

RUSSIA'S HIDDEN SHAME

Amnesty International Russia Campaign 2002-2003

***“You need to be beaten and beaten.
You are just a piece of meat and if I kill you I
won't get punished.”***

Sergei G., Tatiana's husband

Women's organizations in the Russian Federation report some terrifying figures. That a woman dies every 40 minutes in Russia, for example. And that every day around 36,000 women in Russia are beaten by their husbands or partners.

Violence is a fact of life for one family in four in the Russian Federation, according to official statistics. One of the results of the economic crisis in Russia, following the demise of the Soviet Union, was an upsurge in violence against women in the family. Economic distress exacerbated the alcohol abuse in society and made life for many families in the country more difficult and stressful. Women often became the victims when their partners or relatives released their frustrations through violent behaviour against family members.

Men who beat or rape their wives or commit other acts of violence in the family are unlikely to face prosecution in the Russian Federation. One reason for this is that the law does not currently recognize violence in the family as a distinct crime. Although it is possible to prosecute violence in the family under criminal assault laws, this rarely happens. Women who still try to have their abusers prosecuted later often withdraw their complaints, many after facing indifference or neglect at the hands of the police and the courts. Insufficient and largely ineffective mechanisms to

“My husband drinks mainly in the night. He may sleep the whole day and then at 8, 9 or 10 in the evening go to get a bottle and drink all the night until 5 or 6 in the morning. Not only that: he turns on the light, TV, stereo everywhere and starts to 'educate' me, the kids and even the cat. He swears at everyone, pulls me out of my bed and drags me all around the flat – ending up with forcing me to have sex with him. If I start to resist, he beats me, throws me out of the house, insults me, strangles me, ties me up, tears my clothes and my hair, throws me off the balcony...”

Excerpt from Katya V's statement

tackle violence against women in the family are largely to blame for the fact that the police tend not to register and investigate such cases. The great majority of victims of violence in the family, however, avoid bringing their cases to court. One reason for this is that they fear further involvement with the authorities and another reason is the social stigma associated with sexual crimes. According to the Russian women's non-governmental organization *Siostry*, the vast majority of victims of violence in the family hide the crime even from their closest relatives and friends.

The Russian authorities recognize the prevalence of violence in the family. In early 2002 the fifth periodic report of the Russian Federation to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) stated that **14,000 women die every year at the hands of their husbands or other relatives.** Moreover, it acknowledged that “the situation is exacerbated by the lack of statistics and indeed by the attitude of the agencies of law and order to this problem, for they view such violations not as a crime but as “a private matter” between the spouses.” In some regions of the Russian Federation successful cooperation between local NGOs and police has been developed to combat violence against women in the family. So far, however, the authorities have made only limited progress in addressing the problem on the federal level.

The 2002 CEDAW recommendations urged “the immediate enactment of specific domestic violence legislation to facilitate the prosecution of offenders”.

In 2002 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) said:

“The Committee is extremely disturbed by the high level of domestic violence against women. It is concerned at the prevalent tendency, including by law enforcement officials, to view such violence not as a crime, but as a private matter between the spouses. The Committee is concerned that the Government has not taken sufficiently urgent measures to combat domestic violence and that none of the numerous draft bills on domestic violence has been enacted into law.”

*CEDAW/C/2002/1/GRP.3/Add.3, para. 36
(Concluding Observations/Comments)*

*Fifth report: Russian Federation
28/01/2002.*

CEDAW also urged the Russian Federation government to “take immediate and effective measures to provide training to all levels of law enforcement officers and judges” and to provide “training to health-care professionals and social workers to improve recognition and reporting of domestic violence” and “measures of physical protection for women who are victims of domestic violence, such as removal of the violent person from the family home and state budgeting for a sufficient number of shelters”. Finally, it stated that these measures need to be combined with a campaign to change people’s attitude towards violence in the family so that it is seen not as a “private matter” but as a criminal offence.

Amnesty International's Concerns:

- **DATA COLLECTION** - Police forms and procedures for recording crime in police stations in the Russian Federation do not include some basic elements necessary for tracking and highlighting violence against women in the family. They do not indicate the sex of either the victim or the perpetrator nor do they record if there is an intimate relationship between the victim and perpetrator. There is therefore no routinely available data on reported crimes or the prosecution of such abuses. In the absence of such data, violence against women is not recognized as an issue that needs to be prioritized and requires a specific response within the criminal justice system.
- **CODE OF CONDUCT** - Law enforcement officials in the Russian Federation have no official guidance or indication of best practice on how to respond to women who report violence in the family. The absence of a basic code of conduct for law enforcement officials means that women are not treated appropriately and that their cases are often not taken seriously. The absence of a code continues to encourage indifference to the issue among law enforcement officials and to confirm them in their view that these crimes are *"a private matter between the spouses."*
- **TRAINING FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS** - The Russian Federation government does not include issues of gender, women's rights and violence against women in its training of law enforcement officials. There is no agreed training curriculum for senior officials or for police officers routinely in contact with the public. There is therefore no understanding of the systematic nature of violence against women in the family or of the approach which should be taken by law enforcement officials in their contacts with victims of these abuses.

"Sergei entered my room, pulled me out of the bed and dragged me into the kitchen. There he bent my arms, pushed me to the floor and started beating my head against the floor. He said that he is the 'czar and ruler' and that I must do whatever he tells me to do. He forced me to repeat his words, and continued to bend my arms until I replied. I asked him: 'Do you want to kill me?' He answered: 'I will bring you to such a state that you will kill yourself. You need to be beaten and beaten. You are just a piece of meat and if I kill you I won't be punished.'"

Excerpts from Tatiana G.'s statement

The term “due diligence” describes a threshold of efforts which a state must undertake to fulfil its responsibility to protect individuals from abuses of their rights. The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, has held that a “state can be held complicit where it fails systematically to provide protection from private actors who deprive any person of his/her human rights”.

Due diligence includes taking effective steps to prevent abuses, investigate them as they occur, to prosecute alleged perpetrators, bring them to justice through fair proceedings and to provide adequate compensation and other forms of redress.

UN Doc. E/CN.4/1996/53, para.32.

The Russian government cannot justify its failure to address this issue by arguing that there is a general perception among the public and law enforcement officials that these crimes are “a *private matter between the spouses*.” The government clearly has an obligation to develop and implement an **appropriate response by the police and the criminal justice system to violence against women**. Every government must act with due diligence to protect, ensure and fulfil the human rights of all women in its territory.

When some 14,000 women die each year at the hands of their husbands or other relatives and the state fails to address violence against women as a human rights abuse, it fails to fulfil its obligations.

When a state fails to arrest those suspected of these violations, collect appropriate evidence in order to prosecute them and then bring them to justice, it fails to fulfil its obligations.

When a state fails to provide an environment in which women who have suffered these abuses feel that they will be safe, supported and protected in pursuing their complaints, it fails to fulfil its obligations.



8ANNA Center

RUSSIAN NGOs

For a long time non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Russian Federation have driven forward the issue of violence in the family in the face of widespread official indifference and acute social and economic crisis. In certain regions, NGOs have developed initiatives which have enabled them to work with the police and other authorities in order to develop models for responding at a local level to violence against women in the family. This work has produced a degree of understanding and practical co-operation between the authorities and NGOs. Concrete steps could be taken by the government, using the expertise developed by NGOs, to begin to improve the capacity of the police to respond to and protect women who suffer violence in the family. Amnesty International urges the government to work with the Russian Association of Crisis Centres to take such steps, in the context of long-term, strategic planning, to combat violence against women.

Amnesty International's Recommendations

Amnesty International believes that the following measures would radically improve the response by police and the criminal justice system to violence against women in the Russian Federation. It urges the government to:

- **Revise the data collection form for crime statistics so that it accurately records cases of violence against women in the family and clearly disaggregates crime data according to the sex of the victim and the perpetrator and the nature of their relationship, if any;**
- **Create a code of conduct for law enforcement officials on best practices in responding to victims of violence against women;**
- **Establish mandatory gender sensitive training for all levels for law enforcement officials;**
- **Support and collaborate with non-governmental organizations in the Russian Federation active on women's rights;**
- **Raise public awareness of violence against women in the Russian Federation and of the constructive action that the government will take to combat it.**

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WHAT CAN I DO?



WRITE TO PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN AND URGE HIM:

- To ensure that the Ministry of Internal Affairs takes the steps as set out below, and commits sufficient resources to implement them;
- To publicly condemn VAW in all forms.

President of the Russian Federation

Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin

President of the Russian Federation

Kremlin

Moscow, Russian Federation

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Salutation: Dear President



WRITE TO MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND URGE HIM:

- To take immediate steps to change **data collection** forms so that they include information about the sex of the victim and perpetrator and the nature of their intimate relationship, if any;
- To take immediate steps to start the process of drafting a **code of conduct on VAW for law enforcement officials**;
- To take immediate steps to start the process of establishing **mandatory gender sensitive training**;
- To **co-operate and consult with Russian NGOs** providing leadership on this issue, making full use of their expertise.

Minister of Internal Affairs

Boris Gryzlov

Minister of Internal Affairs

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Salutation: Dear Minister of Internal Affairs

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ACT NOW!