

## **ENSURE VICTIMS' SAFETY, HOLD PERPETRATORS ACCOUNTABLE**

– JOINT STATEMENT BY 36 ORGANISATIONS

We are saddened to see that yet another woman has been killed in her home within weeks of the previous murder, making this the fourth femicide this year in Malta. Since 2000, for every 4 femicides in Malta, 3 have been murdered by partners/husbands, ex-partners/ex-husbands or a close family member.

Despite the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in our laws, we are angered by the fact that women's lives are still being taken away by those that claim to love them because the very authorities that are meant to protect them are not ensuring their safety and protection.

Living free from violence is a fundamental human right and it is the State's responsibility to see that this human right is upheld. It is a tired and worn out assumption that femicide happen because victims do not seek help. Countless victims try to access protection and justice services with no success and it has become an unacceptable state of affairs to have women that are on daily basis being forced to live in violent situation in their homes.

We therefore call on the State to ensure that:

1. Domestic violence is dealt with the seriousness that it deserves. It is not a private matter but a crime that affects us all as a society;
2. The state adheres to its positive obligation to ensure that all women and girls are protected and live free from violence;
3. Risk assessment tools are identified, codified and that ALL police officials, including front-liners in our police stations receive the necessary and good quality training to recognise domestic violence and understand the correct procedure that should be followed since the enactment of the Gender based Violence and Domestic Violence Act, to evaluate risk and ensure the safety of the victim and other family members;
4. Different government departments, agencies and ministries work in cohesion to implement processes and strategies that will bring a measure of safety to victims and hold perpetrators accountable;
5. Courts see all cases of domestic violence through to the end, holding perpetrators accountable, even if the victim feels pressured to refrain from testifying against the perpetrator;
6. Police officials have the necessary tools, such as body cams, to gather additional evidence during house calls.
7. A clear political commitment, an adequate budget, a well-resourced unit whose members focus and work exclusively on the issues of violence, and clear targets with strict timelines that are monitored.

In the current situation, the next femicide is just waiting to happen. How many more women need to die before violence against women is truly taken seriously?

*This press release is being issued by the following 36 organisations:*

*St Jeanne Antide Foundation, aditus foundation, Platform of Human Rights Organisations in Malta (PHROM), Women's Rights Foundation, Merħba Bik, Department Gender Studies (Faculty of Social Wellbeing, University of Malta), The Critical Institute, SOS Malta, Allied Rainbow Communities (arc), Richmond Foundation, YMCA, African Media Association Malta, Association for Equality (A4E), Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations (MCWO), Kummissjoni Ejjew Għandi, Dean's Office (Faculty of Social Wellbeing, University of Malta), Men Against Violence, Attard Ladies Cultural Club (ALCC), Malta Association of Women in Business (MAWB), MGRM, We Are, Group of Independent MCWO Members (GIMM), Women's Study Group (WSG), Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses (MUMN), JRS, Drachma*

LGBTI, Drachma Parents' Group, Integra Foundation, SPARK, Department for inclusion and Access to Learning (Faculty of Education, University of Malta), Solidarity with Migrants Group, OASI Foundation, Social Assistance Secretariat of Malta Catholic Action, Victim Support Malta, Dar tal-Providenza, Paolo Freire Institute.