton Field* case ruling identifies 1993 as the year when the femicides began and places them within a context of discrimination and violence against women that find fertile ground in Mexico. The very authorities that are supposed to respond to femicides feed that same culture with indifference and irregularities during investigations. They do not fulfil their role of surveillance and assistance. This slows down the resolution of cases and creates psychological damage to victims and families, and implicitly communicates that women can be killed without consequences.

Not only is the responsibility of the perpetrators of individual cases acknowledged, but it goes further by extending responsibility to institutions and Mexico. Institutions and the State become complicit in violence against women despite not having committed it directly, because their indifference to gender-based violence reproduces violence and consequently perpetuates crimes. Specifically, the Court declares that Mexico has violated

the rights to life, personal integrity, and personal liberty of the victims [...] and the obligation to investigate – and thereby guarantee – such rights and adopt domestic legal measures [...], the rights of access to justice and to judicial protection [...], the obligation not to discriminate [...] [and] the rights of the child [...] to the detriment of the [...] minor victims (Bettinger-Lopez, 2012).

The Court determines that Mexico has “affirmative obligations to respond to violence against women by private actors, and that those obligations are judiciable under Article 7 of the Convention of Belém do Pará” (Bettinger-Lopez, 2012). It reiterates the State's obligations to prevent human rights violations, investigate them, punish perpetrators, and compensate victims, i.e., the elements of due diligence. To meet these requirements, Mexico will have to take measures to establish “an appropriate legal framework, including an effective enforcement mechanism and the adoption of comprehensive and effective prevention policies and practices in order to respond adequately to complaints” (Tiroch, 2010).

Regarding compensation, the Court recognises the gender dimension and measures consistent with the situation and context of systematic gender-based violence. In particular, it

considers the actual cases, consequences of human rights violations, and the context in which they occurred in order to understand how to remedy them. It also recognises the need for remedies to also have transformative effects in the culture that generated that condition of violence, discrimination, and injustice. To fulfil this goal, it is vital that women victims and their advocates actively participate in the design and implementation of these restorative measures. Gender perspectives must be incorporated to legal and institutional change, investigating responsible authorities, and establishing measures to respond to the environment of impunity created by the State, as well as programs to combat gender-based violence and discrimination.

Formal changes in laws and regulations are not enough, but a series of initiatives must be put in place at every level of society that recognise the discrimination women face and its cultural roots in order to achieve substantive change. One example of such initiatives is the provision of training programs with a gender perspective for local authorities. In this way, authorities can deconstruct their beliefs about the stereotypical roles imposed on women and consequently not perpetuate them.

Mexico formally accepts responsibility for femicides and shows a willingness to implement the necessary measures to improve the situation. The Chihuahua prosecutor's office maintains an accessible list of missing women. In 2004 Mexico initiated the 40-point Program of Action aimed at preventing and eradicating violence against women creating a specialised office for female homicide investigation in the State prosecutor's office as well as a crime and forensic sciences laboratory in Ciudad Juarez (Bettinger-Lopez, 2012).

However, there has been no material progress. In many cases, the State does not properly apply legal instruments, as the institutions in charge live in the shadow of corruption and illegality. Moreover, institutional policies end up reaffirming the image of good womanhood, centred on enhancing the role of women in the domestic sphere. One example is the "Women of Ciudad Juarez Centre for Justice", a community centre aimed at offering medical, psychological and legal assistance established in 2012. The government inaugurated the centre without guidelines, legal frameworks or operational and procedural protocols, as reported by the Committee of Mothers of the Victims.

In 2011, a memorial for the victims was inaugurated at the same place where the victims were found. However, this is a facade initiative that once again does not allow the victims' families to find justice for the femicides. In fact, it has caused protests from family members, activists, and associations. Victoria Caraveo, an activist, criticises the State's choice to use a modest amount of money for the construction of the monument, rather than funding appropriate activities aimed at cultural change. From 1994 to 2023, it is estimated that more than 2250 women have been killed (Barbato, 2023). This is more than six victims per month, although official figures are underestimated.

The Cotton Field case in Ciudad Juarez remains an emblematic case for violence against women especially because of its landmark ruling that sets a legal precedent for analysing other cases like it. For the first time, the terminology 'systemic sexual femicides' was used.

The three terms summarise the three main characteristics of the crimes: their repetition over time in a context of impunity that signals the likely connivance of political and economic power groups with criminal organisations, the fact that they involved sexual violence and that of being gendered murders committed by men against women as women. Recognising and naming this specific instance of crime against women is an essential first step for change, because naming the crime offers insight into how reality is working. The emergence of the term femicide in current usage and legal contexts marks a growing attention to and awareness of the issue of violence against women.

The crime of femicide is recognised as a violation of women's rights, considering it an autonomous crime, having characteristics and specificities that differentiate it from other types of homicide. These characteristics are the existence of extreme, structural and systemic violence against these subjects, their bodies and their dignity, within a context in which a macho, sexist and misogynistic culture prevails. The context not only discriminates them and denies them any rights, but also hides, tolerates and minimises such crimes, moreover hidden by corrupt authorities, ambiguous laws or lacking mechanisms that give concrete results.

5. UNDERSTANDING THE LACK OF LEGAL RECOGNITION IN THE ITALIAN CONTEXT

Properly defining femicide involves recognising the killing of a woman as a woman in a social and cultural context that assigns women a submissive role and requires them to submit to power dynamics. However, such recognition does not occur everywhere following the same timelines. In Italy, for example, the road is still arduous to recognise the systemic and structural nature of femicides, which in turn limits its legal, as well as social, recognition.

The starting point is questioning the true use of the term femicide. Many journalists criticise it, claiming that it is disparaging to women who have been killed, that it is a cacophonous and unintelligible term, or even incorrect (Di Cristofaro, 2022). Regarding the last criticism, its supporters see in it a forced desire to distinguish between one crime and another based on the gender of the victim. The same ones provocatively ask why the term

maleicide does not exist, or why the term murder cannot be used since human beings are involved (Di Cristofaro, 2022).

However, the Italian language already provides some words that specify the nature of the crime and characteristics of the victim. The most trivial example is infanticide, to indicate the killing of an infant or child in the first years of childhood. Therefore, some may ask why it should be different for the term femicide. The term does not even appear in legal texts, adding another justification for femicide deniers.

The continued resistance to the use of the term femicide by Italian politicians, journalists or other professionals speaks volumes about the consideration of femicides in the country precisely because that use moves in parallel with the path of awareness about women's rights. As already pointed out, correctly defining a phenomenon means understanding it and consequently being able to measure, compare, and intervene with appropriate actions to prevent its repetition. In Italy, the issue lies in distinguishing between the generic killing of a woman at the hands of anyone, for which femicide is meant to be passed off, and the killing of women that occurred for misogynistic reasons. The sex and gender of the victim are not enough to declare that a femicide has been committed. It is clear that femicide is the tip of the iceberg of the patriarchal culture that considers women subordinate to men and deprives them of their autonomy, self-determination, identity, and right to life, unless as a function of men and their expectations.

According to data offered by Viminale, one femicide occurs in Italy every three days (Ministero dell'Interno, 2024). This data is now constant over the years and shows no signs of decreasing. The data is telling that there is a systemic problem of gender-based violence and a problem of control over the bodies and women killed. In addition, the narrative of violence in Italy not only denies adopting the term femicide, but persists in describing violence in terms of an emergency. However, an emergency is an occasional occurrence, and these high numbers do not fit the bill.

In addition, the data indicate a political class completely unprepared to deal with these numbers. Requests for help are increasing dramatically year by year. In the first nine months of 2023, requests for help to anti-violence centres reached nearly 31,000 (Ruffino, 2023). Anti-violence centres are the safe places that can help prevent violence and protect women who are victims. Yet, there are not enough of them in Italy, and they are few compared to the number required by law; there should be one per 10,000 inhabitants (Ruffino, 2023). Furthermore, most of the anti-violence centres are not established at the initiative of the State or public entities, but at the initiative of private entities, which could cease their activities once the funds run out (Ruffino, 2023).

At the turn of 2023 and 2024, there had been illusions that the Government had grasped the urgency of the issue after the femicide of Giulia Cecchetin. It was a femicide that shocked the public, alarming the community about the patriarchal matrix of the crime. Nevertheless, the Government did not implement any concrete prevention measures.

These facts showcase the State's disinterest in gender-based violence and the remnants of a culture that is hard to die. All of which then results in inadequate laws and measures and inconvenient judgements.

In 2013, the Italian Parliament ratified the Istanbul Convention (Presidente della Repubblica, 2013a), committing itself to preventing and combating violence against women. Since that year, Italian governments have passed an average of one measure per year to combat violence against women, starting with the commonly known Femicide Law (Presidente della Repubblica, 2013b).

Although it is commonly referred to in the media and in public opinion as the Femicide Law, the decree-law contains no such term either in its title or text. This is Law 119/2013, Urgent Provisions on Security and Combating Gender-Based Violence, as well as on Civil Protection and the Commissionings of Provinces, which amended the rules on abuse against family members and introduced new aggravating factors for crimes committed by partners or ex-partners (Presidente della Repubblica, 2013b).

Six years later, in 2019, the Government introduced a new law, renamed Code Red, to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure, increasing protections for victims of gender-based violence. Essentially, the Law introduced an expedited procedure for reporting and investigating cases of gender-based violence with the aim of better protecting victims of violence (Presidente della Repubblica, 2019). In addition, the Code Red introduces four new crimes: non-consensual distribution of sexually explicit photos or videos, deformation of a person's appearance by permanent injury, coercion or inducement to marry, and violation of orders to remove from the family home (Presidente della Repubblica, 2019). More recently, in 2021, there was a reform of the Law that applies its protections to crimes in attempted form and extends the requirement of arrest in *flagrante delicto* for those who violate the ban on approaching the offended person (Presidente della Repubblica, 2021).

In 2022, Parliament passed a bill committing several institutions to periodically conduct statistical surveys entirely devoted to violence against women (Presidente della Repubblica, 2022). After Giulia Cecchettin's femicide in 2023, the Government adopted an additional law, Provisions for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Law No. 923/2023, aimed at strengthening the protection of victims of violence, strengthening precautionary measures, bringing forward the threshold of criminal protection, and ensuring the certainty of the timeframe of proceedings dealing with crimes of gender-based violence or domestic violence (Senato della Repubblica, 2023).

This framework seems promising enough on the surface. However, the measures passed since 2013 focus more on the punitive effect than one that is truly transformative of the patriarchal society, and do not address the root cause of violence. They are partial responses that lack concrete mid- and long-term victim prevention and victim protection interventions and therefore do not tackle the phenomenon at its core.

Regarding the most recent piece of legislation, it focuses almost exclusively on enhancing punishment measures, while what are presented as prevention measures are mainly declined in terms of special surveillance with electronic bracelets and tightening of punishments. There are repressive provisions that are meant to prevent violence through the fear of punishment. What continues to be lacking is a structured and detailed strategy involving anti-violence centres that deal with the phenomenon every day.

Next to this panorama of the Italian legislative system on gender-based violence, a further clarification about the crime of femicide is necessary. The Italian Penal Code provides for the crime of murder, regardless of gender. When the crime of murder is committed against a person in the family circle, if there is a personal emotional relationship, even if it has ceased, there is an aggravating circumstance that increases the penalty set for the crime. There are also other aggravating factors, such as mistreatment in the family, degree of kinship, persecutory acts, threat, sexual assault, and there are the general aggravating factors such as futile motives, or the circumstances in which the murder occurred where the victim was unable at least to defend herself, and the aggravating factor of cruelty.

The necessary clarification is that there is no specific rule that speaks of the crime of femicide. If anything, when the perpetrator of the crime of gender-based violence against a woman is a man, partner or ex-partner, who is related to her by a bond of affection or kinship, this is an aggravating factor for the combination of higher penalty than the one initially noted.

However, while it is true that penalties can be aggravated, at the same time they can be lessened in the presence of circumstances that mitigate the condition of the murder offender. This represents a decidedly problematic aspect for femicide cases. In fact, compounding the Italian situation are the sentences in the courts: judges' decisions are often influenced by bias against women that leads them to attenuate sentences. This happens because judges read violence not as pure overpowering, but as a reaction to a victim's behaviour. Basically, the woman is believed to have brought the man to such a level of exasperation that provoked that murderous urge. All of this, of course, reproduces injustice and discrimination, limiting pathways to freedom.

Several verdicts state that women have been killed by males blinded by jealousy, or anger, or in reaction to their behaviour, which could be a decision to end a marriage or relationship with another. Rape itself is often justified by a woman's look, an attitude or the way she was dressed (De Luca, 2021). Thus, violence in all its forms is presented as an irrepressible act, a consequence of something else and therefore not the responsibility of the perpetrator. The victim's attitude would justify a lesser punishment for the perpetrator: in 70 percent of femicide sentences, judges grant mitigating factors (Di Nicola Travaglini & Menditto, 2019). These sentences are decisive because they are indicators of social tolerance and stigmatisation of the victim's conduct in the Italian country.

In conclusion, Italy does not recognise femicide as a crime, but only as an aggravating circumstance. Such lack of a legal recognition occurs in many other countries where,

similarly to Italy, the reasons for this may be traced to a culture that refuses to come to terms with the structural matrix of violence and to address it as such.

6. FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION : PREVENTING FEMICIDE THROUGH TARGETED INTERVENTIONS

Prevention of femicide refers to actions taken at individual, family, and social levels to reduce the likelihood of women being killed due to various reasons. Strategies for prevention vary depending on the definition of femicide and the cases involved. For instance, prevention in intimate partner relationships differs from preventing trafficked women or girls being subjugated and killed. These distinct femicides involve different risk factors and require different prevention strategies.

Femicide is a global issue that stems from the killing of women because they are women, regardless of whether it is perpetrated by the victim's partner, ex-partner, or a non-partner. This masculine, misogynist perspective on gender also increases the perception that violence is an acceptable way of managing disputes, conflicts, and problems. Within femicides, homicide occurs as an ultimate means to degrade, silence, and subjugate women.

Prevention efforts require both research and intervention, including combating a culture based on relationships where men have dominance over women. Risk factors can be identified at individual, interpersonal, and community levels using an ecological approach. The ecological framework provides a way to better understand differences among abusers and helps identify relevant and critical risk and vulnerability factors.

Fatality reviews in cases of femicide analyse a homicide to identify potential factors that might explain its occurrence and locate any possible failure in the system. The intention is not to hold anyone other than the perpetrator responsible but to offer recommendations for improving procedures, communication, and decision-making processes. In the US and Canada, fatality reviews were created to address homicides with a special focus on intimate partner femicide (IPF) to understand what could have been done to prevent the killing and develop intervention or prevention strategies.

Fatality review teams are authorised by the legislature or established under executive orders to ensure they act with confidentiality, accountability, and immunity. Specific legislations are needed to allow fatality teams to access confidential information related to possible witnesses or family members and interview them to review the homicide and gather as much information as possible. Legislations and related executive orders also allow local discretion regarding the convening agency and the membership of the team.

The main aim of most fatality review teams is to prevent future fatalities through instigating changes at the system level, involving different actors. Addressing each single femicide case, looking at what happened, identifying possible characteristics at the

individual, interpersonal, social, and community levels, and adopting an ecological approach can be useful to prevent other instances of femicide.

Each team reviews its case by adopting different methods depending on the availability of resources, the commitment of different agencies, the experience of members, and the number of femicides to analyse. Some teams review any killings perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner, while others review all deaths that occurred in the context of domestic violence. Teams are organised in such a manner that they either review closed cases (in which the perpetrator has already been convicted) or open cases (where the case is still pending).

The information amassed by domestic violence fatality review teams is collected via several sources of information, including police records, coroners' files, autopsy reports, court documents, medical records, mental health records, social service reports, newspaper accounts, and victim services records. In some cases, family members, friends, or professionals are also interviewed.

An advantage of fatality reviews in cases of femicide is that the team prepares a report indicating the method adopted, the sources of information used, and the outcome of the review. It also provides recommendations for the improvement of service delivery and may be tasked with implementing and evaluating changes to service delivery and assessing their efficacy in various agencies.

Femicide risk assessment is a procedure aimed at prevention, focusing on the principle that some femicide cases can be prevented due to an escalation of violence, threats, and other lethal risk factors. Risk assessment allows us to identify the presence of risk and vulnerability factors, and to establish their nature and relevance to the violence. By adopting an ecological approach, the different levels of risk are addressed: individual, interpersonal, and social and community.

Risk assessment can be carried out using actuarial methods, where a list of risk factors is added together and the total is compared with a specific threshold number, above which the risk is considered high. These approaches allow for an objective reference level, upon which decisions will be based. Other approaches, such as professional structures procedures, are based on the analysis of the presence or absence of risk factors. These risk factors have been identified by reviewing cases and empirical practice as highly correlated to recidivism of violence, escalation of violence, and even killing.

Primary prevention to challenge patriarchal culture

The prevention of femicide is a complex issue that can be approached in several ways. Femicide takes many different forms, such as racist femicide (black women killed by white men), homophobic femicide (lesbians killed by heterosexual men), marital femicide (women killed by their husbands or ex-husbands), serial femicide, mass femicide (including the deliberate transmission of the HIV virus by rapists), and situations where women are

permitted to die as a result of misogynous attitudes or social practices (female genital mutilation, illegal botched abortion).

The best approach to ending femicide involves strengthening surveillance and screening of femicide and intimate partner violence. This involves collecting and analysing mortality data, disaggregating these data by sex, and ensuring documentation of the relationship between the victim and perpetrator. In countries with sparse evidence on femicide, awareness-raising and advocacy could encourage cooperation among police, medical staff, and other relevant agencies to collect and report on the victim-offender relationship and the motivation for the homicide.

Training and sensitising health staff is essential for improving documentation of cases of femicide and the circumstances surrounding them. Evidence-based guidelines are needed, particularly in relation to categorisation of victim-perpetrator relationships and information regarding abuse history. Health-care providers' capacity to identify intimate partner violence and risk of femicide is also crucial. Improving detection of severe partner violence within health systems, particularly during pregnancy, has been suggested as a means of reducing the risk of femicide.

Training and sensitising police is beneficial for identifying and documenting cases of femicide, including reporting of victim-perpetrator relationships. Police should also receive training related to gun removal and enforcement of gun laws in cases of family violence. Policies and training for police could facilitate identification and support of children affected by intimate partner violence and femicide, and laws could ensure appropriate prosecution of perpetrators.

Increasing prevention and intervention research is necessary to reduce intimate partner violence. Research should focus on perpetrators and potential perpetrators, investigate cases of near-fatal intimate partner violence, and consider steps for mitigation. Research consistently shows an association between ownership of guns, particularly handguns, and the perpetration of intimate femicide. Restricting gun ownership for all people, especially stronger laws related to men previously cited for or convicted of intimate partner abuse, is of particular importance in reducing rates of femicide.

Strengthening surveillance, research, laws, and awareness of murder in the name of 'honour' is also necessary. Advocacy to change laws that permit these types of crimes is essential. Advocates have reported success in raising awareness of these crimes among the public and policy-makers, by collecting and analysing available data, court cases, judges' rulings, and referencing international human rights instruments relevant to protecting women's rights. In conclusion, the best approach to ending femicide involves strengthening surveillance, research, laws, and awareness of murder in the name of 'honour'.

CONCLUSION

The persistent prevalence of femicide underscores the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to combat this egregious violation of human rights. Despite significant strides in international and European legal frameworks, including conventions such as Belém do Pará and Istanbul, femicide remains a critical issue, demanding sustained and multifaceted efforts. The data and case studies presented in this report highlight both the progress made and the significant gaps that still exist in addressing violence against women.

Key to advancing the fight against femicide is the enhancement of legal and institutional responses. This involves not only the implementation of stricter laws and regulations but also ensuring their effective enforcement. States must adopt holistic approaches that include preventive measures, effective prosecution, and support for survivors. Additionally, it is crucial to address the cultural and social norms that perpetuate gender-based violence. Education and awareness-raising initiatives must be prioritised to dismantle patriarchal structures that underpin such violence.

Furthermore, international cooperation and the sharing of best practices are essential to tackle femicide globally. The international community must work together to hold states accountable and ensure that they meet their obligations under international human rights law.

In conclusion, ending femicide requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society, including governments, civil society, and international organisations. By strengthening surveillance, research, laws, and public awareness, we can create a world where women and girls are free from the threat of gender-based violence and can live in safety and dignity.

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