



THE KILLING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS – FEMICIDE IN ALBANIA 2024

Including murders/femicides, attempted murders,
causing serious injury with intent and causing suicide



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AP	The People's Advocate (Ombudsperson)
EU	European Union
GDP	General Directorate of Prisons
GDSP	General Directorate of the State Police
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
DV	Domestic Violence
GREVIO	Group of Experts for Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics of the Republic of Albania
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
HJC	High Judicial Council
HPC	High Prosecutorial Council
CoM	Council of Ministers
CC	Criminal Code
CPC	Criminal Procedure Code
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
CRM	Coordinated Referral Mechanism
MHSW	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
CPU	Child Protection Unit
LSGU	Local self-government units
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UN	United Nations
CSO	Civil society organizations
CPO	Child Protection Officer
GPO	General Prosecutor's Office
PO	Protection Order
IPO	Immediate protection order (emergency barring order)
POIP	Preliminary order of immediate protection
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Gender Empowerment
DCM	Decision of the Council of Minister

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, prepared by the Office of the People's Advocate in the framework of the Observatory on Femicide, provides an in-depth and multifaceted analysis of the phenomenon of extreme violence against women and girls in Albania during 2024.¹ The document is a follow-up to the first report entitled “The killing of women and girls and femicide in Albania 2021-2023”,² further expanding the scope of monitoring and analysis by covering additional forms of gender-related extreme violence against women and girls, besides killings of women and girls and femicides.

The report aims to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the prevalence and forms of extreme violence acts against women and girls identified in 2024, examine the response of the responsible institutions to those cases and identify any existing gaps in protection and prevention. By applying an approach which combines statistical analysis, descriptive presentations of concrete cases, and a review of the legal and social context and institutional interventions, the report seeks to serve as an important tool in addressing the issues identified and highlighting the need for coordinated interventions, with a view to preventing violence and strengthening support mechanisms for women and girls survivors of violence.

THE SCOPE OF THE REPORT The present report builds on the findings and recommendations contained in the first report, while at the same time following the example of a number of European countries that have set up their Femicide Observatories as dedicated structures for the monitoring gender-related killings. In this context, the focus of the current report extends beyond just cases of killings of women and girls³ and includes other forms of extreme violence against women as well.

More specifically, in addition to the femicide incidents that were recorded in 2024, the report also covers other criminal offences, including attempted killings, causing serious injury with intent (“Causing serious injury”, Article 88 of the Criminal Code); and causing suicide (Article 99 of the Criminal Code).

The purpose of applying this broader scope is to enable a better and more comprehensive understanding of the extremely serious issue of violence against women,

1. The establishment of the Observatory on Femicide and the preparation of periodic reports was hailed as a success story at the Global Meeting on Measuring Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls (Femicides/Femicides). The meeting was held in July 2025 and brought together representatives from international organizations, states and institutions directly engaged in measuring and addressing femicide and gender-based violence.

2. See Report, available at <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/sq/list/publications/rrapporte-speciale-1/>

3. The analysis of killings of women and girls in Albania and the identification of femicide cases is carried out in accordance with the Statistical Framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls (also referred to as “femicide/feminicide”), prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women). The document is available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Statistical_framework_femicide_2022.pdf

by not restricting it to just the most serious cases of the use of violence that resulted in fatalities, but also addressing other forms of violence that present a grave risk to women and girls which are indicative of systemic failures in prevention and protection.

THE METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION are based on a mixed-method approach, combining primary and secondary data sources. The primary data were obtained through official communications with the responsible institutions, including the State Police, prosecution offices, courts, local self-government units and healthcare institutions. In addition, the report includes data collected from the monitoring of court hearings, analyses of court decisions and judgments and a review of media reports. The secondary data were obtained from existing national and international studies and reports which look into the phenomena of femicide and gender-based violence from various analytical and contextual perspectives.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT The report starts with an **introduction**, which sets out the importance of analysing the issues related to crimes against women, the purpose of the report and how it links with and builds on the previous 2021-2023 report, followed by a brief overview of the phenomenon of extreme violence against women and girls in Albania and the methodology used in data collection, processing and analysis.

Chapter I deals with the phenomenon of extreme violence against women and girls in Albania. It provides an overview of the Albanian legal framework, including regarding the criminal offenses of murder of women and girls, attempted murder, causing serious injury with intent and causing suicide. In addition, this chapter presents some relevant jurisprudence from the European Court of Human Rights and highlights international standards and pertinent European case law dealing with femicide and extreme violence against women.

Chapter II presents a descriptive overview of the cases of killings of women and girls, including those classed as femicides, which occurred in Albania in 2024. The data obtained were analysed in conjunction with the findings of the Report covering 2021-2023, with a view to providing a comparative picture and assessing any developments in relation to this issue. The chapter continues with a detailed analysis of the cases of killings of women and girls, including Information on the victims, perpetrators and the circumstances in which the incidents occurred. An important part of this chapter is dedicated to presenting the role of the People's Advocate in addressing institutional intervention needs for the purpose of preventing femicide and violence against women, based on the findings and recommendations of the first report.

Chapter III provides an analysis of the cases of attempted killings and causing serious injury with intent that occurred in 2024. This chapter contains Information on the victims, the perpetrators and the circumstances in which the incidents occurred, including an analysis of the history of violence exercised against the victims over the years and in the run up to the criminal incident. It also addresses the role of the responsible

institutions and agencies in supporting survivors, both before and after incidents, and identifies the practices followed and any gaps found in institutional response.

Chapter IV addresses the role of local authorities and health institutions in responding to cases of extreme violence against women and girls, focusing on both preventive interventions and on the actions and measures taken after the incidents. In addition, this chapter contains an analysis of the consequences of these serious crimes beyond the direct victims, including their long-term impact on children, other family members and the wider community.

Chapter V analyses the role of the police and prosecution in investigating crimes against women and girls, with a focus on identifying the gender motives behind such criminal offenses. The chapter continues with a review of court decisions/judgments related to the cases under review. A special place in this chapter is given to the findings reached from the monitoring of court proceedings, which are useful for assessing the approach applied by judicial institutions vis-à-vis the required standards in addressing gender-based violence.

Chapter VI lists a set of general and specific recommendations addressed to key responsible institutions, which focus on two main areas:

- ⦿ Measures aiming at preventing femicide and other crimes against women by strengthening protection and support mechanisms, ensuring the timely identification of high-risk cases and mounting a rapid and coordinated response by the relevant agencies.
- ⦿ Measures to be taken during the investigation and trial proceedings involving crimes against women, with a special focus on the examination of the history of violence against the victim and identification of any gender-related motives; as well as measures for engaging perpetrators in rehabilitation programs while they are serving their sentences.

The annex contains five case studies related to criminal offenses of the types that are the subject of this report. Also included are interviews with women survivors of gender-based crimes and their family members which seek to present the human experience beyond statistical data and provide further support to the qualitative analysis of the report.

KEY STATISTICAL FINDINGS PRESENTED IN THE REPORT:⁴

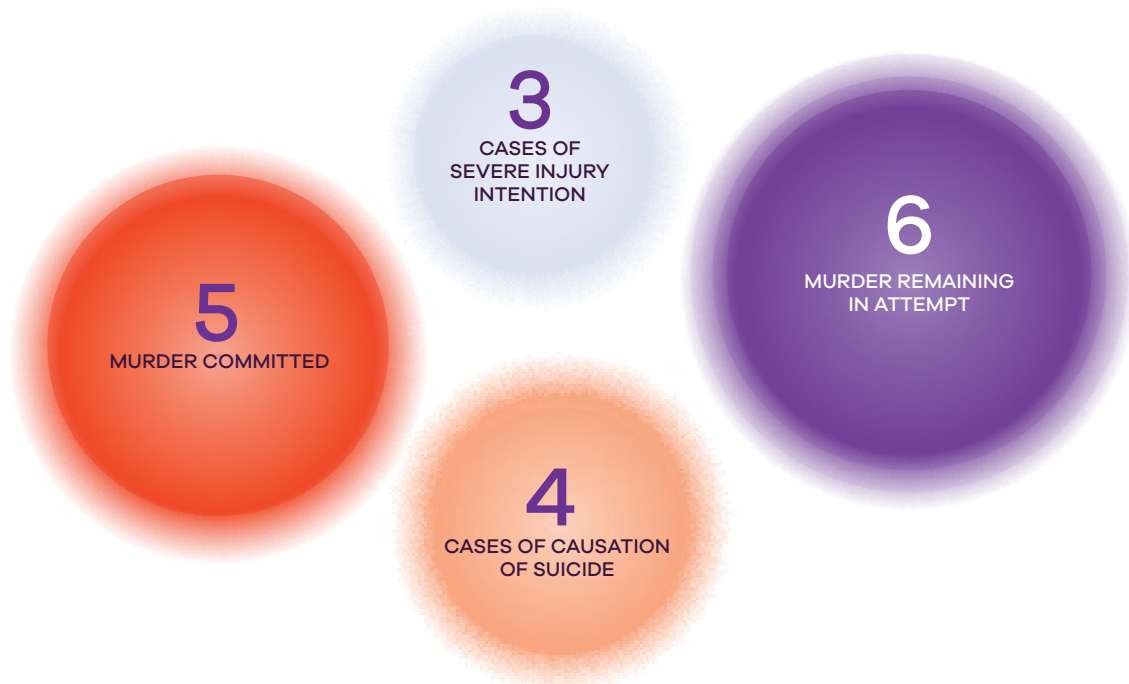
In the period covered by this report, a **total of 18 cases** of extreme acts of violence committed against women and girls were recorded; of these five were murders, six were attempted murders, three were cases of causing serious injury with intent and four cases of causing suicide.

4. The relevant findings on the level of implementation of the People's Advocate's recommendations made in the first report (which covered the period between 2021 and 2023) and the findings on the role and response of key relevant institutions, judicial and law-enforcement bodies, can be found at the end of the respective sections of the report.

An analysis of the circumstances in which the criminal offences of killing women and girls were committed, based on the Statistical Framework established by the United Nations,⁵ shows that **three out of the five killings committed fall in the femicide category**. Two of them were cases of husbands killing their wives, while the third involved a double murder, where an elderly woman and her husband were killed by their neighbour. This case was also classified as femicide based on the specific circumstances and the manner in which the criminal offence was committed.

In the remaining cases, two women were killed by their sons who were reportedly suffering from mental health issues.⁶ These incidents, although not strictly speaking femicides according to the standard definition of the crime, remain part of the general analysis conducted here due to an established link with domestic violence.

EXTREME VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS 2024

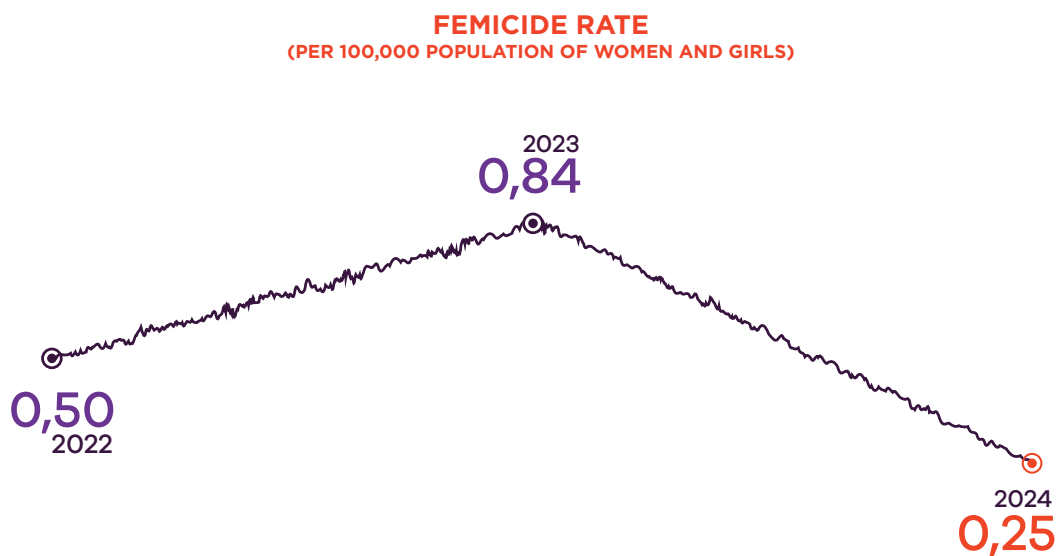


5. Statistical Framework for Measuring the Gender-Related Killing of Women and Girls (also referred to as “femicide/femicide”), prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The document is available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Statistical_framework_femicide_2022.pdf; According to this framework, “gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide) are defined as intentional homicides of female victims committed by intimate partners, those committed by other family members and those committed by other known or unknown perpetrators with a certain modus operandi or in specific contexts indicative of gender-motivations.”

6. The perpetrators mental health condition was established and documented by the competent authorities.

In 2024, the number of femicides dropped considerably, with only three recorded cases, compared to eight in 2023, five in 2022 and eleven in 2021. This downward trend is a positive development; however, its interpretation requires careful analysis in order to establish whether the improvements are due prevention work, awareness-raising and/or institutional response.

Similarly, the femicide rate recorded in 2024 was 0.25 per 100.000 women and girls, which constitutes a sharp decrease compared to 2023, when this rate stood at 0.84 per 100.000 women and girls.



In 2024, **there were six recorded cases of attempted murders of women and girls**. Of these, two were committed by the victims' husbands, one by a former boyfriend, one by the victim's father, one by a close relative and one by a person unknown to the victim.

Further, **three cases of causing of serious injury with intent** were recorded: one was committed by the victim's husband, one by the victim's son who was suffering from mental health issues, and one by two young women who were known to the victim.

As regards the criminal offence of **causing suicide**, **four cases were recorded** in which the victims lost their lives and the perpetrators were criminally prosecuted. In two of the cases, the charged perpetrators were the victims' husbands; in one case it was the victim's fiancé and the other involved the victim's boyfriend.

In terms of the geographical location of the incidents, the offences were committed in various towns and regions of the country. **In ten out of the 18 cases identified** for

the purposes of this report (about 56%) the crimes occurred in rural areas. This points to the fact that femicides are more prevalent in rural areas, where the majority of such incidents occurred (56%), showing that geographical remoteness, limited access to support services and protection mechanisms, and traditional patriarchal social norms may increase the risk of extreme violence against women and girls in these areas.

GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE CASES AND PERPETRATORS

In the eighteen cases examined for the purposes of this report, a total of **19 suspects or criminally prosecuted perpetrators** were identified, where the overwhelming majority were individuals acting on their own, and only one case involved co-perpetration.

The information provided in the following chapters contains details about the victims and perpetrators, previous history of violence, motives identified, means or instruments used in the commission of the criminal offences and the procedural steps taken in each case. This analysis seeks to contribute to a more thorough understanding of the dynamics of extreme gender-based violence and the respective institutional response.

In **17 cases**, the suspected perpetrators of the crimes were men and boys, with only one case where the co-perpetrators were two young women. In nine cases, the perpetrators were convicted by a judgment of a first instance court of general jurisdiction. In two of those cases, the judgment was appealed before the appeals court of general jurisdiction. In three cases, the trial proceedings against the suspected perpetrators are still ongoing, while seven cases are still in the investigation stage.

In three cases, the perpetrators committed suicide or died shortly after committing the crime.⁷ The measures imposed against the rest of the perpetrators include pre-trial detention in fourteen cases and house arrest with obligation to report in two cases.

As regards the motives behind the crimes, the information collected shows that in the majority of the cases the extreme violence exercised against women and girls was for reasons such as seeking to coercively control the victim, jealousy, refusal to accept a break-up or divorce, and retaliation.

The criminal offences under review, including murder, attempted murder or causing serious injury with intent were committed with extreme cruelty and brutality and involved the use firearms, blunt or sharp objects, inflammable substances and direct physical violence.

7. In one murder case, the perpetrator committed suicide shortly after the incident. In another case, the perpetrator lost his life after being attacked by his son, who was in a state of extreme mental shock. In the third case, the father fired a gun at his daughter, with the intention to kill her, and then committed suicide.

In five out of the 18 cases under review, the **victims had previously sought help** from the police, but the relevant authorities had failed to intervene effectively to prevent the incidents from happening.

As regards the existence of previous history of violence, the information collected shows that three of the five women who were killed (60%) had been previously abused by the perpetrators. In the remaining two cases, there is no confirmed information on any previous history of violence as the investigations in these cases are still ongoing. In four out of the six attempted killings, the victims had previously suffered abuse at the hands of the perpetrators. In addition, two of the three cases of causing of serious injury with intent, there was also previous history of violence against the victims by the perpetrators of the crime.

The information collected in relation to all four cases of gender-based violence-related suicides shows that the victims had previously suffered abuse at the hands of the perpetrators.

In total, **in 13 out of the 18 cases reviewed for the purposes this report** (about **72%**), the victims had suffered constant abuse in the hands of the perpetrators prior to the commission of the criminal offence.

In addition, the analysis shows that **seven** of the **19 perpetrators had previous convictions** for various criminal offences.

The investigation and trial stages of the cases that have now concluded were carried out within a reasonable time, in accordance with the timeframes set out in the applicable law.

In the cases where a final judgment has already been pronounced, the sentences handed down against the perpetrators fell within the sentencing ranges provided in the criminal law. However, in addition to imposing a punishment, it is important that judicial decisions also provide for the perpetrators' compulsory attendance of rehabilitation programs during the time they are serving their sentences. Such measures may play an important role in preventing recidivism, changing attitudes and violent behaviour in the long term.

The data collected for the report shows that the women victims were mothers of a total of **33 children**, nine of which were under 18. In one particularly tragic case, **three children** lost their lives together with their mother, who committed suicide in grave psychological and social circumstances.

INTRODUCTION

The year 2024 marked a period of increased engagement on the part of the Office of the People's Advocate, with special focus on promoting greater transparency, strengthening inter-institutional cooperation and addressing social issues that greatly affect the society, particularly gender-based violence and femicide.⁸

Gender-based violence and domestic violence represent some of the greatest and most complex challenges facing the Albanian society. Gender-based killings of women, internationally referred to as femicides, constitute an extreme form of violence, deeply rooted in cultural and social norms. These are not just criminal acts committed by one individual; they reflect structural gender inequalities, constant failings by state institutions, and a social climate characterized by collective indifference and silence. Femicide essentially reflects structural gender inequalities, institutional gaps in providing effective protection to victims and, invariably, a climate of silence or social indifference in the face of gender-based violence.

Femicide is a systemic issue that transcends national borders and affects all countries to varying degrees.⁹ The most recent survey in European Union member states, carried out jointly by Eurostat, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU-FRA) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), found that violence against women remains a worryingly widespread issue. According to the data collected, on average, one in three women has experienced some form of violence in their lifetime. In general, prevalence appears to be very similar to the figures recorded a decade ago, in the first survey of this kind.¹⁰

Additionally, other serious crimes committed against women and girls – representing escalating forms of violence – are indicative of the fact that European states and societies continue to face serious challenges in guaranteeing women's human rights and effectively protecting their lives and dignity.

Albania's experience in establishing and operating an Observatory on Femicide was included as a case study" in the joint report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UN Women, entitled "Femicide in 2024 – Global

8. See Office of the People's Advocate, 2024 Annual Report, p. 270, available at: <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/sq/list/publications/rraporte-speciale-1/>;

9. See ECtHR, final judgment in the case of *N.D. v. Switzerland*, regarding Switzerland's positive obligation to protect a woman from attempted murder and torture at the hands of her former partner. The European Court of Human Rights recognized for the first time that femicide is a systemic issue that transcends borders and affects all countries.

10. See *Femicides in 2024*. The report can be accessed at: <https://knowledge.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/femicides-in-2024-global-estimates-of-intimate-partner-family-member-femicides-en.pdf>, p. 14.

11. See *Femicides in 2024*, The report can be accessed at: <https://knowledge.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/femicides-in-2024-global-estimates-of-intimate-partner-family-member-femicides-en.pdf>, p. 14.

Assessments of Intimate Partner/Family Member Femicide”. The data provided in the report shows that, globally, nearly 50,000 women and girls were killed by their intimate partners or other family members during 2024, which means that an average of 137 women and girls worldwide lost their lives every day at the hands of a partner or close relative.¹²

This second Albanian report, prepared by the Office of the People’s Advocate in the framework of the Observatory on Femicide, builds on the experience and findings of the previous report, expanding the scope of monitoring and analysis. In addition to gender-based killings of women and girls, the present report also includes other forms of extreme violence against women¹³ which are often the precursors and/or direct consequences of the same system of violence.

This report was drafted as a response to the need for an in-depth, independent and evidence-based analysis on how extreme violence against women is manifested and addressed in Albania. It aims to make a contribution to raising institutional and societal awareness about the dimensions and consequences of gender-based violence, identifying existing gaps in protection and prevention mechanisms, analysing institutional practices in dealing with concrete cases, and identifying systemic challenges that hinder effective response. In addition, the report aims to promote the development of an integrated and gender-sensitive approach in the processes of designing and implementing public policies for the protection of women and girls. In accordance with the constitutional mandate as a guarantor of fundamental human rights and freedoms, the People’s Advocate considers this report an integral part of the efforts to foster a coordinated, responsible and comprehensive response to a social problem that threatens both the life, well-being and dignity of women and girls in Albania.

The aim of this report is not only to systematically document cases of extreme violence against women, but also to foster a culture of institutional accountability and public engagement. The approach seeks to contribute to putting an end to gender-based violence and building a fairer, more equitable and a safer society for all citizens without exception or distinction.

The report is designed to serve as a tool for advocacy and reflection and aims to support the development of more effective policies for preventing and addressing violence against women. In essence, it represents a clear call for immediate, coordinated and sustained action at all levels of the state and society for guaranteeing women’s right to life, security and dignity.

12. See *Femicides in 2024*, The report can be accessed at: <https://knowledge.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/femicides-in-2024-global-estimates-of-intimate-partner-family-member-femicides-en.pdf>

13. Cases of attempted murder, intentionally causing serious injury and causing suicide.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND HOW IT LINKS WITH THE REPORT PUBLISHED IN 2024

The purpose of the present report is to analyse and document cases of extreme violence against women and girls, including gender-based killings (femicides), attempted killings, causing serious injury with intent, and causing suicide. Through this analysis, the aim is to identify problems and gaps in the institutional response regarding the prevention of violence, femicides and suicides.¹⁴ In addition, the report aims to make concrete recommendations on how to strengthen the mechanisms for the prevention of crimes against women and girls and improve institutional response in support of victims and their families.

The link the report published in 2024 – This report represents a continuation of the analytical work undertaken in the context of the previous report which addressed cases of killings of women and girls during 2021-2023. Similarly to the approach applied in the previous report, the present report is based on the UN Statistical Framework and maintains methodological coherence with its predecessor, providing further comprehensive insights on the evolving situation in this regard. In addition, it further expands its scope to address other forms of extreme violence against women and girls, with the aim of improving understanding and increasing impact in the field of policymaking and advocacy.

2. METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

Both primary and secondary data were used in the preparation of this report. The primary data were collected through official requests addressed to the responsible institutions, as well as through direct monitoring of court proceedings in trials related to cases of extreme violence against women and girls. The secondary data, on the other hand, were obtained through desk review of relevant literature, including previous published studies on femicide and gender-based violence in Albania and beyond.

14. The word suicide comes from the Latin, “sui” (self) + “caedere” (to kill) = to kill oneself.

Primary data collection and analysis

The primary data were obtained through:

- ⊙ analysing information and data provided by the competent bodies through official channels;
- ⊙ examining indictments and judgments related to the criminal offences of killing or attempted killing of women and girls, causing serious injury with intent and causing suicide;
- ⊙ monitoring of trial hearings dealing with these offences;
- ⊙ interviews; and
- ⊙ analysing media reports and articles.
- ⊙ Data collection was enabled through cooperation with the main responsible institutions, including:
 - ⊙ State Police structures,
 - ⊙ prosecution offices at judicial districts,
 - ⊙ judicial district courts,
 - ⊙ local government bodies, and
 - ⊙ health institutions.

In collecting data and information, the same practice was followed as in the preparation of the first report. In relation to cases of killings of women and girls, the same categories of data were requested¹⁵ from the above-mentioned bodies, with a view to maintaining methodological continuity and comparability of data. Regarding the offences included for the first time in the present report, such as causing serious injury with intent and causing suicide, the information was requested in accordance with the specificities and concrete characteristics of such incidents.

The criminal offenses subject to monitoring and analysis in the framework of the report

This report examines the criminal offenses under Article 76 **“Murder with intent”**; Article 77 **“Murder with intent connected to another crime”**; Article 78 **“Premeditated murder”**; Article 79 **“Murder committed under other qualifying circumstances”**; and Article 79/c **“Murder in the context of family relationships”**; including cases of **attempted killing, causing serious injury with intent and causing suicide**, where the victims were women and girls. All these criminal offenses are investigated, prosecuted and tried in the first instance, by the prosecution offices and first instance courts of general jurisdiction in the respective judicial districts.

15. See Office of the People's Advocate, Annual Report, 2024. Available at <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/sq/list/publications/rraporte-speciale-1/>, p. 14.

Temporal scope

The cases identified and analysed in the present report cover the period between January and December 2024. The monitoring of court hearings, on the other hand, took place in 2025, with a focus on the trials involving the criminal offenses subject of this report, which were being heard at various first instance courts of general jurisdiction at the time.

Limitations of the methodology

Based on the review of the relevant information and records provided by the General Directorate of the State Police, prosecution offices and judicial district courts, the Office of the People's Advocate contacted local police directorates and municipal authorities where the victims were resident. In addition, information was also sought from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare regarding the role of healthcare institutions in the handling of these cases. It is worth noting that the majority of the institutions contacted expressed their readiness to collaborate and provided useful information on femicide.

However, some problems were identified in the process of providing information, including:

- ⊙ delays in responding to requests for information,
- ⊙ failure to provide the information sought as requested,
- ⊙ perfunctory responses, not supported with detailed or complete information,
- ⊙ mismatched information or inaccurate information,
- ⊙ lack of standardized data.

Where discrepancies in the information provided were identified, requests for further information or clarification were made and ongoing contact maintained with the focal points in the responsible institutions in order to ensure that the data relied on in this report were accurate and adequate.

CHAPTER I

FEMICIDE AND EXTREME VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ALBANIA: THE PHENOMENON, APPLICABLE NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND INTERNATIONAL JURISPRUDENCE

1.1

An overview of the situation of extreme violence against women and girls in Albania

“ny act of gender-based violence that results, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”

The United Nations definition of violence against women

“Extreme violence” against women refers to the most severe forms of gender-based violence leading to grave consequences, which may go as far as loss of life. According to data published by national and international organizations, Albania is facing an increase in cases of extreme violence against women, especially in the context of domestic and intimate relationships.

According to the first report, “The killing of women and girls and femicide in Albania 2021-2023”,¹⁶ the total number of cases of killings of women and girls recorded in 2023 was 13; of these eleven were killed by their husbands, former husbands, partners or family members. A further five cases of killings of women and girls were recorded in 2024.¹⁷ Various research studies on violence against women and girls in Albania¹⁸ have shown that the cause of this violence is rooted in a number of significant factors, which largely relate to patriarchal and traditional gender norms and women’s economic dependence, which makes it difficult for them to leave abusive relationships. In addition, there is an insufficiency of measures for the prevention of violence and punishment of perpetrators, low level of public awareness, and other factors such as alcohol and substance abuse. While Albania has taken important steps to continuously improve its legal framework on the protection and support of women against violence, the practical implementation of this framework in real life remains difficult due to a number of structural and institutional challenges that will be analysed in more detail further in this report.

16. See Office of the People’s Advocate, Annual Report, 2024. Available at: <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/sq/list/publications/rrapporte-speciale-1/>

17. According to the European Commission’s 2024 Report on Albania, the persistently high rate of killings of women per capita remains a serious concern. The report highlights the work of People’s Advocate in monitoring and reporting femicide cases through the Observatory on Femicide. The Report can be accessed at: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a8eec3f9-b2ec-4cb1-8748-9058854dbc68_en?-filename=Albania%20Report%202024.pdf;

18. See: “National Surveillance on Violence against Women and Girls in Albania” INSTAT (2018). See also, Report of Office of the People’s Advocate on the situation of domestic violence and violence against women in Albania for the period January 2020-September 2021.

1.2

Analysis of the legal framework addressing the criminal offences of murder of women and girls (femicide), attempted murder, causing serious injury with intent and causing suicide

1. KILLINGS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS (FEMICIDE)

Over the past few years, the Albanian criminal legislation has been aligned with international standards for the protection of human rights by introducing new provisions aimed at guaranteeing special protections for women, girls and minors. However, femicide is not yet recognized as a distinct criminal offense in the Criminal Code, and the killings of women and girls are covered within the general framework of criminal offences against life.¹⁹ The gender element is reflected indirectly only in Article 50 of the Criminal Code, which refers to gender-related motives and crimes committed in the context of family relationships as aggravating circumstances.²⁰

Although the current legal framework contains important elements that are aligned with the international standards set by the United Nations, this lack of recognition of femicide as a specific, distinct criminal offense continues to restrict the effective identification, analysis and prevention of this phenomenon in Albania. In the new draft Criminal Code, currently under review, the killing of women and girls because of their gender is included as one of the forms of murder committed under qualifying circumstances.²¹ This constitutes an important step towards taking into account, as a matter of course, the gender motive as a criminally important element.

In European legislative practice, only a limited number of states have legally recognized femicide as a separate criminal offense.²² More recently, in November 2025, the Italian parliament passed a law on the recognition of femicide as a discrete criminal category, explicitly institutionalizing the criminalization of this form of gender-based violence.²³

19. Articles 76, 77, 78, 79 and 79/c of the Criminal Code.

20. For more detailed information regarding the criminal legislation on the killing of women and girls in Albania, see the first Report, "The killing of women and girls and femicide in Albania 2021-2023", p. 18.

21. A new Criminal Code and a comprehensive law addressing all forms of violence against women and girls, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence, are currently in the process of being prepared.

22. See "The killing of women and girls and femicide in Albania 2021-2023", p. 18.

23. According to this provision: "Anyone who causes the death of a woman, when the act was committed as an act of hatred, discrimination, subjugation, or as an act of control, possession, or domination of a woman because she is a woman, or in connection with her refusal to establish or maintain an emotional relationship, or as an act intended to limit her individual freedoms, is sentenced to life imprisonment."

2. ATTEMPTED MURDER

According to Article 22 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania, an attempt to commit a criminal act constitutes a crime if the act attempted is punishable by law.²⁴ In the cases of the offences specified under Articles 76, 77, 78, 79 and 79/c, the attempted form of which is criminally punishable, the perpetrator is criminally liable pursuant to Article 22 of the Criminal Code.²⁵ *In the case of attempt, the courts impose lower sentences than where the offence was actually completed. However, the sentence may not be lower than a third of the minimum sentence imposed when the corresponding criminal offense was actually committed.* In many cases of violence against women, attempted murders are the result of a previous abusive relationship and there is a direct link between them and factors such as violent and coercive control, jealousy, refusal to accept a breakup, separation, or filing for divorce initiated by the victim. These circumstances underline the need for an in-depth analysis of gender-based motives during the investigation and trial proceedings of these criminal offenses.

3. CAUSING SERIOUS INJURY WITH INTENT

Article 88 of the Criminal Code concerns the criminal offense of causing serious injury with intent, which involves the causing of serious harm that directly affects the physical health or endanger the life of the victim. The legal provision under Article 88 of the Criminal Code reads as follows:

“Intentional injury that results in the mutilation, disfigurement or any other permanent damage to a person’s health, in the termination of a pregnancy, or which constituted a threat to life at the time of its infliction, is punishable by a prison term of three to ten years. The same offense, when committed against several persons, or a person who is a spouse, former spouse, partner or former partner, close family member or an in-law of the perpetrator of the criminal offense, or where it resulted in someone’s death, is punishable by a prison term of five to fifteen years.”

Where such injury is inflicted in aggravating circumstances, the offence attracts a more severe sentence. Such circumstances include:

1. The crime is committed against several persons.
2. The crime is committed against someone with whom the perpetrator has a close personal relation, such as:

24. “An attempted criminal offence is one where, even though a person takes direct action to commit it, the offence is interrupted and not completed for circumstances beyond his or her own volition”.

25. Article 76 “Intentional killing”, Article 77 “Intentional killing in connection with another crime”, Article 78 “Premeditated murder”, Article 79 “Murder under other qualifying circumstances” and Article 79/c “Murder in the context of family relationships”.

- ⊙ a current or former spouse,
- ⊙ a current or former partner,
- ⊙ an immediate family member (children, parents, brothers, sisters),
- ⊙ close in-laws (father-in-law, sister-in-law, etc.).

3. The crime results in death - even though the intention was not to kill, the injury actually led to the loss of life.

The second paragraph of Article 88 seeks to emphasize the increased dangerousness of the criminal offense where it is committed in the context of family relationships, against more than one person, *or* when it resulted in someone's death. The purpose of this provision is to strengthen protection for victims of violence in a domestic or other close relationship setting, by singling out these cases as of a greater gravity compared to ordinary injuries.

4. CAUSING SUICIDE

Article 99 of the Criminal Code provides for the criminal liability of any person who, through their illegal actions, incites or drives another person to suicide or causes them to attempt committing suicide. The purpose of this provision is to criminally sanction the causing of suicide or an attempt thereof as a result of ill-treatment which leads to a grave violation of the person's dignity, especially when this is committed in the context of dependency, family or intimate relationships.

The legal provision under Article 99 of the Criminal Code reads as follows:

“Causing the suicide or attempted suicide of a person as a result of persistent mistreatment or other patterns of behaviour that seriously affect the dignity of a person, by a person on whom he or she is dependent or with whom he or she has a family or cohabitational relationship, is punishable with a prison term of three to seven years.”

This article protects:

- ⊙ The life and psychological integrity of the person;
- ⊙ Human dignity, especially in the context of dependent or family relationships;
- ⊙ The right to live one's life free of pressure, humiliation, or other treatment that violates the well-being of the individual.

The subject of this criminal offence:

- ⊙ The perpetrator is the person with whom the victim is in some form of a relationship of dependency (e.g., employee and employer, student/pupil and teacher, minor and legal guardian, etc.), or
- ⊙ The perpetrator is a person with whom the victim has a family or cohabitational relationship, such as a spouse, partner, former spouse, etc.

- ⊙ This particular circumstance gives the offence a structural violence dimension with a prolonged psychological impact.

Criminally punishable behaviour:

- ⊙ Persistent ill-treatment, which may include:
 - ⊙ repeated psychological violence,
 - ⊙ social isolation,
 - ⊙ abusive control,
 - ⊙ humiliation in private or in public.
- ⊙ Other adverse patterns of behaviour that seriously affect the dignity of a person, such as:
 - ⊙ constant insults,
 - ⊙ inducing feelings of low self-esteem,
 - ⊙ constant humiliating treatment in the family or work environment.

Consequences:

- ⊙ A suicide is caused, i.e. the victim's death is the result of the perpetrator's actions; or
- ⊙ A suicide attempt, i.e. the victim undertakes an act with the aim of causing their own death, but the act is not fully executed (e.g. due to the intervention of another person, a failure of the means used, etc.).

Punishment:

- ⊙ The sentencing range for this offence is 3 to 7 years, which is relatively high for an offence that, in essence, seeks to address the psychological and moral impact of invisible but repeated acts of violence.

This particular provision is of central importance in dealing with cases where a woman's suicide is the consequence of psychological abuse and constant humiliation suffered in the context of family or cohabitational relationships.

In practice, many women end their lives after a long period of:

- ⊙ psychological violence,
- ⊙ threats,
- ⊙ isolation from family and friends,
- ⊙ lack of institutional support.

However, this provision has rarely been implemented in practice, due to:

- ⊙ difficulties in proving the causal link between the perpetrator's behaviour and the act of suicide;
- ⊙ lack of capacities to systematically record instances of psychological violence;
- ⊙ inability of the justice system to investigate gender-based violence related cases of suicide.

1.3

Jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights on femicide and other serious forms of violence against women

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has developed consolidated jurisprudence that links femicide and violence against women with serious violations of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights, specifically under Article 2 (“Right to life”), Article 3 (“Prohibition of inhuman treatment”), Article 8 (“Right to respect for private and family life”), and Article 14 (“Prohibition of discrimination”). This jurisprudence is based on the principle of the state’s positive obligation to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence and guarantee effective protection and support for victims.

The ECtHR has delivered a number of important judgments on cases related to the killing of women (femicide) and gender-based violence. Although the term “femicide” is not always specifically and formally mentioned in the text of the judgements, the content of the reasoning essentially addresses the killing of women by partners or former partners, often preceded by a long history of violence which the state authorities have failed to prevent.

In the case of *De Giorgi v. Italy* (1998),²⁶ a case that involved repeated use of violence by the perpetrator who ultimately ended up killing the victim, the victim had filed numerous complaints of violence used against her, but the Italian authorities had failed to stop the perpetrator. Ultimately, he ended up killing her. The ECtHR assessed that the authorities had had information and should have acted to intervene. The Court’s case law in later years has emphasized the positive obligations of states to prevent violence by applying what is known as “the Osman test”. This test was developed in the context of the case of ***Osman v. the United Kingdom***²⁷ (1998) and stipulates that the state authorities have an obligation to take preventive operational measures to protect an individual when they know or should have known of the existence of a real and immediate danger to the life or physical integrity of an individual by the actions of another person. This approach was then adapted and applied to cases of repeated use of violence in a domestic or intimate relationship setting, by highlighting the need for proactive responses by state authorities, in line with the obligations arising from Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights (“Right to life”).

26. ECtHR (1998), [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp#{%22fulltext%22:\[%22De%20Giorgi%20v.%20Italy%22\],%22itemid%22:\[%22001-4346%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp#{%22fulltext%22:[%22De%20Giorgi%20v.%20Italy%22],%22itemid%22:[%22001-4346%22]})

27. The complete judgment is available at: [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/#{%22fulltext%22:\[%22Osman%20v.%20United%20Kingdom%22\],%22documentcollectionid%22:\[%22GRANDCHAMBER%22,%22CHAMBER%22\],%22itemid%22:\[%22001-58257%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/#{%22fulltext%22:[%22Osman%20v.%20United%20Kingdom%22],%22documentcollectionid%22:[%22GRANDCHAMBER%22,%22CHAMBER%22],%22itemid%22:[%22001-58257%22]})

The case of **Opuz v. Turkey (2009)**²⁸ is also one of the more well-known cases involving women's rights and a landmark case in ECtHR's femicide-related case law. In its judgment, the Court found that the repeated violence exercised by the husband, who ultimately ended up killing of the plaintiff's mother, constituted a violation of Article 2 ("Right to life"), Article 3 ("Prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment"), and Article 14 ("Prohibition of discrimination") of the European Convention on Human Rights. This was the first ruling in which the Court recognized domestic violence as a form of gender discrimination, setting an important precedent in addressing gender-based violence in European law.

In its April 2025 judgment in the case of **N.D. v. Switzerland**,²⁹ the European Court of Human Rights explicitly acknowledged for the first time that femicide is a systemic issue that transcends national borders and affects all societies. The case concerned the failure of Swiss authorities to protect a woman from an attempt on her life and from the inhumane treatment she suffered at the hands of her former partner who had previous convictions for murder and rape. The plaintiff had not been informed about the perpetrator's criminal past, and the authorities had failed to carry out a proper risk assessment or take adequate preventive measures. The ECtHR found that there had been a violation of Article 2 of the Convention ("Right to life") and that the state had not fulfilled its positive obligation to protect the life of the individual against a known and immediate danger. The authorities had failed to use the available legal instruments to prevent the violent act despite indications pointing to a real danger to the victim's life.

The judgment in this case was based on an already consolidated series of ECtHR authorities on domestic violence, particularly on the landmark case of **Kurt v. Austria**,³⁰ where the Court noted that state authorities have an obligation to carry out a risk assessment that is autonomous, proactive and comprehensive (paragraph 186). Furthermore, this case also introduced the standard of "special diligence" to be applied in cases where domestic violence situations involve children, requiring state authorities to exercise a higher degree of responsibility and attention. The judgment in *N.D. v. Switzerland* not only upholds this line of jurisprudence; it also contributes to the further development of the Court's case law regarding **femicide** as an issue of a systemic nature and with a gendered dimension. The practical effect of these judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) is particularly important for the development of national legislation and legal practice, particularly in cases related to matters affecting fundamental human rights, including violence against women, gender discrimination and femicide. These ECtHR judgments set binding minimum standards for member states and, additionally, they serve as a catalyst for concrete improvements in national legislation and institutional mechanisms for victim protection.

Through its jurisprudence, the ECtHR has established legal precedents that oblige states to take effective measures to prevent the killing of women and ensure their protection.

28. ECtHR (2009), *Opuz v. Turkey*, Judgment: <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-92945>

29. ECtHR (2025), *N.D. v. Switzerland*, Judgment: [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp#\({%22fulltext%22:\[%22N.D.%20v.%20Switzerland.%22\],%22itemid%22:\[%22002-14450%22\]}\)](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp#({%22fulltext%22:[%22N.D.%20v.%20Switzerland.%22],%22itemid%22:[%22002-14450%22]}))

30. ECtHR (2015), *Kurt v. Austria*, Judgment: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp?i=001-184709>

CHAPTER II

THE KILLING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS / FEMICIDE IN ALBANIA DURING 2024 SEEN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE FINDINGS OF THE FIRST REPORT (2021-2023)

2.1

The role of the People's Advocate in addressing intervention needs for the prevention of femicide and violence against women

In fulfilment of its constitutional mission for the protection and promotion of human rights, the Office of the People's Advocate has played a fundamental role in monitoring, identifying and addressing issues related to gender-based violence, domestic violence and femicide in Albania. Placing particular emphasis on the strengthening institutional mechanisms for preventing and addressing cases of violence against women, the Office of the People's Advocate has highlighted the need for increased inter-institutional collaboration, enhanced professional capacities and a coordinated and gender-sensitive approach in support of victims.

Based on the findings of the first report, "The killing of women and girls and femicide in Albania 2021-2023", the People's Advocate issued a series of recommendations addressed to the main responsible institutions, including the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the General Directorate of the State Police, the General Prosecutor's Office, the High Judicial Council and all the municipalities in the country, aimed at improving institutional response and strengthening the protection mechanisms against violence against women and girls and femicide.

The People's Advocate appreciates the fact that these recommendations were welcomed by the majority of the relevant authorities, which, in turn, reported on the measures taken for their implementation in the short and long term. The analysis presented below includes an evaluation of the responses received, the level of implementation of the recommendations, any identified gaps, and the further steps needed to strengthen the response of state authorities to gender-based violence.

This approach aims to raise institutional and public awareness and to foster further reflection and action in accordance with the national and international standards on the protection of the rights of women and girls. In the context of monitoring the implementation of the recommendations, the People's Advocate held meetings with representatives from each of the relevant institutions, in order to support them in their efforts for a fuller and more effective implementation of the relevant measures.

ON THE RECOMMENDATION ADDRESSED TO THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE³¹

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare is the institution responsible for managing and coordinating national policies in the areas of prevention and treatment of cases of violence against women in the context of domestic and intimate relationships. It plays a key role in drafting long-term strategies, special programs and secondary legislation aimed at strengthening the victim protection system and increasing institutional capacities for effectively addressing cases of violence.

The first report identified several issues that were mainly related to a lack of necessary capacities, both in terms of trained human resources and specialized infrastructure. It also highlighted the lack of sustainable funding for shelters and rehabilitation programs, and the need for continuous improvement of inter-institutional coordination. All these challenges directly affected the quality of protection and support provided to victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence.

In light of the above, in June 2025, the People's Advocate issued the following recommendation to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare: *"To take measures to further strengthen the role of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare³² in addressing issues of gender-based violence and domestic violence, including femicide"*.

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare responded to the recommendation. In its response, it provided information on each of the points made in the recommendation:

1. **Increased effectiveness in the functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanisms (CRM) in all the municipalities of the country** – The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, through its Directorate of Gender Equality,³³ has undertaken measures to consolidate and strengthen institutional attention to gender equality and domestic violence issues. The Ministry reported about a series of trainings that were held with CRM members, particularly with local CRM coordinators, in the framework of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030 and in collaboration with UNDP, aimed at increasing their capacities in handling and managing cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence.
2. **Conducting trainings and monitoring in the healthcare sector** – The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare reports that it has started a cycle of trainings in the healthcare sector, with doctors, nurses, psychologists and social workers, aimed at enhancing the role of professionals in the handling and referral of cases.

31. The full text of the recommendation is available at: <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/sq/articles/general-issues/e-drejta-e-grave/rekomandime-n-kuadr-t-observatorit-mbi-femicidet-1138/>

32. The name of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection was changed into the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare following the 2025 parliamentary elections and the forming of the new government.

33. Established by Order of the Prime Minister No. 205, dated 23 October 2024.

Despite these activities which aim to enhance workers' capacities in the healthcare sector, the People's Advocate assesses that there is still a need for further interventions in order to strengthen the role of health professionals in addressing and handling gender-based violence cases.

First, in order to ensure implementation of the applicable legal framework, it is necessary to promote mechanisms related to: a) the standardization of intervention procedures by healthcare institutions in cases of suspected or confirmed violence, and b) the drafting of internal protocols on reporting and recording cases, victim protection and referral to relevant bodies and agencies, such as the police, social protection centres, etc.

Second, it is important to ensure that cases do not go unreported and victims do not experience re-victimization in their interactions with the healthcare system. Healthcare institutions have a key role to play in identifying and dealing with cases of domestic violence, as they often are the first port of call where victims present themselves to seek help. For this reason, they should ensure that no suspected or confirmed cases identified remain unreported, by strictly applying the referral protocols and setting in motion inter-institutional protection mechanisms. Of equal importance is that healthcare institutions act in such a way that victims will not experience re-victimization when receiving services or treatment. This means a sensitive approach to trauma, respecting privacy, avoiding unnecessary questions or procedures, and providing psychological and emotional support.

Third, more should be done to raise public awareness about the role of health institutions in identifying and managing domestic violence, in order to encourage reporting violence and build more trust in these structures.

In this regard, in order to enhance the role of healthcare institutions in handling cases of domestic violence, it is necessary to strengthen their internal capacities, improve multi-agency collaboration, and develop a consistent, coordinated approach that focuses on the protection of the victims' dignity and rights.

3. **Regular awareness campaigns** - The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare reported that it organized a series of awareness campaigns, in collaboration with other line ministries, international organizations such as UN Women and UNDP, and local organizations. These activities are usually held as part of the global campaign "16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women", on March 8th, and other significant dates. Awareness campaigns constitute an important tool in the efforts to prevent domestic violence, as they aim to inform the public and galvanize social response against gender-based violence. Through structured messaging and focused activities, they contribute to increasing public awareness about the various forms of violence, legal protection mechanisms and services available to victims.

4. **Increased funding from the Social Fund for projects involving the establishment of emergency centres** – The MHSW reports that in the recent years it has funded the establishment of four emergency services for victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Berat, Durrës and Gjirokastër.³⁴ During 2026-2028, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare envisages setting up new emergency centres in the municipalities with the highest number of cases.
5. **Establishment of rehabilitation centres/programs for offenders, including to address issues such as drug and alcohol addiction and mental health problems**
 - The MHSW reports that work is being done to strengthen community mental health services and to transform health centres into social and health centres, by expanding health centre teams with trained psychosocial professionals.

The establishment of rehabilitation centres and programs for offenders is an important component of this integrated approach to the prevention of domestic violence. Treating abusive behaviour should not focus only on punitive interventions; it requires addressing the root causes that are often related to drug and alcohol addiction, or mental health issues. The initiative of the MHSW to strengthen community mental health services and transform health centres into social and health centres is a significant step towards achieving this goal, as it provides a more all-round support infrastructure, by including psychosocial professionals.

6. **Measures towards establishing a social fund to provide financial and in-kind support to children affected by femicide** – The MHSW reports that children whose mothers have been killed qualify as beneficiaries of social support programs, alongside children victims, children who have witnessed violence or abuse, and children without parental care.

The analysis carried out by the Observatory regarding minors affected by femicide revealed a need for immediate institutional intervention through the provision of *ad hoc* packages of financial and in-kind support, which should be tailored to the specific needs of each child. These measures are necessary to guarantee uninterrupted interim support until the child receives a family pension or survivor's benefit in accordance with the relevant legal framework.

34. All four emergency shelters were subject to inspections during the period January 2023-May 2025, and a number of recommendations were made, including making infrastructural adjustments to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, strengthening internal regulations, expanding the shelter staff to include other professionals, such as social workers, improve contingency planning, etc.

ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE STATE POLICE³⁵

The State Police represents a key link in the immediate and effective response to cases of domestic violence, as the first port of call for victims in need of protection. Police structures are required to ensure that the victim is safe, to collect and record evidence, to prepare the paperwork for the issuance of protection orders (IPO/POs) as well as initiate legal proceedings against the perpetrator of violence.

The issues addressed in the recommendation for the General Directorate of the State Police (GDSP) *“On taking measures to further strengthen the role of the State Police in addressing cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence, including femicide”* seek to strengthen the role of the State Police in the prevention, identification, handling and follow up of cases of violence, as well as to enhance inter-institutional collaboration for a more effective and comprehensive approach.

The official response sent by the State Police comprehensively addresses the matters raised by the Observatory. It provides information on the actions undertaken, current plans and institutional commitments for the future. However, as described in some more detail below, the reported information is largely descriptive in nature and lacks specific data on the results achieved, measurable implementation indicators and the actual impact of the measures that were undertaken. In this context, there is a need to strengthen the effective implementation of obligations stemming from the legal framework and secondary legislation and to establish sustainable mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating institutional performance in the area of prevention of gender-based violence and femicide.

- ⊙ **In relation to the recommendation requesting a review of risk assessment protocols and procedures and the issuance of Immediate Preliminary Protection Orders (IPOs)** by taking concrete measures consistent with the standards established in the Istanbul Convention, ECtHR jurisprudence and the domestic legal framework: the response provided by the GDSP is a rather generic in nature one and does not directly address the issues raised in the recommendation. It only contains one piece of Information on the establishment of a working group tasked with reviewing the legal framework and proposing legal amendments.

Although initiatives to review and improve the legal framework are clearly important steps towards strengthening the protection of victims of gender-based violence, it is assessed that it is most imperative that further measures are in place to ensure prompt, appropriate responses to situations where there is danger to the life and integrity of the victims.

35. The recommendation is available at: <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/sq/articles/general-is-sues/e-drejta-e-grave/rekomandime-n-kuadr-t-observatorit-mbi-femicidet-1138/>;

In relation to the following issues raised by the People's Advocate:

- ⊙ Set in motion mechanisms that promote better coordination with other responsible CRM members in the implementation of protection orders, for the purpose of avoiding immediate danger and handling cases in a multidisciplinary manner.
- ⊙ Ensure a coordinated and prompt treatment of cases by all CRM members from the moment the violence is reported, including conducting a risk assessment, addressing the victims' immediate needs, monitoring compliance with protection orders until full victim rehabilitation.
- ⊙ Re-address the need for simultaneously monitoring the issuance of IPO/POs and the subsequent criminal proceedings against the offender, based on the premise that the purpose of protection orders is not only to ensure the protection of the victims' integrity, but also to set in motion the process of their rehabilitation.

The State Police provided information on the work carried out by the police structures in addressing these issues and on their collaboration with other relevant responsible institutions. In this context, the GDSP prepared Action Plan no. 1971, dated 28 February 2025, "On measures to be taken by police authorities for the prevention of and fight against domestic violence in 2025", which was distributed to all local police directorates. In addition, the GDSP issued a specific instruction on collaboration with other local authorities regarding the handling of gender-based violence cases. These relate to:

1. **Referral of cases to healthcare institutions for the purpose of supporting victims with medical and psychological assistance and ensuring the issuance of the required a medical report:** According to the information provided, the General Directorate of the State Police sent out Memo No. 3039/1 dated 01 July 2025 to all local police authorities, reminding them of their legal obligation to inform victims of violence about their right to seek medical and psychological help from healthcare institutions and their right to be issued with the required medical report.
2. **Improved effectiveness in case identification and acting more proactively in requesting the issuance of IPO/POs where the use of violence is established.** This relates to tailored training programs for police officers with a focus on the identification of cases of violence and the procedural steps to be taken in reporting gender-based violence. However, no information has been provided about any instances where the police have acted proactively in the absence of an official report, in accordance with their legal obligations.
3. **Collecting, updating and streamlining of data on all forms of gender-based violence,** by creating template online electronic registers for their identification and recording. In response to this recommendation, the State Police provided information on the REVALB system³⁶ and data collection work carried out by the

³⁶ The REVALB system is a nationwide electronic system for collecting and managing data on cases of violence, with a special focus on domestic violence and gender-based violence. It is managed by the local coordinators against gender-based violence at each municipality.

police. In the REVALB system, the data on perpetrators and victims are classified by criminal offense, gender, age, place of residence and the perpetrator's relationship to the victim.

4. **The establishment of specialist units at police stations**, whose primary responsibility is to deal with gender-based violence cases, including femicide, is an essential component in the strengthening institutional response. In this regard, the State Police informs that it is in the process of reviewing its organizational structure and that, in that context, the possibility of setting up dedicated specialist units for handling domestic violence cases at police stations will be considered and assessed.

ON THE RECOMMENDATION ADDRESSED TO PROSECUTORS³⁷

In the context of institutional efforts for the effective prevention and punishment of gender-based violence and femicide, an important role is played by prosecution offices attached to courts of general jurisdiction, which constitute a key link in the criminal justice chain. The recommendation addressed to the General Prosecutor's Office aims to further improve and guide the investigation and prosecution of cases of violence against women towards a more gender-sensitive approach, through systematically conducting analyses of the motives behind the crimes, strengthening inter-institutional collaboration and ensuring victims' meaningful and equal access to the justice system. In addition, the recommendation highlights the need for harmonized procedural standards to be applied in all prosecution offices in the country, aiming not only the effective punishment of perpetrators, but also the protection and empowerment of victims, in accordance with the principles of the rule of law and international obligations for the protection of human rights.

The recommendation addressed to the General Prosecutor's Office concerns:

"Measures to be taken by the General Prosecutor's Office for issuing a general instruction for the purpose of guiding all prosecution offices in the country towards a commitment to further improve their procedures in dealing with cases of femicide and violence against women through:

- ⊙ Conducting a detailed analysis of the history of violence against the victim and any gender motivation behind the commission of the criminal offense;
- ⊙ Analysing the history of violence exercised against the victim and the motives behind the killing even where an application has been made for terminating of proceedings due to the perpetrator's death after the incident or during the investigation stage.
- ⊙ Prioritizing the safety and security of victims during the investigation of cases of domestic violence and violence against women, by working closely with local coordinators and other CRM members;

37. The full recommendation is available at: <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/sq/articles/general-is-sues/e-drejte-e-grave/rekomandime-n-kuadr-t-observatorit-mbi-femicidet-1138/>

- ⊙ Providing victims domestic violence with written documentation, such as forensic expert reports or other certificates and documents held in the file, through procedures that are easily accessible to the victims;
- ⊙ Establishing channels of communication and improving information sharing among the various institutions, such as the police, civil and criminal courts, victim support services, CRMs, etc.

In response to these recommendations, the General Prosecutor's Office provided information on the prioritization of cases of violence against women and the measures taken to strengthen the investigation procedures, through the implementation of the relevant laws and secondary legislation that set out standards and guidelines for guaranteeing the rights of victims of crime. Among others, the commitment to a strict punishment of crimes committed against women and girls was emphasized.

In this context, the General Prosecutor's Office issued General Instruction No. 17, dated 16 September 2020, "On the effective investigation and prosecution of the criminal offences of violence against women, domestic violence and hate-based violence". The instruction aims to standardize and streamline procedural practices in all prosecution offices of general jurisdiction, by ensuring that investigations and prosecutions are completed within a reasonable time and carried out in an effective manner, by seeking effective, proportionate and preventive punitive measures, in accordance with the objective of preventing such criminal offences.

At a meeting held at the General Prosecutor's Office on 13 October 2025, a proposal was put forward to amend this Instruction to include specific provisions on the investigation and prosecution of cases involving the killing of women and girls and femicide. The representatives from the Prosecutor's Office present at the meeting expressed their willingness to review the instruction in order to better and more effectively address cases of femicide and killings of women and girls.

It is noted that, pursuant to Article 68 of Law No. 97/2016 "On the organization and functioning of the Prosecution Service in the Republic of Albania", as amended, dedicated coordinators with specialist training in psychology, sociology or other similar areas of expertise, have been appointed within every prosecution office with a view to ensuring the provision of the necessary assistance to victims of crime. In order to facilitate access to justice and encourage the reporting of cases of violence, the General Prosecutor's Office has published information, brochures and other material on its web page, aiming to inform and raise the awareness of the general public and the victims about their rights, as well as about the relevant procedures for pursuing their rights.

ON THE RECOMMENDATION ADDRESSED TO THE JUDICIARY³⁸

In the context of efforts to strengthen institutional mechanisms for effectively addressing gender-based violence and femicide, the courts are an essential link in guaranteeing access to justice, effective victim protection and ensuring that the perpetrators receive just and proportionate punishment. Through the Observatory on Femicide, the People's Advocate addressed the following recommendation to the High Judicial Council: *"To take measures to further strengthen the role of courts of law in dealing with cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence, including femicide"* with a view to further guide judicial practices towards a more gender sensitive, more streamlined and more effective handling of cases involving violence against women and femicide.

These recommendations aim to strengthen the examination of gender motivations behind the criminal offences, ensure the protection of the physical and psychological integrity of the victims, prevent revictimization during court proceedings and promote the application of perpetrator rehabilitation measures, in accordance with international human rights standards.

The recommendations issued to the courts relate to:

- ⊙ Maintaining synchronized data on defendants, perpetrators and victims;
- ⊙ Establishing a uniform practice in analysing the gender motives in cases related to any form of violence against women;
- ⊙ Taking measures to ensure that the survivors of violence and their family members are interviewed in separate premises from where the perpetrator is, in order to prevent their revictimization;
- ⊙ Paying greater attention to cases involving violence against women, by ensuring that the punishment given fits the perpetrator's level of dangerousness and providing for the perpetrators' compulsory attendance in rehabilitation programs during and after serving their sentence;
- ⊙ Conducting an in-depth analysis, on a case-by-case basis, of the history of violence and motives behind the crime, by seeking and gathering information from other responsible institutions;
- ⊙ Paying greater attention to the victim's protection needs even in the cases where they do not attend or refuse to attend trial, by ordering protective measures that ensure protection of the victim's integrity and take account of her needs.

In its response to the People's Advocate's recommendations, the High Judicial Council provided information on the steps that were taken for the harmonization of data collection and management, while at the same time being mindful of their sensitivity and the importance of properly handling gender-based violence and domestic violence cases, including femicides.

38. The recommendation is available at: <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/sq/articles/general-issues/e-drejta-e-grave/rekomandime-n-kuadr-t-observatorit-mbi-femicidet-1138/>

Additionally, the HJC forwarded the content of the recommendations to the First Instance Courts of General Jurisdiction, in order for these matters to be taken into consideration in the exercise of their judicial activity, with a view to adopting a more gender-sensitive and effective approach in dealing with these cases.

ON THE RECOMMENDATION ADDRESSED TO MUNICIPALITIES³⁹

In light of the essential role played by the local self-government units in the effective prevention, identification and management of domestic violence or gender-based violence cases, including their most extreme forms, such as femicide, it is of paramount importance to further strengthen their institutional capacities and clarify their functions and responsibilities in this area.

With this in mind, the People's Advocate issued a multi-strand recommendation for the local authorities: *"On taking measures for the further strengthening of the role of local self-government authorities regarding the handling and addressing domestic violence and gender-based violence, including femicide"* addressed to all 61 (sixty-one) municipalities in the country. The recommendation emphasizes the need to set up structures to serve as bridges between the victims and other institutions, to strengthen their human and material resources, improve response and support mechanism, as well as the need for a more proactive engagement in the legal protection of and long-term support for victims and children affected by femicide.

The issues raised in the recommendation refer to taking measures for:

- ⊙ Creating model institutions which serve as a bridge between the victims' needs and other responsible agencies.
- ⊙ Strengthening and human resources in order to respond, in a timely manner and without delay, to every victim of violence in need of support and assistance, including by assisting the police from the first moment violence is reported, and by conducting ongoing monitoring of the case until the completion of the rehabilitation process.
- ⊙ Increasing their involvement in filing requests for the issuance of IPO/POs both at the victim's request, or of their own initiative where use of violence is established.
- ⊙ Reviewing the standards for monitoring protection orders, by conducting a case-by-case assessment of intervention needs, with a view to preventing breaches of protection orders and the escalation of violence.
- ⊙ Increasing human and material resources in order to address, in a timely fashion, both the emergency and long-term needs of the children and other family members of victims of femicide.

39. The recommendation is available at: <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/ëebsite/media/Rekomandim%20Bashkite-%20Observatori%20per%20femicidet.pdf>;

Fifty-nine municipalities in the country responded to the recommendation in writing. In general, these responses focused on providing the information under each issue expressly addressed in the recommendation. However, in some cases, some municipalities did not strictly adhere to what was requested in the recommendation and provided information in general terms, mostly on the functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanisms (CRM) and services available to victims of gender-based and domestic violence. Additionally, in some cases, they responded to just one or a limited number of the issues raised, without addressing the entirety of the components of the recommendation.

Furthermore, in some cases, the responses sent by the municipalities were perfunctory in content, consisting of nothing more than a declarative acceptance of the recommendation and an expression of their readiness to implement it, without providing any concrete data or information on any actual actions taken. In addition, some of the responses did not fully answer what was raised in the recommendation, or their content was unclear, making it difficult to assess the real situation on the ground.

The information received shows that the Coordinated Referral Mechanisms (CRMs) have been set up and are operating in all the municipalities of the country; however, the degree to which they are operational varies considerably from one municipality to the next. Based on the information received, some municipalities demonstrate a higher level of consolidation of their CRM and more meaningful efforts to strengthen interinstitutional collaboration, improve human capacities and material resources, and a more proactive role of the local coordinators in the identification, management and monitoring of cases of violence, including as regards the monitoring of protection order implementation. These municipalities include Tirana, Kamza, Elbasan, Durrës, Shkodra, Lezha, Korça, Vlora, Pogradec and Gjirokastra.

In general, the information provided points to the existence of a good collaboration between local coordinators, State Police structures, and civil society organizations working in the area of protection of victims of gender-based violence. Case management is conducted in close cooperation with the police and the persons responsible at the municipality provide support to the victims during the processing of their cases at the police station and also contribute to the monitoring of the implementation of protection orders.

However, while collaboration exists in practice, the effective involvement and assistance of local coordinators during the processing of the cases at police stations continues to be a challenge that requires immediate attention, particularly as regards clarifying the specific roles of the respective institutions and strengthening their operational capacities.

Regarding the roles and responsibilities of municipalities in supporting victims of violence, particularly in relation to drafting and submitting requests for the issuance

of Immediate Preliminary Protection Orders and/or Protection Orders (IPO/POs) and undertaking proactive action in the cases where violence has been ascertained, there is a clear discrepancy between the stated institutional commitments and the actual application of their powers. While the municipalities express their readiness and willingness to assist victims as needed, the information provided shows that actual interventions and the number of cases assisted in practice remain quite limited, raising concerns about the actual effectiveness of their role within the victim protection mechanism.

As regards the monitoring of protection order enforcement, the responses provided show that the practices applied by the municipalities vary widely and are as yet not unified. While all the reports state that monitoring is carried out, our analysis shows that this process is done in a perfunctory manner and does not fully meet the standards and requirements set out in the applicable legal framework, which affects the effectiveness of the protective measures and their preventive purpose.

In relation to the establishment and consolidation of human and material resources for addressing the urgent and long-term needs of children and families of victims of femicide in a timely and sustainable manner, the data provided by the municipalities do not go beyond general descriptive information. The information provided focuses mainly on the formal role of Child Protection Unit at the municipalities where these units have already been established, and a description of the responsibilities of the child protection officer within the municipality, without providing any concrete information on the actual capacities, available resources and actual interventions carried out in practice.

With respect to emergency in-kind and/or financial support provided to this category of children, it is noted that the support is limited, and of a sporadic and temporary nature, consisting mainly of food packages and school supplies. The analysis of the responses provided by these institutions shows that none of the municipalities has clear, structured, and long-term mechanisms in place for supporting the children and family members of victims of femicide, which points to the lack of a comprehensive and coordinated approach in guaranteeing their continuous social protection and welfare.

Some of the main challenges faced by most municipalities relate to:

- ⊙ Lack, or insufficiency of specialized rehabilitation programs, both for victims and perpetrators, limiting the possibility of sustained and effective interventions;
- ⊙ Lack of emergency centres, or limited capacities of existing ones, which are insufficient to properly meet actual needs in emergencies;
- ⊙ Limited funding and human resources, directly affecting the quality, scope and continuity of services provided;
- ⊙ Difficulties in managing cases that involve mental health issues, due to a lack of specialist services and inter-institutional collaboration;

- ⊙ Lack of sustainable mechanisms for ensuring long-term accommodation for victims, beyond the emergency temporary solutions;
- ⊙ Inadequate funding and lack of sustained provision of services to victims of domestic violence, making them dependent on *ad hoc* short-term projects;
- ⊙ Challenges in dealing with cases where the perpetrators are drug and/or alcohol users, due to the lack of programs on rehabilitation and treatment of addiction;
- ⊙ Lack of secondary legal assistance for victims of crime and their families,⁴⁰ effectively restricting their access to justice;
- ⊙ High employee turnover and constant training needs for new staff, which affect the retention of institutional capacities and the quality of interventions.

Examples of best practices:

Some examples of best practices identified during the analysis of the information provided by the municipalities include:

Coordination of work between the municipality and the police station and joint handling of cases.

- ⊙ *Elbasan Municipality* has in place a duty schedule establishing an on-call rota for employees of the Social Services Department to assist in cases of domestic violence outside office hours every day of the week. The staff are authorized to proactively identify cases in need of the protection of municipal authorities and to accompany victims to the police station to initiate procedures for the issuance of an IPO/PO. The identification of cases is carried out by the Needs Assessment and Referral Unit and the police are involved even where the victim is hesitant to report the abuse. In every case where an IPO/PO is issued, a victim needs assessment is carried out, as well as a risk assessment on the likelihood of further escalation of violence.
- ⊙ Attendance of the local coordinator at *Gjirokastra Municipality* during the processing of cases by the police.
- ⊙ According to the information provided, the staff at *Maliq Municipality* have in place clear procedures for alerting, responding and assigning duties in cases where violence could escalate to femicide. The same report also highlights the important role played by the head of the village in this respect.

40. According to the 2024 annual performance report of the Free Legal Aid Directorate, 46 per cent of the beneficiaries are indigent, that is to say, they are not in possession of any income or property; 53 per cent fall under special legal categories such as victims of violence, beneficiaries of social assistance plans, etc.; and 1 per cent fall under other undefined categories. This report does not provide data on the number of victims of domestic violence supported by secondary legal aid (free representation in court and exemption from court fees).

Supporting the children and families of victims of femicide

Regarding support for the children and family members of victims of femicide, *Elbasan Municipality* has taken a number of steps to address both their urgent and long-term needs. The municipality reports that they are provided with temporary accommodation, financial assistance, and psycho-social and legal support. Similarly, *Korça Municipality* has allocated the necessary resources to address emergencies and help the victims' families, both in the short and long term.

Notification of release of perpetrators from prison

It is reported that *the Social Services Unit within Vlora Municipality* keeps regular contact with the Vlora correctional institution and receives prompt notification whenever a perpetrator is released from prison. Similarly, the local coordinator at *Pogradec Municipality* keeps a close eye on the detained perpetrators' release times.

Establishment of Needs Assessment and Referral Units (NARUs)⁴¹

Some of the municipalities that provided information have already established their Needs Assessment and Referral Units (NARU) which operate at the level of administrative units. In some other municipalities these units are in the process of being established.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE RELEVANT INSTITUTIONS

The analysis of the responses provided by the institutions following the recommendations issued to them by the People's Advocate in the context of the first report on femicide, reveals that the institutions generally welcomed the recommendations and have reported accordingly on the measures already implemented and measures they intend to implement in the future, thus demonstrating institutional willingness and readiness to improve their response to gender-based violence and femicide.

However, a closer look into the actual content of the responses received and the nature of the measures reported shows that the implementation of the recommendations remains uneven, fragmentary and focused, to a considerable degree, on actions of a procedural or formal nature, such as drafting plans, conducting trainings, organizing roundtables, or initiatives that remain at the inception stage and not sufficiently accompanied by tangible and verifiable results on the ground.

In this respect, there seems to be a gap between the stated commitments and the actual protection effect achieved, due to the lack of standardized practices

41. The establishment of Needs Assessment and Referral Units (NARUs) in Albania is based on Law No. 121, dated 24 November 2016 "On social care services".

and the lack of monitoring, periodic reporting and accountability mechanisms for implementing the measures.

Particularly concerning are the gaps identified in ensuring proactive and preventive action, consistent and effective inter-institutional coordination and the timely and prompt use of existing legal instruments aimed at effectuating risk assessments, emergency interventions and the issuance of protective measures for the victims. In addition, the protocols for ensuring immediate and long-term support for victims and children affected by femicide are not yet unified, not always coordinated, and dependent on uneven local capacities, thus affecting the proper implementation of the principle of equal access to services, protection and rehabilitation.

In summary, despite what is reported in relation to the measures taken and the commitments expressed, institutional response is still deemed inadequate to ensure a meaningful, uniform and effective protection, in accordance with national and international standards on the protection of human rights. It is therefore imperative that the reporting institutions move away from largely declarative and procedural approaches to verifiable and measurable implementation, based on functioning coordination, clear intervention standards, constant monitoring, and clear accountability regarding the results, with the aim of preventing loss of life and guaranteeing the safety of women and girls.

2.2

An overview of cases of killings of women and girls and femicides in Albania in 2024 in conjunction with the cases addressed in the first report (2021-2023)

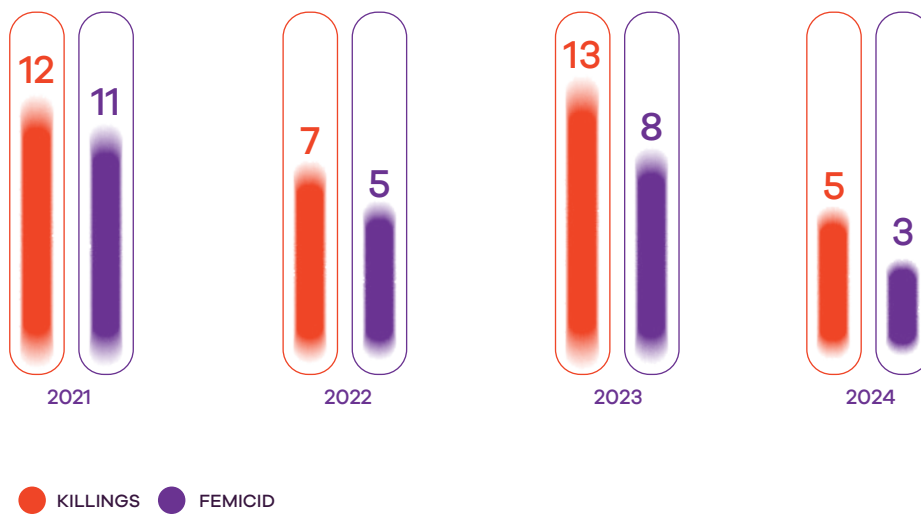
Even though the number of killed women and girls/femicides and other grave forms of crimes against women decreased compared to the three preceding years,⁴² these offences continue to be a serious concern in Albania. This is an indicator that reflects a deep-seated social and institutional issue which cannot be evaluated by simply referring to statistics; rather, it requires constant analyses and sustained interventions aimed at prevention, protection and punishment of these crimes.

According to official statistical data, the rate of femicide in Albania stood at 0.84 per 100,000 women and girls during 2023. In 2024, the rate dropped markedly, to 0.25 per 100,000 women and girls. While this quantitative improvement is encouraging ,

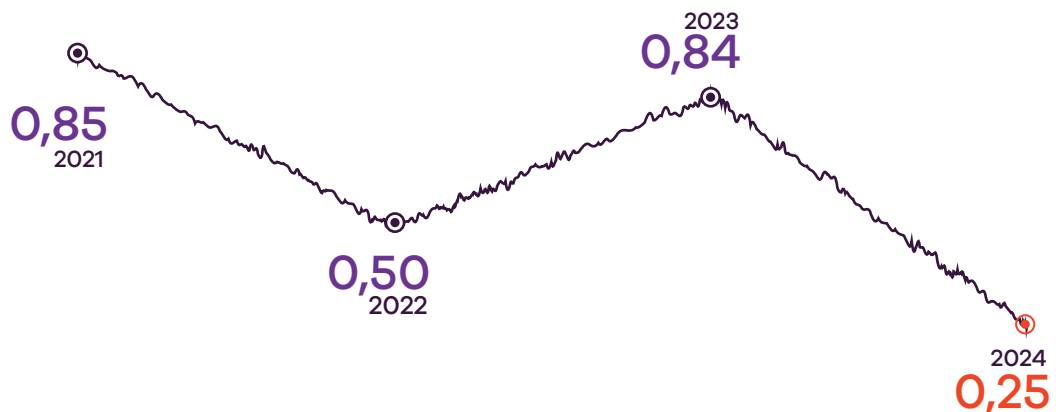
42. According to the previous report, 32 women and girls were killed in Albania between 2021 and 2023, of which 12 killings were recorded in 2021, 7 in 2022 and 13 in 2023.

the phenomenon of extreme violence against women and girls remains concerning, highlighting the need to strengthen institutional response, improve prevention mechanisms and ensure the effective protection for women and girls at risk.

THE KILLING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS AND FEMICIDES IN ALBANIA



RATE OF FEMICIDE IN ALBANIA (PER 100,000 POPULATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS)



According to INSTAT's *Women and Men in Albania 2025*,⁴³ out of a total of 40 murders recorded in 2024, 10 cases, or about 22.5 per cent, occurred in the context of family relationships, within the meaning of Article 79/c of the Criminal Code. Additionally, the statistical data reported show that during the same year, a total of 1,456 women reported incidents of domestic violence, with a very high share, namely 41.1% of the total number of women affected by domestic violence, occurring in the Tirana District. The next highest number was recorded in Durrës, with 15.2% and Fier, with 8.3%, showing an uneven geographical distribution of the phenomenon and highlights the need for targeted interventions in areas with higher incidence of cases.

Similarly, according to the data provided by the General Prosecutor's Office, the share of the criminal offence of "Murder in the context of family relations" within the category of criminal offences "Crimes against life committed with intent", was 4.25% in 2024, marking a slight increase of 0.11% compared to 2023.⁴⁴ This development shows that despite the overall drop in the total number of killings, the risk of extreme violence in domestic contexts continues to be present and requires increased institutional attention.

In 2024, there were five killings of women in Albania; two of the women were killed by their husbands while in another case the murder was committed by someone known to the victim. All three cases were classified as femicides in accordance with the UN Statistical Framework.⁴⁵ More specifically, the two cases where the women were killed by their husbands are classified as femicides because they were intentional killings committed by intimate partners. The third case is also classified as femicide based on the concrete circumstances and the manner the criminal offence was committed.⁴⁶ This information confirms that femicide, despite showing a downward

43. "Women and men in Albania, 2025" is a publication providing data sets on various areas, disaggregated by gender and covering a wide range of social issues, with a view to facilitating the monitoring of cross-sectoral policies rework of achieving gender equality, see: <https://www.instat.gov.al/media/aim-nosvx/pressrelease-gra-dhe-burra-2025.pdf>;

44. General Prosecutor's Office Report on the Situation of Criminality in 2024, p. 62; file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Raporti_PP_2024_permbledhes_28_03_2025_7729.pdf;

45. The UN Statistical Framework for the collection and analysis of statistical data, femicide is defined as: "[i]ntentional homicide of female victims committed by intimate partners, committed by other family members, or committed by other known or unknown perpetrators, with a certain modus operandi or in specific contexts indicative of gender motivations".

The statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls (also referred to as femicide/feminicide), prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2022, p. 10. See: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Statistical_framework_femicide_2022.pdf

46. Based on the UN Statistical Framework, where the killing has been committed by a perpetrator other than someone who is in an intimate or domestic relationship with the victim, the case qualifies as femicide if one or several of the following indicators of gender-related motivation are present, including:

- Previous history of violence
- Illegal exploitation
- Abduction or illegal deprivation of liberty
- Involvement of victim in the sex industry
- Sexual violence on the body of the victim
- Excessive mistreatment of the body of the victim
- The body of the victim was disposed of in a public space
- Hate or bias against women.

trend numerically, remains an extreme form of gender-based violence with roots in family and social relationships and highlights the need to strengthen the mechanisms for the prevention, protection and early intervention by responsible institutions. One of the women killed in 2024 was an Indonesian national, member of a small Indonesian community living in Tirana, who had been residing in Albania for a number of years together with her husband, a US national. The incident happened in the context of their relationship as husband and wife, and the husband committed suicide after killing his wife. According to information published in the media, the perpetrator was thought to suffer from mental health issues, a factor which may have contributed to the escalation of the conflict and commission of the fatal act. However, the full verification and final findings of the investigation into the full circumstances of the crime are still pending.

Currently, the matter is still under investigation by the Prosecution Office at the Tirana Judicial District, with a view to fully establishing the circumstances of the incident, identifying the contributing factors and attributing responsibilities, in accordance with the applicable legal framework and investigative procedural standards.

In one of the cases, an elderly woman and her husband lost their lives after a brief argument with their neighbour, who attacked them using extreme violence. This incident is still being investigated by the competent authorities.

In two other cases, the perpetrators of the crimes were young men suffering from mental health issues, as evidenced by their respective medical records and forensic reports; both young men killed their mothers. In both situations, the victims were the official carers of the perpetrators and the only persons living with them and caring for them. In these cases, the First Instance Courts of General Jurisdiction in Lezha and Durrës ordered the measure of “compulsory treatment in a medical institution” against the perpetrators, in accordance with the medical reports and the applicable legislation.

These two cases clearly point to the need for targeted treatment and increased attention to situations where there are indications of aggressive behaviour of people with mental health problems, particularly where such behaviour may pose a real and serious risk to the life and health of the people who live with them. To this end, it is necessary to strengthen early identification, risk assessment and preventive intervention mechanisms through close multi-agency collaboration between healthcare services, social protection structures and law enforcement authorities, with the aim of preventing incidents with fatal consequences.

The review of the data collected reveals that the mental health issues identified in some of the cases included in this report appear to have been contributing factors in the commission of acts of extreme violence against women. The analysis also reveals that persons with mental health disorders who have not received adequate

and continuous support from the healthcare system and/or their circle of family and friends, have displayed aggressive behaviour triggered by their social isolation and exacerbated by the lack of a structured, long-term treatment plan, further worsening their psychological and emotional state. These factors, in combination, have contributed to a considerable increase of the risk of escalation by creating favourable conditions for the manifestation of acts of extreme violence against the persons cohabiting with them.

According to the information on one of the cases analysed for the purposes of this report, the victim had repeatedly asked the State Police structures to proceed with sectioning her son, who suffered from mental health problems and was violent towards her. Despite these requests for help, the interventions were only of a limited scope and temporary in nature, consisting mainly of short-term hospitalizations, after which the perpetrator returned to the family home without any follow-up or monitoring measures in place.⁴⁷

The analysis also shows that there are no proactive mechanisms in place for the identification, follow-up and management of cases of perpetrators with a history of psychiatric conditions, despite the high-level risk they pose to the safety and life of the family members they live with. In this context, the lack of an early diagnosis, the social stigma attached to mental health disorders and institutional failure to effectuate timely and adequate interventions, have contributed to the creation of an unsafe environment, with progressively escalating acts of violence, such as serious injury of even murder of the victim.

In relation to previous history of violence exercised against the women and girls that were killed, the information provided shows that in four out of the five murder cases, the victims had suffered constant violence at the hands of the perpetrators before the fatal incidents. This finding is also in line with those in the first report of the People's Advocate Office, which noted that over 90 per cent of the women and girls who were killed had previously experienced violence at the hands of the perpetrators of the crime.

However, the present review shows that none of the victims had been issued with immediate preliminary protection orders or protection orders, both before and at the time when the killing occurred. In addition, none of these cases were ever handled by the Coordinated Referral Mechanism on Domestic Violence (CRM).⁴⁸ These findings highlight the pronounced gaps in early identification of risk, emphasizing the need for more proactive and coordinated interventions in cases of high risk of violence.

47. This is the case of the killing of H.S. by her son, who was suffering from mental health problems, in Kavaja.

48. The organisation and functioning of the CRM is regulated by Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 327, dated 2 June 2021 *"On the mechanism for the coordination of work among the responsible authorities in referring and prosecuting domestic violence cases and for providing support and rehabilitating victims of violence"*.

2.3

Analysis of the cases killings of women and girls, information on the victims, perpetrators and incidents

INFORMATION ON THE VICTIMS

Regarding the victims' ages, according to the information received, four out of the five women killed were over 60 years old and one victim was 48 years old. Regarding their nationality and citizenship, three of the victims were of Albanian nationality and citizenship, born and resident in Albania, one victim was of Greek nationality and Albanian citizenship, while another was of Indonesian nationality and US citizenship and had been living in Albania for a number of years.

As regards their place of residence, the victims were resident in Tirana, Kavaja, Lezha, Dropull and Konispol. Further information shows that three out of the five victims lived in rural areas and two in urban areas. These data go to show that femicide affects women of diverse age groups and backgrounds and from both to rural and urban areas, which highlights the need for preventive policies and protective mechanisms tailored to the specific demographic and territorial context.

Regarding the marital status of the victims, three of the women were married at the time of the incidents, while two victims were widows and official carers of their sons who suffered from mental health problems. Four of the victims had children, who were all adults.

As for their level of education, according to the data provided, two of the victims had completed four years of education, two victims had completed eight years of education, and one victim had higher education. In terms of their employment status, four of the victims were pensioners, while one victim was still working. There is no information about any of the victims having a disability.

Likewise, the case records provided contain no information about any alcohol or drug abuse by the victims, revealing a gap in the data in relation to such factors at the time of the incident.

INFORMATION ON THE PERPETRATORS

The data on the killings of women show that in all the cases the perpetrators were men, which confirms the gendered nature of the criminal offenses under review. As regards their ages, three of the perpetrators were over 60 and two were 35 and 55 years old, showing that the use of extreme violence is not limited to a certain age group.

Regarding nationality and citizenship, in four cases the perpetrators were of Albanian nationality and citizenship, born and resident in Albania, while in one case the perpetrator was of American nationality and citizenship and had been living in Albania for several years.

Regarding their marital status, three of the perpetrators were married at the time of the crime, while two perpetrators were single. In addition, four of the perpetrators had children, who were all adults.

Regarding the level of education, two perpetrators had completed higher education, one had completed eight years of education, one had completed four years of education, and one had never been to school.

Regarding employment and disability status, two of the perpetrators were retired, one was in employment, and the other two were individuals with mental health disabilities. The data examined contains no information regarding any alcohol or drug addiction of the perpetrators.⁴⁹

A check of their criminal records showed that none of the perpetrators had previous convictions. After committing the criminal offense, three of the perpetrators were promptly detained by law enforcement bodies, while two of them died shortly after the incident.⁵⁰

Regarding the relationship between the perpetrators and the victims: in two cases the perpetrators were the victims' husbands, in two cases they were the victims' sons and in one case the perpetrator was a person known to the victim (neighbour). According to the data received, the crimes were mainly committed in the context of close family or social relationships.

INFORMATION ON THE INCIDENTS

As regards the geographical location of the crimes, these fatal incidents occurred in Tirana, Kavaja, Lezha, Dropull and Konispol. In all cases, the killings occurred in the victims' homes, which demonstrates the family and private nature of such incidents. Regarding the presence of children of minor age at the time the criminal offenses were committed, the information shows that in one of the cases a minor was present (the granddaughter of the victim and the perpetrator), who was the one who informed other family members about the crime.

49. There is no information whether the law enforcement bodies had administered any tests to establish if the perpetrators were intoxicated.

50. One perpetrator committed suicide immediately after killing the victim, one perpetrator lost his life after being attacked by his son, in a state of extreme psychological shock.

Manner in which the criminal offences were committed and instruments used

The crimes committed were particularly violent in nature and involved the use of various instruments, including blunt, sharp, or cutting objects. These circumstances point to the intensity of the acts undertaken by the perpetrators and the presence of a clear intent to cause serious physical harm to the victims or to deprive them of their lives.

The high intensity violence used reflects elements of coercive control, the desire to punish or take revenge on the victims. These elements are important indicators of the high level of dangerousness of the perpetrators and of the nature of violence exercised, mainly in close family or social relationship contexts.

These findings highlight the fact that women continue to be exposed and subjected to extreme forms of violence and underline the need for early and more effective preventive interventions, as well as for strengthening protection and risk assessment mechanisms.

As regards the times when the crimes were committed, they occurred at different times of the day, from 06:00 to 20:00 hours.

CHAPTER III

CASES OF ATTEMPTED MURDER, CAUSING SERIOUS INJURY WITH INTENT AND CAUSING THE SUICIDE OF WOMEN/GIRLS

3.1

Analysis of attempted murders, causing serious injury with intent, and suicides as an extreme form of responding to violence

This chapter will focus on the criminal offences of attempted murder, causing serious injury with intent and causing suicide, committed against women and girls.

ATTEMPTED MURDER

Attempted murders represent one of the most extreme forms of violence, where the perpetrator takes concrete actions towards killing a person but, for various reasons, fails to achieve that goal.

In 2024, there were **six cases of attempted murders** committed against women and girls. In two cases, the perpetrators were the husbands of the victims and in one case the perpetrator attempted to kill his former girlfriend. Another case involved a violent act in a domestic context, where a father tried to kill his daughter. In yet another case, the victim of the aggression was the wife of the perpetrator's uncle. These cases testify to the fact that violence can spread to the wider family circle.

It should be noted that the numbers recorded in 2024 represent a **significant increase** compared to those in the period between 2015 and 2020, when a total of **nine cases** of attempted killings of women and girls were recorded.⁵¹ This increase raises serious concerns about the worsening of extreme acts of gender-based violence and highlights the need for more in-depth institutional and societal interventions.

These cases are clear indicators of the immediate risk posed to the victims' lives and the fact that they are often preceded by recurrent episodes of violence, threats, or a long history of domestic conflict.

Even where the victims survived the attack, the physical and psychological consequences are severe, and the risk of violence recurring remains real in the absence of immediate protective and legal intervention. Attempted murders must be treated with the same level of seriousness as completed crimes, in order to prevent the escalation of violence.

51. See the report "On femicides and attempted femicides in Albania, 2017-2020", p. 24, prepared by the Centre for Civic Legal Initiatives as part of UN Women's regional programme "Ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Applying norms, changing mindsets", with the financial support of the European Union. The report is available at: <https://www.qag-al.org/publikime/femicidi.pdf>;

Victims need immediate protection, medical treatment, and psychological support, while perpetrators must be investigated and prosecuted. The relevant institutions have the obligation to implement preventive and monitoring measures to ensure the safety of the victims and prevent the recurrence of violence.

CAUSING SERIOUS INJURY WITH INTENT

The infliction of serious injury with intent represents one of the most severe forms of physical violence, where the actions of the perpetrator are characterized by awareness and intent to cause serious harm to the bodily integrity and/or health of the victim.

These cases display high levels of intentional aggressiveness and pose a direct risk to the life and integrity of the individual. As a result, they need prompt institutional response and strict punishment in accordance with the criminal law, in order to prevent escalation of the violence into even more severe forms.

As regards the criminal offence of causing serious injury with intent, the analysis of the information received shows that in 2024 there were three such cases where the victims were women. In one case, the son severely wounded his mother. According to the information provided by the Prosecution, the perpetrator suffered from mental health problems and had previously been subject to an order for “compulsory treatment in a medical institution”. The second case involved two sisters as co-perpetrators. They severely injured a young woman, who they alleged had meddled in one sister’s intimate relationship. In the third case, the victim was severely injured by her husband in the wake of frequent arguing and fighting spates in their marital relationship.

These criminal offences were committed with particular cruelty and brutality and were characterized by extreme violence and complete disregard for human life and dignity. They were committed with the clear aim to cause severe physical and/or psychological suffering, often by using cutting instruments, blunt objects, inflammable substances, and direct attacks to vital organs. In some cases, elements of torture and other aggravating circumstances were identified. The analysis shows that in most cases these crimes were not accidental or spur-of-the-moment but premeditated.

The consequences of such intentional infliction of serious injuries are extremely grave and long lasting, including by leaving the victims with permanent damage to their physical integrity, profound psychological trauma and a constant sense of fear and uncertainty. In most cases, the victims need specialized medical treatment, long-term counselling and psychological intervention, as well as effective legal protection to prevent further escalation of the violence.

INFORMATION ON THE VICTIMS/SURVIVORS OF THE CRIMES

During 2024, there were six cases of attempted murders and three cases of causing serious injury with intent where the victims were women and girls. These incidents represent extreme forms of violence with serious consequences for the life and integrity of the victims, requiring specialist treatment by relevant institutions.

As regards the age groups of the victims who survived these crimes, the data show a wide age distribution. Three were women over 60 years old, two belonged to the 45-59 age group, while three belonged to the 30-44 age group. One case involved a younger victim, in the 15-29 age group.

In eight cases, the survivors were born and resided in Albania, while one survivor was born abroad and was temporarily residing in Albania. Similarly, in eight cases the survivors were of Albanian nationality and citizenship, while one case involved a woman with Rumanian nationality and citizenship. In another case, the woman belonged to the Egyptian ethnic and cultural community.

With regard to their places of residence, the survivors lived: two in Tirana; two in Lushnja, two in Fier; two in Korça; and one in Kruja. Four lived in urban areas and five in rural areas.

Regarding the marital status of the survivors, the information provided shows that four of the women were married, of which one woman was pursuing a divorce case in court when the incident happened. Two other women were divorced, another two were single, and one survivor was a widow.

Seven of the survivors were mothers with two or three children each, sixteen children in total between them, of whom three were of minor age at the time of the incidents. According to the records none of the survivors was pregnant at the time of their respective incidents.

As regards the survivors' **educational level**, the data show that six of them had completed eight years of education, two had completed secondary education, and no information was provided about one woman's level of education.

As regards their **employment status**, three of the survivors were in employment at the time of the incident, two were pensioners, and four were unemployed.

There is nothing in the data about any of the victims having a disability before the incidents. After the incidents, however, three of them became physically disabled as a result of the bodily injuries suffered.

The case-related materials consulted do not contain any findings that point to alcohol or drug abuse at the time of the incidents.

In addition, none of the victims in this group had previously been in contact of benefitted from support services under the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) before the incident.

INFORMATION ON THE PERPETRATORS

According to the data provided, these criminal offences were committed by a total of ten perpetrators. In eight cases, the perpetrators were male and in one case the injury was caused by two young women in co-perpetration.

The perpetrators belong to various age groups, with the highest number of them in the 30-44 age group (4 perpetrators), followed by the 60+, 45-49 and 15-29 age groups, with two perpetrators each. All the perpetrators were of Albanian nationality and citizenship and were born and resident in the territory of the Republic of Albania. One of them belonged to the Egyptian ethnic and cultural community.

Regarding marital status, five perpetrators were single and four were married, one of whom was going through divorce proceedings in court at the time of the incident. Four perpetrators had children and one had children of minor age (under 18).

Regarding the perpetrators' level of education, the data show that seven had completed eight years of education, two had completed secondary education, while one had completed only four years of primary education.

Regarding their employment status, eight out of the ten perpetrators were not in employment at the time of the incident; the other two were retired.

One of the perpetrators was disabled, suffering from mental health issues, as demonstrated by the relevant medical records. In another two cases, similar health problems were reported by family members but there is no medical documentation issued by medical authorities as proof of their condition.

The case-related materials consulted show that three perpetrators were under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol at the time and were known to be regular users. In addition, five out of nine perpetrators had previous criminal convictions, of which three had convictions for criminal offences related to domestic violence. Nine of the perpetrators were apprehended by law enforcement officers, while one committed suicide after the incident. Seven perpetrators were prosecuted and tried while in remand.

Regarding the relationship between perpetrators and victims, in four of the cases the perpetrators were intimate partners of the survivors (husband or former husband of the victim); in three cases they were a family member of the victim, and in one case the perpetrator was unknown to the victim.

INFORMATION ON THE INCIDENTS

The manner in which the criminal offence was committed and the instruments used

The objects or instruments used in the commission of these crimes demonstrate a high level of cruelty and a variety of forms of violence. The recorded cases involved knife attacks to various parts of the victim's body and face, use of firearms and hunting rifles, and one case of dousing the victim in inflammable liquid and setting her alight. In some cases, the perpetrators used blunt instruments to hit the victims. In addition, other forms of direct physical violence were recorded, including repeated punching and kicking, the use of belts or bed sheets to suffocate the victim, and acts of torture lasting for several days.

The incidents occurred at different times during the day and at night, starting from 03:00 hours in the morning until 22:00 hours in the evening. This demonstrates the lack of predictability and impulsiveness of the perpetrators' criminal behaviour.

In some cases, the perpetrator's motivation was based on family or personal conflicts, including revenge, jealousy, or the wish to exercise control over or isolate the victim in the context of an abusive relationship.

In other cases, the mental health problems of the perpetrators, compounded by the lack of timely and adequate interventions by the relevant institutions, were found to be contributing factors to the commission of the criminal offence.

3.2

An analysis of cases of gender-based violence-related suicides of women

The analysis of the information and official records of the cases under review reveals that driving someone to commit suicide is one of the most extreme and most severe forms of violence. When the victim finds herself in such an untenable situation, she is driven to take her own life as a result of the constant violence, blackmail, threats, psychological pressure or social isolation imposed on her by people closest to her, or other people in her family or social circle.

Even though ultimately the act of suicide is carried out by the woman herself, the moral and legal responsibility falls on those persons whose abusive behaviour gravely affected the dignity, integrity, liberty, and mental health of the victim, driving her to a state of extreme desperation and a sense of hopelessness about the possibility of escaping from the situation or the availability of protection.

From the official information provided by the General Directorate of the State Police (GDSP) and the prosecution offices attached to district courts, eight women and girls lost their lives to suicide in 2024 and another five attempted suicide. Four of the suicides were investigated and no charges were brought against a perpetrator.

The cases reviewed by the Observatory involve the situations where women lost their lives and perpetrators were identified and prosecuted for the criminal offence of causing suicide.

The women in the four cases examined were of various ages, ranging from under 18 years old to the 30-44 age group. Three of the victims were married and had children under 18.

The motives that led to the suicides related mainly to the victims' prior conflictual and abusive relationship with their partners, including the exercise of multiple forms of violence against them.

Two of the victims were in employment at the time of the incident, while the other two were unemployed at the time.

An important element noticed in two cases where women committed suicide following online abuse directed to them, was the lack of immediate and effective intervention by the responsible institutional structures. Despite prior reporting in relation to this form of violence, the protection mechanisms in place were not able to ensure full protection and prevent the escalation of violence, with fatal results.

The analysis of the cases and testimonies provided by family members of the victims revealed that the victims had suffered violence at the hands of the perpetrators in the past. The constant physical and psychological abuse, accompanied by constant emotional pressures and social isolation, were the determining factors that led the victims to decide to take their own lives.

In one of the cases reviewed, the perpetrator had **exercised physical and psychological violence against the victim for a period of over twenty (20) years**. The information provided shows that the victim had visible marks on her body, caused by the physical violence she had suffered, even on the day of the incident.⁵² In addition, it was established that the children of the couple, of minor age, had also been subjected to violence, which created an environment of constant fear and uncertainty in the family.

A review of the court judgment and the perpetrator's statements shows that their

52. Judgment No.1109, dated 11 December 2024, of the First Instance Court of General Jurisdiction at Durrës.

daughter, of minor age, had attempted suicide herself a few years earlier, as a result of the trauma and constant psychological pressures she experienced in the family. This fact highlights the profound dimension of violence that directly affected the wellbeing and emotional development of the children.

Taken as a whole, the cases analysed here reflect a painful and complex reality, where the pervasiveness of violence in family relations, lack of early institutional interventions, the victims' social isolation and their economic dependence are significant factors contributing to the escalation of violence and its fatal consequences.

INFORMATION ON THE PERPETRATORS OF THE OFFENCE OF CAUSING SUICIDE

The identified perpetrators are men, between 18 to 59 years of age, of Albanian nationality and citizenship. Most of them are parents of children of minor age, under 18. As regards their educational level, most have completed upper secondary education and were unemployed at the time of the incidents. In two cases, the perpetrators had prior convictions and had served sentences for other criminal offences. In all the cases, the perpetrators were in a close relationship with the victims: their husband, partner, fiancé, or romantic partner. In three cases the perpetrator and the victim were legally married.

INFORMATION ON THE INCIDENTS

In all four (4) cases of gender-based violence-related suicide, where the victims took their own lives and legal action was taken against individuals for the criminal offence of "Causing suicide", it was found that the perpetrators had exercised constant physical and psychological violence against the victims. The review of the investigation records and relevant documentation reveals that the main factor leading to the exacerbation of the psychological and emotional state of the victims and their decision to take their own lives, was the sustained abuse inflicted upon them.

In one case, the act of suicide, the three (3) children of the victim lost their lives together with her, a fact that highlights the extreme dimension of violence and lack of effective protection mechanisms.

In another case, psychological abuse was exercised in the form of blackmail and posting the victim's intimate photos on social media, which is a novel and particularly grave form of psychological and emotional violence, which was the direct cause of the victim's extreme and fatal decision.

In another case, the exercise of psychological violence by the perpetrator was fuelled by jealousy, leading to the worsening of the psychological and emotional state of the victim and was a factor that pushed her to commit the extreme act of suicide.

The reviewed cases point clearly to the necessity of early identification and adequate treatment of all cases of violence, be it physical and psychological. They also draw the attention to the profound and long-term effect violence has on the mental health, dignity and the very existence of the victims, emphasizing the urgent need for a coordinated and effective response by the relevant institutions responsible in preventing the escalation of violence and its often irreparable consequences.

The motives that drove the victims to take their own lives in these cases are mainly related to:

- 1. The psychological and physical violence** suffered at the hands of their intimate partners, which caused immense suffering to the victims.
- 2. Constant conflictual situations**, including related to adultery, which intensified tensions and exacerbated the emotional state of the victims, increasing their sense of powerlessness and desperation.
- 3. Blackmail and posting of intimate photos on social media**, gravely affecting and harming the dignity and reputation of the victim, leading to social stigmatization and intense psychological pressure.
- 4. Lack of effective support and institutional assistance**, which contributed to the escalation of the violent situation and to feelings of isolation and powerlessness in the victims.
- 5. Emotional motives, such as jealousy**, which led to the exacerbation of interpersonal relations and destabilization of the psychological state of the victims.

3.3

History of previous violence exercised against victims and survivors and the role of responsible institutions in supporting them before and after the incident

The analysis of the other criminal offenses under review, including attempted murder, causing serious injury with intent, and suicide caused as a result of constant violence, found that most victims had prior history of suffering violence. In some cases, this violence was known to the relevant institutions but was not addressed in time and with the necessary means to prevent its escalation.

This fact shows that acts of serious violence do not just happen out of the blue or in isolation but are the result of a sustained physical, psychological and emotional violence. In a significant number of cases, these incidents could have been prevented if early identification, a coordinated response and effective intervention by the institutions responsible for the protection of victims of violence had been ensured.

In three out of nine cases, the survivors of these crimes⁵³ had previously reported the violence to the police. In addition, the women and girls who lost their lives to suicide had had a prior history of suffering violence at the hands of the perpetrators, albeit not recorded with law enforcement authorities.⁵⁴ One victim had reported the violence to the police and had been previously issued with a PO,⁵⁵ but in that case the perpetrator of the violence had been her then partner and not the perpetrator who drove her to suicide.

The institutions responsible for the protection of victims – including law enforcement agencies, social services, the judiciary and support centres – have an essential role to play in identifying and stopping the cycle of violence before it escalates to incidents with fatal or irreversible consequences. The review reveals, however, that in most of the cases there was a marked lack of effective and coordinated inter-institutional intervention, as well as a failure to activate protective mechanisms in a timely manner, such as by issuing protection orders and the criminal prosecution of perpetrators of violence.

The gaps in the functioning of the case referral system, lack of a streamlined risk assessment mechanism, and the limited capacities of support structures – often accompanied by a lack of human and financial resources – create an unsafe environment for victims, exposing them to the risk of recurrence of violence. In a significant proportion of the cases examined, this risk materialized in serious criminal acts with irreversible consequences.

Cases of suicide driven by violence, coercive control, social isolation or blackmail represent an additional dimension of violence with extreme consequences. Even though the ultimate act is undertaken by the victim herself, these cases are a direct consequence of the institutional failure to provide immediate protection and support to overcome the situation of risk.

The analysis of the cases shows that most victims had experienced previous recurring episodes of violence, which was not adequately addressed by the relevant institutions. This fact proves that serious acts of violence do not just occur suddenly but are the result of a gradual escalation and of the failure of institutions to promptly and effectively act to identify, protect and treat these cases.

53. This includes attempted murders and causing serious injury with intent.

54. The previous history of violence exercised against the victims in these cases was confirmed by the survivors themselves, or by the witness statements.

55. Victim S.A. had previously been provided with a PO against her partner. According to the testimony of the victim's mother, she had previously attempted to commit suicide due to the constant disagreements and fights with her partner. She survived that attempt due to prompt intervention and hospital treatment.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES AND HEALTHCARE INSTITUTIONS IN ADDRESSING CASES BEFORE AND AFTER THE INCIDENT

4.1

A summary of the information provided by municipalities in relation to crimes against women and girls during 2024

Based on the analysis of the data and documentation administered by the General Directorate of the State Police, prosecution offices and district courts regarding the cases under review in 2024, the People's Advocate made official requests to all municipalities where the victims lived for the provision of information on the measures taken to protect and support them.

In relation to the cases where victims had previously reported violence to the police, the information requested by the People's Advocate concerned:

- ⦿ The referral of these cases to the coordinator or employee responsible for handling domestic violence cases;
- ⦿ Treatment of these cases by the relevant CRMs;
- ⦿ Recognition of the risk posed by perpetrators;
- ⦿ Monitoring of compliance with protection orders by the local coordinator or responsible employee at the Municipality;
- ⦿ Maintaining contact with the victim;
- ⦿ Collaboration between the local coordinator or responsible employee with the police regarding the monitoring of the IPO/PO;
- ⦿ Support services provided to victims, etc.

In the cases where victims had not previously reported violence to the police, the information requested focused on the data available from the municipalities on the socio-economic status and general situation of the victims, as well as any social services provided to them by local self-government units.

In the cases of deceased victims with minor children, the request for information focused on the role of the child protection officer and the support and services provided to them. Further information was requested on the type of services provided, measures taken to guarantee the children's wellbeing, and identification of entities with legal custody over them.

Where the perpetrators were found to suffer from mental health problems, the information requested concerned the assessment of the level of risk posed by these individuals, measures taken by the municipalities where violence was identified, and the existence and functioning of support services for families with a member suffering from mental health disorders.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE IN THE CASES OF PREVIOUSLY REPORTED VIOLENCE

The review shows that in a limited number of cases (five cases), victims had previously reported incidents of violence to the police. However, there seemed to be no follow-up work by the Coordinated Referral Mechanisms, and the victims were not included in the support programs offered by the municipalities.

The results demonstrate that inter-institutional cooperation was activated only after the occurrence of serious incidents, at which time local coordinators, in collaboration with the relevant structures, engaged in the provision of support to the survivors of crimes. The victims were issued with protection orders (IPO/POs) immediately after the incident, as an emergency measure of protection and to prevent further violence.⁵⁶ In addition, the municipalities provided financial assistance, food and sanitary packages, as well as housing benefit allowance to survivors.⁵⁷

Psychosocial and health services and support for victim's rehabilitation from the physical and psychological consequences of violence were offered in cooperation with NGOs operating in the respective municipalities. These organizations played a key role in assisting victims, conducting awareness campaigns and building the capacities of the relevant institutions.⁵⁸

Included in the support for victims of violence is the provision of psychosocial and health services and assistance with victims' rehabilitation from the physical and psychological consequences of violence. This support is provided in cooperation with not-for-profit organizations (NPOs) operating in the respective municipalities. These organizations have played an essential role in providing support to victims, conducting awareness-raising campaigns and strengthening the capacities of institutions in charge of their protection.⁵⁹

While Law No. 57/2019, "On social assistance in the Republic of Albania", as amended, does provide that victims of domestic violence who are not being treated in social care institutions, are entitled to receive financial assistance throughout the time the **protection order or immediate protection order** (PO/IPO) is in place,⁶⁰ it appears that in practice this assistance is only provided in the case of protection orders with

56. However, providing an IPO/PO after the incident indicates a delay in early response.

57. However, based on the testimonies of survivors and their families, the assistance provided was short-term and insufficient.

58. The information provided by the Tirana and Korça Municipalities states that the organization "Të ndryshëm dhe të barabartë" (Different and Equal) has contributed to supporting some of the victims through providing medicines to help them recover, as well as clothing and school supplies for the victims' children.

59. The information provided by the Tirana and Korça Municipalities states that the organization "Të ndryshëm dhe të barabartë" (Different and Equal) has contributed to supporting some of the victims through providing medicines to help them recover, as well as clothing and school supplies for the victims' children.

60. Article 7(d), of Law No. 57/2019 "On Social Assistance in the Republic of Albania", as amended.

a duration of over one month.

Furthermore, the amount of financial benefit received (9,900 ALL per month) remains below the minimum living standard, according to the People's Advocate 2021 report "On the minimum living standard in Albania".⁶¹

In addition, representatives from the municipalities have been attending court proceedings and conducting on-going monitoring of the cases. Often, the provision of services was initiated or supplemented by local NGOs, which have significantly contributed to ensuring emergency and long-term support for victims.

The cases where there was no reporting of violence before the incident

Most victims had not previously reported the perpetrators of the crimes for violence exercised against them, a fact that points to weaknesses in the early identification and intervention systems and demonstrates the victims' lack of trust in the institutions responsible for their protection.⁶² The present review highlights in particular the following issues:

- ⊙ **Lack of prior information:** Municipal authorities often did not have data on the victims or about the level of risk posed by the perpetrators, especially in the cases of individuals with mental health disorders.
- ⊙ **Lack of specialized structures:** There is no network of services for the treatment of perpetrators with mental health issues. In the best case, these individuals are as a rule referred for short-term treatment in psychiatric hospitals, which are overcrowded.
- ⊙ **Delayed response:** In many cases, institutional intervention occurred only after the crime was committed, with a focus on providing emergency assistance rather than early identification and intervention to prevent the escalation of violence.
- ⊙ **Difficulty in accessing services:** In some cases, victims were not registered with local self-government units, which led to delays in their inclusion in social support schemes.
- ⊙ **Partial post-incident support:** After the incident, the support provided was fragmented and often limited to medical services, psychological counselling, or temporary assistance, without an integrated long-term rehabilitation plan.

61. The People's Advocate's report "On the minimum living standard in Albania", 2021, is available at: <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/Minimumi%20jetik%20ok.pdf>;

62. According to the interviews with survivors and victims' families, one of the reasons for not reporting violence is the lack of trust in the authorities.

⊙ **The cases involving young children – involvement of child protection mechanisms**

- ⊙ The report's findings in relation to the cases where the victims had young children were as follows:

⊙ **The provision of post-incident services and support by Child Protection Officers** consisted of:

- ⊙ Psychological counselling for children
- ⊙ Financial support
- ⊙ **A more structured and sustainable support system is needed**, especially for the caregivers who are left with the responsibility of raising the victim's children, often in difficult psychosocial and economic conditions.
- ⊙ **There is a lack of preventive interventions**, even in cases where the institutions had prior knowledge of situations of violence, especially as regards perpetrators suffering from mental health problems.
- ⊙ **Specialized structures** for the treatment and rehabilitation of perpetrators of violence with mental health disorders are also lacking.
- ⊙ **Delayed institutional response** following the incidents. In some municipalities, there is a lack of information on services provided to children and families after the crime has been committed.
- ⊙ **Difficulty in obtaining housing benefit allowance** due to the absence of regular tenancy contracts or the refusal of private owners to formalize the rental relationship.

Findings regarding the role of local self-government structures:

Regarding the roles, functions and responsibilities of local self-government institutions in addressing gender-based violence, it appears that the local referral mechanisms' capacities still vary widely, with a significant number having insufficient capacities to provide a comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable response. These inequalities are reflected both in the lack of specialized human resources and limited financial and organizational capacities, directly affecting the quality, expeditiousness and effectiveness of interventions at the local level.

Psychosocial services, which constitute an essential component of the system of protection and rehabilitation of victims of gender-based violence, are limited both in geographical scope and their functional capacities. Provision of these services is not evenly distributed and equally accessible throughout the country, with evident

inequalities between urban and rural areas. Particularly in remote areas with limited infrastructure, the lack of psychosocial services reinforces the victims' isolation and hinders their access to protection mechanisms, significantly limiting opportunities for early intervention, continuing treatment and effective social integration.

In this context, long-term support for women survivors of crimes and the family members of victims of violence-related suicides is fragmented and largely of a temporary nature, focusing mostly on emergency interventions and not on building sustainable mechanisms for rehabilitation, social reintegration and economic empowerment.

In addition, there is a lack of an institutionalized mechanism for a systematic follow-up of cases with a history of repeated violence, as well as lack of dedicated support schemes for official carers of persons with mental health disorders. These structural and institutional gaps significantly limit the preventive capacity of the system and reduce the effectiveness of interventions at the local level, creating conditions for the escalation of violence and the recurrence of cases with extreme consequences.

In this regard, it is necessary to strengthen monitoring, coordination and integrated support mechanisms at the local level, with the aim of building a comprehensive and sustainable system that guarantees prompt response, effective prevention and long-term rehabilitation of victims of gender-based violence.

4.2

The role of health institutions in identification, treatment and prevention

Healthcare institutions have a legal obligation to provide medical, social and psychological assistance to victims of domestic violence and to record every case of violence in the relevant medical documentation and to provide victims with the relevant forensic reports.⁶³ However, according to the data collected from these institutions, the fulfilment of this obligation and their actual response to gender-based violence and domestic violence cases is not structured, sustainable or coordinated.

The cases reviewed show that most victims received hospital treatment only after a serious incident, when they were given emergency medical assistance for the

63. Article 7(2) of Law No. 9669, dated 18 December 2006 "On measures against violence in domestic relations", as amended, provides that: The Ministry responsible for healthcare shall provide medical services in the family, through emergency services, family doctors and healthcare centres located within the local self-government units and:

- a) provides, at any time, medical, social, and psychological assistance to victims of domestic violence;
- b) conducts, at any time, the necessary examinations in the relevant public health institutions;
- c) records cases of domestic violence in the relevant medical documentation approved by the Ministry of Health;
- d) provides the victim with the relevant medical report;
- e) refers and orients victims to other services for support and protection from domestic violence.

physical injuries or traumas sustained. According to the data, none of the victims had been previously identified or treated by health services as a victim of gender-based violence.

This situation points to the lack of a functional and effective mechanism for the early identification of cases of violence and insufficient involvement of health institutions in the prevention and protection network. This **significantly limits the possibilities for early intervention, structured referral and prevention of the escalation of violence** and increases the risks of serious and extreme consequences faced by victims.

It is also found that a large number of health institutions do not have special registers for the identification and tracking of cases of violence against women; they do not complete individual clinical records in accordance with the relevant protocols on the treatment of domestic violence cases, and do not provide victims with the required special medical report, which is essential for further institutional follow-up and for use as evidence before the court.

FINDINGS ON THE ROLE OF HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

The review of the role, capacities and practices of health institutions in dealing with cases of gender-based violence shows that these institutions continue to face considerable challenges in performing early and consistent identification of cases of violence and applying a proactive and preventive approach. These challenges are particularly pronounced in situations where victims do not directly report the violence suffered due to fear, emotional or economic dependence, or social pressure.

In addition, a number of specific challenges are identified involving persons with mental health disorders who require specialized assessments, coordinated interventions and an integrated and coordinated approach by healthcare, social services and other relevant agencies, with a view to preventing escalation of violence and guaranteeing victim protection.

The review shows that during 2024 health institutions reported treating only seven cases of domestic violence. This figure shows a very low level of intervention and structural deficiencies in the capacities of the health system to effectively identify, document and refer cases of violence.

Particularly problematic is the fact that in none of the cases treated were the victims provided with the specialist medical report, despite their legal obligation to issue this document immediately after the medical treatment.

Similarly, the review highlights that inter-institutional coordination between health institutions, the State Police, the Prosecutor's Office and the courts, remains weak, informal and fragmented, in the absence of clear operational protocols on cooperation

and information exchange. This situation directly affects the ability of institutions to respond swiftly, in a coordinated and effective manner, especially in high-risk cases.

As a result, not only the real and timely protection of victims is compromised, but also the guarantee of the safety of their caregivers and family members. In this context, it remains necessary to strengthen the role of health institutions as a key link in the prevention of gender-based violence, through increasing professional capacities and institutionalizing sustainable and functional inter-institutional coordination mechanisms.

4.3

Consequences of serious crimes against women and girls beyond the direct victims

Besides the direct victims, serious crimes against women, including femicide, have profound and long-term consequences for a wider circle of people who are directly affected by such traumatic events. The families of the victims, including their children, parents, siblings, often remain outside institutional attention, despite facing severe psychological, social and economic consequences.

In particular, children orphaned because of femicide and those who live with the severe physical and psychological trauma sustained by their mothers who survived serious crimes, are exposed to constant feelings of lack of safety, serious emotional problems and, in many cases, lack of a stable care and support structure. These children are not only witnesses of violence, but also bearers of its long-term consequences, which directly affect their emotional, educational and social development.

Despite this, institutional support for victims' families and children affected by femicide remains fragmented, uneven and inadequate, reflecting the lack of an integrated and long-term approach to addressing their needs and ensuring their full social protection and rehabilitation.⁶⁴

64. See the first report on femicide prepared by the People's Advocate, page 60, on the financial support provided to the victims' children, as well as the People's Advocate's Report "On the minimum living standard in Albania", 2021, available at: <file:///C:/Users/pc/Downloads/Minimumi%20jetik%20ok.pdf>

CHAPTER V

INVESTIGATION AND ADJUDICATION OF CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: MURDERS, ATTEMPTED MURDERS, CAUSING SERIOUS INJURY AND CAUSING SUICIDE

5.1

The role of the Police and the Prosecution in investigating crimes against women and girls and identifying gender motives behind these crimes

The State Police and prosecutorial bodies have an essential role to play in the investigation of crimes against women and girls, not only to ensure justice for the victims, but also to prevent violence and address the structural and individual factors that permit and perpetuate it. The effectiveness of interventions by these institutions directly affects the level of victim protection and public trust in the justice system.

As key links in the chain of the institutional response to gender-based violence, the police and the prosecution carry a special responsibility to conduct professional, independent and gender-sensitive investigations. This includes the accurate identification and documentation of the gender motives, preventing gender bias and stereotypes, and the establishment and strengthening of the necessary institutional capacities for the adequate handling and punishment of the crimes.

The investigation of cases of violence against women must be carried out to the highest legal and professional standards and based on a comprehensive knowledge of the complex dynamics of violence,⁶⁵ which are often characterized by relationships of power, coercive control, and emotional or economic dependence.

In most of the cases reviewed in the context of this report, the perpetrators are individuals with whom the victims used to be or still are in a close family or intimate relationship. This makes it imperative to apply a targeted investigative approach in order to understand the context of the violence and clearly identify the gender motives behind these criminal offences.

5.2

5.2 Analysis of court decisions by criminal offense subject to monitoring

An analysis of court decisions and judgments is an essential component to understanding how the criminal justice system handles serious crimes against women, including murder, attempted murder, causing serious injury with intent and causing

65. With regard to investigations and trial proceedings, GREVIO's First Thematic Report on Albania (2024) found that prosecutors and judges often do not apply the necessary gender lens, do not fully understand the dynamics of violence against women and may be influenced by prejudices that hinder the correct implementation of the law.

suicide. This analysis enables the evaluation of the approach taken by the courts towards these criminal offenses, examination of the case law vis-à-vis identification and handling of gender motives, and the identification of trends in decision-making, the types and sentencing ranges handed down, and the legal reasoning used.

Due to delays in judicial proceedings, a significant part of the cases under review are still in the investigation or trial stage. This limits the possibility for a full and conclusive assessment of judicial practices in all cases included in this report.

Out of the 18 cases subject of the present review, only nine have received a first instance court judgment, of which two were appealed and a judgment was issued by the Court of Appeals of General Jurisdiction.

The analysed court decisions include the following categories of cases:

Two cases of killings of women in which the perpetrators were individuals with mental health problems who killed their mothers. In these cases, the courts imposed the security measure of “compulsory treatment in a medical institution”, in accordance with the assessment of the mental state of the perpetrators.

Two cases of attempted killing. In one case, the father shot his daughter with a shotgun, after family relations deteriorated as a result of her husband’s refusal to accept divorce.⁶⁶ Given that the perpetrator committed suicide immediately after the incident, the court decided to terminate the criminal proceedings.

In the other case, the husband tried to kill his wife, causing multiple injuries to her body and head. For this criminal offense, the Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction at Tirana sentenced the author to 30 (thirty) years of imprisonment.⁶⁷

Two cases of serious injury with intent. In one case, a young man suffering from mental health problems injured his mother and the court imposed the measure “compulsory treatment in a medical institution” against the perpetrator. In the other case, two sisters seriously injured a young woman known to them. In their case, the court handed down different sentences, proportionate with the concrete role each had played in the commission of the criminal offense.⁶⁸

^{66.} Judgment No. 254 dated 19 February 2025 of the Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction at Fier. In the statement provided to the judicial police officer, K.Q., who survived the crime, testified that she had not had any arguments with her father at the time the incident happened, but that he could not accept the fact of her separation from her husband, as he felt ashamed and judged by public opinion.

^{67.} Judgment No. 2005, dated 28 July 2025 of the Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction at Tirana.

^{68.} One of the co-perpetrators, who was proven to have played the main role in committing the crime, was sentenced to three years in prison, but her sentence was reduced to two years, thanks to her agreeing to a summary trial. Her sister was sentenced to three years of probation, reduced to two years under the same mitigation mechanism.

Two cases of causing suicide. In one case, the victim took her own life and the lives of her three children, all of minor age, by drowning in River Buna. The perpetrator of the criminal offense of causing suicide was convicted and sentenced to 4 (four) years' imprisonment by the First Instance Court at Shkodra,⁶⁹ a decision which was upheld by the Court of Appeals of General Jurisdiction at Tirana. In the other case, the perpetrator convicted of causing his wife's suicide was sentenced to 10 (ten) years' imprisonment by the Court of First Instance at Durrës for the criminal offenses of "Causing suicide" under Article 99 of the Criminal Code and "Unauthorized possession and production of weapons, ammunition and explosives" under Article 278/4 of the Criminal Code.⁷⁰ This decision was upheld by the Court of Appeals of General Jurisdiction at Tirana.⁷¹

The judgments reviewed were issued by courts of General Jurisdiction at Tirana, Durrës, Fier, Shkodra and Lezha,⁷² and are representative of the judicial practice of these courts in handling serious crimes against women. Regarding the legal characterization of the criminal offenses, the review shows that the legal characterizations submitted by the prosecution were confirmed by the courts in all the cases.

The review of indictments submitted for confirmation and court judgments shows found that some prosecutors⁷³ and judges have **relied on the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights**, using it as a source of interpretation to strengthen the legal reasoning and guarantee a higher standard of protection of fundamental rights.⁷⁴ However, ECtHR jurisprudence is not yet consistently or uniformly applied at all levels of the judiciary, which points to the need for strengthening capacities and increasing the awareness of the judiciary in relation to its centrality in judicial practice.

Regarding the perpetrators' stance during their trials for murder, attempted murder and causing serious injury with intent, they generally pleaded guilty to the charges brought against them. However, during the trial proceedings continuous efforts were

69. Judgment No. 713, dated 25 February 2025 of the Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction at Shkodra.

70. Judgment No.1109, dated 11 December 2024, of the First Instance Court of General Jurisdiction at Durrës.

71. One of the co-perpetrators, who was proven to have played the main role in committing the crime, was sentenced to three years in prison, but her sentence was reduced to two years, thanks to her agreeing to a summary trial. Her sister was sentenced to three years of probation, reduced to two years under the same mitigation mechanism.

72. In six cases the judgments are now final.

73. In its reasoning presented in the indictment sent for confirmation for trial, against the citizen A.Q, accused of the criminal offense of causing suicide (Article 99 of the Criminal code) and stalking (Article 121(a) (2) of the Criminal Code) the prosecution at the Tirana Judicial District states that despite the fact that our criminal legislation does not provide for stalking in cyberspace and online platforms, the jurisprudence of the ECtHR in the case "Volodina v. Russia" (no. 2), page 52, has emphasized that acts of cyber violence in the case in question were sufficient to require a criminal response from the local authorities. The publication of her intimate photographs was intended to humiliate and denigrate her.

74. These referrals serve to harmonize domestic case law with European standards and to ensure that court judgments are comply with the European Convention on Human Rights, which Albania has ratified.

made to mitigate or justify the criminal offense, or to minimize its consequences by relativizing the scale and severity of the violence exercised.

In the cases involving gender-based violence-related suicides of women, the perpetrators repeatedly denied responsibility for the role of their actions and conduct on the deterioration of the victims' psychological and emotional state which drove them to the fatal decision to take their own lives. In these cases, there is a clear tendency to largely attribute the act of suicide to the victim's individual psychological and emotional problems, denying or minimizing the effect of violence, pressure and abusive behaviours exercised by the perpetrators.

5.3 Monitoring of court hearings

The monitoring of court hearings is an essential mechanism in assessing compliance with the procedural rights of the parties and examining the functioning of the justice system in accordance with the principles of due process of law and the international standards on the administration of justice.

Following the analysis of the information forwarded by the responsible structures and the identification of cases that had gone on to the trial phase, the process of monitoring court hearings continued in 2025, in order to assess the way cases of extreme violence against women are dealt with by the judiciary.

In this context, a total of four court cases were monitored: two at the Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction in Tirana and two at the Court of Appeals of General Jurisdiction in Tirana.

The defendants in these cases stood trial for the criminal offenses “attempted **murder in the context of family relationships**” under Articles 79/c and 22 of the Criminal Code and “causing suicide” under Article 99 of the Criminal Code.

The monitoring of trial proceedings in the case of the defendant charged with the criminal offense of attempted murder in the context of family relationships showed that the prosecution had carried out comprehensive and in-depth investigations and the victim, together with some of her family members, actively participated in the judicial process.

During the trial, the daughter of the victim and the defendant were questioned again by the parties. In her testimony, she showed a tendency to minimize the violence exercised against her mother in order to mitigate the position of the perpetrator before the trial panel. Similarly, the testimony of the victim herself tended to minimize the severity of the violence experienced, in an attempt to influence the way the court would assess and decide on the case.

This demeanour of the parties highlights the complexity of domestic violence cases and the need for careful judicial assessment, which is based not only on the statements of the parties involved, but also on objective evidence and any previous history of violence.

In another case in which the defendant was tried for the criminal offense of “Causing suicide”, a total of twelve court hearings were held. The defendant was represented by a privately chosen counsel and denied the charge brought against him. The victim’s family members actively participated in the court hearings, clearly expressing their desire for justice to be done and for the perpetrator to be punished in accordance with the law. They, too, were represented by privately chosen counsel throughout the judicial proceedings.

As regards the cases appealed before the Court of Appeals of General Jurisdiction, a total of four court hearings were monitored. These sessions were held in the absence of the victims’ surviving family members, a circumstance which was noted during the monitoring process.

FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE MONITORED CASES

The court hearings monitored reflected a satisfactory degree of sensitivity towards the context of gender-based violence, especially through an analysis of circumstances related to the history of violence in the relationship between the victim and the defendant. This element is of crucial importance for assessing the dangerousness of the situation and understanding the dynamics of violence, which is often characterized by recurring cycles and escalation of violence.

The court proceedings were conducted in accordance with the procedural rules set out in the Code of Criminal Procedure. During the monitoring, some adjournments of court hearings were identified, which, however, did not appear to have substantially affected the right to trial within a reasonable time, as the trial proceedings were completed within four to eight months.

The charges filed by the prosecution were based on the evidence administered and the factual circumstances of the cases and reflected an appropriate legal characterization of the criminal offenses. The sentences handed down by the courts were assessed as proportionate to the severity and social dangerousness of the crimes.

The monitoring did not identify any elements which would indicate interference by or the influence of external factors in the conduct of proceedings and the panels’ adjudication of the cases. However, maintaining this independence requires continuous and regular monitoring and increased institutional attention, especially as regards gender-based violence cases, which are socially complex and highly sensitive by their very nature. Pursuant to the applicable legislation, perpetrators of criminal offenses are entitled to free legal aid for their representation in criminal proceedings;

the victims of crime and their family members, on the other hand, only receive this form of support if they meet the criteria set out in the law and pursuant a specific legal procedure which requires them to formally submit to the court a request for free secondary legal aid.⁷⁵

The monitoring of the record of the cases included in this report shows that none of the surviving victims or the victims' family members received support in the form of free secondary legal aid. This situation points to the existence of practical and procedural obstacles to the victims' meaningful enjoyment of this right, despite the fact that legal provisions guaranteeing this right exist.

The lack of effective access to free secondary legal aid creates significant inequality between the parties in the criminal proceedings and violates the principle of equality of arms. In this context, it is found that the criminal justice system still remains mainly oriented towards guaranteeing the procedural rights of the defendants, while further structural and procedural improvements are needed for the protection and strengthening of the victims' position.

FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PROSECUTORIAL BODIES

Findings regarding the role of the Police

The analysis of the responses sent by the Police shows that there are still some gaps and shortcomings in the police response to cases of gender-based violence, as reflected in the delayed or inconsistent interventions by the police, the absence of systematic and proactive action based on sound risk assessment and aimed at preventing the escalation of violence. These elements show that, despite legal obligations and the key role that the Police have in multi-agency chain of protection, intervention often remain reactive and fragmented.

A particular issue relates to the lack of structured and continuous monitoring of cases with recurring history of violence, which significantly increases the risk of escalation to incidents with fatal consequences. In this regard, there is also an absence of clear, specialized and functional mechanisms for the identification and prevention of suicides and situations of extreme danger related to gender-based violence, which significantly limits capacities for early intervention.

In addition, there is a need to strengthen the professional capacities of police officers, particularly as regards the identification of high-risk cases, improved effectiveness in the use of risk assessment instruments and the implementation of uniform procedural standards in handling the cases. Likewise, it is necessary to improve the systems of data collection, administration and analysis, so that the available information can be effectively used for the purposes of prevention and informed decision-making.

75. Law No. 111/2017 "On legal aid guaranteed by the State", Articles 11, 12 and 19.

FINDINGS REGARDING THE ROLE OF THE PROSECUTION AND COURTS

The analysis of the practice followed by prosecutions and courts in dealing with these cases shows that a consistent and harmonized implementation of the standards of the Istanbul Convention and the relevant jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights is not always guaranteed in the handling of gender-based violence cases by these institutions.

The monitoring showed that prosecutorial bodies do not focus on carrying out an analysis of any gender motives behind the crimes, while the assessment of the history of violence in the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator is carried out in a fragmentary and non-comprehensive manner.

There are as yet no specific guidelines in place for the courts regarding the treatment of gender-related crimes, which leads to a lack of uniformity in the case law and significant differences in the quality and content of decision-making.

Multi-agency collaboration between prosecution offices, courts, the State Police and victim support services remains fragmented and not always functional, lacking sustainable coordination mechanisms.

Court proceedings do not always guarantee safe and dignified conditions for the hearing of survivors and their family members, which increases the risk of their re-victimization and affects full and meaningful respect for their fundamental rights.

Additionally, the analysis shows that the investigation and trial of the cases now completed was carried out within the reasonable timeframes set out in the law; however, prosecutorial bodies must take additional measures for these cases to be dealt with as expeditiously as possible, in order to prevent the re-victimization of survivors and their family members, to ensure the effectiveness of their investigations and the bringing of perpetrators before justice.

In the completed cases, the sentences handed down to the perpetrators were generally in line with the provisions of the relevant legislation. However, a more comprehensive analysis of gender motives would enable a more effective and proportionate use of punitive measures.

The monitoring of the court cases revealed that in none of the cases reviewed did the courts order, as an additional measure, the compulsory attendance of perpetrators in rehabilitation or specialized intervention programs. This fact is indicative of the as yet limited use of the preventive instruments provided for in the law and fails to comply with the positive obligation of the state to undertake effective measures for the prevention of the recurrence of violence.

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1

Other recommendations following the recommendations of the first report⁷⁶

In the first report of the People's Advocate on the killing of women and girls and the phenomenon of femicide in Albania for the period 2021-2023, a series of general and specific recommendations were presented, oriented towards addressing legal and institutional gaps in the field of preventing extreme violence against women, strengthening victim protection mechanisms and improving the conduct of criminal proceedings against perpetrators.

These recommendations included, among others, the need to develop specific strategies for the prevention of femicide, strengthen inter-institutional coordination, establish and consolidate support services for victims and the family members left behind, and consider the possibility of including femicide as a separate criminal offense in the Criminal Code.

Following the first report, the current report expands the range of issues under review and focuses on an analysis of cases that occurred during 2024. The findings of the present report highlight that, despite some measures that are being taken in certain sectors, a significant number of the recommendations presented in the first report still remain unimplemented or have only been partially implemented. This situation points to the need for a more sustained institutional engagement and a more systematic approach in addressing the phenomenon of femicide and gender-based violence in Albania.

Accordingly, the recommendations listed below do not aim to repeat the recommendations formulated in the first report but, rather, to further reinforce and expand them, based on data analysis, the trends identified and the assessment of the new challenges that arose in 2024.

In this context, they aim to strengthen institutional intervention in a coordinated and effective manner, address other serious and complex forms of gender-based violence, as well as guarantee a comprehensive, integrated and sustainable approach to survivors and victims' family members, focusing on the protection of their rights and the specific needs stemming from these cases.

⁷⁶ See the People's Advocate's report "The killing of women and girls and femicide in Albania 2021-2023", p. 61.

6.2

General recommendations

In order to prevent femicide and other serious forms of violence against women and girls and guarantee the effective support of survivors and family members of victims, the People's Advocate recommends that all relevant institutions and agencies take coordinated and comprehensive measures, as follows:

- ⦿ **The Albanian Parliament** should accelerate the process of reviewing and amending the civil and criminal legislation, in order to fully and integrally address all forms of violence against women in line with the standards and recommendations of international human rights instruments and mechanisms, including the CEDAW Committee, GREVIO and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR);
- ⦿ **Undertake a revision of Law no. 111/2017 “On state-guaranteed legal aid”**, for the purpose of including survivors of crimes related to violence against women and victims' surviving family members in the special categories of beneficiaries, as well as simplifying and facilitating the procedures for obtaining free secondary legal aid, in order to guarantee the meaningful and effective access of these categories to justice;
- ⦿ **Strengthen the role and responsibilities of central and local institutions** for an effective implementation of legislation on gender-based violence and domestic violence, through coordinated interventions, clear accountability mechanisms and continuous monitoring, in order to provide real, sustainable and effective protection for women and girls at risk;
- ⦿ **Improve multi-agency coordination** between the responsible institutions, with the aim of unifying, harmonizing and continuously updating data, in order to develop policies that are evidence-based and strengthen the institutional prevention and response mechanisms;
- ⦿ **Provide continuous and comprehensive support to survivors of crimes and to the victims' surviving family members**, through the provision of financial assistance, psychological support, legal aid and other necessary services, so that their needs are addressed in a coordinated and effective manner, and in accordance with human rights standards;
- ⦿ Provide special and tailored support to minors affected by femicide or other serious crimes committed against their mothers, through the provision of financial assistance, psychological support and legal assistance, as well as through continuous and structured follow-up of their rehabilitation process, in order to effectively address the traumas they sustained and guarantee their healthy development;

- ⊙ Review the amount of financial support provided to victims of domestic violence and minors affected by femicide and enable the parallel access of victims of domestic violence to financial assistance schemes, where the victims fall into one of the categories in need and have been issued with a protection order or an immediate protection order, with the aim of providing them with meaningful and sustainable social support;
- ⊙ Strengthen the mechanisms for the prevention of suicide driven by gender-based violence in cyberspace, through the development of preventive policies, early interventions, monitoring potential risks and increasing institutional capacities for identifying and addressing these cases;
- ⊙ Systematically include gender-based violence-related suicides in the institutional analyses and reporting and treat them as direct and serious consequences of violence, with a view to ensuring a complete understanding of the phenomenon and undertake targeted public policies based on solid evidence;
- ⊙ Review and strengthen the standards of coordination between the responsible agencies and institutions, aiming at an effective and integrated handling of cases of violence, as well as the establishment, development and consolidation of new support and rehabilitation programs services;
- ⊙ **Take measures for the early identification and timely treatment of the mental health issues of perpetrators of violence** through specialized professional assessments, appropriate medical interventions and inter-institutional referral mechanisms, in order to reduce the risk of recurrence of violence and strengthen preventive measures;
- ⊙ **Conduct detailed psychological and emotional assessments and carry out assessments of potential risks to the victim's safety before releasing the perpetrators of violence from the correctional institutions where they served their sentences**, in order to prevent the risk of recurrence of violence and ensure that necessary protective measures are in place;
- ⊙ **Establish monitoring mechanisms for a transitional period following the serving of sentences for violence against women related crimes**, to be applied in the case of individuals released from prison, through inter-institutional cooperation and the use of appropriate monitoring measures;
- ⊙ **Develop and strengthen the professional capacities of the police, prosecution, the judiciary, and other social and health services agencies**, through specialized and continuous training programs focusing on the handling of cases of crimes against women and gender-based violence;

- ⦿ **Raise public awareness and challenge patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes that contribute to the normalization of violence against women**, through information campaigns, public education and community engagement, aiming at the long-term prevention of this form of violence.

6.3

Specific recommendations

(i) Strengthen the protocols for the treatment and referral of cases of gender-based violence, with special attention to cases of perpetrators suffering from mental health conditions, and improve inter-institutional coordination in respect of such cases, especially in situations where:

- ⦿ there is a presence of physical marks giving rise to reasonable suspicions that they are the result of the use of violence;
- ⦿ victims refuse to make statements or collaborate, but there are sufficient professionally established indications which suggest that they have been subjected to violence;

(ii) Establish and formalize direct communication mechanisms through the appointment of dedicated contact points between mental health centres and law enforcement, prosecutorial and judicial authorities, including the State Police, prosecutions and courts, to be activated in cases of high-risk patients. This mechanism aims to enable rapid and coordinated intervention to guarantee the protection of caregivers and other family members as well as to prevent the escalation of situations posing a high risk to their life and safety.

(iii) Carry out mandatory and periodic trainings for healthcare professionals, with special focus on general practitioners, emergency doctors and psychiatrists, with a focus on:

- ⦿ strengthening professional capacities for the early identification of victims and potential perpetrators of violence;
- ⦿ standardizing of practices for the drafting and issuing special medical reports, which are valid for use in judicial and administrative proceedings;
- ⦿ ensuring effective inter-institutional coordination for comprehensively addressing the needs identified in each case, with a view to protecting the victim and prevent the recurrence of violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE POLICE

Reiterating the need to accelerate and intensify efforts for the implementation of the recommendations set out in the first report and taking into account the findings of this report, the State Police should increase its efforts in a coordinated and sustained manner, to:

- ⊙ **Strengthen the prompt and professional response** to any sign or indication that violence has occurred, including the exercise of their legal powers to act on their own initiative in cases where there is an immediate need for protective measures;
- ⊙ **Strengthen inter-institutional cooperation** between the State Police, local self-government units and healthcare institutions, in order to guarantee a rapid, coordinated and comprehensive response to cases of gender-based violence;
- ⊙ **Systematically monitor cases with a previous history of violence**, as well as pay increased attention to cases where suspected perpetrators have criminal records, in order to prevent escalation of violence in the future;
- ⊙ **Take preventive measures to stop gender-based violence-related suicides**, through structured cooperation with educational, local and health institutions, aiming at an early identification of risk factors and providing the necessary support;
- ⊙ **Develop and conduct specialized trainings for State Police officers**, with a focus on identifying and assessing situations presenting a high risk of commission of fatal crimes or suicide, and on the professional management of these cases;
- ⊙ **Improve the data collection, management and analysis systems** for gender-based violence cases, in order to identify trends, gaps and deficiencies in the institutional response of the State Police.

RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO PROSECUTORS AND THE JUDICIARY

Following on the recommendations of the first report and based on the findings of the present report regarding the role of the prosecution offices and courts in dealing with criminal cases involving violence against women and girls, it is recommended that these authorities take the following measures, namely to:

- ⊙ **Organize specialist on-going trainings of prosecutors and judges**, on the topic of the handling of cases of violence against women and girls, including femicides and cases of gender-based violence-related suicide, in accordance with the standards set by the Istanbul Convention and taking into account the

jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, with particular focus on the interpretation of criminal offences in the gender context;

- ⊙ **Carry out full, effective and expeditious investigations, ensuring a full assessment of the history of violence, an analysis of the gender motive and identification of risk factors in each concrete case;**
- ⊙ **Develop and adopt specific guidelines for the courts**, on the handling of gender-related crimes, with a view to unifying judicial practice and improve the quality of decision-making;
- ⊙ **Systematically monitor judicial practice and decisions, as well as** publish periodical analyses of tendencies, applied standards and issues identified in the handling of such cases;
- ⊙ **Strengthen multi-agency coordination with the State Police and other responsible authorities**, to ensure an effective and timely sharing of information and carry out comprehensive analyses of each case;
- ⊙ **Prioritize the safety and protection of victims during the entire investigation process and trial proceedings** through ensuring that effective protective measures, proportionate to the level of risk, are in place;
- ⊙ **Take into account the risk level posed by the perpetrator**, and impose sentences which take that into account, including, where applicable, the obligation to attend rehabilitation and treatment programs during and after serving the sentence;
- ⊙ **Apply procedural measures that ensure that survivors and their family members are heard in a safe manner**, which prevents any form of revictimization and respects the dignity, integrity and their fundamental rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO MUNICIPALITIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

Pursuant to the applicable legal framework and taking into account the obligations and powers of the local self-government units in preventing, handling and addressing domestic violence and gender-based violence, it is recommended that institutional mechanisms are operationalized and strengthened in order to promote:

- ⊙ **The operational strengthening of local referral mechanisms (LRM)**, through ensuring adequate human, financial and logistic resources, in order to guarantee the timely, coordinated and integrated treatment of cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence;

- ⦿ **Expansion and diversification of psychological and social services at the local level**, including by setting up mobile multidisciplinary teams for active monitoring of cases in the community, with particular focus on the rural areas and households with previous history of violence;
- ⦿ **Ensuring long-term and sustainable support for women survivors of attempted murder or those who have sustained serious injuries**, through developing and implementing integrated accommodation, employment, rehabilitation and social reintegration programs;
- ⦿ **Prompt and coordinated intervention in cases of gender-based violence-related suicides**, by ensuring the provision of support services for the victim's family members, including psychological and financial support, provision of care for orphaned children, and legal assistance;
- ⦿ **Systematic observation and monitoring of cases with previous history of violence**, through structured and continuous collaboration with the State Police and healthcare institutions, with the aim of preventing the recurrence of violence or its escalation to other serious criminal offences;
- ⦿ **Establishment and implementation of support schemes for official carers and family members living with persons with mental health disorders**, in order to manage risk, protect their safety and prevent high-risk situations.

ANNEX

CASE STUDIES

This section of the report presents an in-depth analysis of six cases of serious crimes committed against women that represent some of the most deeply shocking incidents that occurred in our country during 2024. These include: one case of femicide, two cases of attempted murder, one case of causing serious injury with intent, and two cases of gender-based violence-related suicide. In all the selected cases the victims were women who were in a close family or intimate relationship with the perpetrators.

The selection of these cases aims to illustrate the structural features and dynamics of gender-based violence, as well as to encourage reflection regarding the institutional and social responsibility in its prevention.

CASE STUDY I

Analysis of the case of the murder of SH.I. by her husband, following which their son hit the perpetrator to death

INTRODUCTION

In August 2024, SH.I. was hit several times with an axe by her husband H.I., as a result of which she died instantly of the injuries she suffered. The information received through official channels and the review of the case-related materials show that the victim had been constantly abused, physically and psychologically, by her husband.⁷⁷ It does not appear that the victim had previously reported the violence inflicted on her to the responsible authorities. This case draws attention to cases of this kind where, in spite of being under constant coercive pressure and suffering continuous violence, the victims still do not report the abuse and do not seek support. This, once again, highlights the need to have in place functioning mechanisms that promote awareness, identification, and proactive action by the police and other responsible authorities.

INFORMATION ON THE VICTIM

SH.I., aged 67, was married and the mother of three adult children. She had completed four years of education and was retired at the time of the incident. She did not appear to have had any disabilities according to the official records kept by the relevant authorities. From the testimonies provided by the victim's relatives during the investigation, it appears that she had suffered constant violence at the hands of her husband.

INFORMATION ON THE PERPETRATOR

H.I., the victim's husband, 69 years of age, with no formal education and no prior convictions. It does not appear, according to official records, that he had any

⁷⁷ In the explanations given to the prosecuting authorities, the victim's son claimed that his father constantly exercised violence on the victim and that he had also used violence against her on the day before the murder.

disabilities officially recognized and documented by competent authorities. However, according to the evidence his son gave to the prosecuting authorities, it appears that there had been concerns about the state of his mental health. He was also known in the community as someone who had a violent character.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INCIDENT

The victim woke up early in the morning to prepare food for her son to take with him to work. Only a few minutes after her son left for work and following an argument fuelled by motives of jealousy, the victim was hit several times with an axe on her body and head by her husband. She succumbed to the injuries a few minutes after being hit.

Circumstances that led to the incident:

- ⊙ constant physical and psychological violence exercised by the perpetrator;
- ⊙ the perpetrator's violent character and failure to address the issues related to his aggressive behaviour;
- ⊙ jealousy;
- ⊙ failure to report the violence and lack of support for the victim.

Investigation and trial of the case against the perpetrator

The case is being investigated by the prosecution and, given that the perpetrator also died shortly after the incident, it is expected that a request will be made to the court for the case against him to be abated. In the meantime, the investigations are still ongoing in the case against their son for the criminal offense of "Killing committed in the state of severe psychological shock" under Article 82 of the Criminal Code, committed against his father (the perpetrator of the murder of SH.I.).

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Public reaction:

- ⊙ The incident deeply shocked the community, prompting large scale discussions on domestic violence and the need to identify and support victims.
- ⊙ Social stigma:
- ⊙ Discussions about the incident invariably focused on the son's "taking revenge" for his mother's death at the hands of his father, but not as much attention was given to the factors that contributed to commission of both crimes and to the need for institutional intervention in identifying cases and preventing the escalation of violence.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

The media focused mainly on the son's revenge against the father, without delving into the analysis of the previous history of violence against the victim and the measures that could and should have been taken to prevent the incident.

CASE STUDY II

Attempted murder committed by a father against his daughter as a result of his refusal to accept her divorce.

INTRODUCTION

In May 2024, R.M., mother of two young children, who was in the middle of divorce proceedings at the time of the incident, was shot with a hunting rifle by her father, seriously endangering her life. From the information obtained through official channels and the review of the case materials, the victim does not appear to have previously reported any violence to the responsible authorities. Based on the statements and explanations provided by witnesses and the victim herself, the perpetrator committed the crime motivated by his refusal to accept the fact that she had decided to divorce her husband.

INFORMATION ON THE VICTIM

R.M., aged 40, with eight years of education, does not appear to have had any disabilities documented by the competent authorities. After the *de facto* separation from her husband and the initiation of legal divorce procedures, the victim returned to live with her parents, a decision that was not welcomed by her father.

INFORMATION ON THE PERPETRATOR

B.M., the victim's father, aged 82, with eight years of education, does not appear to have had any disabilities documented by the competent authorities. He was known to be a quiet man and does not appear to have had any prior convictions.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INCIDENT

The victim had returned to her parents' apartment a week earlier after deciding to divorce her husband. Her father was against this. Around 15:30 PM, when only the perpetrator and the victim were at home and without any prior argument, the perpetrator shot the victim with a hunting rifle. The gun was fired at very close range, causing very serious injuries to the victim. After shooting his daughter, the perpetrator committed suicide using the same weapon.

The circumstances that led to the incident:

- ⊙ the perpetrator's refusal to accept his daughter's divorce;
- ⊙ the patriarchal mentality as an instigating factor. The incident clearly demonstrates the profound influence of the traditional patriarchal mindset,

where a woman's choice to divorce and return to her family of origin is considered unacceptable, even "bringing shame" to the family. The perpetrator's violent reaction was largely motivated by this kind of mentality.

- ⊙ lack of awareness of the importance of reporting violence.
- ⊙ lack of support for women after divorce.

Investigation and trial of the case against the perpetrator

The case is still under investigation by the prosecution and given that the perpetrator also died shortly after the incident, it is expected that a request will be made to the court for the case against him to be abated.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Public reaction:

The incident deeply shocked the community, prompting discussions on the role of this mentality in cases where women decide to seek divorce and return to their families of origin.

Social stigma:

Discussions on the incident often focused on the role of this mentality, especially among the elderly, without paying equal attention to the factors that led to the commission of the crime and the suicide.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

- ⊙ The reaction of the media and the community focused mostly on the sensational aspects of the incident and failed to analyse the deep-rooted structural and social factors that led to this extreme act.
- ⊙ The media focused mainly on the circumstances in which the incident unfolded, without delving into the analysis of the factors that could have contributed to the commission of the crime and the need for support for women and girls after the dissolution of the marriage.

CASE STUDY III

Analysis of the case of the attempted murder of E.SH.

INTRODUCTION

In May 2024, J.SH. attempted to kill his wife, E.SH, after an altercation fuelled by jealousy. The perpetrator surrendered to police immediately after the incident. The victim survived the injuries sustained after extensive medical treatment. For months on end, the victim suffered as a result of the injuries she sustained which also resulted in partial incapacity for work.

INFORMATION ON THE VICTIM

E.SH., aged 48, was married and mother of two children, with secondary school education. Before the incident she was in employment and does not appear to have had any disabilities. The statements given by the victim herself and her relatives in the course of the investigation show that there were constant arguments between her and her husband caused by his jealousy, often accompanied by the use of physical and psychological violence against her. The Municipality reports that there is no indication in the REVALB system that the victim had previously been issued with an IPO/PO.

INFORMATION ON THE PERPETRATOR

J.SH., the victim's husband, aged 52, married with two adult children, with eight years of education, was unemployed at the time of the incident. The information shows that the perpetrator had a prior criminal record for murder and domestic violence. He was known for his violent character.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INCIDENT

The incident occurred in May 2024 at around 02:10 AM, after a heated argument between the parties motivated by jealousy. The perpetrator stabbed the victim more than 20 times with a knife in different parts of her body and face with the intention to cause her death, then rang his daughter to tell her what had happened. The daughter rushed to the apartment and called an ambulance. The perpetrator surrendered to police and criminal proceedings were initiated against him for the criminal offense of attempted femicide in the context of family relationships.

Circumstances that led to the incident:

Constant physical and psychological violence exercised by the perpetrator;
Failure of the responsible authorities to take measures to prevent the violence;

Investigation and trial of the case against the perpetrator

The case was investigated for the criminal offense of “Attempted **murder in the context of family relationships**” (Articles 79/c and 22 of the Criminal Code). Following the completion of the investigation, the case went to trial, with the prosecution requesting a 35-year prison term for the perpetrator. The First Instance Court of General Jurisdiction in Tirana found the perpetrator guilty and imposed the lengthy sentence requested by the prosecution. The judgment was appealed before the Court of Appeals of General Jurisdiction and is currently under review.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Public reaction:

The event deeply shocked the community and prompted discussions on domestic violence, on the need to toughen punishments for perpetrators and to take measures for their rehabilitation during the time they serve their sentences and after their release from prison.

Social stigma:

Discussions on the incident often focused on the victim, without addressing the role of contributing factors and paying no attention to issues related to the need for institutional support.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

The media played an important role in shedding light on the factors that contributed to the escalation of violence against the victim. The information published in the media also highlighted the claims made by the victim and her daughter that this was an incident waiting to happen and that the victim had previously sought police protection, but no action had been taken against the perpetrator.⁷⁸

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CASE STUDY IV

Analysis of the case of the suicide of A.A. and the death of her three children by jumping into River Buna: Contributing factors and social consequences

INTRODUCTION

In May 2024, A.A. jumped into River Buna and drowned together with her three young children, an event that deeply shocked Albanian public opinion. This is one of the most serious incidents of this nature ever to have occurred in the country. The victim took her own life by drowning in River Buna along with her three children, aged 9, 8 and 3. From the information received through official channels and the review of the case materials, it appears that the incident occurred after a long period of constant stress and abuse in the family. This case draws attention to the effect of domestic violence and the role of other social factors in driving people to take extreme decisions, emphasizing the need for rapid intervention in the identification and support of potential victims.

INFORMATION ON THE VICTIM

A.A., aged 39, married and mother of three children, with no education and unemployed before the incident, does not appear to have had any disabilities officially documented by the competent authorities. From the testimonies given during the investigation by the victim's relatives it appears that she suffered from anxiety and depression and received medication. The data show that the victim was known for her calm and withdrawn disposition, she engaged in raising and taking care of her children and generally being a homemaker.

INFORMATION ON THE PERPETRATOR OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE RELATED SUICIDE

E.A., the victim's husband, aged 31, married with three young children, with secondary school education, was unemployed at the time of the incident and had no prior convictions.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INCIDENT

In the run up to the incident:

On May 2, 2024, the victim met her sister-in-law and told her about the difficulties she was going through before taking her children and heading towards a bridge over River Buna. She told her sister-in-law that she was going to her brother's, to calm down. The next day, the news arrived that the victim had thrown herself into River Buna, together with her three children, ending her own life and the lives of the children. The bodies were found two days later by specialist RENE A forces.

The circumstances that led to the incident:

- ⦿ The perpetrator's constant infliction of physical and psychological violence on the victim created an unsafe and stressful family environment;
- ⦿ The worsening of the psychological and emotional state and the strained relations within the family;
- ⦿ The lack of social and family support for the victim, leaving her isolated and without an effective way out.

Investigation and trial of the case against the perpetrator

The case was initially investigated for the criminal offense of "Murder in other aggravating circumstances" under Article 79/a of the Criminal Code, but following a more in-depth investigation into the incident, the charge was changed due to the fact that the victim had committed suicide and together with her three young children.

In these conditions, the Prosecution Office at the Shkodra Judicial District filed an indictment for confirmation in the court, charging the defendant with the criminal offence of "Causing suicide" under Article 99 of the Criminal Code and requesting the partial dismissal of the charge regarding the criminal offense of "Murder in other aggravating circumstances".

As regards the criminal offence of "Causing suicide" under Article 99 of the Criminal Code, the prosecution succeeded in proving the infliction of psychological and physical violence on the victim. The violence suffered contributed to the worsening of the victim's psychological condition, pushing her to commit the extreme act. Following the defendant's agreeing to a summary trial, the prosecution requested a sentence of six years' imprisonment. Ultimately, the First Instance Court of General Jurisdiction at Shkodra sentenced the perpetrator to four years' imprisonment. The perpetrator appealed the decision before the Court of Appeals of General Jurisdiction, which upheld the decision of the Court of First Instance.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS**Public reaction:**

The event deeply shocked public opinion and highlighted the need for reflection and concrete action. It also led to public discussions on domestic violence and the need for greater support for victims.

Social stigma:

Discussions on the incident often focused on the victim, without addressing the role of contributing factors and paying no attention to issues related to the need for institutional support.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA:

The role of the media was two-fold, both informing the public and exerting pressure on the prosecuting authorities to conduct full and comprehensive investigations.

CASE STUDY V

The suicide of a young woman after the posting of her intimate photos on social networks

INTRODUCTION

In April 2024, S.A., a 27-year-old woman, ended her life by jumping from the fourth-floor terrace of the apartment where she lived with her family, after intimate photos of her were posted on social media. The victim had a 2-year-old daughter. She had returned to live with her mother due to altercations and disagreements with her partner. About two weeks before the incident, she started working as a cleaner in the perpetrator's house.

INFORMATION ON THE VICTIM

S.A., aged 27, a single mother with a young child, had completed secondary education and was in employment before the incident, did not appear to have had any disabilities officially documented by the competent authorities. According to information provided by the victim's family and published in the media, S.A. had previously shown signs of a serious psychological disorder but had not received the necessary help. She was known as withdrawn and reluctant to share her difficulties or troubles with other people.

INFORMATION ON THE PERPETRATOR CAUSING THE SUICIDE

A.Q., aged 39, an individual with whom the victim was thought to have an intimate relationship. He was married with two children, had completed secondary school education and was unemployed at the time of the incident. He had a prior conviction. The information provided shows that the perpetrator is disabled.⁷⁹

DESCRIPTION OF THE INCIDENT

A few days before committing suicide, S.A.'s demeanour had been unusual, she seemed emotionally overwhelmed and would not tell anyone what bothered her. On 12 February 2024, she took her own life by jumping from a height. From the information provided, it transpired that her intimate photos had been posted online and that she had received threatening messages and was the subject of blackmail. All these factors ratcheted immense emotional pressure which led her to take her own life.

⁷⁹. According to police records, the perpetrator has moderate mental health issues and behavioural disorders.

Circumstances that led to the incident:

- ⊙ Online violence and posting of intimate photos on social networks;
- ⊙ Emotional pressure and lack of support;
- ⊙ Lack of communication and support in the family;
- ⊙ Failure of the responsible authorities to respond in a timely manner.

Investigation and trial of the case against the perpetrator

The case was investigated for the criminal offense of “Causing suicide” under Article 99 of the Criminal Code and “Stalking” under Article 121/a of the Criminal Code. Once the investigation was complete, the case went to trial. The victim’s relatives participated in the trial, represented by a lawyer privately chosen by them. The trial proceedings are ongoing.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS**Reactions in the society:**

The event deeply shocked public opinion and sparked a broad debate regarding the role of social networks in the commission of online crimes and the need for the continuous monitoring of social networks in order to identify various forms of abuse in a timely manner and prevent such occurrences. The event was widely reported and commented both in the conventional media and on social networks, where a part of public opinion focused on moralizing rather than the causes and consequences of the crime.

Social stigma:

When girls or young women commit suicide following the posting of their intimate photos on social media, social stigma plays a crucial and often tragic role in escalating the pressure brought to bear upon them and drives them to undertaking the extreme act. Society often treats the victim as guilty, by shaming and isolating her, rather than addressing the effect of digital violence and abuse that was used against her. This stigmatization is reinforced by patriarchal norms and moral double standards, which harshly judge women and girls for behaviour that is seen as “inappropriate,” while the perpetrators who disseminate compromising material often go unpunished or their responsibility is underplayed. In cases when suicide occurs after the posting of intimate photos, the stigma is twofold: the victim is judged not only for the content of the material posted, but also for the “weakness” she showed by ending her life. This stance is extremely problematic as it places the responsibility on the victim instead of addressing the violence, abuse, and lack of support that led to the victim’s suicide.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

The media informed the public about the incident but, in certain cases, ethical principles were breached by publishing the woman’s private details and not protecting the anonymity of the family. There was also a lack of emphasis on the analysis of

systemic factors that could have contributed to the prevention of the incident. This case is a call for reflection on the impact of online violence on victims, on the factors that drive women and girls to take extreme decisions, and on the urgent need for early intervention, psychosocial support, and mental health education.

Interviews with survivors of crimes and the victims' families

INTRODUCTION

The voice and opinions of persons directly affected by the crimes, of the women who survived extreme violence and the families of victims who lost their lives to violence constitute an essential part of the report.

The interviews with these individuals aimed to shed light on their personal experiences, the challenges they faced in the search for justice and any inter-institutional support they received in this context.

Not only do these testimonies provide a more complete picture of the social and legal realities of gender-based violence, but they also point to the persistent gaps that often leave victims defenceless. The aim of giving a platform to their voices is to better understand the depth of the psychological, social, and legal consequences caused by these crimes, and to highlight the immediate need for urgent action to strengthen protection and support mechanisms.⁸⁰

Analysis of the interview with crime survivor E.SH, who survived an attempt on her life committed by her husband – an individual with prior criminal record.

Case code: E.SH.

Interview date: 13 June 2025

Interviewed person: Crime survivor

This interview contains the distressing testimony regarding the experiences of a 49-year-old woman, a survivor of extreme violence with severe physical and psychological consequences. The analysis below aims to identify persistent gaps and

80. Interviewing the families of the crime survivors or victims presented major challenges because the profound trauma they experienced and still carry prevents them from fully sharing their experiences and challenges, and feelings of fear, pain and lack of trust make the process of sharing memories even more complicated. However, efforts to hear their voices and document their stories remain essential to fully understand the consequences of the incidents reviewed for the purposes of this report.

shortcomings in the prevention, protection, and rehabilitation of victims of gender-based violence.

I. THE VICTIM'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

The victim lives in Tirana. She is the mother of two adult children and is currently going through divorce proceedings. She works part-time as the child carer of a young child and struggles to make ends meet and to cope with life's challenges.

Her profile bears great similarities with that of many other women who, after experiencing violence, face unemployment, poverty, and lack of safe accommodation. The social care system does not possess sustainable mechanisms to provide long-term support.

She states that she has applied for many jobs but, according to her, they refuse to hire her because of prejudice connected to the scars she was left with after the attacks (wound scars on her face and neck).

II. NATURE AND HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

The victim was stabbed several times in the body and head by her husband, an act that the court assessed as an attempted murder.⁸¹

The violence had been going on for years, both physical and psychological violence. The victim had previously reported it to the police, and the perpetrator had been sentenced to a prison term of several months. She states that no measures were taken by the police to monitor the case following the perpetrator's release from prison. The victim admits that she was unaware of the services available and did not believe she would receive the necessary help and support.

III. CHALLENGES AFTER THE INCIDENT

The interviewee reported that she suffered very serious injuries because of the extreme violence. Initially, she was in danger of losing her life due to the life-threatening injuries sustained. Subsequently, during the recovery period, she was again in a lot of physical pain and suffering due to the physical injuries. She emphasizes that even now (nearly one year after the incident) she still needs physiotherapy as the health problems caused by the injuries need time and long-term therapeutic treatment.

81. The perpetrator was found guilty of the charge and sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment by the First Instance Court of General Jurisdiction at Tirana.

In addition to the physical injuries, the interviewee also suffered serious psychological consequences and emphasized that she suffered a lot and continues to experience emotional difficulties. Her social and economic situation is dire; she lives in a rented apartment and the little income she makes goes towards paying her rent and she struggles to survive.

According to her, a medical panel assessed her health condition but did not grant her the right to receive disability benefits.

IV. RESPONSE OF THE INSTITUTIONS AFTER THE INCIDENT

The survivor reports that after the incident the police “did their job”, but she has no clear memory of the initial response due to the serious condition she was in.

She stated that she received medical care for an extended period, due to the very serious injuries to her face, neck, and body. After the incident, she was issued with a protection order (PO) and received financial assistance during the time the PO was in force.

Institutional assistance was limited to financial assistance during the period of validity of the protection order, and to medical care for the treatment of her injuries.

More long-term assistance was provided by a non-governmental organization, which supported her with psychological services, medicines, and several months’ worth of payment of her rent.⁸²

She appeals for continued economic and health support and emphasizes the importance of sustained assistance in coping with her situation.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE VICTIM

The victim underlines the need for:

- ⊙ Continuous medical and psychological support;
- ⊙ Safe accommodation;
- ⊙ Financial assistance until she finds gainful employment;
- ⊙ Legal aid and assistance with representation in court proceedings;
- ⊙ Appeals to other women not to tolerate violence and to seek help as early as possible.

This interview represents a typical case of the failure of early protection mechanisms, the failure of institutions to fully address the needs after an act of violence, and the lack of long-term rehabilitation and reintegration strategies. The victim now faces multiple consequences: physical, psychological, economic, and social.

82. It is reported that after the incident, support was provided by the ‘*Të Ndryshëm dhe të Barabartë*’ (Different and Equal) Centre.

It is recommended that this case serve as a basis to:

- ⊙ Set in motion mechanisms that enable long-term support for victims;
- ⊙ Establish a special fund to address the emergency and long-term needs of survivors of crime, including support for the children and family members of victims.

Interview with the mother of a young woman who committed suicide because of blackmail and the posting of her intimate photos on social networks.**Case Code:** D.A.**Interview date:** 27 August 2025**Place of interview:** The premises of the Office of the People's Advocate**Interviewed person:** Victim's mother**I. INFORMATION ON THE VICTIM PROVIDED BY THE INTERVIEW**

The victim was 27 years old, mother of a 2-year-old child from a cohabitation she had ended about a year earlier. After leaving her partner, with whom she had a violent relationship, she returned to live with her family of origin, together with her young daughter.

The victim's mother reported that during her pregnancy, the daughter tried to poison herself because of the constant arguments with her partner. She survived the attempt thanks to the intensive hospital care; however, the victim did not receive any follow-up professional help after leaving the hospital. Later, the victim was issued with a protection order (PO) against her partner because of the threats that continued after she left their apartment and moved to her family of origin.

II. THE EVENTS IN THE RUN-UP TO THE SUICIDE

According to the victim's mother, her daughter started working as a cleaner in a private apartment in the period before the incident. A few days after starting work, she became even more withdrawn and dejected, which coincides with the time when compromising videos of her were posted on social networks.

Her mother was not able to fully understand her daughter's emotional state because of her existing health problems at the time. She confirmed that no professional help was sought and the girl was not in contact with any such institutions at the time of the incident.

The family was aware of the posting of the images but later received information about blackmail and direct threats to the victim by the person who shared the images online.

III. INSTITUTIONAL INTERVENTION

The family was contacted by local self-government authorities after the incident, but the assistance provided was temporary and insufficient. The interviewee was convinced that the lack of early institutional intervention, lack of access to psychological and social support, as well as the failure to respond and take measures against the young woman's public exposure, contributed to the escalation of the situation and the tragic outcome.

IV. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

The incident had serious psychological consequences for the family. The mother states that after the incident, the health condition of her younger daughter worsened significantly and she herself underwent a difficult operation (heart surgery). She states that she did not receive psychological help to cope with the trauma. The family is facing significant economic difficulties. They managed to receive limited assistance to meet the necessities of everyday life thanks to the support of relatives and referrals to the responsible authorities,

V. SUPPORT AND INTERVENTION FROM THE FAMILY'S PERSPECTIVE

The victim's mother suggests that institutions should be more attentive and intervene as early as possible in cases of digital violence. She emphasizes the importance of educating parents and family members to carefully observe their children's behaviour, to pick up signals of isolation or emotional turmoil. She also calls for the establishment of stronger support mechanisms for women and girls victims of digital abuse, including legal, psychological, and social support.

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