

## International conventions

The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) took a global approach to discrimination against women and to the rights of women to work, to access health care services, to equality with men before the law, in all matters relating to marriage and family relations, in education and in the political and public life.

Over the years, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) has drafted a series of interpretation documents, the General Recommendations. General recommendation no. 19 of 1992 defines gender-based violence as a form of violence directed against women because they are women or that affects women disproportionately.

The UN General Assembly has also defined violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." (Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women – DEVAW – December 20, 1993).

On May 11, 2011 the Council of Europe adopted the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) in order to:

protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence;

contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women;

design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence;

promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence;

provide support and assistance to organizations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.

The Convention deals with three main areas of action: prevention, protection and support to victims, and prosecution of perpetrators.

For the purposes of the Convention:

"violence against women" is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and includes 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;

"domestic violence" includes 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;

“gender” means the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men;

“gender-based violence against women” means violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately;

“victim” is any natural person who is subject to the conducts specified in points 1 and 2;

“women” includes girls under the age of 18.

The Convention obliges the Signing Parties to prosecute the perpetrators of acts that infringe the fundamental rights of women as well as of discriminatory acts:

psychological violence

persecutory acts

physical violence

sexual violence

forced marriage

female genital mutilation

forced abortion and forced sterilisation

sexual harassment

economic violence

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