Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2395 (2021)[1]

Strengthening the fight against so-called "honour" crimes

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Throughout the world, violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) people are the tangible expressions of a desire to control and of gender inequality. They are serious human rights violations which must be systematically and firmly condemned.

2. The entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, the "Istanbul Convention") in 2014 marked a major milestone by setting out fundamental principles and calling on the States Parties to do everything in their power to put an end to violence against women and domestic violence. The Parliamentary Assembly recognises that this convention is a key instrument for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence that has the Assembly's unwavering support. The convention offers a tool to crack down on so-called "honour"-related violence perpetrated against women and girls and States Parties can decide to apply its provisions on domestic violence in relation to men and boys in all their diversity.

3. The Istanbul Convention unequivocally asserts that customs, tradition, culture, religion or so-called "honour" cannot be used to justify violence. No mitigating circumstance on grounds of so-called "honour" may be enshrined in national legislation or tolerated by courts when passing judgment. The Assembly stresses that so-called "honour" constitutes no ground, excuse or explanation for violating physical integrity and human dignity. Reiterating its Resolution 1681 (2009) "Urgent need to combat so-called 'honour crimes'", it emphatically condemns these crimes.

4. So-called "honour" crimes are most often perpetrated or ordered by members of the victim's family who refuse to accept their gender identity, sexual orientation, lifestyle or life choices, desire for emancipation or refusal of marriage. These crimes may take the form of murder, illegal confinement, abduction, torture, mutilation, burning, forced suicide, forced marriage, conversion therapy, interference in the choice of a partner or assault. They are often premeditated and organised. Large-scale awareness-raising initiatives must be carried out in order to have a tangible impact.

5. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in an increase in gender-based violence, including acts aimed at upholding "honour". Significant progress made in gender equality has been slowed and even set back in certain sectors. Recalling its Resolution 2339 (2020) "Upholding human rights in times of crisis and pandemics: gender, equality and non-discrimination", the Assembly emphasises that an effective response to the Covid-19 pandemic must include a gender dimension, be inclusive, take an intersectional approach and make preventing and combating violence a priority. It asserts that the education system has a fundamental role to play in promoting gender equality from the earliest age, deconstructing stereotypes and encouraging the development of critical thinking.

1. *Assembly debate* on 28 September 2021 (26th sitting) (see Doc. 15347, report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 September 2021 (26th sitting).

6. In light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on the Council of Europe's member States, as well as on all States whose parliaments enjoy an observer or a partner for democracy status, to:

6.1. ratify and implement the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, if they have not already done so, and implement Resolution 2289 (2019) "The Istanbul Convention on violence against women: achievements and challenges";

6.2. abolish from their criminal code any justification of crime linked to the upholding of so-called "honour" or any mitigating circumstance linked to the upholding of "honour";

6.3. adopt a clear definition of so-called "honour" and recognise the upholding of so-called "honour" as an aggravating circumstance of any form of violence, and take into account the aggravating circumstances established by the Istanbul Convention;

6.4. firmly condemn violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people, ensure that the sentences passed are carried out and condemn a system of oppression based on so-called "honour";

6.5. punish any public statements inciting violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people, including in the name of so-called "honour";

6.6. recognise that LGBTI persons are vulnerable to so-called "honour" crimes and include them in all action plans aimed at preventing and combating this violence, and also ban conversion therapy;

6.7. make the collection of data on violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people a priority and log cases of violence committed to uphold so-called "honour";

6.8. adopt action plans aimed at preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people, including a section dedicated to so-called "honour"-based violence, and provide adequate funding for them.

7. The Assembly also calls on them, where protection and assistance for the victims are concerned, to:

7.1. open telephone helplines, available in several languages and with trained staff, for individuals looking for advice after being subjected to violence, including so-called "honour"-based violence, or seeking protection;

7.2. ensure the protection, including through protection orders, of persons at risk of or having been subjected to gender-based violence;

7.3. train police officers and members of the judiciary in the identification of violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people, including so-called "honour"-based violence, and in the reception, support and assistance of victims;

7.4. guarantee a sufficient number of places, with adequate funding, in facilities for the reception of persons having fled such violence and offer care appropriate to their situation;

7.5. offer refuge and support for victims of gender-based violence, including so-called "honour"-based violence, or potential victims of so-called "honour" crimes who have fled their country, in reception centres for asylum seekers, include a gender dimension in asylum policies and accept their requests for asylum;

7.6. support national human rights institutions and equality bodies, civil society and non-governmental organisations working to promote the rights of women and to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, as well as those providing assistance to them, by guaranteeing them a space in which to operate, enabling them to carry out their work without hindrance;

7.7. provide support for national human rights institutions and equality bodies, civil society and non-governmental organisations dedicated to protecting the rights of LGBTI people as well as those providing them with support and assistance;

7.8. adopt an intersectional approach in combating gender-based discrimination, violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people.

8. In the area of prevention, the Assembly calls on them to:

8.1. run campaigns to prevent violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people, and raise awareness of so-called "honour" crimes, as well as communication initiatives aimed at parents;

8.2. launch campaigns or awareness-raising programmes to promote gender equality aimed at the general public;

8.3. carry out activities to promote gender equality within education establishments, from the earliest age, and offer training for teachers on the prevention and detection of gender-based violence.

9. The Assembly also asks national parliaments to:

9.1. carry out awareness-raising activities aimed at promoting gender equality and preventing violence, including so-called “honour”-based violence;

9.2. organise debates at regular intervals on the action taken at national level to combat violence against women and domestic violence, and on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention or its ratification, and engage actively in its promotion.

10. The Assembly encourages the organisations involved in preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and violence against LGBTI people to continue their work and expresses its full support for them.