

Compliance with the Convention against Torture: Turkmenistan and Women's Rights

**Submitted by Progres Foundation
and**

The Advocates for Human Rights

a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1996

**for the 82nd Session of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or
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Progres Foundation (“Progres” with one “s” as in the Turkmen language) is a non-profit organization based in the United States that supports various progressive initiatives that contribute to understanding of social realities, shaping a new vision and approaches to sustainable human development in Turkmenistan. There are two flagship informational portals established by Progres Foundation: Saglyk.org and Progres.online. Saglyk.org has been working to improve public health literacy in Turkmenistan over the last 13 years and has become a leading source of COVID-19 information in the Turkmen language. One of the focus areas of Saglyk’s work is to provide the public in Turkmenistan with access to quality sexuality and reproductive health and rights information. Saglyk has been developing public education content and covering domestic violence both as human rights and a public health emergency. Progres.online is an online analytical journal that promotes nuanced understanding of societal trends.

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 since its founding in 1983. 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 publication. The Advocates is the primary provider of legal services to low-income asylum seekers in the Upper Midwest region of the United States. The Advocates is committed to ensuring human rights protection for women around the world. The Advocates has published more than 25 reports on violence against women as a human rights issue, provided consultation and commentary of draft laws on domestic violence, and trained lawyers, police, prosecutors, judges, and other law enforcement personnel to effectively implement new and existing laws on domestic violence.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report addresses Turkmenistan’s compliance with its obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) with respect to the absence of adequate legislation to prevent and protect women from gender-based violence, especially domestic violence. This report also highlights Turkmenistan’s failing on its obligation to facilitate women’s exercise to their sexual and reproductive rights. This report recommends that Turkmenistan adopts a number of key recommendations to better align its practices with its obligations under the Convention. These steps, among other things, include: (1) adopting comprehensive legislation to address gender-based violence (GBV) against women, and especially domestic violence (DV); (2) developing and implementing programs to prevent gender-based violence, domestic violence and discrimination against women; (3) guaranteeing avenues of protection for victims, (4) ensuring accurate data is collected and divulged; and (5) improving women’s access to sexual and reproductive health care, particularly abortion services.

Turkmenistan fails to uphold its obligations under the Convention Against Torture

I. Turkmenistan’s legislative framework and definition of discrimination against women (List of Issues, paragraph 6)

2. In its 2024 List of Issues, the CAT Committee (“The Committee”) requested updated information on the status on the bill on the prevention of family and domestic violence against women, especially progress on defining and introducing specific criminal offenses for domestic violence, including sexual violence and marital rape under the Criminal Code.¹ The Committee also requested further information on any legislation, whether proposed or enacted, to combat gender-based violence.²
3. In its 2024 State Party Reply to the List of Issues, the State responded by highlighting the National Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2021–2025, especially the strategic priority number four on gender-based violence against women and girls.³ Turkmenistan also has created a road map for the prevention of domestic violence for 2022-2025.⁴ Planned actions listed in the State Party Reply to the List of Issues include a series of promises by the State to establish legal definitions of GBV and DV in the development of DV prevention laws; create an inter-agency response to GBV; inform women of their rights and provide choices, especially when it is about their reproductive rights; and collect data on the prevalence, frequency, and characteristics of GBV and DV inside and outside of the home.⁵ Although the government has made verbal commitments in the roadmap for the National Action Plan, this roadmap is not

¹ Committee Against Torture, *List of issues in relation to the third periodic report of Turkmenistan*, (4 June 2024), U.N. Document CAT/C/TKM/Q/3, ¶ 6.

² Ibid.

³ Committee Against Torture, *Replies of Turkmenistan to the list of issues in relation to its third periodic report*, (30 October 2024), U.N. Document CAT/C/TKM/RQ/3, ¶ 28.

⁴ Ibid, ¶ 32.

⁵ Ibid, ¶ 33; Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, *Third periodic report submitted by Turkmenistan under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2023*, (28 November 2023), U.N. Document E/C.12/TKM/3, ¶ 136; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Replies of Turkmenistan to the list of issues and questions in relation to its sixth periodic report*, (1 November 2023), U.N. Document CEDAW/C/TKM/RQ/6, ¶ 81.

available online. As these commitments are not shared with the public, it makes it difficult for civil society to assess its progress and effectiveness. Furthermore, details on the implementation are also very limited to make a fair assessment of the developments concerning the National Action Plan.

4. Despite legislative developments aimed at protecting women and girls, women in Turkmenistan lack adequate legal protection from discrimination and violence, particularly from domestic violence. Current legal provisions include Article 29 of Turkmenistan's Constitution, which enshrines equality based on gender and establishes the duty of accountability for its violation.⁶ Additionally, Article 22(2) of the *2015 Law of Turkmenistan on Equality and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women* establishes the protection from physical or psychological violence in families;⁷ and Article 3.2(8) of the *Family Code of Turkmenistan* prevents any form of violence against any member of the family.⁸ As detailed in paragraphs 6-9 of this report, despite these legal provisions, the various statutes and infrastructure lack comprehensive domestic violence legislation, specialized courts, civil protective orders, criminalization of marital rape, and legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality.⁹
5. The National Action Plan on Gender Equality (NAPGE 2015-2020) was designed to examine Turkmenistan's legislation and potentially adopt a law criminalizing gender-based violence.¹⁰ The National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP 2016-2020) included steps to introduce amendments to the Criminal Code.¹¹ In accordance with the evaluation made by Progres, these steps have been delayed and moved to the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2021–2025 and the National Action Plan on Human Rights for 2021-2025, with plans to increase or strengthen legislative measures and state policies. As mentioned in paragraph 3, as of today, the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2021-2025 has not been published online, which creates barriers to evaluating its goals and progress.¹²
6. The government has not set a specific timeline for the law on domestic violence in Turkmenistan. As described in the document Comments by The Advocates for Human Rights on the Criminal Code, Administrative Offenses Code, and Criminal Procedural Code of Turkmenistan,¹³ existing domestic legislation, including these laws, lacks adequate protection

⁶ Constitution of Turkmenistan, 2016 [Gazette of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan, 2016, No. 3, Art. 131], <https://minjust.gov.tm/ru/hukuk/merkezi/hukuk/1>

⁷ *Law of Turkmenistan on Equality and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women* [Gazette of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan, 2015, No. 3, Art. 98], <https://minjust.gov.tm/ru/hukuk/merkezi/hukuk/304>

⁸ Family Code of Turkmenistan, 2012 [Gazette of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan, 2012, No. 1, Art. 9], <https://minjust.gov.tm/ru/hukuk/merkezi/hukuk/539>

⁹ UN Women, “*Turkmenistan*”, last accessed 12 Dec. 2023, <https://data.unwomen.org/country/turkmenistan>

¹⁰ Press Release, UNFPA Turkmenistan, Framework for monitoring and evaluation of the National Action Plan on Gender equality discussed, (April 12, 2019). Also available online at <https://turkmenistan.unfpa.org/en/news/framework-monitoring-and-evaluation-national-action-plan-gender-equality-discussed>

¹¹ UNDP Turkmenistan, National Human Rights Action Plan 2016-2020 (July 2017), 56, accessed Feb. 20, 2025, <https://www.undp.org/turkmenistan/publications/national-human-rights-action-plan-2016-2020>

¹² The current assessment is up to the date to the submission of the report for the Committee (2025).

¹³ [Comments by The Advocates for Human Rights on the Criminal Code, Administrative Offenses Code, and Criminal Procedural Code of Turkmenistan.](#)

for victim-survivors of domestic violence. Furthermore, the Criminal Code does not include a specific provision on domestic violence. As a consequence, the current legislation requires the use of other offenses, such as degradation, humiliation, cruelty, and the infliction of various types of bodily injury to investigate and prosecute domestic violence.¹⁴ Article 43 of the Administrative Code allows law enforcement agencies to qualify domestic violence offenses as an “administrative offense.”¹⁵ Based on this legislative framework, domestic violence is only considered as a criminal offense when the perpetrator has a history of repeatedly abusing the victim.¹⁶

7. Testimonies shared with the authors via the *Progress Online Survey on Domestic Violence* exhibit how the absence of protection for victims for non-injury-based violence exposes them to further and increased violence, as well to unsafe environments. One victim reported physical violence causing “various injuries: bruises, once a broken finger, wounded lips, and pulled hair;” and emotional violence through “[casual death threats] and non-casual threats of dishonor and shame when he [their partner] felt that I [the victim] was on the brink of leaving him after another serious argument.”¹⁷ The victim also stated, “in the beginning, this was more about control, jealousy and emotional abuse, which was already something hard to deal with.”¹⁸ Yet Turkmenistan’s current legislation would be inadequate in addressing emotional abuse as domestic violence or even providing adequate protection for the victim.¹⁹
8. Analysis of Turkmenistan’s Criminal Code revealed the existence of provisions that place victim-survivors at risk. For example, women are discouraged from reporting their abuse out of fear that the judge will apply “immorality” as a mitigating factor in their perpetrator’s sentencing.²⁰ By exploiting victim-blaming, perpetrators take advantage of a system that maintains impunity. Furthermore, these judicial systems reinforce gender inequality by allowing patriarchal stereotypes to remain a tool for controlling women’s agency and maintaining impunity. Other provisions that need amendments to fulfil international standards are the provisions on rape and forcing an individual to have sexual intercourse as the current legislation fails to address consent, as well as addressing other forms of criminal sexual conduct like intentional contact and touching of the victim’s intimate parts.²¹

¹⁴ Criminal Code of Turkmenistan (2022). See Articles 107 on Intentional Infliction of Harm to Health of Moderate Severity; Article 108 on Intentional Infliction of Harm to Health of Moderate Severity; Article 109 on Intentional infliction of grievous bodily harm in a state of passion; and Article 114 on Threat of Murder or Grievous Bodily Harm.

¹⁵ The Advocates, *Comments by The Advocates for Human Rights on the Criminal Code, Administrative Code, and Criminal Procedural Code of Turkmenistan*, Dec. 22, 2023, p.15, https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/International_Submissions/A/Index?id=457

¹⁶ Criminal Code of Turkmenistan, 2022, [Gazette of Milli Gengesh of Turkmenistan, 2022, No. 1-2, Art. 11] . <https://minjust.gov.tm/ru/hukuk/merkezi/hukuk/560>

¹⁷ Testimony on file with the authors (2023).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Criminal Code of Turkmenistan. See Article 56 on circumstances mitigating liability and Article 102 on Murder committed in a state of passion.

²¹ Criminal Code of Turkmenistan. See Article 132 on Rape and Article 135 on Forcing a person to have sexual intercourse.

9. The Administrative and Criminal Procedure Codes require further reforms to enhance victim safety and offender accountability. For instance, The Administrative Code currently contains a provision on warnings,²² with such provision, the State fails to convey a message of zero tolerance for domestic violence. These warnings offer offenders a second, third, or even endless opportunities to escape punishment rather than promote accountability. Likewise, the Criminal Procedure Code includes provisions that restrict the access to justice of individuals enduring domestic violence. For example, Articles 31 and 33 may exclude *ex officio* prosecution in some crimes that may constitute domestic violence and also rely on the cooperation of the victim in order to proceed with prosecution.²³ Article 31 also states that reconciliation of the parties should trigger dismissal of criminal charges in crimes that may involve instances of domestic violence.²⁴
10. Turkmenistan’s family law, policies and widespread stereotypes place victims in vulnerable situations with their abusers. Existing domestic legislation fails to protect victims of intimate partner violence. For example, recent amendments to Turkmenistan’s Family and Civil Procedure Codes in 2024 may complicate divorce proceedings for survivors of domestic violence by requiring in-person attendance and potentially delaying legal relief due to mandatory reconciliation periods.²⁵
11. Based on testimonials from the *Progress Online Survey on Domestic Violence*, the lack of effective laws and institutional capacity results in infrequent interactions with police and other responders, especially as involvement from law enforcement often comes too late.²⁶ Many testimonials indicated how domestic violence incidents resulted in the deaths of the victim or her child due to delayed or absent protection.²⁷ In our data we have found that in one of the few reported interactions with the police, the police did immediately intervene to stop the witnessed violence but hesitated to take the lead on the case.²⁸ Instead, the responsibility to report the case fell on the victim. The victim stated, “Their actions were not consistent. If anything, they acted more like good citizens than well-trained police officers. If anything, they failed to reassure me I was safe, and I could rely on their protection.”²⁹ This victim did not report their perpetrator based on fear of the potential repercussions they could face from their abuser and was forced to flee.³⁰ Afterwards, the police let the perpetrator go after his insistent claims this was “a family matter,”³¹ which proves the victim had no protection by state-responsible actors.

²² Code of Turkmenistan on Administrative Offenses (2013). [Gazette of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan, 2013, No. 3, Art. 52]. See Article 43 on Warnings.

²³ Criminal Procedure Code of Turkmenistan (2009) [Gazette of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan, 2009, No. 2].

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Art. 29.

²⁵ Progres, “Turkmenistan Makes Changes to the Divorce Legislation: What You Need to Know,” accessed Nov. 7, 2024 <https://progres.online/society/rule-of-law/turkmenistan-makes-changes-to-the-divorce-legislation-what-you-need-to-know/>

²⁶ *Supra* Note 17.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

II. Gender-based violence against women (List of Issues, paragraph 6)

12. The Committee, in its 2024 List of Issues, requested further information on the ability of victim-survivors of gender-based violence to access protection measures, medical services, legal aid, redress, and rehabilitation.³²
13. In its response, the State Party mentioned the 2022-2025 domestic violence prevention plan to engage police, healthcare, and social service providers to provide a unified “inter-agency” response to gender-based violence.³³ Furthermore, The State reported the Ministry of Internal Affairs conducted 312 awareness-raising activities, published 33 articles in the country’s newspapers and magazines, and produced eight television programs on gender-specific issues between 2018 to 2023.³⁴
14. In Turkmenistan, public pressure remains a significant barrier for women to report and seek help after experiencing violence. According to the *Health and Status of a Woman in the Family in Turkmenistan* report, the majority of women (80.1%) only seek assistance when they cannot endure the violence any longer.³⁵ Of these 80.1% of women, 26.1% fear that their husband/partner might kill them and 23.5% seek assistance once their children receive threats.³⁶ In a recent UNICEF report, statistics indicated that 25.5% of children witnessed a beating, and 5.9% reported direct harm to their child.³⁷ Furthermore, the report indicated that 61.3% of mothers had children from the ages of five to 12 exhibiting behavioral issues like nightmares, withdrawal, and aggressiveness.³⁸ These statistics demonstrate the prominence of women seeking support after the violence has escalated.
15. The *Health and Status of a Woman in the Family in Turkmenistan* report stated that around 31.2% of women do not want help, and those who do often turn to their families (23.8%) rather than relevant organizations (11.9%).³⁹ In the 2024 UNICEF report, 15% of respondents supported the idea that domestic violence is a private matter of the family, in which the state has no right to interfere.⁴⁰ In fact, only 9.8% of women have sought help from the police for domestic violence,⁴¹ and those women who sought help elsewhere were even lower: courts (5.9%), medical institutions (3.8%), and local elders (3.2%).⁴² The reasons for women’s low engagement with these resources is due to their mistrust of the authorities and their ability to

³² Supra Note 1.

³³ Supra Note 3, ¶ 32-33.

³⁴ Ibid, ¶ 69.

³⁵ Institute of State, Law and Democracy of Turkmenistan, State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan, Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan, and UNFPA. *Health and Status of a Woman in the Family in Turkmenistan. Report on the results of the national sample survey.* (2021, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan) 35, accessed June 16, 2022, https://turkmenistan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/report_health_and_status_of_a_woman_in_the_family_in_turkmenistan.pdf

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ UNICEF, Situation Analysis of Women and Children in Turkmenistan, 2024 (Nov. 2024), 10, accessed March 4, 2025, <https://www.unicef.org/turkmenistan/media/4801/file/%20SITUATION-ANALYSIS-of-%20Women-and-Children-in-Turkmenistan-eng.pdf.pdf>

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Supra Note 35, pp. 31, 32, 47.

⁴⁰ Supra Note 37, p. 12.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

provide support. One individual stated in Testimonials, “I don't believe there could be any help received,” while another explained “nobody taught us to go to the police or to a doctor.”⁴³ In some instances, mistrust in institutions was also based on the connections the abuser had with the police or higher-ranking authorities.⁴⁴ One testimony reported “...this guy had friends at [the] police, so contacting them wasn't an option.”⁴⁵ Another person wrote about a witnessed event of violence “...if a person like her boyfriend has connections, it is hard to imagine her getting help she needed, also because she was ethnically Russian, and he was Turkmen, the language and ethnicity gives him a lot of privilege in this case.”⁴⁶ Interaction with medical staff was only once mentioned in one testimony, where a witness indicated that the staff was “very rude” to the victim, which resulted in them not receiving sufficient help or receiving follow-up actions after the interaction.⁴⁷

16. The UNICEF report also gathered information on other reasons for women’s reluctance to seek support, especially as 69% of respondents believe that conflicts and disagreements are a normal part of any relationship, while 62% of respondents agree with the statement that men and women are equally violent towards each other.⁴⁸ The same report further dismissed accountability for the perpetrator with 92% of respondents blaming substance abuse, such as alcohol and drugs, as the cause for domestic violence, while 46% of respondents felt obligated to tolerate the violence to preserve their family.⁴⁹ The presented data from the government, UNFPA and UNICEF suggests a need for increased public awareness, training, and trust-building with relevant service providers, as well as specialized training for those service providers on the best practice responses to domestic violence.
17. The *Health and Status of a Woman in the Family in Turkmenistan* report has also indicated that only 0.4% pursue assistance from women’s organizations.⁵⁰ The report does not elaborate on which women’s organizations surveyed individuals refer to, what kind of support these organizations provide and whether they are connected to the only known NGO hotlines, Keyik Okara and Beyik Eyyam. Nonetheless, the reality of 0.4% women seeking assistance from these organizations reflects how very few women know or trust organizations that could provide help.
18. Testimonies collected by the authors show that many individuals emphasized this lack of knowledge about socio-economic and psychological support for victims, including access to and knowledge about available shelters.⁵¹ Individuals reported in their testimonies: “I have not looked for or heard of any shelters back then. I did not even know this kind of thing existed.”⁵² Another stated “if there are shelters, they are not advertised well or at all, which means they

⁴³ Supra Note 17.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Supra Note 37, p. 12.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Supra Note 35, p. 32.

⁵¹ Supra Note 17.

⁵² Ibid.

are not accessible.”⁵³ Several others expressed the desire for such support, with one woman stating, “I wish there were shelters where women could stay with her children. Where she could be provided with food and clothing, also a way she could gain her financial freedom.”⁵⁴ Another opined, “I wish the government provided shelter to women escaping such situations.”⁵⁵ There was only one example of a person sharing the contact information of an NGO providing shelter and services for victims.⁵⁶ Although there are organizations that provide help, such support is limited, poorly advertised, and likely poorly equipped and underfinanced.⁵⁷ There are only two shelters known to the Progres Foundation, which are run by Keyik Okara in Ashgabat and Beyik Eyyam in Lebap.⁵⁸ The government does not mention the existence of other shelters in their different responses in the treaty bodies revisions,⁵⁹ which are vital in protecting women from domestic violence, especially when the laws and systems actors’ responses are inadequate.

19. Recent research, including the *Digital Violence as a Mirror to Offline Realities* report, revealed that content promoting violence against women and girls online, including domestic violence, is prevalent.⁶⁰ According to findings, the absence of informative and educational content to engage the youth and the public is likely contributing to increased incidences of hateful speech and domestic violence against women and girls in Turkmenistan.⁶¹
20. Due to the absence of many other educational resources in Turkmenistan, Progres Foundation’s health portal, Saglyk,⁶² is the one of the only places where Turkmen speakers can learn about domestic violence and its impact, with an emphasis on public health costs for families and society. Saglyk consistently develops content explaining that domestic violence should not be considered only a private family matter. The content provided by Saglyk includes advice from lawyers and doctors, and explains the cycles of violence and types of violence. The website also provides a comparison of the level of protection from intimate partner violence in the region and globally. In addition, the Saglyk team has developed comprehensive content

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid. The name of the NGO was not indicated.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Information in file with the authors.

⁵⁸ Press Release, United Nations Turkmenistan, New specialized social services to prevent unintended pregnancy and domestic violence piloted in Turkmenistan, (Aug. 6, 2021). Also available online at <https://turkmenistan.un.org/en/139288-new-specialized-social-services-prevent-unintended-pregnancy-and-domestic-violence-piloted>

⁵⁹ Committee against Torture, *Third periodic report submitted by Turkmenistan under article 19 of the Convention, due in 2020**, (26 July 2023), U.N. Document CAT/C/TKM/3, ¶ 259, 263; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Sixth periodic report submitted by Turkmenistan under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2022**, (10 August 2022), U.N. Document CEDAW/C/TKM/6, ¶ 111.

⁶⁰ Progres Foundation and Saglyk. *Digital Violence as a Mirror to Offline Realities What does the public in Turkmenistan think about the status of women?* (2023), https://progres.online/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Digital_Violence_Full_Report_en.pdf

⁶¹ Progres Foundation and Saglyk, *Supplementary Report for the Adoption of List of Issues for the CEDAW Pre-session Working Group for the 87th session*, (April 7, 2023).

⁶² See more about the project at <https://www.saglyk.org/english/about-us.html>

concerning women’s health, access to abortion, contraception, family planning, as well as child mortality and its causes,⁶³ and guidance for journalists on how to report on domestic violence.⁶⁴

21. Although there are still widely held beliefs that domestic violence should remain a private matter, the Turkmen reality is that incidents and discussion related to domestic violence have increasingly reached the public’s attention. For example, in August 2022, a video containing scenes of domestic violence in a beauty salon was streamed publicly. In the video, a man is brutally attacking a woman, who appears to be his wife. The video was first published by independent media⁶⁵ and then went viral, including in meme pages in the country.⁶⁶ As perceived private affairs are not generally made public, this provided a rare opportunity to generate discussions about domestic violence among social media users both within and outside of Turkmenistan. Many comments reflected harmful stereotypes and perceptions that “family matters are private and sacred,” and “they should never be up for public discussion.”⁶⁷ These sentiments were common throughout many of the comments addressed to the page and account. Other comments included: “...you shouldn’t have shared this video with the public;” “No need to get into other people’s lives and put it on display...” or; “No, at least smooth things out at home, why [do you] need to do this in public.”⁶⁸ Despite this public reaction, there was counter-response on the importance of sharing this publicly to keep the abuser accountable.⁶⁹
22. Saglyk began the *Dymma!* (Don’t be silent!) campaign in 2020⁷⁰ in which anonymous stories are published from readers who are victims or witnesses of various forms of domestic violence (physical, psychological, sexual), and discrimination against women in public and private spheres. Saglyk received and published 22 stories, which resonated with followers on social media, and the campaign quickly became one of the most-read sections on the Saglyk digital platforms. In the stories involving sexual or physical violence, women and girls reported being heavily traumatized, scared, worn out, depressed, and even suicidal because of their experiences.⁷¹ However, according to the provided information, most of them remained silent due to shame, victim-blaming, or not having-or-knowing a reliable trusted person who can provide support.⁷² In most experiences, a pattern of rejection and blame has risen when women and girls disclose their horrific experiences to partners or in-laws.⁷³ According to information provided in the testimonies, only mothers seem to be understanding and supportive of their daughters. “She understood and didn't judge,” writes one of the authors of the anonymous

⁶³ Supra Note 60, p. 26.

⁶⁴ Original text *ŽURNALISTLER AÝAL-GYZLARA EDILÝÄN ZORLUK BARADA NÄDIP HABAR BERMELI?*, Saglyk, Nov. 6, 2023, <https://www.saglyk.org/makalalar/tazelikler-arhiwy/14-umumy/2592-zurnalistler-ayal-gyzlara-edilyan-zorluk-barada-nadip-habar-bermeli.html>

⁶⁵ See more at *Мужчина в Туркменистане избил женщину в салоне красоты. Видео 18+*, Turkmen News, Aug. 3, 2022, <https://turkmen.news/poboi-salon-krasoty/>.

⁶⁶ Supra Note 17.

⁶⁷ Supra Note 60, p. 28.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See more at <https://www.saglyk.org/english/about-us.html>

⁷¹ Supra Note 17.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

stories, and “she took part in helping me return to a normal life without suicidal thoughts and destructive habits.”⁷⁴ Another person wrote, “After four months, I told my mom everything and she immediately got me out of that house (the house of the harassing uncle).”⁷⁵ According to our data, with the exception of one abusive driver who was reported to the police, perpetrators were not held accountable.⁷⁶ Often, victims expressed feeling helpless and a lack of awareness of avenues for legal recourse.⁷⁷

III. Data collection and analysis (List of Issues, paragraph 6 & 13)

23. The Committee, in its 2024 List of Issues, requested the State Party to provide information on the existing complaint mechanisms for victims of domestic violence, especially whether they are independent instruments that influence the investigation and prosecution of domestic and gender-based violence.⁷⁸ The Committee further requested that Turkmenistan provide information on the sanctions given to perpetrators convicted of domestic violence (DV) and gender-based violence against women and girls (GBVAW).⁷⁹ Additionally, the Committee requested the amount of trainings held by the state focusing on domestic and gender-based violence.⁸⁰
24. The State Party noted in its response that the data on domestic violence was collected by a joint survey conducted with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Turkmenistan that collected data on DV.⁸¹ The State Party also noted that “judicial officials participated in 15 events on gender equality, the prevention of domestic violence, the protection of the rights of women and awareness-raising for officials.”⁸² Furthermore, 719 training sessions on gender-related topics were held by Turkmenistan each year between 2019 and 2023.⁸³
25. Nonetheless, the domestic violence survey portion of the NAPGE (2015-2020) and NHRAP (2016-2020) was continuously delayed and changed to the *Health and Status of a Woman in the Family in Turkmenistan* survey conducted in 2020 as part of the implementation of objectives of the first NAPGE for 2015-2020. It was the first survey and discussion that shed light on domestic violence statistics in the country.⁸⁴ For the first time, the government (reluctantly) acknowledged the existence of domestic violence in Turkmenistan through data that expressed how 12% percent of women in Turkmenistan experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner at some point.⁸⁵

⁷⁴ Original text “И моя мама [...] поняла и не осудила. Она приняла участие в том, чтобы помочь мне вернуться к нормальной жизни без суицидальных мыслей и деструктивных привычек.”

⁷⁵ Original text “Son 4 ay sonra ejeme hemmezady aytlym we ol meni tizden tiz ol jaydan chykardy.”

⁷⁶ Supra Note 17.

⁷⁷ Data on file with the authors.

⁷⁸ Supra Note 1.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid, ¶ 13.

⁸¹ Supra Note 3, ¶ 29.

⁸² Ibid, ¶ 67.

⁸³ Ibid, ¶ 68.

⁸⁴ Supra Note 35, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 13, 36, 45.

26. This 12% figure reveals how domestic violence is a threat to women throughout Turkmenistan; yet, despite it being an issue, the State still lacks protective and preventive responses to reduce this figure. For example, in a 2024 OSCE Gender Issue Programme study conducted with the Regional Office of the UNFPA for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, there were very minimal findings on Turkmenistan's perpetrator program due to there being no established programs in the country,⁸⁶ with only two government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGO): Keyik Okara with a shelter in Ashgabat and Taze Zaman with a shelter in the Lebap region.⁸⁷ Although these two shelters provided services for survivors, their approach to address perpetrators was very limited.⁸⁸ Without established, state-sanctioned perpetrator programs, it will be very challenging to achieve domestic violence prevention. As a result, these perpetrator programs will require legislative frameworks and guidance mechanisms that identify and refer perpetrators⁸⁹ so these targeted interventions achieve safety for survivors and accountability and long-term behavioral change of perpetrators.⁹⁰
27. In terms of state protection for DV, the country only has two hotlines for domestic violence and human trafficking. However, neither hotline publishes data or information on how and where they work, nor the general profile of their callers.⁹¹ Furthermore, the hotlines have been rarely mentioned on the UNFPA Instagram and Facebook accounts throughout 2020, 2021, and 2024,⁹² and when closely observing the UNFPA's social media pages it is clear that there is low engagement with the public specifically on Facebook that has only 1,500 followers and each post having around three or four likes. In addition with this low engagement, no campaign or content on domestic violence has been produced by the Ministry of Health, the State

⁸⁶ Progres Foundation, "Programs for Perpetrators of Domestic Violence in Turkmenistan," accessed on Nov. 11, 2024, <https://progres.online/society/programs-for-perpetrators-of-domestic-violence-in-turkmenistan/>

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ OSCE, Mapping of Programmes for Perpetrators of Domestic Violence in Central Asia (Sept. 2024), 5-6, <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/576324>

⁹¹ Information on file with the authors.

⁹² See posts: UNFPA Turkmenistan, *Haýsy ýagdaýlarda "Ynanç telefonyna" jaň edip bilersiňiz?*, Facebook (Oct. 26, 2020),

<https://www.facebook.com/unfpatkm/posts/pfbid0hN1F1i84LNwXeCSCVTHhbS2BGYCVLos6tMYKUw6tJMcFAA7g1KdfnNaEoVmG4U2fl>; UNFPA Turkmenistan, *Ýetginjek gyzlar "Ynanç telefonyna" haýsy soraglar bilen ýüz tutup bilerler?*, Facebook (Nov. 2, 2020); UNFPA Turkmenistan, *Ýetginjek gyzlar "Ynanç telefonyna" haýsy soraglar bilen ýüz tutup bilerler?*, Facebook (Nov. 2, 2020),

<https://www.facebook.com/https://www.facebook.com/unfpatkm/posts/pfbid02TPzYiXzb2RffrMEjAVnLc7WemtF3cixWr57SWJTU6y3c784UdYMEWffsyA5K3KU71/unfpatkm/posts/pfbid02TPzYiXzb2RffrMEjAVnLc7WemtF3cixWr57SWJTU6y3c784UdYMEWffsyA5K3KU71>; UNFPA Turkmenistan, *Zenanlar we maşgalalar üçin ynam telefony!*, Facebook (Aug. 16, 2024),

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=892679716225192&set=pb.100064495157899.-2207520000&type=3;>

UNFPA Turkmenistan, *Gyzlaryň we zenanlaryň saglyk we maşgala ýagdaýlary boýunça YNANÇ TELEFONY*, Instagram (Sept. 2, 2021), https://www.instagram.com/unfpa_turkmenistan/p/CTT9cEKMBBM/?img_index=1;

https://www.instagram.com/unfpa_turkmenistan/p/CTT94fIMMh/?img_index=1, UNFPA

Turkmenistan, *ТЕЛЕФОН ДОВЕРИЯ по вопросам здоровья и положения женщины и девочки в семье*,

Instagram (Sept. 2, 2021), https://www.instagram.com/unfpa_turkmenistan/p/CHFddPEgdZO/?img_index=3, and

UNFPA Turkmenistan, *Haýsy ýagdaýlarda "Ynanç telefonyna" jaň edip bilersiňiz?*, Instagram (Oct. 15, 2020), https://www.instagram.com/unfpa_turkmenistan/p/CGX09gDjWku/?img_index=1.

Statistics Committee, or the Institute of State, Law and Democracy of Turkmenistan.⁹³ The absence of public information and outreach creates barriers to access these services, especially as interactions on social media demonstrate how the public is uninformed and distrustful of their services.

28. Although the State claims to collect and analyze disaggregated data on gender-based violence, document complaints, conduct investigations, and prosecute criminal cases, the actual extent of reported and investigated domestic violence cases remains undisclosed to the public.⁹⁴ Most of the news that is spread on gender-based or domestic violence is often spread by independent media outlets, such as the death of 21 year old Byagul Annazarova, whose family has been trying to obtain justice since 2016,⁹⁵ and also the death of 20 year old Guljemal Jumamuradova from Bayramaly, whose mother is a migrant in Turkey trying to investigate the death of her daughter remotely.⁹⁶ In both these instances, the official report is that these women committed suicide, but there are valid suspicions that these women were victims of femicide.⁹⁷ The lack of transparency extends to the handling of cases, the number of individuals reporting incidents of violence, and the overall efficacy of the implemented measures. Furthermore, in the two cases highlighted above, there has been no accountability in these investigations, as law enforcement either has ignored requests for re-investigation⁹⁸ or the prosecutor's office has dismissed any evidence that could incriminate the male suspect.⁹⁹ These factors demonstrate the substantial gap of data, which results in our inability to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of justice efforts.

IV. Turkmenistan systemic failure to protect women materializes in the lack of access to sexual and reproductive care (art. 2)

29. Despite Turkmenistan's human rights commitments, its abortion legislation remains highly restrictive. Abortion is only permitted up to five weeks of pregnancy,¹⁰⁰ which is one of the shortest time frames in the world.¹⁰¹ This five week limit marks a sharp contrast to the 2002

⁹³ Data on file with the authors.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Original Text *Кто виноват в смерти Бягуль? Родные девушки, покончившей с жизнью 6 лет не могут добиться справедливости*, Radio Azatlyk, Sept. 10, 2022, <https://rus.azathabar.com/a/who-is-to-blame-for-byaguls-death/32027617.html>

⁹⁶ Original Text *История матери добивающейся справедливого расследования смерти дочери усилила активность туркменской полиции*, Radio Azatlyk, Aug. 22, 2024, <https://rus.azathabar.com/a/istoriya-materi-dobivayuscheysya-spravedlivogo-rassledovaniya-smerti-docheri-usilili-aktivnost-turkmenskoy-politsii/33087374.html>

⁹⁷ Ibid; Supra Note 95.

⁹⁸ Supra Note 96.

⁹⁹ Supra Note 95.

¹⁰⁰ See Aynabat Yaylymova, *Turkmenistan cut our abortion rights overnight. Our 'allies did nothing'*, openDemocracy, May 4, 2022, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/turkmenistan-abortion-rights-five-weeks-un-eu/> (citing to the original legislation in Turkmen at <https://minjust.gov.tm/hukuk/namalar>).

¹⁰¹ Center for Reproductive Rights, "The World's Abortion Laws, 2023," Dec 23, 2023, <https://reproductiverights.org/maps/worlds-abortion-laws/>. Globally, there is an overwhelming trend towards the liberalization of abortion laws.

law, which allowed abortions up to 12 weeks.¹⁰² Current regulations, amended in 2015 and 2017, permit abortion up to 22 weeks only for social or medical reasons with medical advisory approval.¹⁰³ Beyond 22 weeks, abortion is allowed only for medical reasons and based on a decision of a council of doctors in the manner prescribed by the authorized body.¹⁰⁴ The law, however, is ambiguous on the meaning of “social” and “medical” reasons. This lack of clarity is further complicated by the involvement of medical advisory commissions or councils of doctors, who must decide and agree on which abortions may be performed on these grounds.

30. Minors under the age of 18 face even greater challenges when it comes to accessing abortion services as they need parental consent and medical advisory approval before their pregnancy reaches 5 weeks.¹⁰⁵ In Turkmenistan, this is a prevalent occurrence as the teenage pregnancy birth rate for youth aged 10-19 is very high: 28 girls for every 1,000 women which is four times higher than in Europe.¹⁰⁶ In comparison with the national average of 12%, these statistics demonstrate and justify how this age group has a higher unmet need for family planning.¹⁰⁷
31. According to the Public Health Care Act, abortions must be performed in State facilities,¹⁰⁸ with only 95 reproductive health offices and 76 certified gynecologists nationwide¹⁰⁹ to serve over 1.6 million women of reproductive age.¹¹⁰ Further, there is no public information on whether public health insurance covers abortion costs. Despite lack of availability and accessibility of abortion services, care and information, unauthorized abortions are criminalized, with penalties including imprisonment, fines, or corrective labor.¹¹¹ If authorities learn about medical professionals performing an unauthorized abortion, they face severe consequences.¹¹²
32. Doctors who provide abortion services outside of a medical setting and outside of the scope of the law may be penalized with up to 2 years of correctional labor, or compulsory labor of up to 480 hours, or asked to pay a fine.¹¹³ If the person does not possess the necessary medical qualifications, they may be imprisoned or subjected to correctional labor for up to 2 years, or

¹⁰² Public Health Care Act, Sec. V, Art. 32, adopted on December 14, 2002 and amended on October 25, 2005 (Turkmenistan) available at <https://www.saglyk.org/images/stories/laws/3-2.pdf>.

¹⁰³ The Public Health Care Act, Chapter III, § 2, Art. 19.4 (1) and (2), adopted in 2015 as amended by the Laws of Turkmenistan dated 06/03/2017 No. 576-V, 11/25/2017 No. 659-V, 12/01/2018 No. 103-VI, 08/22/2020 No. 276-VI, 07/24/2022 No. 504-VI and 06/03/2023 No. 32-VII (Turkmenistan) available at <https://minjust.gov.tm/ru/hukuk/merkezi/hukuk/497> [hereinafter 2015 Public Health Care Act].

¹⁰⁴ Public Health Care Act. Art. 19.4(3).

¹⁰⁵ Public Health Care Act. Art. 19.3.

¹⁰⁶ *Supra* Note 37, p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Public Health Care Act. Art. 19.5.

¹⁰⁹ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *List of issues in relation to the second periodic report of Turkmenistan. Addendum. Replies of Turkmenistan to the list of issues* (Jul. 26, 2018), U.N. Doc. E/C.12/TKM/Q/2/Add.1, ¶142.

¹¹⁰ World Population Review, “Turkmenistan (2023),” accessed Dec. 23, 2023, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/turkmenistan-population> (Female population between the ages of 15 and 49 is 1,639,900 and the median age for females is 43.264).

¹¹¹ Criminal Code of Turkmenistan (2022). *See* Article 118.1 on illegal abortion.

¹¹² *Id.* Art. 118.

¹¹³ Criminal Code of Turkmenistan (2022). *See* Article 118 on illegal abortion.

asked to pay a fine.¹¹⁴ Further, if an individual is found guilty of committing more than one of these offenses, then imprisonment may be increased up to three years.¹¹⁵ In cases where an abortion resulted in death or harmed the health of the person seeking abortion, the impossible penalty may be up to five years of imprisonment. In all cases, an accessory penalty of disqualification to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities may also be imposed.¹¹⁶

33. Authorities strictly control abortion pill prescriptions,¹¹⁷ and it remains unclear whether essential medications, such as mifepristone and misoprostol, are accessible for individuals.¹¹⁸ Recent reports highlight that health-care workers are increasingly at risk of losing their license for performing abortions, even if the procedure is conducted legally – effectively, abortions are restricted to instances where the fetus shows no sign of life.¹¹⁹ These strict restrictions have resulted in an increase of illegal abortions and instances of bribery, with costs ranging from USD 500 to USD 14,300, depending on the location and stage of the pregnancy. Despite these expenses, patients are still denied post-abortion care and have no recourse for complications. As a result, those who cannot afford such costly procedures opt for other unsafe methods.¹²⁰ Although self-managed abortions are not explicitly banned, they could be interpreted as an offense, potentially placing individuals without medical qualification at risk of imprisonment, correctional labor, or fines.¹²¹
34. Restrictive abortion laws and limited family planning services increase women's vulnerability to experience further abuse, especially when they are victims of sexual violence. Approximately one in three have sought an abortion in Turkmenistan.¹²² As a result of these restrictive abortion laws, doctors regularly refuse abortion inquiries due to warnings from the Health Ministry and law enforcement,¹²³ further worsening the additional suffering and isolation.¹²⁴
35. Criminalizing abortion is counterproductive as it will lead to more women and girls seeking unsafe procedures, with limited access to post-abortion care, resulting in higher maternal mortality. It will also force many to remain in abusive relationships, perpetuating cycles of violence, poverty, and economic dependence. In response to the limited access to sexual and

¹¹⁴ Criminal Code of Turkmenistan (2022). See Article 118(3) on illegal abortion.

¹¹⁵ Criminal Code of Turkmenistan (2022). See Article 118(4) on illegal abortion.

¹¹⁶ Criminal Code of Turkmenistan (2022). See Article 118(5) on illegal abortion.

¹¹⁷ RFE/RL's Turkmen Service and Farangis Najibullah, *Turkmenistan's Crackdown On Abortion Puts Lives At Risk, Doctors Warn*, RadioFreeEurope.RadioLiberty, Aug. 27, 2024, <https://www.rferl.org/a/turkmenistan-crackdown-on-abortion--putting-lives-at-risk/33093207.html>

¹¹⁸ World Health Organization, "Global Abortion Policies Database", accessed Dec. 23, 2023, <https://abortion-policies.srhr.org/country/turkmenistan/>

¹¹⁹ Supra Note 117.

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Criminal Code of Turkmenistan (2022). See Article 118.3 on illegal abortion.

¹²² Supra Note 35, p. 13; Health and Status of a Woman in the Family in Turkmenistan, Report on the results of the national sample survey, UNFPA, p. 29, Figure 20 (2021) available at https://turkmenistan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/report_health_and_status_of_a_woman_in_the_family_in_turkmenistan.pdf.

¹²³ Supra Note 117.

¹²⁴ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*, (Jan.5, 2016), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/31/57, ¶51.

reproductive care, the UNFPA established an investment case for reducing the unmet need for family planning in Turkmenistan in 2021.¹²⁵ This case discovered that only 4.32% of vulnerable women in Turkmenistan have access to family planning.¹²⁶ As a result, the UNFPA argued that addressing their needs over the next decade could prevent 6,600 unsafe abortions and ensure 132,800 safe abortions.¹²⁷

36. The public has limited access to objective data on abortion. In past revisions, the State party claimed a decline in abortion rates.¹²⁸ The data on abortion is not publicly accessible, and generally, availability and access to data remain a major challenge.¹²⁹ Further, the government has not provided comprehensive data concerning abortion rates over the last 32 years. And the references mentioned in the *2021 Investment Case on Ending Unmet Need for Family Planning* are not publicly accessible online (e.g. data on abortions, cesarean sections, prematurely born unplanned children). In addition, the National Strategy for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health for 2020-2030 and the 2021-2025 National Strategy on "Healthy Mother - Healthy Child - Healthy Future," with crucial data have not been published online.
37. Although, Turkmenistan claims that in 2013–2017 abortion rates declined,¹³⁰ other sources show that countries with less restrictive abortion laws see fewer unintended pregnancies ending in abortion¹³¹ and due to its restrictive framework, in Turkmenistan about 83% of unintended pregnancies ended in abortion from 2015 to 2019,¹³² totaling around 28,900 abortions annually.¹³³ This rate is higher than the 80% average in Central Asia and significantly above other Asian regions. This high-rate underscores both that the restrictive framework for reproductive rights is not reducing the occurrence of abortions, as well as the urgent need for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care in Turkmenistan.¹³⁴
38. The State's Public Health Acts amendment to replace the term "abortion" with "induced or artificial termination of pregnancy,"¹³⁵ has been a setback for reproductive rights. The new

¹²⁵ UNFPA, *Investment Case on Ending Unmet Need for Family Planning in Turkmenistan* (2021), 2, accessed on Oct, 25, 2023, [investment case on ending unmet need for family planning in turkmenistan 0.pdf](#)

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 9. These groups of women include those who seek abortion, had previous delivery at an interval of less than 2 years, live in rural areas and socio-economically vulnerable, unemployed or unable to work, with 3 or more cesarian births, and absolute anatomic indications for a cesarean birth.

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. 10, table 12.

¹²⁸ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Second periodic report of States parties due in 2016, Turkmenistan*, (Jan. 24, 2016), U.N. Doc. E/C.12/TKM/2, ¶165.

¹²⁹ Information in file with the authors.

¹³⁰ Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, *List of issues in relation to the second periodic report of Turkmenistan*, (July 26, 2018), U.N. Doc. E/C.12/TKM/Q/2/Add.1, ¶148.

¹³¹ *New Estimates Show Worldwide Decrease in Unintended Pregnancies: Abortion Rates Fall in Regions Where It Is Broadly Legal*, Guttmacher Institute, July 23, 2020,

<https://www.guttmacher.org/news-release/2020/new-estimates-show-worldwide-decrease-unintended-pregnancies>

¹³² Guttmacher Institute, "Country Profile: Turkmenistan," accessed Dec. 23, 2023,

<https://www.guttmacher.org/regions/asia/turkmenistan>

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Bearak J et al., Unintended pregnancy and abortion by income, region, and the legal status of abortion: estimates from a comprehensive model for 1990–2019, *Lancet Global Health*, 2020, 8(9):e1152–e1161,

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(20\)30315-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(20)30315-6).

¹³⁵ 2015 Public Health Care Act, *supra* note 28, Art. 19.

term lacks clarity, complicates research, and may increase stigma.¹³⁶ This new term also advances State media promotion of the pronatalist views by reinforcing gender stereotypes, including the notion that women's role is to procreate and serve as the primary caregiver.¹³⁷ With these actions, the State is omitting to combat gender stereotypes, cultural stigma, and discriminatory norms that hinder access to reproductive health services.

Suggested recommendations for the Government of Turkmenistan

39. We respectfully suggest the CAT Committee provide the following recommendations to the Government of Turkmenistan:

- Draft a law addressing gender-based violence and domestic violence in line with CAT and other international human rights standards, and with the meaningful participation of civil society on the conception and drafting of the law, in particular those working on women's rights, as a matter of priority. Such a law should include protection measures for victims and their dependents with effective remedies and appropriate enforcement.
 - i. Develop comprehensive tools to estimate the risk of serious harm, escalation of violence and homicide in domestic violence cases, and put in place procedures to minimize this risk.
- Address the stigmatization of women who are victims of gender-based violence, including domestic and sexual violence, which deters them from reporting cases by implementing public-awareness campaigns, with substantive guidance from civil society organizations.
- Allocate and provide human and financial resources to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the Ministry of Health to prioritize the work on deepening gender inequality in Turkmenistan.
- 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. These campaigns must include:
 - i. Task the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, and the Ministry of Health with educating the public on existing support and complaint mechanisms for gender-based violence (GBV) against women and domestic violence.
 - ii. Develop national hotline services by setting up one phone number that is available 24/7 and is free, and publicize its work so the public learns about the available services.

¹³⁶ Aine Kavanagh and Abigail RA Aiken, The language of abortion: time to terminate TOP, *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 2018 125:9, 1065, <https://obgyn.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1471-0528.15137>.

¹³⁷ *Türkmenistanda köp çagaly maşgalalara goldaw bermek bilen bagly täze kanunlar güýje girdi*, Turkmenportal, Jan. 1, 2022, <https://turkmenportal.com/tm/blog/42956/turkmenistanda-kop-chagaly-mashgalalara-goldaw-bermek-bilen-bagly-taze-kanunlar-guyje-girdi>

- iii. Raise awareness of national hotline services by placing posters in highly frequented areas and publishing social media posts from official government platforms, ensuring that the content shares extensive information on all the services provided for women and girls and ways to access these hotlines.
- Establish mandatory training for judges, prosecutors, police, social workers, psychologists, and health-care workers on the dynamics of violence against women and on conducting victim-centered investigation procedures in cases of GBV against women.
- Ensure that assistance and services are specialized and meet the specific needs of women victims of violence, including:
 - i. Support for victims both to prevent and address violence. This includes mental health services, access to long-term counseling, affordable housing, childcare support, more accessible and quality legal assistance, and employment opportunities.
 - ii. Fund stakeholders that provide services and immediate protection to victims.
- Collect and publish comprehensive statistical data on gender-based violence disaggregated by age, gender, sex, and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator regularly, at least annually, including the work of Keyik Okara in Ashgabat and Beyik Eyyam in Lebap.
- Publish national protocols for health care professionals and law enforcement officers that have been developed in collaboration with UNFPA and civil society organizations.
- Collect data on all the steps taken to ensure the free choice of women to seek abortion in safe conditions in accordance with domestic legislation. Including any steps taken to decriminalize abortion and/or repeal the 5-week gestational age limit and other restrictions on abortions based on specific grounds or gestational age limits.
- Make abortion available on the request of the woman without restrictions and without the authorization, ensuring that national regulations regarding abortion are in accordance with international guidelines and the Covenant.
- The State must increase access to basic services in sexual and reproductive health by guaranteeing affordable and easy access to contraception and other reproductive health services for low-income or vulnerable populations.
- Ensure government's efforts to improve family planning for victims' gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence and sexual violence.
- Collect data on deaths and health complications for pregnant women who have been denied abortion, and based on this information having the state take measures to combat the stigmatization of women having abortions.
- Address the data gaps on abortions and publish objective data on abortion that is available to the general public.
- Take measures to ensure doctors and other medical professionals provide access to safe abortion for women whose lives or health are in danger as a result of pregnancy.
- Ensure that health professionals do not lose their licenses for performing legally sanctioned abortions, and clarify regulations and establish protection measures for these professionals to avoid punitive measures

- Establish a statewide campaign to address all stigmas associated with abortion and abortion practices.
- Provide information about the available procedures to ensure provider-patient confidentiality, and the holistic care for women accessing abortion care.