

**Forum:** GA 6

**Issue:** Working towards the elimination of crimes against women and girls committed in the name of “honor”



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## Introduction

Every year, more than 5,000 people are murdered in the name of “honor”<sup>1</sup> according to the UN Population Fund (UNPF). The vast majority, over 90%<sup>2</sup>, of these victims are female and many are underage or young adults. Furthermore, due to the nature of “honor” crimes, figures detailing demographic information of the victims killed and indeed even the number of deaths linked to “honor” motivated crimes are underreported and lacking accuracy. The aforementioned figure of 5,000 deaths per year is questioned by some NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations) and estimated to be much higher, at around 20,000 “honor” killings per annum.

Indeed, even these high figures only enumerate “honor” *killings*, a subcategory of the broader term “honor” crimes. In order to be classified as the former, the violence perpetrated against an individual must lead to their demise. The latter allows for a more expansive definition and refers to all crimes committed to punish or chastise an individual for breaking, or having been alleged to have broken, a familial, or perceived cultural and religious norm.

The, usually male, perpetrators of “honor” crimes are predominantly relatives of the individual or members of their community. In communities in which “honor” crimes are common, the maintenance of a woman’s “sexual purity” and ensuring her compliance to religious and/or societal codes of behavior are considered to be the responsibility of male relatives i.e. her father, brother(s) and/or husband. Justifications for the crime circle around a perceived “need” or “moral duty” to commit said crime to restore the “honor” of the family that the victim has supposedly destroyed. What actions are considered to be destructive to the “honor” of the individual and thereby family depend on the community this takes place in. Common examples are “imoral” dress, premarital sex, adultery, divorce, refusal to consent to a forced marriage, homosexuality and having been raped. The methods of punishment for womens’

<sup>1</sup> This report refers to “honor” in quotation marks or as “so-called honor.” This is done, in accordance with the recommendations of UN Women, to emphasize the nature of “honor” as a subjective social construct. Additionally, this terminology attempts to mitigate the risk of reinforcing discriminatory sentiments which imply that there is any “honor” in committing such heinous crimes.

<sup>2</sup> This report deals with “honor” crimes targeted against female demographics. When general remarks concerning “honor” crimes are made, victims may be referred to as female. This does not exclude male victims of “honor” based crimes; these statements are made in light of statistical predominance.

“wrongdoings” can take many forms, including murder, attempted murder, psychological torture, in some cases leading to suicide, rape, torture, unconsensual virginity testing, kidnapping, forced marriage, harassment, violent threats, stove burnings, acid attacks and maiming.

“Honor” crimes take place all across the globe and are not limited to one religion or region however the majority of them take place in parts of the Middle East and South Asia, with close to 50% of such crimes occurring in India and Pakistan alone. High rates of “honor” crimes can be linked in correlation to deeply patriarchal structures and lacking gender equality. Religious fundamentalism is seen to be an exacerbating factor, though these crimes are *decidedly not* condoned by any of the world religions.

An effective elimination of “honor” crimes hinges upon legal changes as well as societal measures to eradicate the deeply entrenched ideas of what constitutes and what measures are justified to retain “female honor.” Regarding the former, in many jurisdictions, “honor” crimes are either condoned by government inaction or even defended by law as a legitimate justification for committing a crime, leading to a lesser sentence - if any. As a result, “honor” crimes go unrecognized and unpunished in many countries which have insufficient legal instruments to punish such crimes or consistently fail to make use of existing ones. Secondly, achieving a true alteration of societal perceptions on issues such as e.g. female sexuality is a long and arduous process, yet one that must be brought into motion, for example through interventions in education as well as advocacy campaigns.

## Definition of Key Terms

### “Honor” Crimes

“Honor” crimes are crimes that are carried out in order to protect the so-called “honor” of a family or community, which has supposedly been tarnished by the “immoral” conduct of the, usually female, victim. In order to restore the “honor” of the family, the individual must be punished for their behavior. This includes attempted murder, driving to suicide, rape/sexual assault, torture, virginity testing, kidnapping, forced marriage, forced eviction, harassment, violent threats, stove burnings, acid attacks and maiming, including but not limited to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

### “Honor” Killings

“Honor” killings are a subcategory of “honor” crimes in which the victims are either intentionally murdered to restore the family’s “honor” or in which the individuals die due to the medical consequences of another “honor” crime.

### Gender Based Violence (GBV)

Forms of violence that individuals of a certain gender are (disproportionately) afflicted by due to their gender are known as Gender Based Violence. GBV is a human rights violation that may, but does

not invariably have to, lead to death. The abuse can be of physical, sexual or psychological nature. “Honor” crimes are a form of GBV, as they disproportionately affect female demographics. Furthermore, such murders are often motivated by attitudes towards women’s bodies and behaviors that are contradictory to female equality and self-determination.

### **Femicide**

A Femicide is the killing of a female individual due to factors related to her gender and is an umbrella term that can encompass different forms of GBV (though it is limited to forms of GBV which result in death). This includes the murder of women in intimate partner violence, “honor” killings, the killings of women and girls in armed conflict, dowry-related killings of women and deaths resulting from gender based mutilation.

### **Impunity**

Impunity is when an individual is exempt from punishment or rendered free from the consequences of an action that would otherwise be deemed punishable. In International Human Rights Law, impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of crimes constitutes a failure to investigate, prosecute and punish human rights abuses. This denies victims their basic rights to justice. Impunity for “honor” criminals can either be codified openly in law, through legal loopholes or through a legal practice.

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

The partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons as well as any other wanton harm to these is referred to as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). 44,000 women and girls are estimated to die annually from the effects of FGM and more than 20 million women and girls alive today have undergone the practice, mostly performed on them during infancy to adolescence. FGM has serious health implications, short and long term, as well as physically and mentally. It is a human rights violation that is carried out due to social conventions that consider FGM a necessary preparation for girls to be eligible for marriage, as it is a method to control female sexuality. FGM is seen as a guarantee for premarital virginity and fidelity in marriage - concepts linked intrinsically to “honor”, which is why FGM can be viewed as a “pre-emptive honor crime.”

### **Forced Marriage**

A forced marriage is defined by the United Nations as, “a marriage in which one and/or both parties have not personally expressed their full and free consent to the union.” It is in some cases considered to be an “honor” crime, for example if the girl/woman in question was married against her will to “protect her honor” due to allegations of an extramarital relationship. Forced Marriage is a violation of international human rights law, as enshrined in Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

### **Due Diligence**

Due Diligence in international law is an obligation of conduct towards the State: it holds the State responsible for illegal acts that, while not committed by the State or any of its agents, could and should

have been prevented by the State. In other words, if an “honor” crime was committed that the government could have reasonably prevented, this would constitute a failure of the state’s due diligence to protect. If such a crime has already been committed, a failure to investigate, apprehend and prosecute the (suspected) criminals would be an infraction of due diligence. Due Diligence in regards to the elimination of violence against women is entrenched in international law via the 1994 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, article 4: “States should [...] exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women [...] by private persons.”

## Background Information

Women and girls are the most common victims of “honor” crimes although men and boys can also be impacted. Aforementioned crimes are not only vastly underreported but also frequently go unpunished. Therefore, there is very little data on the number of women and girls affected by “honor” crimes annually, yet they are suspected to occur widely all around the world, affecting women of all regions, religions and ethnicities. “Honor” killings are considered to be the most violent form of crimes committed in the name of “honor” and the little data that has been collected on “honor” crimes generally centers around “honor” killings.

“Honor”-based violence and crimes are a form of GBV but are fundamentally different from other forms of violence against women, because they are grounded in the philosophy that they are being carried out in order to maintain the “honor” of a family or community. When a woman breaks a code of behavior, it is the responsibility of her male relatives and the only way to restore the so-called “honor” of the family/community to punish the woman. Additional motivations for “honor” crimes may also include changing the woman’s behavior and deterring other women from doing the same.

### Sub-topic 1: Cultural origins and traditions

“Honor” crimes, as stated in General Assembly Resolution 57/179, “are incompatible with all religious and cultural values.” This being stated, “honor” crimes do appear to be closely related to *misconstrued* understandings of cultural and religious values and do, while not being compatible with the culture and religion in question, occur more often in some cultures and religions than others. In 2003, the Council of Europe stated in Resolution 1327 that “the majority of reported cases in Europe have been among Muslim or migrant Muslim communities.” The Qur’an however makes no mention of “honor” killings or crimes and the practice is denounced by Islamic law as well as Muslim scholars. Similar examples can be found in other religions.

“Honor”-based violence and crimes can be found in many cultures throughout history, most often as a means of punishing women for premarital or extra-marital relations and are therefore deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and traditions in many nations, rendering attempts to alter such norms difficult.

“Honor” crimes are suspected to have existed before many modern religions, strengthening the argument that they are not caused by the values of said religions. In the past, “honor” crimes were a drastic means of averting the loss of female reproduction assets. In modern times, where this is no longer necessary, they have become purely about maintaining the “honor”, reputation and therefore the social standing of a family. The cultures in which these crimes predominantly occur are usually classified as collectivist cultures, because families are considered to be more important than individuals and individual autonomy is considered to be destructive.

In some regions, it is widely believed that the maintenance of a woman's "sexual purity" as well as her conformity to religious, societal or community codes of behavior is the responsibility of her male relatives. Due to this aspect of “honor” crimes, an extremely common factor in places where they are most prevalent is a patriarchal society where women have little to no autonomy. Therefore, “honor”-based crimes are connected to the patriarchal organization of families, as well as the set of beliefs and norms on women that commonly accompany such structures, and not necessarily one culture or religion.

### **Sub-topic 2: Criminalization and ending impunity**

The failure of Member States to do their due diligence and enforce the criminalization of “honor” crimes is a major concern of the UN. As General Assembly resolution 55/66 states, “crimes against women committed in the name of honour are a human rights issue and [...] States have an obligation to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish the perpetrators of such crimes and to provide protection to the victims.”

In many nations however, such criminal acts are either condoned through government inaction or defended as a legitimate cultural or religious practice. As a consequence, in said countries, male relatives can “easily” get away with abusing and/or murdering their female family members or wives in the name of “honor”. Not only are “honor” crimes rarely investigated and prosecuted, in the rare case that an individual is found guilty, often a claim that the crime was committed in the name of “honor” will lead to a reduced sentence. Almost no legislative system in the world sanctions “honor” crimes outright but in many countries adultery and other “immoral” sexual behaviors by female family members can be considered mitigating circumstances in “honor” crimes.

Furthermore, even in countries with the necessary laws in place, such crimes are often covered up and/or simply never reported by the family members of a woman, leading to impunity.

To sum up, impunity for the perpetrators can be caused by this impunity/lesser sentence being codified in the law, either explicitly or through a legal “loophole”, it not being codified in the written law itself but through misogynistic legal practice or through the case not coming to the attention of an official legal system in the first place. There are various examples for these scenarios.

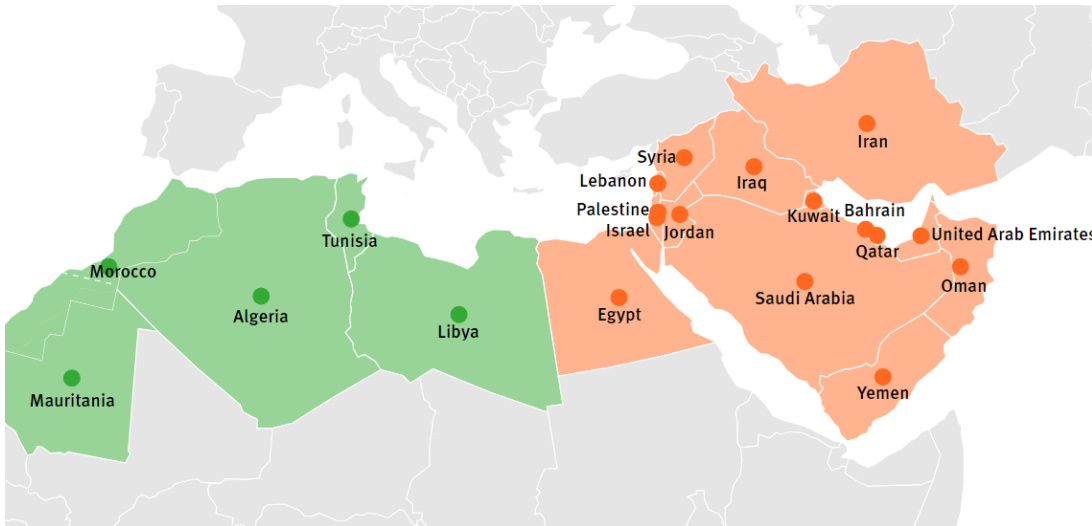
In Jordan, article 340 of the penal code states that “whosoever surprises his wife or one of his ascendants or descendents in the crime of adultery or in an unlawful bed, and kills her immediately” shall benefit from reduced sentence. A 2001 amendment to the law extends this leniency in sentencing also to women who have killed their husband, not however to any other of their male relatives, as the law for men allows. Despite movements to remove article 340, it, (as of December 2023) remains part of Jordanian law, state-sanctioning the defense of “honor” and thus legitimating such murderous acts. Nations which allow for some form of the “honor defense” mostly include MENA (Middle East and North Africa) countries with some exceptions, for example the Philippines. These contemporary laws are for the most part derived from and/or inspired by the French Napoleonic Code, specifically France’s crime of passion law which remained in force until 1975 and allowed for a reduced sentence if an individual commits a crime, especially murder, in the “heat of passion.”

In Brazil, the “defense of honor” was a commonly used legal defense based in customary law used to justify the murder of a woman by her husband or family members by attributing the motivating factor of the crime to “defending a family’s honor.” This defense stemmed from a very broad interpretation of the self-defense statute and was not actually codified in Brazilian law. Additionally, the Supreme Court ruled in 1991 that this legal defense has no basis in Brazilian law. Despite this fact, it has been continuously used by lawyers until this year (2023), when the Supreme Court reiterated its 1991 judgment, banning this form of defense.

Furthermore, in some countries such as Pakistan, “honor” crimes are not always initiated by families, but instead women and girls are attacked or killed on orders from village or tribal councils, so-called Jirgas. Crimes initiated and undertaken by such extrajudicial “courts” enjoy widespread acceptance in isolated and tight-knit communities and are even less likely to be reported and/or punished. They therefore rarely come to the attention of official judicial systems.

### **Sub-topic 3: Women’s rights, gender equality and preventative measures**

“Honor” crimes are often rooted in misogynistic views towards women and girls. They are far more prevalent in male-dominated societies where women are expected to be submissive and are not viewed as individuals with their own agency. Often, women are dependent first on their fathers and other male family members and then on their husbands. They are therefore expected to be compliant to these male figures and in turn it is the job of a woman’s male relatives and/or husband to safeguard a woman’s sexual and moral “purity.” In many countries, especially those where “honor” crimes are prevalent, women have little autonomy, including economic and physical autonomy. Women are often required to follow rigid religious or societal codes of behavior which limit their autonomy. For example, women may not be able to choose their husbands, work outside the home, or even converse with men outside of their family. In over half of the MENA countries for example, women cannot leave their homes without their husbands or another male guardian’s permission, as depicted in the map below.



A lack of female autonomy is an extremely detrimental factor heightening the likelihood of “honor” crimes. Such an aforementioned lack of autonomy often incapacitates women from being

able to reach out and travel to emergency centers, hindering them from escaping from harmful situations. In countries where women lack autonomy and or equal rights they are frequently not allowed to or believed incapable of making decisions for themselves and/or controlling their own sexuality. Therefore, when they violate a religious, societal or community code of behavior by refusing a forced marriage, seeking a divorce, choosing their own husband, socializing outside the home, renouncing or changing religion, etc. a woman’s male relatives must punish her in order to “restore the honor of the family.” This also makes an example of women who choose to disobey their family or community.

Additionally, societies with a lack of gender equality will likely also be characterized by pervasive misogynistic beliefs which have the potential to negatively impact institutional mechanisms that allow victims to report crimes safely and confidently as well as undermining fair trials if a gender bias persists.

Increasing female autonomy and gender equality in nations plagued by this issue is a key step in ending and preventing “honor” crimes. This must come both from changing deeply rooted cultural beliefs about women’s lack of autonomy as well as laws which guarantee economic, social, and political rights for women. Specifically, such laws should focus on ending the gender gap in education, the workforce and positions of power.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### UN Women

UN Women is the United Nations organization primarily responsible for gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was created in 2011 and works with governments, the private sector, civil society and academia to achieve its goals. One of its main targets is the elimination of GBV against female demographics. To tackle this issue, UN Women pursues a multi-faceted approach. Firstly, UN

Women is active in collecting and evaluating data concerning violence against women, including “honor” crimes, in order to understand trends and create possible solutions on the basis of this information. UN Women often includes policy recommendations in their reports. Prevention is another vital pillar of UN Women’s work, attempting to provide access to information to educate both girls and women about their rights but also to work with men and boys to foster respectful and non-violent relationships. In light of this, UN Women is a key player in the elimination of “honor” crimes.

### Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The High Commissioner for Human Rights is a part of the Secretariat of the United Nations and serves as such for the Human Rights Council and its components, such as the offices of the special rapporteurs. Additionally, it presides over treaty-based bodies - i.e. bodies established by one of the various international human rights conventions to which many Member States are signatories. The OHCHR was established on the 20th December 1993 by General Assembly resolution 48/141. One of the Special Rapporteurs over which it presides is the *Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences*. This position was established by the UN commission on Human Rights in 1994 (Resolution 1994/45) and has been under the jurisdiction of the OHCHR since 2006 (Human Rights Council’s decision 1/102). The Special Rapporteur’s mandate, currently (as of December 2023) held by Ms. Reem Alsalem (Jordan), revolves around the gathering of information concerning violence against female demographics, its causes and consequences as well as methods to integrate protections from such violence into the United Nations Human Rights Framework. This framework in turn provides policy suggestions or imperatives for the individual Member States.

### Pakistan

Pakistan is one of the countries with the highest rate of “honor” killings in the world. While Pakistani authorities claimed in 2021 that around 470 women were killed in the name of “honor” that year, human rights groups estimate the number to be closer to 1,000 a year. Often, “honor” crimes are classified as suicide or an accident, even if the nature of the wounds clearly indicate intentional external influence. A weak and often unaffordable central criminal justice system causes cases of “honor” based violence to be dealt with by unofficial court systems, in many cases strengthening the impunity of the perpetrators. Frequently, the most brutal punishments in the name of “honor” are ordained by male dominated tribal or village councils. A strict caste system and deeply entrenched norms of female “honor” - which is to be upheld by modest and chasteness - in combination with the state's lack of due diligence are seen as some of the causes for the high “honor” crime rates in Pakistan. An “anti-honor killing law” was passed in 2016 as a reaction to the international media interest in the “honor” killing of Qandeel Baloch, a social media celebrity, by her brother. This legislation closed the loophole which allowed relatives of the victims to pardon or reach a monetary settlement with the perpetrator, who, in the case of many “honor” killings, often was a relative themselves. Nevertheless, in practice, many “honor” crimes continue to go unreported, uninvestigated and unpunished, leading to a nearly unabated rate of



such crimes.

## India

Alongside Pakistan, India is one of the countries which has the highest prevalence of “honor” crimes in the world. As is common in the field of “honor” criminality, there is a relative dearth of information concerning “honor” crimes. Yet, there is slightly more information available to crimes resulting in death; while “honor” killings are also expected to be majorly underreported, United Nations figures suggest that 1 in 5 “honor” killings committed worldwide takes place in India. Furthermore, investigations by the Dalit Human Rights Defenders Network show that “honor” killings, at least those committed due to inter-caste relationships, are on the rise. India struggles with a deeply patriarchal and caste-focused society that exacerbates “honor” based violence and abuse. Such crimes fall under general provisions of India’s legal system, as India does not have special legislation to combat “honor” criminality. This situation persists despite the fact that a 2012 report of the Law Commission of India urged exactly this step, as echoed by the 2018 Supreme Court decision “Shakti Vahini vs. Union of India” which outlined steps to prevent and prosecute “honor” crimes, calling for India to fulfill its due diligence to a greater extent through its police and administrative organs.

## Timeline of Events

Date (start - end)	Name	Description
February, 23rd, 1994	Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW)	The DEVAW was adopted without a vote on the 23rd of February 1994 by the UN General Assembly. It was a landmark document, being the first international human rights declaration dealing specifically with the issue of violence against women. Articles 1 & 2 provide one of the most widespread contemporary legal definitions of violence against women.
September, 4th - 15th, 1995	Fourth World Conference on Women	The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was created in Beijing at the Fourth World Conference on Women. It aimed at creating a framework realizing global legal equality for women. Implementing legal equality in national legislation governing homicide as well as access to criminal justice systems is a vital step in combating “honor” crime.
January, 31st, 2001	General Assembly Resolutions on “honor” killings	The United Nations General Assembly passed one of three resolutions on the topic of “Working towards the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honor”

January, 30th, 2003	See above	See above
February, 10th 2005	See above	See above
October, 28th, 2015	Release date of "A Girl in the River: the Price of Forgiveness"	The documentary "A Girl in the River: the Price of Forgiveness" by Pakistani director Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy gained international media attention through winning an Academy Award in the section "documentary short subject". It chronicles the story of an "honor" killing survivor (Saba Qaiser) forced to "forgive" her father and uncle in court, freeing them from punishment in regards to their attempt to kill her. The Pakistani Prime Minister announced upcoming changes to the laws on "honor" killing in reaction to the film, showcasing the power of media in achieving policy change.
July, 15th, 2016	"Honor" killing of Qandeel Baloch	Qandeel Baloch, born Fouzia Azeem, was a Pakistani social media celebrity who was known for challenging social norms through e.g. criticisms of the role of women in Pakistani society, her dress style, considered by some to be "immoral" etc. She was asphyxiated by her brother Waseem Azeem in 2016, who confessed to the crime stating that she was bringing "dishonor" onto the family. This high profile case brought heightened international attention to the issue of "honor" crimes.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

There are various sources of international law that provide relevant guidance on the issue of "honor" crimes. Some of these are general human rights law provisions, others are more specifically geared towards GBV. Treaties, conventions and resolutions that attempt to address gender equality and work against discrimination are relevant to the elimination of "honor" based violence as well, due to the fact that these crimes stem in part from harmful social norms against female demographics. General human rights law provisions are not included in the following list, any documents dealing with human rights (such as the Universal Declaration for Human Rights) will also be applicable to the victims of "honor" crimes.

- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 23 February 1994, **(A/RES/48/104)**
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 18 December 1979
- Working towards the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honour, 31 January 2001 **(A/RES/55/66)**.
- Working towards the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honour, 30 January 2003 **(A/RES/57/179)**

- Working towards the elimination of crimes against women and girls committed in the name of honour, 10 February 2005, (**A/RES/59/165**)
- Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, 29 November 1985, (**General Assembly resolution 40/34**)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, created at the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 4 to 15 September 1995

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

While the right of women to live in freedom from violence is a basic principle of international human rights law, and “honor” based violence undeniably constitutes a severe violation of said principle, there have been few international attempts to specifically solve this issue. However, the three General Assembly Resolutions **A/RES/55/66**, **A/RES/57/179** & **A/RES/59/165** have outlined general principles for Member States to follow:

### Increased Data collection:

The lack of reliable data, including data detailing victims ages and other demographic information, is seen as one of the exacerbating factors in the case of insufficient measures taken to combat “honor” criminality. The United Nations, through its aforementioned General Assembly resolutions, has expressed its concern regarding this situation and has encouraged further research and data collection in this area. While some progress has been made, it must be mentioned that the last of the three relevant UN resolutions was published in 2005 and data remains insufficient and unreliable to this day.

### Setting standards for national legislation:

In the context of addressing “honor” crimes, national legislation plays a vital role. The United Nations has urged Member States “to implement their relevant obligations under international human rights” (A/RES/55/66) by methods such as “the adoption of amendments to relevant national laws relating to such crimes” (A/RES/57/179). Reforms in Pakistani and Turkish law, for example, have attempted to foster change:

### Pakistan:

In Pakistan the 2016 high-profile killing of Qandeel Baloch spurred legal reform: the Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offenses in the name or pretext of Honour) Act 2016, which was passed on Oct 6, 2016. Nominally, the amendment closed the loophole which had previously allowed the killers, who are predominantly relatives of the victim, to enjoy impunity if the victims legal heirs, also their relatives, forgive them. In practice however, many issues remain as the prosecution (of the killer) must prove that it was indeed an “honor” crime for these terms to apply. Perpetrators can deny that their motives were based on “honor.” Women’s lives and behaviors will now be judged by (predominantly male) judges in courts of law “paving a way for misogynistic rulings on the victims’ morality rather than the act of

perpetrators” (Aleena Khan). If the case is not dealt with as an “honor” crime, other sections of Pakistani law will apply and the family of the victim (and perpetrator) will once again be able to ensure impunity for the killer. Although the lack of reliable data is an impediment to exact statistics, the number of “honor” killings does not seem to have decreased.

### Turkey:

In 2004, Turkey revised its penal code, increasing sentences for violence against women and eliminating (on paper) leniency towards perpetrators of “honor” killings. In Turkey, it was common practice for families to pressure male family members under 18 to kill their sisters, mothers, aunts etc. in the knowledge that they would receive juvenile sentences of already very lenient laws on such crimes. Research suggests that simply increasing the sentences without significant efforts to install change of societal norms has led not to a decrease of “honor” related deaths but simply to a shifting of the methods of murder. Increased rates of “honor” suicides followed the legislative revision: in order to protect male family members from imprisonment, female individuals were subjected to increased pressure to kill themselves, rather than being killed through physical means. This example showcases the fact that, while legal change is crucial in combating “honor” criminality, legal change alone is insufficient and must be accompanied by further reaching campaigns in order to alter harmful societal norms that are the root cause of “honor” killings.

## Possible Solutions

### Sub-topic 1: Cultural origins and traditions

Governments of Member States should cooperate with a vast array of groups including but not limited to NGOs, other civil society organizations, social services, public health, crime, prison and probation units, United Nations specialized agencies as well as with religious and local community leaders to create far-reaching awareness campaigns. These comprehensive and multisectoral awareness raising campaigns should focus on working with both female and male demographic groups. Religious and community leaders should communicate that “honor” crimes are contrary to their respective values as well as work towards the elimination of harmful norms of “masculinity” and “femininity” that spur “honor” crimes. Women and girls should be informed about their rights and be provided with information where they can get help in an emergency situation (e.g. emergency hotlines and women’s shelters). Relevant police and judiciary forces should also be included in this information campaign, though specialized training for these groups is advisable. Additionally, the role of Media in influencing societal norms should not be underestimated, which is why a broad array of Media outlets should be incorporated in the awareness campaign. Media can, in the best cases, be a positive force for social change and legal reform (e.g. A Girl in the River documentary). Media and advertising can however also be harmful through upholding negative stereotypes and thereby underlining existing patriarchal social norms.

## Sub-topic 2: Criminalization and ending impunity

All Member States must recognise their Due Diligence to protect possible victims from “honor” crimes and to uphold justice if an “honor” crime has been committed.

### National legislation:

As a first step, states should ensure that legislation does not only address “honor” killings but also “honor” crimes. Furthermore, Member States should modify and/or create national legislation which targets the shortcomings of current legislation. Any and all legitimization of or leniency towards “honor” based violence must be removed from legislation immediately. Instead of making “honor” crimes a separate criminal offense, countries should focus on banning the use of the “honor defense” in any capacity. This is due to the fact that “honor” killings and crimes should be treated with the same severity as any other violent crime of the sort. The “honor” defense is a justification used by perpetrators and does not alter the way in which a crime should be charged. Thus, states should not treat it as such and should ensure that legislation specifically safeguards against any attempt to justify criminal behavior as a means of “restoring or maintaining the honor.” Furthermore, family members *should not* be given the power to pardon the perpetrator.

### National legal practice:

Member States should train police forces and the judiciary to recognise cases of “honor” based violence as well as how to appropriately deal with them. All possible and necessary efforts should be made to eliminate discriminatory and victim-blaming practices within relevant institutions. Special focus should be given to the establishment or strengthening of institutional mechanisms to facilitate safe and confidential reporting of “honor” based violence. Furthermore, governments should cooperate with tribal leaders to prevent cases of “honor” based violence being judged in informal courts, which have been shown to only further harm the victims.

## Sub-topic 3: Women’s rights, gender equality and preventative measures

In order to promote women’s rights and equality as a whole, laws should be implemented that allow for equal social, political and economic rights for women. The policy recommendations of the Beijing platform for Action which aimed at creating a framework realizing global legal equality for women should be implemented. Any and all legal provisions - in written or in customary law - that negatively impact human rights and freedoms of women should be removed. Vital areas to address in this field include closing the education and pay gap between the sexes; women are more likely to be unable to flee from “honor” based violence if they are completely dependent on male relations.

Further measures that can be taken to prevent “honor” crimes are the creation of free and confidential emergency hotlines for actual and potential victims of “honor” based violence. Additionally, support services should provide safe shelter as well as legal and psychological counseling.

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