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An abstract, expressive painting of a woman's face. The colors are vibrant and varied, including shades of purple, blue, orange, red, and pink. The brushstrokes are thick and visible, giving the portrait a textured, almost cubist feel. The woman's eyes are a striking light blue, and her lips are painted in a deep red. The background is dark and textured, with some white and red splatters on the left side.

# Reporting on Violence against Women and Girls

**A Handbook for Journalists**

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Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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## Foreword

In the age of digital, democratic, societal and political change, communication has become a crucial means of conveying revolutionary ideas and initiatives, capable of creating communities that are stronger, better informed and more engaged than ever before. The emergence of ethical journalism has become central to all newsrooms and is the cornerstone of a news journalism that supports society's development.

In the wake of these changes, the issue of gender is inseparable from progress and ethical journalism.

Addressing gender-based violence means addressing a subject that concerns humanity in its entirety. Reflecting on biased representations, stereotypes, prejudices and violence against women and girls means taking part in change so that, finally, this violence is covered in the media in a way that fully reflects the concerns of our societies. This is undoubtedly an ambitious objective for a handbook, but given the scale of this scourge, it is becoming important to cover gender-based violence issues, in order to help the media to better understand the scale and consequences of this violence on the people directly concerned: girls, boys, women, the LGBTI community,<sup>1</sup> women journalists, etc.

Violence against girls and women knows no geographical boundaries. Although the risk of suffering violence is higher for poor or marginalized women, gender-based violence is not a feature specific to any particular culture, religion or social class. Moreover, this violence is not always an expression of male domination. In some circumstances, it is perpetrated by women. Gender-based violence takes several forms: sexual assaults, so-called 'honour' crimes, female foeticides, female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual harassment, forced or early marriages, trafficking in persons, violence in times of conflict, etc.

While putting together this handbook, an analysis of selected press articles and television and radio reports revealed the need to assist the media in improving the coverage of such crucial and unjust issues as violence against women and girls. In order to provide concrete examples and case studies, the topics covered had to be carefully selected. This handbook does not seek to provide an exhaustive and complete analysis

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<sup>1</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

of the subject of violence, but it does intend to help radio, television, press and social media professionals determine which channels of investigation and information would be relevant and ethical. It therefore provides working media professionals and those already involved in ethical journalism with recommendations and examples of good practice to help them make the right choices in media coverage of such an important topic of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In terms of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality, progress has been made. Nevertheless, women and girls continue to suffer from discrimination and violence, while media coverage of the issue does not reflect the reality and extent of this scourge. The media can create the right conditions to neutralize this violence and combat it through articles and by taking a committed civic stance. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) therefore wished to publish this handbook in order to provide journalists and other media professionals with explanations, definitions, statistical data and, above all, resources and advice so that from now on these issues are treated as violations of fundamental rights.



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## Introduction

- Worldwide, nearly one in three women (30 per cent) have experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives committed by their intimate partners, and 7 per cent have experienced sexual assault by another person.<sup>2</sup>
- 38 per cent of all murders of women are committed by (ex-) intimate partners.<sup>3</sup>
- At least 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone FGM in 30 countries.<sup>4</sup>
- More than 126 million girls are ‘missing’ worldwide due to prenatal sex selection.<sup>5</sup>
- 99 per cent of victims of forced labour in the sex industry are women and girls.<sup>6</sup>
- 84 per cent of forced marriages and 96 per cent of early marriages involve girls and women.<sup>7</sup>

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) SDG 5 calls on all countries to make gender equality the foundation of a peaceful world.<sup>8</sup>

Violence against women is not a minor issue, only worthy of being reported as a short news item or ‘in other news’. These are not isolated ‘incidents’, private family matters or sacrosanct ‘local customs’, but rather very serious societal problems. Acid attacks, so-called ‘honour’ crimes, incest, gender-specific infanticide and foeticide, early and/or forced marriages, FGM, rape, domestic violence and (online) harassment are gender-based violence. They are based on a patriarchal system that establishes relationships of power and domination between men and women. “Recognizing that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women,” the Declaration on

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2 World Health Organization (WHO), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and South African Medical Research Council, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-partner Sexual Violence*, Geneva, 2013. <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9789241564625/en/>

3 *Ibid.*

4 [https://www.unicef.org/media\\_25228.html](https://www.unicef.org/media_25228.html)

5 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Gender-biased sex selection, 23 July 2018, <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-biased-sex-selection>

6 International Labour Office and Walk Free Foundation in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*, Geneva, 2017. [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_575479/lang-en/index.html](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_575479/lang-en/index.html)

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 47 and 49.

8 United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, 2015. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted in 1993 by the United Nations General Assembly, defines gender-based violence as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”<sup>9</sup> This definition has been repeated in various subsequent international instruments<sup>10</sup> that condemn these acts and describe them as serious human rights violations. According to the declaration, “Violence against women constitutes a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and impairs or nullifies their enjoyment of those rights and freedoms...”

### **The Impact of the media**

Journalists can help to break the silence and take this issue out of the private sphere, where it is still too often relegated. As highlighted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in September 1995: “The media have a great potential to promote the advancement of women and the equality of women and men by portraying women and men in a non-stereotypical, diverse and balanced manner”.<sup>11</sup> By placing the fight against violence against women at the heart of its work, the media can foster a change in public opinion and behaviour.

Several reports on violence against women have succeeded in changing attitudes and driving major legislative and social changes. For example, at the end of the nineteenth century, one of the pioneers of ‘undercover journalism’, Nelly Bly, posed as mentally ill to gain access to a women’s psychiatric institution in the United States. Her book, *Ten Days in a Mad-House*, published in 1887, became a social journalism classic. It led to the opening of a formal investigation, an increase in the budget for psychiatric institutions, and the adoption of more stringent criteria when deciding whether to commit someone to them. Mae Azango, a Liberian journalist who received the International Press Freedom Prize from the Committee to Protect Journalists in 2012, reported on FGM and the controversial practices of a society of women circumcisers. The publication of this report led the Government to take a clearer stance against these violations of the rights of women and girls, which affect the majority of women in Liberia.

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9 United Nations General Assembly, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ViolenceAgainstWomen.aspx>

10 <https://www.un.org/french/documents/instruments/about.html>

11 World Conference on Women, Beijing Declaration, 15 September 1995. [https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing\\_Declaration\\_and\\_Platform\\_for\\_Action.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf)

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Public interest journalism is therefore an essential lever in the fight against gender-based violence. One of the most recent examples is the #MeToo movement, which was for the most part launched by US newspaper investigations. Numerous testimonies from women worldwide made the issue go viral in a huge social movement of freedom of expression for women.

Investigating gender-based and sexual violence is, however, not without its risks. Some reporters examining women's rights issues have even been killed. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has systematically condemned these killings, in accordance with resolution 29 C/29 adopted in 1997 by its Member States.<sup>12</sup> However, between 2012 and 2017, Reporters Without Borders (Reporters Sans Frontiers, RSF) reported nearly 90 serious cases of violence against journalists investigating women's rights in 20 countries: 11 of these reporters were killed; 12 were imprisoned; 25 were subjected to verbal or physical attacks; and 39 others were victims of online abuse and alarming threats on social media.<sup>13</sup>

### **Target audience**

This handbook is aimed at new and experienced journalists alike who are not necessarily used to covering gender issues, and who do not have the time on set or on air to explore the subject, but who are interested in the challenges of covering these issues. It concerns all journalists, regardless of the department or section in which they work: society, politics, economics, cinema, literature or sport. The handbook is also aimed at all members of staff: photographers, reporters, heads of department, editors in chief and, more generally, media leaders, journalists' associations and unions, as well as media regulators. Not to mention the moderators of media-dependent forums and social media, who can have a substantial impact in the fight against online harassment and gender stereotypes.

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12 <https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/resolution29-en.pdf>

13 RSF, *Women's Rights: Forbidden Subject*, 1 March 2018. [https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/womens\\_rights-forbidden\\_subject.pdf](https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/womens_rights-forbidden_subject.pdf)



## **Objectives**

This handbook has two main objectives: to provide journalists with recommendations and examples of good practice, on the one hand, and to encourage their ongoing reflection on the profession, on the other.

### **1) Provide journalists with recommendations and examples of good practice**

Adequate media coverage of gender-based violence should enable the public to fully appreciate and better understand the phenomenon. Calling it by its correct name, explaining its context, recalling some key figures and legal texts, talking about it sufficiently and providing useful information to female victims of violence (telephone numbers and contact details of associations and support services, etc.) helps to prevent and tackle gender-based violence, and to assist victims. To help journalists with their reporting work, this handbook brings together the advice of experienced reporters, charters of good practice from many media outlets around the world, and recommendations for journalists from institutions such as the Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma, the International Federation of Journalists, the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO), UNESCO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and others. This publication therefore contains very practical advice, particularly about avoiding certain pitfalls when reporting on gender-based violence.

### **2) Encourage ongoing reflection on the profession**

How can the subject of violence against girls and women be covered in an ethical and responsible way, while avoiding any form of sensationalism? When interviewing someone who has been subjected to violence, how can respect for their rights, dignity and safety be reconciled with the need for information? Achieving a balance will not always be easy. This handbook aims to provide food for thought on the dilemmas that each journalist working on these topics will inevitably face.

## **Content**

Newsrooms and their journalists often have only limited time to cover a topic. However, there are a plethora of studies and various documents on harassment, domestic violence, so-called 'honour' crimes, forced marriages and FGM.

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What does this handbook contain? First of all, 10 fact sheets presenting 10 specific topics, arranged in alphabetical order, and which can be consulted separately according to the needs of newsrooms. The topics covered were chosen from among the many forms of violence against girls and women, and are particularly representative. Each of the fact sheets presents a topic (definition, facts and figures, explanations and context), followed by various tips and good practices for journalistic coverage of the topic. It also includes a glossary, which will allow for the informed use of language, a list of organizations to contact, and a selection of relevant documents for those wishing to learn more. The final section offers a series of considerations and recommendations concerning the media coverage of gender-based violence: how can these topics be better addressed, framed and covered? How should an interview be conducted? Which images should be chosen to illustrate them?

This handbook does not specifically deal with improving the media coverage of LGBTI people and issues, but it does mention this population in order to prevent journalistic blunders.

**Note 1:** The information provided in this publication is not intended to provide an exhaustive analysis of the subject matter or countries cited. Some information may refer to external links over which UNESCO has no control and for which it does not acknowledge any responsibility.

**Note 2:** All the Internet links and reports cited were consulted between February 2018 and July 2019.

UNESCO has also published *The Big Conversation: Handbook to Address Violence against Women in and through the Media*, jointly with UN Women in 2019 (ISBN 978-92-3-100332-5).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369853.locale>





# **1 ■ Ten specific themes (in alphabetical order)**

- » **Cyberbullying and online harassment of women journalists**
- » **Early marriages or child marriages**
- » **Female genital mutilation/cutting**
- » **Forced marriages**
- » **Gender-specific foeticide and infanticide**
- » **Sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape**
- » **So-called 'honour' crimes**
- » **Trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants**
- » **Violence against women in conflicts**
- » **Violence by an intimate partner or ex-partner and domestic murders**



**16** “Violence against women and girls is one of the most systematic and widespread human rights violations,” according to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). “It is rooted in gendered social structures rather than individual and random acts; it cuts across age, socio-economic, educational and geographic boundaries; affects all societies; and is a major obstacle to ending gender inequality and discrimination globally.”<sup>15</sup>

There are many definitions of violence against women. This handbook is based on the one that serves as an international reference. It appears in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women,<sup>16</sup> adopted in 1993 by the United Nations General Assembly (resolution A/RES/48/104), and is incorporated into subsequent international instruments.

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<sup>15</sup> Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls (UN Women), Defining violence against women and girls, 31 October 2010.

<https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/295-definition-de-la-violence-contre-les-femmes-et-les-filles.html>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ViolenceAgainstWomen.aspx>

## Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

### Article 1

“For the purposes of this Declaration, the term ‘violence against women’ means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

### Article 2

Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

(a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;

(b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

(c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.”<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the definitions suggested in this handbook, an inclusive glossary entitled *GenderTerm*<sup>18</sup> has been developed by UN Women. The glossary is a resource that contains more than 650 gender-sensitive terms in English, Arabic, French and Spanish.

17 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ViolenceAgainstWomen.aspx>.

18 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/genderterm>

## 18 **1.1. Cyberbullying and online harassment of women journalists**

### **1.1.1. Definition**

Online harassment is a form of violence that occurs online. In Report A/HRC/38/47, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences states that: “the definition of online violence against women therefore extends to any act of gender-based violence against women that is committed, assisted or aggravated in part or fully by the use of ICT [information and communications technology], such as mobile phones and smartphones, the Internet, social media platforms or email, against a woman because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately.”<sup>19</sup> Online harassment, or cyberbullying, involves anonymous, massive or permanent attacks or comments with the sole purpose of harming an individual.

It is the frequency of the comments or their insulting, obscene or threatening nature that constitutes harassment. This can range from gender-based insults to physical threats of sexual violence or death. It takes many forms, including:

- Cyberbullying.
- Trolling – trolls post comments to try to provoke controversy.
- Doxing refers to online researching and publishing of private information about a person in order to cause them harm.
- Obsessive online stalking (cyberstalking), intrusive and threatening harassment of a person.
- Cyber-control in relationships.
- Revenge porn: non-consensual dissemination of intimate images, online public sharing of sexually explicit content without the consent of the person concerned, often for the purposes of revenge.

### **1.1.2. Facts and figures**

Gender-based cyberbullying has also infiltrated the school environment, affecting children and adolescents and threatening their health and well-being. Data on the

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<sup>19</sup> <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/38/47>

prevalence of online harassment<sup>20</sup> collected in the UNESCO report on school violence and bullying, produced in 2017, show that between 5 and 21 per cent of children and adolescents are victims, with girls being more exposed to it than boys. Together with its partners, UNESCO supports international campaigns to engage stakeholders in responding to gender-based violence in schools. Two campaigns, *Safe to Learn*<sup>21</sup> and *Power of Zero*,<sup>22</sup> were launched against harassment and cyberbullying in schools.

Online harassment can affect all types of people. But according to the Pew Research Center, women – especially those between the ages of 18 and 24 – are particularly affected, especially when it comes to stalking and sexual harassment.<sup>23</sup>

The online world is similar to the offline situation: women are at greater risk than men. For example, with regard to revenge porn, at least 90 per cent of cases in the United States involve women and adolescent girls, according to the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative.<sup>24</sup>

According to a European Union report, one in 10 women over the age of 15 has already been harassed online (in the form of insulting or threatening messages, offensive and sexually explicit e-mails or text messages, or unwelcome advances on social media).<sup>25</sup>

According to research conducted by Amnesty International in late 2017 on the experiences of women aged 18 to 55 in eight countries, 23 per cent of the 4,000 women surveyed reported having experienced online violence at least once. Very worryingly, 41 per cent of women who have experienced online violence reported that on at least one occasion they had felt physically threatened.<sup>26</sup>

20 UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying – Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000246970>

21 <https://www.end-violence.org/safetolearn>

22 <https://www.powerof0.org/>

23 Pew Research Center, *Online harassment*, 2014. Summary of findings by Maeve Duggan. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/10/22/online-harassment/>; Pew Research Center, *Online harassment*, 2017. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2017/07/11/online-harassment-2017/>

24 Cyber Civil Rights Initiative, *Power in numbers*, 2014. <https://www.cybercivilrights.org/revenge-porn-infographic/>

25 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against Women: An EU-wide Survey. Results at a Glance*, Vienna, 2014, p. 104.

26 Amnesty International, "Harcèlement en ligne : l'impact inquiétant" ["Online harassment: the worrying impact"], 19 November 2017. <https://www.amnesty.fr/discriminations/actualites/des-femmes-du-monde-entier-font-etat-de-stress-dangoisse>

### 1.1.3. Explanations and background

The Internet and social media are extraordinary vehicles for communication, information and citizen mobilization, but they can also give discrimination, hatred and violence a voice. New technologies and Internet-based networks do not create the sexist behaviours that prevail in a particular social context, but they can amplify and globalize them. In many cases, these acts of harassment are committed by relatives (ex-husbands, classmates, colleagues, etc.), but those responsible for these attacks can also come from the entire public sphere.

Online abuse is not just virtual: it's very real. "Individual women who experience online abuse understand that online violence is real violence, but very often their peers, friends, or families don't," says Bishakha Datta, a member of the Point of View non-profit based in Mumbai.<sup>27</sup> The incidence of these forms of harassment remains underestimated. According to a study by the Internet Governance Forum, whose management and funding are under the supervision of the United Nations, such abuse "impede[s] women's right to freedom of expression by creating environments in which they do not feel safe to express themselves".<sup>28</sup>

The response from authorities and companies (platforms, social media, etc.) is generally perceived as inadequate.

Online harassment is characterized by the use of anonymity, which fosters a sense of impunity. Indeed, Governments face difficulties in enforcing national legislation in cyberspace.<sup>29</sup> According to a United Nations report, "despite the rapidly growing number of women experiencing online violence, only 26 per cent of law enforcement agencies in the 86 countries surveyed are taking appropriate action."<sup>30</sup>

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27 Global Fund for Women, Online violence: Just because it's virtual doesn't make it any less real, undated. <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/online-violence-just-because-its-virtual-doesnt-make-it-any-less-real/#.WytU36kyUjd>

28 Committee to Protect Journalists, Responding to internet abuse, 27 April 2016. <https://cpj.org/2016/04/attacks-on-the-press-responding-to-internet-abuse.php>

29 UNESCO, Countering online hate speech, Paris, 2015. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000233231>

30 Broadband Commission for Digital Development, ITU/UNESCO/UNDP/UN Women, Cyber violence against women and girls: a world-wide wake-up call, September 2015. Press release available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/9/cyber-violence-report-press-release>. Complete report: [http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/cyber\\_violence\\_gender%20report.pdf?v=1&d=20150924T154259](http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/cyber_violence_gender%20report.pdf?v=1&d=20150924T154259)



Some companies that own these private opinion platforms, which operate as a public space, have begun to address the phenomenon, but the very definition of online harassment may vary from one to the other.<sup>31</sup> However, these platforms could be more proactive in developing solutions.

#### 1.1.4. Advice and good practices

- Publish gender-disaggregated statistics. National statistics should comply with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS).<sup>32</sup> Several online harassment and cyberbullying crimes are listed in this classification. By disseminating knowledge about these crimes, the authorities can keep accurate statistics on them.
- Investigate 'troll factories' and other groups that invade social media and target women in particular, including investigating signs of an organized and funded campaign.
- Find out about the content moderators of these platforms, the quality of their training and ability, as well as the transparency of these private cyberspaces with regard to women's complaints of harassment.<sup>33</sup>
- Analyse the general conditions of use of platforms where harassment occurs, their content regulation policy, and the definition of bullying, defamatory, abusive, etc. content, as well as its possible correlation with the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes.<sup>34</sup>
- Publish the names of all reputable companies that advertise on the online platform in question.
- Describe how to report matters to the police, Internet industry companies (web hosts, social media) and associations against online harassment. Explain the difference between filing a complaint and getting an incident logged.
- Reiterate the penalties that may be imposed on those responsible for online harassment, which vary from country to country.

31 Kayla Epstein, Twitter teams up with advocacy group to fight online harassment of women, *The Guardian*, 8 November 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/nov/08/twitter-harassment-women-wam>

32 Published by UNODC in 2015, the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes is available in the six official languages of the United Nations: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/statistics/iccs.html>. The English version is available at the following address: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/ICCS/ICCS\\_English\\_2016\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/ICCS/ICCS_English_2016_web.pdf)

33 For example: Do women have access to a harassment reporting mechanism that enables them to demand that appropriate action is taken? Is this method responsive? Is there an independent appeals mechanism if the complainant is not satisfied with the moderators' decision?

34 See footnote 32 above.

- Explain the difficulty of legal competence and the challenges that these private online spaces pose to national regulatory authorities.
- Address the challenges posed by gender-based cyberbullying to freedom of expression and democracy.
- Provide advice on the best ways to protect against this type of harassment, for example, the best practice established by the Association for Progressive Communications.<sup>35</sup>
- Seek solutions to this problem under international human rights provisions. Analyse international legal instruments and regional measures.
- Examine research on the links between online harassment and other social phenomena, such as social inequalities, educational opportunities, identity and citizenship, employment, discrimination, etc.

### 1.1.5. Glossary

- **Online bullying, online harassment**
- **Gender-based cyberbullying**
- **Cyberbullying**
- **Trolling**
- **Doxing**
- **Cyberstalking**
- **Revenge porn**

These terms are all defined in section 1.1.1.

### 1.1.6. Resources

#### **Organizations to contact**

- 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media, Haifa:  
<http://7amleh.org/>
- Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society (Harvard University):  
<https://cyber.harvard.edu/>

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<sup>35</sup> Association for Progressive Communications, How to avoid becoming a cyberstalking victim, May 2011.  
<https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/issue/how-avoid-becoming-cyberstalking-victim>

- Cyber Civil Rights Initiative:  
<https://www.cybercivilrights.org/revenge-porn-laws>
- Take back the tech<sup>36</sup>  
<https://www.takebackthetech.net/>

### Short selection of documents to consult

- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against Women: An EU-wide Survey*, Vienna, 2014.  
<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/violence-against-women-eu-wide-survey-results-glance>
- Albanian Media Institute, *Hate Speech in Online Media in South East Europe*, Tirana, 2014.  
<http://www.institutemedia.org/Documents/PDF/Hate%20speech%20in%20online%20media%20in%20SEE.pdf>
- Article 19, “Internet intermediaries: Dilemma of Liability Q and A”.  
<https://www.article19.org/resources/internet-intermediaries-dilemma-liability-q/>
- Internet Governance Forum, “Best Practice Forum on Online Abuse and Gender-Based Violence Against Women”, 2015.  
<http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/documents/best-practice-forums/539-draft-jp-bpf-women/file>
- Gagliardone, Iginio; Gal, Danit; Alves, Thiago; and Martinez, Gabriela, *Countering Online Hate Speech*. UNESCO, Paris, 2015.  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000233231>
- High Gender Equality Council, *En finir avec l’impunité des violences faites aux femmes en ligne : une urgence pour les victimes [Ending impunity for online violence against women: an urgent matter for victims]*, Paris, 16 November 2017.  
<http://www.haut-conseil-egalite.gouv.fr/violences-de-gendre/travaux-du-hce/article/violences-faites-aux-femmes-en-1301>
- Henrichsen, Jennifer R., Betz, Michelle, Lisosky, Johanne M., *Building Digital Safety for Journalism: A Survey of Selected Issues*. UNESCO, Paris, 2015.  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232358>

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36 A collective global campaign project to highlight the problem of technology-related violence against women.

- Liou, Caroline, *Using Social Media for the Prevention of Violence against Women: Lessons Learned from Social Media Communication Campaigns to Prevent Violence against Women in India, China and Viet Nam*. Partners for Prevention, Bangkok, Thailand, 2013.  
[http://www.partners4prevention.org/sites/default/files/resources/socialmedia\\_final.pdf](http://www.partners4prevention.org/sites/default/files/resources/socialmedia_final.pdf)
- United Nations, Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/38/L.6, Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls: preventing and responding to violence against women and girls in digital contexts.  
<https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/38/L.6>
- Pew Research Center, Online harassment 2017, July 2017.  
<http://www.pewinternet.org/2017/07/11/online-harassment-2017/>
- Soronen Sonja, #WeWillNotBeSilent. *What Is Hate Speech and What Has It Got to Do with Gender?* Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, 2018.  
[http://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/135990/URN\\_ISBN\\_978-952-343-042-6.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/135990/URN_ISBN_978-952-343-042-6.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
- UNESCO launches 'Her Headline': a first-ever gender equality chrome extension,  
<https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-launches-her-headline-first-ever-gender-equality-chrome-extension>
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU), *Cyber Violence against Women and Girls: A World-Wide Wake-Up Call*. Report of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development, ITU/UNESCO/UNDP/UN Women, September 2015. The executive summary is available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/9/cyber-violence-report-press-release> Complete report: [http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/cyber\\_violence\\_gender%20report.pdf?v=1&d=20150924T154259](http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/cyber_violence_gender%20report.pdf?v=1&d=20150924T154259)

### 1.1.7. Online harassment of women journalists

As UNESCO points out, women journalists are sometimes victims of a “double attack” on social media. They are targeted as women and as journalists.<sup>37</sup> In a study of 977 media professionals, two thirds reported experiencing online bullying (insults, verbal abuse, substantial criticism, threats), including threats against family and friends.<sup>38</sup>

According to a study conducted by RSF in some 20 countries, cyberbullying accounted for 43.8 per cent of the 87 reported cases of serious violence against women journalists between 2012 and 2017.<sup>39</sup> Their attackers include radical groups, criminal organizations, authoritarian regimes, pressure groups, but also ordinary Internet users, whose online attacks are often of a sexual nature.

For example, Indian journalist Barkha Dutt spoke out in the *Hindustan Times*<sup>40</sup> about the extent of the insults she received for having denounced in a book published in 2015 the abuses she had suffered during her childhood and adolescence.<sup>41</sup> Before her, in 2012, Anita Sarkeesian, a Canadian blogger known for her criticism of the portrayal of women in video games, had also been subjected to a particularly aggressive harassment campaign.<sup>42</sup> Other journalists had also been targeted.<sup>43</sup> These behaviours also have an impact on freedom of expression and the right to information.

Harassment can range from sexist insults to hate speech and rape and death threats. It may also be accompanied by other forms of aggression, such as phishing, a technique used on the Internet to obtain personal information and confidential data. Surveillance is another way of causing harm, by creating a toxic atmosphere in the digital space – or even in the real world – of the targeted journalist. Different types of attacks, such as DoI (Denial of Information), DDoS ([Distributed] Denial of Service) attacks, deep fakes,

37 UNESCO, Jennifer R. Henrichsen, Michelle Betz and Joanne M. Lisoosky, *Building Digital Safety for Journalism*, UNESCO, 2015, p. 43.

38 International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF) and International News Safety Institute (INSI), *Violence and Harassment against Women in the News Media: A Global Picture*, 2014. <https://www.iwmf.org/resources/violence-and-harassment-against-women-in-the-news-media-a-global-picture/>

39 RSF, *Women’s Rights: Forbidden Subject*, 1 March 2018. [https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/womens\\_rights-forbidden\\_subject.pdf](https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/womens_rights-forbidden_subject.pdf)

40 Barkha Dutt, Let’s talk about trolls. Online abuse a weapon to silence women, *Hindustan Times*, 12 May 2017.

41 Barkha Dutt, *This Unquiet Land. Stories from India’s Fault Lines*, Hardcover, 2015.

42 RSF, *Women’s Rights: Forbidden Subject*, 1 March 2018. [https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/womens\\_rights-forbidden\\_subject.pdf](https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/womens_rights-forbidden_subject.pdf).

43 UNESCO, Larry Kilman, *An Attack on One is an Attack on All: Successful Initiatives to Protect Journalists and Combat Impunity*, UNESCO, Paris, 2017. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000250430>



DoubleSwitch and mass report attacks also occur. The objectives are to humiliate, discredit and, above all, intimidate the journalist concerned, so that she abandons the subjects on which she is working. By demonstrating their ability to cause harm, harassers also seek to deter other journalists from covering topics they find disturbing. Reporters who are not part of mainstream media, and especially freelancers, are particularly at risk and vulnerable.

Harassers sometimes claim freedom of expression as a justification for their attacks, when in fact they are weapons of censorship and a major violation of both freedom of expression and freedom of the press. The consequences of online harassment are both personal (stress, trouble sleeping, feelings of shame, panic, etc.) and professional (abandoning social media, even though it is an essential journalism tool, change of address, even change of profession). Some media and journalists' associations are mobilizing to offer support to those suffering from these illegal acts and to develop clear policies in this area.

As a United Nations entity with a specific mandate to defend freedom of expression and press freedom, UNESCO actively supports the safety of journalists and of all those involved in the media industry. UNESCO spearheaded the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.<sup>44</sup> This is the first concerted effort within the United Nations to address these issues through a comprehensive approach involving all stakeholders. Please consult UNESCO for good practice, guides, handbooks and toolkits on this subject.<sup>45</sup>

The harassment of journalists, which mainly targets women journalists, is a serious threat to democracy. The general public needs to be informed about the issue in order to defend freedom of expression and the exercise of everyone's fundamental rights.

### 1.1.8. Advice and good practices

- Report on attacks at an early stage, in order to understand how the phenomenon spreads.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, *United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity*, 12 April 2012. [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/un-plan-on-safety-journalists\\_en.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/un-plan-on-safety-journalists_en.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> UNESCO, *Safety of journalists: research and good practices*. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/freedom-of-expression/safety-of-journalists/research-and-good-practices/>

- Explain the democratic damage caused by attacks on journalists. Put the explanation into context, with local examples, to help individuals and society as a whole to understand the issues.
- Show examples of threatening messages on social media (screenshots).
- Write reports that show justice system and police representatives handling complaints and conducting investigations. Show the financial and human resources available, the measures in place to ensure the protection of the journalists concerned, etc.
- Provide information on the specific nature of attacks against journalists – mainly women – who investigate violations of women's rights.<sup>46</sup>
- Investigate the obligations of online platforms, such as transparency regarding curation algorithms, moderation rules, mechanisms in place to identify abusive reports, etc.
- Challenge social platforms and social media so that companies in the Internet sector make a serious undertaking not to serve as channels for harassment and hate speech.
- Conduct interviews with defenders or goodwill ambassadors willing to champion freedom of expression.
- Investigate the financing of cyberbullying and advertisements on websites that are lenient towards online attacks on women journalists.
- 2 November is the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists<sup>47</sup> and provides an opportunity to address this theme.
- See section 1.1.4.

### 1.1.9. Glossary

- Same terms as set out in section 1.1.5.
- The following definitions are available in the RSF publication, *Online Harassment of Journalists – Attack of the Trolls*.<sup>48</sup>

46 RSF, *Women's Rights: Forbidden Subject*, 1 March 2018. [https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/womens\\_rights-forbidden\\_subject.pdf](https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/womens_rights-forbidden_subject.pdf)

47 United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/68/163, 18 December 2013. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/68/163>

48 [https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/rsf\\_report\\_on\\_online\\_harassment.pdf](https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/rsf_report_on_online_harassment.pdf)

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- **DoI attack:** DoI stands for Denial of Information. This involves “amplifying messages through autonomous software – bots – thereby drowning an information channel in false or distracting information. Access to genuine information becomes more difficult. This massive disinformation tactic is used to discredit journalistic information.”

- **DDoS attack:** Stands for (Distributed) Denial of Service. This “aims to incapacitate a server, a service or an organization by overloading bandwidth or monopolizing all resources to exhaustion.”

- **Deep fakes:** “Producing a video, then using software to substitute one person’s face for another. The technique can be used to create fake news or damage a journalist’s credibility.”

- **DoubleSwitch:** This method consists of “hacking an accounting [sic], stealing a journalist’s identity and then disseminating fake news in order to discredit him or her.”

- **Mass report:** “This involves reporting a journalist’s account as abusive. Once the call is made on social networks the reporting becomes massive, leading to the account being closed.”

### 1.1.10 Resources

#### Short selection of documents to consult

- AMWIK and article 19, *Women Journalist’s Digital Security*. Nairobi, May 2016.  
<http://amwik.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Women-Journalists-Digital-Security.pdf>
- Barton, Alana and Storm, Hannah, *Violence and Harassment against Women in the News Media: A Global Picture*. IWMF and INSI, 2014.  
<https://www.iwmf.org/resources/violence-and-harassment-against-women-in-the-news-media-a-global-picture/>
- Committee to Protect Journalists, *Attacks on the Press 2016. Gender and Media Freedom Worldwide*. Bloomberg Press/Wiley, New York, 2016.
- United Nations Human Rights Council, resolution A/HRC/39/6 on the safety of journalists, adopted in September 2018.  
[https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/39/6](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/39/6)

- International Federation of Journalists, *Byte Back Campaign, Fighting Online Harassment*.  
[https://samsn.ifj.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ByteBack\\_CombatingOnlineHarassment.pdf](https://samsn.ifj.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ByteBack_CombatingOnlineHarassment.pdf)
- Ferrier, Michelle, *Attacks and Harassment. The impact on Female Journalists and their Reporting*, Trollbusters and IWMF, April 2018.  
<https://www.iwmf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Attacks-and-Harassment.pdf>
- Henrichsen, Jennifer R., Betz, Michelle, Lisosky, Joanne M., *Building Digital Safety for Journalism: a Survey of Selected Issues*. UNESCO, Paris, 2015.  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232358>
- International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), *How can UN resolutions make it safer to be a journalist?* 17 November 2017.  
<https://ifex.org/how-can-un-resolutions-make-it-safer-to-be-a-journalist/>
- Lanza, Edison, *Women Journalists and Freedom of Expression: Discrimination and Gender-Based Violence Faced by Women Journalists in the Exercise of Their Profession*, Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, OAS, 2018.  
<http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/expression/docs/reports/WomenJournalists.pdf>
- United Nations, *The safety of journalists and the issue of impunity*. Report of the Secretary-General, 4 August 2017.  
<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1304392?ln=en>
- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Safety of female journalists online*.  
<https://www.osce.org/representative-on-freedom-of-media/safety-female-journalists-online>
- RSF, *Women's Rights: Forbidden Subject*, 1 March 2018.  
[https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/womens\\_rights-forbidden\\_subject.pdf](https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/womens_rights-forbidden_subject.pdf)
- UNESCO and RSF, *Safety Guide for Journalists*, 2017 (new edition).  
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/publications-and-communication-materials/publications/full-list/safety-guide-for-journalists/>
- Wolfe, Lauren, *The silencing crime: sexual violence and journalists*, Committee to Protect Journalists, June 2011.

## 30 1.2. Early marriages or child marriages

### 1.2.1. Definition

According to UNICEF, the term ‘early marriage’ or ‘child marriage’ refers to the union of a couple in which one of the members is under 18 years of age.<sup>49</sup> The main focus is on marriages of adolescents and children well below the age of 18. Early marriage is often associated with forced marriage (see section 1.4).

### 1.2.2. Facts and figures

Globally, 21 per cent of girls (now aged 20 to 24) married before the age of 18, and 5 per cent married before they turned 15. The highest proportions are found in Central and West Africa, where 41 per cent of women married before they turned 18 and 14 per cent before they were 15.<sup>50</sup> However, the percentages vary greatly from one country to another in the world. Europe is also concerned by this phenomenon, particularly in the Roma community.<sup>51</sup> In the United States, more than 200,000 underage girls married between 2000 and 2015.<sup>52</sup> This phenomenon affects all communities, but particularly the rural poor. Half of the American states have not set a minimum age for marriage.<sup>53</sup>

UNICEF reports that boys around the world are also married as children.<sup>54</sup> Data from a study covering 82 countries<sup>55</sup> show that 115 million boys and men were married as children, with one in five boys thought to have been married before the age of 15.

However, girls continue to be disproportionately affected by early marriage. According to UNICEF, 12 million girls still marry before the age of 18 every year around the world.<sup>56</sup>

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49 UNICEF, Child marriage. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>

50 UNICEF, Global Child Marriage Databases, March 2018. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>

51 UNICEF, Preventing child marriage. <https://www.unicef.org/eca/what-we-do/child-marriage>

52 Sarah Ferguson, What you need to know about child marriage in the U.S., UNICEF USA, 29 October 2018.

<https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/what-you-need-know-about-child-marriage-us/35059>

53 *Ibid.*

54 UNICEF, “115 millions de garçons mariés durant leur enfance à travers le monde” [“115 million married boys in childhood worldwide”], 6 June 2019. <https://www.unicef.fr/article/115-millions-de-garcons-et-hommes-maries-durant-leur-enfance-travers-le-monde>

55 Colleen Murray Gastón, Christina Misunas and Claudia Cappa, Child marriage among boys: a global overview of available data, *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 2019, 14:3, pp. 219 to 228. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17450128.2019.1566584>

56 UNICEF, 25 million child marriages prevented in last decade due to accelerated progress, according to new UNICEF estimates, 6 March 2018. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/25-million-child-marriages-prevented-last-decade-due-accelerated-progress-according>

However, the global trend is downward. South Asia recorded the most dramatic decrease between 2008 and 2018.<sup>57</sup> In the Middle East and North African countries, the risk of marrying before the age of 18 has been halved over the past three decades.<sup>58</sup> Another example is Ethiopia, which has succeeded in reducing the prevalence of this practice by one third over the past 10 years.<sup>59</sup> However, it should be stressed once again that the figures should be treated with extreme caution: they often refer to countries where data can actually be obtained, and are therefore difficult to compare at the international level.

### 1.2.3. Explanations and background

#### Causes

Child marriage is rooted in gender inequalities, traditions, poverty, lack of education and insecurity. Early marriage of girls exercises control over female sexuality and avoids any sexual relations before marriage that would bring dishonour on the family. For poor families, child marriage also means one less person to feed and, sometimes, the hope of improved social status. Finally, in the event of a humanitarian crisis or conflict, there is often an increase in the rate of child marriage as a gruesome survival mechanism, as the United Nations Secretary-General notes in his March 2018 report on conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>60</sup> It is important to note that early marriage has all the characteristics of forced marriage, because the consent of the child, if given, is often subject to emotional, family or social pressures.

#### Consequences

Early marriages are a flagrant violation of children's rights. They have a negative impact on the health of young women, as they significantly increase the number of early pregnancies. These in turn can have complications and thus increase maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity rates. Child marriages also often lead to girls dropping out of school and therefore affect their education, ability to find employment and empowerment. Early marriage also increases young women's vulnerability to physical

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> UNICEF, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and prospects*, UNICEF, New York, 2014. [https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child\\_Marriage\\_Report\\_7\\_17\\_LR.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Marriage_Report_7_17_LR.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> UNICEF, 25 million child marriages prevented in last decade due to accelerated progress, according to new UNICEF estimates, 6 March 2018. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/25-million-child-marriages-prevented-last-decade-due-accelerated-progress-according>

<sup>60</sup> United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence, 23 March 2018. <https://undocs.org/en/S/2018/250>



and sexual violence because they have no power over their husbands or in-laws. This practice therefore helps to perpetuate the cycle of inequality and discrimination between men and women.

### **What does the law say?**

Child marriage or early marriage is a violation of human rights. UN Women notes that “The right to ‘free and full’ consent to a marriage is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – with the recognition that consent cannot be ‘free and full’ when one of the parties involved is not sufficiently mature to make an informed decision about a life partner.”<sup>61</sup>

Child marriage contravenes several international and regional agreements, including the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, which entered into force in 1964. On the other hand, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child does not explicitly mention it. Many countries allow marriage before the age of 18, subject to parental consent. Around 50 countries even allow marriage before the age of 15, in all cases subject to parental consent.

However, the abolition of early marriage is one of the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG 5.3 provides for the elimination of “all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.”

The UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education and the L’Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Fellowships are levers and means to encourage girls’ schooling and empower them. According to Manos Antoninis, Director of UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring Report, “More than one in 10 births are among girls between 15 and 19 years old. This not only spells the end of their education, but is often fatal, with pregnancy and childbirth the leading cause of death among this age group.”<sup>62</sup>

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61 UN Women, UN Women: approaches to end child marriage, 11 October 2012. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2012/10/un-women-approaches-to-end-child-marriage>

62 <https://en.unesco.org/news/new-paper-busts-myths-about-comprehensive-sexuality-education>



#### 1.2.4. Advice and good practices

- Present stories that make the phenomenon more human, but do not limit reporting to simply telling these stories. Explain how child marriages perpetuate gender-based discrimination and unequal opportunities.
- Emphasize that this is a harmful practice that affects the health, social, economic and legal situation of women and girls, as stated in Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/35/16 of July 2017.
- Stress that child marriage is a violation of human rights.
- Quote national laws.
- In countries where the practice of child marriage is not prohibited, explain the need for a reform of the Family Code, if one exists, that would establish an equal legal age of marriage for men and women and raise it to 18. Demonstrate the impact that such a reform could have on society, enabling women and girls to reach their full potential.
- Interview opinion leaders, such as traditional chiefs and elders who have a voice in their community and who support the abolition of child marriage. Their stance can help change attitudes.
- Present reports on prevention, awareness-raising and educational activities carried out by various associations and international institutions, including in schools. The UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage publishes results achieved in various countries.<sup>63</sup>
- See the recommendations in the fact sheet on forced marriages.
- See also the general recommendations for general advice on covering all forms of violence against women (section 2.1).

#### 1.2.5. Glossary

- **Early marriage** or child marriage: see definition in section 1.2.1.
- **Forced marriage**
- **Arranged marriage**: see section 1.4.1.

<sup>63</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, *Let's End Child Marriage*, 2018. [https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/Global\\_Programme\\_Child\\_Marriage\\_2018\\_Brochure-EN.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/Global_Programme_Child_Marriage_2018_Brochure-EN.pdf)

## 1.2.6. Resources

### **Organizations to contact**

- Girls Not Brides:  
<https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/>
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR):  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx>
- IOM:  
<https://www.iom.int/>
- International Labour Organization (ILO):  
<https://www.ilo.org/global/lang-en/index.htm>
- WHO:  
<https://www.who.int/home>
- UN Women:  
<https://www.unwomen.org/en>
- Save the Children:  
<https://www.savethechildren.org/>
- UNFPA:  
<https://www.unfpa.org/>
- UNICEF: Contact [data@unicef.org](mailto:data@unicef.org)

### **Short selection of documents to consult**

- Girls Not Brides  
<https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/>
- United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 18 December 1979.  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>
- United Nations General Assembly, Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, 7 November 1962.  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/MinimumAgeForMarriage.aspx>
- United Nations General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948.

<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

- Barry, Charlotte and Jempson, Mike, *The Media and Children's Rights*, UNICEF and MediaWise, 2005. New edition in 2010. The 2005 version is available online at:  
<http://www.mediawise.org.uk/children/the-media-and-childrens-rights/>
- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*, June 1981.  
<https://www.achpr.org/legalinstruments/detail?id=49>
- United Nations Human Rights Council, resolution A/HRC/RES/35/16, 12 July 2017.  
<https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/RES/35/16>
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<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/CEFM/RecommendationsForActionEbook.pdf>
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  - UNICEF, Global Child Marriage Databases, March 2018.  
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## 1.3. Female genital mutilation/cutting

### 1.3.1. Definitions

A WHO fact sheet for the media explains that “Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for **non**-medical reasons.”<sup>64</sup>

International institutions (for example WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNESCO and UN Women) now use both terms: female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C).

According to WHO, FGM is classified into four major types.

Type 1 – clitoridectomy: partial or total removal of the clitoris (a small, sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals).

Type 2 – excision: partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora (the inner folds of the vulva), with or without excision of the labia majora (the outer folds of skin of the vulva).

Type 3 – infibulation: the narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the labia minora, or labia majora, sometimes through stitching, with or without removal of the clitoris.

Type 4 – all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area.

Deinfibulation refers to the practice of cutting open the sealed vaginal opening in a woman who has been infibulated, which is often necessary to allow intercourse or to facilitate childbirth. Sometimes genital tissue is stitched again several times, including after childbirth, increasing both the health risk and pain for the woman.

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64 WHO, Female genital mutilation, 31 January 2018. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>

### 1.3.2. Facts and figures

Worldwide, at least 200 million women have been subjected to FGM in about 30 countries, according to a UNICEF study published in 2016. Girls under the age of 15 account for 44 million of these victims.<sup>65</sup>

According to this study, some countries in sub-Saharan Africa have the highest rate of women who have undergone FGM/C (up to 98 per cent of women aged 15 to 45).

According to UNICEF, a decrease in the prevalence of FGM/C has been observed over the past three decades: in 1985, 51 per cent of girls aged 15 to 19 years were cut in the 30 countries covered by the UNICEF study, compared with 37 per cent today.

However, UNICEF warns that this decrease does not apply to all countries and does not offset population growth. Consequently, we could see a significant increase in the number of girls affected by these practices in the next 15 years. One hope, however, is that in countries where FGM/C is still practised, more and more people believe that it must be stopped. In Guinea and Sierra Leone, boys and men are more likely to oppose FGM/C than girls and women. For example, 27 per cent of Guinean girls aged 15 to 19 and 41 per cent of Guinean boys of the same age believe that FGM/C should be stopped. In Sierra Leone, the figures are 30 per cent of girls and 40 per cent of boys.<sup>66</sup>

Young people's growing awareness is also leading to action. For example, in 2017, five young girls in Kenya created a mobile app to end FGM/C. The app won the Netexplo Innovation Grand Prize at the UNESCO Netexplo Innovation Forum in 2019.<sup>67</sup>

### 1.3.3. Explanations and background

FGM/C is practised in many African countries, in the Middle East and in several Asian and Latin American countries. However, prevalence varies greatly from region to region.

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65 UNICEF, *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Global Concern*, New York, 2016. [https://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGMC\\_2016\\_brochure\\_final\\_UNICEF\\_SPREAD.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGMC_2016_brochure_final_UNICEF_SPREAD.pdf)

66 *Ibid.*

67 <https://www.netexplo.com/n100/>

See also: <https://en.unesco.org/news/learning-digital-age-smart-cities-among-innovations-taking-centre-stage-unesco-netexplo-forum>

In Europe, North America and Australia, there are cases among migrant girls from countries where FGM/C occurs.<sup>68</sup>

The practice remains largely taboo in many families. Some girls born in countries that practise FGM/C who are now living in Europe simply do not know that they were cut as babies. Sometimes, parents are not even consulted. If a migrant child returns to the village for the holidays, she may in some cases be at risk of being taken by her grandmother or an aunt to the cutter, because she is considered unclean if she remains uncut.

FGM is most often carried out on young girls, either during childhood or adolescence, as a rite of passage. It is occasionally carried out on adult women.<sup>69</sup>

Still often performed by traditional circumcisers, these procedures are sometimes undertaken by health-care professionals. In 2010, WHO published a document against the medicalization of FGM, entitled *Global strategy to stop health-care providers from performing female genital mutilation*.<sup>70</sup>

FGM/C can have dramatic consequences on the health of girls and women and, of course, on their sexuality. Many women who have undergone FGM can no longer enjoy a fulfilling sex life, and even experience great pain during sexual intercourse.

When covering this subject, provide an explanation of the short-term (bleeding, infections, urinary problems, etc.) and long-term health consequences of these

interventions (cysts, complications during childbirth, risk of AIDS transmission, etc.). Journalists can also explain that there are corrective surgical procedures.

In some cultures, FGM/C is integrated into the rites of passage to adulthood and considered a necessary part of a young girl's upbringing. By undergoing the procedure, they would be socially valued, publicly praised and given gifts. However, WHO warns: FGM is used "to ensure premarital virginity and marital fidelity. FGM is in many communities believed to reduce a woman's libido and therefore believed to help her

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68 WHO, Female genital mutilation, 31 January 2018. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>

69 *Ibid.*

70 Available at: [https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/fgm/rhr\\_10\\_9/en/](https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/fgm/rhr_10_9/en/)



resist extramarital sexual acts. When a vaginal opening is covered or narrowed [...], the fear of the pain of opening it, and the fear that this will be found out, is expected to further discourage extramarital sexual intercourse among women with this type of FGM,” especially when the husband is away for months at a time.

For journalists, it is also a matter of reporting on social coercion, an important factor in maintaining this custom, and the pressure on families who question it. It should be noted that this practice is performed in an exclusively female environment in which women cut girls.

Reporting also means putting an end to misconceptions: FGM/C is not a custom linked to the three monotheistic religions. The custom predates them and these religions do not in any way require women to be cut.

FGM/C is a violation of the rights of girls and women. It is almost always performed on minors and therefore constitutes an infringement of the rights of the child. It also “violates a person’s rights to health, security and physical integrity, the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to life when the procedure results in death,” according to WHO.<sup>71</sup>

At the international level, article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights<sup>72</sup> states that “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” This text has become law in the 171 States that have ratified it. Journalists can therefore report on FGM/C using the covenant as a basis. FGM/C also violates many other international legal instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), by violating the physical integrity of girls and the principles of equality and non-discrimination on the basis of gender.

At the national level, many countries have passed laws prohibiting FGM/C, but many citizens are still unaware of the legislation in force. To inform them on the subject, awareness-raising campaigns have been set up to highlight the dangers of these traditional practices. In Burkina Faso, FGM/C was banned in 1996, and the impact of

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<sup>71</sup> WHO, Female genital mutilation, 31 January 2018. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>.

<sup>72</sup> Adopted by the United Nations in 1966, it entered into force in 1976.

the law has been dramatic.<sup>73</sup> Since then, in addition to prevention campaigns, female circumcisers have been sentenced to harsh prison terms.

For supporters of cultural relativism, an individual's beliefs, ways of thinking and actions are strongly influenced by the culture in which he or she grows up. According to the most radical proponents of the theory, customs and opinions should therefore only be considered from the point of view of this culture. Universalists, on the other hand, consider that there are universal fundamental rights, to be placed above any particular cultural belief, such as those contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948. However, this debate should no longer take place in journalistic coverage of the issue, as legislation now prohibits this custom in many countries.

The United Nations General Assembly has adopted several resolutions calling on the international community to intensify its efforts to end FGM/C. In addition, the SDGs adopted by the United Nations in 2015 (specifically SDG 5) call for an end to these practices by 2030. SDG 5.3. aims to “eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation”.<sup>74</sup> Many international organizations are actively working in this direction (see section 1.3.6 – Resources). 6 February has been declared International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.<sup>75</sup>

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73 For further reading on this subject: Jean-Michel Hauteville, “Excision : les résultats inégaux de la lutte contre les mutilations génitales en Afrique” [Cutting: Unequal results in the fight against FGM in Africa], *Jeune Afrique*, 6 February 2014. <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/165763/societe/excision-les-r-sultats-in-gaux-de-la-lutte-contre-les-mutilations-g-nitales-en-afrique/>

74 United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, 2015. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>

75 United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/67/146, 20 December 2012. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/67/146> and <https://www.un.org/en/events/femalegenitalmutilationday/>

### 1.3.4. Advice and good practices

- Be tactful. As already discussed, FGM/C is a highly sensitive subject, which must therefore be addressed with sensitivity in terms of style and great clarity in terms of substance.
- Avoid any stigmatization. When articles on FGM/C are disseminated in countries where these practices do not occur, they can reinforce prejudice and convey a negative image of the cultures that perpetuate them. To avoid this, it is useful to put these practices into their spatial and temporal context and to ensure that the positive role of women in promoting universal values and their contribution to gender equality awareness-raising campaigns is demonstrated.<sup>76</sup>
- Give a voice to respected figures in this field. As a journalist, rather than writing comments on FGM/C yourself (and being perceived as a know-it-all, especially if you are foreign to the culture performing FGM), it is probably more effective to give a voice to local figures who are respected in the community. Their words will have greater weight and legitimacy. They may be cultural, sports, political or religious leaders committed to abolishing this practice. The renowned Senegalese filmmaker Ousmane Sembène made the film *Moolaadé* to raise awareness of FGM. Since he is highly respected, his resolutely hostile stance to FGM has made many people think about it.
- Tell alternative stories, such as that of Norkiramati Kurandai, a Tanzanian traditional circumciser who became a women's health educator, through a project launched by UNESCO to empower girls in pastoral communities. This initiative aims to improve the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls and women through training and awareness-raising activities.<sup>77</sup>
- Any journalistic coverage of FGM/C should emphasize four fundamental points:
  1. FGM/C is not recommended by any of the three monotheistic religions.
  2. The procedure is a violation of the fundamental rights of girls and women. It is contrary to international law and the legislation in force in many countries (highlight the situation in the country in question).

<sup>76</sup> The UNESCO report *Gender Equality, Heritage and Creativity* (2014) has been used in initiatives to raise awareness about gender equality.

<sup>77</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/from\\_traditional\\_female\\_circumciser\\_to\\_womens\\_health\\_educ/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/from_traditional_female_circumciser_to_womens_health_educ/)

3. It is harmful to the health and sexual development of girls who undergo it.
4. It reflects deep gender inequality and “constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women”.<sup>78</sup>

- Never use the term “female circumcision” to refer to FGM/C. The two practices have nothing in common. Confusing them leads to FGM/C being downplayed.
- Report on women’s shelters and community centres that provide confidential and safe support for vulnerable women or victims. These centres may work in a network or have units staffed by doctors, midwives, specialized psychologists, sexologists, social workers, surgeons, etc. who can provide support and medical care.
- Report on corrective surgery.
- Emphasize that the media has the capacity to help abolish this practice by framing and giving visibility to this issue, as well as through the amount of information provided to the public and through the questioning of influential people and the authorities.
- Address the subject on the occasion of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM/C (6 February).
- See the general recommendations (section 2.1.), where you will find other general tips for covering all forms of gender-based violence.

Term to use	Term not to use
Female genital mutilation	Female circumcision (see bullet point explanation)

### 1.3.5. Glossary

- **Female genital mutilation (FGM)** is also called **cutting**.
- **Clitoris**
- **Clitoridectomy**
- **Cutting**
- **Infibulation**
- **Deinfibulation**

All these terms are defined in section 1.3.1.

<sup>78</sup> WHO, Female genital mutilation, 31 January 2018. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>

### 1.3.6. Resources

#### **Organizations to contact**

- End FGM:  
<http://www.endfgm.eu/female-genital-mutilation/what-is-fgm/>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):  
<https://www.unhcr.org/>
- OHCHR:  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx>
- World Health Organization (WHO):  
<https://www.who.int/home>
- UN Women:  
<https://www.unwomen.org/en>
- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS):  
<https://www.unaids.org/en>
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP):  
<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home.html>
- UNESCO:  
<https://en.unesco.org/>
- UNFPA and UNICEF:  
<https://www.unfpa.org/unfpa-unicef-joint-programme-eliminate-female-genital-mutilation>
- UNICEF:  
<https://www.unicef.org/>

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<https://www.ined.fr/en/publications/editions/population-and-societies/female-genital-mutilation-around-the-world/>
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<https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/69/147>

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<https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-EN.asp?fileid=23176&lang=en>
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- UNHCR, WHO, UN Women, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, *Eliminating Forced, Coercive and Otherwise Involuntary Sterilization*. WHO, Geneva, 2014.  
<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/eliminating-forced-coercive-and-otherwise-involuntary-sterilization>
- Nabaneh, Satang and Muula, Adamson S., Female genital mutilation/cutting in Africa: a complex legal & ethical landscape, *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics*, 19 February 2019.  
<https://obgyn.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ijgo.12792>
- WHO, Global Health Observatory (GHO) data.  
<https://www.who.int/gho/database/en/>
- WHO, Female genital mutilation, 31 January 2018.  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>
- United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted in 1966 and entered into force in 1976 (see article 7).  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- European Parliament, resolution of 7 February 2018, Zero tolerance for female genital mutilation (2017/2936(RSP)).  
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELE:52018IP0033&from=FR>
- UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, *Accelerating Change by the Numbers. 2016 Annual Report of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Accelerating Change*, 2017.  
<https://www.unfpa.org/publications/accelerating-change-numbers>
- UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, *How to Transform A Social Norm. Reflections on Phase II of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation*. UNFPA, 2018.  
[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNFPA\\_UNICEF\\_FGM\\_17\\_Report\\_web.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNFPA_UNICEF_FGM_17_Report_web.pdf)

- UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, *Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Accelerating Change. Summary report of Phase I 2008–2013* UNFPA, 2014.  
<https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Joint%20Programme%20on%20FGMC%20Summary%20Report.pdf>
- UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, *17 Ways to End FGM/C*. UNFPA, 2017.  
<https://www.unfpa.org/publications/seventeen-ways-end-fgm>
- Sembène, Ousmane, *Moolaadé*, 2005.<sup>79</sup>
- End FGM Guardian Global Media Campaign, 2014. This global media campaign was launched to end FGM.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/end-fgm>
- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/gmcendfgm/>
- UNESCO, *From Traditional Female Circumciser to Women's Health Educator*, 25 November 2016.  
[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/from\\_traditional\\_female\\_circumciser\\_to\\_womens\\_health\\_educ/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/from_traditional_female_circumciser_to_womens_health_educ/)
- UNFPA, *Calling for the End of the Medicalization of Female Genital Mutilation*, Policy brief, 2018.  
[https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/FGM\\_Policy\\_Brief\\_On\\_Medicalization\\_Brochure\\_-\\_PDF\\_June\\_18.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/FGM_Policy_Brief_On_Medicalization_Brochure_-_PDF_June_18.pdf)
- UNFPA, *Engaging Midwives in the Global Campaign to End Female Genital Mutilation*, 2014.  
<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/engaging-midwives-global-campaign-end-female-genital-mutilation>
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[https://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGMC\\_2016\\_brochure\\_final\\_UNICEF\\_SPREAD.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGMC_2016_brochure_final_UNICEF_SPREAD.pdf)
- UNFPA, *Female genital mutilation (FGM) frequently asked questions*, December 2015.  
<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-frequently-asked-questions>
- UNFPA, *Female genital mutilation*.  
<https://www.unfpa.org/female-genital-mutilation>

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79 This feature film helps viewers to better understand the phenomenon and is a real indictment against FGM.



## 1.4. Forced marriages

### 1.4.1. Definition

According to the 1964 Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, “No marriage shall be legally entered into without the full and free consent of both parties.”<sup>80</sup> Forced marriage refers to the imposition of a marriage on a non-consenting individual (or both of them). This coercion, which can involve violence, physical threats, emotional blackmail, theoretically distinguishes it from ‘arranged marriage’, which involves the consent of both spouses. Any marriage committed under duress, whether religious, civil or contracted according to traditional customs, is therefore a forced marriage and could fall within the scope of people trafficking and modern slavery (see section 1.8.).

### 1.4.2. Facts and figures

The ILO estimated that in 2016, 15.4 million people were living in forced marriages. 84 per cent of these marriages concerned women and 37 per cent concern children (persons under 18 years of age). Among child victims, 44 per cent were forced into marriage before the age of 15. According to the same ILO report, 90 per cent of forced marriages occur in two regions of the world: Africa, on the one hand, and Asia and the Pacific, on the other.<sup>81</sup> This phenomenon also affects Europe (see section 1.4.3.)<sup>82</sup> and does not exclude any region of the world.

However, it should be remembered that extreme caution should be exercised with regard to the figures relating to such a hidden subject. Figures are often only estimates and may vary from one source to another. It is important to check if there is an underestimation. Be careful not to confuse the figures for forced marriages and early marriages (see fact sheet on early marriage).

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80 United Nations, Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, 7 November 1962. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/MinimumAgeForMarriage.aspx>

81 International Labour Office and Walk Free Foundation in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*, Geneva, 2017. [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_575479/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_575479/lang-en/index.htm)

82 Mathilde Sengoelge et al., *EU FEM Roadmap: EU Roadmap on Forced/Early Marriage (FEM) Referral Pathway for Frontline Professionals*, 2016. <http://files.wave-network.org/home/ForceEarlyMarriageRoadmap.pdf>

Forced marriage can also occur in affluent environments and among the elite, while not being accounted for in the statistics.

### 1.4.3. Explanations and background

Forced marriage is condemned by international law. “Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses”, proclaims article 16.2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which entered into force in 1981, states in article 16 (1) (b) that women have “the same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent.” The United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have adopted several resolutions calling on States to implement policies to prevent, combat and eradicate child marriage, early marriage and forced marriage. Forced marriage is often combined with early marriage and is frequently accompanied by domestic violence. When it affects children, it also violates their right to education, health, work and leisure, as explained in the fact sheet on early marriage.<sup>83</sup>

“In some societies, a forced marriage may occur when a rapist is permitted to escape criminal sanctions by marrying the victim, usually with the consent of her family,” notes the ILO.<sup>84</sup> The Human Rights Council therefore calls on States to repeal or amend this statutory provision.<sup>85</sup>

In humanitarian crisis situations, there is an increase in the number of forced, early and child marriages, due in part to insecurity and the “misconception of providing protection through marriage”.<sup>86</sup> During conflicts, armed groups can also use forced marriage as a war tactic.

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83 Mathilde Sengoelge et al., *EU FEM Roadmap: EU Roadmap on Forced/Early Marriage (FEM) Referral Pathway for Frontline Professionals*, 2016. <http://fileserver.wave-network.org/home/ForceEarlyMarriageRoadmap.pdf>; UNICEF, 25 million child marriages prevented in last decade due to accelerated progress, according to new UNICEF estimates. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/25-million-child-marriages-prevented-last-decade-due-accelerated-progress-according>

84 International Labour Office and Walk Free Foundation in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*, Geneva, 2017. [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_575479/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_575479/lang-en/index.htm).

85 UN Human Rights Council, resolution A/HRC/RES/35/16, 22 June 2017. The text contains many insights into the consequences of child marriages, early marriages and forced marriages, and notes that the risk is “highly exacerbated” in humanitarian crisis situations. [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/35/16](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/35/16)

86 *Ibid.*

In 2018, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe invited its member states to recognize forced marriage as grounds for international protection, as well as to conduct public awareness-raising and information campaigns.<sup>87</sup> In the United Kingdom, the Forced Marriage Unit (which is a joint Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office unit) reported that in 2016 it was aware of 1,428 cases of forced marriage, a quarter of them involving people under the age of 18. Although this phenomenon mainly affects women, in the United Kingdom 20 per cent of victims are reported to be men.<sup>88</sup> It should be noted that all Council of Europe member states are affected by forced marriages.

The 2015 United Nations SDGs, and in particular SDG 5, target 3, call to “Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation,”<sup>89</sup> by 2030.

The United Nations has also launched the Girls Not Brides campaign to do everything possible to eliminate early and forced marriages by 2030.<sup>90</sup>

#### 1.4.4. Advice and good practices

- Stress that forced marriage is a crime, condemned by international law and by national legislation in many countries. Systematically cite laws, conventions, prosecutions of persons involved in forced marriage and/or any sanctions that may exist.
- Keep in mind that this phenomenon affects all parts of society, regardless of the social standing of the person or family.
- Report on measures implemented or to be implemented in the future so that forced marriages can be annulled, or are annulled or dissolved in practice.
- Strictly protect the identity of the person who filed a complaint or denounced this practice.
- Avoid terms, references and generalizations that can lead to a community being stigmatized.

87 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, resolution 2233 (2018), *Forced marriage in Europe*. <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-EN.asp?fileid=25016&lang=en>

88 United Kingdom Home Office, Forced Marriage Unit statistics 2016, March 2017. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forced-marriage-unit-statistics-2016>

89 United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, 2015. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>

90 <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/themes/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs/>

- Report on prevention work carried out in schools or professional environments as well as non-governmental organization (NGO) initiatives and training available in this field for the police and social, justice and health services.
- Report on the structures in place to provide assistance to victims and people at risk of forced marriage.
- Contact diplomatic and consular authorities, in particular regarding the repatriation of people who have been taken away from their country of residence to be married.
- Explain why legal proceedings should be initiated in countries other than their own in order to protect them from forced marriage.
- Also explain what an asylum application actually is, if applicable, in order to avoid the issue of forced marriage being dragged into the debate on migration.
- See also the general recommendations for general advice on covering all forms of violence against women (section 2.1.), as well as those mentioned in the fact sheet on early or child marriages.

#### 1.4.5. Glossary

- **Forced marriage** (defined in section 1.4.1)
- **Arranged marriage** (defined in section 1.4.1)
- **Early marriage** or child marriage (see section 1.2)

#### 1.4.6. Resources

##### **Organizations to contact**

- OHCHR:  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/ChildMarriage.aspx>
- IOM:  
<https://www.iom.int/>
- ILO:  
<https://www.ilo.org/global/lang-en/index.htm>
- WHO:  
<https://www.who.int/en>

- UN Women:  
<https://www.unwomen.org/en>
- UNFPA:  
<https://www.unfpa.org>
- UNICEF:  
<https://www.unicef.org.uk/>

### **Short selection of documents to consult**

- United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, article 16 (1) (b), 18 December 1979.  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>
- United Nations General Assembly, Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, 7 November 1962.  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/MinimumAgeForMarriage.aspx>
- United Nations General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 16.2, 10 December 1948.  
<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>
- International Labour Office and Walk Free Foundation in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*, Geneva, 2017.  
[https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_575479/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_575479/lang-en/index.htm)
- United Nations Human Rights Council, resolution A/HRC/RES/35/16, 12 July 2017.  
[https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/35/16](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/35/16)
- Cox, John W., Essential tips for interviewing children, Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma, 31 August 2018.  
<https://dartcenter.org/resources/essential-tips-interviewing-children>
- International Federation of Journalists, *Draft Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Issues Involving Children*, 2001.  
[https://childhub.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/63\\_153\\_EN\\_original.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=6988](https://childhub.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/63_153_EN_original.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=6988)

- OHCHR, *Recommendations for Action against Child and Forced Marriages*, September 2017.<sup>91</sup>  
<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/CEFM/RecommendationsForActionEbook.pdf>
- United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, 2015.  
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>
- UNICEF, Global Child Marriage Databases, March 2018.  
<https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>

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<sup>91</sup> This document presents a list of United Nations reports and resolutions on the subject.

## 1.5. Gender-specific foeticide and infanticide

### 1.5.1. Definitions

Female foeticide is a gender-selective abortion. A female fetus is aborted solely on the grounds of being female.

Female infanticide refers to the murder of a young girl (after birth). Common methods are strangulation, drowning or poisoning.

According to UNFPA, which defines female foeticide as “gender-biased sex selection” (i.e. prenatal sex selection), the practice is based on gender bias.<sup>92</sup> This is due to parental preference for boys, particularly because of discriminatory traditions and socioeconomic practices.

Female foeticide is most commonly practised in financially able families living in urban areas, while infanticide is more common in rural and poor areas.

### 1.5.2. Facts and figures

In several countries in Asia, the Caucasus and the Balkans, prenatal sex selection has led to a pronounced demographic imbalance. While the global birth rate averages 105 boys per 100 girls (biological standard), this ratio is biased in some regions, according to UNFPA data. The organization provides a map and statistics for the main countries where the imbalance is most pronounced.<sup>93</sup>

Although these data provide a clear indication, the precise scale of female foeticide and female infanticide remains difficult to determine, as these acts are committed in the secrecy of families and are not sufficiently reported in the media.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> UNFPA, “Gender-biased sex selection” 23 July 2018.

<https://www.unfpa.org/gender-biased-sex-selection>

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Gautam N. Allahbadia, “The 50 Million Missing Women,” *Journal of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics*, September 2012, vol. 19, No. 9. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1016859622724>



### 1.5.3. Explanations and background

According to a 2016 study by the Canadian Medical Association Journal, the phenomenon mainly affects countries in Asia, the Caucasus and the Balkans, but it is also practised in Europe and North America.<sup>95</sup>

Several factors explain the preference for boys. The reasons may first of all be economic: in many societies, it is indeed the boy who will provide for the family and look after his elderly parents in his home. The girl, on the other hand, is perceived as a heavy burden since, at the time of her marriage, her parents will have to pay a dowry to the husband's parents – a costly custom for many families.<sup>96</sup> The preference for boys may also be explained by reasons related to religious or cultural practices. For example, in some cultures, it is the son who takes care of the rites and must light the funeral pyre for his parents. Finally, the patriarchal structure of society, which grants a higher status to boys, is so difficult for girls in some regions that once they reach adulthood, they do not want to give birth to a girl who would have to go through what they have suffered.<sup>97</sup>

Even if girls have escaped foeticide, then infanticide, they are still not safe from harm. Many of them will have to face gender-based discrimination that can sometimes seriously endanger their health: negligence in the care provided, less or poorer quality food, lack of investment in their education, etc.<sup>98</sup> Not to mention early marriages and dowry crimes (where the young wife is killed if the in-laws consider the dowry insufficient). A girl will therefore be disadvantaged from birth and throughout her life.

“Gender biased sex selection is a manifestation of the subordinate status of women in society, with far reaching socio-demographic consequences,” emphasizes UN Women.<sup>99</sup> According to UNFPA, in some Asian countries, many men may find it impossible to marry, and there are signs that the upcoming “marriage squeeze” could

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95 Marcelo L. Urquia, Rahim Moineddin, Prabhat Jha, Patricia J. O'Campo, Kwame McKenzie, Richard H. Glazier, David A. Henry and Joel G. Ray, Sex ratios at birth after induced abortion, *JAMC/CMAJ*, 14 June 2016. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4902709/>

96 Vibhuti Patel, A long battle for the girl child, *Economic & Political Weekly*, 21 May 2011, vol. 46, No. 21, available on the UNFPA website: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA\\_Publication-39860.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_Publication-39860.pdf)

97 UNFPA, Gender-biased sex selection, 23 July 2018, <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-biased-sex-selection>

98 Christophe Z. Guilimoto, *Sex Imbalances at Birth. Current Trends, Consequences and Policy Implications*, UNFPA Asia and Pacific Regional Office, 2012, <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/sex-imbalances-birth>

99 UN Women and UNFPA, *Sex Ratios and Gender Biased Sex Selection. History, Debates and Future Directions*. UN Women Multi-country Office for India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka, 2014.

have serious social consequences.<sup>100</sup> In some areas, men are already finding no more women to marry and are condemned to live alone. The terms ‘bare branches’ or ‘dead branches’ are sometimes used to refer to involuntarily single men, because they are unable to ‘add fruit’ to the family tree. “And there has already been an increase in ‘cross-border brides’ – women and girls migrating, or being trafficked, into areas where there are fewer women than men,” UNFPA continues.<sup>101</sup> ‘Bride trafficking’ is taking place, and allows a woman to be bought abroad, for example in South-East Asia and the Pacific. There are also reports of women being kidnapped to alleviate this shortfall.<sup>102</sup>

According to some research, this disproportionate number of single men can lead not only to an increase in the number of sexual assaults, but also to an increase in crime and even to the adoption of various forms of political radicalism (such as nationalism or jingoism). In addition to issues of gender-based violence, this phenomenon may therefore have an international, security and geopolitical dimension, as Valerie M. Hudson and Andrea M. den Boer discuss in their book *Bare Branches*.<sup>103</sup> With this in mind, this demographic imbalance – which affects about 40 per cent of the world’s population – would indeed lead to the emergence of authoritarian, nationalist or fundamentalist ideologies based on sexist interpretations of history or religion.

To counter and reverse the phenomenon, some countries have taken a range of measures, including revising family planning policies, or restricting or prohibiting scans to determine the sex of the fetus, unless there are proven medical grounds and the scan is ordered by a doctor. However, these rules are not always respected since these practices, such as foeticide, can be very lucrative in some of the regions concerned. Strict law enforcement is undoubtedly crucial, but deeper societal developments should also be expected. UNFPA is therefore calling for an acceleration of “efforts to develop programmes and policies that end all forms of discrimination, including son preference and gender-biased sex selection.”<sup>104</sup> It is at this level that educational institutions and the media can have a positive impact.

100 UNFPA, Gender-biased sex selection, <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-biased-sex-selection>  
101 *Ibid.*

102 UNODC, 2017. <https://www.unodc.org/southeastasiaandpacific/en/resources/publications.html>

103 Valerie M. Hudson and Andrea M. den Boer, *Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia’s Surplus Male Populations*. The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA), 2004.

104 UNFPA, Gender-biased sex selection, 23 July 2018, <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-biased-sex-selection>

#### 1.5.4. Advice and good practices

- Distinguish between female foeticide (selective abortion) on the one hand, and female infanticide, on the other.
- Contextualize the issue by describing the culture of discrimination against women that fosters these practices.
- Investigate complicity within the medical profession and the impunity enjoyed by those responsible.
- Investigate the resources available to the authorities to combat these phenomena, but also the difficulties they face.
- Describe the consequences of the lack of women on the general state of society: men's frustration due to enforced celibacy can lead to an increase in aggressiveness, violence against women, trafficking in persons,<sup>105</sup> crime and radicalism.
- Report on prevention and education programmes in schools, workplaces and religious institutions.
- When covering the subject, bear in mind that it is not a question of giving an opinion on abortion but of denouncing any act of prenatal sex determination whose sole purpose is to commit female foeticide.<sup>106</sup>
- See also the general recommendations (section 2.1), which concern all forms of violence against women.

#### 1.5.5. Glossary

- **Gender-specific foeticide:** prenatal sex selection
- **Female infanticide:** murder of a young girl after birth

<sup>105</sup> United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Gender-biased sex selection, 23 July 2018, <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-biased-sex-selection>.

<sup>106</sup> Vibhuti Patel, A long battle for the girl child, *Economic & Political Weekly*, 21 May 2011, vol. 46, No. 21, available on the UNFPA website: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA\\_Publication-39860.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_Publication-39860.pdf).

## 1.5.6. Resources

### Organizations to contact

- Child Rights International Network: independent information network on children's rights:  
<https://home.crin.org/>
- OHCHR:  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx>
- WHO:  
<https://www.who.int/home>
- UN Women:  
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/increasing-knowledge-and-awareness>
- UNODC:  
<https://www.unodc.org>
- UNFPA:  
<https://www.unfpa.org/>
- UNICEF:  
<https://www.unicef.org>

### Short selection of documents to consult

- Aravamudan, Gita, *Disappearing Daughters: The Tragedy of Female Foeticide*, Penguin Books India, 2007.
- Guilmo, Christophe Z., *Sex Imbalances at Birth. Current Trends, Consequences and Policy Implications*, UNFPA Asia and Pacific Regional Office, 2012.  
<https://www.unfpa.org/publications/sex-imbalances-birth>
- Gupta, Parul, Privées du droit de naître [Deprived of the right to be born], *Enjeux internationaux* No. 17, autumn 2007, p. 45.
- Hudson, Valerie M., and Den Boer, Andrea M., *Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Populations*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA), 2004.

- Vibhuti Patel, A long battle for the girl child, *Economic & Political Weekly*, 21 May 2011, vol. 46, No. 21.  
[https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA\\_Publication-39860.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_Publication-39860.pdf)
- Schloenhardt, Andreas, et al., *Trafficking in Persons from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to Thailand*, UNODC, Bangkok, August 2017.  
[https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2017/Trafficking\\_in\\_persons\\_to\\_Thailand\\_report.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2017/Trafficking_in_persons_to_Thailand_report.pdf)
- Sen, Amartya, Missing Women – Revisited, *British Medical Journal*, 2003.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC286281/>
- Sen, Amartya, More than 100 million women are missing, *The New York Review of Books*, 20 December 1990.  
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1990/12/20/more-than-100-million-women-are-missing/>
- UNFPA, *Preventing Gender-biased Sex Selection in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*, UNFPA Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, May 2015.  
<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/preventing-gender-biased-sex-selection-eastern-europe-and-central-asia>
- UNFPA, Gender-biased sex selection, 23 July 2018.  
<https://www.unfpa.org/gender-biased-sex-selection>

## 1.6. Sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape

### 1.6.1. Definition

The United Nations Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2008/5<sup>107</sup> focuses on harassment and defines it as follows: “any improper and unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person.” In particular, “sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature [...]”

Harassment is distinct from sexual assault, which involves non-consensual physical contact (for example, touching, forced kissing, etc.) with violence, coercion or threat. Nevertheless, harassment can be a precursor of sexual assault. Abuse of authority, i.e. when the harasser or aggressor is in a position of hierarchical superiority, group violence and the use of threats or weapons are generally aggravating circumstances.

Rape is any act of sexual penetration without consent (i.e., carried out with violence, threat, or by surprise), whether the penis, finger or an object is used.<sup>108</sup> Every rape is a sexual assault, but not every sexual assault is necessarily a rape. Therefore, appropriate terminology should be used in cases of rape. However, the way in which the facts are described may vary in different national legislations.

### 1.6.2. Facts and figures

According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 45–55 per cent of women over 15 years of age have been victims of sexual harassment in the EU.<sup>109</sup>

According to a UN Women study conducted in four countries in the Middle East and North Africa, between 40 and 60 per cent of women surveyed reported that they had already been victims of sexual harassment in the public space, mainly in the form

<sup>107</sup> <https://undocs.org/en/ST/SGB/2008/5>

<sup>108</sup> In its Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (New York, 2017), the United Nations defines rape as “Penetration – even if slightly – of any body part of a person who does not consent with a sexual organ and/or the invasion of the genital or anal opening of a person who does not consent with any object or body part.” [https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/SEA%20Glossary%20%20%5BSecond%20Edition%20-%202017%5D%20-%20English\\_0.pdf](https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/SEA%20Glossary%20%20%5BSecond%20Edition%20-%202017%5D%20-%20English_0.pdf)

<sup>109</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against Women: An EU-wide Survey. Results at a Glance*, Vienna, 2014. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/violence-against-women-eu-wide-survey-results-glance>

60 of sexual comments, stalking / tailing or staring. Between 31 and 64 per cent of men reported having committed such acts.<sup>110</sup>

In Asia, studies have shown that 30 to 40 per cent of women are sexually harassed in the workplace.<sup>111</sup> Beyond the workplace, violence against women is also an issue in the political sphere. A recent study by the Bolivian network *Coordinadora de la Mujer*, an organization receiving funding from the UN Women Fund for Gender Equality, shows that 65–70 per cent of women parliamentarians had been victims of harassment and political violence.<sup>112</sup>

The peak of this violence occurs during election campaigns. It often takes the form of misogynistic attitudes, sexist remarks or harassment, including sexual assault. This violence occurs within political institutions or online, and can lead, in the worst cases, to femicide. One emblematic example is the 2016 murder of environmental activist Berta Cáceres, one of many women involved in environmental protection, in Honduras.

### 1.6.3. Explanations and background

The profile of sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape issues has risen considerably with the #MeToo movement.<sup>113</sup> In 2017, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker* and *The Washington Post* investigated accusations of sexual assault and rape allegedly committed by film industry and political figures. Boosted by several Pulitzer Prizes, these revelations received considerable media coverage and led to the launch of the #MeToo hashtag. Through this and local hashtags, hundreds of thousands of women began to tell their stories.

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110 UN Women and Promundo-US, *Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa, Executive Summary*. Cairo and Washington, 2017. <https://imagesmena.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/05/IMAGES-MENA-Executive-Summary-EN-16May2017-web.pdf>

111 Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls (UN Women), *Fast facts: statistics on violence against women and girls*, 31 October 2010. <https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/299-faits-en-un-coup-dil-statistiques-sur-la-violence-lgard-des-femmes.html>

112 UN Women, *Across Latin America, women fight back against violence in politics*, 14 November 2018. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/11/feature-across-latin-america-women-fight-back-against-violence-in-politics>

113 The term 'Me Too' (without a hashtag) was used in 2007 by activist Tarana Burke to support women who are victims of sexual abuse, particularly those from visible minorities and disadvantaged communities.



Testimonies have multiplied, with many countries and domains affected: the media and entertainment industry, politics and business, universities and sports clubs, hospitals and humanitarian organizations and so on. This global wave has highlighted the omnipresence of harassment and sexual assault against women.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines violence and harassment as “a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, [...] that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm [...]” This may include, in particular, “physical abuse, verbal abuse, bullying and mobbing, sexual harassment, threats and stalking”.<sup>114</sup> This definition also covers violence and harassment occurring through “work-related communications, including those enabled by ICT.”<sup>115</sup> Harassment and sexual assault can result from hostile working environments that provide the conditions for these offences to be committed by colleagues, superiors, subordinates or people outside the company. It is generally part of a system of male domination that confers inferior status on women. It is also important to note that gender-based violence includes homophobia (which includes lesbophobia), biphobia and transphobia.

In 2011, UNESCO produced a report<sup>116</sup> on harassment focusing on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. The same report points out that in schools, reports of violence vary according to sexual orientation: 7 per cent of heterosexual students reported being harassed, compared with 15 per cent of lesbians, 24 per cent of bisexual male students, and 48 per cent of gay male students. Harassment is reinforced by social norms shown in the media. A 2016 report published by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) refers to this as ‘media violence’, since the media can contribute to “promoting a culture of commercialization of women’s bodies and commodification that transforms them into places where violence can be perpetrated”.<sup>117</sup>

114 ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment: Five key questions.

[https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_711891/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_711891/lang-en/index.htm)

115 *Ibid.*

116 UNESCO, *Out in the Open: Education Sector Responses to Violence Based on Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity/Expression: Summary Report*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244652>

117 Natalia Gherardi, *Otras formas de violencia contra las mujeres que reconocer, nombrar y visibilizar* [Other forms of violence against women to recognize, name and make visible], ECLAC, 2016. <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/otras-formas-violencia-mujeres-que-reconocer-nombrar-visibilizar>

## 62 **Rape and journalistic ethics**

Some journalists are not very concerned about ethics and are sometimes even encouraged to adopt this attitude by senior media executives. The temptation is all the more intense when the fields of operation are far away, which can sometimes give journalists a sense of total impunity. For example, many of them interviewed women victims of rape and other abuses in Kivu, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, in defiance of the most basic rules of ethics. As Solange Lusiku, editor of the newspaper *Le Souverain*, the only independent newspaper published in Bukavu, denounced, “rape has become the business of a large number of NGOs and journalists”.<sup>118</sup> Journalists must be able to report the facts to readers, viewers and listeners without violating the ethical and deontological principles of the profession. This knowledge must be shared and reinforced by self-regulatory bodies.

### **1.6.4. Advice and good practices**

- Be precise in your choice of words and use appropriate vocabulary: sexual harassment is not synonymous with sexual assault or rape (see section 1.6). To make it clear that violence has occurred, do not use the term ‘sexual intercourse’ and avoid the term ‘non-consensual sexual intercourse’. Instead, use the terms ‘rape’ or ‘sexual assault’, as appropriate. Similarly, care should be taken with the use of pronouns. For example, be careful not to say that ‘she got raped’ and instead say ‘she was raped’.
- Give the victim/survivor a voice when possible and if they wish to speak out.
- Talk to experts rather than relatives of the aggressor or victim, whose testimonies often provide little information and are ridden with clichés (‘he was just an ordinary father’, ‘we would never have thought that...’ etc). It is recommended that journalists contact specialists (doctors, psychologists, lawyers, social workers), who can provide proper analysis.
- Emphasize the impact that harassment, assault or rape has on the victim, both in the short and long term, in terms of physical (injuries, trauma, unwanted pregnancy, insomnia and other health problems), psychological (insecurity, low self-esteem, depression), social (difficult family relationships and friendships, dropping out of education) or economic (inability to work) issues.

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118 From an interview Solange Lusiku gave Anne-Marie Impe in Bukavu in 2012.

- Also show the impact of this type of crime on society as a whole (women's exclusion from public spaces, absenteeism from work, etc.).
- Do not limit yourself to covering an individual case. Investigate the 'culture', exploitation or 'system' of harassment and sexual objectification of women that this individual case may reveal. Interviewing an activist against violence against women can provide an interesting viewpoint.
- Investigate the concrete circumstances that foster sexual harassment and sexual assault: the lack of a clear gender equality policy in various companies and institutions; the inadequacy of public transport services; working conditions in workshops and offices; the dangerous nature of certain public spaces (urban building sites, dark tunnels, deserted streets and parks, etc.); gang-dominated settings, etc.
- Reiterate that remaining passive when witnessing an assault constitutes failure to assist a person in danger.
- Practise solutions journalism: report, for example, on prevention measures and responses to harassment, whether these strategies are individual, community or state. Why not produce a series of reports featuring various positive and creative initiatives to prevent or address harassment and sexual assault? These could include courses in verbal or physical self-defence for women, or 'safety audits',<sup>119</sup> which are now conducted in many countries.
- Also investigate institutional responses to sexual harassment and similar assaults: are they appropriate? Do victims have adequate protection? How are they treated in police stations when they report a crime? Are police officers trained to understand the extent of psychological abuse? Do they respond in a timely and appropriate manner? Are survivor support services adequately resourced?
- Encourage women to report the matter to the authorities: only a small minority do so, because of a sense of shame, fear of reprisals, fear that reporting it will not resolve the situation or because of the cost and the slowness of the proceedings.

119 Women's safety audits were initiated in Toronto, Canada. They assume that while women face several forms of violence in the public space, they are also natural experts in their own safety: because they are used to noticing dangerous places when they travel, they are therefore in the best position to propose appropriate urban planning developments that would improve safety for everyone. Further reading on this subject: Anne-Marie Impe and Jean-Paul Marthoz, "Le droit des femmes à la ville" [Women's rights in my town] in *Les droits humains dans ma commune. Et si la liberté et l'égalité se construisaient dans la Cité ?* [Human rights in my area. What if freedom and equality shaped the city?] GRIP Publishing and Amnesty International, Brussels, 2018.

- Consider the specific ethical and legal dilemmas posed by reports of harassment and assault (e.g. libel suits). Be particularly careful to double-check testimonies and respect the presumption of innocence.
- Ensure that the media as a whole (cultural services, sports, advertising, photography, etc.) does not reinforce representations and stereotypes that contribute to trivializing sexual harassment and similar attacks.
- See also the general recommendations for general advice on covering all forms of violence against women (section 2.1).

### In a nutshell

Term/phrase to use	Term/phrase <u>not</u> to use
Sexual assault or (where appropriate) rape	Sexual relationship/sexual intercourse (see prior explanation)
She was raped - She was pushed out of the window (if that's the case)	She got raped - She threw herself out of the window
She reports that she was harassed or She states that she was harassed	She confesses (or admits) to having been harassed (This gives the impression that she was in some way responsible)
She had told people that she was gay	She had confessed that she was gay
The reported victim	The alleged victim (seems to question the victim's word)
Make the assailant the subject of the sentence and verb: 'According to the police, the assailant forced the victim to do such and such a thing.'	Do not make the victim/survivor the subject of the sentence: 'The victim did this or that against her will.'
Gender transition	Sex change

### 1.6.5. Glossary

- **Sexual harassment**
- **Sexual assault**
- **Rape**

See definitions in section 1.6.1.

### 1.6.6. Resources

#### ***Organizations to contact***

- Inter-American Commission of Women:  
<http://www.oas.org/en/cim/default.asp>
- International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF):  
<https://www.iwmf.org/>
- ILO:  
<https://www.ilo.org/global/lang-en/index.htm>
- WHO:  
<https://www.who.int/home>
- UN Women:  
<https://www.unwomen.org/en>

#### ***Short selection of documents to consult***

- Association des journalistes lesbiennes, gays, bi.e.s et trans [French Association of LGBT Journalists]  
<http://ajlgbt.info/informer-sans-discriminer/>
- Association des journalistes professionnels [Association of Professional Journalists], "Les médias et les violences contre les femmes. Quel traitement journalistique ?" [The media and violence against women. How should journalism approach the subject?], Brussels, 2018.  
<http://www.ajp.be/violencesfemmes-recommandations/>

- Di Martino, Vittorio, Hoel, Helge and Cooper, Cary L.: *Preventing Violence and Harassment in the Workplace*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Luxembourg, 2003.  
[https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_publication/field\\_ef\\_document/ef02109en.pdf](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef02109en.pdf)
- Everbach, Tracy, A primer for journalists covering sexual assault, *Quill, A magazine by the Society of Professional Journalists*, 11 April 2018.  
<https://quill.spjnetwork.org/2018/04/11/sexual-assault-coverage-journalism-diversity/>
- Equality Now, *The World's Shame. The Global Rape Epidemic. How Laws Around the World are Failing to Protect Women and Girls from Sexual Violence*, New York, Nairobi and London, February 2017,  
[https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/equalitynow/pages/208/attachments/original/1527096293/EqualityNowRapeLawReport2017\\_Single\\_Pages.pdf?1527096293](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/equalitynow/pages/208/attachments/original/1527096293/EqualityNowRapeLawReport2017_Single_Pages.pdf?1527096293)
- Kanigel, Rashel, *The Diversity Style Guide: LGBTQ Glossary*  
<http://www.diversitystyleguide.com/topic-glossaries/lgbtq-glossary-2/>
- Macharia, Sarah and Morinière, Pamela (Eds.), *The Learning Resource Kit for Gender-Ethical Journalism and Media House Policy. Book 1: Conceptual issues; Book 2: Practical resources*, World Association for Christian Communication and International Federation of Journalists, 2012.  
[http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/learning\\_resource\\_kit/learning-resource-kit-book-1-eng.pdf](http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/learning_resource_kit/learning-resource-kit-book-1-eng.pdf)  
[http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/learning\\_resource\\_kit/learning-resource-kit-book-2-eng.pdf](http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/learning_resource_kit/learning-resource-kit-book-2-eng.pdf)
- NLGJA, *Stylebook Supplement on LGBTQ Terminology*  
<https://www.nlgja.org/stylebook/>
- ILO, Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)  
[https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/108/reports/texts-adopted/WCMS\\_711570/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/108/reports/texts-adopted/WCMS_711570/lang-en/index.htm)
- WHO, LSHTM and South African Medical Research Council, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-partner Sexual Violence*, Geneva, 2013.  
<https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9789241564625/en/>

- WHO, Protecting Workers' Health Series, No. 4, *Raising Awareness of Psychological Harassment at Work*  
[https://www.who.int/occupational\\_health/publications/en/pwh4e.pdf](https://www.who.int/occupational_health/publications/en/pwh4e.pdf)
- United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/73/148, Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment, 17 December 2018. First resolution on sexual harassment adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.
- UN Women, interactive infographic.  
<https://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/infographic/violenceagainstwomen/en/index.html>
- UN Women and Promundo-US, *Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa, Executive Summary*. Cairo and Washington, 2017.  
<https://imagesmena.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/05/IMAGES-MENA-Executive-Summary-EN-16May2017-web.pdf>
- European Parliament, *Bullying at Work*.  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/workingpapers/soci/pdf/108\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/workingpapers/soci/pdf/108_en.pdf)
- Poynter Institute, Which sexual harassment and assault stories should you cover? Here are some guidelines.  
<https://www.poynter.org/news/which-sexual-harassment-and-assault-stories-should-you-cover-here-are-some-guidelines>
- Prenons la une (an association of women journalists), "Le traitement des violences faites aux femmes – outils à l'usage des journalistes" [Covering violence against women – tools for journalists].  
<https://prenons-la-une.tumblr.com/post/153517597146/le-traitement-m%C3%A9diatique-des-violences-faites-aux>
- Level Up. *Dignity for Dead Women: Media Guidelines for Reporting Domestic Violence Deaths*. 2018. <https://www.welevelup.org/media-guidelines>
- 2018 Pulitzer Prizes.  
<http://www.pulitzer.org/winners/new-york-times-reporting-led-jodi-kantor-and-megan-twohey-and-new-yorker-reporting-ronan>



## 68 **1.7. So-called ‘honour’ crimes**

### **1.7.1. Definition**

According to WHO, crimes committed in the name of ‘honour’ “involve a girl or woman being killed by a male or female family member for an actual or assumed sexual or behavioural transgression.”<sup>120</sup> These crimes refer to violence against people, including LGBTI people, accused of ‘dishonouring’ a member of their family and are usually committed by a father, husband, brother or, more rarely, by another woman in the family, in order to protect the family’s reputation in society. The grounds for the crime may be a woman’s behaviour that is regarded as being immoral and perceived as dishonouring the whole family (for example pregnancy before marriage or adultery), her refusal to accept an arranged marriage or to submit to the demands of her husband, a divorce application or even having been a victim of rape. Other reasons are sometimes given, such as talking to a stranger, or challenging established social norms. Within the family or community that perpetrates them, these crimes are considered legitimate, and are even glorified, because they aim to restore the group’s ‘honour’.

### **1.7.2. Facts and figures**

According to WHO, more than 5,000 so-called ‘honour’ killings are recorded each year.<sup>121</sup> However, their number is probably largely underestimated, for many reasons: family code of silence, victims’ relatives being too scared to denounce the killing, the silence of the community in which they are committed, the presentation of these crimes as ‘suicides’, the tendency of local authorities to see the killer as a ‘victim’ of dishonour, or these crimes being committed in remote villages, far from the attention of institutions that are likely to intervene, or the media.

United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/59/165,<sup>122</sup> adopted in December 2004, calls on Member States to not only take measures to eliminate so-called ‘honour’ crimes, but also to “encourage the efforts of the media to engage in awareness-raising campaigns”.

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<sup>120</sup> WHO, *Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women – Femicide*, 2012. [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf?sequence=1)

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/59/165>

### 1.7.3. Explanations and background

When we speak of so-called 'honour' crimes, we are generally referring to killings, i.e. premeditated intentional homicides. "Studies have reported 'honour' killings being committed by use of firearms, axes and edged tools; through strangulation and stabbing; and by burning, forcing a woman to take poison or throwing her from a window" (WHO).<sup>123</sup> They can therefore take many forms and constitute a very old custom, sometimes mistakenly confused today with religious edicts.

In some countries where these crimes are committed, legal and judicial statutes protect the perpetrators. Tradition also sometimes allows murderers to escape justice in exchange for compensation, usually financial ('blood money'), or forgiveness from the victim's relatives. Only the strict application of laws firmly prohibiting these practices will reduce them. As they are rarely punished, these crimes can sometimes be used to disguise the real reasons for a killing, in which they are used as pretexts to settle disputes over inheritance, between neighbours, about dowries, or even to cover up incest, as WHO explains.<sup>124</sup>

Sometimes, the women targeted by these accusations of dishonour choose to commit suicide. However, so-called 'honour' suicides can be the result of coercion, making them equivalent to killings.

These crimes are rooted in patriarchal and feudal traditions, where the 'dignity' of the group is often measured by the control it exercises over women's bodies. In societies where these practices persist, women's autonomy is considerably restricted. They are confined to the home, prohibited from outside contact, constantly monitored, and prevented from seeking employment outside the family. These constraints explain why victims are unable to develop the relationships that would have enabled them to flag the risk of homicide to the outside world (for example to the authorities or associations).

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<sup>123</sup> WHO, *Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women – Femicide*, 2012. [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf?sequence=1)

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

#### **1.7.4. Advice and good practices**

- Put the word 'honour' in quotation marks ('honour' crime) or use the expression 'so-called' honour crime, or both at the same time, as a distancing mechanism. Accompany this expression with a brief explanation of the practice.
- Emphasize that it is a premeditated killing that no cultural tradition can justify.
- Report on the legal and judicial statutes that protect the perpetrators of these crimes, in order to encourage democratic debate on this subject.
- Provide information on the legal provisions, if any, and on the effective enforcement of the laws that punish this crime.
- Ask the authorities about their actions (or inaction) with regard to these practices.
- Investigate possible accusations of laxness, or even complicity, on the part of the police and magistrates in favour of the perpetrators of these crimes.
- Broadly cover the initiatives and campaigns of associations that campaign against so-called 'honour' crimes.
- Ensure that the way these crimes are covered does not tarnish the image of a particular community or group.
- Provide the telephone numbers and contact details of relevant associations in the article or programme, as well as those of lawyers who focus on these issues and are involved in defending the victims of this type of crime.
- Refer to the general recommendations in section 2.1, which contains other advice applicable to media coverage of all forms of gender-based violence.

### 1.7.5. Glossary

- **Killing:** premeditated murder, i.e. the act was organized and planned. (Some countries' legislation also includes the notion of 'intentional assault and battery resulting in death without intent to kill'. The line between killing and murder is not always easy to determine and is subject to court interpretation).
- **Crime:** A particularly serious transgression, an attack on order and security, contrary to accepted social values, reprehensible by conscience and punishable by law.<sup>125</sup> An illegal act does not necessarily constitute a crime.
- **Homicide:** killing someone, voluntarily or involuntarily.
- **Murder:** voluntary homicide (with intent to kill).
- **Prevalence:** number of people affected or impacted.

### 1.7.6. Resources

#### **Organizations to contact**

- Amnesty International:  
<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/education>
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR):  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx>
- WHO:  
<https://www.who.int/home>
- UN Women:  
<https://www.unwomen.org/en>
- UNFPA:  
<https://www.unfpa.org/>
- UNICEF:  
<https://www.unicef.org>

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<sup>125</sup> Gérard Cornu, *Vocabulaire Juridique* [Legal Vocabulary], Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), Paris, 8th edition, 2007[1987], p. 239.

## 72 Short selection of documents to consult

- United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.  
[https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx\\_](https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx_)
- Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls (UN Women), Sources of International Law related to 'Honour' Crimes and Killings.  
<https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/729-sources-of-international-law-related-to-honour-crimes-and-killings.html>
- Hussein, Rana, *Murder in the Name of Honour*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 2009.
- Idzikowski, Lisa, *Honor Killings, Global Viewpoints*, Greenhaven Press, 2017.
- WHO, *Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women – Femicide*, 2012.  
[https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf?sequence=1)
- UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide, Gender-Related Killing of Women and Girls* (2018).  
[https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/GSH2018/GSH18\\_Gender-related\\_killing\\_of\\_women\\_and\\_girls.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/GSH2018/GSH18_Gender-related_killing_of_women_and_girls.pdf)
- United Nations, United Nations General Assembly resolutions calling on Member States to intensify their efforts through legislative, educational and social measures to prevent and eradicate honour crimes against women.<sup>126</sup>
- Pope, Nicole, *Honor Killings in the Twenty-First Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012.
- Wold, Lene, *Inside an Honor Killing. A Father and a Daughter Tell Their Story*, Greystone Books, Vancouver, 2019.

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126 A/C.3/55/L.11/Rev.1, A/C.3/55/L.13.Rev.1, and A/RES/55/68.

## 1.8. Trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants

### 1.8.1. Definition

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two protocols, adopted by the General Assembly on 15 November 2000, are the international reference texts on this subject. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, also known as the Palermo Protocol, defines trafficking in persons in article 3 as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”<sup>127</sup> The second protocol addresses the smuggling of migrants by land, sea and air.

UNODC notes that trafficking in persons includes at least three elements: the act, the means and the purpose. It refers to the act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring or receiving a person (act) by using force, coercion, deception, abduction or abuse of a position of vulnerability (means), with a view to exploiting them (purpose). It may be local or international.

Trafficking in persons refers to the trade and transport of human beings for the purposes of forced labour, sexual exploitation and organ trafficking. It includes forced marriage, domestic servitude, debt bondage, contractual slavery, forced child labour or the recruitment of child soldiers. The term ‘modern slavery’ is also used to highlight the common denominator of all these crimes, namely, the control exercised by one person over another.

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<sup>127</sup> UNODC, *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto*, 2004. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html>

Trafficking is distinct from people smuggling or smuggling of migrants, which is the illegal crossing of a border for remuneration and constitutes a unique contractual relationship. The latter is considered a crime, without necessarily involving the violation of migrants' human rights.<sup>128</sup>

### 1.8.2. Facts and figures

The figures are particularly difficult to establish. There is a risk that figures could be underestimated, due to the illegal and clandestine nature of trafficking, but also overestimated, due to the indignation it arouses and the desire to see the international community put an end to it. The difference between States in their interpretation of legal definitions of trafficking or the status of victims further complicates the collection and comparison of data.

Three figures are commonly mentioned: according to UNODC, 72 per cent of identified victims of trafficking in persons are women and girls.<sup>129</sup> According to ILO, of the 40.3 million people who were victims of various forms of modern slavery in 2016, 4.8 million, 99 per cent of them women and girls, were trapped in systems of forced commercial sexual exploitation.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, according to the United Nations, one million children, mainly girls, are sold each year as prostitutes or for child pornography in both developed and developing countries.<sup>131</sup>

However, these figures are estimates and should therefore be presented as orders of magnitude. They may be reported alongside other figures, such as the number of arrests and convictions of smugglers or traffickers recorded by the authorities, which may be an indicator of the extent and trends in trafficking in persons or of the (in)effectiveness of efforts to prevent it.

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128 <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/index.html?ref=menuaside>

129 UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, Vienna, 2018. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTIP\\_2018\\_BOOK\\_web\\_small.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTIP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf)

130 International Labour Office and Walk Free Foundation in partnership with IOM, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*, Geneva, 2017. <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/statistics/lang-en/index.htm>

131 United Nations, *Modern forms of slavery*

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/slave-route/modern-forms-of-slavery/>



### 1.8.3. Explanations and background

Many initiatives have been taken within the United Nations system to combat trafficking. For example, on 30 July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.<sup>132</sup> The elimination of trafficking in persons also forms part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations in 2015. An increasing number of States have enacted legislation criminalizing the scourge that trafficking represents (33 States in 2003, 192 as of 3 July 2019). However, according to the United Nations, the number of convictions remains low.

Contrary to popular belief, most trafficking cases (80 per cent) pass through official border points (airports, border crossings, etc.), according to an IOM publication, which also reveals that “Women are more likely to be trafficked through an official border point than men (84 per cent of cases, versus 73 per cent for men).” These data, notes IOM, highlight “the crucial role that border agencies and service providers at border points can play to identify potential victims and refer them for protection and assistance.”<sup>133</sup>

Migratory movements are often associated with trafficking in persons, insofar as people in situations of extreme vulnerability and dependency can be trapped in systems of sexual exploitation, either during the journey or in the country of destination. Sexual violence is not only committed in the context of sexual exploitation. It can also occur during forced labour and can manifest itself through harassment and aggression in the workplace or at home. The closed-door situation in which victims of forced labour find themselves increases the risk of violence.

However, other forms of sexual violence, particularly against women and girls, can also be perpetrated in the context of migration. According to figures from the United Nations Population Division from December 2015, 48.2 per cent of migrants are women.<sup>134</sup> A number of them have fled internal situations or conflicts where they were victims of violence (war, crime, sexual assault or sexual mutilation). During their migration journey, these women and girls may be victims of sexual violence perpetrated by

132 <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/64/293>

133 IOM, “IOM: most victims trafficked internationally cross official border points”, 30 July 2018. <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-most-victims-trafficked-internationally-cross-official-border-points>

134 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *Trends in International Migration*, 2015, Population Facts No. 2015/4, December 2015. [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/popfacts/PopFacts\\_2015-4.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/popfacts/PopFacts_2015-4.pdf)

other migrants, smugglers and even immigration officers, police officers and guards in detention centres. A 2016 study by Jane Freedman on female Syrian refugees in the European Union refers in particular to cases of blackmail (forced sexual relations) in exchange for crossing a border, housing or a sum of money, among others. The author also highlights the insecurity created by the lack of adequate reception facilities and housing for women, particularly for those travelling alone.<sup>135</sup>

While the same risks of sexual violence exist elsewhere in the world, attention is being given to the issue in the context of migration due to the significant increase in migration in recent years. According to the United Nations, there were 244 million international migrants in 2015, 40 per cent more than in 2000. The number of internal migrants is even higher, with UNDP estimating this figure at 740 million in 2009.<sup>136</sup>

Female victims of trafficking and, more broadly, persecution related to their gender identity or sexual violence (particularly in the context of migration) can rely on a number of international instruments to claim protection or even refugee status, as highlighted by recommendations from UNHCR<sup>137</sup> and OHCHR.<sup>138</sup> The 2013 European Union Asylum Procedures Directive takes into account the special vulnerability of certain asylum seekers, including victims of trafficking in persons, and people who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological abuse and physical or sexual violence, such as FGM/C.<sup>139</sup> States differ, however, in their interpretation of instruments that advocate granting refugee status on the grounds of gender-based violence or discrimination.

In response to the legal evolution of the term ‘gender’, the *Guidelines on International Protection: Gender-Related Persecution within the context of Article 1A(2) of the*

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135 Jane Freedman, Sexual and gender-based violence against refugee women: a hidden aspect of the refugee “crisis”, *Reproductive Health Matters*, Elsevier, 2016, 24, pp. 18–26.

<https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01441147/document>

136 UNDP, *Human Development Report 2009. Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development*, New York, 2009, p. 21. [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/269/hdr\\_2009\\_en\\_complete.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/269/hdr_2009_en_complete.pdf)

137 UNHCR, General Conclusion on International Protection No. 71 (XLIV) – 1993. <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/excom/exconc/3ae68c6814/general-conclusion-international-protection.html>

138 OHCHR, Rights and plight of women asylum seekers and refugees brought into stark focus in new UN human rights paper. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15259&LangID=E>

139 European Union, *Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast)*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013L0032&from=en>

1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees<sup>140</sup> place particular emphasis on the interpretation of the definition of refugee contained in article 1, paragraph A, subparagraph 2 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (hereinafter referred to as the 1951 Convention) from a gender perspective. They also propose procedural practices to ensure that adequate attention is given to female asylum seekers during refugee status determination procedures, and that all gender-related claims are recognized as such.<sup>141</sup>

Accordingly, the treatment of refugee status will be examined from a gender perspective, especially if there is an established link with the types of persecution or violence suffered. Although refugee status is not systematically granted, a claim will likely be approved if it is justified by acts of sexual violence, domestic or family violence, or FGM/C, or sanctions for the transgression of social norms that victimize lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people, as these acts are now recognized as gender-related persecution.

#### 1.8.4. Advice and good practices

- Do not confuse trafficking with smuggling: the two words are not synonymous, as explained in section 1.8.1.
- Use the correct terms ('exploited girls', 'sexual exploitation of children') and avoid the use of terms such as 'prostituted girl' or 'child prostitution'.
- Describe the context in which trafficking takes place: situations of exploitation and inequality in countries of departure, the role of transnational criminal organizations, barriers to legal migration, etc.
- Cover other forms of trafficking (such as forced labour) and not only gender-related issues, which tend to be of greater interest to the media.
- Investigate possible links, particularly financial links, between criminal groups and the representatives of authorities that are supposed to protect victims of trafficking.
- Cover examples of resilience and resistance against trafficking practices.

140 UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection: Gender-Related Persecution within the context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*. <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/publications/legal/3d58ddef4/guidelines-international-protection-1-gender-related-persecution-context.html>

141 *Ibid.*

- Provide information about national, regional and international laws and programmes aimed at eliminating trafficking, their implementation and their effectiveness.
- United Nations World Days can provide a hook to cover this phenomenon more broadly – 20 June has been proclaimed World Refugee Day,<sup>142</sup> 30 July is World Day against Trafficking in Persons,<sup>143</sup> 11 October is International Day of the Girl Child,<sup>144</sup> 2 December is International Day for the Abolition of Slavery<sup>145</sup> and 18 December is International Migrants Day.<sup>146</sup>
- See also the general recommendations for coverage (section 2.1.), which concern all forms of violence against women.

### 1.8.5. Glossary

- **Trafficking in persons**
- **Modern slavery**
- **People smuggling**
- **Smuggling of migrants**

See the definitions of these different terms in section 1.8.1.

Trafficking and smuggling are two different concepts, as explained by Myria, the Belgian Federal Migration Centre.<sup>147</sup>

### 1.8.6. Resources

#### **Organizations to contact**

- OHCHR:  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Pages/Home.aspx>

142 United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/55/76, 4 December 2000. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/55/76>

143 United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/68/192, 18 December 2013. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/68/192>; <https://www.un.org/en/events/humantrafficking/>

144 United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/66/170, 19 December 2011. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/66/170>

145 United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/317(IV), 1949. [https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/317\(IV\)](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/317(IV)); <https://www.un.org/en/events/slaveryabolitionday/>

146 United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/55/93, 4 December 2000. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/55/93>

147 <https://www.myria.be/en/traff-and-smuggling/human-trafficking-smuggling>

- United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking:<sup>148</sup>  
<http://www.ungift.org/>
- IOM:  
<https://www.iom.int/counter-migrant-smuggling>
- ILO:  
<http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang-en/index.htm>
- WHO:  
<https://www.who.int/home>
- UN Women:  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en>
- UNODC:  
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/index.html>
- International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL):  
<https://www.interpol.int/en/>
- UNICEF:  
<https://www.unicef.org>

### **Short selection of documents to consult**

- United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/64/293, *United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons*, 30 July 2010.  
[https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/64/293](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/64/293)
- Cacho, Lydia,<sup>149</sup> *Trafics de femmes. Enquête sur l'esclavage sexuel dans le monde* [Trafficking in women. Study of worldwide sexual slavery]. Nouveau monde éditions, Paris, 2012.
- Feingold, David A., "Trafficking in Numbers. The Social Construction of Human Trafficking Data", in Andreas, Peter and Greenhill, Kelly M., *Sex, Drugs, and Body Counts. The Politics of Numbers in Global Crime and Conflict*. Cornell University Press, 2010.
- Freedman, Jane, Sexual and gender-based violence against refugee women: a hidden aspect of the refugee "crisis", *Reproductive Health Matters*, Elsevier, 2016, vol. 24.  
<https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01441147/document>

148 Launched in 2007 by ILO, OHCHR, UNODC, UNICEF, IOM and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

149 Mexican investigative journalist. Winner of the 2008 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize and the Olof Palme Prize in 2011.

- OHCHR, *Human Rights and Human Trafficking*, Fact Sheet No. 36, 2014.  
[https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS36\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS36_en.pdf)
- UNHCR, 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and resolution No. 2196 (XXI) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.  
<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/basic/3b66c2aa10/convention-protocol-relating-status-refugees.html>
- UNHCR, *Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2018*, Geneva, 2019.  
<https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5d08d7ee7/unhcr-global-ends-2018.html>
- UNHCR, *Women on the Run. First-Hand Accounts of Refugees Fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico*. Washington D. C. and Geneva, October 2015.  
<http://www.unhcr.org/publications/operations/5630f24c6/women-run.html>
- United Nations, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which entered into force in 2003.  
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html>
- UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018*, Vienna, 2018. [http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTiP\\_2018\\_BOOK\\_web\\_small.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTiP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf)
- UNODC, *Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants*, Vienna, 2018. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/glosom.html>
- UNODC, At least 2.5 million migrants were smuggled in 2016, first UN global study shows.  
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2018/June/at-least-2-5-million-migrants-were-smuggled-in-2016-first-un-global-study-shows.html>
- UNODC, UNODC on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.  
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/index.html>
- UNFPA, Issue 4: Trafficking in women and children.  
<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/issue-4-trafficking-women-and-children>
- UNFPA, Putting an end to human trafficking: regional and international programmes.  
[https://www.unfpa.org/resources/putting-end-human-trafficking\\_](https://www.unfpa.org/resources/putting-end-human-trafficking_)
- UNFPA, *Socio-Cultural Influences on the Reproductive Health of Migrant Women: A Review of Literature in Cambodia, Lao, PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam*, 2011.

<https://www.unfpa.org/publications/socio-cultural-influences-reproductive-health-migrant-women-review-literature-cambodia>

- White, Aidan, *Media and Trafficking in Human Beings. Guidelines*, Ethical Journalism Network (EJN)/International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), 2017.

<https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/publications/media-trafficking-guidelines>

- Zimmerman, Cathy and Watts, Charlotte, *WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women*, WHO, 2003.

[https://www.who.int/mip/2003/other\\_documents/en/Ethical\\_Safety-GWH.pdf](https://www.who.int/mip/2003/other_documents/en/Ethical_Safety-GWH.pdf)



## 82 **1.9. Violence against women in conflicts**

### **1.9.1. Definitions**

What does ‘conflict-related sexual violence’ mean? This term is used to describe acts of a sexual nature committed by force or coercion; it covers “rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity, perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict”.<sup>150</sup>

Rape was recognized as a war crime by the United Nations,<sup>151</sup> a characterization confirmed by the International Criminal Court in a judgment handed down on 21 March 2016.<sup>152</sup>

### **1.9.2. Facts and figures**

In cases of conflict, some military leaders sometimes tend to minimize the violence committed by their own troops and maximize the violent acts perpetrated by the enemy. It is therefore important to be extremely cautious about the figures and to verify sources, since propaganda and disinformation are omnipresent in times of war. For their part, NGOs and international organizations sometimes tend to exaggerate figures in an attempt to mobilize resources.

If they are reliable, statistics can nonetheless be used to attract the attention of public opinion and political leaders. However, the complaints recorded rarely reflect reality, as many survivors do not report the violence they have suffered, out of shame, fear of reprisals or to avoid stigmatization and disgrace. Often, it is the authorities themselves who refuse to register complaints.

Most of the figures are therefore based on approximate estimates, producing very wide-ranging results. In Bosnia and Herzegovina during the early 1990s, between 20,000 and 50,000 people were raped, including men and boys, according to several sources

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<sup>150</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, 17 July 2018. <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/73/171>

<sup>151</sup> In 2008, United Nations Security Council resolution 1820 established that “rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide”. [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1820\(2008\)](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1820(2008))

<sup>152</sup> [https://www.icc-cpi.int/CourtRecords/CR2016\\_02238.PDF](https://www.icc-cpi.int/CourtRecords/CR2016_02238.PDF), p. 319.

cited by The Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium.<sup>153</sup> Similarly, during the genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994, estimates of rape, based on the number of pregnancies, ranged from 100,000 to 500,000 victims, according to the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Rwanda of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, René Degni-Ségui.<sup>154</sup> However, the report highlights that “the important aspect is not so much the number as the principle and the types of rape”.

### 1.9.3. Explanations and background

#### Rape as a weapon of war

“Rape epitomizes the crime of desecration perpetrated against the female body, and through it, against any promise of life from the whole community”, explains anthropologist Véronique Nahoum-Grappe. “The idea of impregnating the enemy’s wife makes it possible to imagine the eradication of the collective enemy, which is deprived of its own reproduction: the enemy’s child, implanted through rape, is always imagined as a son carrying the paternal identity and thus completing the identity war that began with the massacre of men [...]. Rape is a gender-based murder that devalues women’s lives and uses them as a vehicle, conveying the victorious other into the next generation.”<sup>155</sup> The society targeted will remain permanently traumatized. As well as annihilating parental relationships, rape often leads to the breakdown of the family unit. In many patriarchal and conservative societies, rape victims are rejected – or even killed – by their husbands, mothers-in-law, families or communities. Due to the stigma attached to rape, the humiliation felt by the man, or sometimes the suspicions of complicity hanging over the victims, they are perceived as a disgrace to the family.

Rape is often used as a strategy during war, a weapon designed to destroy men by stigmatizing their descendants through attacking women. This type of planned violence has been acute in many conflicts. “It is now more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier in modern wars”, said Major General Patrick Cammaert, former Deputy Force

153 Jeanne Ward, “Post-conflict Situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, in *If Not Now, When? Addressing Gender-based Violence in Refugee, Internally Displaced, and Post-conflict Settings*, The Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium, 2002.

154 United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Report on the situation of human rights in Rwanda submitted by Mr René Degni-Ségui, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, under paragraph 20 of resolution S-3/1 of 25 May 1994, 29 January 1996. <https://undocs.org/en/E/CN.4/1996/68>

155 Christine Ockrent (ed.) and Sandrine Treiner (coord.), “Les viols, une arme de guerre”, *Le livre noir de la condition des femmes* [Rape, a weapon of war, The Black Book of Women's Condition], XO Éditions, Paris, 2006, pp. 56 and 57.

Commander of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), in 2008.<sup>156</sup> However, even though women and girls are by far the most common victims of rape, it should not be forgotten that men and boys are also targeted to humiliate the society and destroy its authority structures.

In addition, armed conflicts systematically worsen the plight of women and girls. As highlighted in a United Nations General Assembly resolution of December 2016, “the incidence and risk of child, early and forced marriage can increase during humanitarian emergencies, situations of forced displacement, armed conflict and natural disaster”.<sup>157</sup> Similarly, “over half the world’s maternal deaths occur in countries torn apart by armed violence and in fragile states”, notes Isabelle Arradon, Special Adviser on Gender at the International Crisis Group.<sup>158</sup> Once the war is over, the destruction of medical facilities will continue to expose women to major health risks. The impact of conflicts persists long after the fighting has ended, increasing discrimination and gender inequalities. As economic opportunities and resources become scarce, women will often be the first to suffer from the unequal distribution of jobs and even food. Sometimes, after a conflict in which they have actively participated as combatants, women are relegated to a lower status, subdued and even ostracized, because they are viewed as ‘soldiers’ women’.

Moreover, in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons, the presence of humanitarian workers does not always provide protection. Some of them have been guilty of abuse in various conflict zones, exchanging food for sexual services.<sup>159</sup>

### **Sexual violence, a tactic of terrorism and a bargaining chip**

As well as a weapon of war, sexual violence has become a tactic of terrorism. In his aforementioned report, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres denounces the existence of “hybrid criminal-terrorist networks, which have used the bodies of

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156 Radhika Behuria, Why women matter for peace. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2014/7/3/why-women-matter-for-peace.html>

157 United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/71/175, 19 December 2016. <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/RES/71/175>

158 Isabelle Arradon, A hidden face of war, 7 March 2018. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/hidden-face-war>

159 United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence, 23 March 2018. <https://undocs.org/en/S/2018/250>. See also United Nations Security Council, resolution 2331, 20 December 2016. [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2331\(2016\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2331(2016))

women and girls as a form of currency in the political economy of war” and emphasizes the problem of “sexual violence as a tactic of terrorism, integral to recruitment, resourcing and radicalization strategies”.<sup>160</sup>

### What does international law say?

Rape and other acts of sexual violence committed in the context of armed conflict constitute violations of international humanitarian law. They are formally prohibited by the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. The International Criminal Court recognizes rape and sexual violence as war crimes and even, when committed as part of a widespread and systematic attack against populations, as crimes against humanity.

#### 1.9.4. Advice and good practices

- Starting a report on sexual violence by giving a voice to a woman telling her story could be a good way to address the issue of sexual violence in wartime, since this will be more relevant to the general public than statistics or official statements.
- Too many media outlets focus on the abuses suffered by presenting these women as ‘sex slaves’ or ‘rape victims’,<sup>161</sup> without providing the context for the public to better understand what is at stake. This was criticized by Johanna Foster, a sociologist at Monmouth University (New Jersey, United States of America) and Sherizaan Minwalla, a human rights lawyer at American University (Washington, D.C., United States of America), who interviewed Yazidi women who were raped in Iraq in 2014 by the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Daesh. These women would have liked the international press to focus less on the rapes they had suffered than on the history of their people.<sup>162</sup>
- Present these women as strong and emphasize their resilience and creativity. Sherizaan Minwalla<sup>163</sup> suggests recounting the remarkable stratagems that

160 United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence, 15 April 2017. <https://www.undocs.org/en/S/2017/249>

161 Sherizaan Minwalla, Yazidi women and girls resist ISIS in creative ways, Women’s Media Center, 4 October 2016. <http://www.womensmediacenter.com/women-under-siege/yazidi-women-and-girls-resist-isis-in-creative-ways>

162 Shawn Carrié, Yazidi women speak about unethical practices by journalists, Columbia Journalism Review, 4 May 2018. <https://www.cjr.org/watchdog/yazidi-isis-interview.php>

163 Sherizaan Minwalla, Yazidi women and girls resist ISIS in creative ways, Women’s Media Center, 4 October 2016. <http://www.womensmediacenter.com/women-under-siege/yazidi-women-and-girls-resist-isis-in-creative-ways>

Yazidi women invented to avoid being captured by Daesh group fighters, to protect their children, to resist forced religious conversions, to survive in challenging conditions in captivity or to escape from detention, and above all not to be content with presenting these women as ‘sex slaves’ or ‘rape victims’. This approach completely changes the perspective!

- Look for unusual or innovative journalistic angles. Address, for example, the impact of conflict through the lens of reproductive health, as proposed in Isabelle Arradon’s article “A Hidden Face of War”.<sup>164</sup>
- Emphasize the need for women’s participation in peacekeeping operations. The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations recognizes “the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls”.<sup>165</sup> It is therefore important that they participate in conflict prevention and resolution on an equal footing with men.
- When mass rapes have been committed in a region, avoid presenting them as if the violence was part of the local culture.
- Emphasize that rape is a war crime (see United Nations Security Council resolution 1820) and do not present it as an inevitable practice in times of conflict.
- Refer to chapter 2, which is common to all themes, in particular, ‘Reject language that ‘lectures’ or could incite judgment’ (section 2.1.9.) and ‘How should an interview be conducted?’ (section 2.3.). See also the following table.
- The International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict<sup>166</sup> is observed on 19 June – this is an opportunity to discuss this subject.

164 Isabelle Arradon, A hidden face of war, 7 March 2018. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/hidden-face-war>

165 <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/promoting-women-peace-and-security>

166 United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/69/293, 19 June 2015. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/69/293>

Do	Do not
Before embarking on a fact-finding mission, find out about the local culture to avoid upsetting, hurting or humiliating the people you will be talking to.	Arrive in the field without any preparation and without knowing anything about the culture of the people you will be meeting.
Ask the person if they would prefer to be interviewed by a female or male journalist and/or interpreter.	Send a female or male journalist (see section 2.2) and/or interpreter de facto.
Conduct the interview in a protected and discreet location, such as a women's centre where various activities take place: the interviewee's presence will therefore attract less attention.	Conduct the interview among a crowd, with all the inevitable noise and comings and goings, in the presence of strangers.
Maintain the safety of the interviewee. When testifying anonymously, ensure that no information or details in the report can be used to identify the interviewee. Be aware of the risks of retaliation and stigmatization faced by the survivor.	Show the person's hands, a detail of their hairstyle, the environment in which they live or a blurred image that could be unblurred using software, or use the survivor's real voice (even disguised) (see section 2.3.2).
Introduce yourself, the interview's objectives and the media outlet you work for.	Hide your status as a journalist or use hidden cameras or microphones (see section 2.1.8).
Explain that you want to alert public opinion to the situation.	Promise money or other benefits to convince the person to tell their story.
Accept that some survivors are not ready to tell their story and respect their wishes, without insisting.	Put pressure on victims to tell their story.



Do	Do not
<p>Before any interview, create a trusting, caring and respectful atmosphere. Remember that talking about the violence they have suffered may lead to further suffering for the survivor. Show empathy. Do not show any judgment in the way questions are asked, through language or behaviour.</p>	<p>Rush the victim/survivor, overlooking the trauma that they have experienced or their vulnerability. Pressure the interviewee to talk about what they have been through when then do not feel ready to do it. Start the interview without explaining what will be done with the story or in what context it will be made public. Use judgmental expressions.</p>
<p>Obtain the person's informed consent. Make sure to explain to them that an interview broadcast locally can now be repeated on social media and go around the world in a few clicks.</p>	<p>Abuse the survivor's vulnerability or their lack of knowledge of the media and the flow of information.</p>
<p>Choose the interpreter carefully, seeking advice from an NGO in the field or from a local United Nations entity.</p>	<p>Hire an interpreter without checking whether they have a good understanding of the phenomenon of gender-based violence and without ensuring that they will respect the rules of confidentiality designed to protect the safety and dignity of victims.</p>
<p>Let the survivor speak at their own pace. Respect silences.</p>	<p>Interrupt the victim inappropriately to ask further questions.</p>
<p>Present the account of the violence (thinking carefully about how far to go in describing it), but also explain the context and issues. <i>What is the political context for violence? Which global story is it a part of? What is its impact on victims? What would survivors want the public to know about their experiences?</i></p>	<p>Describe the abuse suffered complacently or in detail.</p> <p>Focus on the abuse suffered.</p>



Do	Do not
Focus on the strength and resilience of survivors.	Tip over into sensationalism or voyeurism.
Cross-reference the information gathered during the interview.	Be satisfied with only one story. Fail to verify the survivor's account.
Reported victim.	Alleged victim (because this expression seems to question the victim's word).
Exploited girl – sexual exploitation of children.	Prostituted girl – Child prostitution.
She was raped.	She confesses to having been raped (suggests the idea that she had some responsibility for the attack). She got herself raped.
Survivor. Using the word 'survivor' rather than 'victim' emphasizes the person's ability to respond to adversity; <sup>167</sup> see section 2.1.10 for a discussion on this subject.	Victim

167 UNESCO, *Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media. Framework of Indicators to Gauge Gender Sensitivity in Media Operations and Content*, 2015, p. 45.  
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/publications-and-communication-materials/publications/full-list/gender-sensitive-indicators-for-media-framework-of-indicators-to-gauge-gender-sensitivity-in-media-operations-and-content/>

### 1.9.5. Glossary

- **Rape**
- **Conflict-related sexual violence**

These terms are defined in section 1.9.1.

### 1.9.6. Resources

#### **Organizations to contact**

- ActionAid: Women in conflict programme:  
<https://www.actionaid.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/emergencies-disasters-humanitarian-response/conflict>
- Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies:  
<https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/>
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). As a guarantor of the Geneva Conventions and a key player in humanitarian crises, the ICRC pays particular attention to sexual violence.  
<https://www.icrc.org/en/what-we-do/sexual-violence>
- United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations.<sup>168</sup>  
<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en>
- UNHCR:  
<https://www.unhcr.org/>
- International Crisis Group:  
<https://www.crisisgroup.org/gender-peace-and-security>
- United Nations, *Stop Rape Now, UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict*. An initiative to combat sexual violence in countries in conflict.<sup>169</sup>  
<http://www.stoprapenow.org>
- Women's Media Center:  
<http://www.womensmediacenter.com/>

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<sup>168</sup> This department is a key point of reference on these issues. The main lines of its work are based on the resolutions mentioned.

<sup>169</sup> This campaign is a cross-cutting initiative that brings together 13 United Nations entities: the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), OHCHR, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), UNODC, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO. It aims to end sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. Each of the 13 partner institutions is also a reliable source to contact.

**Short selection of documents to consult**

- United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/52/86, Crime prevention and criminal justice measures to eliminate violence against women, 2 February 1998.  
[https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/Crime\\_Resolutions/1990-1999/1997/General\\_Assembly/A-RES-52-86.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/Crime_Resolutions/1990-1999/1997/General_Assembly/A-RES-52-86.pdf)
- Branche, Raphaëlle and Virgili, Fabrice, *Viols en temps de guerre* [Rape in wartime], Paris, Payot, 2011.
- United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence, 23 March 2018.  
<https://undocs.org/en/S/2018/250><sup>170</sup>
- United Nations Security Council, resolution 1325, 31 October 2000.  
[https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SC\\_ResolutionWomenPeaceSecurity\\_SRES1325%282000%29%28english\\_0.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SC_ResolutionWomenPeaceSecurity_SRES1325%282000%29%28english_0.pdf)<sup>171</sup>
- Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma, Reporting on Sexual Violence, 15 July 2011. This document contains numerous practical tips for preparing an interview with survivors of sexual violence and for constructing a report. The Dart Center is a project of Columbia University's School of Journalism in New York City.  
<https://dartcenter.org/content/reporting-on-sexual-violence>
- Equality Now, *The World's Shame. The Global Rape Epidemic. How Laws Around the World are Failing to Protect Women and Girls from Sexual Violence*, New York, Nairobi and London, February 2017.  
[https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/equalitynow/pages/208/attachments/original/1527096293/EqualityNowRapeLawReport2017\\_Single\\_Pages.pdf?1527096293](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/equalitynow/pages/208/attachments/original/1527096293/EqualityNowRapeLawReport2017_Single_Pages.pdf?1527096293)
- Fayer-Stern, Danièle, Sanchez, Belen and Schmitz, Marc (eds.), *Le viol, une arme de terreur. Dans le sillage du combat du docteur Mukwege* [Rape, a weapon of terror. In the wake of Dr Mukwege's fight], Mardaga-GRIP,

170 This report takes stock of the overall situation in this area, but also presents an overview of the situation in 19 countries in particular.

171 This resolution aims to protect women and girls from sexual violence in armed conflict. This is the first resolution to address the particular and disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women. It also underlines the importance of the full participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution and in peacebuilding and peacekeeping, on an equal footing with their male peers.

As a follow-up to this text, the Security Council adopted a series of other resolutions on the subject: resolutions 1820 (in 2008); 1888 (in 2009); 1889 (in 2009); 1960 (in 2010); 2106 (in 2013); 2122 (in 2013); 2242 (in 2015) and 2331 (in 2016). Resolution 1820 of 2008 deals, for example, with sexual violence as a tactic of war and emphasizes that sexual violence in conflict is a war crime. Resolution 2331 of 2016 highlights the links between conflict-related sexual violence, trafficking in armed conflict and violent extremism.

2015. [http://www.democratieoubarbarie.cfwb.be/index.php?eID=tx\\_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=fileadmin/sites/dob/upload/dob\\_super\\_editor/dob\\_editor/documents/News/livre\\_VIOL\\_sommaire\\_\\_\\_preface.pdf&hash=04c22db9fbddd41f4528c07db462053883a7a273](http://www.democratieoubarbarie.cfwb.be/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=fileadmin/sites/dob/upload/dob_super_editor/dob_editor/documents/News/livre_VIOL_sommaire___preface.pdf&hash=04c22db9fbddd41f4528c07db462053883a7a273)
- United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, *Annual Report 2017: Generating Sustainability*. UN Women, 2018. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/6/un-trust-fund-to-end-violence-against-women-annual-report-2017>
  - Foster, Johanna E. and Minwalla, Sherizaan, Voices of Yazidi women: Perceptions of journalistic practices in the reporting on ISIS sexual violence, *Women's Studies International Forum*. <http://isiarticles.com/bundles/Article/pre/pdf/132013.pdf>
  - Global Protection Cluster, *Media Guidelines for Reporting on Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Contexts*, 2013. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GBV-Media-Guidelines-25July2013.pdf>
  - Green, Elon, Behind the story: NYT's Rukmini Callimachi on covering ISIS sex slaves, *Columbia Journalism Review*, 10 April 2017. [https://www.cjr.org/the\\_feature/isis-rukmini-callimachi-new-york-times.php](https://www.cjr.org/the_feature/isis-rukmini-callimachi-new-york-times.php)
  - OHCHR, Women's human rights and gender-related concerns in situations of conflict and instability. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/PeaceAndSecurity.aspx>
  - Impe, Anne-Marie, "Crimes contre la moitié de l'humanité" [Crimes against half of humanity], *Enjeux internationaux*, No. 17, pp. 20–27, autumn 2007. [http://www.enjeux-internationaux.org/articles/num17/EI17\\_P20-27.pdf](http://www.enjeux-internationaux.org/articles/num17/EI17_P20-27.pdf)
  - WHO, *WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies*, Geneva, 2007. [http://www.who.int/gender/documents/OMS\\_Ethics&Safety10Aug07.pdf](http://www.who.int/gender/documents/OMS_Ethics&Safety10Aug07.pdf)
  - United Nations, Conflict-related sexual violence. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/conflict-related-sexual-violence>
  - UNFPA, *Adolescent Girls in Disaster & Conflict: Interventions for Improving Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services*, 2016. <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/adolescent-girls-disaster-conflict>
  - UNFPA, Gender-based violence in Humanitarian settings, December 2014. <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/gender-based-violence-humanitarian-settings>

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<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/nine-ethical-principles-reporting-ethically-gender-based-violence-syria-crisis>
- UNFPA, *Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies*, 2015.  
<https://www.unfpa.org/featured-publication/gbvie-standards>
- White, Aidan, *Media and Trafficking in Human Beings. Guidelines*, EJI/ICMPD, 2017.  
<https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/publications/media-trafficking-guidelines>

## 1.10. Violence by an intimate partner or ex-partner and domestic murders

### 1.10.1. Definitions

“**Intimate partner violence** refers to behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours”, according to WHO.<sup>172</sup>

According to the typology proposed by WHO,<sup>173</sup> intimate partner violence (also known as domestic violence or domestic abuse) results in different types of behaviour:

**Acts of physical violence**, such as slapping, hitting, kicking, etc.

**Sexual violence**, including forced sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion (forced sexual intercourse with others or pornography, etc.).

**Emotional abuse (verbal and psychological)**, such as insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation (e.g. destroying things), cyberbullying, threats of harm or threats to take away children.

**Controlling behaviour**, including isolating a person from family and friends, depriving them of identity documents, monitoring their movements and limiting their access to financial resources, employment, education or medical care.

As WHO notes, “The term ‘domestic violence’ is used in many countries to refer to partner violence but the term can also encompass child or elder abuse, or abuse by any member of a household”.<sup>174</sup>

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172 WHO, *Violence against Women*, 2017. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

173 WHO, *Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women: Intimate Partner Violence*, 2012. [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.36\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO_RHR_12.36_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

174 WHO, *Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women: Intimate Partner Violence*, 2012. [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.36\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO_RHR_12.36_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

### 1.10.2. Facts and figures

Domestic abuse is the most common form of violence against women.<sup>175</sup> Worldwide, nearly one in three women (30 per cent) have experienced physical or sexual violence committed by their intimate partners, and 7 per cent have been sexually assaulted by someone other than their partner, according to WHO.<sup>176</sup> With regard to murders of women, 38 per cent are committed by a partner or ex-partner, compared with 5 per cent for murders of men. According to WHO, “the overwhelming burden of partner violence is borne by women at the hands of men”.<sup>177</sup>

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has figures on the prevalence<sup>178</sup> of domestic violence. However, violence against women occurs “everywhere, in both developed and underdeveloped countries”, notes Papa Seck, Chief Statistician at UN Women,<sup>179</sup> and affects all social categories, professions and age groups.

Violence within the family is also not included in the statistics. Often, women who report violence or make a complaint go unheard. The statistics therefore do not always accurately reflect reality. In addition, due to the methods and criteria used, the data are rarely comparable between the different studies. Some, for example, take into account only physical and sexual violence, while others include psychological, verbal or financial abuse. Prevalence will vary in both cases.<sup>180</sup>

175 WHO, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and South African Medical Research Council, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-partner Sexual Violence*, Geneva, 2013.

<https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9789241564625/en/>

176 *Ibid.*

177 WHO, *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva, 2002. [https://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/world\\_report/en/](https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/)

178 OECD, Violence against women. <https://data.oecd.org/inequality/violence-against-women.htm>

The prevalence of domestic violence is the percentage of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence committed by an intimate partner at some point in their lives.

179 Quoted by *Radio Canada*, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1069150/femmes-violence-conjugale-monde-etat-des-lieux> (in French; free translation provided in English).

180 For country-specific information, see the report of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, *The World's Women 2015, Trends and Statistics*, “Chapter 6, Violence against women”, 2016. [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015\\_report.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015_report.pdf)



According to an UN Women report published in 2019,<sup>181</sup> in 2017 alone, about 58 per cent of female victims of intentional homicide (137 women per day) were killed by a family member. According to the same report, the proportion of women and girls aged 15–49 who have been physically or sexually abused by an intimate partner (current or former) varies across regions: 6.1 per cent in Europe and Northern America, 9 per cent in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, 11.8 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 12.3 per cent in Northern Africa and Western Asia, 21.5 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, 23 per cent in Central and Southern Asia and 34.7 per cent in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

### 1.10.3. Explanations and background

As the United Nations General Assembly recognized in resolution 61/143 adopted on 19 December 2006, “violence against women is rooted in historically unequal power relations between men and women”.

Domestic violence is gender-based violence, produced by a patriarchal system that establishes ‘asymmetry’<sup>182</sup> and domination-based relationships between men and women. All over the world, a very large majority of victims are women.

In some cases, such violence may extend to homicide, particularly when the husband suspects that his wife has cheated on him or perceives her emancipation as a loss of control and power (for example, after the victim has expressed her desire to be independent or to break up).

The personal consequences of domestic violence are obviously numerous and catastrophic: guilt and devaluation of the victim, loss of self-esteem, anxiety, permanent tension, sleep disorders, fatigue, greater vulnerability to illness, social suffering, depression and more suicide attempts than in the rest of the population, among others.

In addition, these events are particularly traumatic for children, who are now considered co-victims of domestic violence. Often witnessing brutality towards their mother and

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181 UN Women, *Progress of the World’s Women 2019–2020: Families in a Changing World*, United States, 2019. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/progress-of-the-worlds-women-2019-2020-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3512>

182 Pauline Delage, *Violences conjugales. Du combat féministe à la cause publique* [Domestic violence. From feminist struggle to public cause], Presses de Sciences Po, Paris, 2017.

sometimes even her killing, they suffer from post-traumatic stress, anxiety, sleep disorders, nightmares, stunted growth, difficulties at school, withdrawal, sadness, aggressiveness and generalized distrust, and are subject to depression that can lead to suicide. According to Karen Sadlier, a doctor of clinical psychology who specializes in supporting child victims of violence, “Having a figure of attachment, well-being and protection violated by another figure who is also supposed to be a figure of protection is among the most traumatic situations for a child. In cases of domestic violence, 60 per cent of children [witnesses] present symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. This represents 10 to 17 times more cases of behavioural disorders and anxiety or depression than in the general child population. In the case of femicide, the rate reaches 100 per cent”.<sup>183</sup> Children may, in some cases, be victims of filicide,<sup>184</sup> often committed by the father. This crime is a punitive act,<sup>185</sup> intended to hurt the mother who has expressed a desire to leave.

In addition to the impact on children, the societal consequences are also significant. As WHO points out, “The social and economic costs of intimate partner and sexual violence are enormous and have ripple effects throughout society. Women may suffer isolation, inability to work, loss of wages, lack of participation in regular activities and limited ability to care for themselves and their children”.<sup>186</sup>

WHO also highlights the mechanism by which the phenomenon is reproduced: witnessing violence within the family as a child predisposes people to submit to or commit violence in later life.<sup>187</sup> This does not mean, of course, that all boys who witness or suffer abuse in childhood will necessarily be aggressive in their relationships as adults.

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183 Observatory on Violence against Women of the Seine-Saint-Denis Departmental Council, “Les enfants co-victimes des violences dans le couple” [Children co-victims of domestic violence]. [https://seinesaintdenis.fr/IMG/pdf/fiche\\_enfants\\_co-victimes.pdf](https://seinesaintdenis.fr/IMG/pdf/fiche_enfants_co-victimes.pdf)

184 Filicide comes from the Latin term ‘filius’ or ‘filia’ which means ‘son’ or ‘daughter’ and ‘cida’ which means ‘kill’ (Niobey, Larousse, Lagané and Guilbert, 1978).

185 Glenn Carruthers, Making sense of spousal revenge filicide, *Aggression and Violent Behavior* vol. 29, 2016, pp. 30–35. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1359178916300556>

186 WHO, Violence against women, 29 November 2017. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

187 *Ibid.*

See also on this subject: WHO, *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva 2002, based on various studies in Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Indonesia, Nicaragua, Spain, United States of America and Venezuela. Available at:

[https://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/world\\_report/en/](https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/)

To change attitudes and behaviour, several United Nations entities and international organizations have set up education and prevention programmes. These aim to influence, on the one hand, cultural factors, by challenging social norms that reinforce men's control and authority over women and, on the other, the economic and social factors that sustain this culture of violence. UN Women Maghreb, for example, has launched campaigns to prevent violence by raising awareness among men and boys.<sup>188</sup>

Moreover, in many countries, violence against women is now recognized by law as a crime and not as a domestic and private matter. The criminalization of this behaviour is an important step forward in terms of both legislation and women's rights.

### **How do the media report on it? Some observations**<sup>189</sup>

The way that violence and domestic murders are covered in the media reveals some patterns:

1. The theme of gender-based violence is under-represented, trivialized or even obscured and is almost invisible in some societies.
2. When it is addressed, journalists can sometimes appear complacent towards the act or its perpetrator, even in the case of murder. They will talk about 'a moment of madness' or even 'crazy love': he loved her too much to let her go, so he killed her. The myth of the broken man, who regretted his action so much that he wanted to die, is then perpetuated. This type of coverage encourages pity for the perpetrator from some parts of the public. Silence about the victim is unacceptable because it obscures an essential element of reality.
3. The murderer is regularly described in glowing terms as a man who is 'good in every respect' and whose criminal record is sometimes even kept quiet or downplayed by the journalist.
4. The victim is erased in favour of the murderer, especially if the latter is from a privileged social background. "A nation reels as a star runner is charged in girlfriend's death", read the headline in a respected newspaper about the murder of Reeva Steenkamp by a two-time gold and silver medal-winning athlete. There

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<sup>188</sup> See UN Women, "Maroc : grande mobilisation pour les 16 jours d'activisme contre les violences faites aux femmes et aux filles" [Morocco: Major mobilization for 16 days of activism against gender violence]. <http://maghreb.unwomen.org/fr/actualites-evenements/actualites/2018/12/campagne-16-jours-maroc>

<sup>189</sup> Several parts of this section are taken from an investigation by Juliette Deborde, Gurvan Kristanadaja and Johanna Luyssen "220 femmes tuées par leur conjoint, ignorées par la société" [220 women killed by their partner, ignored by society], *Libération*, 29 June 2017. <http://www.liberation.fr/apps/2017/06/220-femmes-tuees-conjoints-ignorees-societe/>

was not a single word about his partner or the suffering of her relatives. When talking about the victim, they are sometimes publicly denigrated and defamed, as if they were responsible for what happened to them.

It should be noted that many media do an excellent job. It is therefore important to avoid any unfair generalizations.

#### **1.10.4. Advice and good practices**

- Reflect on the asymmetrical relationships between men and women, which can lead to violence. Try to dismantle the underlying mechanisms and raise public awareness of this structural phenomenon.
- Restore the victim's existence by describing their profession and living environment or by assigning them a first name. Although first names are often changed to protect the victim's anonymity, giving them one – even if it is changed – or describing their family situation humanizes the story.
- Remove domestic homicides from the 'news in brief' section to which they are generally relegated, as if they were isolated acts of madness and individual, private stories, rather than recurring events. In reality, these are a social phenomenon in their own right and must therefore be treated as such, not as an incidental news item. Putting the story into perspective and explaining the context is essential in these cases.
- Find reporting angles that are likely to make people think, focusing, for example, on the societal repercussions of domestic violence or its consequences for children: how should journalists support them to prevent a possible repetition of the abuse? Are there any interesting programmes that have been developed in this area? Is the public assistance provided sufficient? How do children – girls or boys – who witness violence against their mothers construct their identities as adults? What can be done to protect them after a homicide has occurred and the parent responsible has served their prison sentence: should they be placed in an institution or left with their families? These are all delicate questions, which need to be handled carefully.
- Avoid minimizing the facts, concealing who bears responsibility or even putting the victim and murderer on an equal footing, with headings such as 'Couple found dead' or 'Two shot dead', which suggest that there has been a double murder. These headlines sometimes occur due to time constraints: the journalist

may not yet have had any additional information. Nevertheless, headlines such as this say nothing to suggest that it was a domestic homicide, followed by the murderer committing suicide.

- Ensure that responsibility is not unduly placed on the murdered woman, for example, by pointing out that she had been beaten by her husband for years and that, if she had left him, the tragedy could have been avoided.
- Do not simply repeat the words of the prosecutor or a murderer's lawyer, who are often very uncritical in representing their clients. They might suggest that the murderer was afraid of adultery and madly in love with the victim as if to explain their action. Avoid sentences such as: his wife was violent, the lawyer explained. Make it clear that these are the words of the defence lawyer and cite them in quotation marks, but also ensure that the point of view of the claimant's lawyer is systematically given as a counterpoint.
- Use a tone that suits the severity of the subject, not only for the body of the article, but also, and above all, for the headline. Avoid talking cheerfully or as if it were an anecdote, as in the following example, "He kills his ex and returns the body to the police in his Renault Twingo".<sup>190</sup> See section 2.1.5 for a more comprehensive and in-depth discussion of headlines.
- Avoid clumsy links and unfortunate juxtapositions during a radio or television news broadcast, or between two articles on the same newspaper or magazine page, as explained in section 2.1.11.
- Provide practical and useful information: remind people, for example, of the emergency telephone number that female victims of abuse or those threatened by their partners can contact. Also mention the telephone number of the police and any other service where it is possible to file a complaint.
- Address the issue of gender-based violence regularly: in response to trials, publications, symposiums, association profiles, etc.

### **Spotlight on vocabulary: what to say and what to avoid**

- Choose words and formulations very carefully to avoid the possibility of misrepresenting reality or even changing the nature of a phenomenon by describing it inappropriately. For example, the word 'fall' should not be used

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<sup>190</sup> Europe 1, 30 January 2015. (In French). <https://www.europe1.fr/faits-divers/Il-tue-son-ex-et-rapporte-le-corps-a-la-police-dans-sa-Twingo-766700>

when the person has been pushed out of a window by their partner in front of witnesses. Using the word ‘fall’ trivializes the act and suggests that it may have been accidental, when in fact the person was pushed deliberately, which means it was a murder. Similarly, someone does not kill their wife out of love, but out of a desire for domination or because of jealousy. To speak of an ‘unhappy love affair’ in this case is to draw a romantic veil over reality and create a feeling of understanding towards the perpetrator of the crime.

- Avoid euphemisms such as ‘marital dispute’, which minimize reality. Instead, use the term ‘homicide’ or the expression ‘intimate partner violence’, depending on the situation. Do not use the term ‘attempted seduction’ when it is a proven sexual assault that involves physical injury.
- Do not use the terms ‘family drama’ and ‘crime of passion’: “These minimize the attacker’s actions by viewing them as carried away by love and passion. If these terms are used by defence lawyers or the police, the journalist must use them in quotation marks and present them as an argument of one of the two parties. As journalists, opt for the terms ‘domestic murder’ or ‘murder by an intimate partner’”.<sup>191</sup> Journalists can also report such crime as resulting from possessive behaviour or partner separation, for example.
- Do not confuse different concepts. The term ‘battered woman’ is not synonymous with ‘abused woman’ (see glossary). Similarly, unlike disputes or conflicts that can sometimes occur within a couple, partner violence differs in its persistence, its destructive impact, the fear it produces and its hidden intention of control and power.<sup>192</sup>
- Respect the presumption of innocence of the attackers and describe the facts accurately. Do not speak of ‘murder’ prematurely. A homicide is not necessarily a murder, let alone a killing (see glossary).
- United Nations World Days offer opportunity to provide information on this theme, such as: 8 March, International Women’s Day;<sup>193</sup> 2 October, International Day

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191 Prenons la une, “Le traitement médiatique des violences faites aux femmes – outils à l’usage des journalistes” [Media coverage of violence against women – tools for journalists], 22 November 2016. <https://prenons-la-une.tumblr.com/post/153517597146/le-traitement-médiatique-des-violences-faites-aux>

192 Amnesty International, “Qu’est-ce que la violence conjugale ?” [What is domestic violence?]. <https://www.amnesty.be/camp/droits-des-femmes/violence-conjugale/article/qu-est-ce-que-la-violence-conjugale>

193 <https://www.un.org/en/events/womensday/>



of Non-Violence;<sup>194</sup> and 25 November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.<sup>195</sup>

- For example, every year on International Women's Day (8 March), UNESCO's Women Make the News<sup>196</sup> campaign is organized as a global initiative to draw the international community's attention to gender equality issues in and through the media, to debate these issues and to support practical solutions to ensure that these objectives are achieved.

### 1.10.5. Glossary

- The terms '**intimate partner violence**' and '**domestic violence**' are defined in section 1.10.1. The difference between 'dispute' or 'conflict' and 'partner violence' is also explained in section 1.10.4.
- According to WHO, **sexual violence** is "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva or anus with a penis, other body part or object."<sup>197</sup>
- The term '**battered woman**' "does not cover all violence between partners. It draws attention to physical violence only, whereas psychological abuse is the most common", explains Amnesty International in French-speaking Belgium.<sup>198</sup>

### Homicide, murder and killing: what are the differences?

- **Killing**
- **Crime**
- **Homicide**
- **Murder**

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194 United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/61/271, 15 June 2007. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/61/271>

195 United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/54/134, 17 December 1999. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/54/134>

196 <https://en.unesco.org/themes/media-pluralism-and-gender-equality/womenmakenews/2019>

197 WHO, Violence against women, 29 November 2017.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

198 Amnesty International, "Qu'est-ce que la violence conjugale ?" [What is domestic violence?]. <https://www.amnesty.be/camp/droits-des-femmes/violence-conjugale/article/qu-est-ce-que-la-violence-conjugale>



See section 1.7.5. for these definitions.

### 1.10.6. Resources

#### **Organizations to contact**

- OHCHR and its Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, appointed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/SRWomenIndex.aspx>
- WHO
- UNESCO
- UNICEF
- Many countries have associations for the prevention, protection and support of abused women. Obtain information about each different context. Examples:
  - » Zero Tolerance, Edinburgh (United Kingdom). Scottish association to tackle violence against women.
  - » Our Watch, Melbourne (Australia): <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/>
  - » The Wassila/Avife network (Association against violence against women and children), Algeria.
  - » KAFA, association against violence and exploitation of women in Lebanon.
  - » The legal advice centre for abused women, founded by the Gabon Observatory for Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

#### **Short selection of documents to consult**

- Association of Professional Journalists, "Les médias et les violences contre les femmes. Quel traitement journalistique ?" [Media and violence against women. What coverage?], Brussels, 2018.  
<http://www.ajp.be/violencesfemmes-recommandations/>
- Attané, Isabelle, Brugeilles, Carole, Rault, Wilfried, *Atlas mondial des femmes. Les paradoxes de l'émancipation* [World atlas of women. The paradoxes of emancipation], Ined et Autrement, Paris, 2015.  
<https://www.cairn.info/revue-travail-genre-et-societes-2017-1-page-221.htm>

- UN Women Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls, Fast facts: statistics on violence against women and girls, 31 October 2010. <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/299-fast-facts-statistics-on-violence-against-women-and-girls.html>
- Elford, Sasha, Giannitsopoulou, Shannon and Khan, Farrah, *Use the Right Words: Media Reporting on Sexual Violence in Canada*, Femifesto, Toronto, 2017. <http://femifesto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/UseTheRightWords-Single-May16.pdf>
- Global Women's Institute, *Violence against Adolescent Girls: Trends and Lessons for East Africa*. <https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs1356/f/downloads/GWI%20Policy%20Brief%20-%20Violence%20against%20Adolescent%20Girls.pdf>
- Keller, Marike, *Reporting on Gender-Based Violence: A Guide for Journalists and Editors*, Sonke Gender Justice and Health E-News, Cape Town, South Africa, 2017. <https://www.saferspaces.org.za/uploads/files/Reporting-on-GBV.pdf>
- OECD, Violence against women. <https://data.oecd.org/inequality/violence-against-women.htm><sup>199</sup>
- WHO, *Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women: Intimate Partner Violence*, 2012. Highly educational explanatory sheet. [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.36\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO_RHR_12.36_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
- WHO, Violence against women, 29 November 2017. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>  
Concise and very informative. Refers to all other existing WHO documents on the subject.
- WHO, LSHTM and South African Medical Research Council, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-partner Sexual Violence*, Geneva, 2013. <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9789241564625/en/>

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199 The OECD website has data for 2014 (tables of figures by country, diagrams and maps) presenting (among other things) two very different realities. On the one hand, the **attitude** towards domestic violence, i.e. the percentage of women who believe that domestic violence is justified in certain circumstances and, on the other hand, the **prevalence** of domestic violence over a lifetime, i.e. the percentage of women who have suffered physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner at some point in their lives. Be careful not to confuse these two sets of data.

- Level Up. *Dignity for Dead Women: Media Guidelines for Reporting Domestic Violence Deaths*. 2018. <https://www.welevelup.org/media-guidelines>
- UN Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020: Families in a Changing World*.  
<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/progress-of-the-worlds-women-2019-2020-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3512>
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## **2. ■ How should the subject be addressed, framed and covered?**



**2.1 General recommendations**



**2.2 What gender should the reporter be?**



**2.3 How should an interview be conducted?**



**2.4 Which images should be chosen?**

**108** This chapter discusses the reflections, recommendations and good practices common to the coverage of each specific theme mentioned in chapter 1, and of all forms of violence against women.

Which words, images or titles should be chosen? How should an article on gender-based violence be framed? How should a journalist talk to a survivor? Each journalist will draw on the following elements as they see fit, depending on their particular situation and field experience. The conditions are very different for journalists when working in their own community, where they know the language and culture, to when reporting in a foreign country.



## 2.1. General recommendations

### 2.1.1. Talk about it!

Choosing to address gender-based violence is already an important first step. Keeping silent endorses the idea that these are minor acts or an insignificant phenomenon. Violence against women must be brought out of the shadows. However, the opposite temptation also exists – in some media coverage, there is a fad and trend towards exaggeration, complacency and voyeurism about violence against women in conflict areas, for example. It is also an issue that is sometimes highlighted for geopolitical purposes. Critical thinking is always essential!

Moreover, when talking about gender-based violence, there is a risk to be taken into consideration: the contagion effect or ‘copy-cat effect’. A number of authors warn against the copy-cat actions that media coverage of a crime can produce. In Cambodia, an acid attack on singer Tat Marina in December 1999 was followed in the same month by six similar attacks, noted a report from the Heinrich Böll Foundation.<sup>200</sup> In Argentina, journalists refer to the Wanda Taddei effect to describe the risk of gender-based violence spreading. Wanda Taddei was burned with alcohol by her husband, Eduardo Vázquez, on 10 February 2010. She died 11 days later, after suffering horribly. The perpetrator of the crime was part of a well-known rock band and was sentenced to life imprisonment after extensive media coverage of this act of domestic violence. In the three years following Wanda Taddei’s death, 132 women were set on fire and nearly half of them died from it, according to the report.<sup>201</sup>

According to the researchers, who examined the links between media coverage and violence against women, it all depends on how such attacks are addressed. If treated as mere isolated miscellaneous events, on which the spotlight is turned in a sensationalist way, the effects such as those previously described are more likely to occur. On the other hand, as Chilean lawyer Patsili Toledo, a member of the Antigona research group at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain), and Claudia Lagos Lira, a professor at the Institute of Communication and Image at the University of Chile, explain, “The news has also been found to provide a protective effect when it focuses on initiatives against

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200 Patsili Toledo and Claudia Lagos Lira, The media and gender-based murders of women: notes on the cases in Europe and Latin America, Heinrich Böll Foundation, 24 July 2014. <https://eu.boell.org/en/2014/07/24/media-and-gender-based-murders-women-notes-cases-europe-and-latin-america>  
201 *Ibid.*



violence towards women and femicide (related to laws, statements from and interviews with politicians and key figures in the field of violence against women, or public acts that condemn this type of crime) instead of focusing on the crimes themselves. [...] when the Law to Penalize Violence against Women was passed in 2007 in Costa Rica, there was a significant drop in the number of femicide<sup>202</sup> cases, nearly half that of previous years, which can only be explained by the entry into force of the Law and the extensive media attention it received.”<sup>203</sup>

To properly cover violence against women, journalists should not wait until an international body or NGO issues a report or organizes a conference or press trip to address the problem, but should carry out regular investigative and reporting work. In other words, replace reactive journalism with proactive journalism. In countries where so-called ‘honour’ crimes, child marriages or FGM/C occur, journalists could put these disturbing issues on the public agenda and constantly challenge civil society, the private sector and the authorities on these issues to avoid a lack of interest. This is what journalist Gita Aravamudan did when she denounced the tragedy of the foeticide of girls in India, in *Disappearing Daughters*,<sup>204</sup> a book that brought the debate to the public arena.

### **2.1.2. Treat gender-based violence as a violation of human rights and no longer as an isolated incident**

As several studies show,<sup>205</sup> violence against women is often dealt with in the form of brief or miscellaneous news items. They are presented as individual, private stories of events within the family. However, these are not isolated incidents at all, but recurrent acts, which must be treated as human rights violations and major societal issues. Violence against women is a systemic attack, resulting from power relationships and domination that affects society as a whole. It is important to remember this.

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202 Femicide or femicide is the murder of a girl or woman because she is female.

203 Patsili Toledo and Claudia Lagos Lira, The media and gender-based murders of women: notes on the cases in Europe and Latin America, Heinrich Böll Foundation, 24 July 2014. <https://eu.boell.org/en/2014/07/24/media-and-gender-based-murders-women-notes-cases-europe-and-latin-america>  
204 Penguin Books India, 2007.

205 In particular, Sarah Sepulchre and Manon Thomas, “La représentation des violences sexistes et intrafamiliales dans la presse écrite belge francophone” [The representation of gender-based and domestic violence in the French-speaking Belgian written press], Université catholique de Louvain, 2018. <http://www.ajp.be/telechargements/violencesfemmes/l-etude.pdf>

Moreover, such violence is rarely analysed. However, when the media decide to devote time to these topics and make them a real object of investigation and reporting, they often succeed in changing not only the way the phenomenon is viewed, but sometimes also the law itself. Former reporter for the Liberian daily *FrontPage Africa*, journalist Mae Azango, is a good example. While her report on FGM/C has led to numerous threats and forced her to hide with her daughter, it has also led the Liberian authorities to speak out more clearly against this practice, which affects most of the country's girls.<sup>206</sup> “Women journalists are a powerful instrument tool for bringing change”, she said when she received the International Press Freedom Award from the Committee to Protect Journalists in New York in 2012.

### 2.1.3. Explain the context

The role of the media, noted the writer Milan Kundera, is to “shed light on the complexity of the real”. We must ensure that we provide keys to understanding the phenomenon of violence against women through statistics, putting events in perspective and an explanation of its systemic nature. Providing figures makes it possible to assess the extent of a phenomenon, though statistics must be handled carefully. Giving a voice to female survivors, but also to experts, improves our understanding of reality and helps tackle clichés such as ‘In any case, violence against women is endemic in this region’. Putting things into perspective also makes it possible to deconstruct the fatalistic thinking that implies we are powerless in response to the issue, as expressed by those who say, ‘violence against women has always existed and will always exist’ or ‘men are inherently macho, there is nothing we can do about it!’.

Journalists should be careful not to talk about a gender-based or sexual assault in isolation, focusing only on the latter brutal incident, but to tell the whole story, even briefly. It is not a matter of excusing the aggressors, but providing information to improve understanding of the phenomenon. Explanatory journalism of this kind helps the public to understand what is at stake. Abuse is the result of an economic, social and political situation that must be brought to light. Where rape is used as a weapon of war, reporters should recall the historical and geopolitical context and refer to humanitarian law. For example, has anyone ever been convicted of this type of crime by an international criminal court? What was the political breeding ground for violence?

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206 Mae Azango: Liberian journalist and taboo breaker, IFEX.org, 24 March 2019. <https://ifex.org/faces/mae-azango-liberian-journalist-and-taboo-breaker/>

What would survivors of the conflict want the public to know about their experiences? In the case of domestic murder, the act is often the result of long-standing violence suffered by the victim. Had she ever filed a complaint? If so, why was she not heard and protected? Were there failings in how it was handled? What do associations that support female victims of violence in similar situations recommend?

As several studies have pointed out, regular coverage in the media of existing legal provisions, including certain articles of criminal codes, and other measures taken to combat this phenomenon would have a deterrent effect and therefore protect women. It is also worth recalling what international law says. For example, FGM/C and forced marriages are a violation of the rights of girls and women, enshrined in various international pacts and conventions. Finally, it is useful to provide readers with practical information (addresses of shelters, legal aid and protection associations, etc.) and resources (Internet links and book references) to further explore the subject.

#### **2.1.4. Be careful with vocabulary**

Pay particular attention to the choice of words and formulations, which are anything but harmless. Reject the term ‘crime of passion’ and replace it with ‘domestic murder’. Avoid the term ‘alleged victim’, which seems to question the victim’s word and use the term ‘reported victim’ instead. Avoid the phrase ‘she confesses to having been raped’, which suggests that the victim had some responsibility for the assault, and use more

neutral language, such as ‘the victim reports that she was raped’ or ‘says she has been raped’. Similarly, the concepts of ‘people smuggling’ and ‘trafficking in persons’ are not interchangeable.<sup>207</sup> These examples and many other expressions to avoid are included in chapter 1.

As Albert Camus wrote, “Misnaming an object is adding to the misfortune of this world”.<sup>208</sup> This is also the view of the Association des journalistes professionnels de Belgique francophone [Association of Professional Journalists of French-speaking Belgium], which, in April 2018, published a series of recommendations: “The vocabulary used to talk about issues of violence against women is not neutral. Some words hurt and

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207 <https://www.myria.be/en/traff-and-smuggling/human-trafficking-smuggling>

208 *Sur une philosophie de l'expression* [On a philosophy of expression], 1944.

conceal, minimize, mock, trivialize or truncate the reality of violence”.<sup>209</sup> It is therefore better to avoid humour or to use it with the greatest caution.

It is advisable to use precise language and exact terms.

### **2.1.5. Pay attention to headings**

The title of an article is its shop window. It attracts the reader much more than the content itself, to which it is possible not to pay much attention. Social media are no exception in this respect: shared links are sometimes not even ‘opened’, but are still passed on.<sup>210</sup>

This shows how important headings are! A sensationalist or casual policy in this area has consequences that should not be minimized. When writing a title, journalists should ask themselves a few simple questions: does it contribute to reinforcing gender stereotypes? Does it avoid the pitfalls of touting and voyeurism? Does it respect the victim(s)? Does it focus all its attention on the perpetrator? (See sections 1.7. and 1.6.). The choice of illustrations is also very important (see section 2.4).

### **2.1.6. Analyse statistics and surveys with caution**

Worldwide, what percentage of the population are estimated to be victims of violence carried out by their intimate partner (or ex-partner)? Is this number lower or higher than the presumed number of physical or sexual assaults committed in the public space by a person other than a partner? Finally, how many so-called ‘honour’ crimes, early marriages and FGM/C cases are recorded each year?

Whatever the topic covered, journalists often refer to statistics. It is important to support their statements with figures to illustrate the extent of gender-based violence.

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209 Association des journalistes professionnels [Association of Professional Journalists], “Les médias et les violences contre les femmes. Quel traitement journalistique ?” [Media and violence against women. What coverage?], Brussels, 2018. <http://www.ajp.be/violencesfemmes-recommandations/>

210 Caitlin Dewey, 6 in 10 of you will share this link without reading it, a new, depressing study says, 16 June 2016. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/06/16/six-in-10-of-you-will-share-this-link-without-reading-it-according-to-a-new-and-depressing-study/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.3ca1298125c6](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/06/16/six-in-10-of-you-will-share-this-link-without-reading-it-according-to-a-new-and-depressing-study/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.3ca1298125c6)

The problem is that it is difficult to find reliable statistics on this subject. Even when using rigorous methodology, researchers working on such sensitive subjects as gender-based violence often face similar challenges: how can they ensure that respondents will give honest answers on such personal subjects, and that in a context of social and sometimes even political pressure, their statements will accurately reflect reality? Researchers know how to avoid non-reporting bias, but lack primarily the funding needed to conduct general population studies (covering the entire population).

It is therefore difficult to find accurate statistics, but even more so to compare data from different research projects. Why? Firstly, because they do not all define subjects in the same way: when dealing with intimate partner violence, some studies cover, for example, all forms of assault against women, whether physical, sexual or psychological. Secondly, because they do not cover the same periods: some studies focus on violence experienced over the course of a lifetime, while others cover only the previous 12 months or five years. Finally, because the selection criteria for respondents vary: some studies survey all women in a certain age group, while others only consider women who are or have been married. There are also variations in the wording of questions and in the type of study involved, where the main topic may differ.

However, despite these reservations, nowadays it is almost unthinkable to produce an article without figures. In terms of studies and their translation into statistics, it is therefore important to always keep a critical perspective and take time to verify the source of the statistics. Readers should also be reminded that figures often represent only the tip of the iceberg: they give a sense of scale, but may not reflect reality, even when they appear very specific. For example, police rape statistics only include reported cases.

It is even more important to exercise caution when dealing with surveys. As the journalist and essayist Jean-Paul Marthoz explains, “the media must also resist the temptation to rush and rely too heavily on surveys, which often make up “degree zero” journalism. Unfiltered, they lend themselves to sensational or simplistic headlines. The media also too often refrain from reading the details of the survey and simply repeat the summaries. Who commissioned the survey? When was it carried out? On what sample of the population? What were the conditions of security and freedom? What questions were asked? Some institutions that carry out surveys are obviously more conscientious than others, but critical distance is a requisite in all circumstances – even when those

who commissioned the survey are respectable intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations.”<sup>211</sup>

When dealing with gender issues, it is important to use gender-specific statistics, i.e. statistics that are disaggregated by sex and therefore separate the information collected according to whether it concerns men or women, as recommended by UNESCO.<sup>212</sup>

### **2.1.7. Describe reality while avoiding sensationalism**

A major challenge is in knowing how to describe the violence committed, its nature and the circumstances surrounding it. How many details should journalists give? To what extent should journalists provide interviewees' raw statements? Providing too little information could weaken the story and lead the reader to underestimate the seriousness of the situation, but too much detail could shock or arouse a certain morbid curiosity. Finding the right balance between the two is obviously not easy. Respect for survivors and the public's right to be informed are the two sides of the scales that we must constantly try to balance.

### **2.1.8. Limit the use of hidden cameras and other undercover methods**

The difficulty in securing information and testimonies on such sensitive subjects as violence against women can lead journalists to resort to undercover methods. These may include disguise, infiltration, hidden cameras, hacking telephone or online communications, lying about their role as journalists or claiming to belong to the police or a self-help group.

The ethical rules are clear: a respectable journalist must not “use unfair methods to obtain news, photographs or documents”, according to the Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Journalists, adopted by the International Federation of Journalists in Istanbul in 1972. However, some of the most famous reporting has bypassed this rule. For example, for reports published in the daily newspaper *La Prensa* in 2011 and 2013,

211 Jean-Paul Marthoz, *Terrorism and the Media. A Handbook for Journalists*, UNESCO, Paris, 2017. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247074>

212 UNESCO, *Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media: Framework of Indicators to Gauge Gender Sensitivity in Media Operations and Content*, UNESCO, Paris, 2015 [2012]. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/crosscutting-priorities/gender-and-media/gender-sensitive-indicators-for-media/>



the Honduran journalist Xiomara Orellana posed as a migrant to accompany Hondurans on their journey through Mexico to the United States of America.

Nonetheless, these methods must remain the exception and should only be used if the information is of compelling and indisputable public interest and cannot be obtained in any other way. Such methods represent the last resort, after exhausting all 'fair' methods of gathering information. They cannot be the result of a desire to stage information or indulge in what Poynter Institute ethics adviser Steve Myers calls 'entrapment journalism'. This approach involves reporters not only concealing their true identity and filming with hidden cameras, but also trying at all costs to provoke and trap those they are interviewing.

Care must be taken to control the use of undercover methods. The integrity of the profession is at stake: even if some of the public approve of this technique, it can help to create – or reinforce – the image of a profession that uses unfair means, traps its contacts, lies and conceals. This technique also endangers journalists who use it: if discovered, they may be subject to violence or to legal proceedings.

Journalists must consider all the consequences of this practice, in accordance with the fundamental ethical principle of responsibility (do no harm). These methods do not exempt them from other rules on privacy or image rights. Extreme caution should therefore be taken in reconciling on the one hand the duty and right to inform, and on the other the rights of individuals presented in the report.

### **2.1.9. Reject language that 'lectures' or could incite judgment**

Avoid giving advice to 'not go out at night': if it is not justified by a true situation of insecurity, it risks increasing women's fear or guilt about walking in public spaces after dark. As sociologist Marylène Lieber points out,<sup>213</sup> the public space is perceived as dangerous and the domestic space as safe. However, this is a distorted perception, since most sexual assaults and rapes take place in the private space, in the home of the victim and/or abuser. According to Marylène Lieber, women's fear is a construct which serves to maintain the status quo in power relationships. Journalists must avoid what she terms 'calls to the gendered order of control' and inciting, by the way they present

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213 *Genre, violences et espaces publics. La vulnérabilité des femmes en question* [Gender, violence and public spaces. The vulnerability of women in question], Les Presses de Sciences Po, Paris, 2008.



information, comments such as ‘see what happens to women who are underdressed or who hang around alone outside at night!’

They should therefore refrain from asking a rape victim questions about the way she was dressed or about her lifestyle. These are all factors that could suggest the victim ultimately bore some responsibility for what happened to her. The structure and presentation of the article, the language used (including vocabulary) and the questions asked during the interview should avoid suggesting or leading to the belief that the survivor could be responsible for the violence committed against her. It is not the victim who should be stigmatized. All journalists should carefully consider the relevance of mentioning certain details or information, such as references to the physical appearance of the person being attacked.

Some information is provided by the police or the prosecutor’s office as part of the investigation and may have a completely different impact when written by a journalist. Always ask yourself if it is relevant to share this information, thinking about the consequences, especially for the victim. Similarly, when portraying the victim, perpetrator and witnesses, gender stereotypes should be avoided, and their origin or religion should be mentioned only if it is relevant and necessary information with real added value.

#### **2.1.10. Avoid secondary victimization and portray survivors as resilient**

Be careful not to make survivors doubly victimized: once because of the violence they have suffered and again because of coverage that is discriminatory (indulgent towards the aggressor but accusatory towards the victim) or degrading.

It is not easy to leave an abusive partner. Some women simply do not have the financial means to do so. In some societies, it is the women who would be shunned and lose custody of their children. Female victims of violence from their intimate partners often show great courage and remain at home to care for their children. Filing a complaint against a spouse is a complicated process, both psychologically and practically. It sometimes even increases the risk of assault, without any certainty that the complaint filed will result in the violent husband being convicted, let alone the woman being protected.

When journalists describe violence that has taken place in a public space, without departing from the journalistic principle of respect for the truth, they must be careful to report that the woman concerned did not act as a passive victim, that she tried to defend herself and escape her aggressor. Whenever possible, positive, resilient stories should be presented that show how some survivors, through their courageous testimony and actions, have become agents of change.

### **Victims or survivors?**

UNESCO considers that the percentage of women and men described as survivors (by showing that they have been able to react to adversity) is an indicator for gender equality in the media.<sup>214</sup> Similarly, many other organizations now recommend talking about 'survivors' rather than 'victims', which in their view is a more positive representation. However, this choice is not unanimously accepted, particularly because the term 'victim' is generally used in criminal codes, not 'survivor'.

As explained by the authors of *Use The Right Words*,<sup>215</sup> a Canadian guide for journalists on reporting sexual violence, some "prefer the term "survivor" because it conveys agency and resilience. Others may prefer "person who has been subjected to sexual assault" because it doesn't define an individual solely in relation to an experience of sexual violence." They ultimately advise asking the opinion of the person who has been assaulted and using the wording they prefer: victim, survivor or person who has been subjected to sexual assault. 'Complainant' is another option if the person has filed a complaint.

#### **2.1.11. Think about the order of topics, links and context**

There is not only the content of the audiovisual footage to consider, but also the prioritization, for example the order and timing of its appearance in a news programme. However, audience studies show that the peak audience is not necessarily at the beginning of the news; it may therefore be worth placing an important sequence a little later in the news.

It is also important to review the context in which the footage appears and to check the

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<sup>214</sup> *Gender-sensitive indicators in the media*

<sup>215</sup> Sasha Elford, Shannon Giannitsopoulou and Farrah Khan,

*Use the Right Words: Media Reporting on Sexual Violence in Canada*, Femifesto, Toronto, 2017. <http://femifesto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/UseTheRightWords-Single-May16.pdf>

links. For example, the televised news on a Belgian public service channel<sup>216</sup> broadcast a sequence covering a double murder: a mother and her daughter had their throats slit by the mother's former partner. The report ended with these sentences: "In the prosecution court, there is zero tolerance for acts of domestic violence. However, to act quickly, the court needs tangible evidence that is not always easy for the victim to gather". Then, with no transition, the presenter continued with "Next in this news bulletin, some footage of the mistreatment of pigs on Italian farms that make Parma ham". The footage was the same length for both subjects, save for a few seconds, at just under two minutes, including the presenter's words.

Apart from radio or television news, programmes on violence against women should be scheduled more often in prime time, and not relegated to late evening. The social importance of this information means that newsrooms need to ensure it is aired at a time when audience figures are high. This gender awareness must be reflected in different types of editorial content: documentaries, talk shows, studio interviews, etc. In the press, it is essential that these topics are covered more often on the front page, in opinion pages and in feature articles – provided, of course, that they are not treated as general news and in sensationalist ways.

### 2.1.12. Practise service and solutions journalism

When the media focus on responses to violence (what institutions are doing, for example, to combat this scourge and care for victims), they have a beneficial effect on women, according to Chilean lawyer Patsili Toledo: "When news about violent cases focuses on the resources and responses provided by institutions or civil society, such as shelters, specialized judges, the provision of economic or social assistance, it has a protective effect on women. [With this type of information] the crime is not presented as the end of the story; rather, [the information] shows that there are [protection] mechanisms and other pathways are for those experiencing violence".<sup>217</sup>

216 News at 7:30 p.m. from Radio télévision belge francophone (RTBF) on the channel La Une, 26 March 2018.

217 Patsili Toledo, The media and gender-based murders of women: notes on the cases in Europe and Latin America, Heinrich Böll Foundation, 24 July 2014. <https://eu.boell.org/en/2014/07/24/media-and-gender-based-murders-women-notes-cases-europe-and-latin-america>

Also on this topic: Vives-Cases, C., Torrubiano-Domínguez, J. and Álvarez-Dardet, C., The effect of television news items on intimate partner violence murders, *European Journal of Public Health*, 2009, vol. 19, No. 6, pp. 592–596.

Each article should include emergency numbers for female victims of violence (police, hospitals, women's associations, human rights organizations) and explain what to do to obtain protection and assistance, especially if the police are failing to act. It would also be useful to mention associations that undertake preventive action in relation to gender-based violence. Highlighting the actions carried out by these associations may give hope to those who have not yet dared or been able to contact them.

This solutions journalism also involves reminding the authorities of their obligations to prevent and punish violence against women under the international conventions to which they are party, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.<sup>218</sup>

### **2.1.13. Take enough time before, during and after reporting**

One of the challenges of being a reporter is that you are often on the ground for a very short period. Time has too often become a luxury in the profession, even though it is a basic necessity. For journalists to understand the context, immerse themselves in a situation and, above all, talk to trauma survivors, they need time: this is the price to be paid for quality journalism. As long as there is no breaking news (for example, a humanitarian crisis that requires journalists' immediate departure), it is strongly recommended that journalists prepare their reports carefully. This will not only save many hours on the ground, but will also avoid errors of judgment and traps of all kinds.

It is true that on the Internet nowadays, there is a plethora of information on all possible subjects. This volume is difficult to manage when gathering information before starting the reporting process. It is important to learn to quickly identify the right sources and to effectively sort through the mass of documents.

Slow journalism, which takes time to grasp the full complexity of a subject, is particularly relevant in this context. In recent years, it has regained its prestige with the emergence of many magazines that produce narrative journalism. It is often accompanied by an investigative approach that, beneath the froth of daily news, seeks to describe the underlying waves in societal phenomena. It has been responsible for some exemplary investigations that have given meaning and understanding to isolated facts. Some

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218 [https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1981/09/19810903%2005-18%20AM/Ch\\_IV\\_8p.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1981/09/19810903%2005-18%20AM/Ch_IV_8p.pdf)

good examples are the articles and books published by Sergio González Rodríguez on femicide in Ciudad Juárez and Lydia Cacho on sex trafficking and sexual exploitation networks in Mexico.

#### **2.1.14. Gain an understanding to help others understand**

The complexity and diversity of forms of violence against women calls for detailed knowledge of the problem. However, there are fewer and fewer specialists in the press. This is undoubtedly an issue for discussion: if the journalistic profession wishes to regain its credibility with the public, it may require greater specialization on the part of the editors. Given the extraordinary complexity of the topics, the fact that generalists cover all subjects can lead to major errors. If a journalist does not know about a topic and questions an expert, they could easily misunderstand them. Reporters therefore have a duty to understand the subject they are covering. The Benin Press Code of Ethics (1999), for example, explicitly covers this duty of competence: “Before producing an article or a broadcast program, a journalist must take into account that his aptitudes and his knowledge are limited. A journalist deals with topics only after investing a minimum of effort in research and investigation.”

#### **2.1.15. Rebalance information to improve gender equality**

Before writing an article or producing an audiovisual sequence, consideration should be given to how these can be used to enhance gender equality. This is not a feminist activist approach, but simply good journalism, since it aims to give women an equitable presence at the heart of news. Women “make up only 24% of the persons heard, read about or seen in newspaper, television and radio news” and “only 26% of the people in Internet news stories and media news Tweets combined”, notes the Global Media Monitoring Project.<sup>219</sup> Care must therefore be taken to re-establish the balance and give a fair place to women experts and leaders in all areas.

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<sup>219</sup> Sarah Macharia et al., *Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project*, World Association for Christian Communication, Toronto, 2015. Data from 114 countries that monitored 22,136 reports published, broadcast or tweeted by 2,030 separate news organizations, written or presented by 26,010 different journalists and highlighting 45,402 people interviewed and/or covered in the news.

## Reminder

### Fifteen tips for covering violence against women

- Talk about it!
- Treat gender-based violence as a violation of human rights and no longer as an isolated incident
- Explain the context
- Be careful with vocabulary
- Pay attention to headings
- Analyse statistics and surveys with caution
- Describe reality while avoiding sensationalism
- Limit the use of hidden cameras and other undercover methods
- Reject language that 'lectures' or could incite judgment
- Avoid secondary victimization and portray survivors as resilient
- Think about the order of topics, links and context
- Practise service and solutions journalism
- Take enough time
- Gain an understanding to help others understand
- Rebalance information to improve gender equality

## 2.2. What gender should the reporter be?

In some contexts, when covering gender-specific issues, it may be more effective to send a female reporter to collect testimonies of violence experienced or to approach victims and talk to them.

This is the view of Syrian journalist Zaina Erhaim, winner of the 2016 Index on Censorship Freedom of Expression Award, who stresses that female reporters can describe what underlies the subjects, testify to real life in wartime and accompany women to their rooms where they feel comfortable expressing their feelings.<sup>220</sup>

“Journalism is a male profession in my community”, says Ameera Ahmad Harouda, a Palestinian journalist and ‘fixer’.<sup>221</sup> “Some people from Gaza do not believe we women have the ability to work in this kind of field [...] However, there are also upsides to being a woman fixer within my cultural environment. Women have better access to certain places and persons than men. For example, I find it easy to reach families and make women and children open their heart to me. This requires empathy and an honest will to listen, but if I were a man, even if I had all the understanding and humanity in the world, some people wouldn’t be as available as they are with me for the fact that I am a woman.”<sup>222</sup>

The contribution of women to the profession is indisputable, but to say that some topics should be covered by women journalists would support the view that some areas of journalism are reserved for men and others for women. Moreover, the notion of woman and man is only affirmed by the social role played by each.

Rather than letting the debate revolve around the journalist’s gender identity and the topics they could cover, it would be wiser to involve the survivors being interviewed as far as possible, to ask their preference. Far beyond making the survivor feel comfortable during the interview, it is about inviting her to fully participate and taking her choice into account, as this will make her feel respected and protected all round.

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<sup>220</sup> Index on Censorship podcast, 24 September 2017 <https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2016/10/podcast-how-are-women-journalists-shaping-war-reporting-today/>

<sup>221</sup> A fixer is an aide who, in a war-torn or troubled region, acts simultaneously as an interpreter, guide and logistical aid for a foreign journalist.

<sup>222</sup> Awad Joumaa and Khaled Ramadan (eds.), *Despite Barriers and Hazards: A Woman’s Experience Working in Gaza*, in *Journalism in Times of War*, Al Jazeera Media Institute, Qatar, 2018.



## 124 **2.3. How should an interview be conducted?**

“Anyone here been raped and speaks English?” This question, which became famous, was reportedly asked by a journalist in 1961 during the violence that accompanied the independence of the country now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>223</sup>

This perfectly expresses abuses by the profession. On the ground in wars or major humanitarian crises, swarms of journalists often descend like wasps on the surviving population, attacking them with tactless questions in search of shock statements and a good story to tell. In competition with each other, reporters are sometimes quick to push the survivors psychologically if it means they can get *the* statement from them, that will ‘hit the mark’.

Following Daesh’s attack on the Yazidis in Sinjar, Iraq, in August 2014, many journalists visited nearby camps for internally displaced persons to report in great detail on the horrors perpetrated by this group: abductions of women and girls, slave markets where their virginity was tested, captives being shared out to sheikhs and emirs and repeated rapes, among others. Even though these facts are confirmed by several United Nations reports,<sup>224</sup> their media coverage presented sometimes “salacious treatment and framing that caused great harm to survivors and their families”, as reported the Women’s Media Center.<sup>225</sup> Johanna Foster and Sherizaan Minwalla interviewed 26 Yazidi women about their interactions with international journalists. They were shocked to hear that 85 per cent of the women complained about unethical practices by journalists. At the top of their grievances was pressure to recount what they had experienced and a lack of adequate protection of their anonymity.<sup>226</sup>

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223 Edward Behr, a journalist at *Newsweek*, used the quote as the title for one of his books: *Anyone Here Been Raped and Speaks English?*

224 OHCHR, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May–31 October 2015*, Geneva, 5 January 2016. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRReport1May31October2015.pdf>

225 Annie Hylton, Study: 85 percent of Yazidi women interviewed describe unethical journalism practices, Women’s Media Center, 26 February 2018. <http://www.womensmediacenter.com/women-under-siege/study-85-percent-of-yazidi-women-interviewed-describe-unethical-journalism-practices>

226 Johanna E. Foster and Sherizaan Minwalla, Voices of Yazidi women: Perceptions of journalistic practices in the reporting on ISIS sexual violence, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, vol. 67, March–April 2018, pp. 53–64.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277539517301905>

What standards should be followed when conducting an interview and what behaviour should be adopted to avoid such abuses? How can the necessary respect for the rights, dignity and safety of victims be reconciled with the requirements to report?

### 2.3.1. Respect the rights and dignity of survivors

When meeting female victims of rape, sexual slavery or other gender-based violence, it is undoubtedly necessary to take their trauma into account and to behave with all the required empathy and sensitivity. Journalists must be aware that they are encroaching on the survivors' privacy. As the Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma reminds, when survivors tell their stories, they may relive some of the emotions they felt during the traumatic episode(s) they experienced.<sup>227</sup> "Each time we tell them our stories, we go back to them, like a flashback", confirms a Yazidi woman. "It is difficult [...] I tell them, please enough, please enough."<sup>228</sup> Journalists must therefore be particularly attentive to the vulnerability of survivors, not push those who do not feel ready to speak out, take care of those who have agreed to testify and show compassion towards them. Journalists must also be aware that victims of trafficking in persons, for example, are sometimes terrified to meet a journalist, as pointed out by the EJN.<sup>229</sup>

Before starting the interview, care should be taken to create a caring and trusting atmosphere that will put the survivor at ease. First, explain why her story is important and inform her of the interview's objectives. Introduce the media on which it will be broadcast, its context and how it will be presented. Then mention that she may, for example, request a break during the interview if she feels the need and provide any other requirement that may put her at ease and reduce her stress. Also emphasize that she does not have to answer a question that she feels is too intrusive, embarrassing or hurtful. Finally, specify at the outset how long the interview will last and why, as cutting someone short while they are in the middle of recounting a traumatic experience, or interrupting to ask them to be more succinct, could be deeply hurtful to them.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277539517301905>

<sup>228</sup> Shawn Carrié, Yazidi women speak about unethical practices by journalists, *Columbia Journalism Review*, 4 May 2018. <https://www.cjr.org/watchdog/yazidi-isis-interview.php>

<sup>229</sup> Aidan White, *Media and Trafficking in Human Beings. Guidelines*, EJN/ICMPD, 2017. <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/publications/media-trafficking-guidelines>

## 126 **Honesty**

“Be fair and realistic”, advises the Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma. “Don’t coerce, cajole, trick or offer remuneration, and don’t suggest that giving an interview will bring more aid / military intervention.”<sup>230</sup> Thus, do not offer money to convince someone to testify; if they do not feel physically or psychologically fit to do so, insisting would only worsen their suffering. It is generally not advisable to pay for an interview, especially because some victims may put themselves in danger to come forward to testify just because they need money. However, media outlets often cover the person’s travel and food costs. Be transparent about your intentions and methods, and never make any promises that can’t be kept.

Speaking of journalists, a Yazidi woman said “They take our stories and they do not do anything for us. They come here and they take videos, take pictures, ask questions and then they go.” To avoid these misunderstandings, Sherizaan Minwalla, co-author of the study *Voices of Yazidi women*, advocates transparency. She stresses that journalists should explain more clearly that their only power is to tell their story, hoping that others will then be able to make a difference.<sup>231</sup>

### **2.3.2. Ensure the safety of interviewees**

It is obviously essential to ensure that interviewees are not put at risk. Under some regimes, simply talking to a journalist is suspicious enough and can lead to imprisonment. Similarly, in many societies, a woman seen accompanying and talking to a foreign man will be stigmatized and met with social rejection.

### **Anonymity**

Journalists must also be aware that in many societies, rape is the ultimate taboo. A woman who has been raped is often considered disgraced and shameful to her family. She will therefore often be stigmatized, rejected by her husband and sometimes even killed by him as a show of power. To avoid being rejected or killed, some victims try to hide what has happened to them from their relatives or neighbours. Sometimes, however, they agree to testify to expose the situation, but only if their anonymity is

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230 Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma, Reporting on sexual violence, 15 July 2011. <https://dartcenter.org/content/reporting-on-sexual-violence>

231 Shawn Carrié, Yazidi women speak about unethical practices by journalists, Columbia Journalism Review, 4 May 2018. <https://www.cjr.org/watchdog/yazidi-isis-interview.php>

strictly respected. The journalist must therefore take great care to ensure that they cannot be identified. The individual's watch, their hands, a detail of their hairstyle or the environment in which the interview was conducted can be enough to identify them. As regards their voice, it is important to avoid disguising it in a way that would belittle the interviewee. It should also be noted that, even if the tone of voice is altered, the rhythm of the sentences, the vocabulary used and certain language mannerisms can make it possible to recognize the individual. It is therefore better to scroll the transcript of the interview in a banner rather than to broadcast the voice.

For journalists, the safety of witnesses and sources is "an immense responsibility", confirms Annick Cojean, a senior reporter for the *Le Monde* newspaper, who has written extensively on the use of rape as a weapon of war. "We establish close relations, the women gradually confide in us about this event, this earthquake, that has overturned their lives and which they have related to almost no one, not even their mothers or husbands", she comments. "And we leave with their precious account, conscious of their gift to us and above all of the challenge. But then we go on to cover other news stories while they stay there, weighed down with their torment and pain, and sometimes exposed to the danger of being killed for revealing their secret. So, it is absolutely essential to protect their identity because they put their lives in our hands."<sup>232</sup>

In all cases of sexual violence, it is strongly recommended to respect the anonymity of survivors who have requested it, including when the perpetrators are police officers, soldiers, government officials or members of armed groups.

### **The danger of notes**

Sometimes journalists are careless because they are unaware of the environment in which they are working. While they are well aware that the names of survivors need to be changed in their articles and radio or television programmes, they sometimes enter the person's real name in their notebook or computer when they are recording the stories. This can endanger the witness who spoke to them, since journalists are at risk of being arrested and having their notebooks confiscated at a checkpoint or roadblock by authorities or members of a criminal organization, or of having their computers stolen from their hotel suitcases. This can happen whether under certain authoritarian

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<sup>232</sup> RSF, *Women's Rights: Forbidden Subject*, 1 March 2018. [https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/womens\\_rights-forbidden\\_subject.pdf](https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/womens_rights-forbidden_subject.pdf)

**128** regimes, in a situation of armed conflict or in democracies. Necessary precautions must therefore be taken with the information collected.

### **Incriminating contact details**

Some organizations advise journalists to leave their contact details with the interviewee so that they can contact the journalist later, if desired. This admittedly shows respect for the individual, but can risk their safety, especially if they were exposing abuses by police officers, soldiers or armed groups. If the individual's home is searched and the journalist's contact details are found, revenge could be taken on the individual.

### **Avoid the use of undercover methods**

With a few rare exceptions, ban hidden cameras and microphones, as explained in section 2.1.8. Clearly specify your identity and do not disguise your role as a journalist.

### **2.3.3. Obtain informed consent**

Sometimes interviewees do not realize the risks that their testimony poses to them; in some parts of the world, they are not used to the media. Journalists must avoid abusing this lack of knowledge and this vulnerability, instead ensuring that interviewees are fully informed of the consequences of their actions so that they can make an informed decision as to whether they wish to testify in public or be protected by anonymity. There must be clear agreement on what should be kept confidential and what can be made public and broadcast.

It is important, for example, to explain that information distributed locally can now be picked up by social media and travel around the world in a few clicks. Journalists must therefore ensure that the survivors have understood that even if their testimony is, for example, published in an article appearing in the Philippines or included in a television programme broadcast in Jamaica, it will also be visible locally to their relatives and others in their neighbourhood or village.

'Informed consent' is defined as the person about to be interviewed giving their consent freely, without pressure from anyone, and fully understanding the consequences of their decision. Ideally, it is good to obtain this consent in writing. If the person is illiterate, care should obviously be taken not to have them sign clauses to which they have not

agreed. It is important to establish a contract of trust with the person who agrees to testify and to respect this.

### **2.3.4. Adopt an attitude of active, attentive and non-judgmental listening**

As previously mentioned, allow the survivor to speak at their own pace, without constantly interrupting them to ask further questions. Remember that they have experienced painful events and that recounting them can bring back memories and emotions. Respect their silences; pay attention to their expression and body language and express understanding whenever you feel they need it. In the case of sexual violence, the victim often tends to feel guilty. Care should therefore be taken to avoid using words or phrases that might suggest to the victim that you consider them partly responsible for what happened to them. The interview must not turn into an interrogation.

As the Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma advises, do not tell the survivor that you know how they feel: you do not.<sup>233</sup> However, words of compassion and empathy are welcome, such as, for example, telling the survivor that you understand how difficult it must be for them.

Do not judge any inconsistencies and contradictions in the victim's account either. It is important to note that in the event of traumatic experiences (incest or other sexual violence for example), the victim's unconscious mind will tend to erase all or some of the distressing facts. Denial is a protection mechanism for the survivor that can go as far as amnesia. Other defence mechanisms may also occur.

However, this attitude of respect for the victim should not, of course, prevent you from carrying out your work as a journalist, and therefore from cross-checking the facts with other sources (local grass-roots associations, international organizations, authorities, etc.).

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<sup>233</sup> Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma, Reporting on sexual violence, 15 July 2011. <https://dartcenter.org/content/reporting-on-sexual-violence>



## 130 **2.3.5. Choose the interview location carefully**

Above all, it is important to avoid conducting an interview in a crowd or in the vicinity of other media professionals that are in a hurry to interview the witness (as mentioned in section 1.9.4). Being surrounded by noise, commotion, bustle and unknown faces is not conducive to gathering the survivor's story, especially if they have experienced trauma. Finding a discreet, quiet and protected place where the survivor can feel comfortable and safe is essential. The individual must be able to tell their story with no outside pressure from curious and intimidating onlookers or even family members. It is often a good solution to conduct the interview in the premises of an NGO, at least if they meet the criteria.

### **2.3.6. Be sensitive to and respect cultural differences**

When reporting in an unfamiliar community or country, especially on sensitive issues such as violence against women, it is essential to learn about the culture of the people you are going to talk to. This is because people express themselves differently in different parts of the world. There are, for example, taboo questions or expressions. For instance, in some ethnic groups in West Africa, people believe that asking a woman how many children she has may bring misfortune on them. You must therefore ask her how many pieces of wood she has. Similarly, in some cultures, it is considered unacceptable to speak directly to a dignitary. Regardless of whether you are a man or a woman, a native or a foreigner, you must talk through a mediator who will convey your words to the dignitary.

To avoid shocking, offending or humiliating people, effort should be given to finding out as much as possible about the environment's culture(s) before travelling to report. As soon as you arrive on the ground, you should then observe how interpersonal communication is established. Finally, you should seek advice from people from that country or who have been working there for many years (employees of NGOs or international organizations, humanitarian workers, etc.).

Knowledge and respect for cultural codes, particularly those relating to clothing and behaviour, help journalists to avoid many mistakes, blend into society and carry out their work as a reporter without hindrance. Thus, before walking around in shorts or



sleeveless tops, for example, journalists should find out how this clothing would be viewed, otherwise they may risk rejection, thus compromising their reporting.

### **2.3.7. Choosing the right interpreter**

When reporting in a community or country whose language you do not speak, the choice of interpreter is crucial, as a good interpreter amounts to a cultural conduit. This person will be able to inform you about current codes, but will also be able to reformulate your questions to make them more culturally appropriate.

To choose well, it is useful to seek advice from a local association or United Nations agency on the ground, which will be able to recommend someone to you. In some countries, interpreters are used as guides by the security services; they are responsible for supervising journalists and reporting on who they meet and what they say. You also need to make enquiries to ensure, firstly, that the designated person has a good understanding of the issue of gender-based violence and that they will accurately translate victims' words, without minimizing the facts because of patriarchal ideology, for example. Secondly, you need to ensure that they are aware of and committed to confidentiality rules designed to protect the safety, anonymity and dignity of survivors. Several associations recommend drawing up a code of conduct to be signed by the interpreter.

In the event of war or conflict, it is obviously difficult to find an interpreter who has the trust of the various opposing camps. Ideally, you should therefore use several interpreters, belonging to the interviewees' respective communities. Some ethnic groups do not trust each other. For interviews covering gender-based violence, it is far preferable to have a female interpreter.

### **2.3.8. Meet with associations on the ground**

NGOs working in humanitarian crisis or conflict areas are often good sources of information and contacts. Through them, journalists can find people to interview and interpreters. However, the other side of the coin is that some victims may feel indebted to these organizations for providing them with food or medical assistance and, therefore, may not feel free to say no and refuse an interview. To obtain more funding from donors in humanitarian crises, some NGOs may also be tempted to encourage

women to highlight the most serious violence they have experienced. Journalists should try to conduct the interview without the presence of an employee from an association, who could guide the interview, and should cross-check the information gathered with other sources.

### **2.3.9. Do not allow technology to take over from humans**

A big camera and boom microphone, brandished by a large media team, can intimidate the survivor to the point of obstructing their story. When discussing subjects as personal and painful as gender-based violence, an interview in a very small group is best, with the survivor, journalist and interpreter forming an ideal trio. When a photographer is required, this person should be as discreet as possible. That said, it is important to check the quality of the sound and image throughout the interview to avoid unpleasant surprises later on.

### **2.3.10. Ask questions that will help explain the context**

What is the political background to this violence or sexual exploitation? What is its context? What is its impact on the victims? What do women survivors want to share about their experience?<sup>234</sup> Focus should not be given solely to the narrative of the violence. Rape, for example, is a weapon of war and a war crime, and must be presented as such. For more advice and further discussion on how to handle the interview and its content, please refer to the chapter: 'How should the subject be addressed, framed and covered?'

### **2.3.11. Finish an interview well**

A good way to close an interview can be to ask the person if they have anything to add or if they would like a particular element to be highlighted. Journalists should opt for an open-ended question that encourages free expression and sometimes leads to an aspect of the subject to be addressed that they had not considered. In addition, psychologists advise not to leave the victim in their account of the past but to gently bring them back to the present. Time should then be taken to say goodbye to the person, thanking them for their testimony and assuring them that you will keep to your

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<sup>234</sup> Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma, Reporting on sexual violence, 15 July 2011. <https://dartcenter.org/content/reporting-on-sexual-violence>

commitments regarding its use (anonymity, etc.). When editing the interview or writing the article, care must be taken not to distort the words of the person who testified and, of course, to avoid any spin.

### **Reminder**

In summary, each time a journalist interviews a victim of gender-based violence, they must ask themselves three questions:

- Have I taken all necessary measures to avoid endangering either the safety or the reputation of the interviewee? If the interviewee has asked for anonymity, am I absolutely certain that there is no detail enabling them to be identified?
- Have I informed the interviewee in a transparent way about the purpose, context, duration and medium of the interview, so that I can obtain their truly informed consent?
- Have I been able to create a caring, respectful and non-judgmental atmosphere to ensure, as far as possible, that recounting the violence experienced will not incur further suffering for the survivor? Have I upheld my commitments and the contract of trust drawn up?

### **Note**

There are two types of interviews: interviews with survivors, which should be conducted with all due kindness, ensuring that they are allowed to express themselves, as described above; and interviews with those in power – various authorities, religious leaders, business leaders, armed group members, traffickers – who should be asked relevant questions if they enable a better understanding of the context. The saying that “The job of the newspaper is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable” is usually credited to journalist Finley Peter Dunne writing in 1898. Nevertheless, journalists should consider ethical and legal dimensions when interviewing people who engage in illegal activities, ensuring that they do not provide them with a platform for justifying or defending criminal acts.

## 134 **2.3.12. Interviews with children**<sup>235</sup>

All the aforementioned standards regarding respect for the rights and dignity of interviewees also apply to children. However, in their case, journalists should be even more cautious, considerate and ethical. This attitude involves thinking first of the best interests of the child,<sup>236</sup> which must take precedence over any other concern, including the wish to report abuses committed against the child.

According to UNICEF, “When trying to determine the best interests of a child, the child’s right to have their views taken into account are to be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity [...] Those closest to the child’s situation and best able to assess it are to be consulted about the political, social and cultural ramifications of any reportage.”<sup>237</sup>

In practice, ethics and caution require written permission from the child and the adult responsible for them, for any interview, video or photo.<sup>238</sup> It is important to ensure that these people understand that their story could be shared locally and worldwide, and therefore that they are fully aware of the possible consequences of this for the child’s future. If the journalist has doubts about the child’s safety, they should of course not take any risks, regardless of the benefits of the testimony. In this case, they may, for example, “report on the general situation for children rather than on an individual child.”<sup>239</sup>

When a young person is a victim or a perpetrator of violence (a child soldier, for example), care should be taken to change their name and not to show anything by which they could be recognized, except “when a child is engaged in a psychosocial programme and claiming their name and identity is part of their healthy development”.<sup>240</sup>

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235 See Charlotte Barry and Mike Jempson, *The Media and Children’s Rights*, UNICEF and MediaWise, 2005. New edition published in 2010. The 2005 version is available online at <http://www.mediawise.org.uk/children/the-media-and-childrens-rights/>

236 This principle is included, without precise definition, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly. It is therefore subject to interpretation.

237 See UNICEF, *Ethical guidelines for reporting on children*, undated. <https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/en/ethical-guidelines-reporting-children>

238 A consent form template (which can be used by anyone to fit their work context) is available from Media Monitoring Africa and Save the Children, *Editorial Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Children in the Media*, Johannesburg, 2014. [https://mma-ecm.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/mma\\_editorial\\_guideline.pdf](https://mma-ecm.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/mma_editorial_guideline.pdf)

239 UNICEF, *Guidelines for journalists reporting on children*, undated. <https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/ethical-guidelines>

240 *Ibid.*

If the child agrees to testify anonymously, care should of course be taken not to give any details that could allow them to be identified and endangered in any way. Remember once again that in many parts of the world, a woman or girl victim of rape will be rejected or even excluded by her community. In this case, even more care must therefore be taken to preserve anonymity.

Finally, when addressing a child, care should be taken to use vocabulary and language that they can understand.

During the interview, several associations recommend the presence of a trusted adult (parent, teacher or person working for a child protection agency) to support the child in their testimony, and perhaps also to avoid overly intrusive questions from the journalist. It should also be added that a child's testimony should of course be verified with other sources.

There should be a limit to the number of times the child is interviewed. That said, whose responsibility is it to monitor this? The adult accompanying the child? Will the child be able to stand up to numerous journalists, each thinking about their own interview without necessarily gauging the overall impact? In this situation, should you take care to limit the damage and give up on the interview? Or hold group interviews? Some media editorial charters recommend forming teams of journalists, recording questions from each, and sending one or two journalists on behalf of the group. In this way, the child will only have to deal with one interview. It should be noted, as the lawyer Anna Neistat says, that "If you want to bring a human voice to the stories, you have to feel it in the first place".<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> From an interview with Rosena Sammi for A Lawyer's Life. <http://www.alawyerslife.com/dr-anna-neistat-senior-director-of-research-amnesty-international>

## 136 **2.4 Which images should be chosen?**

It is obviously not easy to illustrate an article on violence against women. Can we, for example, use photos of survivors? And if so, under what conditions?

As mentioned regarding interviews, the most important rule is to ensure that the lives or future of victims and witnesses are never put at risk.

Journalists must therefore start by asking for the person's consent to photograph or film them individually, especially if they have been the victim of abuse and other violence. This principle may seem elementary, but it is not always applied, and some photojournalists are not very scrupulous in this regard.

When requesting the person's authorization to film them, this must be informed consent, i.e. they must be fully aware of all consequences that could result from publication of their image, and must have given their consent freely and without any pressure or promise of financial reward. Time must therefore be taken to explain this to the individual. Many photojournalist associations around the world recommend getting a written and signed agreement to protect yourself and your media.

It is also necessary to specify what this agreement covers: does it cover the publication of the individual's photo only in this particular report or also in other articles and contexts? A woman who has consented to her picture being published in an article exposing domestic violence would surely not want it to be used to illustrate a text on prostitution, for example. Similarly, it must be clarified whether the survivor agrees to be recognizable on the screen, i.e. presented with their face shown, or whether they wish to be filmed anonymously.

If they request anonymity, care must be taken to blur their image very well. Despite this masking, it is often still possible to recognize people in television reports. Even more caution is now needed due to the availability of software that can 'unblur' footage. If a survivor exposes abuses they have been subjected to by soldiers or police officers, for example, the so-called security services could use such a tool to identify them. It can be a good approach to film the survivor from behind and in semi-darkness, ensuring that no distinctive features show.



Finally, it is not enough to have obtained the person's informed consent to film or photograph them. It is also important that the shots respect their dignity. Careful consideration should therefore be given to the framing and angle chosen, for example.

Permission is not required to photograph a group of people in a public place. However, this does not exempt journalists from compliance with other ethical standards, in particular the first previously mentioned, namely protecting the safety of individuals. If a group of migrants crossing a border illegally is filmed by telephoto lens and they can be identified, they or their families may be put at risk.

In its guide on journalistic coverage of trafficking in persons,<sup>242</sup> the EJN provides a series of tips that also apply to other forms of violence against women:

- Avoid the use of photos or the creation of videos that give way to sensationalism.
- Shun clichés that contribute to reinforcing stereotypes. The EJN gives the example of an image of a woman seen from behind and marked with a barcode on the shoulder, and asks “how does a picture of a faceless human with a barcode on them help humanize the situation of survivors of human trafficking?” However, some will feel that this sums up the commodification of these women and that it reflects reality without being shocking. Sensitivities may therefore vary on this matter. Care should be taken not to introduce overly restrictive standards that would limit the freedom of expression of the media.
- Avoid explicit images of violence. “It is very rarely that images of extreme violence need to be shown in the public interest”, notes Aidan White, former president of the EJN, though where media should draw the line in this regard? “Is it justified to show the scars, bruises, broken limbs of victims of slavery and trafficking in order to tell the story?” To answer this question, we undoubtedly need to assess the added value of depicting violence. In the case of the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda, several renowned photographers chose, for example, to show scars caused by machete blows on the heads of Tutsi survivors. According to the photographers, exposing this aftermath to the world helped raise public awareness of the extreme violence that had taken place. In other words, these photos had real added documentary value.

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242 Aidan White, *Media and Trafficking in Human Beings. Guidelines*, EJN/ICMPD, 2017. <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/publications/media-trafficking-guidelines>



- Do not crop or edit the reality.
- In addition to ethical standards, journalists must also of course comply with legal standards. In some countries, image rights are very specific and strict. Some legislation in this area goes so far as to threaten the public's right to be informed. It is therefore necessary to fully investigate what can and cannot be done in compliance with the law.
- One good solution to avoiding problems is undoubtedly the use of drawings, since these allow journalists to describe rather than show situations, and thus avoid certain ethical and legal problems raised by photographs. Publishing drawings made by child victims of violence also provides very strong content and eliminates any risk of identifying survivors.
- Finally, the importance of captions should not be underestimated. Most photos are, in fact, polysemous (carry multiple meanings). The caption not only specifies the context (where, when and under what circumstances the photo was taken) but also clarifies the meaning of the image. However, a caption can never be used to justify an unacceptable photo. It should also be mentioned whether the photo has been edited or staged: are the people seen in the image actors playing a role or real victims? This must be clarified.

A number of issues cannot be resolved in the form of 'do and 'don't' recommendations. It will be the responsibility of each journalist or media executive to think about the choices to be made depending on the context, their own sensitivity and that of their media. This will often be far from simple: photos place journalists in ethical dilemmas even more than words do. How can we reconcile the duty to inform with respect for individuals?

**Reminder**

In summary, when choosing a photo to accompany an article or film for a report, three questions must always be asked:

1. Does the image protect the safety and dignity of the survivor?
2. Does it avoid sensationalism, voyeurism and stigmatization?
3. If the photo shown is explicit or shocking, is it in the public interest? In other words, does the shocking aspect serve the subject matter? Does it help the public to better understand or feel the situation?

“Not until the half of our population represented by women and girls can live free from fear, violence and everyday insecurity, can we truly say we live in a fair and equal world.”

— United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday/>

## 140 **International declarations, resolutions and conventions**

### **United Nations Instruments**

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on 10 December 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly.<sup>244</sup>

1951 Refugee Convention, adopted on 28 July 1951 by the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons and entered into force on 22 April 1954.<sup>245</sup>

Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, known as the 1967 Protocol.<sup>246</sup>

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted on 16 December 1966 by the United Nations General Assembly (resolution 2200A (XXI)) and entered into force on 3 January 1976.<sup>247</sup>

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted on 16 December 1966 by the United Nations General Assembly (resolution 2200A (XXI)) and entered into force on 23 March 1976.<sup>248</sup>

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted on 18 December 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly and entered into force on 3 September 1981.<sup>249</sup> Optional Protocol adopted on 6 October 1999 by the United Nations General Assembly (resolution 54/4) and entered into force on 22 December 2000.

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted on 10 December 1984 by the United Nations General Assembly (resolution 39/46) and entered into force on 26 June 1987.<sup>250</sup>

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244 <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

245 <https://www.unhcr.org/en/1951-refugee-convention.html>

246 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolStatusOfRefugees.aspx>

247 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

248 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx>

249 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

250 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CAT.aspx>

Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted on 20 November 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly (resolution 44/25) and entered into force on 2 September 1990.<sup>251</sup>

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted on 20 December 1993 by the United Nations General Assembly (resolution 48/104).<sup>252</sup>

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,<sup>253</sup> adopted at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, on 15 September 1995.

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, adopted on 25 May 2000 by the United Nations General Assembly and entered into force on 18 January 2002.

United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted on 15 November 2000 by the United Nations General Assembly (resolution 55/25) and entered into force on 29 September 2003 and protocols thereto.

### **Regional treaties and instruments**

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990.

Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belém do Pará Convention), 1994.

Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), 2003.<sup>254</sup>

Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), 2011.<sup>255</sup>

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251 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

252 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Violenceagainstwomen.aspx>

253 [https://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa\\_e\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf)

and <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration>

254 [https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/protocol\\_rights\\_women\\_africa\\_2003.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/protocol_rights_women_africa_2003.pdf)

255 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>

## 142 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence against Children in ASEAN, 2013<sup>256</sup> and its Action Plan, 2017.

### Resolutions

In addition to these declarations and conventions, there is a whole series of United Nations Security Council resolutions on more specific issues, such as women, peace and security. These resolutions include:

Resolution 1325 (2000), adopted by the Security Council on 31 October 2000, which addresses the particular and disproportionate effects of armed conflict on women.<sup>257</sup>

Resolution 1820 (2008), adopted by the Security Council on 19 June 2008, calling for an end to all acts of sexual violence against women and girls used as a weapon of war, and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.<sup>258</sup> It emphasizes that rape and other forms of sexual violence may constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or a constituent act of the crime of genocide. It calls on the United Nations Secretary-General to strengthen the policy of zero tolerance against sexual exploitation in United Nations peacekeeping operations and to ensure the protection of women and girls in refugee camps.

Resolution 2331 (2016),<sup>259</sup> adopted by the United Nations Security Council on 20 December 2016, which establishes the following observation: acts of sexual and gender-based violence constitute, for some armed groups, a tactic of terrorism. It underlines the “connection between trafficking in persons, sexual violence and terrorism and other transnational organized criminal activities, which can prolong and exacerbate conflict and instability or intensify its impact on civilian populations”.

Other resolutions aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women have been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Examples include resolutions 61/143 (2006); 63/155 (2008); 64/137 (2009); 65/187 (2010); 67/144 (2012); 69/147 (2014) and 73/148 (2018).

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256 [https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/documents/political\\_declarations/east\\_asia\\_and\\_pacific/declaration\\_on\\_the\\_elimination\\_of\\_violence\\_against\\_women\\_and\\_elimination\\_of\\_violence\\_against\\_children\\_in\\_asean.pdf](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/documents/political_declarations/east_asia_and_pacific/declaration_on_the_elimination_of_violence_against_women_and_elimination_of_violence_against_children_in_asean.pdf)

257 [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1325\(2000\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1325(2000))

258 [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1820\(2008\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1820(2008))

259 [https://www.undocs.org/S/RES/2331%20\(2016\)](https://www.undocs.org/S/RES/2331%20(2016))

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<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>EJN</b>	Ethical Journalism Network
<b>ICMPD</b>	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
<b>LSHTM</b>	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>INSI</b>	International News Safety Institute
<b>IWMF</b>	International Women's Media Foundation
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>RSF</b>	Reporters Sans Frontières [Reporters Without Borders]
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>ITU</b>	International Telecommunication Union
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women (mandate and functions transferred to UN Women in 2010)

## 148 **About the author**

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### **The Big Conversation: Handbook to Address Violence against Women in and through the Media**

2019 – English

UNESCO and UN Women, *The Big Conversation: Handbook to Address Violence against Women in and through the Media*. UN Women, New York. UNESCO, Paris, 2019. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369853.locale=en>

ISBN: 978-92-3-100332-5

The most significant obstacle to combating violence against women and girls remains the persistence of attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and practices that perpetuate negative stereotypes, gender-based discrimination and inequalities. Addressing this challenge lies at the core of prevention work. This handbook is designed as a resource for United Nations entities and other similar organizations on how to work with and through the media to prevent violence against women and girls, and thereby advance progress towards achieving gender equality, encompassed by the Sustainable Development Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda. The publication provides guidance and tools for those working with and within the media sector. In addition to referring to relevant regulatory frameworks and policy instruments, ethical principles and positive institutional approaches, it covers how to work with the media to engage in social norms change, including through content production and dissemination. The handbook builds on a review of international evidence on what works to prevent violence against women and girls through engaging with the media. It makes use of case studies and promising practices across different regional and national contexts to help think about innovative project conception and management, working with the specificities of the local, regional or national situation.



**Gender, Media & ICTs: New approaches for research, education & training**

Lisa French, Aimée Vega Montiel and Claudia Padovani

2019 – English

French, L., Vega Montiel, A., and Padovani, C. (eds), Gender, Media & ICTs: New approaches for research, education & training. UNESCO, Paris, 2019.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368963.locale=en>

ISBN: 978-92-3-100320-2

Higher education has to grapple with intense changes in communications technologies, genres and business models, and also with persisting gender inequalities. This publication helps to navigate and transform this challenge. It provides seven structured and practical modules, and many useful links to further resources. Ranging from representation issues through to rights advocacy, and including a preface by Margaret Gallagher, the publication's contents can empower its readers to advance gender equality in and through communications.



**Setting the Gender Agenda for Communication Policy: New proposals from the Global Alliance on Media and Gender**

Aimée Vega Montiel and Sarah Macharia

2018 – English

Vega Montiel, A. and Macharia, S. (eds), Setting the Gender Agenda for Communication Policy: New proposals from the Global Alliance on Media and Gender. UNESCO, Paris, 2019.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368962.locale=en>

ISBN: 978-92-3-100321-9

The guidance notes in this publication respond to the need for contemporary policy on gender and media. They provide the reader with a basis to interrogate existing norms of inequality and to reinforce mechanisms to strengthen gender equality within the media landscape. These documents, written by members of the Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG), assess contemporary issues such as the persistent gaps in gender equality in and through the media. They also explore how these hinder work towards the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.



### **Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media: Framework of indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content**

UNESCO

2012 – Arabic, English, Chinese, French, Indonesian, Mongolian, Spanish, Vietnamese

UNESCO, Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media: Framework of indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content. UNESCO, Paris, 2015 [2012]. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000217831>

ISBN: 978-92-3-001101-7

The Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM) were developed by UNESCO in cooperation with the International Federation of Journalists and other partners. The GSIM are in line with the indicators defined by various sectors of the organization to effectively assess levels of media development. The objective of the GSIM is to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in and through media of all types, regardless of their technology. The publication mainly focuses on equality and the elements of gender equality in the social diversity of the media. The proposed indicators are divided into interrelated rather than discrete categories, with each covering the main dimensions of gender and media: Category A – Actions to foster gender equality within media organizations; and Category B – Gender portrayal in media content.



### **Getting the balance right: Gender equality in journalism**

Aidan White/International Federation of Journalists

2009 – English, Croatian, French, Spanish

White, A., Getting the balance right: Gender equality in journalism. International Federation of Journalists, Brussels, 2009.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000180707>

ISBN: 978-94-90116-00-2

This handbook is a timely, illustrated and easy-to-read guide, which aims to equip all journalists with more information and understanding of gender issues in their work. By giving added argument and dynamism to a campaign that should be taken up in every newsroom, the handbook addresses media organizations, professional associations and journalists' unions seeking to contribute to the goal of gender equality.



Journalism has its roots in the fight for decency, progress and rights for all, a tradition that will be reinvigorated by putting into practice the guidelines and advice found within the document. UNESCO, jointly with its partners, invites journalists to use this handbook to become better informed when dealing with gender issues. It will assist people working in the media to assess progress on gender equality, identify challenges and contribute to local, regional and global debates leading to the formulation of concrete policies that promote gender equality and the advancement of women worldwide.

**Forthcoming:**

UNESCO global study on effective measures to address online harassment of women journalists (Autumn 2020).



# A framework for responsible, balanced coverage free from stigmatization and sensationalism.

Ethical journalism is inseparable from fact-based journalism that seeks to promote gender equality in and through the media.

This handbook aims to support media professionals in their coverage of the various types of violence against girls and women.

It provides advice, benchmarks and resources to help journalists and reporters ensure quality media coverage that is accurate, regular, engaged and respectful of the fundamental principles of the profession.

By adopting these principles, the media has the power to shed light on the extent and implications of violence against women and girls, and to inform victims about available resources for support. This can, in turn, influence public opinion and help stop violence against girls and women through collective awareness-raising of the human rights at stake.

## Topics covered:

### 10 specific themes on violence against women and girls

Cyberbullying and online harassment of women journalists  
Early marriages or child marriages  
Female genital mutilation/cutting  
Forced marriages  
Gender-specific foeticide and infanticide  
Sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape  
So-called 'honour' crimes  
Trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants  
Violence against women in conflicts  
Violence by an intimate partner or ex-partner and domestic murders

### How should the subject be addressed, framed and covered?

General recommendations  
What gender should the reporter be?  
How should an interview be conducted?  
Which images should be chosen?

### International declarations, resolutions and conventions



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Communication and  
Information Sector



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