



Bulgaria's Compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Suggested List of Issues Relating to Violence Against Women

Submitted by The Advocates for Human Rights

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and

Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, in cooperation with the Alliance for Protection from Gender-based Violence

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The Advocates for Human Rights (The Advocates) is a volunteer-based non-governmental organization committed to the impartial promotion and protection of international human rights standards and the rule of law. Established in 1983, The Advocates conducts a range of programs to promote human rights in the United States and around the world, including monitoring and fact finding, direct legal representation, education, training, and publications. The Advocates has published twenty-five reports on violence against women as a human rights issue, provided consultation and commentary of draft laws on domestic violence, and trained lawyers, police, prosecutors, judges, and other law enforcement personnel to implement effectively new and existing laws on domestic violence.

The Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (BGRF) is a non-governmental organization established in 1998, with three branches registered, specializing in proactive research, monitoring, providing counseling for victims, training of professionals and proposing legislative changes. The organization has ECOSOC Consultative Status and prepared 10 alternative and shadow reports for the situation in Bulgaria to UN treaty bodies, with a focus on CEDAW, ICESCR, and the Universal Periodic Review. Since 2000, the NGO began support for legal cases on women's rights before the European Court on human rights in Strasbourg and under the OP0CEDAW. Since 2004, the NGO, together with partners, has been conducting specialized legal training on women's rights for lawyers from Europe called the Women's Human Rights Training Institute.

The Alliance for Protection from Gender-based Violence (The Alliance) seeks to unite since 2009 the efforts and expertise of 10 Bulgarian NGOs in the field of domestic violence and violence against women and provides through its members interdisciplinary services for women victims of DV in 12 locations in Bulgaria, including accommodation in crisis centres in most of the places. The Alliance works on proposing legislation, monitoring implementation of the legislation, training on a coordinated community response, on monitoring and court monitoring, prevention, and training of professionals through the Black Sea Academy for Prevention of Violence.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women are forms of discrimination against women and constitute a violation of women's rights under CEDAW. Domestic violence violates a woman's rights to freedom from discrimination, equal protection and equality with men before the law, and equality in all matters relating to marriage and family relations. When a state fails to ensure that its criminal and civil laws adequately protect women and consistently hold abusers accountable, or that its agents – such as police and prosecutors – fail to implement the laws that protect victims of domestic violence, that state has not acted with due diligence to prevent, investigate, and punish violations of women's rights. This Report focuses on Bulgaria's obligations under CEDAW, Articles 1, 2, 3, 5, 14, 15, and 16.
2. Domestic violence and other crimes of violence against women continue to be a serious problem in Bulgaria. According to a 2014 report by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, 23% of women aged 18-74 had suffered physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partners.¹ Most cases of domestic violence, however, go unreported. The Center for the Study of Democracy estimated that in 2015, 70-80% of domestic violence cases went unreported.² In the case of Romani women, the rate of non-reporting is as high as 90% due to fear and lack of family or institutional support.³ In its Report on the monitoring of domestic violence legislation for the period 2013-2014, the Bulgarian Alliance for Protection against Domestic Violence found an increase in the number of severe cases of domestic violence being reported, including the murders of seven women by their husbands, particularly in minority populations and in rural areas, and that elder abuse and domestic violence by young people (aged 18-25) under the influence of drugs or alcohol to be also on the rise.⁴ While authorities could prosecute spousal rape under the general criminal rape statute, they rarely do so. Data from the National Statistics Institute shows that statutory rape convictions in 2015 dropped by 31% compared to 2014, and by 80% compared to 2011.⁵ According to a September 2016 survey by three Bulgarian NGO's, 40% of police officers and 30% of social workers believe the rate of domestic violence has increased over the previous several years but that the government has not implemented consistent policies with adequate funding for the services needed for the prevention and protection of women from domestic violence. For example, Bulgaria's penal legislation does not criminalize all forms of violence against women; the Criminal Code continues to require private complaints by victims of domestic violence in cases of light or medium levels of harm; courts impose minimal punishments for violations of restraining orders; local authorities rarely provide financial assistance for operating domestic violence shelters; and government funding of domestic violence services is inadequate.⁶

Bulgaria fails to uphold its obligations under CEDAW

3. In the last review of Bulgaria, CEDAW expressed concern over: 1) insufficient public visibility of legislative and policy measures to eliminate discrimination against women and awareness of government branches of women's rights under CEDAW; 2) failure to prohibit discrimination against women through a gender equality law and persistent stereotypical patterns regarding the role and responsibilities of women; 3) serious concern about the high prevalence of domestic violence and absence of provisions criminalizing domestic violence and marital rape, lack of criminal prosecution of violence within the family, and failure of the judiciary to allow shifting of the burden of proof to favor victims; and 4) the practical obstacles women face for acts of domestic violence, including insufficient social and legal services available to women and a scarcity of and insufficient funding for shelters for domestic violence victims, among other things.⁷

4. CEDAW further recommended that Bulgaria: 1) take all appropriate measures to ensure the Convention is sufficiently known and applied by all levels of government, is an integral part of mandatory systematic training for lawyers, judges, and law enforcement officials, and that women are informed of their rights under the Convention; 2) adopt a gender equality law that comports with the Convention and strengthen measures to overcome stereotypical attitudes about roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society; 3) strengthen legal complaint mechanisms to ensure women have effective access to justice, including legal aid, and ensure sufficient state-funded shelters and other support services for victims of domestic violence; and 4) amend the Criminal Code to criminalize all forms of domestic violence and marital rape and introduce prosecution for both, amend Article 10(1) of the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act to remove the one month time limit to file petitions for protective orders and ensure stringent judicial application of Article 13(3) to ease the burden of proof in favor of victims; and 5) set a time frame for ratification of the Istanbul Convention.⁸
5. **Since its last review by CEDAW, Bulgaria has taken some steps toward combating violence against women in fulfillment of its obligations under the Convention.** In September 2015, the National Assembly adopted amendments to the Criminal Code to incorporate Directive 2011/93/EU on combating sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children. It also repealed Article 158 that allowed for termination of criminal prosecution for sexual abuse or rape of a minor if the perpetrator later married the victim.⁹ The National Assembly, despite explicit recommendations from the CEDAW Committee and the United Nations Human Rights Council, decided not to abolish Criminal Code Article 161 (establishing private complaint mechanisms in cases of light or medium injury among spouses or relatives) or to change the procedure for initiating criminal prosecutions for domestic violence, thus perpetuating the procedure whereby a victim must initiate proceedings and collect evidence and prove the accusation.¹⁰ Women's NGOs made great efforts to reform both Articles 158 and 161. The Alliance and the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (BGRF) proposed the repeal of Article 158 and amendments to Article 161, as well as other changes that would facilitate compliance with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). Despite these efforts and the presence of NGOs in parliamentary committees, all other proposed amendments besides Article 158 were postponed. In April 2016, Bulgaria signed the Istanbul Convention but has not yet ratified it.¹¹ In 2015, the National Assembly elaborated and then tabled the Equality Between Men and Women bill.¹² The NGO sector was unanimous that the text of the bill is incapable of achieving the desired objectives for a number of reasons.¹³ The Act regulates only the institutional mechanisms for State policy on gender equality, without introducing any new substantive reforms, and does not contain or increase protection through the material law.¹⁴ Also in 2009, the Law on Protection Against Domestic Violence was amended to expand the scope of persons entitled to file an application for the issue of an order for protection. In 2015, a new Chapter 3 was introduced to harmonize the law with Regulation of the EU No. 606/2013 on mutual recognition of measures for ensuring protection under civil law.
6. The Ministry of Justice implemented a project in 2015 that it claimed would improve the national legal framework for domestic violence to bring it in line with the Council of Europe standards and strengthen the capacity of institutions involved in cases of domestic violence.¹⁵ Finally, from June 2016 to January 2017, the Ministry of Justice established working groups for the elaboration of legislative amendments in both civil and penal legislation to comply with the Istanbul Convention. Based on general discussions of the working groups composed of representatives of institutions, the judiciary, and NGOs, a small group of experts elaborated two draft bills. The first bill proposed

amendments to the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, and the second bill outlined amendments to the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code. The first bill seeks to expand the Law to include gender-based violence and to create a national council at the Council of Ministers to coordinate, monitor, and assess the performance of policies and procedures relating to the prevention of domestic violence and gender-based violence.¹⁶ The second draft bill proposes to expand criminal responsibility for acts of violence, including in the context of interpersonal relations, include threatening behavior and psychological harm, increase the penalties for criminal acts of domestic violence, and allow for criminal prosecution by the State where light physical injury occurs in domestic violence cases.¹⁷ The Ministry of Justice did not send the draft bills for approval to the different ministries, which is a procedure that precedes the introduction of bills in Parliament, upon approval by the Council of Ministers. One reason for this omission is the political instability until May to June 2017 when, after the national elections, a new government was formed. **The delay in ratification of the Istanbul Convention and in amending the Criminal Code, where the most urgent changes are needed, has prolonged impunity for offenders and perpetuated a lack of effective protection against domestic violence.**

7. **Despite these efforts, many serious problems remain with Bulgaria's violence against women legislation and its implementation,** resulting in a systemic failure to protect domestic violence victims and promote abuser accountability. The considerable delay of the government to ratify the Istanbul Convention and to align Bulgarian legislation and practice with this instrument has highlighted that effects when severe and even lethal cases of domestic violence go unpunished. The public was particularly shocked by four cases of brutal murders of women in less than a month between July to August 2017. The Alliance and Alliance members expressed their indignation and appealed for action and recognition of these crimes as crimes of femicide.¹⁸ The shortcomings in the implementation of the law were noted on this occasion, and specifically: the court does not use the urgent procedure for issuing orders for protection for the victims and their children; in case of violation of the order for protection, the aggressor is not arrested as required by law and enjoys impunity; and perpetrators of violence have access to firearms. The distorted application of the law by the state institutions blames the victim, creates risk for women and their children who instead have to flee through the country to find shelter. Instead of providing for urgent protection against the violence, the court gives priority to the parental and visitation rights of the perpetrator, insisting on hearing an indefinite number of expert opinions, and assigning the victim to mediation sessions with the aggressor.¹⁹

I. **Harmful stereotypes about women persist in society and the media, and current legal reform efforts do not adequately address these misperceptions.**

8. **Persistent stereotypes and prejudices regarding women in the family perpetuate violence against women in Bulgaria, contributing to underreporting of violence against women.** The Law on the Protection Against Domestic Violence (LPDV) lays the groundwork for protection of victims of domestic violence and accountability for abusers. It also requires the State Party to implement programs to prevent domestic violence, including training for relevant persons, to develop prevention and education programs, and to assist municipalities and NGOs in establishing services for victims and perpetrators.²⁰ Despite these mandates, sexist stereotypes remain pervasive in all levels of society, including in the judiciary and law enforcement, that can impact these systems actors' responses. Monitoring of LPDV implementation by the Alliance found that still some judges hesitate to remove an abusive husband from his home out of concern that he has no place to live.²¹ Investigating authorities continue to believe that domestic violence is a private or individual matter that the victim

must resolve or overcome. A serious consequence is that domestic violence is considered socially acceptable and that victims are hesitant to report the crime.²² Likewise, courts, law enforcement, and government authorities continue to believe that the rights of an abusive father to visitation with his children in cases of domestic violence supersede the rights of the non-violent parent to security. As a result, victims are pressed to mediate or negotiate such meetings with their abuser, thus re-victimizing them.²³

9. **Despite the specific recommendations of the CEDAW Committee expressed in 2012, the government has not deployed sufficient and consistent efforts to combat gender stereotyping and sexist images of women and girls in the media and entertainment industry.** There is reluctance of the Council on Electronic media and other bodies to ban hypersexualized images of under-aged young girls in this industry. For example, sexualized images of the minor singer Gery Nikol, with the explicit consent of her parents, are proliferate in the media. The Council refused to ban these images stating that nowadays, minors become adults more quickly. Currently, the hypersexualized images of the 14-year-old singer Suzanita are fashionable. In addition, the theme of sexualized girls carrying weapons is on the rise and images being disseminated.²⁴
10. **The Equality Between Men and Women bill introduced into the National Assembly in 2015 does not adequately address issues that perpetuate the stereotypical roles and responsibilities of women in Bulgaria** despite expressly excluding gender-based violence against women and requiring removal of gender-based stereotypes. It also does not comport with CEDAW. NGOs and the Ombudsman agree the text is incapable of achieving the desired objectives; rather, it reaffirms the status quo without offering new regulations to address the principles of equality between men and women or its implementation.²⁵ As noted above, Bulgaria has signed but not ratified the Istanbul Convention in which it agrees “to protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women.”²⁶ The Istanbul Convention is the most comprehensive legal instrument that introduces effective prevention and protection measures against all forms of domestic violence. The delay in its ratification perpetuates existing prejudices, stereotypes and enforcement policies at all levels of society.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

- Has the State Party established a timetable for ratification of the Istanbul Convention? If so, describe. What are the reasons for the delay to ratify this instrument, given the urgent situation, i.e. the high number of severe cases of violence against women in the country and the number of Bulgarian cases on violence against women brought and considered under the OP-CEDAW?
- What steps is the State Party taking to address the concerns expressed by the NGO community and Ombudsman regarding the deficiencies in the proposed Equality Between Men and Women bill?
- What steps has the State Party taken since its last report to CEDAW to put into practice strategies aimed at eliminating stereotypes about women in society?
- How is the State addressing and intending to address the overexposure and hypersexualization of young girls in the media, advertisement, and entertainment industry?

- What steps is the State Party taking to address societal and cultural pressures on victims and increase the reporting of crimes against women, including sexual assault and domestic violence?
 - What measures have been taken by the State to prevent the most severe and lethal forms of violence against women, when state institutions have information about escalation of violence and/ or have issued orders for protection? Are the cases of murders of women quantified and classified as femicides? If not, what are the intentions of the State to track and monitor such murders?
 - What training is given to judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials and social service agencies on domestic violence, the law, and ingrained stereotypes regarding the roles of women in the family and society? How, if at all, are NGOs involved in such trainings?
- b. Legal reforms to the LPDV and the Criminal Code are needed to promote victim safety and offender accountability.

II. Current legislation, including the LPDV and Criminal Code, do not adequately hold domestic violence offenders accountable or address gender-based violence against women in Bulgaria.

11. **Crimes of violence against women are widespread and ineffectively investigated, prosecuted, and adjudicated.**²⁷ The LPDV laid the groundwork for protection of domestic violence victims and accountability for perpetrators. The law defines domestic violence as any act or attempted act of physical or sexual violence, or physical or emotional pressure against members of one's family. It empowers courts to impose fines, issue protective or eviction orders or require counseling. Bulgaria increased the effectiveness of the law by explicitly criminalizing violations of protective orders. Non-compliance with a protective order may result in imprisonment for up to 3 years or a fine. The number of petitions for protective orders has risen annually since the law's enactment. The criminal penalties imposed against abusers who violate these protective orders have decreased, however, thus perpetuating the perception that domestic violence is not a serious offense.²⁸ Thus, although the existing law provides important protection for a victim of domestic violence from future harm, it does not impose adequate criminal penalties on the abuser to hold him accountable for his violence.
12. **Provisions that enhance protection of victims and accountability for abusers need to be systematically integrated into all areas of Bulgarian law in order to bring Bulgarian law and practice into conformity with international legal standards.** The LPDV needs to be amended in several ways to: address all forms of gender-based violence including forced marriage, marital rape, and other sexual violence; provide a remedy for persons in forced marriages and victims of sexual violence; include persons who are intimate partners but who are not co-habitants since domestic violence may begin when partners are dating but not married; guarantee specialized services to support domestic violence victims, including crisis centers, 24-hour hotlines, and legal aid for victims; establish a national council on domestic and gender-based violence to gather and maintain statistics on domestic violence, including repeat offenders; supervise and implement public education and training on domestic violence issues; and ensure courts, law enforcement officials, and government agencies are trained on the law. Without these amendments, victims of domestic violence will not be able to seek effective recourse against their abuser or able to obtain necessary information, services, or access to justice.

13. Despite the CEDAW Committee's 2012 recommendation to amend the Criminal Code to bring it into compliance with CEDAW, Bulgaria has failed over the past five years to make the necessary changes to better protect victims and punish abusers. **The Criminal Code does not criminalize all forms of domestic violence and continues to require victims of domestic violence who sustain light or medium injury to initiate criminal prosecution with the victim being required to collect evidence and prove the accusation.**²⁹ In many cases, victims lack the resources or capacity to go forward, to locate and call witnesses, and to present evidence in court. The law, in essence, sends a message to victims of domestic violence that, unless seriously injured, they are responsible for holding their abusers accountable. This denies domestic violence victims effective access to the criminal justice system and equal protection before the law, thus not providing an effective remedy for most victims.
14. **The Criminal Code also does not require prosecutors to inform domestic violence victims about their rights and does not require the investigating authorities to conduct a risk assessment.** Such an assessment is key to determining the risk of further injury to or death of the victim and should be used by the police, prosecutors and judiciary in formulating appropriate relief for the victim. Ineffective investigation and assessment, and insufficient penalties for abusers discourage domestic violence victims from seeking help from authorities because they feel they will not be taken seriously or be protected. Moreover, monitoring of domestic violence shows that at least one third of domestic violence cases involve sexual violence including marital rape.³⁰ Exceptionally severe cases of domestic violence, including murder, are increasing as are the frequency of acts that endanger life such as suffocation or strangulation. Yet, these types of violence are not defined as sufficiently egregious as to warrant severe punishment under the Criminal Code.³¹ Additionally, there is no defined right to privacy in criminal domestic violence cases. This lack of privacy is a strong deterrent to reporting sexual violence.³²

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

- What results have come from the 2015 Ministry of Justice project to improve the national legal framework to address domestic and gender-based violence?
- What steps has the State Party taken to amend the LPDV to establish a comprehensive statutory framework to protect women from all forms of domestic violence, including sexual violence and forced marriage, including effective prosecutions, training for law enforcement, investigators, prosecutors, judges and social service providers, and public education?
- What steps has the State Party taken to expand the LPDV to include as victims, persons who are intimate partners but not co-habitants of the perpetrator?
- What steps has the State Party taken to amend the LPDV to expand the time frame for filing petitions for protective orders and to ease the burden of proof in favor of victims?
- What steps has the State Party taken to establish a national body council on domestic and gender-based violence that is charged with obtaining and maintaining statistics on domestic violence, including repeat offenses, and offenses involving minors and the elderly?
- What steps has the State Party taken to educate the public and particularly women, the judiciary, law enforcement officials, and social services agencies, about domestic violence and their rights and responsibilities under CEDAW?

- Why has the State Party failed to abolish Criminal Code Article 161 which requires victims of domestic violence who suffer light of medium injury to file a private complaint against the abuser and to present the case in court without state support?
 - What steps is the State Party taking to increase criminal penalties for domestic violence perpetrators, including increased sanctions for non-compliance with protective order, repeat violations of a protective order, and aggravated or severe forms of physical or psychological violence, and to ensure that those criminal penalties are effectively implemented?
 - What steps is the State Party taking to criminalize all forms of domestic and gender-based violence, including sexual violence, marital rape, forced marriage, murder, life-threatening aggressive acts such as suffocation, severe psychological violence, and stalking, and to require effective enforcement and prevention?
 - What steps is the State Party taking to ensure a right to privacy in all domestic violence cases involving sexual violence?
 - What steps is the State Party taking to ensure prosecutors, the police, and judges inform domestic violence victims of their rights under Bulgarian laws and treaty obligations?
 - How does the State Party monitor and review the performance of police, prosecutors, and judges relating to the adjudication of cases involving violence against women?
- c. Victims face challenges accessing services, including legal aid, shelters, and social services, and government funding for such services remains inadequate.

III. Victims of domestic violence continue to face practical obstacles to protection from domestic violence including insufficient social and legal services, and inadequate funding for hotlines, shelters, counseling and legal aid.

16. The LPDV provides that the Ministry of Justice shall annually include a line item in its budget to provide funding for the development and implementation of programs for the prevention of and protection against domestic violence, including funding for crisis centers, social support centers, and NGO projects addressing domestic violence. **The amounts allocated annually to date have been inadequate to meet the growing need for service providers.** In 2016 and 2017, the Ministry of Justice made no adequate allocation of funds, in spite of the annual amounts disbursed to the ministry's budget from the State budget.³³
17. As of February 2016, Bulgaria ran five crisis centers that provide crisis intervention and psychological services across the country with a total capacity of 166 places.³⁴ In response to this inadequate number of domestic violence shelters, police and social services workers refer domestic violence victims to 20 NGO-run crisis centers but local authorities rarely provide financial assistance for their operating costs.³⁵ NGOs also run a free domestic violence hotline for women in crisis. As of September 2016, the Animus Association Foundation hotline, funded through a two year government grant, worked with 1166 clients, including 790 domestic violence survivors and 13 sexual violence survivors. However, government funding was only sufficient to operate the hotline 12 hours per day rather than 24 hours.³⁶ Also, the NGO members of the Alliance operate their hotlines in 10 locations throughout Bulgaria and have provided support for the last two years to more than 4500 women victims of violence. **There is no clear governmental commitment to support these services.**

18. **There is no special law on social services in Bulgaria, and the services for victims of violence are neither explicitly recognized nor guaranteed through financial support.** Limited instances of support through the state and/or municipal budgets are available. In the last two years, almost no new state-supported services for women victims of violence were opened in the community. Instead of developing existing and new services, their number of services and level of financial support decreases continually.
19. The importance of **access to justice for women victims of violence** has been increasingly highlighted, particularly in the last two to three years under the framework of the Council of Europe and by the CEDAW Committee. Some women and girls are at particular risk of violence as victims of multiple forms of discrimination and stereotyping. Women and girl from minority groups in Bulgaria, women seeking international protection, and migrant women are among these vulnerable groups. They face stereotyping and additional barriers—cultural, religious, and language barriers—to their access to justice. Legal aid and representation is an important element aimed at ensuring women’s rights.³⁷
20. Under the Law on Legal Aid, persons who are entitled to free legal aid under Article 22 include victims of domestic violence and sexual violence, and victims of trafficking who have not sufficient financial means. Another group of eligible persons are those in the process of securing international protection. Nevertheless, in these cases, as with other cases of entitled persons, **a “means” test is applied which limits access to legal representation and to justice for women victims of violence.** The following circumstances are considered by the court in the “means” test: income accruals to the victim or her family; property status, as certified by a declaration; marital status; state of health; employment; age; and other circumstances. After the court decision to grant legal aid, the ruling is immediately sent to the Bar Association within the court’s district for the appointment of an attorney. Given the lengthy procedure and heavy requirements of the means test, this system is not appropriate for the urgent and unconditional protection that women in situations of violence need. The NGO-led legal services remain the only recourse for the victims in these urgent situations.³⁸
21. **The social assistance directorates are hindered in their efforts to protect and provide services to victims of domestic violence by stereotypical prejudices about the roles of women in the family and society and severe bureaucracy.** Social service officials underestimate the risk faced by domestic violence victims and rely on personal beliefs about women rather than acting in compliance with the law. As a result, many victims are prevented from obtaining adequate and timely assistance and are not directed to appropriate social service providers for protection and assistance.³⁹ In addition, social services officials are not sufficiently informed of the powers, roles, and responsibilities of other government institutions. Lack of inter-agency knowledge impedes coordination and delays necessary interventions in domestic violence cases. Moreover, lack of communication between agencies often leads to contradictory actions by different institutions (e.g., between social assistance directorates and the police, or the social services suppliers, or the NGOs providing legal aid or crisis shelters). These attitudes towards victims of domestic violence and lack of coordination efforts by institutions often lead to reoccurrence of the violence against the victim and victims’ loss of trust in the system for protection and assistance.⁴⁰
22. In conclusion, there is still a lack of coherent policies and commitment to regular and adequate provision and funding of activities for prevention and protection from violence. NGOs bear the burden of providing services and other activities for prevention and protection without having the constant support of the state and municipalities.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

- What steps is the State Party taking to increase the number of shelters and crisis centers, and related services, across the country for women fleeing domestic violence?
- What steps is the State Party taking to increase the number and operational capacity of NGO-run domestic violence crisis hotlines, shelters and services?
- Does the State Party intend to increase funding through the Ministry of Justice for the development, implementation, and operation of programs for the prevention of and protection from domestic violence?
- What steps is the government taking to ensure the legal basis for the range of services needed for protection of women against violence? What steps is the state undertaking to remove limitations for starting and expanding services for women?
- What steps have been taken to ensure access to justice for women victims of violence, including women from most vulnerable groups? What are the intentions of the state with regard to removing the “means” test for legal aid in such cases?
- What steps is the State Party taking to educate employees of the social assistance directorates on domestic and gender-based violence and ingrained stereotypes and prejudices regarding the roles of women in the family and society?
- What steps is the State Party taking to ensure inter-agency knowledge and coordination in cases of domestic or gender-based violence?

¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, “Violence Against Women: An EU-Wide Survey”, accessed September 25, 2017, <http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/Europe/Bulgaria>.

² United States Department of State, “Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016-Bulgaria”, accessed September 25, 2017, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/58ec8a64a.html>.

³ United States Department of State, “Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016-Bulgaria”, accessed September 25, 2017, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/58ec8a64a.html>.

⁴ The Alliance for Protection Against Domestic Violence (the Alliance), *Monitoring of the Legislation related to protection against domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence: A Summary of Main Findings from 2013-2014*, 1–2.

⁵ United States Department of State, “Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016-Bulgaria”, accessed September 25, 2017, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/58ec8a64a.html>.

⁶ United States Department of State, “Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016-Bulgaria”, accessed September 25, 2017, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/58ec8a64a.html>.

⁷ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding Observations: Bulgaria*, (Aug. 7, 2012), U.N.Doc. CEDAW/C/BGR/CO/4-7, ¶¶ 9, 11, 13, 21, and 25. Also available online at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/co/CEDAW-C-BGR-CO-4-7.pdf>.

⁸ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding Observations: Bulgaria*, (Aug. 7, 2012), U.N.Doc. CEDAW/C/BGR/CO/4-7, ¶¶ 10, 12, 14, 22, and 26. Also available online at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/co/CEDAW-C-BGR-CO-4-7.pdf>.

⁹ Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *Human Rights in Bulgaria in 2015, Annual Report*, (Sofia, Bulgaria: Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 2016), 107.

¹⁰ Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *Human Rights in Bulgaria in 2015, Annual Report*, (Sofia, Bulgaria: Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 2016), 107; United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Bulgaria*, (July 8, 2015), UN Doc. A/HRC/30/10, 20-21. Also available online at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/151/90/PDF>.

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- ¹¹ Human Rights Committee, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Fourth Periodic Report of States Parties due 2016: Bulgaria*, (Dec. 16, 2016), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/BGR/4, 5.
- ¹² See National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, “Bills,” accessed Sept. 25, 2017, <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/15643>.
- ¹³ See http://www.genderalternatives.org/images/mmm/Equality_Act_GAF_Opinion_Ombudsman.pdf.
- ¹⁴ Personal Communication with BGRF, via email, Sept. 27, 2017 (on file with authors).
- ¹⁵ Human Rights Committee, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Fourth Periodic Report of States Parties due 2016: Bulgaria*, (Dec. 16, 2016), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/BGR/4, ¶ 99.
- ¹⁶ Act on Amendment and Supplementation of the Domestic Violence Act, ¶5 and Chapter 1 A (2017).
- ¹⁷ Criminal Code Amendment and Supplemental Act, ¶¶ 2, 4 and 9-12.
- ¹⁸ See Alliance for Protection against Gender-based Violence, www.facebook.com/Алианс-за-защита-от-насилие-основано-на-пола-304407276275623/?ref=nf, accessed Sept. 28, 2017.
- ¹⁹ Personal Communication with BGRF, via email, Sept. 27, 2017 (on file with authors).
- ²⁰ The Law on the Protection Against Domestic Violence, §§ 2–3 (2005).
- ²¹ The Alliance for Protection Against Domestic Violence (the Alliance), *Monitoring of the Legislation related to protection against domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence: A Summary of Main Findings from 2013-2014*, 3.
- ²² The Alliance for Protection Against Domestic Violence (the Alliance), *Monitoring of the Legislation related to protection against domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence: A Summary of Main Findings from 2013-2014*, 11.
- ²³ The Alliance for Protection Against Domestic Violence (the Alliance), *Monitoring of the Legislation related to protection against domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence: A Summary of Main Findings from 2013-2014*, 8.
- ²⁴ Personal Communication with BGRF, via email, Sept. 27, 2017 (on file with authors).
- ²⁵ Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *Human Rights in Bulgaria in 2015, Annual Report* (Sofia, Bulgaria: Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 2016), 108-109.
- ²⁶ Council of Europe, Istanbul Convention: Action Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, 2014, Art. 1, 1a.
- ²⁷ See Paragraph 3 above.
- ²⁸ Criminal Code, Art. 296. See also The Alliance for Protection Against Domestic Violence (the Alliance), *Monitoring of the Legislation related to protection against domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence: A Summary of Main Findings from 2013-2014*, 10.
- ²⁹ Criminal Code, No. 103, art. 161(1) (2004); Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *Human Rights in Bulgaria in 2015, Annual Report*, (Sofia, Bulgaria: Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 2016), 107.
- ³⁰ The Alliance for Protection Against Domestic Violence (the Alliance), *Monitoring of the Legislation related to protection against domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence: A Summary of Main Findings from 2013-2014*, 16.
- ³¹ The Alliance for Protection Against Domestic Violence (the Alliance), *Monitoring of the Legislation related to protection against domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence: A Summary of Main Findings from 2013-2014*, 15.
- ³² Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, The Advocates for Human Rights, and The Alliance for Protection of Domestic Violence, *Domestic Violence in Bulgaria: Report to Dubravka Simonovic, Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women* (2017), 9.
- ³³ Personal Communication with BGRF, via email, Sept. 27, 2017 (on file with authors).
- ³⁴ Human Rights Committee, *International Convention of Civil and Political Rights: Fourth Periodic Report of States Parties due 2016: Bulgaria*, (Dec. 16 2016), UN Doc. CCPR/C/BGR/4, ¶¶ 100, 101, and 107.
- ³⁵ United States Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016: Bulgaria* (Washington D.C.: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2017), 14, accessed 23 Aug. 2017, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dld=265404>.
- ³⁶ United States Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016: Bulgaria* (Washington D.C.: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2017), 14, accessed 23 Aug. 2017, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dld=265404>.
- ³⁷ Personal Communication with BGRF, via email, Sept. 27, 2017 (on file with authors).
- ³⁸ Personal Communication with BGRF, via email, Sept. 27, 2017 (on file with authors).

³⁹ The Alliance for Protection Against Domestic Violence (the Alliance), *Monitoring of the Legislation related to protection against domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence: A Summary of Main Findings from 2013-2014*, 6.

⁴⁰The Alliance for Protection Against Domestic Violence (the Alliance), *Monitoring of the Legislation related to protection against domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence: A Summary of Main Findings from 2013-2014*, 16.