

29th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of justice
“Breaking the silence – united against domestic violence”
Tromsø, 18-19 June 2009

SPEECH

Mr Fikrat Mammadov, Minister of Justice, AZERBAIJAN

*Dear Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to the Council of Europe and the Norwegian authorities for hosting the conference on such a vital issue. We have already enjoyed an excellent organization of this important forum and warm hospitality.

Dear Colleagues,

Prevention of domestic violence has been increasingly gaining particular significance. According to the statistics every third woman becomes a victim of violence or abuse.

It is well-known that women and children become the most frequent victims of domestic violence, especially in unhappy families. Existence of two hundred fifty thousand families of refugees and IDPs emerged due to aggression of the neighboring country negatively affects this issue. A special anti-violence survey showed that the vast majority (78%) of the respondents in Azerbaijan consider women to be the most frequent victims of violence, 19% goes for children and only 3% for the elderly ones.

Unfortunately, very often the victims of violence do not speak up in order to maintain the family united and avoid traumatizing children. This ultimately could lead to more serious consequences and even deaths.

Our state has been taking progressive steps to address the gender problem which is a serious obstacle in achieving equality.

The 1995 Constitution eliminated all forms of political, legal, social, economic or psychological discrimination against women. A special institution with ministerial status carries public policy to address family, women and children's issues.

The Head of State signed specific decrees in 1998 and 2000 aimed directly at increasing the role of women in the society and strengthening of public policy in respect of women. These are the very documents which identified priorities of the national policy in this area.

At the same time, we actively participated in the special Council of Europe Campaign. Alongside this, «Combating violence against women in the 21st century» Project was successfully implemented jointly with the UN.

The National Action Plan for the Protection of Human Rights approved by the Azerbaijan President H.E. Ilham Aliyev in 2006 specifically provided for strengthening the fight against

domestic violence. Our Parliament held a special session and adopted a Statement «On measures to combat violence against women, including domestic violence».

In addition, the Action Plan for Juvenile Justice is carried out each year jointly with the UNICEF, which is aimed at combating violence against children.

In 2007 the Government approved a Comprehensive Program to combat the everyday violence.

Intense actions are taken to implement UN CEDAW Convention into national legislation. Thus, a draft law «On the prevention of domestic violence» was elaborated, which took into account the UN and OSCE recommendations, as well as best practices of many European states. The project is currently under discussion at the Parliament.

The Draft Law provides for mechanisms for adequate and effective protection against domestic violence, including the issuance of security orders, provision with shelter, establishment of special centers to render victims necessary aid and offer social rehabilitation etc.

Along with that, the possibility of criminal prosecution of domestic violator for crimes, including physical, psychological and sexual violence is in place.

The effectiveness of the fight against domestic violence largely depends on the quality of the trial, access to justice for victims and rendering legal assistance.

In this regard, we continue to improve the judicial system, increase the number of judges and advocates, improve their professionalism, create new courts and use new IT technology.

Alongside this, the civil society plays a key role in drawing attention of the public to this issue. Today over one hundred seventy NGOs out of 25 hundred are dealing directly with the rights of women and children.

They are holding an anti- domestic violence campaign in the mass media while TV broadcasts videos on this subject.

These days, we have been informed about the experience of various countries. We have much in common. However, there is an emerging need in having single document to consolidate efforts at the international level.

We therefore support the work of the Council of Europe units on combating violence against women on developing an appropriate European Convention.

Along with this it would be useful to create a common *Electronic Network* on domestic violence, containing:

- International standards and domestic norms;
- News about the specific training;
- Contact details of the relevant agencies;
- Discussion forum for exchange of information and requests.

I would like to express my confidence that high attention drawn to such a pressing issue will help us to improve the efficiency of cooperation in this area and make a significant contribution to the prevention of family violence.

Dear friends,

In conclusion, I want to quote the wisdom of the east, saying: «A nobleman honors a woman, but only the mean one humiliates!».

Let us unite together and say «NO» to the domestic violence.