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CANADA: Woman or girl murdered every 2.5 days on average during 2018: femicide report

A goal of the report is to acknowledge that circumstances surrounding women's violent deaths differs from those of men so that femicide can be better prevented

By Nicole Thompson

The National Post (20.01.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2MDr0TQ> - A woman or girl was killed every 2.5 days on average in Canada last year, according to an inaugural report on femicide that argues the issue must be better understood in order to reduce the number of slayings.

The first annual report by the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability — titled “#CallItFemicide” — was released Wednesday and answers a call from the United Nations for countries to better track gender-related killings of women, said lead author Myrna Dawson, the observatory’s director and a professor at the University of Guelph.

“It really drove home how often this was happening when we were monitoring this on a daily basis,” she said. “Women are still most at risk of men that they are intimate with or who they should be able to trust.”

The goal of the report, at least in part, is to acknowledge that the circumstances and motivations surrounding women’s violent deaths differs from those of men so that femicide can be better understood and prevented.

"The context in which women and girls are killed is vastly different because they're most often killed by people they know, and that's in contrast to males who are most often killed by acquaintances and strangers," Dawson said. "Calling it for what it is and recognizing the distinctiveness underscores the fact that we need different types of prevention."

The report said 148 women and girls were killed in 133 incidents in 2018, with 140 people accused in their deaths. In 12 of the 133 incidents, no accused has been identified. Some cases involve multiple accused.

More than 90 per cent of those accused were men.

In many cases, a police investigation is still ongoing, Dawson said, adding that researchers intend to follow the cases through the justice system the coming years to better understand the factors that went into each.

The statistics include a van attack that left eight women and two men dead in Toronto last year. The accused in that case, Alek Minassian, has been charged with 10 counts of first-degree murder and 16 of attempted murder. He is set to stand trial in February 2020.

The women who died in the van attack are among the 21 per cent allegedly killed in 2018 by a stranger. By contrast, 53 per cent were allegedly killed by intimate partners, according to the report. Another 13 per cent were allegedly killed by other male family members.

That includes the case of Krassimira Pejcinovski and her 13-year-old daughter Venallia, who were allegedly slain by the elder Pejcinovski's partner in May 2018. Her 15-year-old son Roy was also killed in the incident, but is not included in the statistics.

The numbers and demographic information were pulled from media reports of the deaths, the study said. Dawson said information from the media was more handily available and at least as accurate as information from official sources. But the report notes that in coming years, as these cases progress through the justice system, researchers will look at court records to track updates.

Dawson said there are some demographics disproportionately represented in the statistics. For instance, the report indicates Indigenous women represent only about five per cent of the population, but made up 36 per cent of the women and girls killed by violence. Thirty-four per cent of the women and girls were killed in rural areas, where only 16 per cent of the population lives, the report said.

Understanding these issues is key to preventing further femicides, said Julie Lalonde, a women's rights advocate and public educator.

For instance, she noted, funding for sexual assault centres and women's shelters is distributed on a per capita basis in Ontario, which puts women in sparsely populated areas at an even greater disadvantage.

"The argument is there's less of a need (in rural areas). Perhaps in terms of numbers, but you have a more complex need in rural communities that requires more resources, because you have to travel long distances. You don't have public transit for people to get away," Lalonde said.

She said statistics like those in the report also help cut down on misconceptions about violence against women, such as the idea that women in abusive relationships should just leave.

"We don't talk about things like criminal harassment or the fact that most women are killed after leaving or declaring that they're going to leave a partner," she said. "We have to challenge all the myths and stereotypes that tell women it's their own fault."

IRAQ: Slaying of Instagram star shocks the country

By Sinan Salaheddin

ABC News (03.10.2018) - <https://abcn.ws/2DTa8b8> - She was a 22-year-old former beauty queen, fashion model and social media star, whose daring outfits revealed tattoos on her arms and shoulder.

Tara Fares won fame and 2.8 million Instagram followers in conservative, Muslim-majority Iraq with outspoken opinions on personal freedom, such as: "I'm not doing anything in the dark like many others; everything I do is in the broad daylight."

It was also the way she died.

Last week, she was shot and killed at the wheel of her white Porsche on a busy Baghdad street during the day, apparently by a man who leaned in briefly and opened fire before speeding away on a motorcycle with an accomplice.

The killing, caught on security camera video, followed the slaying of a female activist in the southern city of Basra and the mysterious deaths of two well-known beauty experts.

The violence has shocked Iraq, raising fears of a return to the kind of attacks on prominent figures that plagued the country at the height of its sectarian strife.

Iraq is still recovering from its bloody fight against Islamic State militants. The country has been without a government since national elections in May, and riots have repeatedly broken out in the south over the authorities' failure to provide basic services.

"These harrowing crimes are worrying us," said Iraqi human rights activist Hana Adwar. "There are groups that want to terrify society through the killing of popular women and activists ... and to tell other women to abandon their work and stay at home."

It is not clear whether the deaths of the women are connected, and reports that they knew each other could not be confirmed.

Fares, with an Iraqi father and a Lebanese mother, first became famous in 2015 when she won an unofficial Baghdad beauty pageant organized by a social club. She has become a social media darling, with bold posts and photos of herself posing in elaborate makeup, tight jeans and blouses that showed off her tattoos.

A YouTube channel drew more than 120,000 followers in addition to those on Instagram, where she shared makeup tips.

She gave details of a brief marriage at 16 to an abusive husband who posted intimate photos of her on social media and took away their now 3-year-old son. Fares said the experience taught her "strength ... and how not to let anyone control me in anything."

Fares also spoke out occasionally against religious, tribal and political leaders.

While many young Iraqis shared her videos and pictures, others criticized her lifestyle as racy and un-Islamic.

She lived in Iraq's self-ruled Kurdish region with her family, visiting Baghdad from time to time. In a TV interview this year, she said her family had converted to Islam in 2002.

Hours after she was gunned down on Sept. 27, a video on social media showed her body being carried away by a group of young people, with her face and white shirt stained with blood. She was buried in the Shiite holy city of Najaf, her grave decorated with a black-and-white photo of her, along with red plastic flowers.

In August, Dr. Rafeef al-Yassiri, a plastic surgeon labeled "Iraq's Barbie," died under mysterious circumstances. Authorities initially called it a drug overdose but have not offered an update in over a month, leading to rumors she might have been poisoned.

Al-Yassiri, a Shiite Muslim with a prominent social media presence, ran the Barbie medical center, which offered cosmetic surgery as well as treatment for war victims and those with birth defects.

She posted photos of herself in full makeup and fashionable clothes, promoting her latest projects to more than 1 million Instagram followers. She also worked with local and religious charities.

A week after her death, Rasha al-Hassan, the owner of a well-known beauty center in Baghdad, was found dead in her home. Authorities initially said she suffered a heart attack.

On Sept. 25, a gunman killed Soad al-Ali, a prominent activist in the southern city of Basra. Al-Ali had organized protests demanding better services and jobs and decried the growing influence of Iran-backed Shiite militias in the area. Police said the killing was "purely personal" and had nothing to do with the protests.

Last weekend, another former beauty queen, Shaimaa Qassim, posted a video on Instagram in which she tearfully said she had received threats through social media.

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has ordered an investigation into what he called "well-planned kidnappings and killings." He said organized groups are "carrying out a plan to destabilize the security situation under the pretext of fighting perversion."

Security agencies have not yet commented on the investigation into Fares' death and no group has claimed responsibility.

Iraq once boasted a liberal society and progressive laws for women and the family, going back to the 1950s. Those gains were eroded after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, which toppled Saddam Hussein and led to the emergence of powerful religious parties and a rise in extremism.

Posters on some streets, particularly near shrines, exhort women to cover their hair and wear an abaya — a long, black cloak that covers the body from shoulders to feet.

"After the killing of Tara Fares, I feel speechless," columnist Mohammed Ghazi al-Akhras wrote on his Facebook page. "We've reached the moment of total anarchy. They will kill everyone they don't like. ... The state of death is taking shape."

In one of her videos, Fares had chastised a Shiite cleric who she said had sought a temporary marriage with her, a tradition in Shiite communities that critics compare to prostitution.

"I'm not afraid of the one who denies the existence of God, but I'm really afraid of the one who kills and chops off heads to prove the existence of God," she wrote on Instagram in July.

EL SALVADOR: 'Police never turned up': El Salvador's devastating epidemic of femicide

Pressure is growing to tackle the rising toll of violence in one of the world's most dangerous places to be a woman

The Guardian (06.06.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2Lsjo4Q> - the day before she was found dead in a garden in a suburb of the El Salvadoran capital, Graciela Eugenia Ramírez Chávez had gone to buy shoes for her wedding. Her fiancé was later arrested and charged with her murder – she had been stabbed 56 times – in a case that briefly made headlines in a country where femicide is a grisly daily reality.

The death of 22-year-old Ramírez on 13 February came less than a month after Dr Rosa María Bonilla Vega, 45, died in hospital after being found injured at the foot of the stairs at her home in the city of Santa Ana. Two months later Karla Turcios, a 33-year-old journalist, was found, strangled and suffocated, on a road near the western town where she lived. The partners of both women have been charged with their murders.

These were just three high-profile cases among 152 murders of women between 1 January and 1 May in El Salvador, according to the National Women's Development Institute (Isdemu). The statistics mark an increase from last year, when 123 women were murdered from 1 January up to 30 April in the Central American country, considered one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman. As the rate of femicide has increased, so have demands for the government to act.

Last month the attorney general's office responded by launching a new unit to combat the crisis. Four officials will coordinate nationwide efforts to halt violence against women, children and adolescents, the LGBT community and other vulnerable groups. Graciela Sagastume, who led the investigations into the murders of Bonilla and Turcios, will head up efforts to stop violence against women.

"The goal of this new unit is the standardisation, creation and coordination of criteria, strategies and guidelines that permit the attorney general's office to pay integral attention to the process of investigation and victims of violence," said the attorney general, Douglas Meléndez, as he inaugurated the unit.

"We have confidence that this will get results and make a difference," said Silvia Ivette Juárez Barrios of Ormusa (the Organisation of Salvadoran Women for Peace). "This integrated approach is what we asked for in the strategy we developed."

She said the crisis was linked to impunity and tolerance by authorities and police. "When the authorities don't react, that sends out a message that nothing will be done."

Meléndez said that in the case of Ramírez, police had failed to act on warnings in the months leading to her murder. "On repeated occasions neighbours called the [emergency number] to report the victim was being attacked but the police never turned up."

The main reason that women did not report violence was that they found it difficult to access public services, said Vanda Pignato, the secretary for social inclusion, adding that women were often disbelieved if they did manage to report it. Accounts of violence did not match surveys that found, for example, that four in 10 women had experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.

The new unit will focus on better allocation of resources and will prioritise prevention, including mobilising civil society to raise awareness, said Salvador Martínez, at the attorney general's office. "We won't just be working on cases where murders have occurred, but on prevention. We have found many women are not even aware they are being abused and schools and other institutions will be mobilised to educate people."

He attributed the rise in femicide to "a total social breakdown – a lack of values, a lack of education, a lack of respect and tolerance".

Pressure to tackle the femicide epidemic has been mounting. In March the UN office in San Salvador called for government action to strengthen special tribunals for women and specialist services at PNC (national civil police) branches. A month later women's rights organisations protested outside the attorney's general's office, with banners reading: "It's not a crime of passion, it's a crime of patriarchy", and "We demand the state guarantee the right to a life free from violence".

According to the UN, Latin America and the Caribbean is the most violent region in the world for women, with femicide occurring on a "devastating scale" in Central America, where two out of three women who are murdered die because of their gender. In El Salvador 468 femicides occurred in 2017, one every 18 hours, according to the Institute of Legal Medicine.

For Graciela Ramírez, whose family released photographs of the wedding dress she planned to wear, her murder ended a life long marred by violence. She had fled to a new area of the country to escape a former partner who had abused her. Police had simply advised her to "take justice into her own hands" when she reported those attacks, her mother told reporters. "It never stops. People talk about violence against women, but when you look for help, nothing happens."

INDIA: Death penalty for rapists of young girls could push them to kill

With the majority of rapes committed by someone known to the victim, the new law could drive offenders to murder to avoid detection

By Rituparna Chatterjee

The Guardian (24.04.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2qZ8CKP> - n Saturday India's government approved the death penalty for convicted rapists of girls under the age of 12, amid a groundswell of public outrage following the gang-rape and murder of an eight-year-old Muslim girl in Jammu and Kashmir state.

The shocking case involved a girl from the Bakarwal nomadic tribe, who was out grazing her horses when she was abducted, drugged and murdered after a week of torture and repeated rape. It led to a nationwide outcry for swifter justice.

However, the hastily issued executive order is facing criticism from activists and politicians, who say the death penalty, usually meted out for severe crimes in India, will not be a deterrent to child rapists without an overhaul of the criminal justice system.

"I am afraid this [executive order] has very little credibility because what is required is certainty of punishment," the leader of Communist Party of India (Marxist), Brinda Karat, told reporters.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau data from 2016, in 94.6% of cases, the perpetrator is known to the victim – usually a brother, father or someone from the family's social circle. Reporting rape in India's patriarchal family structure is often fraught with victim shaming and further alienation.

Child rights activists fear the introduction of the death penalty will make families more likely to cover up sexual crimes, and that rapists might kill their victims to avoid detection.

Critics are also concerned that the order, which was approved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet on Saturday, makes no mention of boys. In a country where male children often grow up in an atmosphere that discourages them from showing vulnerability, experts say such a discriminatory legal provision will fail boys who have been sexually assaulted.

Unlike the current Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (Pocso) 2012, which is gender-neutral and defines any person under 18 as a child, the new ordinance will stop boys who have been sexually abused from seeking the same justice accorded to a girl of their age, says gay rights activist Harish Iyer.

"I principally stand against the death penalty. This discriminatory legislation implies what boys are taught growing up – that they have to be the protector and not the protected. Children are vulnerable to sexual assault, irrespective of gender," Iyer said.

A nationwide survey of crimes against children conducted by the ministry of women and child development in 2007 found that half of India's children had been sexually abused.

Iyer said the new executive order was a shortcut for an overhaul of a criminal justice system that often discriminates against the poor. "This is sexism of a different nature, it favours one gender. What about protection of intersex children? Unless the crime is female foeticide, which is specifically gender-oriented, this is a shortcut for real measures."

He said the government should prioritise fast-track courts, child-friendly police stations, and a national registry of sex offenders. The new law proposes stricter punishment for convicted rapists of children under 16 years of age. Its definition of the victims and proposed age limit has triggered a debate about categorising victims of the same crime.

"What's the explanation for death penalty for 'gang rape of children below 12 years'? The state is a man. Why else would the reproductive age of a girl be the determining factor for the kind of punishment meted out to the rapists?" journalist Kota Neelima wrote in a Facebook post.

In 2016 India recorded an alarmingly low conviction rate (18.9%) for crimes against women. In that year, of all the child rape cases that came before the courts under the Pocso, less than 3% ended in convictions.

An issue of such a grave nature should have had a public discourse with participation from civil society stakeholders. By its nature, an executive order can be announced by the president of India on recommendation from the federal cabinet and does not require consultation.

After the gang rape of Jyoti Singh in Delhi in 2012, India introduced tougher rape laws and launched fast-track courts, but the measures have not deterred violent sexual crimes.

In addition, homelessness and poverty increase the vulnerability of children to sexual predators as parents have to leave them on their own to go to work, making them easy targets.

In an election year, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wants to be seen as proactive in taking strong steps to make India safer for women. However, it is implementation, the real challenge in India, that will determine its true intention.

Further reading:

[India's cabinet adopts death penalty for rape of girls under 12](#)
[The death penalty ordinance has no leg to stand on](#)

UGANDA: Male feminists inside Uganda's police strike out at killing of women

By Thomas Lewton

Thomson Reuters Foundation (05.03.2018) - <http://tmsnrt.rs/2p9cTLo> - Balancing a heavy clay pot on his head with a baby tied to his back, policeman Francis Ogweng caused a scene as he marched down the busy highway towards Uganda's capital, Kampala.

With traffic backed up to the horizon, crowds of men stared and laughed as the baby girl swaddled in white cloth slipped precariously down Ogweng's back, pulling his khaki uniform into disarray.

"We want to put ourselves in the shoes of women," Ogweng, an assistant superintendent in the Uganda Police Force (UPF), told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Is it difficult to carry water? Is it difficult to carry a baby?"

Judging by the sweat dripping down his face, it is.

Onlookers were surprised to see a senior officer marching to stop violence against women, in a force that opponents of Uganda's long-serving President Yoweri Museveni accuse of spending more time suppressing dissent than tackling crime.

Police often break up opposition rallies in the east African nation with teargas and beatings, rights groups say they torture suspects to illicit confessions, and surveys often rank the force as Uganda's most corrupt institution.

"Their image has been tainted," said Regina Bafaki, head of Action for Development, a local women's rights group.

"They have actually been more violators than protectors of citizen's rights."

But a spate of unsolved murders of young women, with more than 20 corpses found beside roadsides south of the capital since May, is putting rare public pressure on the police.

They have charged more than a dozen suspects with the women's murders, listing possible motives range from domestic rows through sexual abuse to ritual murder linked to human sacrifice.

Battering of women

Ogweng was not alone, flanked by three policemen carrying bundles of firewood, a 50-strong police brass band and other officers carrying placards that read: "Peace in the home. Peace in the nation. Prevent Gender Based Violence".

"Men can also carry water, men can carry babies ... it does no harm at all, it doesn't make a man less of a man," said Ogweng, who describes himself as a feminist - a rarity in a country where women often kneel to show deference to men.

About half of Ugandans believe that domestic violence is justified under certain circumstances, such as when women neglect children or burn food, government data shows.

"There are those who still believe that battering of women, beating of women, is something normal," said Asan Kasingye, assistant inspector general, another unlikely ally in Uganda's fight for gender equality.

"We must invest our resources, our training, our recruitment ... into fighting against gender based violence," he said, seated in his top floor office at the police headquarters.

"It must percolate, it must be known by everybody. So it preoccupies us."

Stripped naked

The police demonstration calling for an end of violence against women went down well with locals around Entebbe, where about 20 women were raped and murdered in 2017.

"This government prides itself for bringing security ... but at the same time when these ladies were being murdered, the government didn't even talk about it," said Anatoli Ndyabagyera, whose fiancée Rose Nakimuli was killed in July.

The murders illustrate a broader problem in Uganda, where government data shows more than one in three women suffer physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner, although few report it to the police.

"We have in our society a dangerous attitude of men thinking they can dispense with women and they can get away with it," said Ndyabagyera. "They look at women and tend to think of them as items of ownership."

Four in 10 girls wed before they turn 18, even though Uganda has banned child marriage, according to the United Nations children's fund (UNICEF), and few go beyond primary school.

Efforts to pass a bill seeking to ban traditional practices, like dowry and the inheritance of widows by their husbands' male relatives, and to grant rights to women in divorce have floundered for years.

Women wearing miniskirts were stripped by mobs of men following the 2014 Anti Pornography Act that banned "indecent" dressing and the police in 2015 stripped female opposition leader Zaina Fatuma naked in the street.

"There are (officers) who are badly behaved," said Ogweng, who works in the child and family protection department.

"But there are those who are good, and there are many."

Given the influential role of the police in Ugandan society, Ogweng believes he can help to change people's perceptions about what it means to be a man.

"People are so rooted in the culture where some things are only done by women and some things are done by men," he said.

"If a man, a police officer, can carry a baby, can carry a pot, then other men can do it ... Men even called me afterwards and said: 'You have opened my eyes' ... So I think people are beginning to understand."

LEBANON: Nine Lebanese women murdered by partners in single month

By Florence Massena

Al-Monitor (26.01.2018) - <http://bit.ly/2EyNPUH> - Nada Bahlawan was shot and killed by her husband at dawn Jan. 22 in Beirut. The same day, a man stabbed his wife in south Lebanon after a dispute over doing the dishes. On Dec. 16, British diplomat Rebecca Dykes was raped and murdered.

Nine women were killed in December and January by their fiances or husbands. There seems to have been a rise since Dykes was killed, feminist activist Maya Ammar told Al-Monitor. She and others held a vigil in front of Beirut's National Museum on Jan. 23.

"In the last week of December, four women were killed. The night we organized the vigil about violence against women, we learned about Malak Moukdad, who was stabbed to death by her husband. Two days later, a woman killed herself because she couldn't handle the violence at home," Ammar added.

On Jan. 6, Zarifa Z. was stoned to death and her body was found on a beach in south Lebanon five days later. Her husband admitted to having committed an honor killing. A woman and her baby were found dead on Jan. 12, killed by repeated blows to the head.

Ghida Anani, the director of ABAAD, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that fights for gender equality, told Al-Monitor, "With the absence of national statistics on domestic violence in Lebanon and monitoring mechanisms, we cannot confirm for sure if domestic violence crimes are rising."

She added, "What can be confirmed for certain is a rise in women's awareness about reporting domestic violence incidents, seeking help outside their social and family spheres and disclosing [what happened to them], as the stigma around gender-based violence has been broken thanks to the persistent efforts of women's movements and campaigns in the last decade."

However, Minister of Women's Affairs Jean Ogasapian told Al-Monitor, "The people working in specialized associations and NGOs say that at least 12 women die annually as a result of their husband's violence."

"It was not the first time that we've had no cases for two months and then five in a week," Ammar said. "Because people can now see the situation is changing, women no longer accept violence and discrimination. There is some resistance and backlash from some men who want to prove they still have power in an extreme way."

Women are seeking support from the ABAAD-affiliated Model Community Holistic Care Unit, which provides safe spaces for women in the north, Bekaa Valley, south, Beirut and Mount Lebanon provinces. The centers were established in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs. Based on that and on the number of women turning to these emergency safe houses, Anani observed that violence against women in 2017 seems to be changing in nature. There is more sexual violence reported than physical and psychological violence and murders are more common than in previous years. The civil society NGO Lebanon Support and the feminist organization Kafa (Enough) developed a map to display statistics on violence against women per year. In 2017, 12 women have been killed, five more than in 2016, most of them victims of their husband, ex-husband, fiancé or boyfriend.

Law 293 was adopted in April 2014 to address domestic violence, but several organizations have criticized it for being incomplete. Human Rights Watch said after the law passed that it "has serious flaws and the parliament should consider amendments to fully protect women from domestic violence." The law defines domestic violence very narrowly, doesn't criminalize marital rape except if physical violence can be proven. Protection orders are a difficult and lengthy process to obtain.

"According to recent NGO reports on the Lebanese judicial system, the number of unofficial documented cases of women killed as a result of family violence crimes since Law 293 was passed reached 40, and the number of official protection orders issued to date exceeds 500," Ogasapian said. The data shows that a growing number of women know they can be protected and don't hesitate to ask for help.

"The work done by the judges is very encouraging since the law passed, they answer to these women with efficiency," Kafa media and communication officer Diala Haidar told Al-Monitor. "We have been campaigning in the media and social networks for years and now women are becoming more aware. But the media shouldn't hesitate to call these crimes femicides and should stop being apologetic toward the killer, like we see sometimes."

Kafa has been collaborating with the Ministry of Justice to amend Law 293 with a draft proposition that was accepted by the government in August 2017. They are now waiting for the vote by Lebanese parliament. "In light of all these recent crimes, we hope the vote will be pushed forward," Haidar said. The draft amendments will improve the implementation of the law, for example with a faster process for a protective order, stricter penalties and immediate custody rights for the mother in cases of domestic violence.

The Ministry of Women also started to develop an action plan for gender equality. "We are in the process of developing a national strategy on gender-based violence,"

Ogasapian said. "It will be developed with an action plan and a monitoring process and be submitted for implementation with the relevant stakeholders."

He added, "We are conducting a study on the economic cost of gender-based violence in Lebanon. It will result in the development of policies to prevent violence against women."

Ogasapian insisted that the ministry is taking the issue of women's rights very seriously, with seven draft laws processed in a year. "Three draft laws were approved by the council of ministers and now sent to the parliament for approval: one against sexual harassment, one granting paternity leave and another for equal privileges in Social Security funds. We are also supporting all the amendments proposed to Law 293."

Even if the draft amendments are passed and applied quickly, some fear the Lebanese justice system is too slow to prosecute these crimes fast enough for the victims' families. "Roula Yaacoub's murderer still hasn't faced a judge since 2013," Haidar pointed out. "This needs to change."

ARGENTINA: Public outrage after murder of Anti-Femicide activist

The latest victim of gendered violence in the country was an anti-femicide activist who had been missing for a week.

To Μωβ (09.04.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2nEJDxB> -

"Ni una menos!" ("Not one less!")

"Vivas nos queremos!" ("We want ourselves alive!")

"Estado responsable!" ("The state is responsible!")

These were some of the chants heard in the town of Moreno, Buenos Aires, where thousands gathered Saturday (8/4) to protest the femicide of **Micaela Garcia**, who herself was an activist against sexist violence.

The 21-year-old Argentine had been missing for a week after she had attended a nightclub in nearby Gualeguay. Her naked body was found Saturday morning in a rural area with signs of having been strangled.

Her suspected killer, Sebastian Wagner, arrested the same day, is a serial rapist with previous charges of rape against him. While his original sentencing was to be imprisoned for those instances of rape until at least 2020, when he was convicted in 2010, a judge had reduced his sentence. As such, the target of the protests in Moreno was also Judge Carlos Rossi, who had been responsible for releasing Wagner early.

"Here are two people responsible: the murderer of Micaela and a judge who released him despite being advised against doing so," said Fabiana Tuñez, the president of the National Women's Council.

Garcia, a university student, was involved with various social movements and championed the struggle against femicides of women in Argentina, her father told reporters.

"We are going to live to try to achieve a more just society, as Micaela intended. Pain has to serve us to change society," explained Nestor Garcia, the young woman's father.

A recent documentary by Alejandra Perdomo, titled "Every 30 Hours," found that gendered violence in Argentina kills one woman every 30 hours.

According to Casa del Encuentro, almost 3,000 women have been killed since 2008, when the organization started to monitor femicides. Despite the inclusion of "femicide" in the criminal code in 2012, only one man has been sentenced for femicide charges since then.

According to Perdomo, the anti-femicide movement "Ni Una Menos" made the issue more visible, resulting in a surge of complaints.

While Argentina has been a pioneer in implementing laws defending the rights of the LGBTI community over the past decade during the progressive administrations of Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernandez, the country only recently started to measure the extent of the femicide issue, after an accumulation of horrendous murders were covered in the media.

The movement against femicide saw a resurgence in Argentina last year, sparking a wider uprising across the region against gender violence and the systemic impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of femicide and domestic abuse.

For additional, important information, from "Newsweek", 10 April:

Pope Francis—one of Argentina's best-known citizens—telephoned Garcia's parents, Yuyo Garcia and Andrea Lescano. Writing on Facebook, Yuyo Garcia said: *"This is how far your fight and message has come, my beautiful. Thank you Holy Father for your humility and your respect!"*

Speaking to the Argentinian Radio Mitre on April 9, Argentine President Mauricio Macri argued that "the laws we have are enough" but criticized the judge for releasing Wagner early.

"We cannot keep these kinds of judges. We all have to understand that we have to take responsibility, there is not a president or a government that solves the problems magically, we all are."

According to La Casa del Encuentro, an Argentinian feminist organization monitoring femicides in the country, 230 women were murdered between January 1 and October 31, 2016—roughly one every 30 hours.

TURKEY: Report reveals 38 women killed in January

Turkish Minute (05.02.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2kpczrQ> - A report released by the Stop the Murder of Women Platform has shown that a total of 38 women became the victims of domestic violence in Turkey in January.

Most of the murders took place in the western province of İzmir, where six women were killed, followed by İstanbul, Balıkesir, Trabzon and Şanlıurfa, where three women were murdered in each province.

The platform said it could not determine whether all of the murdered women had state protection but said 8 percent of the women killed in January died while they trying to protect another woman.

"These data clearly show that women are not protected by the state. Thirty-one percent of the women were killed because they wanted to divorce, end a relationship or simply because they wanted to make a decision regarding their lives," the platform said in its report.

Women's rights organizations have for years been trying to raise awareness about the rise in violence against women that has taken place in the last decade.

According to local reports, between 2003 and 2010 there had been a 1,400 percent increase.

Many women think that this is linked to the policies or rhetoric of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, which has its roots in political Islam and has been in power since 2002.

Other reading:

[IHD Report: Human rights abuses systematically grew in Turkey following failed coup](#)

GERMANY: Domestic violence affects over 100,000 women in Germany

For the first time, federal police have released national data on violence in relationships in Germany. The information shows that murder, sexual offenses, bodily harm and stalking are not uncommon between partners.

DW (22.11.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2g1h1m5> - The Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) together with the German Minister for Family Affairs, Manuela Schwesig, released the statistics in Berlin on Tuesday. This is the first time police were releasing numbers showing the extent of violence in intimate relationships, the BKA said in a press statement.

According to the BKA's figures, in 2015, a total of 127,457 people in relationships were targets of murder, bodily harm, rape, sexual assault, threats and stalking. Eighty-two percent, or over 104,000, of these were women.

Among the women, over 65,800 suffered simple injuries, 11,400 were badly injured, 16,200 were subjected to threats and nearly 8,000 were victims of stalking. Three hundred thirty-one women were killed intentionally or unintentionally by their partners.

In cases of rape and sexual assault, almost all the victims were women. Over ninety percent of victims of stalking and threats were also female, according to the statistics.

In a press statement, the BKA's President Holder Munch explained that police had registered several cases of abuse, starting from subtle forms of humiliation, insults and intimidation, psychic, physical and sexual abuse to rape and murder.

"Domestic violence against women, against men, against children is not a private affair, it is a punishable offence and must be tracked accordingly," Family Minister Manuela Schwesig told reporters.

"Violence, that takes place within one's own four walls, in a place where one should feel secure, is unfortunately true for many women. This taboo, of not speaking about it, must be broken. For the first time numbers for this particular subject have been specifically evaluated," she added.

"We need these numbers, because they help in making domestic violence visible. They also help in developing measures to prevent and fight against domestic violence," she said.

Schwesig also urged victims to call the "Gewalt gegen Frauen" (Violence against women) helpline at 08000116116. The 24-hour number offers free counselling to victims in 15 languages.

TURKEY: 35 women killed in October

Hurriyet Daily News (16.11.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2eZZvBF> - A total of 35 women were killed in October and 21 others were subjected to sexual violence, according to a report released by the Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu, a women's rights activist organization that keeps track of violence against women.

According to the organization, a total of 42 children were left motherless as a result of femicides and 29 children were sexually abused.

Three hate crimes were committed against members of the LGBTI community.

The total number of femicides reached 272 since Jan. 1, the report also said.

Four women were killed in the southern province of Muğla, three of them were killed in Istanbul, and two murders each were committed in five provinces, the western provinces of Aydın and Manisa, the northwestern province of Balıkesir, the southeastern province of Şanlıurfa and the Black Sea province of Ordu.

Some 46 percent of the murdered women were married, according to the statistics presented by the organization. The statistics in the report also showed that 51 percent of the 35 women killed in October were murdered for making decisions regarding their own lives, for ending their relationships or for seeking divorce, while 9 percent were killed as they attempted to protect their daughters from their husbands.

Three of the murdered women had previously been subjected to violence, applied for state protection or were taken under police protection, the report also said.

More reading: [One of the 12 suspects arrested after rape of 14-year-old girl](#)