

STATEMENT

**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPOREUR ON VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN, ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES**

REEM ALSALEM

*CCPCJ Thematic Discussions on the Implementation of the
Kyoto Declaration*

12 November 2021

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to address this forum for the first time since assuming my functions as UN Special Rapporteur for violence against Women.

In the few minutes that I have, I would like to speak -very briefly- to the requirement by the Kyoto Declaration to mainstream a gender perspective into crime prevention, policies, and legislation, to prevent all forms of gender-related violence, including gender-related killings.

I would like to speak on this requirement with regards to three specific points: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on domestic violence; the relationship between the collection of data and femicide; and online violence.

COVID-19

When it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic, the mandate had presented a report to the UN General Assembly in 2020 on the intersection between the Covid-19 pandemic and domestic violence. In it, the mandate highlighted the dramatic increase globally in such cases.

While national prevention systems often lack reliable data in so-called “normal” times, the Covid-19 context made it even more difficult to get a clear picture of the potential increase in femicide because of the pandemic and the related lockdown measures.

This reading coincides with the findings from other stakeholders, including UNODC’s recent research brief entitled “what crime and helpline data says about the impact of COVID-19 pandemic had on reported violence against women and girls”.

The UNODC report points out that, during restrictive measures, there was a decrease in the accessibility of women to institutions for reporting incidents.

My mandate’s report found that the restrictive measures put in place were generally gender blind.

At the same time, the mandate did impress upon States the importance of collecting data on the impact of COVID-19 on domestic violence, to evaluate the extent of the increase in domestic violence during the pandemic.

Since then, my mandate has found that the experience of countries was varied with domestic violence increasing in some during COVID-19 while in others reducing. These findings were also mirrored in the UNODC report.

Femicide

In my first address to the General Assembly of the United Nations in October 2021, in which I also presented my predecessor's report on the Femicide Initiative, I recalled General Recommendation No. 35's call on State parties to CEDAW to establish a system to regularly collect, analyze and publish statistical data on the number of complaints of violence.

In line with this recommendation, the mandate stressed that these systems should include information on the sentences imposed on perpetrators, reparations, including compensations, that are provided to victims. The CEDAW Committee also recommended that data should be disaggregated by type of violence, relationships between victim and perpetrator, and other relevant sociodemographic characteristics. The mandate had also stressed that the lack of criminalization of gender-related killings of women as femicide should not be an obstacle to data collection.

It is worth highlighting that since the onset of COVID-19 pandemic, it has become even more difficult to get a clear picture of the potential increase in femicide because of the pandemic and the related lockdown measures.

However, I would like to stress that we can and should learn valuable lessons for future pandemics and crisis of this scale.

I welcome that UNODC and UN Women are working to develop a global statistical framework to measure gender-related killing in line with the international Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes and which will be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission at its 53rd session in March 2022.

It will be an important tool that fills a serious gap.

Online violence

Finally, and since we are speaking of the duty to prevent all forms of gender-related violence, it would be remiss of me not to mention the deeply troubling consequences of online violence that many women and girls experience, particularly women in politics, women journalists, women human rights defenders and women and girls of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

Online gender-based violence should be defined internationally.

Furthermore, digital space should be made safe for women, in part through ensuring that States adopt effective laws that are grounded in human rights laws and that prohibit, investigate, and prosecute online gender-based violence.

I would like to end my intervention by calling the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to continue to support Member States in the process of mainstreaming a gender perspective into crime prevention by including violence against women as a permanent and specific agenda item.

In the interest of time, I will stop here. I would be happy to receive any questions or comments.