

CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUES ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

STATEMENT BY **Stichting FIBREE** ON THE **ISSUE OF GENDER-RELATED KILLINGS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WORLDWIDE** delivered by **TAYS YUMI TAN DEWES**

11 September, 2023

Chairpersons,
Presidents,
Ministers,
Mayors,
Governments authorities,
Distinguished panellists,
Excellencies,
Human Rights Activists,
Ladies and Gentleman

Addressing the third point of the agenda items "Gender, human rights and victim-centred approaches to countering organized crime":

As a Latin American woman, I feel the obligation to bring to the agenda the phenomenon of gender-related killings of women and girls when discussing international cooperation. These violent incidents are based on gender inequality and are a constant threat to the safeguarding of the rights of women and girls around the world, demonstrating a grave and urgent crisis that needs to be tackled collectively. This crisis is intricately entwined with the complex interplay of transnational organized crime and the concept of necropolitics.

It is known that women's and girls' rights are the first ones to be violated in any disruptive context: conflicts, political instability, forced migration and natural disasters. However, gender-related crimes occur all over the world, even in nations that are considered democratic and relatively safe (varying only in intensity and frequency). In some regions of the world, this violence occurs more often, at levels that cannot be accepted, for example, in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Asia. In 2021, about 45,000 women and girls died from murders committed by close family members or intimate partners. Women are also the most affected by domestic abuse, human trafficking and sexual exploitation. These manifestations epitomize the darkest depths of human depravity, marked by the corrosive presence of toxic masculinity, entrenched misogyny, and the commodification of the female body.

The mass killing of women and girls is neither a new nor a localized phenomenon, it is entrenched in the political, economic and social daily life of people, and it is an

institutionalized practice. This idea can help clarify how the implementation of necropolitics by states or their inaction contributes to and perpetuates violence against women. One might assume that weak legal protections are the main contributor to this issue, but in reality, it is the lack of strong legal safeguards that can foster an environment where offenders go unpunished, strengthening a culture of impunity in society as a whole. Many instances of violence against women do not receive sufficient attention from state institutions in charge of law enforcement, and effective support services, such as shelters, counselling, and legal aid, are usually not offered to victims of gender-based violence. This may take the form of improper investigation management, insufficient victim care, or a failure to hold offenders accountable. Additionally, state actors may participate directly in or be complicit in acts of violence against women in many instances. Government representatives, law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, judges, and people in positions of authority may fall under this category.

The concept of necropolitics regarding violence against women and girls comes also - despite of what was already mentioned above - in the economic and social marginalization of this group, enhancing their vulnerability. Lack of access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and social services can limit women's ability to escape abusive situations. Likewise, state policies that do not address systemic gender inequality contribute to an environment where violence against women is normalized. Considering that criminals act with alarming impunity because they take advantage of legal ambiguities and the corrupting effects of systemic corruption, the victims are almost always subjected to not only the physical suffering that is inflicted upon them but also the systemic failure of the international community to ensure their safety and bring their perpetrators to justice. Therefore, it is clear that international cooperation is indispensable for a comprehensive response encompassing investigation, prosecution, and extradition.

Since transnational organized crime does not possess, as the name implies, geographical boundaries, in the context of international cooperation when combating gender-related killings, it is crucial to take into consideration a holistic approach. Intersectionality and a victim-centred approach are also pivotal in these circumstances. Putting their safety and well-being first is as crucial as empowering them - while upholding their agency and dignity. A victim-centred approach in the context of international cooperation entails acknowledging the various needs and vulnerabilities of survivors across various regions and cultures. Recognizing that no two people's needs are the same, it calls for modifying support services, legal frameworks, and prevention tactics to meet those particular requirements.

The sharing of best practices and the creation of uniform standards that give victims' rights and needs top priority should be the focus of international cooperation through the implementation of mechanisms that may allow the broad presence of civil society in the universalization and implementation of the UNTOC. This includes encouraging cross-border cooperation between law enforcement organizations to guarantee that victims can access justice no matter where the crime was committed. Additionally, by offering funding, technical support, and training to governments and local organizations, non-governmental organizations and international organizations can significantly contribute to the facilitation of victim-centred initiatives. Thus, everyone, including civil society, can work towards a world where victims of gender-based violence are not only protected and supported but also given the power to reclaim their lives and contribute to the larger fight against this violence.

Considering that transnational organized crime is based on complex networks and connections, the sharing of data in context is vital to dismantle these networks from the inside out. Because many states face resource constraints and a lack of expertise when confronting these multifaceted issues on their own and in order to address the intricate interactions between necropolitics, gender-based violence, and state policies, international cooperation is essential. It provides a channel for resource mobilization, institutional capacity development and a platform to exchange best practices, information, and materials, allowing the nations to build on each other's achievements and mistakes in combating gender-based violence against women. This collaboration can guide states in the development and implementation of effective legal frameworks, law enforcement practices, and support services that prioritize women's safety and rights.

Furthermore, international collaboration can put pressure on states to align their policies with international human rights standards, holding them accountable for any complicity or indifference in cases of gender-based violence. It also sends a strong message of international solidarity to victims and survivors, reinforcing their inherent dignity and resilience. Reassuring them that they are not alone in their tireless pursuit of justice and the affirmation of their humanity is a collective effort. Additionally, international cooperation can also make it easier to share data and information about femicide and other forms of gender-based violence. Sharing precise and thorough data among nations can help to clarify the scope of the issue and its underlying causes, enabling the development of evidence-based policy and targeted interventions. In the end, states can work together to challenge and demolish the necropolitical foundations that sustain violence against women by fostering international cooperation, while also advancing a culture of respect, equality, and human rights for all.

Tays Yumi Tan Dewes
Project Coordinator of Fibree Foundation - Malta