

Violence against women, till when?

The Council of Europe Agreement on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the so-called “Istanbul” Convention), ratified by France on July 4, 2014, defines violence against women as "all acts of gender-based violence which cause, or are likely to cause for women, harm or suffering of a physical, sexual, psychological or economic nature". From this definition we arise two points that need to be clarified to better understand the phenomenon of violence against women.

The first thing is that violence can be in several forms. They are physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, and economical. They can also be distinguished according to the sphere of life in which they take place (private, public, professional, school, university, etc.) and according to the author (spouse or ex-spouse, family member, a colleague of work, friendly circle, etc.).

The second point is that these various manifestations of violence against women are based on a common foundation. Indeed, whether it is domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, or the different forms of constraints that are placed on women's sexuality (female genital mutilation, forced marriages, etc.), this violence is perpetrated against women precisely because they are women and only takes on meaning when placed in a larger context of inequalities between men and women. The declaration on the elimination of violence against women adopted by the UN General Assembly on

December 20, 1993, establishes that violence against women reflects historically unequal power relations between men and women. Women, who have resulted in the domination and discrimination exercised by the former and hindered the raise of the latter, and is one of the main social mechanisms to which the subordination of women to men is due.

Violence against women does not, therefore, arise only from a specific interaction between two people, it is part of a broader context of inequalities between women and men, which are the cause and which they help to maintain. Violence against women is also societal violence, which begins with tolerance for assault and sexist speech. Therefore, the fight against such violence is now part of a policy of indorsing equality and combating sexist prejudices in all areas of society.

According to Global Database there were 129 women killed by their partner in 2013, 201,000 women victims of physical and/or sexual violence by their partner or ex-partner, and 83,000 rapes or attempted rapes each year in France only. Violence against women affects women of all ages and from all social categories. During 2013, 129 women were killed by their partner, 121 by their husband, companion, or civil union partner and 8 in the context of unofficial relationships (lover, boyfriend,..etc.) .A national study on violent deaths within the couple show that in 41% of cases, the victim had suffered previous violence from her partner.

Discover Violence against women has long remained hidden, ignored as a social issue, and as a matter of public health and safety. It was not until the 1990s that the first investigations on the subject were carried out and their scope was revealed. The Enveff survey (National survey on violence against women in France), carried out in 2000, was

the first large-scale scientific survey to accurately measure violence against women. In particular, it made it possible to estimate an overall rate of intimate partner violence suffered by women in France. From the answers given to a series of twenty-two questions, an indicator was constructed according to the frequency and type of violence suffered. This indicator has two levels, first situations of serious violence which correspond to repeated insults, psychological harassment, and in more rare cases to a single act of physical or sexual violence, second, situations of very serious violence, which group the accumulations of violence and third is physical and sexual assault associated with verbal violence and psychological harassment.

According to WHO results shows the proportion of female victims by age that Almost one in ten women in a couple (9%), aged 20 to 59, living in mainland France, is or was confronted with domestic violence during the year 2000. Among them, a quarter (or 2.3% of the general population) is in a very serious situation of violence, as described above.

After the completion of the Enveff survey, several surveys completed our knowledge on certain aspects of violence against women. Since 2007, INSEE and ONDRP carry out an annual victimization survey, the Living and Safety Framework survey (CVS survey), covering all attacks on property and people suffered during the previous two years. Although unlike the Enveff survey, the main objective of these surveys is not to study violence against women, they shed additional light on the measurement of violence within couples and sexual violence. It shows that, on average, each year, 201,000 women, or 1.2% of women aged 18 to 59, are victims of physical or

sexual violence from their partner or ex-partner. These results do not consider the facts of verbal or psychological violence (threats, denigration, etc.).

Regarding sexual violence, whoever the committer is, CVS surveys have made it possible to establish that each year, on average, in mainland France, 83,000 women are victims of rape or attempted rape . Contrary to popular belief, these rapes are not the work of strangers. In 83% of cases, the victim knew his enemy, who, in almost a third of cases, is his companion.

Sexual violence can also be measured over a lifetime, and it is estimated that one in five women has been a victim in her lifetime and that 59% of female victims were victimized for the first time before their 18th birthday.

The impact of this violence on the women who endure it is hefty in terms of their physical, mental, and somatic health. They can go as far as killing and are the cause of serious injuries, induced illnesses, psycho-traumatic disorders, depression, suicides... They isolate the victims and weaken all aspects of their social and professional life. One of the specificities of violence against women is that it frequently takes place in the private domain, where it can remain hidden.

Because it grasps victims in their confidentiality and is most often the act of relatives, violence against women and the behavior adopted by victims differ from what can be observed in other cases of violence. Complaint rates are low. It is estimated that 16% of victims of domestic physical and/or sexual violence have complained of the incidents that happened. This rate drops to 11% for cases of rape and attempted

rape More than to the police and justice, it is first to doctors and health professionals that victims turn to.

One of the main features of sexual violence is the difficulty victims have in talking about their battering, the feelings of shame and guilt they may feel, and the fear of not being believed or heard. Often, they never expose what happened to them. This is the case for nearly half of women who have been sexually assaulted. Gradually, this word is freed, the younger generations speak more than their elders.

The revelation of the extent of violence against women, made possible by the surveys carried out on this subject, has led to the implementation of national policies to combat this violence. Because they differ from other forms of violence on many points, violence against women requires a specific policy.

France's current policy on combating violence against women is based on three main recent texts: First is the Istanbul Agreement which sets a general framework, Second is the law for real equality between women and men who completes the French legislative fund to prevent violence, protect victims, and punish criminals.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee plan presented in November 2013 is based on three priorities: organizing public action with a simple principle: no declared violence should go unanswered; protect victims; and mobilize the whole of society.

The 4th Inter Plan operates a major reorganization of public action against violence against women around the principle of a systematic and comprehensive response to each reported violence. It provides measures to systematize responses at all stages of

the victim's journey and to ensure the earliest possible care, particularly in terms of health and legal matters.

The current policy also creates the conditions for the mobilization of all public services and professionals, with emphasis on training and awareness-raising. Created in January 2013, the Miprof was instructed by the Minister of Women's Rights to develop a training plan for all professions likely to come into contact with women victims of violence.

In a nutshell, the involvement of all professional actors who, in the field, are confronted with violence against women, is necessary. The rate of violence against women will only be able to drop if the whole of society is vigilant and if the victims' path out of violence is facilitated. Therefore, the training of health, justice, social work, and law enforcement professionals is a priority. Health professionals have a key role in identifying, providing medical care, and referral of women victims of violence. Because even if only to offer victims a space to express themselves by asking the question of violence, appropriate medical care and orientation towards the rich network of associations engaged in the fight against violence is already decisive for them. make it possible to initiate a journey towards the end of violence.

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