

**Cyprus's Compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of
Discrimination against Women: Gender-based Violence Against Women:**

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Submitted by The Advocates for Human Rights,

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report addresses Cyprus' laws and policies with respect to combatting gender-based violence against women, including trafficking; non-discrimination of women and girls and women's participation in political life; and protecting the rights of women migrants and asylum seekers. While Cyprus has made advances to promote the human rights of women, the responsible institutions lack adequate capacity, transparency, and coordination. Laws on domestic violence require harmonization and do not sufficiently protect victims. Cyprus does not effectively support all victims of gender-based violence, as it has not established rape crisis centers, sexual violence referral centers, or a suitable number of shelters. Additionally, Cyprus has failed to provide consistent, transparent, and disaggregated data on the implementation and effectiveness of its programs and the breadth of crimes of violence against women.

Cyprus fails to uphold its obligation under the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

I. Women and peace and security (Concluding observations, paragraphs 10-11)

2. In its 2018 Concluding observations, the Committee on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women (The Committee) commended the State party's "commitment to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)."¹ The Committee was concerned about women who remain underrepresented, and how the action plan implementation lacks proper funding.² As such, the Committee recommended ensuring adequate funding and providing a space for women and civil society organizations to be involved in the various levels of the peace process.³
3. In 2020, Cyprus adopted its first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security for 2021-2025.⁴ Women have historically been under-represented in the peace-process negotiations on both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sides.⁵ Women's underrepresentation in the peace-process is an example of a broader struggle for women's access to justice in Cyprus, where they face gender stereotypes and deeply rooted sexist

¹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶¶ 10–11.

² Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶¶ 10–11.

³ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶¶ 10–11.

⁴ *Women, Peace, and Security: National Action Plan 2021-2025 of the Republic of Cyprus for the Implementation of the United Nations Resolution 1325* (Unofficial translation, funded by ARC DP160100212 [CI Shepherd]). https://www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2022/12/Cyprus-NAP-2-2021-2025_greek_ENG-translation-Google-Translate.pdf.

⁵ Cyprus Women's Lobby, *Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 70th Session, Cyprus Shadow Report*, by Susana Pavlou and Josie Christodoulou, CEDAW/NGO/CYP/31500, (Nicosia: Cyprus Women's Lobby, Nov. 2018), 13, 61.

attitudes.⁶ Furthermore, Turkish Cypriot women and women from Latin, Armenian and Maronite minorities face additional barriers to meaningful participation in peace processes. The Gender Advisory Team (GAT)⁷ have long noted that the leaders of the two major ethnic communities have never discussed gender equality or women's rights in the negotiations.

4. In 2015, the Technical Committee on Gender Equality (TCGE) was established which is attached to the peace negotiations, but its impact has remained marginal mainly due to the restrictive mandate of the committee and the continuing deadlock in peace negotiations. In 2021, the committee prepared an "Action Plan on how to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the settlement process/an eventual settlement process".⁸ These proposed activities, however, have yet to be implemented as there are no mechanisms in place to hold the leaders accountable for not complying.
5. Authorities approved the National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace & Security in December 2020,⁹ but there is no available information on its implementation. NGOs have not been informed on how they can be involved or supported financially in implementing its actions.¹⁰

II. Refugee and asylum-seeking women, and domestic migrant workers (Concluding observations, paragraphs 12-13 and 36-39)

6. In its 2018 Concluding observations, the Committee commended the State party's efforts to receive and protect those fleeing dire circumstances.¹¹ However, the Committee

⁶ Cyprus Women's Lobby, *Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 70th Session, Cyprus Shadow Report*, by Susana Pavlou and Josie Christodoulou, CEDAW/NGO/CYP/31500, (Nicosia: Cyprus Women's Lobby, Nov. 2018), 7 ; Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Joint Shadow Report - Cyprus*, 7, June 22, 2021.

⁷ Maria Hadjipavlou, "The Exclusion of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the Cyprus Peace Negotiations: A Critical Perspective," (Istituto Affari Internazionali, 03 of August 2023),

<https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/exclusion-women-peace-and-security-agenda-cyprus-peace-negotiations>

⁸ Technical Committee on Gender Equality, *Action Plan on How to Ensure Women's Full, Equal and Meaningful Participation in the Settlement Process/an Eventual Settlement Process. Recommendations of the Technical Committee on Gender Equality to the Leaders, in Fulfilment of the Request of the UN Security Council in Its Resolution 2587 (2021)*, April 2022,

https://uncyprustalks.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/action_plan_on_how_to_ensure_womens_participation_in_cyprus_en.pdf.

⁹ Republic of Cyprus, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press Release regarding the approval of the National Action Plan 2021-25 for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security," (Dec. 29, 2020), <https://mfa.gov.cy/press-releases/2020/12/29/national-action-plan-UNSC-resolution-1325/>.

¹⁰ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (May 25, 2023).

¹¹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶¶ 12-13.

remained concerned about the lack of a gender lens in resolving asylum applications and identifying and providing assistance to individuals.¹²

7. Migrant women and girls have historically been excluded from policies, structures, and administrative practices in place in Cyprus.¹³ Even though the Refugee Law entails gender-based provisions, its implementation remains fragmented. Authorities carry out individualized assessments in Cyprus' reception centers on an *ad hoc* basis.¹⁴ Vulnerability assessments conducted from March to November 2019 at the First Reception Center, the first stop for people arriving in Cyprus to seek international protection, including asylum, concluded that 50% of women arriving in Cyprus to seek international protection reported some form of sexual and/or gender-based violence ("SGBV").¹⁵ The assessments also indicate that LGBTQI+ individuals are clearly at heightened risk of SGBV,¹⁶ however, reception services fail to address the specific needs of SGBV survivors.
8. Integration policies are also failing migrant women in Cyprus.¹⁷ The voices of refugee women are absent from policy processes in relation to migration and integration policy. Migrant women are at increased risk of femicide,¹⁸ face additional barriers to accessing help,¹⁹ and are more likely to experience specific forms of gender-based violence such as

¹² Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Concluding *observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶¶ 12 (a) (b)

¹³ Cyprus Women's Lobby, *Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 70th Session, Cyprus Shadow Report*, by Susana Pavlou and Josie Christodoulou, CEDAW/NGO/CYP/31500, (Nicosia: Cyprus Women's Lobby, Nov. 2018), 10. Cyprus Women's Lobby, *Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 70th Session, Cyprus Shadow Report*, by Susana Pavlou and Josie Christodoulou, CEDAW/NGO/CYP/31500, (Nicosia: Cyprus Women's Lobby, Nov. 2018), 10.

¹⁴ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Questionnaire on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)*, 21–22, Sept. 2021.

¹⁵ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Questionnaire on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)*, 22, Sept. 2021.

¹⁶ UN Office of the High Commissioner on Refugees and Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Sexual and Gender-based Violence among Asylum-Seekers in Cyprus*, Dec. 2021, 35.

¹⁷ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Country report on femicide research and date: Cyprus*, by Alexia Shakou, Christiana Kouta, Elina Kofou, and Susana Pavlou (Nicosia: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2021), 36; Christiana Kouta et al., "A Qualitative Study of Female Migrant Domestic Workers' Experiences of and Responses to Work-Based Sexual Violence in Cyprus," *Sexes*, July 7, 2021.

¹⁸ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Country report on femicide research and date: Cyprus*, by Alexia Shakou, Christiana Kouta, Elina Kofou, and Susana Pavlou (Nicosia: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2021), 25.

¹⁹ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Country report on femicide research and date: Cyprus*, by Alexia Shakou, Christiana Kouta, Elina Kofou, and Susana Pavlou (Nicosia: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2021), 16; Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Gender Dynamics across Reception and Integration in Cyprus*, by Maria Angeli (2020) <https://medinstgenderstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/WP6-Report-Cyprus.pdf>.

rape and sexual abuse²⁰ or female genital mutilation.²¹ Despite these intersecting discriminations, migrant women are “invisible” to national laws and policies.²² Both integration policies and gender mainstreaming are implemented sporadically and in an uncoordinated manner with no real impact on the ground. This fragmented approach to policy implementation poses significant challenges in designing, implementing, and evaluating gender sensitive integration policies.

9. Asylum-seeking and other migrant women also experience barriers to accessing specialized support services such as those provided by the Women’s House and/or shelters, as a referral from the welfare services/or the police is commonly a prerequisite.²³ Therefore, there is a need to develop and improve accessibility to protection and support services, including social welfare services, the Women’s House and shelters for asylum-seeking and/or migrant women, including domestic workers.
10. Overall, there is a lack of intersectional and systematic data and research on refugee and asylum seekers at all levels in Cyprus.²⁴ This further prevents disadvantaged groups of asylum seekers from finding services responding to their specific needs and accessing help without risking revictimization.

Domestic migrant workers

11. Female migrant domestic workers are the largest migrant population in Cyprus. However, the actual number of domestic workers is unclear as many domestic workers are actively engaged in the domestic sector in the “grey economy.”
12. Migrant domestic work has never been recognized as a formal employment sector resulting in domestic workers being underpaid, and at high risk of exploitation by their employers as well as of deceptive recruitment by employment agencies.²⁵ Domestic workers

²⁰ UN Office of the High Commissioner on Refugees and Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Sexual and Gender-based Violence among Asylum-Seekers in Cyprus*, Dec. 2021, 20.

²¹ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies and End FGM European Network, *Joint Shadow Report – Cyprus*, 2021,

²² Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Country report on femicide research and date: Cyprus*, by Alexia Shakou, Christiana Kouta, Elina Kofou, and Susana Pavlou (Nicosia: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2021), 36.

²³ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (May 25, 2023).

²⁴ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Country report on femicide research and date: Cyprus*, by Alexia Shakou, Christiana Kouta, Elina Kofou, and Susana Pavlou (Nicosia: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2021), 12; UN Office of the High Commissioner on Refugees and Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Sexual and Gender-based Violence among Asylum-Seekers in Cyprus*, Dec. 2021, 36.

²⁵ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Combating Trafficking in Women for Labour Exploitation in Domestic Work in Cyprus*, (2015). Also available online at https://medinstgenderstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/combat-trafficking_CY.pdf

frequently live in the private households of their employers, with many reporting physical, psychological, and sexual abuse.²⁶

13. Undocumented domestic workers in Cyprus, most of whom are women,²⁷ are particularly at risk of trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation,²⁸ as domestic work is often the only job migrant women have access to.²⁹

III. Constitutional and legislative framework (Concluding observations, paragraphs 14-15)

14. In its 2018 Concluding observations, the Committee noted the lack of comprehensive non-discrimination legislation and the limited effectiveness of the State party's anti-discrimination laws³⁰ The Committee recommended adopting and implementing specific anti-discrimination legislation and repealing current discriminatory provisions in the Constitution and other legislation.³¹
15. Cyprus ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention, in 2017³². In 2021, Cyprus passed the new Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Law to implement the Istanbul Convention.³³
16. While authorities consulted civil society organizations in the drafting stage, the government bypassed civil society in the final phases of the process and modified the final draft behind closed doors.³⁴ As a result of these last-minute changes, the Law encompasses definitions of women and gender, conflating gender, gender identity, and biological sex.³⁵ These definitions are problematic as they may allow national policies and implementation

²⁶ Cyprus Women's Lobby, *Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 70th Session, Cyprus Shadow Report*, by Susana Pavlou and Josie Christodoulou, CEDAW/NGO/CYP/31500, (Nicosia: Cyprus Women's Lobby, Nov. 2018), 10.

²⁷ Cyprus Women's Lobby, *Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 70th Session, Cyprus Shadow Report*, by Susana Pavlou and Josie Christodoulou, CEDAW/NGO/CYP/31500, (Nicosia: Cyprus Women's Lobby, Nov. 2018), 21.

²⁸ Cyprus Women's Lobby, *Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 70th Session, Cyprus Shadow Report*, by Susana Pavlou and Josie Christodoulou, CEDAW/NGO/CYP/31500, (Nicosia: Cyprus Women's Lobby, Nov. 2018), 10.

²⁹ UN Office of the High Commissioner on Refugees and Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Sexual and Gender-based Violence among Asylum-Seekers in Cyprus*, Dec. 2021, 35.

³⁰ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶¶ 14–15.

³¹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶¶ 14–15.

³² Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, text available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>.

³³ The Prevention and Combatting of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and for Related Matters Law (2021) Law 115(1)/2021.

³⁴ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Joint Shadow Report - Cyprus*, 11, June 22, 2021.

³⁵ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Joint Shadow Report - Cyprus*, 6, June 22, 2021.

practices to not fully acknowledge the gendered nature of violence against women and girls and will also impact data collection based on sex and gender identity.³⁶

17. Cyprus has not harmonized the 2021 Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Law with pre-existing laws on domestic violence. Historically, domestic violence and violence against women has been framed within the concept of violence in the family through the Violence in the Family Laws 2000 and 2004. This framework did not have a gender lens, therefore obscuring the gendered nature of family violence.³⁷ The passage of the Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Law (2021) has instated a welcome gender perspective, but provisions within the 2021 Law conflict with the Violence in the Family Laws. In particular, these laws fail to harmonize definitions of domestic violence as well as other provisions, which risk leaving survivors of domestic violence without adequate protection.³⁸ These weakened protections are especially concerning since, during the first lockdown imposed in March and April 2021, there was a 30% increase in calls to the National Helpline for Violence in the Family (1440) and a 58% increase in incidents of domestic violence.³⁹
18. The 2021 Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Law foresees the establishment of a coordinating body that is accountable to the Minister of Justice and Public Order.⁴⁰ However, the structure and composition of the coordinating body falls short of what is required by Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention. The coordinating body does not have the necessary government machinery or resources to carry out its mandate.⁴¹ Therefore, a fully institutionalized entity, equipped with a clear mandate, powers and competences, as well as sufficient technical, human, and financial resources to carry out its mandate is needed.⁴²
19. While the 2021 Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Law did not define femicide, Cyprus passed a law on femicide under the Law on the Prevention, Protection and Combating of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Amendment) (No. 2) Law of 2021. The law specifically defines femicide as the intentional killing of a woman because of her gender or in the context of intimate partner

³⁶ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Joint Shadow Report - Cyprus*, 6, June 22, 2021.

³⁷ Susana Pavlou and Alexia Shakou, *Policy Brief on Femicide Prevention: CYPRUS*. Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, (2022).

³⁸ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Joint Shadow Report - Cyprus*, 6, June 22, 2021; Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, *Report submitted by Cyprus pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 1 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Baseline Report)*, July 30, 2021.

³⁹ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Country report on femicide research and data: Cyprus*, by Alexia Shakou, Christiana Kouta, Elina Kofou, and Susana Pavlou (Nicosia: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2021).

⁴⁰ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (May 25, 2023).

⁴¹ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (May 25, 2023).

⁴² Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (October 9, 2023).

violence. This definition recognizes that femicide is often motivated by gender-based discrimination and seeks to hold perpetrators accountable for the specific harm caused by gender-based violence. Additionally, the law foresees the establishment of a national database to track femicides and other forms of violence against women.

20. Despite this protection, other forms of violence against women, including rape, sexual abuse, and female genital mutilation, are overlooked in policy and practice in Cyprus. To date, there are no rape crisis centers or sexual violence referral centers in Cyprus.⁴³ The National Strategy and Action Plan on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Gender Equality 2019-2023 mentioned in paragraph 22 of this report did not include specific actions to combat female genital mutilation.⁴⁴

IV. Gender-based violence against women (Concluding Observations, paragraphs 26-27)

21. In its 2018 Concluding Observations, the Committee, while welcoming measures taken to combat domestic violence, remained concerned about the prevalence of gender-based violence, the lack of data, and the inadequate protections and justice provided to victims.⁴⁵ The Committee recommended enforcing current legislation, adopting a bill criminalizing all forms of gender-based violence, incorporating the Istanbul Convention into legislation, and ensuring adequate avenues for reporting cases of gender-based violence, among many other items.⁴⁶
22. According to the latest available data, there is only one women's shelter operating in Northern Cyprus⁴⁷ and three shelters currently operating in the Republic of Cyprus,⁴⁸ notably in Nicosia, Limassol, and in Paphos, with a capacity of, respectively, seven, five and two rooms, hosting victims for periods of between four and six months. Shelters are constantly at full capacity and the number of family places is insufficient. Indeed, a total of 14 rooms and 47 bed spaces⁴⁹ available for women seeking shelter from domestic violence falls short of the target of one bed per 10,000 head of population. These 47 bed

⁴³ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Questionnaire on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)*, 17, Sept. 2021.

⁴⁴ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Joint Shadow Report - Cyprus*, 8, June 22, 2021.

⁴⁵ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶¶ 26-27.

⁴⁶ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶¶ 26-27

⁴⁷ Cyprus Women's Lobby, *Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 70th Session, Cyprus Shadow Report*, by Susana Pavlou and Josie Christodoulou, CEDAW/NGO/CYP/31500, (Nicosia: Cyprus Women's Lobby, Nov. 2018), 41.

⁴⁸ Human Rights Committee, *Fifth periodic report submitted by Cyprus under article 40 of the Covenant pursuant to the optional reporting procedure, due in 2020*, (Nov. 26, 2020), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/CYP/5, ¶¶ 72-73.

⁴⁹ Women Against Violence Europe, "WAVE Country Report 2021: Women's Specialist Support Services in Europe and the impact of COVID-19 on their provision," (December 2021), WAVE_Country-Report.pdf (wave-network.org).

spaces currently equal 1 bed per 18,894 people. Cyprus must increase the number of beds by 42 (according to figures from 2021).

23. The Woman's House (Σπίτι της Γυναίκας) (WH) began operation in December 2020 in Nicosia at the initiative of the Advisory Committee for the Preventing and Combating of Violence in the Family (ACPCVF). It is a multiagency and multi-professional crisis center for victims of violence against women and their children and is operated by the Association for the Preventing and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO) with full government funding.⁵⁰
24. WH is based on the Family Justice Centre model and operates as a “one-stop-shop”, in which all the services involved are located and coordinated under the same roof with the aim of effectively managing cases. The provision of services is not conditional on the victim pressing charges against the perpetrator.⁵¹ The multi-professional network of services in the Woman's House includes services provided by social workers, psychologists, healthcare professionals, legal professionals, and the police.⁵² A mother and her dependent children will receive the initial services at the Woman's House in order to avoid their separation and thus avoid further revictimization.⁵³ Despite its quick success at handling 106 violence against women cases from December 2020 to March 2021,⁵⁴ the WH has yet to be rolled out nationally and does not compensate the lack of service provision for survivors of domestic violence in Cyprus.⁵⁵ Furthermore, WH cannot operate effectively due to the lack of cooperation from the police and social services.⁵⁶

Access to justice and administration of justice

25. Victim-survivors of gender-based violence do not experience adequate access to justice. While the 2000 Violence in the Family Law⁵⁷ provides for the speedy trial of domestic violence cases, in practice, criminal processes are prolonged and are not conducive to

⁵⁰ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (October 9, 2023).

⁵¹ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (May 25, 2023).

⁵² Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (May 25, 2023).

⁵³ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (May 25, 2023).

⁵⁴ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Country report on femicide research and date: Cyprus*, by Alexia Shakou, Christiana Kouta, Elina Kofou, and Susana Pavlou (Nicosia: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2021), 15.

⁵⁵ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Questionnaire on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)*, (17, Sept. 2021).

⁵⁶ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Questionnaire on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)*, 16-17, Sept. 2021.

⁵⁷ Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) law (2000) 119(I)/2000, Article 15, Available at [Συμβουλευτική Επιτροπή για τη Πρόληψη και Καταπολέμηση της Βίας στην Οικογένεια \(familyviolence.gov.cy\)](http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy).

victims staying in the process.⁵⁸ The 2000 Violence in the Family Law and the 2021 Prevention and Combatting of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence Law⁵⁹ also provide for protective orders,⁶⁰ but the process of issuing and implementing such orders is time-consuming and require criteria which leave many victims without protection. Even in cases where protective orders are issued, there is no system or monitoring mechanism for their implementation.⁶¹ Further, while women victims of domestic violence have the right to legal aid,⁶² in practice, there are currently no specific criteria for administering legal aid. Courts often deny this right arbitrarily.⁶³

26. In many cases, courts impose "light" sentences on perpetrators, such as fines or suspending their sentence.⁶⁴ Prosecutors and judges do not have adequate training to ensure that cases involving violence against women are not re-qualified into charges which carry lighter penalties and deprive victims access to protection, support, and compensation.⁶⁵
27. Cyprus has not implemented Article 31 of the Istanbul Convention regarding child custody, visitation rights, and safety issues in domestic violence cases, and child contact arrangements leave women exposed to further coercive and controlling behavior of the perpetrator.⁶⁶

Funding

28. Overall, there is a lack of funding dedicated to combatting violence against women and domestic violence in Cyprus,⁶⁷ including regarding funding for providing services to

⁵⁸ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (October 9, 2023).

⁵⁹ The Prevention and Combatting of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and for Related Matters Law (2021) Law 115(1)/2021, Articles 32-33.

⁶⁰ Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) law (2000) 119(I)/2000, Articles 22-23, Available at [Συμβουλευτική Επιτροπή για τη Πρόληψη και Καταπολέμηση της Βίας στην Οικογένεια \(familyviolence.gov.cy\)](http://familyviolence.gov.cy).

⁶¹ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (October 9, 2023).

⁶² The Prevention and Combatting of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and for Related Matters Law (2021) Law 115(1)/2021, Article 23.

⁶³ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (October 9, 2023).

⁶⁴ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (October 9, 2023).

⁶⁵ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (October 9, 2023).

⁶⁶ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (October 9, 2023).

⁶⁷ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Questionnaire on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)*, 9-10, Sept. 2021.

survivors⁶⁸ and training frontline professionals.⁶⁹ This lack of funding feeds the underreporting of domestic violence cases in the country.⁷⁰ Cyprus has instituted a welcome National Strategy for Preventing and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2023-2028), but has not provided a dedicated budget for its implementation.⁷¹

Data Collection

29. Overall, there is a lack of intersectional data collection on domestic violence at all levels in Cyprus.⁷² And the available data is scarce and inconsistent and does not provide an overall picture on the prevalence of violence against women in Cyprus, impedes an in-depth understanding of the root causes of gender-based violence,⁷³ and obscures the support and protection provided to victims and the response of the relevant institutions.⁷⁴ In particular, the insufficient collection of statistical data on the number of reports received by the police, the investigations opened, indictments made, and final convictions handed down by courts renders it difficult to assess attrition rates and identify gaps in the criminal justice response.⁷⁵ It is also not possible to assess the number and type of protection orders, therefore it is not possible to assess their effectiveness in protecting victims or in preventing further violence, including femicide.⁷⁶

Implementation

30. In Cyprus there is fragmented implementation of measures to prevent and combat domestic violence across different government departments and services. The lack of coordination and communication among government bodies and services has led to a large number of

⁶⁸ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Questionnaire on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)*, 12, Sept. 2021.

⁶⁹ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Questionnaire on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)*, 14–15, Sept. 2021.

⁷⁰ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Questionnaire on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)*, Sept. 2021.

⁷¹ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (October 9, 2023).

⁷² Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Questionnaire on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)*, 11–12, Sept. 2021.

⁷³ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Questionnaire on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)*, 11–12, Sept. 2021.

⁷⁴ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (October 9, 2023).

⁷⁵ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (October 9, 2023).

⁷⁶ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Country report on femicide research and date: Cyprus*, by Alexia Shakou, Christiana Kouta, Elina Kofou, and Susana Pavlou (Nicosia: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2021), 36.

initiatives and actions without any policy dialogue, involvement of women's organizations and NGOs, and often without specific objectives, impact indicators, funding allocation, follow-up or evaluation.⁷⁷ The responsibility for implementing policies and measures on domestic violence rests with the competent state authorities by law, but the current coordinating body comprises members who work in a volunteer and advisory capacity without executive power or mandate to implement policies and measures on domestic violence.⁷⁸

V. Trafficking (Concluding observations, paragraphs 28-29)

31. In its 2018 Concluding observations, the Committee welcomed the adoption and implementation of various legislation and the national action plan against trafficking in human beings.⁷⁹ The Committee remained concerned about the prevalence of trafficking in women and girls, particularly “the limited enforcement of the anti-trafficking law”⁸⁰ and lack of support services available for victims. The Committee recommended “ensuring effective enforcement of anti-trafficking legislation”⁸¹ including by providing training in its gender-sensitive application for those who may have contact with victims and “combat the exploitation of women, in particular migrant women, in prostitution.”⁸²
32. The majority of trafficked persons are nationals of other countries.⁸³ The mechanisms in place for protecting victims of trafficking lack coordination and do not adequately take into account the specific needs of victims of trafficking. The Refugee Law identifies victims of human trafficking as a vulnerable category who are entitled to an expedited asylum process, which prioritizes their asylum case.⁸⁴ The mechanism for identifying victims of trafficking needs further development: government authorities, medical professionals, and social welfare services can report to the Asylum Service if an individual claiming asylum is a vulnerable category and needs a specialized reception, but the process is lengthy and

⁷⁷ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (May 25, 2023).

⁷⁸ Written email communication between Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and The Advocates for Human Rights, (May 25, 2023).

⁷⁹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶¶ 28-29

⁸⁰ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶¶ 28-29

⁸¹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶¶ 28-29

⁸² Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶¶ 28-29

⁸³ GRETA. (2020). Evaluation Report Cyprus, Third Evaluation Round-Access to justice and effective remedies for victims of trafficking in human beings (11 June), Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. GRETA and Committee of the 54 Parties Council of Europe Strasbourg Cedex; France. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/greta2020-04-fgr-cyp-en/16809eb53f>.

⁸⁴ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Mind the Gap report: COALESCE for Support in Cyprus*, by Christina Kaili (Nicosia, Cyprus: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, May 2021), 19.

not standardized.⁸⁵ Therefore, stakeholders such as government agencies and refugee services do not always identify victims of trafficking.⁸⁶

33. In addition, factors such as psychological condition and the impact of trauma are not always taken into consideration during interviews.⁸⁷ The interview process with the police can re-traumatize victims.⁸⁸ One interviewee detailed how the police officer accused her of lying and pressured her to reveal who had coached her on what to say.⁸⁹ Individuals reported being called in for multiple interviews, with at least one individual having ten.⁹⁰ Prioritized cases may also meet delays due to backlog, shortage of interpreters, or challenges obtaining the additional requirements.⁹¹ The process is lengthy and is limited by a lack of training around gender and culturally specific needs.⁹²

VI. Participation in political and public life (Concluding Observations paragraph 30-31)

34. In its 2018 Concluding observations, The Committee was concerned about the absence of representation of women in parliament and municipal councils,⁹³ as well as regarding the “negative cultural attitudes and gender stereotypes in the public sphere” that women in politics endure.⁹⁴

35. Despite these National Action Plans, women in Cyprus remain largely excluded from decision-making and leadership positions, especially in public and political life.⁹⁵ In the

⁸⁵ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Mind the Gap report: COALESCE for Support in Cyprus*, by Christina Kaili (Nicosia, Cyprus: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, May 2021), 20.

⁸⁶ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Mind the Gap report: COALESCE for Support in Cyprus*, by Christina Kaili (Nicosia, Cyprus: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, May 2021), 22.

⁸⁷ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Mind the Gap report: COALESCE for Support in Cyprus*, by Christina Kaili (Nicosia, Cyprus: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, May 2021), 19.

⁸⁸ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Mind the Gap report: COALESCE for Support in Cyprus*, by Christina Kaili (Nicosia, Cyprus: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, May 2021), 23.

⁸⁹ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Mind the Gap report: COALESCE for Support in Cyprus*, by Christina Kaili (Nicosia, Cyprus: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, May 2021), 23.

⁹⁰ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Mind the Gap report: COALESCE for Support in Cyprus*, by Christina Kaili (Nicosia, Cyprus: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, May 2021), 23.

⁹¹ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Mind the Gap report: COALESCE for Support in Cyprus*, by Christina Kaili (Nicosia, Cyprus: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, May 2021), 19.

⁹² Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Mind the Gap report: COALESCE for Support in Cyprus*, by Christina Kaili (Nicosia, Cyprus: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, May 2021), 20.

⁹³ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶ 30(a)

⁹⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶30 (c).

⁹⁵ Cyprus Women’s Lobby, *Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 70th Session, Cyprus Shadow Report*, by Susana Pavlou and Josie Christodoulou, CEDAW/NGO/CYP/31500, (Nicosia: Cyprus Women’s Lobby, Nov. 2018), 11.

May 2021 parliamentary elections, only 8 out of 56 representatives elected were women.⁹⁶ According to the 2023 European Union (EU) gender equality index, only 25% of Ministers, 14.3% of Members of Parliament, and 15.3% of members of regional assemblies are women.⁹⁷ Overall, there is a lack of political will, on the level of the government as well as political parties, to promote gender mainstreaming in policy processes and adopt positive action measures, including quotas, in line with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.⁹⁸

VII. Employment (Concluding Observations paragraphs)

36. In its 2018 Concluding observations, The Committee expressed its concern about the “disproportionately high unemployment rate among women”,⁹⁹ and the “the persistent gender wage gap, particularly in the private sector.”¹⁰⁰

37. Economically, Cypriot women still earn, on average, 10.2% less than their male counterparts. Women’s employment rate is still at 70.1% compared to 81.7% for men; and women’s part-time employment rate is nearly twice men’s, making Cyprus one of the most gender-segregated countries in the EU when it comes to employment.

XI. LIST OF SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

38. We respectfully suggest the following questions for the Government of Cyprus:

- Please provide information about the implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, especially:
- Provide information about targeted measures implemented for migrant women, women with disabilities, elderly women, and women belonging to the Turkish Cypriot, Latin, Maronite, and Armenian communities within the National Plan.
- What measures has the Cyprus government taken to establish and strengthen a systematic mechanism for early identification of vulnerable asylum seekers and a referral system between reception centers and services for survivors of gender-based violence, including sexual assault, rape, domestic violence, and female genital mutilation?

⁹⁶ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, *Country report on femicide research and date: Cyprus*, by Alexia Shakou, Christiana Kouta, Elina Kofou, and Susana Pavlou (Nicosia: Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2021).

⁹⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality, "*Gender Equality Index: Power in Cyprus in 2023*," accessed January 2 2024, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/domain/power/CY>

⁹⁸ Cyprus Women’s Lobby, *Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 70th Session, Cyprus Shadow Report*, by Susana Pavlou and Josie Christodoulou, CEDAW/NGO/CYP/31500, (Nicosia: Cyprus Women’s Lobby, Nov. 2018), 11.

⁹⁹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶36(a)

¹⁰⁰ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic review of Cyprus*, (Jul. 25, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8, ¶36 (c).

- Please describe how the State Party has ensured systematic data collection on SGBV among first arrival asylum-seekers in order to inform programming and develop policies and measures that respond to the specific needs of SGBV survivors.
- What efforts has the State Party has implemented to provide gender-sensitive support services in reception centers for migrants in order to prevent the risk of violence among women refugees and/or provide specialist support to women survivors of SGBV.
- Describe any measures taken to establish and fund the database to collect and publish comprehensive data on all forms of gender-based violence against women, as indicated in the 2021 Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Law and the recently adopted National Strategy on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence 2023-2028.
- Provide information on how the State Party is collecting and publishing comprehensive data on all forms of gender-based violence against women, including the number of reports received by the police, the investigations opened, indictments made, final convictions handed down by courts, and requested and granted orders for protection, disaggregated by sex and age of victim and perpetrator and relationship between victim and perpetrator.
- What steps has the government implemented to provide resources, including adequate technical, human, and financial resources, to the proposed structure of the National Coordinating Body that is responsible for preventing and combating all forms of violence against women in order for it to carry out its mandate effectively?
- What steps has the State Party taken to harmonize definitions of domestic violence in Violence of the Family Laws of 2000 and 2004 with the 2021 Prevention and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Law?
- Describe the efforts undertaken by the State to develop and implement initial and in-service training for front-line professionals, including law enforcement, judges, health professionals, and teachers, on gender-based violence.
- What measures has the State Party to ensure that domestic abuse and child protection services and agencies adhere to Article 31 of the Istanbul Convention regarding child custody, visitation rights, and safety issues in domestic violence cases?
- Provide information on the measures taken to remove logistical barriers, such as referral requirements, to access Women’s House, shelters, and other social welfare programs in order to support all women and girls, particularly women who are in situations of disadvantage and facing multiple forms of discrimination, including migrant women.
- Please describe any measures taken to promote the development of both comprehensive and holistic general services, as well as specialized services for survivors of female genital mutilation in Cyprus, which are adequate, of quality, non-discriminatory, and accessible to all survivors, regardless of migration and residence status.

- Describe the efforts undertaken to provide sufficient funding to enact the National Strategy for Preventing and Combatting of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.
- What efforts has the State taken to provide effective assistance to victims of trafficking, including access to health care, financial assistance and long-term funding for shelters?
- Provide information about the measures and resources implemented to provide legal assistance to victims of trafficking, including the provision of an advocate or legal representative to walk them through the process.
- What training does the State Party provide to law enforcement on victim-centered investigations and prosecutions and implement witness protection measures for victims of trafficking?
- Provide information about the efforts undertaken to improve the availability and suitability of psychological support to trafficking victims, including eliminating the restrictions arising from immigration law and language barriers?