

JOINT POSITION PAPER ON FEMINICIDE IN THE EURO- MEDITERRANEAN REGION

FOR A MAGHREB WITHOUT FEMINICIDE

JOINT POSITION PAPER



8th MARCH 2025

Introduction

Thirty years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which remains the global benchmark for gender equality, femicide in the Euro-Mediterranean region illustrates the stagnation, and even the regression, in women's rights. While the international commitment is to achieve equality by 2030, the persistence of systemic violence and widespread impunity, compounded by the rise of authoritarianism and the repression of feminist movements in many countries, demonstrates the growing gap between political commitments and the reality of the situation. This position paper underlines the urgent need to transform the Beijing commitments into concrete and effective measures to protect women's lives and guarantee the effectiveness of their rights.

Femicide, the most brutal expression of patriarchal domination, continues to claim lives, while institutional inaction and fragmented state responses perpetuate impunity. Now, more than ever, is the time to demand transformative measures and genuine political will to dismantle oppressive systems and guarantee justice for all women.

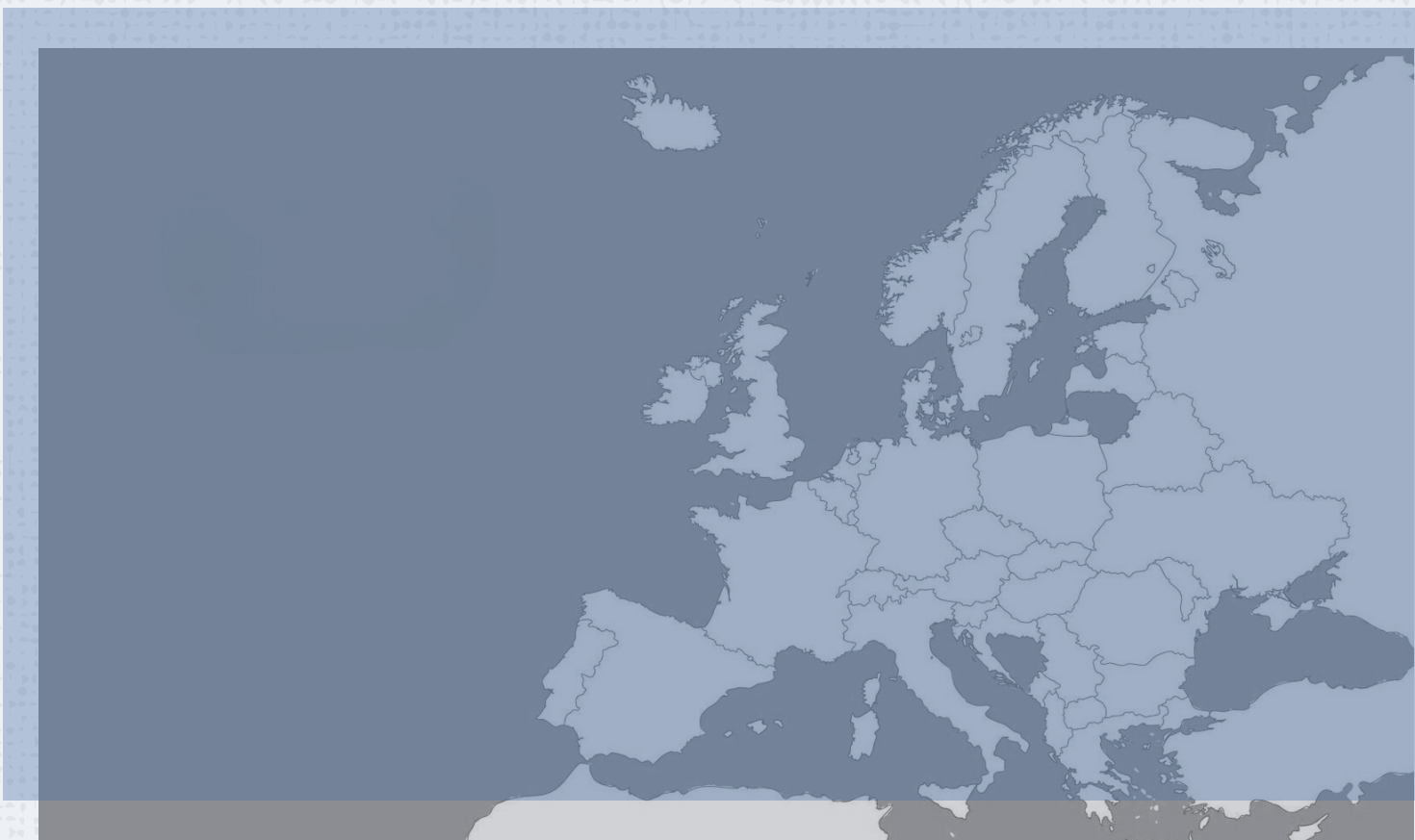


A persistent phenomenon in Europe

Femicide has reached a critical level in Europe, accounting for 64% of murders of women, or 2,300 women, the majority committed by a spouse or ex-partner[1]. This alarming figure highlights the urgent need to step up measures to prevent domestic violence and ensure effective protection for victims.

European legislation on gender-based and sexual violence remains disparate, creating inequalities in the protection of victims[2]. Victims face many obstacles, including a lack of training for law enforcement officers, social stigmatisation and chronic underfunding of shelters and support services.

In 2024, France recorded 93 femicides perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner, while in Italy 99 women were murdered in the same year. In addition, the Italian hotline for victims of violence and harassment recorded a 57% increase on 2023, with around 48,000 calls.[3] In Spain, where legislation against gender-based and sexual violence is one of the most advanced, 31 women were murdered, including 12 in the Catalonia region[4].



[1] Toutes les dix minutes, une femme dans le monde est tuée par un proche | ONU Info

[2] Behind closed doors: the deadly reality of femicide - United Nations Western Europe

[3] Une femme sur trois dans l'UE a déjà subi des violences sexistes | Euronews

[4] En Catalogne, un pic de féminicides préoccupant

An alarming situation in the Middle East and North Africa

The number of femicides in the southern Mediterranean remains difficult to establish due to the lack of official data, but estimates paint a worrying picture. In 2023, Africa was the region most affected by femicide, with 21,700 women murdered by a spouse or family member[1].

In Turkey, the femicide crisis is worsening, with 299 women killed in early 2024. Faced with this tragedy, feminist organizations have denounced this escalation and demanded that Turkey return to the Istanbul Convention, an essential instrument in the fight against violence against women[2]. In Egypt, gender-based violence has reached alarming levels. In 2023, the media outlet Middle East Eye described the situation as an 'epidemic', after three femicides in a single week[3]. Impunity and the lack of appropriate protection measures expose women to danger on a daily basis. In Jordan, femicide in the name of 'honor' is still widely tolerated. In 2022, Human Rights Watch recorded between 15 and 20 such murders[4]. The Jordanian judicial system continues to apply reduced sentences to men who murder a woman on the pretext of adultery, a practice that not only perpetuates the culture of impunity, but also constitutes a flagrant violation of human rights.



[1] <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/femicides-in-2023-global-estimates-of-intimate-partner-family-member-femicides-en.pdf>

[2] Nouvelles manifestations contre les féminicides - L'Orient-Le Jour

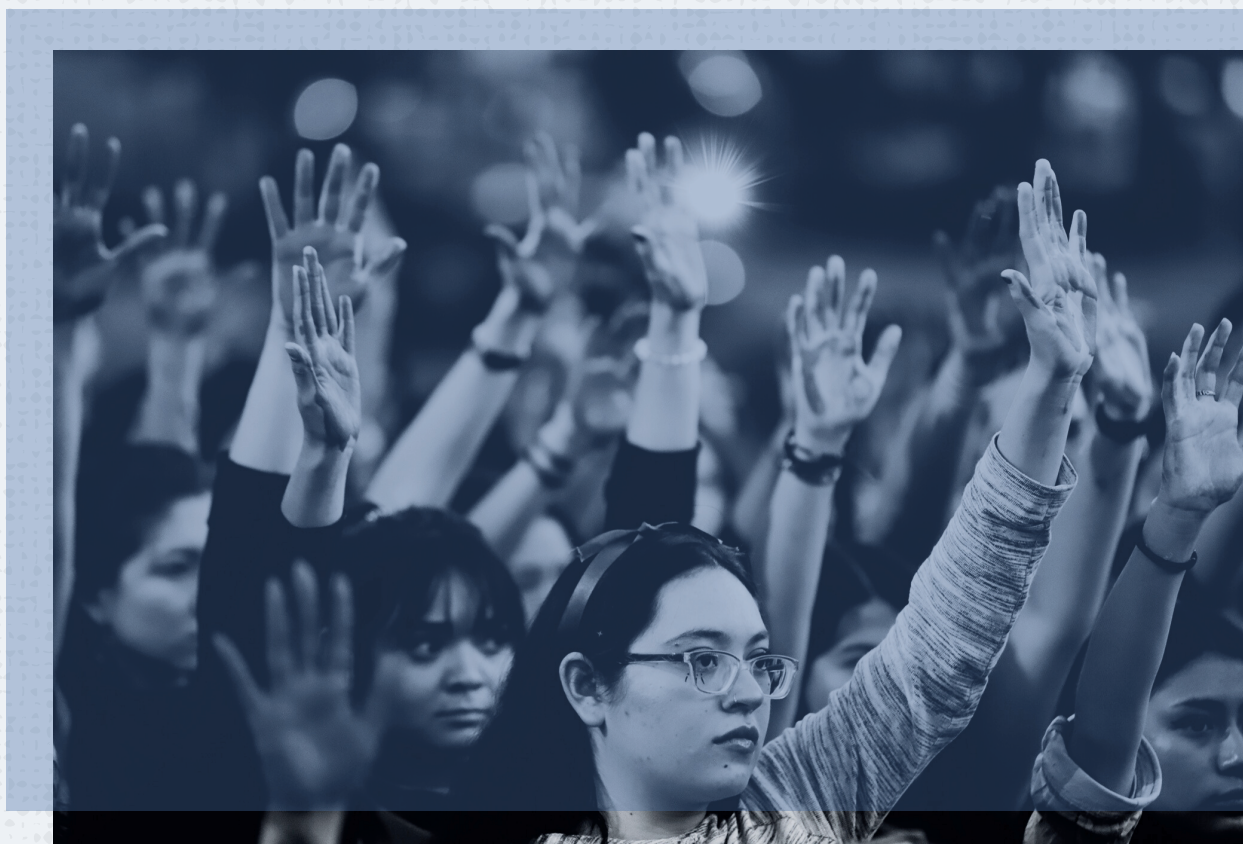
[3] Égypte : trois féminicides en une semaine illustrent l'« épidémie » de violence sexiste dans le pays | Middle East Eye édition française

[4] Contre les féminicides et les inégalités, des Jordaniennes explosent les tabous | Middle East Eye édition française

The need for immediate action

Femicides are not mere news stories, but the result of a system of gender violence rooted in patriarchal and institutional structures that are slow to recognize these crimes as fundamental violations of human rights. The commemoration of the 30^e anniversary of the Beijing Declaration must be a moment of mobilization to demand legislative reforms and firm commitments, so that the promise of equality does not remain a dead letter.

In the face of systemic impunity and the alarming rise in patriarchal violence, EuroMed Rights is supporting the creation of the 'Maghreb Without Femicide' initiative, a transnational feminist movement bringing together associations and groups working against femicide in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Created in 2023, this initiative aims to help break the silence surrounding femicide and build a collective, coordinated response. Across the Maghreb, women's rights organizations and feminist activists are leading the fight to promote systemic change and combat all forms of gender-based violence. Yet their calls for action are regularly met with resistance, and reforms are either insufficient or their voices are repressed. While governments recognize the need for legislative measures, their implementation remains largely ineffective, and legal loopholes allow perpetrators of violence to escape justice.



[1] <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/femicides-in-2023-global-estimates-of-intimate-partner-family-member-femicides-en.pdf>

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The lack of recognition of femicide as a distinct legal category in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia makes it impossible to assess and measure the true scale of the scourge. The data available, which is often collected by civil society rather than official bodies, reveals an alarming reality: reported cases represent only a fraction of femicides, while many murders of women go unrecorded and may be considered as suicides, domestic conflicts and/or crimes of passion. The normalization of violence within families and couples, combined with judicial inaction, creates a climate where women are systematically deprived of protection and perpetrators act with impunity.

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As authoritarian trends strengthen in the region, women's rights defenders and feminist movements are facing increasing restrictions. The shrinking of civic space, heightened surveillance, and judicial harassment of activists engaged in gender justice further weaken the fight against femicides. Moreover, state commitments to international instruments, such as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women, remain largely symbolic without tangible enforcement at the national level. Despite numerous calls from civil society organizations and the international community, Maghreb countries continue to refuse to adhere to the standards of the Istanbul Convention, a key instrument in the fight against violence against women and girls.

“Femicides are not inevitable, but the product of a political choice: not to put an end to patriarchal violence.”

Inadequate legal frameworks

Femicide is not explicitly recognized in the criminal codes of the three countries, which complicates the legal classification of crimes and limits the statistical visibility of the phenomenon.

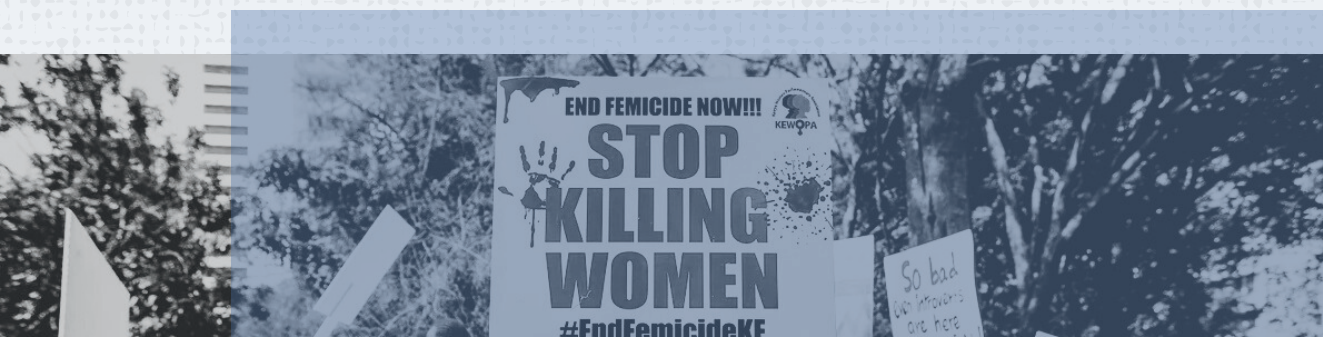
Fragmentation of laws on gender-based violence, which are often reduced to criminal approaches without taking into account the preventive dimension and the protection of victims.

Shortcomings in the protection of female victims of violence, in particular the absence of legal provisions for effective measures to remove aggressors.

In Morocco, constitutional advances since 2011 have made it possible to enshrine gender equality and the prevalence of international conventions in national law. However, these commitments often remain symbolic due to the lack of effective implementation. Law 103-13, adopted in 2018 to combat violence against women, remains incomplete and struggles to provide real protection for victims. In addition, femicides are not recognised as separate crimes in the Penal Code, which prevents legal recognition and clear statistical monitoring. The Instagram account @femicides.maroc revealed at least 80 cases between 2023 and 2024, but these figures remain underestimated due to the lack of official data. Violence is often played down by the authorities, and the judicial response is marked by excessive slowness and a lack of training for magistrates.

Shortcomings in the implementation of laws

- Lack of specific training for law enforcement and judicial personnel on the dynamics of gender-based violence, leading to inadequate responses to complaints and in terms of care and assistance to victims.
- Lack of coordinated intervention protocols between the various government departments, creating gaps in the chain of care for victims and inadequate emergency responses for women in danger.
- Failure to enforce protection orders, which remain ineffective due to a lack of rigorous monitoring and follow-up mechanisms for aggressors.



Tunisia, often cited as a model for women's rights in the region, is facing an alarming increase in the number of femicides. In 2024, 30 cases had already been recorded, compared with 25 in 2023. Law 58-2017 on the elimination of violence against women, which criminalises violence against women and, in addition to criminalisation, includes a prevention and protection component for female victims and provides for strict penalties, suffers from a lack of enforcement. Protection orders are rarely implemented, and the police are slow to intervene in the event of a threat. Numerous femicides, such as that of Refka Cherni, murdered by her husband after she had lodged a complaint, illustrate the ineffectiveness of the judicial system in preventing these crimes despite prior reports. Judicial delays, the stigmatisation of victims and the trivialisation of domestic violence all contribute to the impunity of aggressors.

Culture of impunity and normalisation of violence

- Stigmatisation of victims and social pressure to silence them, reinforced by patriarchal cultural norms that blame women rather than condemn the perpetrators of violence.
- Societal tolerance of violence as a 'private matter', which often prevents early intervention by the authorities and civil society.
- Biased judicial practices, such as the almost systematic granting of extenuating circumstances to aggressors, endanger women and contribute to the increase in femicide.

Shortcomings in data collection

- Lack of monitoring systems and reliable statistics on femicide, with data that is often fragmentary.
- Under-reporting of cases due to fear, shame or lack of effective reporting mechanisms, particularly in rural areas.
- Difficulty in identifying femicides hidden under other criminal headings (accidents, suicides, etc.), which distorts analysis of the phenomenon.



Femicide is a pressing issue in Algeria, and one that is attracting increasing attention. In 2024, at least 48 cases were recorded. In 2023, 39 women were murdered, mostly by close relatives. This year's statistics show an upsurge, with crimes perpetrated mainly by spouses or ex-spouses (42.6%) and family members (27.7%). Nearly 90% of femicides recorded in 2024 took place in the home, including 40.4% in the marital home and 42.6% in the family home[1]. These figures illustrate the danger that spaces that are supposed to be places of safety represent for these women. Despite the introduction of reforms in 2015, the Penal Code still contains a 'forgiveness clause' allowing an abuser to avoid prosecution if the victim withdraws her complaint. This provision reinforces the culture of impunity and discourages victims from pressing charges. The presence of a Sharia-inspired legal framework in the Family Code limits progress on equality. The efforts of civil society, in particular the organisation Féminicides Algérie, highlight the need for clear legal recognition of femicide and the introduction of effective protection mechanisms.

Recommendations

Combating femicide in the Maghreb requires a multidimensional and intersectional approach to protect Maghrebi women from violence and avoid its fatal consequences: Femicide. Dismantling the violent realities experienced by all women. Regional cooperation, combined with a transition from legal recognition to effective application and due diligence by States, is essential. Without urgent intervention, the cycle of impunity and gender-based violence will continue to take lives and erode fundamental rights and freedoms.

Given the urgency and gravity of these crimes, it is imperative that governments, civil society organisations, the media and international partners join forces to put an end to femicide in the Maghreb. Protecting women's lives is a collective responsibility that can no longer be postponed.



[1] <https://www.laradiodessansvoix.org/post/f%C3%A9minicides-en-alg%C3%A9rie-un-bilan-alarmant-pour-l-ann%C3%A9e-2024#:~:text=En%202024%2C%20l%E2%80%99Alg%C3%A9rie%20a%20enregistr%C3%A9%2048%20f%C3%A9minicides%2C%20important,un%20rapport%20publi%C3%A9%20par%20le%20collectif%20F%C3%A9minicides%20DZ.>

1) For governments:

- Adopt national plans to combat femicide.
- Include femicide in national criminal codes/ Make femicide an autonomous offence and distinguish it from other homicides;
- Strengthen victim protection mechanisms and the effective application of existing laws;
- Train legal and law enforcement professionals and journalists in gender-based violence;
- Ratify the Istanbul Convention on combating violence against women and domestic violence;
- Allocate a sufficient budget to combat violence against women;
- Facilitate divorce proceedings for victims of domestic violence;
- Ensure the reintegration and rehabilitation of perpetrators of violence to effectively prevent any risk of re-offending.

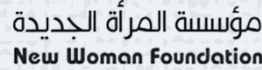
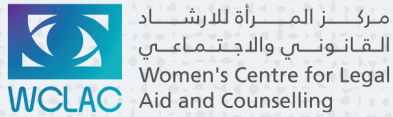
2) For the international community and European institutions:

- Guarantee financial support for local initiatives to combat gender-based violence.
- Address the issue of femicide in formal and informal discussions with third countries and in all forums (bilateral and multilateral).
- Ensure that the issue of gender-based violence, and femicide in particular, remains central to all EU, CoE and UN policies, whether in their domestic or external dynamics.
- Promote harmonisation of data collection and monitoring systems for femicide at regional level.

3) For civil society:

- Facilitate exchanges at regional level (to be defined on the basis of the momentum of this project) in order to create an action network on the issue.
- Strengthen the documentation and monitoring of femicide by publishing regular reports;
- Raise public awareness through media and educational campaigns;
- Mobilise local communities to report and prevent violence. Raise awareness among children, young people and educational staff to deconstruct clichés and stereotypes and put an end to discrimination and gender-based violence.

Signatory organisations



Association Féministe algérienne pour l'égalité des droits entre les femmes et les hommes



