

December 7, 2018

Honorable deputies,

According to Kosovo Police reports, only in the first nine months of this year, **eight women lost their lives as a result of domestic violence**. Globally, domestic violence remains one of the most widespread forms of violence. The Kosovo Women's Network's (KWN) report *No More Excuses*, published in 2015, in close cooperation with the Agency for Gender Equality and the National Coordinator on Domestic Violence, indicates that **62% of Kosovars have experienced domestic violence in their lifetimes** (68% of women and 56% of men). According to data from Kosovo Police, around 1,200 to 1,300 cases of domestic violence are reported in police stations every year. Of these cases, **80% of reports are made by women**, also involving children. Additionally, trafficking in persons continues to be a serious problem in Kosovo. While Kosovo used to be primarily a transit country, in recent years it has become a country of origin for trafficking, primarily of juvenile victims.

Given the high risk that they face from perpetrators of violence, many women and children need shelter. In 2018, **shelters for domestic violence have sheltered 400 women and children, while the shelter for victims of trafficking has sheltered 23 persons**. Lack of shelter for victims of domestic violence, victims of trafficking and children without parental care can place these women and children at great risk of violence, injuries, even death. In the previous year, due to the late allocation of funds, shelters were obliged to close for a period of three months, without providing any service for the numerous victims who needed shelter, placing them at great risk.

Unfortunately, it has come to our attention that the draft budget for 2019 currently does not fully cover the costs of shelters for women and children that have suffered domestic violence. **We strongly urge you to make changes in the budget, with the purpose of ensuring security and wellbeing of women and children, in accordance with constitutional obligations and legal responsibilities in Kosovo.**

In accordance with the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that Kosovo adopted in its Constitution (Article 22), countries are obliged to take necessary measures to eliminate violence, including protection measures such as support services for victims. In 2016, Kosovo approved the National Strategy of the Republic of Kosovo on Protection from Domestic Violence and Action Plan 2016-2020, which states: "the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare to allocate a permanent budget for shelters, which should be sufficient to cover all costs including counseling and care for victims of violence".

In order to ensure continued protection for women and children, we **call upon the Assembly of Kosovo to allocate sufficient funding** through the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW) to cover all shelters' spending for 2019. Shelters are licensed and contracted by MLSW, more specifically from the Department of Social and Family Policy, to provide services.

In June 2016, the Coalition of nine Kosovo Shelters has sent to the Government of the Republic of Kosovo a budget plan designed to cover expenditures based on the shelters' service package. Based on this proposed budget plan, all shelters have calculated that the required annual budget amounts to €60,000 per shelter. This means that the total amount needed for 2019 for eleven shelters is **€660,000**, which considers expenditures such as for medicine, food, clothing, facility maintenance, transport, communication, staff salaries, and so on. Shelters licensed by MLSW itself have an obligation to be transparent with regards to spending public funds by providing reports and full transparency of the use of these funds and other potential funds obtained from international organizations for additional services that will not overlap with state spending.

Compared to Kosovo's overall budget, this is **a symbolic sum to allocate in order to meet state obligations and potentially save the lives of thousands of sheltered women and children.**

Sincerely,

Kosovo Women's Network (with 140 member organizations)
Center for the Protection of Women and Children
Center for the Protection of Women and Children "Raba Voca"
Center for the Protection of the Rights of Women and Children "Liria"
Center for the Protection of Victims and Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings
Women's Wellness Center
The Center for Housing for Women and Children
Hope and Homes for Children Kosovo
Safe House
Shelter in Ferizaj
Novo Brdo Shelter
Žensko Pravo in North Mitrovica