

**CHECK AGAINST
DELIVERY**

STATEMENT

**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN, ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES
REEM ALSALEM**

*31st session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal
Justice*

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*Excellences,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Chairperson,*

Let me begin by thanking you for the invitation to participate in the 31st session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) and to share my expertise in the field of preventing and responding to violence against women.

Over the last number of years, violence against women has come to be recognized as a violation of women's human rights and a form of gender-based discrimination both at global and regional levels.

As the world gradually emerges from the aftermath of the COVID 19 pandemic, we must take stock of the lessons from the pandemic and ensure that they are used to strengthen efforts to prevent gender-based violence in the future.

Indeed, in the context of domestic abuse, the pandemic highlighted the pre-existing legal shortcomings in addressing gender-based violence against women and girls, that resulted in additional barriers to reporting.

As a means of adapting to the current context, many courts switched to the use of new online technology to hear cases remotely, and some States opened up the possibility of issuing e-protection orders.

In many contexts, the access of women and girls to technology is limited, as phones or computers are often controlled by male relatives.

Make no mistake – the timely access to justice for some women is a matter of life and death,

For example in the context of domestic violence, and looking at other broader insights gained so far on how we deal with domestic violence, it is positive that so far 158 countries have passed some form of legislation on domestic violence.

The drawback is that they are not always compliant with international human rights standards. For example, many are yet to criminalize the act of rape between spouses or intimate partners– something that the mandate has called for in its 2020 report to the General Assembly.

Distinguished delegates

Another challenging area when it comes to domestic violence or family violence is the absence of gender sensitive and child centered custody processes, an issue that we are increasingly seeing in many places around the world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before concluding, let me briefly reflect on the issue of gender stereotypes and ingrained patriarchal attitudes within criminal justice systems around the world.

States have an obligation to ensure that gender stereotyping is addressed and dealt with adequately.

Article 5 (a) of CEDAW specifically urges States to take all measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices based on the inferiority or superiority of their sex or their gender.

However, insufficient concrete efforts have been invested in ensuring that judges and prosecutors are made more aware of their own biases; of obtaining a better understanding of what intersectional discrimination against women looks like; and of defining the relationship between gender stereotyping, miscarriage of justice and the lack of independence of judges.

There is also limited reflection on what a gender centered perspective in analyzing cases and reasoning looks like. Not only do these attitudes result in failed justice systems, but they also trap victims in a vicious circle of revictimization, discrimination and victim blaming.

In order to improve the incorporation of a gender lens in the work of the judiciary, it is essential to have more representation from women judges and prosecutors, in all their diversity.

However, even the best of legislative reforms will not produce the desired effect if there is no political will to implement them, if no attention is paid to resources invested in the non-legal aspects of the response and if impunity for violence against women continues to be rampant.

Excellences,

I believe that the cooperation that has already been established between my mandate and the Commission on areas of mutual interest can effectively contribute to identify suitable measures to prevent, investigate and prosecute perpetrators of violence against women and provide protection remedies to women and girl victims.

I therefore look forward to further continuing this cooperation.

I thank you for your attention.

