

GUIDELINE ON GENDER EQUALITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN FOR ARMENIAN JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA WORKERS



This guideline is for journalists, editors and advertisers working in various fields of print, online and broadcast media, including programmes, news, advertisements, and other broadcasts on radio and television stations and/or published in newspapers, magazines or social media channels.

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Armenian examples by
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December 2020

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**GUIDELINE ON GENDER
EQUALITY AND VIOLENCE
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Scope and purpose of this guideline

This guideline is for journalists, editors and advertisers working in various fields of print, online and broadcast media, including programmes, news, advertisements, and other broadcasts on radio and television stations and/or published in newspapers, magazines or social media channels.

■ The guideline gives recommendations and provides guidance on **gender-balanced reporting**, which means equal representation of women and men in the print, online and broadcasting media, but also representation of women and men in a non-stereotyped, non-discriminated and non-sexist manner. Gender-balanced reporting is not only a matter of *how many* women are represented but also of *how* women are represented. Gender-balanced reporting gives a recognition to actual social and professional achievements, careers, interests and roles of women and men equally. Fair portrayal of men and women in the media is a professional and ethical aspiration, similar to other ethical principles of journalism, such as respect for truth, accuracy, fairness, impartiality and honesty.

■ The guideline also provides a way for journalists, editors and advertisers to approach reporting on violence against women, including domestic violence, in a professional, and ethical manner. Violence against women is a violation of women's human rights. Reporting on violence against women and domestic violence requires a sensitive and respectful approach. The media has ethical responsibilities not to normalise violence against women by conveying messages that contribute to and trivialise violence against women. The media also has a responsibility to increase the knowledge and sensitivity of society to the phenomenon of violence against women through addressing all forms of violence against women and always link them to the issues of gender equality and women's human rights. The media can also play a key role in preventing and combating violence against women and promoting awareness on equal and indivisible human rights.

This guideline aims to:

- ▶ Equip journalists, editors, advertisers and all media professionals to use **gender-inclusive language**, as well as increase the understanding on gender equality and violence against women, including domestic violence;
- ▶ Ensure equal representation and visibility of women and men in the media and broadcasting;
- ▶ Avoid sexism, sexist advertising, language and context in all print and broadcasting media;
- ▶ Show how to portray women and men in a way that reflects their actual social and professional achievements, careers, interests and roles;
- ▶ Show how to promote equality and promote change rather than perpetuate gender stereotypes that are harmful;
- ▶ Ensure that all journalists and media professionals who report or play a role in reporting on violence against women are able to preserve the safety, confidentiality and dignity of survivors, their families and communities, including those who are trying to help them;
- ▶ Show how to raise awareness of violence against women and to counteract myths and outdated attitudes about violence against women and domestic violence.

Glossary/Terminology¹

Gender and sex

- ▶ **Gender** means “the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men”.²
- ▶ **Stereotypes** are beliefs about a group of people.
- ▶ **Gender stereotype** is a generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women’s and men’s capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives.
- ▶ **Sex** means biological characteristics identified at birth.
- ▶ **Sexism** is an ideology based on the belief that one sex is superior to another. Sexism is any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline. Sexism can affect anyone, but in society, it is most commonly applied against women and girls. Sexism in the media forms part of a system of use and control of women’s bodies, through the creation, promotion or dissemination, by any means in any type of media, of messages which violate human dignity, human rights and equality between women and men. Sexism in the media manifests through sexual, sexualised and racialised depictions and objectification of women, men, girls and boys and through focusing the reporting on women’s appearance, dress and behaviour rather than balanced and informed discussion of their views and opinions. Sexism is linked to violence against women and girls, whereby acts of “everyday” sexism are part of a continuum of violence creating a climate of intimidation, fear, discrimination, exclusion and insecurity

1. The terminology is developed in accordance with the definitions given by the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence; by the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/GenderStereotypes.aspx>; and in accordance with the internationally accepted definitions given by prof. Sylvia Walby, see Walby, S. *Theorizing Patriarchy*. 1990, Oxford: Blackwell.

2. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2011) provides the first legally binding definition of gender (Article 3c). Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210>

which limits opportunities and freedom.³ By avoiding sexism, the media contributes to the non-discrimination on grounds of sex, prevents the incitement to hatred and promotes zero tolerance of violence against women. By using non-stereotypical and gender-inclusive language and images, the media contributes to the elimination of sexism and sexist behaviour in the society.

- ▶ **Sexist language** is language which excludes one sex or the other, or which suggests that one sex is superior to the other. Also, it is important to note that sexist language is used both by men and by women.
- ▶ **Gender-inclusive language** is a generic term covering the use of non-sexist language, inclusive language and gender-fair language. The purpose of gender-neutral language is to avoid word choices which may be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or demeaning by implying that one sex or social gender is the norm. Using gender-fair and inclusive language also helps reduce gender stereotyping, promotes social change and contributes to achieving gender equality.

Gender-based violence and violence against women

- ▶ **Gender-based violence** means violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or that affects women disproportionately.
- ▶ **Violence against women** is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.
- ▶ **Child** refers to any person under the age of 18 years.
- ▶ **Violence against children/girls** can take the same forms as violence against women occurring in places that should be havens for children, such as the school, the family or in residential institutions thus, the so-called “circle of trust” Children are victims of domestic violence, including as witnesses of violence in the family. Domestic violence against children is widespread and studies have revealed the link between domestic violence against women and child physical abuse, as well as the trauma that witnessing violence in the home causes in children.⁴

3. The Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210>

4. See also the Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and

- ▶ **Victimisation** is when someone subjects or threatens to subject the other person to any detriment.
- ▶ **Secondary victimisation** means the victimisation that occurs not as a direct result of a detrimental or criminal act but through the response of institutions and individuals, including journalists and the media, to the victim. Secondary victimisation occurs when a victim rather than being treated with respect, confidentiality and professionalism, finds herself being seen as not credible or to be exaggerating. Secondary victimisation may be caused by repeated exposure of the victim to the perpetrator, repeated interrogation about the same facts, the use of inappropriate language or insensitive comments made by all those who come into contact with victims.

Forms of violence against women and girls

- ▶ **Domestic violence** shall mean all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.
- ▶ **Physical violence** means any intentional act of physical violence against another person irrespective of the context in which it occurs, including one slap.
- ▶ **Psychological violence** refers to actions that impair a person's psychological integrity through coercion or threats. For example: threats of violence against a person or someone close to him/her (children, family member), humiliation, isolation from friends and family or any contacts outside the family, restrictions on communication and use of children to control or hurt the woman, etc.
- ▶ **Economic violence** is abuse that causes or attempts to cause an individual to become financially dependent on another person, by obstructing her/his access to, or control over, resources and/or independent economic activity.
- ▶ **Sexual violence** (including rape) is any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise direct, against a person's sexuality upon coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.

Sexual Abuse, also known as "the Lanzarote Convention", available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/convention>

- ▶ **Sexual harassment** is unwelcome sexual behaviour. It involves behaviour that could be expected to make a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment can be physical, spoken or written. Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- ▶ **Forced abortion** includes performing an abortion on a woman without her prior and informed consent.
- ▶ **Forced sterilisation** includes performing surgery which has the purpose or effect of terminating a woman's capacity to naturally reproduce without her prior and informed consent or understanding of the procedure.
- ▶ **Female genital mutilation (FGM)** includes procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.
- ▶ **Forced and child marriage or early marriage.** Child marriage is any marriage where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age. Forced marriage is marriage in which one and/or both parties have not personally expressed their full and free consent to the union. A child marriage is a form of forced marriage.
- ▶ **Honour-related violence** (crimes committed in the name of "honour") is a form of violence with special characteristics. Culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called "honour" cannot be regarded as justification for violence against women. The violence and oppression are often carried out by several people together and the perpetrators need not be a current or previous partner. They may instead be parents, siblings, relatives or other members of the family's community. The main purpose of honour-related violence is to control the sexuality of women.
- ▶ **Femicide** means women and girls killed because they are women. It covers, *inter alia*, the murder of a woman as a result of intimate partner violence, the torture and misogynistic slaying of women, the killing of women and girls in the name of so-called honour and other harmful practice-related killings, the targeted killing of women and girls in the context of armed conflict, and cases of femicide connected with gangs, organised crime, drug dealers and trafficking in women and girls.
- ▶ **Prenatal sex selection** means to take a choice to continue or terminate a pregnancy based on the offspring's sex. It is a phenomenon which finds its roots in a culture of gender inequality and reinforces a climate of violence against women.
- ▶ **Cyber/online violence against women** means gender-based violence that is perpetrated through electronic communication and the internet.

Although cyber violence can affect both women and men, there are various forms of cyber violence against women and girls, including, but not limited to, cyber stalking, non-consensual pornography (or “revenge porn”), gender-based slurs, hate speech and harassment, “slut-shaming”, unsolicited pornography, “sextortion”, rape threats and death threats, and electronically facilitated trafficking.

- ▶ **Stalking** means repeatedly engaging in threatening conduct directed at another person, causing her or him to fear for her or his safety.

Media, gender equality and violence against women

Gender equality is a fundamental human right. The concept of gender equality means that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles. It means that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally.⁵

■ Gender equality entails equal rights for women and men, girls and boys, as well as the same visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation, in all spheres of public and private life. It also implies equal access to and distribution of resources between women and men.⁶

■ Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women.

■ The media is still far from being equal to women. The results of the 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) have shown no improvement since the 2010 report regarding the portrayal of women in the news. The GMMP 2015 Report concluded that globally **women represented only 24% of the people who could be seen, read about or heard in the traditional news media**, which is the same percentage as in 2010. In Europe, the situation was the same for online media and traditional media, indicating that women's underrepresentation in traditional media had crossed over into the digital news world.⁷

■ The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted its Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 on gender equality and media calling on member states to support efforts by **media to promote gender equality**. The recommendation encourages, for example, media organisations to adopt self-regulatory measures, internal codes of conduct/ethics and internal

5. The European Commission, 100 words for equality - A glossary of terms on equality between women and men, (1998). Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/library/resource/dedupmrg200286>

6. Council of Europe, gender equality standards and mechanisms, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/standards-and-mechanisms>

7. Council of Europe: Gender Equality and Media – Analytical Report Gender Equality Commission Steering Committee on Media and Information Society, July 2020. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/prems-064620-gbr-2573-gender-equality-in-media/16809f0342>

supervision, and develop standards in media coverage that promotes gender equality. It makes recommendations for implementation in six areas:

- Gender equality policy and legislation;
- Adoption and implementation of national indicators for gender equality in the media;
- Provision of information and promotion of good practices;
- Accountability channels;
- Research and publication;
- Media literacy and active citizenship.⁸

Violence against women is a form of discrimination and a violation of human rights. It is a major obstacle to achieving gender equality. Violence against women is recognised as a structural violation of women's human rights by all international human rights instruments. Both the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by Armenia in 1993,⁹ setting international and European standards to end violence against women, define that gender-based violence is committed against women because they are women and affects women disproportionately.

Violence against women is a global phenomenon. There is no region of the world, no country and no culture in which women's freedom from violence has been secured.

There are many different forms of violence against women: physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence. Some forms, such as international trafficking and violence against migrant workers, cross national boundaries. New technologies generate new manifestations of violence, such as online stalking. Women are subjected to violence in a wide range of settings, including the family, the community, state custody, and armed conflict and its aftermath. Violence constitutes a continuum across the lifespan of women, from before birth to old age. It cuts across both the public and the private

8. Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 on gender equality and media. Available at: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c7c7e

9. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

The General Recommendation No. 19 of the Committee of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cedaw/pages/recommendations.aspx>

spheres. One of the most common forms of violence experienced by women globally is **domestic violence**, sometimes leading to death. It includes physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners.

It is estimated that 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence.¹⁰ In Armenia, the UNFPA¹¹ study found that 45.9% of ever-partnered women reported that they survived psychological violence by a male intimate partner, while 21.3% of women reported they were victims of economic violence, and 12.5% were victims of physical violence by a male intimate partner. However, one of revealing conclusions of the study was that women in Armenia under report physical violence: in face-to-face interviews women were less likely to disclose physical violence by a male intimate partner (12.5%) than in anonymous self-administered questionnaires (22.4%).

A survey conducted by the International Federation of Journalists in 2017 has shown that one in two women journalists experienced violence at work, including online abuse, verbal abuse, psychological abuse and sexual harassment.¹²

Understanding violence against women as a structural phenomenon linked to the gender inequality is important as it explains the links between the different forms of violence. Violence against women is clearly linked to the general sexism in our societies, coupled with symbolic forms of violence against women such as women's poverty, women's economic dependence, the gender pay gap, women's unequal participation in political life and the lack of parity democracy, women's unequal access to public services and common goods (including health, education, culture, transport, housing, media, etc.), gender stereotyping in the media, etc.

There is a connection between media and violence prevention, as inadequate media reporting of violence against women without contextualisation can reinforce gender stereotypes that perpetuate gender-based violence. Ideas

10. World Health Organization, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council (2013).

11. United Nations Population Fund – UNFPA (2016). Men and gender equality in Armenia: Report on findings of sociological survey. Yerevan: UNFPA

12. International Federation of Journalists, 2017. Available at: <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/ifj-survey-one-in-two-women-journalists-suffer-gender-based-violence-at-work.html>

about the inferiority of women and notions of male entitlement influence behaviour and justify men's use of violence against women as a form of control.¹³



Media can normalise violence against women and promote a culture of acceptance to violence, if they:

- Present each story as separate and unique;
- Sensationalise events and crimes, such as rape (for example, do not use words like "sex scandal" or "controversy");
- Suggest that gender-based violence is a by-product of a messy and difficult relationship of equals;
- Minimise the actions of the perpetrator and place the blame on the victim and others.



The media should:

- Depict a thoughtful analysis of causes of violence and show it as a structural problem;
- Avoid biased impressions of events and be neutral; Portray violence against women as an expression of power and control by one person over another;
- Create awareness of the criminal nature of violence against women, the accountability of perpetrators and support available to victims of violence.

The media can contribute to social change by promoting zero tolerance of violence against women by portraying balanced images of women and men, and by raising awareness about violence against women and domestic violence and about ways in which different sectors of society can act to prevent this violence and support victims.

Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 encourages member states to "adopt an appropriate legal framework intended to ensure that there is respect for the principle of human dignity and the prohibition of all discrimination on grounds of sex, as well as incitement to hatred and any form of gender-based violence within the media".

13. Council of Europe: Encouraging the participation of the private sector and the media in the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence: Article 17 of the Istanbul Convention, January 2016. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016805970bd>

Promising practice – Spain¹⁴

The Equality Observatory of the Spanish Radio and Television Corporation (CRTVE) was set up to ensure progress towards full equality and to combat sex-based discrimination and one of its worst expressions, gender-based violence.

The objectives of the observatory are to:

- Promote respect, knowledge and diffusion of the principle of equality between women and men, seeking to avoid any form of inequality and sex-based discrimination in the activities of the RTVE Corporation;
- Encourage the presentation of an image of equality, plurality and balance between both sexes, without sexist stereotypes or standards of beauty, and of women's active participation in different functions in all areas of life, with special attention on the contents of programmes aimed at children and the younger audience;
- Monitor the existence and application of ethical codes in favour of the promotion of equality and the prevention of gender violence in the activity of the RTVE;
- Ensure that the content broadcast on any of the media of the RTVE do not justify, trivialise or incite violence against women;
- Encourage the use of non-sexist language;
- Collaborate in institutional campaigns aimed at promoting equality between women and men and to eradicate gender violence.

The CRTVE also created in 2018 a position of 'equality editor' whose mission is to guarantee equality between women and men in both content and presence on public television and radio. Some national newspapers (paper and digital), such as eldiario.es or El País have also appointed similar editors.

14. The promising practice example from the Council of Europe publication: Gender Equality and Media – Analytical Report Gender Equality Commission Steering Committee on Media and Information Society, July 2020, p 35. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/prems-064620-gbr-2573-gender-equality-in-media/16809f0342>

How to avoid gender stereotypes

- Do not include the physical, marital and/or family status, etc., when describing women, unless it is essential to the story. Introduce a woman in your story with her own title, name and voice, (she is not the “wife/daughter/etc. of somebody”).
- Ensure gender balance in the choice of “experts” or witnesses. Strengthen gender-balanced stories by preparing contact lists of women who are willing to speak and who are accessible.
- Avoid defining women only in terms related to home, family and domestic/private domain and roles; avoid use of any descriptions that pander to societal expectations of women that are inherently limiting (“mother of six”; “spinster”) or in other ways trivialise (for example, using the word ‘girl’ for a woman), diminish, or exploit women, for example, commodification of women; representation of women in male or family-dependent roles; presenting a murder as a “family drama”; describing a rapist as a “sex-offender”.
- Avoid addressing women with the word օրիորդ/Miss to emphasise the marital status of a woman, whether the woman is married or not, instead use the form տիկին/Ms for both Miss and Mrs, since it does not distinguish women by their marital status. It works similarly to the word Mr which does not indicate the marital status of a man.
- Strive to represent both sexes as whole human beings and be careful of assigning gender roles, which pander to bias and strengthens harmful stereotypes. Avoid using gratuitous modifiers such as: աղջիկ, կին/girl, woman, female, or the ending ուհի/-ess as adjectives referring to their jobs. For example, մատուցողուհի/waitress; կին վարորդ/female/woman driver; աշխատակցուհի/female employee; ընդունարանի աշխատակցուհի/female/lady/woman receptionist; քարտուղարուհի/female secretary; կին գրող/woman writer, etc. are inherently sexist because they suggest that it is not normal for a woman to be a writer. They diminish a person’s professional background drawing attention to their sex, unless it is relevant or important to emphasise it in the communication or context.
- The addition of suffix ուհի/-ess, -ette that either minimises women’s role or reinforces the notion that generic nouns are referring to men as a standard. Generic nouns by their origin should be used for both sexes, for example, աշակերտ/student, ուսուցիչ/teacher, բժիշկ/doctor, քարտուղար/secretary, etc., as they do not need any additional

adding of suffixes, unless mentioning gender or making gender visible is relevant or important in the context for communication.

- Avoid using such words and word-expressions that perpetuate and reinforce gender stereotyping on how women should think, act, look or behave, e.g. կանաչի երջանկություն/female happiness, կնոջ ինտուիցիա/female intuition, թույլ սեռ/weaker sex, կնոջ մասնագիտություն/female job or woman's work, կնոջ/մոր պարտականություն/female/woman's/mother's responsibilities, կնոջ մայրական քնազդ/woman's maternal instinct, and so on.
- Avoid using words and expressions that make any other assumptions about gender, for example, "All the guest/speakers/directors/ambassadors/political leaders, etc. and their wives were invited to...". Such expressions presuppose that all the guests/speakers/directors/ambassadors/political leaders, etc. are men. Instead continue using gender-inclusive language; in this case instead of wives use the word spouses/ամուսիններ, which equally refers to both sexes.
- Avoid judging women, e.g. a career woman.
- Avoid sexualising girls and women in the media and broadcasting - do not picture girls and women as sexual objects wearing revealing clothes or implying sexual readiness.
- Ensure coverage that contributes to raising awareness on gender equality.
- Respect the dignity and rights of women and men. Promote equal opportunities for women and men.
- Depict the wide range of women's and men's roles, both traditional and non-traditional, in paid work, social, family and leisure activities. Women and men should both be seen as taking decisions to support the family, in household tasks and taking care of children equally.
- Depict diversity in the society by portraying women and men with diversity in age, abilities, physical appearances, occupations and family status.
- Do not reinforce pictures and reporting, where men are seen to be more powerful than women. The media should not over-emphasise certain roles of women mainly the domestic and sexual role and portray women as submissive.
- Men and women should be portrayed in both public and private spheres. Women should appear more on the screen and should not be seen in limited roles. Women's thinking abilities and men's caring abilities should also appear on the screen.
- Use gender-inclusive and non-sexist language. Sexist language

reflects the idea that one sex is superior to the other. Such language contributes, promotes or results in the oppression of one of the sexes to the detriment of the other and exploits an unfair distinction between sexes. Use բուժակ/health-care professional instead of բուժքույր/nurse և բուժեղբայր/male nurse; use բժիշկ/doctor (which equally refers to the both sexes) instead of բժշկուհի/doctress; use լրագրող/journalist (which equally refers to both sexes) instead of լրագրողուհի/woman journalist; use հաղորդավար/host, broadcaster (which equally refers to both sexes) instead of հաղորդավարուհի/woman host, broadcaster; use աշխատակից/officer (which equally refers to both sexes) instead of աշխատակցուհի/female officer.

- It is important to note that sexist meanings and harmful stereotypes are not realised only through single words but also via situational and contextual parameters, therefore it is equally important not only to focus on single wordings but also challenge the particular discourse and practices in which sexist assumptions and expressions are embodied.

Reporting on violence against women

Reporting on violence against women requires sensitiveness about the topic, awareness of the legal framework, context and facts and knowledge about terminology on violence against women and domestic violence.

Context/reporting

- Report on violence against women and violations of women's human rights without sensationalism (wording and/or pictures).
- Identify violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination in accordance with the internationally accepted definition (see the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence;¹⁵ the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women¹⁶).
- Explain the context, use statistics, infographics and interview experts: increase the depth of understanding by providing relevant contextual information from experts who are familiar with the context of violence against women and/or work with victims/survivors of violence against women.
- Challenge myths about violence against women, e.g. describe a murder of a woman as a murder, not "a crime of passion", do not blame religion or culture or tradition for violence against women.
- Use language that places the accountability of violence with the perpetrator, e.g. use: "he raped her", not "her rape" or "she was raped".
- Provide solutions: explain services available, for example, free legal aid, protection orders, shelters, helpline numbers.
- Portray perpetrators as "normal" men (not "monsters" or psychologically unstable), who should be held accountable for their actions/crimes, prosecuted and sanctioned.

15. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210>

16. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/violenceagainstwomen.aspx>

Interviews

- Ask for an informed consent to be interviewed or portrayed in a story/reporting. Fully explain the use and the purpose of the information sought in order to protect the interviewee's safety; provide information about the distribution of the interview (i.e. the internet). The interviewee must be able to comprehend the implications of his/her participation.
- Any presentation of stories, research or quotes from people who have experienced or committed acts of violence, must protect their confidentiality and be based on the principle of journalistic ethics of do no harm. Be aware of the impact of the media publication/broadcast (words and images) on the lives of others.
- Do not use real names unless people specifically agree to be identified.
- Avoid judgmental language. Writing about a victim/survivor's history, her/his sexual life, what she/he was wearing, where she/he was, what she/he was doing, or what time of day the abuse occurred could imply victim/survivor blame. Blaming the survivor refers to the tendency to hold a survivor responsible of violence and negative events that have happened. It appears to be particularly likely in cases of sexual assault, where a blame can be sought from clothing or the place of a crime (why she was wearing a mini skirt, why she was walking there alone). Violence is always and solely the responsibility of the perpetrator; it is never the victim's fault or incited by the victim. Additionally, violence against women should not be presented as "normal" or part of the culture, tradition, religion, etc. Culture, custom, tradition or so-called "honour" must not be considered as justification for any forms of violence against women.
- Do not report details (names, private or work address, job position, children's school or other identifying information of survivor and survivor's family members), that could put survivors at further risk.
- Ensure a safe, secure and private setting. When setting up an interview, ask where the victim would feel safe and secure conducting the interview. Check if the interviewee requires any specific accommodation, such as wheelchair access. Avoid places where someone could overhear or interrupt the interview. Make sure interviews are not too long or emotionally draining. Allow additional time for conducting the interview, do not rush. Journalists and all media professionals must do everything they can to avoid exposing the interviewee to further abuse/violence.
- Avoid giving opinions and/or advice (for example, "If I were you, I would

- never go out at that time”).
- Avoid asking personal questions regarding private/intimate life of the victim and questions regarding violent act details, for example, questions like “how exactly did the vaginal intercourse happen?” are absolutely forbidden. Remember, you are journalists, not police officers or judges.
 - Avoid secondary victimisation: treat the victim with respect, confidentiality and professionalism and avoid words/images/actions that may undermine a victim’s quality of life or a victim’s standing in the community.
 - Allow the victim/survivor to stop the interview, whenever they feel like it. Journalists and other media professionals should provide contact details to interviewees and make themselves available for later contact. This will ensure that interviewees are able to keep in touch if they wish or need to do so.
 - When interviewing victims/survivors with a disability, use the same interview techniques as above. Focus on the person, not the disability. Speak normally, listen carefully and repeat, if something is unclear. Allow additional time, if needed.

Photos

- Use carefully images, footage and photographs to illustrate violence against women.
- Ask survivors to give their informed consent for publishing photos or any other images.
- Any use of images should present the subject in a way that upholds their dignity. Where possible, images should be used to illustrate a general situation, rather than a specific incident of violence against women.
- It is not recommended to take pictures of survivors. If pictures are taken by photographers, it is important to obtain written consent from the survivors and to stay in contact with photographers to review and select images, clarify any information, and discuss possible use.
- Photos of child survivors should never be used. This applies to all children from families of (domestic) violence.

Specific guidelines

- **Reporting on sexual violence** demands special care and increased ethical sensitivity. It requires specialised interviewing skills, understanding of the law, and basic awareness about the psychological impact of trauma.
- **Reporting on children** demands professionalism and increased knowledge on the rights of children. It requires respect of the dignity and rights of every child, paying special attention to privacy and confidentiality, and protecting the best interests of every child.¹⁷

17. See, for example, these guidelines on reporting children from Unicef: <https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/ethical-guidelines>

National legal framework and context

As a member of the United Nations (UN) and the Council of Europe, the Republic of Armenia has ratified several human rights conventions and has undertaken the obligation to eradicate historically rooted inequality between women and men and to protect women's rights, such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women¹⁸ (acceded 1993), the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights)¹⁹ (ratified 2002), and the European Social Charter (revised)²⁰ (ratified 2004).

■ Moreover, equality before the law and the prohibition of discrimination are also enshrined in the Armenian Constitution. According to the Article 29 of the Constitution, discrimination based on sex, race, skin colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, world view, political or other views, belonging to a national minority, property status, birth, disability, age, or other personal or social circumstances is prohibited.

■ The principle of emphasising the importance of equality between men and women has been separately enshrined in Article 30 of the Constitution: women and men enjoy legal equality.

■ Furthermore, according to Article 86 of the Constitution, promoting de facto equality between women and men has been set as one of the main objectives of the state policy. Guarantees for gender equality are also provided for in the Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men adopted in 2013. However, the implementation of the law has been slow.

■ In 2017, the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia adopted the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Protection of the Persons Subjected to Domestic Violence, and Restoration of Solidarity in the Family (hereafter the DV Law).

18. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

19. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/search-on-states/-/conventions/treaty/005>

20. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/163>

■ The DV Law set obligations and measures to protect the victims from the risk of repeated violence through emergency intervention orders and protections orders, to provide support and assistance to victims and survivors, such as free and necessary psychological and legal assistance, support in finding work, and receiving social assistance and other necessary services. According to the law, the state authorities are also responsible for providing training to state authorities on domestic violence, and to review root causes, conditions and consequences of domestic violence and develop programmes to eliminate it.

Chapter 2 of the DV Law defines the types of protection measures for victims of domestic violence, which include:

1. Warning,
2. Emergency intervention order, and
3. Protective order.

■ Protection of victims is a core element of a response to violence against women and domestic violence and needs to be implemented alongside adequate and effective prevention, support service provision and prosecution. The most effective way to protect domestic violence victims and guarantee their safety, in situations of immediate danger, is by achieving a physical distance between the victim and the perpetrator.²¹

■ The protective measures are applied to protect the victim of domestic violence when there is a risk of repetition of violence and they will not impede an initiation of a criminal case following the Law when required. The first two measures are applied by the respective police units, and the third one is administered by the court.

■ When the police identify a domestic violence case for the first time, and it does not have elements of a crime, and there are no grounds for emergency intervention (see below), then a warning can be applied.

■ If there is a reasonable doubt that there is an imminent risk of a repeated or continuing domestic violence, then an emergency intervention order can be issued by a police officer. An emergency intervention order can be

21. Explanatory Report to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, paragraph 264.

also issued, if a violent act without elements of offence has recurred within one year after receiving a warning. The emergency intervention order can be made for maximum 20 days. During this period following restrictions are enforced: immediately and forcibly removing the perpetrator of violence from the residence (even if the perpetrator has the ownership of that residence) where the victim resides, the prohibition of the contact with the victim of abuse, taking the abuser's weapon, etc.

■ Victim can also apply for a longer-term protective order. The protective orders can be issued for a period of up to 6 months with the possibility to be extended by a court decision for up to 3 months twice. If domestic violence victim is a juvenile or is judged to be incapable or of limited capacity - his or her close relatives, legal representative or the guardianship authority or, with their consent, the support centre can apply to the court for a protective order.

■ The protective order implies following restrictions: immediately and forcibly remove the perpetrator of domestic violence from the residence of the victim and prohibit his/her return until the deadline established in the order; prohibit the perpetrator visiting the workplace, school, leisure places or residence of the victim or other venues (attended by the victim); the distance of approaching the victim of violence shall be determined; contacts with children shall be forbidden if needed; an obligation shall be put on the perpetrator of domestic violence to attend a rehabilitation programme.

■ The police supervise the enforcement of emergency intervention and protection orders. The application of the protective measures does not exclude criminal proceedings.

■ The DV law (Articles 14, 19 and 20) also sets requirements to the government to provide support to victim of domestic violence through establishing support centres, including free helplines, and shelters.

■ Despite the existing legislation, there are still insufficient guarantees for the de jure and de facto implementation of equality between men and women and prevention of violence against women and domestic violence.

■ The Human Rights Defender's Annual Report for 2019²² concluded that despite progress there are following problems related to violence against

22. RA Human Rights Defender Report for 2019, Available at: <https://ombuds.am/images/files/15b2661f76d10eb07746d7d4d4dec84f.pdf>

women and domestic violence:

- **Inadequate or no legislative provisions to combat and prevent domestic violence;**
 - Such as the approach of giving preference to the protection of the perpetrator's rights in domestic violence cases which contradicts the international standards;
 - Preventive record-keeping and monitoring of perpetrators are not performed adequately in practice;
 - Emergency barring orders only enter into force after notifying the violence perpetrator by telephone or by delivery to his formal address or e-mail or by registered mail, subject to delivery confirmation by signature of the recipient procedure which can be time-consuming and, what makes it more problematic, is that the perpetrator's procedural rights supersede the victim's right to life and physical integrity, in breach of the international standards.
 - Domestic legislation does not provide for liability for all types of domestic violence, which makes it impossible for authorities to respond adequately to such cases. The legislation of Armenia criminalises certain types of physical violence, as well as sexual violence, but stalking, for example, is not criminalised.

- **Stereotypes, including in the media, low level of legal awareness, and lack of trust in state bodies;**
 - Stereotyped thinking has direct negative consequences on the victim's decision to speak up about the violence. This problem is particularly severe in rural areas, where the matter may be viewed as a purely family matter.
 - Stereotyped thinking of state officials often leads to revictimisation, which may obstruct the discovery of such cases in the future, largely causing victims to avoid reaching out to the competent authorities.
 - Public misperceptions of women's role and violence are fuelled also by misinformation by the mass media on violence. Moreover, programmes and films shown on television, too, can fuel such misperceptions of violence.
 - The mass media, and especially television, influence the way family conflicts should be solved and contribute to reproducing the traditional perceptions of men's and women's roles. For example, in

Armenian soap operas, the male is often represented as a dominant male who does not involve the woman in the decision-making process, solves conflicts by force, often even beating the woman, while the woman is an obedient woman who spends most of her days drinking coffee and fabricating petty intrigues. The failure of the media to represent such characters as unacceptable and even condemnable – indeed they do the opposite, justifying them by saying that the media simply “show the reality that exists out there”, means that these unacceptable practices continue to reproduce, especially among young people.

- **Lack of services provided by the state and co-operation between state bodies;**
 - The provision of adequate state support to victims and their family members remained problematic: some support centres were established in 2019. Only six support centres have operated in the country - three in Yerevan and one in each of the Syunik, Shirak and Lori regions. Throughout 2019, Armenia did not operate state-run shelters. Shelter services were provided by two NGOs.
 - There is no special free-of-charge helpline, which would be accessible for everyone, including persons with disabilities, and would provide 24/7 support and counselling to persons in need, despite some support centres having their own helplines.
 - There is still no co-ordination of activities implemented by the competent authorities. The steps taken are sporadic and not co-ordinated. The multi-disciplinary system for combating domestic violence and supporting victims has generally not developed yet.

- **Absence of correct statistics on domestic violence cases:**
 - Armenia still does not compile unified statistics on domestic violence cases.
 - Domestic violence is known as a hidden type of violence, i.e. the information and statistics do not completely reflect the real picture;
 - Data provided by the competent authorities show that domestic violence disproportionately affects women.
 - Unified and comprehensive statistics need to be compiled, which will not only contain numbers related to the performance of state bodies, but also help to identify general and specific measures for

prevention.

- **Inadequate professional training and awareness of state and local self-government bodies and officials:**
 - Inadequate competences of the competent authorities, including specific skills to respond to domestic violence cases is problematic in terms of protecting the rights of victims of violence and preventing future cases of domestic violence. This can lead to further violations of rights as it limits the realisation of the victim's right of access to justice, which in turn poses obstacles on the way of accessing effective remedies.
 - For example, there are still problems in the various stages of criminal prosecution of domestic violence cases, including the lack of a victim-centred approach, revictimisation, persuading victims to withdraw complaints or not to complain, attempts to reconcile.

Based on his analysis, the Human Rights Defender provided the following recommendations in the report (ibid.):

1. To amend the RoA Criminal Code to align it with the international standards on violence against women and domestic violence, namely by prescribing sanctions for all violent acts committed against women or in the family.
2. To amend the RoA Criminal Code so that the victim's immoral conduct cannot be viewed as a circumstance mitigating the punishment.
3. To amend Paragraph 4 of Article 183 of the RoA Criminal Procedure Code to align it with the standards elaborated by the European Court of Human Rights.
4. To amend the Law on Prevention of Violence in the Family, Protection of Persons Subjected to Violence in the Family, and Restoration of Solidarity in the Family, by addressing all the gaps and problematic provisions in the Law.
5. In a short period, to ensure the creation of an effective mechanism to make multi-disciplinary support available throughout the country - in the form of support centers that will have all the means necessary for the continuous provision of services.
6. In a short period, to adopt a Government decree defining the procedure of issuing a certificate to create a shelter.
7. To organise continuous and mandatory training for the relevant

specialists (investigators, prosecutors, judges, etc.) on the Armenian legislation on combating, preventing and eliminating violence, as well as the international standards, with a view to overcoming stereotypes related to violence against women.

8. To raise women's awareness of their rights and the mechanisms available for protecting them.
9. To develop and implement awareness-raising programmes aimed at preventing violence in the family.
10. To develop and adopt the state strategy and action plan on preventing and combating domestic violence and on protecting the victims of violence.

Appendix I: Example report and analysis

Report

Title:

In Gegharkunik, husband severely beat his wife. What was the reason?

Story:

A 33-year-old man first hit his wife's head with a stick and then beat her up. According to our information, an extraordinary incident happened last night in Gegharkunik region.

A 30-year-old woman from the village of Nerkin Getashen was taken to the village medical center with head and face bleeding injuries, where she received emergency medical care.

According to some rumours circulating in the village, the 33-year-old husband severely beat up his wife. The incident took place at their home in the presence of children.

The man first hit the wife's head with a stick and then hurt her by beating different parts of her body. According to our sources, the reasons for this dispute were domestic issues.

Analysis – what is wrong in the report?

Violation of privacy and confidentiality; secondary victimisation

■ In the article the principle of privacy and confidentiality is violated. The name of the village is mentioned, and the age of the victim and the perpetrator are published. All this information may reveal the victim's identity for the

■ community, friends, employer, etc., which can contribute to a secondary victimisation or put the victim in danger. It may undermine victim's quality of life or victim's standing in the community.

Sensationalism

■ The article is looking for sensation by highlighting the horrible incident and emphasising how exactly the act of violence has happened: "extraordinary

■ incident happened last night", "... the man first hit his wife's head with a stick and then beat her up", "... head and face bleeding injuries". The article concludes by repeating again: "The man first hit the wife's head with a stick and then hurt her by beating different parts of her body".

■ Instead of sensationalising and by focusing on what kind of stick is used, it is important to report the history of violence, were there other acts of domestic violence, were they reported, were restraining orders issued, what is the future risk of the woman, etc. People need to understand how complicated and multi-layered the crime itself is. The journalistic coverage should be framed in such a way that it affects the public understanding of what domestic violence is, how serious it is, the real reasons why it occurs and how it can be prevented.

Justification and diminishing the act of domestic violence

■ The story does not blame the perpetrator, just the opposite. The story uses sensational words for explaining the act of violence, and at the same time diminishes the act of violence by calling it 'domestic issues'. The word 'violence' does not exist in the article and 'domestic violence' is described as family 'domestic issues'. The repeated acts of violence are also presented as something not very important. The sources that proved the fact that "husband severely beat up his wife" are just "some rumours circulating in the village", which gives the public the impression that violence does not deserve a special attention or to be taken seriously - they are just "some rumours".

■ Domestic violence is normalised by being presented as a private, family matter and there is no need for the perpetrator to be held accountable for his actions/crimes. When reporting on violence against women, like in any kind of reporting, it is crucial to assess the reliability and accuracy of information provided by sources and verify the information before publishing.

Gender blindness, lack of gender sensitiveness and lack of knowledge on women's human rights and rights of the child

■ The article described domestic violence as “an incident” that has happened “in the presence of children”. There is not even a hint about the fact that by being a witness of domestic violence, the child is also a victim of domestic violence.

■ The article not only does not challenge myths about violence against women but defines domestic violence as a “domestic issue”. Instead of being

■ presented as one of the most pervasive forms of violence against women, domestic violence is depicted as a “normal” part of marriage. Domestic violence is never normal, never acceptable. It is a serious crime and should be treated that way.

■ The article does not provide information about services that provide help to victims of domestic violence, nor provide any other statistics, factual information or expert opinion about domestic violence and violence against women.

Appendix II: Contacts of institutions and organisations providing support to victims and survivors of violence against women

Ministry of Labour and Social Support

Helpline: 114

Website: www.mlsa.am

Address: Government Build. 3, Yerevan, RA

Police of Armenia

Helpline: 102

Website: www.police.am

Human Rights Defender's Office

Helpline: 116

Website: <https://ombuds.am/>

Address: 56a Pushkin street, Yerevan, RA

Women's Support Center NGO

Helpline: +374 99 887808

Website: www.womensupportcenter.org

Sexual Assault Crisis Centre

Helpline: +374 77991208

Website: <http://saccarmenia.org>

The guideline gives recommendations and provides guidance on gender-balanced reporting, which means equal representation of women and men in the print, on-line and broadcasting media, but also portrayal of women and men in a non-stereotyped and non-discriminated manner. The guideline also provides a way to approach reporting on violence against women, including domestic violence, in a professional manner. Fair portrayal of men and women in the media is a professional and ethical aspiration, similar to other ethical principles of journalism, such as respect for truth, accuracy, fairness, impartiality and honesty. The media can play a key role in preventing and combating violence against women and promoting awareness on equal and indivisible human rights.

ENG

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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