Date: 31 May 2021

20 Sivan 5781

To: Ms. Dubravka Simonovic, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

Subject: **The State of Israel's Submission to the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women's Report on Femicide**

The State of Israel is honored to submit information to the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, for her report on femicide, to be presented at the 76th session of the General Assembly. Hereinafter is the State's information as provided by the relevant authorities, pursuant to the questions listed by the Special Rapporteur.

**The existence of a national femicide watch**

In 2004, following a Government Resolution, the Director General of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services created a committee of relevant governmental representatives mandated to study cases in which women were killed by their intimate partners, and to offer evidence-based recommendations; its participants included the National Supervisors for the Treatment and Prevention of Domestic Violence, representatives of Child Services, and representatives of the Ministries of Health, Immigration and Absorption, the Police and Local Social Services. The goal of the committee was to study the intervention steps taken in each case before the act of homicide occurred, in order to improve the prevention process in the future, including intergovernmental cooperation.

The committee continues to meet and evaluate cases, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services is looking into expanding its mandate to include homicide of women by other family members, in addition to intimate partners.

**Other measures undertaken**

The Police Crime Victims Unit internally analyzes each femicide case. The unit notes whether the victim had submitted complaints prior to the incident, how the complaint was addressed by the officers, how the case was handled in relation to the specialized guidelines for domestic violence procedures, if it was reported to Social Services and how the case was handled by the State Attorney's Office. Since 2013, the unit maintains and regularly updates a spreadsheet of each case of femicide including data targeting, and conducts follow-ups with the Prosecution regarding each case.

Other measures undertaken include research conducted by the Parliament (Knesset) Research and Information Center in 2017 regarding femicide, which was submitted to the Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Women and Gender Equality, and later adapted for the Committee to Eliminate Crime in the Arab Population for a special session on femicide in the Arab population. The study included data on cases of femicide by intimate partners investigated by the Police, analysis of the common factors of the cases, as well as analysis of cases of attempted femicide.

In 2020, the Knesset Research and Information Center published a review of the data on femicide, violence against women by their intimate partners, and domestic violence in the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Results of the analysis**

In the inter-ministerial committee's analysis, the following were determined as recurring variables in cases of femicide. These are now considered critical risk factors for assessing and eliminating femicide:

Separation, divorce and post-divorce; destabilization of the man's status in the relationship; mental and general state of health; difficulty to obtain the women's consent to the recommended protection plan for a variety of reasons; difficulty within the system, including intergovernmental cooperation; a traumatic turning point or trigger; difficulty in processing risks and lack of awareness on the part of legal counsel; sub-reporting from representatives of the Ministries of Health, Immigration or Education to the welfare authorities; a growing rate of femicide among the elderly; communication and cultural gaps among special cultural groups.

The majority of the studied femicide cases had several of these variables, which heightened the danger.

Following the recommendations of the committee, a special Director General Circular was adopted, which formalized the procedure for improving the cooperation between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services and the Police in the context of domestic violence, specifically women at high levels of risk. The procedure, which came into effect in 2016, defines criteria for determining the priority level of each case, the methods of information transferal, and outlines the regular meetings to be conducted between representatives of various levels and ranks in order to improve cooperation and minimize information gaps.

An additional result of the analysis of cases of femicide is the communication established between the Police and Prisoner Services with regards to domestic violence convicts prior to their release.

The critical importance of preventing femicide has been expressly stated by the High Court of Justice. For example, in HCJ 3011/17 *Mikha Makhluf Peretz v. The State of Israel*, the Court rejected an appeal of a severe sentencing for attempted murder of the appellant's wife, stating that eradicating the phenomenon of domestic violence against women is of paramount importance. In Cr.Ap. 2333/17 *John Doe v. The State of Israel*, the Court affirmed that due to the global phenomenon of domestic violence against women, cases of femicide by an intimate partner must be addressed with special consideration.

**Measures to improve victim support and prevent femicide**

The Police conduct risk evaluations of victims of domestic violence based on analysis of the report conducted at the time of the complaint submission. The report includes dozens of questions, aimed at providing the full context to the relevant officers. Once the report is filled out, an indication is given regarding the risk level the woman faces; this indication is the basis of the officer's recommendation whether or not to release the suspect from detention.

The Prison Service offers treatment to prisoners convicted for domestic violence based on a variety of criteria, including: motivation, consent and mental preparedness to undergo the treatment process, as well as the length of the sentence. Each treatment program is implemented subjectively based on the needs and background of the offender. The goals of the treatment for domestic violence are raising awareness towards violent behavior and its ramifications, and obtaining behavioral and coping tools to minimize the danger towards potential victims. The treatment is offered in both personal and group settings, as well as in specialized clinics. There are currently six (6) specialized clinics for holistic treatment of domestic violence convicts, one of which was established during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the rise in cases.

Before a domestic violence offender is released, a prison social worker files a report to the Police; the report includes the prisoner's details and the social worker's notes regarding whether or not he/she poses a danger. Upon receipt of the report, the police officer contacts the victim and their family, and she is added to the list of women at risk in her local police stations. The local station conducts surveillance of her for at least three months following the prisoner's release.

Several initiatives for improving the protection of victims are in advanced planning stages. The Police is evaluating the use electronic monitoring of persons with restraining orders against them in the context of domestic violence, as a means to protect potential victims. A pilot program was conducted in 2018, and the Legal questions are examined. Additionally, the Police is examining the option of establishing a special unit for protecting threatened women. In addition, the Police together with other governmental bodies is establishing a center for domestic violence victims, which will offer protection and treatment, as well as legal and police counsel and relevant social services. The first center is being established in Acre, and future centers are set to be established in Haifa, Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Be'er-Sheva.

**Good practices and implementation challenges**

The procedure for improving the cooperation between the Police and Social Services has been implemented effectively; the administration receives regular positive feedback from both investigatory units as well as Social Services representatives. The procedure allows for a variety of measures to be undertaken:

Tracking and evaluating the woman's cooperation with the protection plan established by the Social Services; a close connection with the woman from both Police and Social Services representatives; referral for a Court protection order; shortening the length of time between the submission of the complaint and the investigation and the submission of an indictment; adding the woman's phone number to the emergency hotline system; assisting the woman in downloading the Police emergency application; and high-level meetings between Police and Social Services representatives regarding cases with extraordinary circumstances.

Regarding the challenges - The State of Israel faces various systemic and cultural challenges in the prevention of femicide, but is firmly committed to establishing effective evidence-based procedures to best contend the phenomenon.

**Data on femicide**

The following represents the data disaggregated on femicide from the two (2) years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as during the pandemic in the year 2020, as reported by the Police:

In the year 2018, there were twenty-nine (29) cases of femicide; eight (8) women were killed by their intimate partners and twenty-one (21) were killed by others.

In the year 2019, there were eighteen (18) cases of femicide; five (5) women were killed by their intimate partners and thirteen (13) were killed by others.

In the year 2020, there were twenty-six (26) cases of femicide; thirteen (13) women were killed by their intimate partners and thirteen (13) were killed by others.

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, between October 2019 until April 2020, out of seventy-six (76) victims of homicide, ten (10) were killed by their intimate partners or family members, wherein seven (7) of whom were women.

The Israel Prisons System reports that as of April 2021, there are one thousand two hundred and forty-one (1,241) prisoners serving sentences for domestic violence, and seven hundred and thirty-five (735) detainees; among whom four hundred and eight (408) have a domestic violence profile. Forty-three (43) percent of prisoners for domestic violence are serving sentences of up to three (3) years; fifty-seven (57) percent are serving sentences of more than three (3) years, among whom twelve (12) percent are serving life-sentences. Forty-five (45) percent of prisoners for domestic violence committed the crime against their female intimate partners.

According to the Knesset Research and Information Center, sixty-nine (69) women were killed from the year 2018 until November 2020; twenty-eight (28) percent of the femicide cases were committed by an intimate partner, thirty-two (32) percent by a different family member and forty (40) percent by a stranger, or remained undetermined.

Of femicide cases committed by intimate partners, twenty-three (23) percent of the victims were new immigrants and thirty-one (31) percent were of other religions. Of femicide cases committed by other family members, thirteen (13) percent were new immigrants and forty-seven (47) percent were of other religions. Of femicide cases committed by strangers or undetermined cases, eighty-four (84) percent were of other religions.

Between the years 2018-2019, thirty-two (32) percent of victims had previously submitted complaints of domestic violence to the Police, whereas sixty-eight (68) percent had not. Of victims who were killed by their intimate partners, thirty-one (31) percent submitted complaints; of victims who were killed by different family members, forty (40) percent submitted complaints; of victims who were killed by strangers or their cases were undetermined, twenty-six (26) percent submitted complaints. Forty-one (41) percent of victims of other religions and twenty-seven (27) percent of Jewish victims submitted complaints; there were no new immigrants who submitted complaints prior to their killing in these years.