



Belarus

Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review: Gender-based violence against women and girls

Submitted by

The Advocates for Human Rights

a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

and

The Belarusian Coalition of Organizations, Initiatives and Activists against gender-based and domestic violence

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Founded in 1983, **The Advocates for Human Rights** (“The Advocates”) is a volunteer-based non-governmental organization committed to the impartial promotion and protection of international human rights standards and the rule of law. The Advocates conducts a range of programs to promote human rights in the United States and around the world, including monitoring and fact-finding, direct legal representation, education and training, and publications. The Advocates works to end violence against women by changing laws and their implementation, as well as through monitoring and documentation, trainings, and advocacy.

The Belarusian Coalition of organizations, initiatives and activists against gender-based and domestic violence is based in exile. It aims at international advocacy for women's rights. Members of the Coalition provide direct services to Belarusian women in Belarus and in emigration countries, including psychological, legal and information support and counselling.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Belarus is not in compliance with its human rights obligations toward women in all their diversities (hereinafter “all women”) and specifically has failed on its obligations to protect, prosecute, and prevent gender-based violence throughout the years. This report recommends Belarus adopt several key recommendations to ensure better protection and prevention for all women. These steps, among other things, include (1) adopting comprehensive legislation to address gender-based violence against women and girls (GBVAW), especially concerning domestic violence (DV); (2) eliminating barriers and stereotypes that impede victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence from seeking and obtaining support and justice; (3) developing and implementing services that adequately address the necessities of victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence; and (4) ensuring accurate data is collected and divulged.
2. The current report is based on the *Shadow report on Domestic Violence Problem in Belarus* submitted by **the Belarusian Coalition of the organizations, initiatives and activists against gender-based and domestic violence** to the 90th session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS BY BELARUS

Gender-based violence; Domestic violence; Violence against women; Discrimination against women

Status of Implementation: Partially Accepted, partially implemented.

3. In the third cycle, Belarus supported 15 out of the 17 recommendations on improving legislation on gender-based violence.¹ Belarus noted one recommendation urging the government to adopt a comprehensive law criminalizing all forms of violence against women, mainly on domestic and sexual violence.²

Sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls (GBVAW)

4. In Belarus, domestic violence (DV) is a serious problem;³ however, there is no updated data to reflect the prevalence of domestic violence throughout the country. The last specialized study on domestic violence was performed in 2018 by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Belarus. In this study, the UNFPA found that most Belarusian women had experienced either sexual, physical, emotional, psychological, and/or economic abuse by someone in their immediate family unit.⁴ The UN Women study revealed that one out of four women are subjected to physical violence, while 13.3% of these women are subjected to sexual violence by their husband or domestic partner.⁵ This study also documented that 45.2% of women are subjected to psychological violence in the family context, while 15% of women are subjected to economic abuse.⁶
5. Despite the termination of a marital or domestic partner relationship, DV can still occur after a separation. In the case of Belarus, 7% of women reported being stalked by former

spouses/partners between 2022-2024.⁷ According to available research, it is likely that this number is even higher as men often have the tendency to continue to exert power and control over their former partner, whether it be to get back together or punish her for leaving him.⁸ As a result, men often manifest their displeasure with the relationship ending through a series of harmful behaviors toward their former partner. The NGOs Coalition has documented cases where the aggressor inflicts violence, stalking, and threats without any accountability, such actions include: sending over 100 SMS messages to his former female partner; paying obsessive attention to her every move; trying to learn about her new relationships; lingering around her home or work; blackmailing with intimate photos; spreading insulting information among her relatives and friends; and threatening to cause violence to her and her loved ones.⁹

Limited Legislative Recognition of Domestic Violence (DV)

6. A survey conducted in the Minsk region found that only 14.1% of residents claimed not to know anything about domestic violence (DV), and 78.3% of these residents believed alcohol is the source of violence as it impairs an individual's self-control and ability to rationally solve problems.¹⁰ This data suggests both that domestic violence is widespread and known to the general public, and that the majority of the public harbors misconceptions about the causes of domestic violence, i.e. alcohol. After a group of Belarusian citizens realized the extent of the lack of public awareness of DV in the country, they petitioned the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MIA) to publish official DV statistics.¹¹ However, this group was unsuccessful as the MIA responded to their request by stating that information is "classified as official information of restricted distribution."¹² As a result, the government chooses to hide crucial data from its citizens under the pretext of classifying these as acts of public danger.
7. The Belarusian State has not established clear legislation that holds perpetrators of DV accountable for their criminal acts. For example, there is no specific legislation that establishes DV as a separate crime that would hold perpetrators liable for their actions. When it comes to legislation on responsibility concerning DV, stakeholders and victims must rely on provisions that do not provide adequate accountability or protection in line with international standards in the Criminal (approximately 10 articles) and Administrative Codes.¹³
8. The Criminal Code does not encompass domestic violence as a distinct offense but instead applies only to the existing general provisions. These provisions are mostly used in cases of domestic violence. However, this leads to several issues. First, domestic violence itself is not always recognized, as offenses are classified under general articles without considering the specific context. Second, these provisions do not account for the unique nature of domestic violence. As a result, when determining punishment, courts rely solely on the Criminal Code, without addressing factors such as the prolonged nature of abuse, the victim's dependence on the perpetrator, and other critical aspects. Consequently, the punishment may not fully reflect the severity of the issue.¹⁴
9. The Administrative Code addresses light acts of violence and public order disturbances. Offenses include those enshrined in Article 10.1, which prohibit intentional infliction of

bodily harm and other violent acts that do not result in short-term health impairment or minor permanent disability.¹⁵ Administrative penalties are lighter than criminal-level offenses, usually entailing a fine, arrest, or shorter detention. Relevant administrative offenses include battery and intentional infliction of pain or physical or mental suffering against a close relative or family member, punishable by a fine or administrative arrest.¹⁶

10. Even the most recent legislative development: the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 122-3 “about the bases of activities for prevention of offenses”¹⁷ (hereinafter “Prevention Law”) does not provide strong protection and accountability for DV. The Prevention Law only regulates administrative offenses related to DV and does not cover criminal prosecution of perpetrators.¹⁸ Furthermore, the Law does not mandate perpetrators of criminal offenses to participate in correctional programs. The government is also exempt from all requirements to develop inter-agency cooperation in cases involving victim cooperation in criminal domestic violence (DV) cases.
11. In addition to the absence of sufficient victim protection, the Prevention Law does not effectively address DV. Although the State recognizes that 90% of victims are women,¹⁹ the Prevention Law fails to define DV as a gender-specific problem, while also excluding economic violence and stalking as specific forms of DV manifestations.²⁰ The Prevention Law’s shortcomings result from the State’s failure to recognize gender inequality as a root cause that makes women more vulnerable to DV.²¹
12. Women, especially married women, are more vulnerable to different forms of violence due to policies and practices that prioritize preservation of the family unit over victim safety. For example, Article 35 of the Marriage and Family Code prohibits divorce during a wife’s pregnancy and before the child reaches the age of three without the consent of the other spouse.²² In other words, this places what may be one of the few options available for escaping from the violence - separation - in the hands of the abusive spouse. Although divorce alone is not an effective way to end DV, it may be one of few options to increase a woman’s safety when there are insufficient legal protections to keep her safe.
13. Large families are entitled to the country’s financial aid for the construction/purchase of an apartment/real estate. Women who have three or more children are particularly vulnerable if they want to divide property acquired during marriage under the financial aid schemes.²³ According to reports, when a marriage is dissolved due to DV, the local administration (executive committees) will not issue permits for the sale or exchange of residential property built with loans or subsidies.²⁴ Therefore, many women are forced to leave the common dwelling to save their and their children’s life and health, thus leaving the common property to the aggressor.

Barriers to Reporting

14. Although the Prevention Law describes one manifestation of DV as intentional unlawful acts of sexualized violence by family members,²⁵ women rarely report it.²⁶ Women often are discouraged from reporting due to shame or lack of awareness that sexualized violence by (ex)spouses is punishable.²⁷ Another reason for low levels of reporting can be attributed to the widely held wrongful gender stereotype of “marital duty,”²⁸ which expects a woman to agree to physical intimacy with her husband/partner even if she does not want it. This stereotype is linked to the belief that men need regular sex and are entitled to receive it

from their legitimate spouse/partner, especially if their motive is to prevent adultery/partner infidelity.²⁹

15. Another reason women hesitate to report their abuse is based on fears that they will be separated from their children. In Belarus, when a child is in a “socially dangerous situation” in a DV situation, the family undergoes a social investigation.³⁰ According to current protocols, authorities gather findings on the circumstances of the child's life and the relationship between the father and mother. In cases where the father uses violence against the child's mother, the family is perceived as dysfunctional, meaning the child is at risk.³¹ Although the mother is the parent experiencing the abuse, systems actors view it as her responsibility to “normalize” the family situation; if she does not fulfill her maternal duties by “normalizing” the situation, the authorities will may conclude the child needs state protection and place them.³² In many cases of domestic violence, State authorities, especially police, threaten to take away children without explaining the victim’s rights or the proper procedure. This lack of clarity often leads women to avoid contacting the police in the future. In other words, children are not immediately taken away, but the threat of removal is used as a form of intimidation. As a result, many women choose to endure the “punishment” from her aggressor rather than reporting the violence and risking removal of their child(ren) as a second punishment from the State.
16. In cases where victims are able to report their abuse, they still lack legal literacy to advance their claims. Many victims are not educated on their rights, administrative procedures, and the relevant legislation governing protections and remedies. In cases where victims seek assistance from law enforcement, police officers reportedly demonstrate disinterest in properly informing women about their rights.³³ Reports indicate that police officers often do not know what procedural steps are needed to initiate an investigation in cases of sexualized violence by a spouse/partner.³⁴ In an interview with NGOs coalition, a victim of DV stated, “The policeman told me that I should not write that my husband raped me, but only that he used physical force. Because he did not know how to prove it, because [I] have sex with my husband.”³⁵ This scenario demonstrates insufficient responses and a lack of inaccurate reporting by police officers at the crime scene, which can perpetuate impunity and the violence.
17. The Prevention Law established a Register for incidents of DV, which requires the disclosure of sensitive and confidential information about victims and those who report the crime. Collected information about the victim includes their identification number, surname, first name, date and place of birth, education, place of work (study) and position, place of residence and contact telephone number.³⁶ This Register also collects personal information of the individual who reports the abuse, even if they were not directly involved in the time of the incident.³⁷ Since many bystanders prefer to remain anonymous, collecting and storing their personal data may deter them from reporting violence in the future.

Access to justice; Discrimination against women; Rights of the child

Status of Implementation: Accepted, partially implemented.

18. In the last cycle, four recommendations were made to improve access to justice and services. All four were accepted.³⁸

Limited Access to Justice – Institutional Biases

19. In Belarus, most DV offenses are not reviewed as criminal cases and are dismissed; victims, however, have the option to pursue private prosecution for their cases.³⁹ However, most victims are unaware of the possibility of pursuing a private prosecution as they do not enjoy adequate access to free legal aid.⁴⁰ Furthermore, private prosecution places the onus of prosecuting the entire case, such as gathering evidence and calling witnesses, upon the victim or on her lawyer if she can afford one. Victims' access to available free legal support is limited, as NGOs are not authorized to provide legal aid beyond clarification of legal terms or documents.⁴¹
20. Victims often face disproportionately high procedural requirements when seeking justice, starting with the requirement to provide a written statement to initiate a private prosecution case.⁴² Other requirements that hinder access to justice are additional costs, such as lawyer's services, filing an application, an assessment of the value of the property, and an expert examination. Such requirements may be financially impossible for a victim. In addition to the financial bars, women must also allocate precious time to collect evidence and attend court hearings, which can be onerous whether they are working in formal employment or conducting unpaid work, such as household work and childcare.⁴³
21. Victims also experience a lack of comprehensive inter-agency cooperation between system actors. Police officers often operate without the proper coordination and cooperation on matters relevant to government officials within the judicial system.⁴⁴ According to statements from prosecutors, law enforcement often delay prosecution of cases by allowing new violations to occur throughout the administrative process, which causes the court to return administrative cases for revised preparation; this, in turn, further delays deadlines, and has even resulted in the termination of cases.⁴⁵ Since the court must address every violation on the file, it can protract deadlines that are crucial for the victim to receive preventive measures.
22. The available protection resources are insufficient. Police can issue a protection order lasting up to fifteen days, and they may extend it to thirty days with the prosecutor's agreement.⁴⁶ However, legislation limits the extension period to a maximum of 30 days.⁴⁷ As a consequence, protection orders are inadequate to protect the victim in the long-term. Additionally, the Prevention Law states that the extension is made based on risk assessment made by police, without an additional requirement of proof for the victim⁴⁸ rather than based on the victim's fear of violence. In other words, the victim must experience an additional act(s) of violence before her protection will be continued. Another problem with these particular protection orders is that the written consent of victims is required for their issuance in most cases, which is often ineffective because victims are usually financially dependent on their abusers and reluctant to express consent.⁴⁹ Many victims also refuse to express their consent due to increased violence after reporting to police. These conditions to obtain protective orders complicate the process for victims and often drain their resources when they simply want protection from their aggressor.
23. Private prosecution is not an effective way of addressing domestic violence. Furthermore, these cases are terminated if the victim and the accused reconcile.⁵⁰ In these cases, reconciliation is very common.⁵¹ Gender stereotypes also encourage the victim to

reconcile with the aggressor, given harmful misperceptions that family conflicts should not be brought into the public and should be resolved without the involvement of law enforcement.⁵² Furthermore, judicial officers often rely on misperceptions that unlawful acts of aggressors against family members are less serious than the same criminal acts committed by a stranger against another person in public.⁵³

24. Women who do not choose to reconcile with their abuser often face significant challenges in accessing justice. Some of the coalition's cases have had outcomes where judges determine parents have equal custody rights even when the father is violent toward the mother and children have witnessed that violence.⁵⁴ Abusive circumstances are often overlooked in court and custody hearings, as abusive parents may be given custody of the child(ren) when they are more financially stable than the non-violent parent.⁵⁵ When judges rely on these implicit biases, they overlook the best interests of the child, reduce accountability for aggressor DV crimes, and reinforce the cycle of violence.⁵⁶

Limited Victim Services

25. Under the Prevention Law, victims of DV have the right to receive “free medical, legal assistance.”⁵⁷ Additionally, Article 28 of the Law on Advocacy and Advocate's Activities proscribes that victims of violence have the right, on an equal basis with other citizens, to receive free legal aid at the expense of the Bar associations.⁵⁸ Despite these legislative guarantees, only a limited number of individuals in the population are aware of the DV survivor services. In fact, a private 2024 Civic Engagement in Belarus survey revealed that only 19% of the population is aware of DV-related services, in contrast to 55% of the population that knew how to access animal support services. These findings highlight the lack of public awareness of available services.
26. Over the last four years, the Belarusian government closed more than 1,186 NGOs.⁵⁹ According to the Ministry of Justice, there were 3,025 public associations in 2020; as of January 2024, there were just 1,973 public associations in Belarus.⁶⁰ Authorities have applied multiple pretexts for liquidation, including alleging violations of administrative regulations, accusing groups of extremist activity, or failing to comply with financial reporting requirements.⁶¹ As a result, almost all NGOs were told to completely liquidate themselves by 30 December 2024; around 705 of these NGOs took a decision to self-liquidate, based on pressure on their members and staff, the unfavorable legal environment, and the general socio-political situation.⁶² Some of these self-liquidated organizations include the international public association "Gender Perspectives," which administered a Nationwide DV Hotline from 2012 to 2021 and responded to over 15,000 calls;⁶³ Radislava NGO, which ran the Shelter for Women DV Victims and their Children (2002-2022) and provided comprehensive assistance to over 550 clients;⁶⁴ and the women's social association "Provincia," which worked with elderly women victims, women from other regions, and has helped more than 100 women since 1999.⁶⁵ These closures are part of the government's strategy to eliminate independent civil society voices and tighten state control over public discourse.⁶⁶
27. As a response to the government's closing of specialized NGOs, social services in the form of inpatient social care were introduced as a new type of licensable activity on 1 July 2024.⁶⁷ A limitation of this new social care service is that NGOs cannot provide inpatient

social care in DV shelters.⁶⁸ As an alternative, the State directs DV victims to "crisis rooms" to receive inpatient care, but these rooms' effectiveness is limited as they do not provide specialized services.⁶⁹ These "crisis rooms" also fail to provide victims with trauma-informed support and protection, especially when they are assigned to a shared space with men who are seeking some other sort form of care.⁷⁰ In some DV cases, especially in small towns, the location of the "crisis rooms" is public knowledge, exacerbating the risk for victims in high-risk situations. Because these "crisis rooms" provide general as opposed to specialized DV services, local authorities may refer perpetrators to these "crisis rooms" to receive housing assistance when they are evicted from the common residence with the victim under an order for protection.⁷¹ These examples illustrate the ineffectiveness and risks of "crisis rooms," including a disregard for victim confidentiality, re-traumatization, and a risk to victims' safety.

28. As these social services efforts have not been as effective as desired, the government has resorted to manipulating or providing inaccurate data on usage of DV services. For example, in 2022, the Belarusian government claimed that approximately 12,000 DV victims applied for social services per year.⁷² However, civil society questioned these statistics, especially given the low awareness amongst social service professionals on how to identify DV throughout the country.⁷³ It is plausible that this statistic actually includes all assisted people, not just DV victims. The government's counting of all assisted people who access social services implies they are addressing DV without the help of NGOs. As this report shows, however, NGOs are crucial as they best understand victims' needs and how to meet them.
29. The closure of specialized NGOs left a huge gap that cannot be filled by public services, especially when it comes to assistance for female DV survivors who are deterred from using the new resources provided by the government. Trainings were an essential tool for social centers that typically have trouble identifying victims of DV.⁷⁴ Without these NGOs, however, the training of specialists in social services has practically stopped.⁷⁵ As many fundamental workers have lost their jobs due to these closures, this has reduced the possibility of comprehensive assistance based on respect for human rights, a victim-centered approach, and confidentiality.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

30. The authors of this stakeholder report suggest the following recommendations for the Government of Belarus:
 - Adopt a specialized Law on DV Prevention, taking into account international standards and best practices, such as the UN Special Rapporteur on VAW's report on orders for protection and shelters. The law which should recognize the gendered nature of the phenomenon, define economic violence in the context of power and control and stalking as forms of DV, include systems actors and non-law-enforcement government agencies as co-coordinators in the law implementation. Importantly, the law should explicitly define NGOs role as equal participants to other actors charged with implementing such a law.
 - Conduct awareness-raising campaigns to remove stigma and barriers around seeking protection and to prevent discrimination and violence against women,

and about the nature of domestic violence and the power dynamics associated with gender.

- Task relevant ministries and local authorities with educating the public on women's human rights and the existing support and complaint mechanisms for gender-based violence and domestic violence.
- Modify the Special Register requirements related to the reporting of domestic violence cases and eliminate the requirements that pose a risk to the confidentiality privacy and safety of victims and bystanders, in line with international standards on data protection.
 - Allocate sufficient resources to strengthen the capacity of specialists and update protocols for the safe, confidential, and effective collection and management of case information.
- Undertake measures to address gender and bias stereotypes from government authorities, including judges and law enforcement, and their impacts on women's rights to access to justice and protection from violence
 - Establish mandatory training for judges, prosecutors, police, social workers, and other inter-agency actors on the dynamics of violence against women and on how to identify, and respond to DV, especially its latent forms, and provide comprehensive assistance to victims, taking into account gender-sensitive approach and confidentiality. Such trainings should be led by or done in consultation with specialized NGOs that serve and best understand victims' needs.
 - Ensure that all systems actors take into account the child's best interests in custody and visitation determinations and immediately cease the practice of appropriating blame to the non-violent parent for the domestic violence.
- Consider DV as an aggravating and/or exceptional circumstance in divorce, property disposition, child custody determinations, and as an eligibility factor to qualify for free legal aid for victims in civil and family law matters.
- Mandate public prosecution for DV criminal cases and ensure a pro-prosecution policy that does not close cases due to the reconciliation of the parties or victim recantation.
- **Extend the duration of protection orders to at least a year to allow sufficient time for the investigation and resolution of cases, and remove barriers to their issuance, such as the requirement for written consent.**
- Ensure the practical implementation of inter-agency cooperation between different state bodies and NGOs on the basis of case management, when a single entity is responsible for coordinating the provision of comprehensive assistance. The composition of inter-agency councils should be personalized in order to respect confidentiality. Any such coordination must include specialized NGOs in the composition of inter-agency councils.

- Approve official Correctional Programs for aggressors with a duration of at least 80 hours, taking into account international and Belarusian experience, and obliging perpetrators to take part in them. Such programs should be in line with best practice standards that are part of a coordinated community response, have links with the criminal justice system for accountability, have links with NGO service providers, incorporate ongoing risk assessments throughout the programming, and avoid harmful practices such as couples counseling.
- Carry out ongoing trainings, in consultations with NGOs that best understand victims' needs, with a view to ending victim-blaming by law enforcement, social workers, and judicial officers who hold the non-violent parent responsible for placing a child in a "socially dangerous situation."
- Ensure that assistance and services are specialized and meet the specific needs of women victims of violence in a victim-centered, gender-responsive and trauma-informed manner, including:
 - Support for victims both to prevent and address violence. This includes mental health services, access to long-term counseling, affordable housing, childcare and other financial support, more accessible and quality legal assistance, and employment opportunities.
 - Adopt a pro-prosecution policy that prioritizes public prosecution of all domestic violence cases, including those involving light harm. Train and strongly urge prosecutors and law enforcement to gather evidence for use in a victim-absent prosecution should the victim recant her statement or refuse to cooperate. Posters should be placed in judicial and law enforcement centers and highly frequented areas. Publish social media campaigns from official government platforms, ensuring that the content shares extensive information on all the ways women can access justice and other victim services.
 - Fund specialized NGOs with adequate funding to provide services and immediate protection to victims, as well as ongoing training to systems actors.
 - Improve specialized services, particularly "crisis rooms," for DV victims in each regional center based on a gender-responsive, trauma-informed approach. Ensure privacy and confidentiality of the victims and provide specialists of state "crisis rooms" with mobile phones and pay for communication services to ensure prompt response to DV situations, consistency, continuity of care and confidentiality.
- Develop specialized national hotline services by establishing a single phone number that is available 24/7 and free and publicize its operation so that the public becomes aware of the available services.

- Remove the State de facto ban of specialized NGOs and allow them to resume their operations without fear of reprisal, harassment and criminalization. In that sense:
 - Amend Articles 361(1) and 361(4) of the Criminal Code, along with the relevant legislation **governing the registration and operation of civil society organizations**
- Establish a comprehensive, regularly collected and publicly available data collection system on gender-based violence, disaggregated by gender, age, residence, presence of children, disability of victims and relationship between the victim /survivor and the perpetrator, and legal outcomes.

¹ Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Belarus Addendum, (5 March 2021), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/46/5/Add.1 ¶138.20 Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and criminalize domestic violence (Italy); ¶138.70 Adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that defines all forms of discrimination in accordance with international standards, and guarantee women equal access to work (Greece); ¶138.236 Draft and implement a new national action plan to ensure gender equality (Burundi); ¶138.238 Take specific measures to reduce the gender pay gap, and combat the negative stereotypes regarding women in the area of work (Angola); ¶138.239 Take measures to raise public awareness on gender-based discrimination, in consultation with non-governmental organizations (Burkina Faso); ¶138.240 Regularly cover in the national media the issue of gender equality (Burundi); ¶138.241 Conduct awareness-raising campaigns and educational events aimed at eradicating sexist stereotypes (Burundi); ¶138.242 Adopt the necessary legal measures and reforms to prevent and combat all forms of discrimination, as well as violence against women, in particular domestic and sexual violence (Ecuador); ¶138.243 Allocate sufficient resources to training for law enforcement and the judiciary in addressing cases related to violence against women (Fiji); ¶138.244 Redouble efforts in conducting awareness-raising and training for duty bearers towards preventing and addressing gender-based violence and ensuring victims' access to appropriate services (Philippines); ¶138.246 Develop specific legislation to combat domestic violence, including by establishing complaints mechanisms and strengthening the role of civil society in laws, policies, programmes and services to prevent and protect against domestic violence (Costa Rica); ¶138.247 Consider undertaking the necessary reforms to criminalize violence against women, in particular domestic and sexual violence (Peru); ¶138.248 Adopt effective legislation criminalizing violence against women, namely domestic and sexual violence (Portugal); ¶138.249 Continue to take steps to combat violence against women, including through legislative reforms (Malaysia); ¶138.250 Adopt legislation specifically criminalizing violence against women, particularly domestic and sexual violence (Angola); ¶138.251 Develop a legal framework aimed at combating domestic and gender based violence (Croatia); ¶138.252 Launch awareness-raising campaigns to fight domestic violence and to raise further awareness about the consequences of it (Kuwait).

² Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Belarus Addendum, (5 March 2021), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/46/5/Add.1 ¶138.245 Adopt a comprehensive law criminalizing all forms of violence against women, particularly domestic and sexual violence (Brazil).

³ More precisely can be examined under the lens of intimate partner violence (IPV) which can be defined as abusive behavior that occurs within an intimate relationship, whether it be current or former spouses or partners, who have caused physical, sexual, or psychological harm to the other person inside the relationship.

⁴ United Nations Population Fund Belarus, *Распространенность насилия в отношении женщин в Республике Беларусь* (2019), pp. 28-30,

<https://belarus.unfpa.org/ru/publications/%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B7%D1%83%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%8B%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%8F%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%91%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%8F%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%88%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B8%D0%B6%D0%B5%BD%D1%89%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BF%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B5>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Information in file with the report authors (2024). See also, Belarusian Coalition of Civil Society Organisations, Initiatives and Activists (in exile) against Gender-based and Domestic Violence, *Shadow report on Domestic Violence Problem in Belarus to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*, (February 2025), ¶ 32, <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/publications/shadow-report-on-domestic-violence-problem-in-belarus/>.

⁸ Ibid, ¶31.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Survey on opinion of Minsk region population on DV, 2023. 14,188 questionnaires processed

¹¹ Information in file with the report authors (2024).

¹² Response of the Ministry of Internal Affairs dated 20.03.2023

¹³ Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, No. 275-Z of July 9, 1999 (as amended on August 7, 2024). See also, <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=1977>; The Code of the Republic of Belarus About Administrative Offenses, No. 91-Z of Jan. 6, 2021 (as amended on April 22, 2024). See also, <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=129886>.

¹⁴ Information in file with the report authors (2024). Some of the general injury-based offenses may include Intentional Infliction of Bodily Harm (Articles 149-153) with penalties varying based on the severity of the injury inflicted; Rape (Article 166), defined as non-consensual sexual intercourse achieved through violence, threats, or exploiting the victim's helpless state; and Violent Acts of a Sexual Nature (Article 167) that covers non-consensual sexual activities other than intercourse, involving similar coercive elements. Such criminal offenses do not include non-injury-based conduct that perpetrators may engage in during DV incidents, domestic violence that lacks evidence showing bodily harm, long-term domestic violence, as well as the dynamics of coercive control.

¹⁵ The Code of the Republic of Belarus About Administrative Offenses, No. 91-Z of Jan. 6, 2021 (as amended on April 22, 2024). Article 10.1. See also, <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=129886>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Law of the Republic of Belarus About Bases of Activities for Prevention of Offenses, No. 122-Z of Jan 4. 2014 (as amended on July 8, 2024). See also, <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=64951>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Supra Note 7, ¶26.A.

²⁰ Ibid, ¶26.D.

²¹ Ibid, ¶26.A.

²² The Code of the Republic of Belarus About Scrap and The Family, No. 278-Z, of July 9, 1999 (as amended on July 8, 2024). See also, <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=2040>

²³ *Concerning additional measures to support families with children: Decree No. 572 of 9 December 2014*, President of the Republic of Belarus, Dec. 14, 2014, accessed Dec 23, 2023, <https://president.gov.by/en/documents/decreed-no-572-of-9-december-2014-10417>

²⁴ Supra Note 11.

²⁵ Supra Note 17.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The Advocates for Human Rights, *Belarus's compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: suggested list of issues Prior to Reporting*, Jan.31, 2022, 7, <https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Res/Belarus%20CEDAW%20LOIPR%20Final.pdf>

²⁸ Supra Note 7. ¶ 29,

²⁹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, *Gender Stereotyping: OHCHR and women's human rights and gender equality*, accessed Mar. 26, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/women/gender-stereotyping>

³⁰ Resolution of Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus About Recognition of Children Being in Socially Dangerous Provision, No. 22 of January 15, 2019. See also, <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=119277>

³¹ Supra Note 7. ¶ 77-78

³² Ibid.

³³ Amnesty International, *Belarus. Domestic Violence: More than a private scandal*, (November 2006), ¶ 4, accessed March 26, 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/es/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/eur490142006en.pdf>.

³⁴ Ibid., ¶ 11-13.

³⁵ Supra Note 11.

³⁶ Supra Note 7, ¶ 72; Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on the functioning of the register of information on facts of domestic violence, No. 27 (January 11, 2023).

³⁷ Ibid., ¶ 73; Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on the functioning of the register of information on facts of domestic violence, No. 27 (January 11, 2023).

³⁸ Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Belarus Addendum, (5 March 2021), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/46/5/Add.1 ¶138.79 Consider including in its national development strategy measures aimed at ensuring increased efficiency and accountability of public service delivery (Azerbaijan); ¶138.239 Take measures to raise public awareness on gender-based discrimination, in consultation with non-governmental organizations (Burkina Faso); ¶138.243 Allocate sufficient resources to training for law enforcement and the judiciary in addressing cases related to violence against women (Fiji); ¶138.244 Redouble efforts in conducting awareness-raising and training for duty bearers towards preventing and addressing gender-based violence and ensuring victims' access to appropriate services (Philippines).

³⁹ Supra Note 7, ¶¶19,20,22,61.

⁴⁰ Ibid., ¶ 61.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ The information can be found in the following governmental link:
<https://prokuratura.gov.by/special/media/sobytiya-i-meropriyatiya/preduprezhdenie-doma060624/>

⁴⁵ Supra Note 7, ¶ 61.

⁴⁶ Supra Note 17, Art. 31.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid. See also, Supra Note 7, ¶ 19.

⁵¹ Supra Note 11.

⁵² Supra Note 7, ¶ 58.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Supra Note 17, Art. 32. See also, Supra Note 7, ¶ 60.

⁵⁸ Law of the Republic of Belarus About Legal Profession and Lawyer Activities in the Republic of Belarus, No. 334-Z of Dec.30, 2011 (as amended on Oct. 14, 2022), Article 28. See also, <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=48853>

⁵⁹ LawTrend, "Monitoring the situation with freedom of association and the status of civil society organizations in the Republic of Belarus November-December 2024," accessed March 26, 2025, <https://www.lawtrend.org/freedom-of-association/monitoring-situatsii-so-svobodoj-assotsiatsij-i-polozheniem-organizatsij-grazhdanskogo-obshchestva-v-respublike-belarus-noyabr-dekabr-2024>.

⁶⁰ CSO Meter, "Belarus: New wave of liquidation of CSOs that fail to amend their charters," accessed March 28, 2025, <https://csometer.info/updates/belarus-new-wave-liquidation-csos-fail-amend-their-charters>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Supra Note 59.

⁶³ International Center for Civil Initiatives, "How Belarussian government liquidates organizations saving victims of domestic violence," accessed Nov. 11, 2021, <https://news.house/43002>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Supra Note 59.

⁶⁶ Supra Note 60.

⁶⁷ Law of the Republic of Belarus About Amending Laws on Social Services and Social Payments, No. 318-Z of Dec. 13, 2023.; Law of the Republic of Belarus About the State Minimum Social Standards, No. 322-Z of Nov. 11, 1999(as amended on Dec. 13, 2023). See also, <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=2005>.; Law of the Republic of Belarus About Licensing, No. 213-3 of Oct. 14, 2022.; Resolution of Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus About Licensing, No. 154 of Feb. 27, 2023 (as amended on Sept. 3, 2024). See also, <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=148130>

⁶⁸ Supra Note 7, ¶ 47.

⁶⁹ Supra Note 11.

⁷⁰ Supra Note 7, ¶¶ 81-83.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Report of Belarus to the CEDAW Committee, 2022.

⁷³ Ibid., ¶ 52.

⁷⁴ *Минтруда: ежегодно более 12 тыс. пострадавших от домашнего насилия обращаются в ТЦСОХ*, Belta, Nov. 28, 2025, <https://belta.by/society/view/mintruda-ezhegodno-bolee-12-tys-postradavshih-ot-domashnego-nasilija-obraschajutsja-v-ttsson-602305-2023/>.

⁷⁵ LawTrend, “Poorly thought-out and constantly changing legislation: additional challenges for NGOs in Belarus,” <https://www.lawtrend.org/english/poorly-thought-out-and-constantly-changing-legislation-additional-challenges-for-ngos-in-belarus>