



ANALYSIS OF CASES OF FEMICIDES

**MURDERS OF WOMEN IN
THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH
MACEDONIA**

2017 – 2020



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National Network to End Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – "Voice against Violence"

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CONTENT

1. Introduction	4
2. Defining femicides	6
3. National legislation	11
4. Methodology	14
5. Findings	16
6. Findings from conducted court case analysis	18
7. Femicides and firearms	22
8. Media coverage of femicide cases	23
9. Conclusions	26
10. Recommendations	28
11. Used literature	29

INTRODUCTION

Femicides, i.e., the murder of women and girls, are one of the main causes of premature death of women globally and are the most extreme form of violence against women. Femicides are a global problem that has been recognized by the international community 25 years ago. A total of 87,000 women were killed in 2017, according to a study by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). More than half of them (50,000 women or 58%) were killed by an intimate partner or other family member, which means that every day 137 women are killed by a loved one, by someone they trust¹. The same study shows that in 2012 the number of women killed by an intimate partner globally was 48,000 (47% of the total number of women killed). Hence it can be concluded that the number of femicides - murder of women tends to increase over the years. According to the data from this study, Africa is the region where women are most at risk of being killed (3.1 per 100,000 female population), while Europe is the region where the risk is lowest (0.7 per 100,000 female population).

As the most extreme form of violence, femicides pose a threat to the safety of women around the world. Although they occur in different contexts, as a result of an intimate partner violence and domestic violence, sexual violence, armed conflict, or for the purpose of so-called preserving family honor ("honor murder"), the main causes are still to be found in the unequal distribution of power between men and women, and deep-rooted patriarchal values, even in developed countries.

This analysis was carried out with the support of the German Government project "Improving National Practices for Small Arms and Light Weapons and Building Violence Resilient Communities" implemented by UNDP. The project is part of a broader regional initiative, a Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024. By improving data collection, analysis and dissemination of information related to Small Arms and Light Weapons it is ensured that policies and practices for its control are guided by analysis and based on evidence. The gender aspect of the project is of particular importance for these policies and practices to deliver the best results in building a society resistant to violence.

The World Health Pandemic with COVID 19 has increased the risk of gender-based violence. In the first three months since the beginning of the pandemic, several European countries, as well as the countries of the Western Balkans, published statistics on the increase in the number of reports of domestic violence by as much as 30-40%. Women's victim protection systems have been reorganized to provide emergency assistance and support to victims. In the Republic of North Macedonia, there was an increase in reports of domestic violence, especially after the end of the state of emergency and the reduction of curfew measures.

What is significant is the 25% increase in the number of domestic violence complaints in 2020 especially in the first half of the year, during the state of emergency and quarantine days. Annually, compared to 2019, there is an increase of 18% in domestic violence complaints. According to the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2020 there was no significant increase in the number of crimes related to domestic violence compared to 2019. According to the official statistics of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the number of crimes in 2019 was 989², and in 2020 was 992³. The high percentage of women victims of domestic violence crimes remains at 81% and 85%, respectively.

Women's CSOs that run specialized services for women victims of violence have reported an increase in calls to the SOS helplines and free legal aid during the state of emergency. The organizations also appealed for immediate reorganization of the Centers for Social Work and adaptation to the new situation.

The declaration of a state of emergency on the territory of North Macedonia, in March 2020, meant the adoption of urgent measures (health, social and economic) to help overcome the consequences of the health crisis. However, the protection of victims of domestic violence, especially women and children at greater risk, was completely left out as an aspect that needed to be included in the emergency measures. At the beginning of April 2020, the National Network to End Violence against Women sent two requests to the Government of RNM: a request for amendment of the decision for banning the movement of citizens in the entire territory of the country⁴

1 Global study on homicide: Gender related killing of women and girls, 2019 available at the [link](#)

2 Annual Report 2020, Ministry of Internal Affairs, [link](#)

3 Response to the Request for public information, 09.02.2021, Ministry of Internal Affairs

4 The request for amendment of the decision for banning the movement of citizens in the entire territory of the country is available at the [link](#)

and a request to impose urgent measures to protect women and children who are victims of domestic violence during the state of emergency⁵.

The institutional response to the sent requests and the steps taken by them to adapt the system of protection to the new situation is presented in the document prepared by the Network - Overview of urgent measures and steps taken by the Government and competent institutions to protect women and children who are victims of domestic violence⁶.

In the period April - May 2020, during the state of emergency and travel bans, two femicides occurred in Skopje⁷, which only pointed to the urgent need for mobilization and reorganization of institutions in order to ensure protection of victims during a pandemic. Unfortunately, as the above-mentioned document showed, the institutions did not consider this issue a priority and did not take significant steps to promote the protection of women victims of gender-based and domestic violence.

Gender-based violence and femicide as the most severe form, as well as the COVID 19 virus, can occur in all walks of life, they do not discriminate and do not choose age, nationality and socio-economic status. As many international experts, including United Nations agencies call it, it is a "hidden" pandemic that causes thousands of women and girls to lose their lives to people they trust.

The purpose of this analysis is to present the murder of women and girls in the Republic of North Macedonia in the period from 2017 to 2020, and is a continuation of the first Analysis of Cases of Femicides - murders of women in the Republic of Macedonia⁸ conducted by the National Network to End Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, with technical and financial support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The findings of the analysis will be used to develop recommendations for improving the system of prevention and protection of women who are victims of gender-based and domestic violence, which will contribute to the prevention of femicide as a consequence of long-term exposure to violence by an intimate partner violence and domestic violence.

5 The request to impose urgent measures to protect women and children who victims of domestic violence during the state of emergency is available at the link [link](#)

6 Overview of the urgent measures taken by the Government and relevant institutions to protect women and children who are victims of domestic violence during the state of emergency available at the [link](#)

7 Two femicides in less than two weeks is a sign that the system is failing to deal with domestic and gender-based violence available at the [link](#)

8 Analysis of Cases of Femicides - murders of women in the Republic of Macedonia available at the [link](#)

DEFINING FEMICIDES

The founder of the concept of femicides is considered to be the American feminist Diana H. Russell who, in 1976 at the first International Tribunal on Crimes against Women stated: "I chose the new term femicide to refer to the killing of females by males because they are female". Although the word femicide was already known in the Anglo-Saxon language, using it, Russell added political meaning to it and placed it within a broader feminist political framework. Russell later redefined the concept of femicide as "misogynistic killing of women" by men and an extreme manifestation of sexual violence – an addition suggested by Liz Kelly, that highlights the gendered nature of violence against women and focuses on the man's desire for power, domination and control⁹.

The United Nations define femicide as a "gender-based murder of women" that can take many forms, such as: intimate partner murder, murder of women accused of witchcraft / sorcery, murder of women in the name of honor, murder of women in armed conflicts, dowry-related murder, murder as a result of sexual orientation or gender identity, etc.

The Vienna Declaration on Femicides¹⁰ defines them as "murder of women because of their gender", which can take the form of: 1) murder as a result of domestic violence / intimate partner violence; 2) torture and misogynistic killing of women; 3) killing women in the "name of honor"; 4) targeted killing of women in armed conflict; 5) dowry-related murder of women; 6) murder of women due to their sexual orientation and gender identity; 7) murder of Aboriginal and indigenous women and girls because of their gender; 8) female infanticide and feticide (gender - based sex selection); 9) death as a result of female genital mutilation; 10) murder on charges of witchcraft; 11) other types of femicides related to gangs, organized crime, drugs, human trafficking and possession of weapons.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), taking into account the experiences of European countries, has attempted to develop two definitions of femicide: a general one drawn from the Vienna Declaration stated above, and a statistical one limiting femicide to intimate partner murder and murder of women as a result of harmful practices.

The general definition reads:

"The term femicide refers to the killing of women and girls because of their gender, committed and tolerated by both private and public actors. It covers murder of women as a result of intimate partner violence, torture and misogynistic killing of women, murder of women and girls in the "name of honor" and murder as a result of other harmful practices, targeted murder of women and girls in armed conflict, and cases of femicide related to gangs, organized crime, drug dealers and trafficking in women and girls. "

The statistical definition reads:

"Killing of women by an intimate partner and death of women as a result of practices harmful to women. "An intimate partner is a former or current spouse or partner, whether or not the perpetrator shares the same residence with the victim." ¹¹

The European Institute for Gender Equality has also conducted an analysis of the legal regulation of femicides in the European Union member states¹². The absence of a specific definition of femicide in any of the European countries prompted the authors of this paper to analyze the definitions of the underlying crime of murder with a particular focus on when the offense was committed in the context of intimate partner violence, taking into account the various elements of the offense, which are: premeditated murder, gender-based killing of a woman by a man, killing of a former / current partner, death of women as a result of intimate partner violence, death as a result of female genital mutilation and death as a result of unsafe abortion.

⁹ Femicide across Europe available at the [link](#)

¹⁰ Statement submitted by the Academic Council on the United Nations System, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council available at the [link](#)

¹¹ [femicide | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹² [Terminology and indicators for data collection: Rape, femicide and intimate partner violence - Report | EIGE \(europa.eu\)](#)

In table no. 1 the components of femicide regulated in the legislation in the EU member states are presented. The asterisk (*) indicates the countries in which the specific component is envisaged as an aggravating circumstance.

	Member States of the European Union	Total member states
Intentional murder	YES: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, England	24
	NO: Denmark, Malta, Slovenia, Finland	4
Gender-based murder of women	YES: (Belgium, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Slovenia)	6
	NO: (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, England).	22
Murder of a partner / spouse	YES: (Denmark, Estonia, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania)	7
	NO: (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, England)	21
Murder of women as a result of intimate partner violence	YES: (Denmark, Spain, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania)	5
	NO: (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Greece, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, England).	23
Death as a result of female genital mutilation	Separate crime: (Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia)	9
Death as a result of unsafe abortion	Separate crime: (Belgium, Germany, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Slovakia)	14
Dowry - related murder	None of the 28 members states state that they will be subject to murder, but with specific aggravating circumstances identified	0
Murder in the name of honor	None of the 28 members states state that they will be subject to murder, but with specific aggravating circumstances identified	0
Female Feticide	None of the 28 Member States has this component. (Murder of infants is a separate offense in several Member States.)	0

The definitions of murder adopted by international organizations (European Parliament, Eurostat, Council of Europe, Vienna Declaration on Femicides, World Health Organization, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) are also analyzed in this way. The findings from the definitions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Commonly used European and international elements of definitions for femicide

	Premeditated murder	Gender based murder	Context of continuing violence	Position of subordination, marginalization and risk	Murder of women by former intimate partners or as a result of intimate partner violence	Murder of women involving sexual violence	Murder in the name of honor	Death as a result of female genital mutilation	Female infanticide	Death as a result of unsafe abortion	dowry-related murder
European Parliament	✓	✓									
European sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics HEUNI	✓										
Eurostat	✓										
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Vienna Declaration on Femicide (United Nations)	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
World Health Organization	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women - United Nations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
High Commissioner for Human Rights - United Nations	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓			
Classification of crimes for statistical purposes	✓										

There is no generally accepted definition of femicide at the international level, so the basic definition of murder is used as a starting point. It takes into account the elements that each country uses to more specifically define gender-based killing of women. In the laws of different countries, these elements are presented as aggravating circumstances in qualifying the offense, although the findings of a study by the European Institute for Gender Equality show that very few Member States actually take these aggravating circumstances into account. “Intentional murder” is an element of the definition of murder in 24 EU member states; “Gender-based killing of a woman by a man” is an aggravating circumstance in 6 Member States;

“Killing of a former / current partner” is included as an aggravating circumstance in 7 Member States; “Death of women as a result of intimate partner violence” exists as an aggravating circumstance in 5 member states, while death as a result of female genital mutilation is not included in the definition of murder in any member state, i.e. only 9 member states recognize it as a separate crime. The finding of “death as a result of unsafe abortion” is similar, which is a separate crime in 14 member states.

The lack of a single definition of femicide makes it difficult to compile statistics on this most extreme form of gender-based violence. Additionally, the lack of a unified system for data collection at national and international level is a problem.

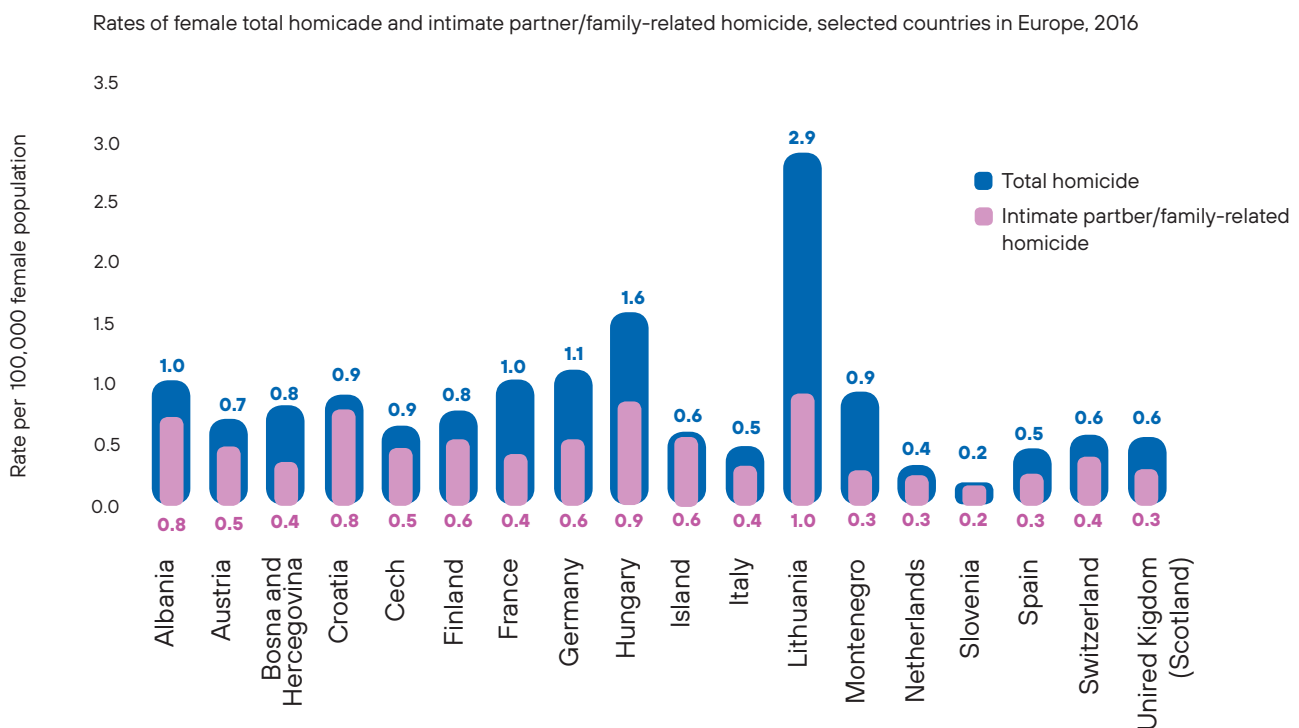
According to a 2019 study by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (the only study that provides statistics on the number of murders of women globally), six out of ten women in the world (58%) are intentionally killed by an intimate partner or other family member. More specifically, of the total number of murder of women, 34% were committed by an intimate partner, 24% by a family member, and the remaining 42% by a perpetrator outside the family. It is important to note that there is no even distribution of murder rates in different regions of the world. Namely, Africa has the highest percentage - in 68% of the total number of murders of women, the perpetrator is an intimate partner or a member of the family, while in Europe this percentage is 38¹³.

The same research reports that one in five murders globally was committed by an intimate partner or other family member, and that women are the most common victims of this type of murder - 36% of the victims are men, while 64% are women, which only confirms the fact that the home is the most unsafe place for women, and that they are often killed by a person close to them whom they trust.

The position on murder of women and femicides in certain countries in Europe is presented in Table 3. The total number of killed women is marked in black, and the number of women killed by an intimate partner or family member - femicides are marked in purple.

Table 3: Murder rate of women and femicides per 100,000 female population in certain countries in Europe, for 2016

Female total homicide and intimate partner/family-related homicide in selected countries



Source: UNODC homicide statistics

13 Global study on homicide: Gender related killing of women and girls, 2019 available at the [link](#)

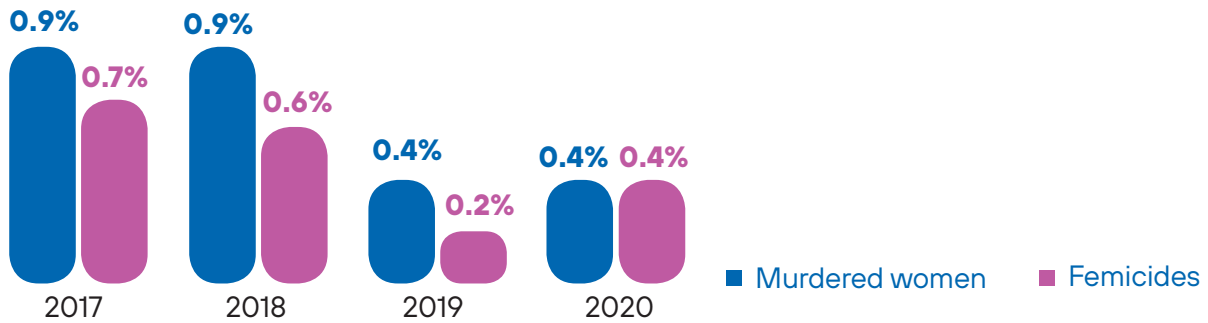
ANALYSIS OF CASES OF FEMICIDES

In the Republic of North Macedonia, in the period from 2008 to 2020, a total of 96 women were killed, of which at least 50 were femicides.

The murder rate of women and femicides for the period covered in this analysis is presented in the table below. The percentage of femicides per 100,000 female population is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Murder rate of women and femicides in North Macedonia for the period 2017 – 2020

Murder rate on 100,000 female population



NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Macedonian legislation does not recognize the term femicide, and therefore does not regulate it as a separate crime. What is part of the criminal code is the basic murder (Article 123), and the commission of the crime Murder in domestic violence is provided as an aggravating circumstance in the same article, paragraph 2, item 2. The inclusion of domestic violence as an aggravating circumstance provides for a more serious penalty for the perpetrator, i.e., from a minimum of 10 years to life imprisonment. In addition to deprivation of life during the perpetration of domestic violence (item 2), Article 123 of the Criminal Code¹⁴ defines the following aggravating circumstances:

1. deprive any person of life in a cruel or insidious way;
2. deprive any person of life and at the same time intentional endangerment of the life of another person;
3. deprive any person of life out of cupidity, for the purpose of committing or concealing another crime, out of ruthless revenge or other low motives;
4. deprive any person of life as a contract killing;
5. deprive of life a female person which they know is pregnant or a minor and
6. deprive of life of a judge, public prosecutor or lawyer, while performing their function, i.e., activity, or public official or military person while performing the activities of public or state security or the duty of keeping public order, catching a perpetrator of a crime or holding a person deprived of liberty.

The Republic of North Macedonia ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence (known as the Istanbul Convention) in December 2017, and entered into force in July 2018. In order to more effectively implement the Istanbul Convention through the harmonization of national legislation with the provisions of this document, a National Action Plan 2018 - 2023 (NAP) was developed and adopted by the Government of the RNM in October 2018. The NAP includes all relevant institutions and envisages any changes that need to be made in the three identified areas: legislation, prevention and protection.

The Criminal Code is one of the basic laws that should be harmonized with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, i.e., to make changes and amendments to criminalize all forms of gender-based violence. According to the "Report on the Progress of RNM in the implementation the National Action Plan for implementation of the Istanbul Convention" for a period of two years (October 2018 - October 2020)¹⁵, *"a working group has been established within the Ministry of Justice in which civil society organizations are not invited to participate, although the cooperation with them is foreseen in the NAP for implementation of the IC. "Before the establishment of this group, in the previous period, the Criminal Code was reviewed and amended by a closed working group formed by the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the OSCE."*

During the preparation of this analysis, a draft text of the Criminal Code prepared by the working group was shared, with the proposed changes and amendments, which provide for the definition of gender-based violence in the glossary of the law, harmonization of the elements of the crime of rape with the provisions of the Convention as well as the criminalization of stalking, sexual harassment, psychological violence, genital mutilation and harsher penalties for crimes committed in order to preserve honor. Regarding the murder of women, femicide is not recognized as a separate crime, but there is an *aggravating circumstance if the crime was committed through gender-based or domestic violence*.

The draft text was adopted by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia on July 28, 2021 and has entered the parliamentary procedure, which leaves room for additional changes and amendments.

With the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, the state has accepted the provisions regulated in this document and is obliged to respect them. Namely, regardless of whether the changes and amendments to the national

¹⁴ Criminal Code available at the [link](#)

¹⁵ Report on the Progress of RNM in the implementation the National Action Plan for implementation of the Istanbul Convention" for a period of two years (October 2018 - October 2020) is available at the [link](#)

legislation will be made, the provisions of the Istanbul Convention can be used in court practice, with the exception of the articles to which the state has made a reservation, in accordance with Article 118 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia¹⁶.

Taking into account that the Istanbul Convention recognizes various forms of violence against women, and the killing of women as physical violence that can result in death, makes recommendations for criminal prosecution of perpetrators, and provides for aggravating circumstances in determining the sanctions, the Macedonian judicial system should use these provisions in practice.

Aggravating circumstances under the Istanbul Convention are:

- a. the crime was committed against a former or current spouse or partner in accordance with national law, by a family member, a person living with the victim or a person who abused his or her authority;
- b. the crime, i.e., related acts were repeated;
- c. the crime was committed to a person who was vulnerable due to certain circumstances;
- d. the crime was committed to or in the presence of a child;
- e. the crime was committed by two or more people acting together;
- f. the crime was preceded by or committed with an extreme level of violence;
- g. the crime was committed with the use or threat of a weapon;
- h. the crime resulted in severe physical or psychological consequences for the victim;
- i. the perpetrator had previously been convicted of acts of a similar nature.

From the aspect of civil law protection of the victims of gender-based violence, the state for the first time in January 2021 adopted a law that recognizes all forms of gender-based violence and which provides specific protection for all women victims of various forms of violence through establishment of specialized assistance and support services. The preparation and adoption of the new law on prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence was envisaged in the National Action Plan for Implementation of the Istanbul Convention, and its main goal is to improve the system for protection of women victims of various forms of gender-based violence.

The glossary of the law in Article 3 specifically defines what it covers and what is meant by "violence against women" (paragraph 1), "gender-based violence" (paragraph 2), "domestic violence" (paragraph 3) and "intimate" partner violence. (Paragraph 5). The new law defines the reintegration of victims of violence (Article 99), for the first time in the system of protection from violence against women and domestic violence, where through a special program for reintegration of victims of violence, the following services will be provided: temporary housing, psychological counseling with mentoring, various types of financial assistance specifically designed for women victims of violence, opportunities for education and training in various fields, as well as employment measures established by law. According to this article, the competent institutions will be obliged to recognize the victims of violence as a special vulnerable category and to develop programs and measures in accordance with the specific needs of women victims of violence.

One of the most significant improvements regulated by this law is the principle of due diligence which obliges all participants in the protection system to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, judicial and other measures to prevent, protect, investigate, punish and ensure equitable compensation for the victims or return to the original position for acts of violence committed by individuals or legal entities¹⁷. The basic principles of the law are non-discrimination, prohibition of victimization, vulnerable women, appropriate adaptation for women with disabilities, gender responsive policies and empowerment of women victims of violence.

Regarding the civil protection system, the Centers for Social Work (CSW) have the same competences as the previous law. The protection measures taken by the CSW in Article 46 are extended as follows: a) provides temporary care; b) ensures that the victim receives the necessary medical assistance and, if necessary, accompanies her to the nearest health institution; c) ensures that the victim exercises the right to social and

¹⁶ Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia available at the [link](#)

¹⁷ Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence available at the [link](#)

health protection in accordance with law; d) provides appropriate psycho-social intervention and treatment; e) ensures that the victim receives psycho-social treatment during counseling by experts in the center for social work, association, counseling for women victims of violence and other victims of domestic violence; f) provides assistance to the family for regular education of a child; g) provides legal aid and representation; h) directs the victim to the relevant state and other bodies responsible for economic empowerment of the victim and its active inclusion in the labor market, through a competent employment center; and i) in case of high risk and taking urgent protection measures, as well as when the victim uses the services of temporary residence, and no later than 12 hours from the receipt of the application, makes a decision for temporary entrustment of care and upbringing of children to the parental victim.

Although the new Law on the Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence is a civil law and does not directly regulate homicide as a crime, its importance stems from the fact that full compliance with the provisions will contribute to the prevention of femicide.

METHODOLOGY

The Analysis of Murder of Women - Femicides took place in four phases.

First phase - the analysis of the legislation included a review of the relevant legal documents with a focus on the Criminal Code and international practices, as well as published analyzes and research with a similar or the same focus, from the Western Balkans region and European countries.

As a result of the review of the above-mentioned documents, the most appropriate definition for this type of crime has been proposed, which can be used in a national context.

Second phase - analysis of individual cases of murders of women. The first step to be effectuated before starting the analysis of individual cases had to be the identification of the number of women who were killed in the period 2017-2020. The experience of the research team in preparing the first study on femicides¹⁸ is that the most relevant data on the number of murders of women per year can be found on the website of the State Statistical Office, while the number of attempted murders was obtained from a review of daily bulletins of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

After identifying the number of women killed in the period that is the subject of this analysis, the next step was to identify the victims, i.e., the municipality / city in which the killing took place. This information was obtained through a detailed review of media announcements and daily bulletins of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This was the only way to collect this type of information because the courts do not collect data by gender of the victim, and the data available to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which are related to the place of the murder, are divided by Sectors of Internal Affairs (SIA) which are not organized in the same way as the Basic Courts with extended jurisdiction responsible for this type of crime. The Sectors of Internal Affairs are not organized in the same way with the Public Prosecutor's Offices with extended jurisdiction responsible for this type of crime.

The next step was to prepare and send requests for court case analysis to all courts with extended jurisdiction where it was identified that a woman was killed in the period from 2017 to 2020. Requests for analysis were also sent to the Public Prosecutor's Offices for court case analysis where the perpetrator committed suicide after committing the murder.

In order to systematically collect data, a structured questionnaire was developed which the researchers filled in for each analysis into the case. The structured questionnaire contains the following indicators:

- ❶ Age and gender of the victim and the perpetrator
- ❷ Employment of the victim and the perpetrator
- ❸ Type of relationship between the victim and the perpetrator
- ❹ Type of disability (if any) of the victim and the perpetrator
- ❺ Existence of violence
- ❻ Method of killing
- ❼ Were the firearms registered?
- ❽ Is there a license to carry
- ❾ Is the license for private or official purposes (if it is for an official for which institution it was approved)
- ❿ Place of killing
- ⓫ Motive for the killing
- ⓬ Were there any other victims or witnesses?
- ⓭ Mental state of the perpetrator
- ⓮ Article of the Criminal Code according to which the crime / indictment is qualified

¹⁸ Analysis of femicides - murder of women in the Republic of Macedonia, National Network to End Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, 2018 available at the [link](#)

- Duration of the court procedure
- Degree of the sentence

Third phase - analysis of media reports

The first analysis of femicides - Murder of women in the Republic of Macedonia (2008 - 2016) conducted by the National Network to End Violence against Women showed that media reports are factual, without deeper analysis of cases, do not use gender sensitive language, do not recognize murder as a form of gender-based violence, and they often use headlines that are sensational and would grab readers' attention.

The analysis of the media reports aims to show whether a step forward has been made in relation to this topic, i.e., whether the way of reporting has been improved. As a result of the analysis of the media reports, specific recommendations for improvement were prepared.

Fourth phase - Summarizing the data and preparing a final report

In the last phase of preparation of the Analysis, after collecting all the data according to the previously described steps, the final report was prepared which consists of findings from the analyzed data, conclusions and recommendations for improvement.

The final report will be presented to representatives of the relevant institutions.

FINDINGS

After reviewing the available information in the section Population – Violent death¹⁹, published on the website of the State Statistical Office, the data obtained showed that the number of women killed in the analyzed period is a total of 26.

Table 1 presents the data obtained from the State Statistical Office, i.e., the number of women killed divided by years, as well as the causes of death.

Table 1: Total number of women killed in the period 2017-2020 by cause of death

Cause of death	2017	2018	2019	2020
Attempt to inflict bodily harm by hanging, strangulation and suffocation	1	1		
Attempt to inflict bodily harm by drowning and immersion	1		1	
Attempt to inflict bodily harm by firing a handgun		5	1	
Attempt to inflict bodily harm by firing from a rifle and a larger firearm	1			1
Attempt to inflict bodily harm by firing from another and unmarked firearm		1		1
Attempt to inflict bodily harm by using physical strength				
Attempt to inflict bodily harm by using a sharp object	1	1		
Attempt to inflict bodily harm by using a blunt object	2			
Attempt to inflict bodily harm in an unmarked way	3	1	2	2
Total	9	9	4	4

After identifying the number of women killed for the period 2017-2020, the next step was a detailed review of the daily bulletins of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the media reports from this period. Comparing the information from several media, more detailed information was obtained such as name and surname / initials of the victim and perpetrator or the initial suspect, relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, place and manner of occurrence, and in some cases motive for killing.

In this way, data on 25 killed women was provided.

For court case analysis of the already identified killed women, requests for access to court cases for analysis were sent to the Basic Courts with extended jurisdiction located in Skopje, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kochani, Bitola, Veles, Ohrid and Prilep, and for which it was determined that they had cases of murders of women. Positive answers were received from all courts, with the exception from Tetovo, which even after numerous calls did not respond to the request for access to inspect the case of a murder that occurred in 2018.

A challenge that arose during the analysis is the lack of court cases for two of the murder, in Gostivar and Kochani. In addition, not all courts allowed all cases to be analyzed, often on the pretext that they could not find them. Two of the cases were still pending, i.e., initial verdicts were rendered which were appealed by the perpetrator and the procedure continued in the Court of Appeals. Access to court cases was not allowed for a total of 10 cases.

Due to the short timeframe provided for this part of the analysis, investigators were unable to gather information on what happened with the murder for which no proceedings have been instituted.

Regarding the murder of women followed by the suicide of the perpetrator, a request was submitted to the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office - Skopje, where they replied that "The Public Prosecutor of the Republic of North Macedonia or a person authorized by him may allow access to records or documents of the Public Prosecutor's

¹⁹ State Statistical Office, Violent Death Statements available at the [link](#)

Office which are archived” and the request of the Network was forwarded to the Public Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of North Macedonia. Despite several attempts, the investigators failed to get in touch and receive an answer from the Public Prosecutor’s Office of RNM. Special requests were submitted to the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Skopje (1 case), the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Bitola (1 case) and the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Kochani (1 case), the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Prilep (1 case). An answer accompanied by an approved request for court case analysis was received only from the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Prilep.

According to initial information obtained from detailed reviews on media reports and the daily bulletin of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, **the conclusion is that 22 murders can be qualified as femicide.**

In the first and second analysis, about 50% of the court cases for murder of women were provided. More specifically, the first analysis for the period from 2008 to 2016 covered 48.5% of the total number of murders, and this analysis covered 61.5%.

In assessing whether a murder could qualify as femicide, the authors of this analysis took into account three criteria derived from the above definitions of femicide. The first basic criterion is that the victim is a woman and that the murder was committed by an intimate partner, former or current, whether they live or have lived in the same household or another male family member. The second criterion is the motive for the murder - whether the victim was the main target of the perpetrator. And the third is whether the murder would have happened if the circumstances were the same, and the roles changed - the victim to be the perpetrator.

Following these criteria, it was found that 22 of the murders of women were femicides, while 4 did not fall into this qualification.

Namely, in two of the murders that were not qualified as femicides, the crime was committed by a neighbor / relative of the husband, and the motive for the murder was not gender-based, i.e., the targets were not the women who were killed. In the first case the neighbor attacked the whole family, during which the other members received minor injuries, in the second case the target was the husband of the killed woman. For the other two murders, the competent institutions did not respond to the requests for analysis, and there was very little information in the media reports, insufficient to determine the motive and gender basis of the murder. The fact remains that if there was enough information, both of these could qualify as femicides.

Table 2: Number of femicides per year

	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Total murder	9	9	4	4	26
Analysis made	5	6	1	4	16
Femicides	7	9	2	4	22

FINDINGS FROM CONDUCTED COURT CASE ANALYSIS

Requests were submitted to the Basic Courts with extended jurisdiction in Skopje, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kochani, Bitola, Veles, Ohrid and Prilep and the Primary Public Prosecutor's Offices in Skopje, Bitola, Prilep and Kochani to analyze 25 court cases of killed women in the period from 2017 - 2020.

Sixteen cases of murder of women were inspected and analyzed, 14 of which could be classified as femicides. In processing the obtained data, the following was taken into account: the age and sex of the victim and the perpetrator, employment of the victim and the perpetrator, type of relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, type of disability (if any) of the victim and perpetrator, existence of violence, method of killing, whether the firearm was registered, whether the holder possessed a license to carry, whether the license is for private or official purposes (if it is for an official for which institution it was approved), place of the killing, motive for the killing, whether there were other victims or witnesses, mental state of the perpetrator, article of the Criminal Code according to which the crime / indictment is qualified, duration of the court procedure.

The obtained findings refer only to the part of the analyzed court cases of murder of women that are qualified as femicides and are presented in accordance with the indicators listed above.

Regarding the age of the victim and the perpetrator, the following table shows the findings by age groups.

Table 3: Findings by age groups

Age	Victim	Perpetrator
Up to 20 years		1
21 – 30 years	2	2
31 – 40 years	3	4
41 – 50 years	3	1
51 – 60 years	1	2
Over 61 years	5	3

Compared to the previous Analysis of cases of killing of women, and the court cases that are the subject to analysis in this document, there is no difference between the perpetrator and the victim in terms of their employment / unemployment.

Table 4: Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Victim	Perpetrator
Macedonian	10	7
Albanian	3	4
Roma	2	2
Turkish		1

According to ethnicity, most of the victims and perpetrators are Macedonian (more than 70%), while the other victims are of Albanian and Roma ethnicity. Only 1 perpetrator is of Turkish ethnicity.

Although as part of the structured questionnaire the question of the existence of disability of the victim and the perpetrator was included, still no such information was received in any of the analyzed cases.

The findings obtained regarding the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator are expected, and coincide with the findings obtained in the previous study. Namely, **out of a total of 14 killed women, 10 were**

killed by a current or former intimate partner. The other 4 were killed by close family members. One woman was killed by her son, two women were killed by their grandchildren and one by a close relative.

Table 5: Relationship between victim and perpetrator

Type of relationship	
Spouses	5
Extramarital partners	3
Intimate partners	1
Ex-spouses / partners	1
Son / Mother	1
Grandson / Grandmother	2
Other family members / relatives	1

As in the previous analysis, this time the focus was on the existence of reports of violence and institutional response. In more than 80% of the cases, although there was violence that was later witnessed in the procedure by close relatives of the victim, still none of the 14 women killed reported the violence they experienced at the competent institutions. Most of the women killed were exposed to more than one form of gender-based violence, and 6 of them received death threats.

Table 6: Form of violence that preceded the murder

Psychological violence	9
Physical violence	6
Death threats	6
Sexual violence	1
Verbal arguments	3
Economic violence	2

Most of the murders were carried out with a knife, with multiple fatal stab wounds to the victims. In committing the murder, in 3 cases the perpetrator used several methods to achieve the ultimate goal - deprivation of life of the victim. The change in the method of killing occurred when the method originally used was not successful, so the perpetrators continued with what was most available to them - their own physical strength (strangulation, kicking, punching)

Table 7: Method of killing

Impact with a blunt object (metal boxer, rolling pin)	2
Stab wounds with a knife	5
Punch / kick	1
Firearm – gun	3
Strangulation	4
Strikes with an ax	1
Burned her alive	1

In 2 of the three cases where a firearm was used - a gun to commit the crime - murder, it was registered, and the perpetrators had a license to carry for private purposes. The perpetrator who committed the murder with an unregistered weapon, in addition to this crime, was also prosecuted for Unauthorized manufacture, possession, mediation and trafficking in weapons or explosives in accordance with Article 396 of the Criminal Code.

Compared to the findings from the first analysis, the use of firearms to commit murder is reduced, i.e., in the period from 2008 to 2016 out of a total of 28 analyzed murders of women, 15 or 53.5% were committed with firearms, for which in 7 cases the perpetrator did not have a license to carry, and in 4 cases there was no information

on possession / non-possession because the perpetrator committed suicide immediately after committing the murder. In the period from 2017 to 2020, 21% of the murders were committed with firearms, i.e., 3 out of 14 women. Only two perpetrators had a license for private purposes.

And in terms of motive for killing, the findings are very similar to those of the first Analysis of Murder of Women (2008-2016). The most common motives are conflicting relationships between the perpetrator and the victim who are in an intimate partnership, regardless of whether it is marital or extramarital, which conflicts can be of a financial nature. Namely, in 3 of the cases the murder happened after the victim refused to give money to the perpetrator. The murder is the ultimate consequence of the economic violence that preceded it.

Alcohol and opiate addiction occur as an accompanying motive, often in combination with conflicting relationships or mental disorder.

Table 8: Motive for murder

Conflicting relationships between current partners	5
Mental condition / disorder	5
Addiction to alcohol, drugs and other psychotropic substances	3
Divorce / Ending a relationship	3
Conflicts of a financial nature	3

Most of the murders (50%) took place in the family home, i.e., the home where the perpetrator and the victim lived together, while 25% of the murders took place in the home where the victim lived alone or with her parents or other family members.

Table 9: Place of occurrence of the murder

Family home	7
Public space	2
The victim's home	1
Home of the parents / other family members of the victim	3
Home of the perpetrator	1

It is frightening that as many as 6 minors witnessed the murder, of which 4 were direct witnesses, i.e., they were present in the same room when the perpetrator committed the murder. The focus of this analysis is the murder of women, so the questionnaire that collected information about the cases did not include questions about children, i.e., the only question was whether the victim had children. In 2018, a national study on prevention, identification, reporting and referral in cases of violence against children was published, which provides an overview of national response mechanisms. This study covers the civil system of child protection of victims of violence, but not the criminal justice system.²⁰ The data collection on the involvement of children in criminal proceedings as witnesses, as well as data on the protection provided to them by the competent institutions is the subject of a separate analysis that needs to be conducted as a next step.

Regarding the mental condition of the perpetrators, during the court case analysis in 7 cases, the existence of some type of disorder was noticed, which was previously diagnosed. These are psychotic and paranoid disorders at different stages that require long-term treatment. For almost all those accused of committing the crime of murder, the court requested a psychiatric expertise for the mental state of the perpetrator and his mental capacity at the time of the murder.

²⁰ Prevention, identification, reporting and referral in cases of violence against children: An overview of national response mechanisms available at the [link](#)

Table 10: Crimes against which an indictment has been filed

Article 123 paragraph 2 item 2, related to Article 12 paragraph 2	1
Article 123 paragraph 2 item 2, related to Article 12 paragraph	1
Article 123 paragraph 2 item 1 and item 2	3
Article 123 paragraph 2 item 1	1
Article 123 paragraph 2 item 2	6
Article 123 paragraph 1	1
Suicide of the perpetrator	1

Aggravating circumstance - murder in domestic violence is envisioned in the qualification of the crime in 11 cases.

During the analysis of the cases of murder of women, the duration of the court proceedings was monitored. The rapid action of both the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Basic Courts in these proceedings is noticeable. Half of the court proceedings, namely for 7 murder cases, ended in less than three months.

One procedure has not been completed yet, the case has been returned several times and there is even a change in the qualifying form of the crime. As the case is still open, no details will be shared about the course of the proceedings in this analysis.

The degree of the sentence ranges from 10 years to life imprisonment (in two cases), with the exception of two cases where the sentence imposed was - Security measure: mandatory psychiatric treatment and confinement in a health institution.

Regarding the duration of the court proceedings, in 4 of the cases there was a confession by the perpetrators and the proceedings were completed in a period of up to 3 months. In one case where the perpetrator was diagnosed with a severe mental disorder, the procedure was completed in 1 month and the sentence imposed was - Security measure: mandatory psychiatric treatment and confinement in a health institution. In two of the cases, the defendants filed an appeal against the verdict, so the proceedings are still ongoing, but the basic courts that originally conducted the court proceedings rendered the verdict in 6 and 7 months, respectively. Also, the duration of the proceedings for the other cases of murder of women ended in a period of 3 to 6 months.

Compared to the findings of the previous analysis, there is some progress in the urgency of the proceedings, i.e., the first analysis shows that the proceedings last from 3 to 20 months, and only longer are those where the perpetrator has impaired mental health and requires expertise from a professional.

Out of the total number of femicides, the research team received permission to analyze 14 court cases. For the other 7 information was obtained only from media reports. In five of the cases, the perpetrator was the husband, in one of the cases the extramarital partner, and for one murder there is no information about a suspect. Two of the murders were committed with firearms - a gun for which there is no information whether the perpetrator had a license. Three of the perpetrators committed suicide after committing the murder. There was no information in any of the media reports about the possible motive for the murder.

FEMICIDES AND FIREARMS

Women are most often victims of abuse and illegal use of firearms, especially in domestic violence, while men are mostly perpetrators of such acts. In general, in Southeast Europe, more than 95% of firearms are owned by men and less than 5%²¹ by women. In the Republic of North Macedonia, the percentage is even higher, i.e., 99.5% of all firearms are owned by men, while women own only 0.5%²².

According to a study published by SEESAC²³ (Southeastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) - Firearms Abuse in Domestic Violence in Southeast Europe²⁴, femicides are the most common form of homicide committed by a family member. The document itself explains that “family member” means a) current or former spouses; b) children, parents and other blood relatives, adopted members; c) persons who live or have lived in the same household; d) persons who are or have been in an emotional or sexual relationship, have a child together or are waiting for a child to be born even though they have never lived together.

Namely, according to the findings in the study, 61% of all killed women were killed by a family member, while among men this percentage is 12.4%, which data only confirms the findings of other research and analysis, that women are most often killed by people whom they trust. An analysis of femicides conducted in Macedonia shows that more than 80% of the killed women were killed by a family member according to the above criteria that this term covers.

Furthermore, according to the study, out of the total number of killed women and men, an intimate partner is the perpetrator of violence in 38.6% of the cases of killed women and 1.2% of killed men. Of particular concern is the fact that in 68.9% of femicide cases, the homicide occurred at home, which reduces the victim’s chances of escaping.

According to the findings of the same study, in Southeastern Europe, in 36.5% of cases of murder of women, the crime was committed with a firearm by a family member, and in 43.5% of murders of women by a firearm the perpetrator is an intimate partner. The analysis of femicides in Macedonia shows that more than 30% of the murders of women were committed with firearms²⁵.

In terms of obtaining a license to carry a firearm, the study shows that in Southeastern Europe, only 8.5% of applicants were rejected on the grounds that they were perpetrators of domestic violence. While only in 2.3% of the withdrawn firearms licenses the reason for withdrawal was cited as domestic violence.

Perhaps one of the most significant findings in this study is that gun abuse was reported in only 0.3 percent of registered domestic violence criminal charges, which only confirms the fact that the number of unreported cases is much higher.

A survey with a similar focus was conducted in Serbia²⁶, where the findings show that every fifth femicide is committed with a firearm (21.1% of the total number of femicides). One of the main findings is that there is a significantly higher risk for a woman to be a victim of gun violence by a partner or other family member. Namely, almost 95% of the femicide cases covered by this research, 84% of the femicide attempts and 86% of the gun threats were committed by an intimate partner.

²¹ Gender and SALW in South East Europe available at the [link](#)

²² Gender and SALW in South East Europe available at the [link](#)

²³ The South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) which aims to strengthen national and regional control capacities and reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, and thus contribute to strengthening stability, security and development in South Eastern and Eastern Europe.

²⁴ The misuse of firearms in domestic violence in South east Europe available at the [link](#)

²⁵ The findings for Macedonia cover the period from 2008 to 2020.

²⁶ Analysis of cases of femicide committed with firearms available at the [link](#)

MEDIA COVERAGE OF FEMICIDE CASES IN MACEDONIA

The media are one of the main actors in raising awareness of all forms of gender-based violence, especially during a pandemic. Media coverage on this topic, including reporting on femicides, as the most severe form of gender-based violence, play a key role in creating and implementing social understandings of the causes and consequences of various forms of violence. The media can also influence the policies created and adopted by state institutions, which refer to criminal justice.

Over the years, media coverage on this topic has changed, has improved, but not enough to portray femicide as part of a larger social problem related to violence against women and deep-rooted inequalities between men and women. The purpose of the media is to raise questions, to inform, to educate, to help the general population understand the social issues of interest, to encourage dialogue and, most importantly, to serve as catalysts for change.

To achieve this, the media need to be educated and sensitized on how to report on gender issues and gender-based violence in an impartial manner, avoiding victimization and stigmatization of women and victims of violence²⁷. Otherwise, the media will contribute to reinforcing stereotypes, prejudices and creating a false image of the roots of gender-based violence, dominated by narratives in which the cause of violence is sought in the victim, not in the perpetrator or in the inaction of the institutions. The narrative in which justification is sought for the perpetrator, presenting him as a responsible, hardworking, peaceful person who was respected by his neighbors, directs the audience to seek guilt and responsibility from the victim i.e., what she has done to upset that peaceful man. These narratives may also increase the risk of violence, such as increasing the number of femicides as the most severe form.

In order to identify the women who were killed in the period from 2017 to 2020, and due to the lack of an adequate database from which this type of information could be obtained, a detailed review of media reports for this period was conducted. In addition to helping researchers with their original purpose, this was also used to analyze the text in the reports themselves. The purpose of the analysis was to determine whether there was an improvement in the way of reporting on cases of femicide – murder of women, by comparing the findings of the first analysis. This process covered 88 media reports.

The following indicators were taken into account during the analysis:

- existence of personal information about the perpetrators and victims (name and surname, age, place of residence),
- use of direct or indirect accusations against the victim,
- contextualizing femicide cases as individual problems or as part of a broader issue related to gender-based and / or intimate partner violence.

Additionally, the analysis included the existence of information regarding the trial and the verdict, i.e., the existence of media coverage on the course of the trial and the final penalty for the perpetrator.

What is noticeable in the media coverage of the murder of women in North Macedonia is a factual presentation of the case through information obtained from the daily bulletins of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. All media reports are almost the same, very often the content completely corresponds to the content of the daily bulletin of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. All reports lack a reference to murder as a form of gender-based violence, the complexity of violence as a phenomenon and a social problem, its causes and consequences, and the explanation of the term femicide.

Regarding personal data, almost all reports contained the initials, age and place of residence of the victim and the perpetrator, as well as information about their relationship.

Additionally, all reports lack information on the institutional response, review of the criminal code, ratified

²⁷ A manual on gender sensitive media reporting available at the [link](#)

international documents on this topic, and possible and expected penalties for the perpetrator. Statements / interviews with experts in the field or statements from representatives of the institutions are also lacking. No subsequent report of the trial and the sentence imposed on the perpetrator was found for any of the femicides.

Compared to the findings of the first analysis, the only difference was in the headlines of the media reports. Namely, in the period covered by this analysis (2017 - 2020), the terminology and identification of murder with "love drama", "family drama" is significantly reduced, but still existing.

"Family drama in Prilep with a tragic end: The Ministry of Internal Affairs with details about the double murder"

What is noticeable is the changed narrative used in the sensationalist reporting, especially in the creation of the headlines, whose main purpose is to attract the reader to open the link, although the text itself does not have much information about the event. Namely, many headlines in the media coverage of the murders of women include the manner in which the murder was committed, as well as the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

"Suspect in the murder of a woman in Bitola, her husband killed her with a rolling pin"

"A woman from Skopje died after her husband beat her to death"

"A grandson killed his grandmother with a metal boxer - 30 days custody for the killer"

"Horror in Macedonia: He killed his partner with a knife in front of their ten-year-old child"

"Murder in Drachevo: Grandson slaughtered his grandmother"

"The man from Kochani stabbed his wife with a knife, then finished her off with a hammer - their minor son witnessed it all"

Part of the headlines use words that on one hand cause terror to the reader, but at the same time arouse curiosity to find out the details of the murder. But very few of the media reports really provide essential and meaningful information in the headline about the event they are writing about.

"Dead woman found in the center of the city - cries for help were heard"

"Murder in Bitola, a woman found in a pool of blood in her apartment"

"Details about the killed woman in Gostivar: He stabbed her with a knife, it was a horrible sight"

"A horrific crime on Holy Thursday shook Macedonia - details of the murder"

"Ohrid: Mother of two children killed in her home this afternoon"

"She worked as a seamstress and was in a relationship: Who and why killed the 47-year-old woman in Ohrid"

The question remains whether these events, murders of women are shared by the media just to get more clicks (website visits).

A positive aspect of the analysis of media reports is that no speech of directly or indirectly blaming the victims for what happened was registered, nor commenting on the character of the perpetrator (with one exception²⁸), which on one hand may be the result of sensitization and media education through trainings conducted by civil society organizations. But, on the other hand, taking into account that the media reports are factual using texts from the daily bulletins of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, such reporting indicates insufficient understanding, disinterest and low level of commitment of the media on this topic.

At the end of this section, we single out the only media report that used the term "femicide" and for which purpose an interview with an expert in the field was conducted, i.e., the connection between gender-based violence and the murder of a woman was presented. Although the journalist of this text could have added information on national legislation, the Istanbul Convention and the existing system for protection of victims of domestic violence, in order to inform victims where to seek help, this media report can still be used as a positive example in writing reports with this kind or similar content in the future.

²⁸ He stabbed her with a knife and looked for the neighbors - testimony for the murder in Prilep | Press24

“Yesterday’s murder in Kochani, the first femicide in 2018²⁹”

Yesterday’s murder of his wife with a knife and hammer by the 54-year-old husband, which happened in the early morning hours in Kochani, is the first case of femicide in 2018, experts believe.

According to Blagica Kirova from the NGO “EHO” from Shtip, who works with victims of domestic violence, yesterday’s bloody family drama in which a woman was killed and then her husband committed suicide, is a classic example that reflects the gender dimension of domestic violence.

- Femicide is the most severe form of discrimination against women. It is the killing of a woman because she is a woman. The most severe form of violence against women and girls, says Kirova.

Despite the fact that violence had not been registered in that family in Kochani by the competent institutions, according to Kirova, this act is a result of many years of psychological and physical torture that was hidden from the institutions.

- The information we have tells us that very often domestic violence and violence against women remain hidden in the families. So, it stays unreported, mostly due to prejudices among the female victims themselves in order to preserve the image of a normal, functional family. Reasons are not leaving the children to manage on their own, to endure in difficult circumstances, most often women do not report the crime. As someone who has been dealing with this issue for years, I think this is not a case that has now happened incidentally, said Kirova.

There are no official statistics on femicides in Macedonia, but according to an analysis made by non-governmental organizations, 19 cases of femicide have been registered at the state level in the past three years.

²⁹ [Yesterday’s killing in Kochani, the first femicide in 2018 | Press24](#)

CONCLUSIONS

Data collection on the murders of women is an extremely difficult and long process. This is due to the lack of a data collection system for this most severe form of gender-based violence, although the system does not exist for other forms of violence against women either. In addition, a comprehensive and complete analysis of all femicides at the national level is impossible to conduct in full, due to the unresponsiveness of some of the courts and public prosecutor's offices, making access and analysis of the court cases of murder of women impossible.

Therefore, in both the first and the second analysis, access was provided in about 50% of the court cases of murder of women. More specifically, the first analysis for the period from 2008 to 2016 covered 48.5% of the total number of murders, and this analysis covered 61.5%.

In the period 2017-2020, a total of 26 women were killed, according to data from the State Statistical Office. Of these, 22 murders (84%) can be classified as femicides.

From the analysis of the murder cases of 16 women, the crime can be qualified as femicide in 14 cases.

In more than 75% of the analyzed cases of murder of women, the crime was committed by the current or former spouse or extramarital partner with whom they lived in a community.

In more than 80% of the cases, although there was violence that was later witnessed in the procedure by close relatives of the victim, **still none of the 14 women killed reported the violence they experienced at the competent institutions.** Most of the women killed were exposed to more than one form of gender-based violence, and 6 of them received death threats.

Most of the murders (50%) took place in the family home, i.e., the home where the perpetrator and the victim lived together, while 25% of the murders took place in the home where the victim lived alone or with her parents or other family members. This conclusion is just another confirmation that women in the Republic of North Macedonia are most insecure in their home.

There is no significant difference between the perpetrator and the victim in terms of their economic situation, i.e., employment / unemployment. While according to ethnicity, most of the victims and perpetrators are Macedonian (more than 70%), while the other victims are of Albanian and Roma ethnicity.

The use of firearms to commit murder is reduced, i.e., **in the period from 2008 to 2016 out of a total of 28 analyzed murder of women, 15 or 53.5% were committed with firearms,** for which in 7 cases the perpetrator did not have a license to carry, and in 4 cases there was no information on possession / non-possession because the perpetrator committed suicide immediately after committing the murder. **In the period from 2017 to 2020, 21% of the murders were committed with firearms,** i.e., 3 out of 14 women. Only two perpetrators had a license for private purposes.

It is frightening that as many as 6 minors witnessed the murder, of which 4 were direct witnesses, i.e., they were present in the same room when the perpetrator committed the murder.

Aggravating circumstance - murder in domestic violence is envisioned in the qualification of the crime in 11 cases out of a total of 14 analyzed, which can be qualified as femicides. If we compare the findings with the first analysis of murders of women, it can be concluded that there is a positive step forward for public prosecutors in recognizing gender-based violence and appropriate qualification of the crime.

The question remains as to why one of the two cases does not qualify as murder in domestic violence, especially given the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. Namely, these are former intimate partners, who lived in an extramarital union, but were separated when the murder took place.

The degree of the sentence ranges from 10 years to life imprisonment (in two cases), with the exception of two cases where the sentence imposed was - Security measure: mandatory psychiatric treatment and confinement in a health institution.

Compared to the findings of the previous analysis, **there is some progress in the urgency of the proceedings,**

i.e., the first analysis shows that the proceedings last from 3 to 20 months, and only longer are those where the perpetrator has impaired mental health and requires expertise from a professional. The findings of this analysis showed that on average the basic court renders a judgment in 3 to 6 months, which can then be appealed and the procedure transferred to the Court of Appeals.

Macedonian criminal law does not recognize femicide as a separate crime, but provides for an aggravating circumstance if the murder was committed in domestic violence, with the penalty for the perpetrator ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment. The proposed amendments to the Criminal Code, which have entered the parliamentary procedure, and are in relation to supplementing the aggravating circumstance for murder "in perpetration of domestic violence" with "perpetration of domestic and gender-based violence" are a positive step, but will not contribute to recognizing the gender aspect of violence and women as the most common victims of murder by an intimate partner or other family member. The situation is similar in the EU member states in terms of defining femicides as a separate crime, but what exists in the legislation in these countries are more clearly defined aggravating circumstances (gender-based act of murder of a woman; murder of a partner; death of woman as a consequence of intimate partner violence).

The Istanbul Convention also provides for aggravating circumstances for perpetrators of gender-based violence, which should be taken into account and incorporated into criminal law.

Precise and clear definition of the gender aspect in criminal justice protection and provision of higher penalties for perpetrators is especially important for the prevention of femicide as the most common form of murder of women in our country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Network to End Violence against Women has conducted two analyses of femicide - murder of women, from 2008 to 2016 and from 2017 to 2020. These findings, together with the overall experience of the network in supporting women victims of domestic and gender-based violence are the basis for the recommendations aimed at improving the system of prevention and protection of women victims of gender-based and domestic violence. We are convinced that the adoption of these recommendations will contribute to the prevention of femicides as a consequence of long-term exposure to intimate partner and domestic violence.

1. **Amendments to the Criminal Code by envisaging femicide as a separate crime**, or supplementing the aggravating circumstances in the qualification of basic murder with a more precise definition of gender-based violence following the example of European countries. Gender-based act of killing a woman, killing an intimate partner / wife, death of a woman as a result of intimate partner violence, female feticide, killing a woman or a girl in the "name of honor" are the proposed aggravating circumstances that need to be included in the existing Criminal Code.
2. A proposed definition of femicide is "**gender-based murder of women**" which can take many forms: a) murder as a result of domestic / intimate partner violence; b) torture and misogynistic murder of women; c) death of women and girls as a result of harmful practices (killing women in the "name of honor", female genital mutilation); d) targeted killing of women in armed conflict; e) dowry – related murder of women; f) murder of women because of their sexual orientation and gender identity; g) female infanticide and feticide (gender based sex selection); h) other types of femicides related to gangs, organized crime, drugs, human trafficking and possession of weapons.
3. **Development of a system for data collection by gender**, ethnicity, place of residence (rural / urban), motive for the murder, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, the connection between the murder and previous exposure to violence, criminal history of the perpetrator, circumstances in which the crime takes place, and in accordance with the guidelines established by the European Institute for Gender Equality, so that the Republic of North Macedonia could be part of the European statistics on femicide.
4. **Establishment of a Femicide Watch Observatory**. The main objective of the observatory is to establish a system for monitoring and timely reporting of gender-based murder of women, which would include data on the number of femicides per year, broken down by age of perpetrator and victim, relationship between perpetrator and victim, as well as information on prosecuting and punishing the perpetrators³⁰.
5. The Ministry of Internal Affairs should **publish data on femicides** - murder of women and girls on a semi-annual and annual basis.
6. In accordance with previously established criteria harmonized with the data from other institutions, **the State Statistical Office should collect data on murders of women** and publish special reports on an annual basis.
7. In order to prevent future femicides, it is necessary to **improve the process of obtaining a license for weapons for both private and official purposes**. Namely, the psychological assessment of the person who has submitted the application and to whom the permit has been issued, must be repeated at predetermined intervals. Regular psychological assessment is necessary because the mental state can change as a result of everyday (negative) events in the life of the individual, and as a consequence the firearm can be used to injure or deprive another person of life.
8. **Strengthening the capacity of uniformed police officers, as well as domestic violence inspectors**, especially to recognize the various forms of violence and appropriate risk assessment of the victim's life is necessary for timely action and protection from future violence that may result in femicide. The inclusion of gender-based violence as a topic in the basic police training curriculum and as a separate module in the regular curriculum of the Police Academy is the most sustainable solution.
9. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, in cooperation with other relevant institutions and civil society organizations working on this issue, **should conduct a continuous campaign to inform the general population about the role and responsibility of police officers** in the protection and prevention of various forms of violence against women.

³⁰ More about the Femicide Watch Observatory can be found at the following link [link](#)

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