

## **Information on the fight against gender-related killings in the Republic of Belarus**

In the territory of the Republic of Belarus, 22 cases of gender-related (sexually motivated) killings of women and girls have been registered over the last 10 years.

Four such killings were registered in 2003, two in 2004, four in 2005, six in 2006, one in 2007, two in 2008, one each in 2009 and 2010, none in 2011, one in 2012 and none during the period from January to August 2013. That information indicates that such offences are not widespread in Belarus.

All of the above-mentioned killings, without exception, triggered public outrage in Belarus, and the internal affairs agencies deployed maximal efforts and resources to investigate those killings. The following are noteworthy examples of the investigation of some of those offences.

From 2000 to 2005 in the town of Hrodna and in Hrodna province, there were 10 gender-related (sexually motivated) killings of women.

In 2000, Ms. O. V. Goroshchuk, born in 1979, was killed by an unidentified individual in April (the victim was drowned in the Neman river); Ms. O. R. Shor, born in 1984, was killed in May; Ms. S. A. Pyrskaya, born in 1969, was killed by the same offender in June; Ms. Y. Y. Yatsishinaya and Ms. L. V. Kodik, both born in 1981, were killed in July; Ms. G. S. Azizovaya, born in 1982, was killed by the same person in September (her corpse was burned in a forest); and Ms. E. I. Boltak, born in 1979, was killed in November (her corpse was burned). In January 2001, the same offender killed Ms. E. G. Runets, born in 1976 (her corpse was burned in a forest). Ms. E. V. Turchenik, born in 1976, and Ms. N. Z. Bazis, born in 1983, were also killed by the same person in October 2002 and February 2005, respectively.

After carrying out the killings, the criminal carefully covered up evidence of the offences. Investigation of the areas where the bodies were discovered, enquiries made among persons living in the areas where the offences were committed and checks of individuals previously convicted of offences against the person and sexual offences all failed to produce any positive results. When one of the crime scenes was examined in 2005, bed linen bearing traces of biological substances was taken from the apartment of the deceased for analysis. Those traces were confirmed to be semen and a male DNA profile was established.

It was only in 2006, after comprehensive analytical work had been carried out by members of the operational services of the internal affairs bodies, that certain persons were identified as suspects. Biological samples were taken from those persons and, following tests, the DNA discovered at the crime scene where Ms. Bazis was killed was matched to that of one of the suspects, Mr. A. V. Sergeychik, born in 1969.

As a result of careful work with the suspect — who was later formally charged — carried out by officers of the operational units of the internal affairs bodies, including officers of the correctional system, the other killings were uncovered, as were a range of property-related crimes connected to trafficking in weapons and ammunition.

The defendant was given the severest sentence: the death penalty.

On 1 January 2012, Mr. Y. I. Lyashuk, born in 1975, approached the Stolin District department of internal affairs of Brest province to report the unexplained disappearance of his daughter Yuliya, born in 1998, who had gone to a disco on New Year's Eve but had failed to return home. The circumstances indicated that her disappearance was suspicious. Consequently, steps were quickly taken to establish the chronology of the events leading to her disappearance and to identify witnesses. At the same time, the likely route that the girl had taken was thoroughly searched. All the internal affairs bodies of Belarus were involved in the search for the girl.

As a result of search efforts and the combing and examination of the area where events on the girl's likely route had taken place, a number of items belonging to the girl were found: a camera, a mobile telephone,

a pair of gloves, chewing gum, a cardigan, a scarf, a sanitary towel with dark red stains, an earring, a jacket belt, a brassiere and a woman's boot. Traces of a dark red substance resembling blood and marks caused by something being dragged were also discovered.

The local division of the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Belarus launched a criminal case under article 139, paragraph 1, of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (on murder). The objects and substances discovered were submitted for the relevant tests.

A second search of the area, including the river that flowed through it, was carried out with the participation of officers from the Ministry of the Interior's special anti-terrorism unit, "Almaz", the Ministry for Emergencies and the Water Rescue Association.

Information was requested from mobile telephone operators regarding customers who had made calls in the area of the crime scene and the calls made between the victim herself and persons listed among her contacts. The identities of all the persons who were at the disco were established and verified. The individuals with whom Ms. Lyashuk socialized, including on the Internet, were also identified and interviewed. Checks were also carried out on persons previously convicted of offences, persons with psychological illnesses and persons with a record of antisocial conduct. Biological samples were taken for testing from every individual identified as a suspect on the basis of the investigative measures carried out.

Two weeks after the girl had disappeared, a DNA profile was established on the basis of the victim's clothes found at the crime scene. The male DNA discovered on the brassiere matched the DNA profile of a man from whom biological samples had been taken by criminal investigation officers as part of their investigation work and who had been identified as a suspect, Mr. V. Y. Karpovets, born in 1994.

Mr. Karpovets later gave testimony concerning the circumstances surrounding the killing of Ms. Lyashuk and, during the verification of that testimony, revealed the place where he had hidden the corpse, confirming that before killing the girl he had raped her.

Belarus has recently made substantial efforts to combat trafficking in persons. The number of offences such as trafficking in persons, pimping, kidnapping for the purpose of exploitation and use of forced labour has decreased by 90 per cent since 2004 (from 555 in 2004 to only 56). The number of victims of trafficking in persons fell from 1,107 in 2006 to 115 in 2013.

The main forms of trafficking in persons in Belarus have remained practically unchanged since 2000; they comprise offences committed for the purposes of sexual or labour exploitation. Only one case of trafficking in persons for the purpose of removal of organs has been detected, in 2010.

Sexual exploitation is the most widespread form of trafficking in persons. Of the 4,970 victims of trafficking in persons identified between 2002 and 2013, a total of 4,386 had been subjected to sexual exploitation and 581 to forced labour, and three had had organs removed. Child victims of human trafficking account for around 11 per cent of all victims (549 of the total number of victims).

Between 2002 and August 2013, the law enforcement bodies in Belarus disbanded 22 criminal organizations (of which 21 were transnational) and 83 organized groups. A total of 2,001 individuals were convicted of human trafficking and related offences, 737 of whom were given prison sentences.

Belarus has acceded to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Work is currently under way to bring domestic legislation into line with that Convention.

The international centre for the training, advanced training and retraining of personnel working in the area of migration and the combating of trafficking in persons is operating successfully in Belarus and is the main institution where experts from Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States receive

specialist training. Since it opened in 2007, around 1,100 individuals from 16 States, including the United Kingdom, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, have come to the Centre for instruction.

To give effect to the provisions of the Trafficking in Persons Act of the Republic of Belarus, international organizations and non-governmental organizations are giving substantial support to Belarusian State bodies in assisting victims of such trafficking.