

(Translated from Arabic)

Response to the request for information from the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, its causes and consequences:

The measures taken with regard to public awareness campaigns and efforts to educate the young generation about gender equality can be summed up as follows:

1. The Government promulgated the Education Act establishing free and compulsory basic education for young persons.
2. The Government, through the National Committee for Women, set up a legal working group to review and examine any provisions of the laws in force that may discriminate against women with a view to eliminating such discrimination.
3. A proposal has been made to raise the marrying age to 18. The Cabinet has approved the idea in principle and the proposal will be forwarded to the Chamber of Deputies for discussion and approval.
4. Awareness campaigns have been run to draw attention to the dangers and damaging effects of early marriage and AIDS.
5. The Minister of Health has issued a decision banning the performance of female genital mutilation operations in public health institutions.

As for efforts to measure changes in attitudes and perceptions of violence against women, the National Committee for Women, a governmental mechanism, takes the issue of violence against women very seriously. In this connection, it has entered into a partnership with the National Network for the Elimination of Violence against Women which, in addition to the

Committee, includes 14 civil society organizations working to highlight the gravity of the phenomenon of violence and its adverse impact on women as individuals and on social development and progress. Through this programme, support, welfare and legal protection are offered to female prisoners in Aden and Ta`izz (the areas covered by the project). The Committee has also managed to form a partnership with Islamic religious scholars (*ulama*) who have considerable influence over the public and are able to discuss this phenomenon in their sermons and teachings.

The Committee and its Network partners have carried out a series of studies on different forms and manifestations of violence in the home and the community. In addition, laws that include provisions which discriminate against women have been revised.

A women's development strategy has been designed on the basis of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to serve as a standard-setting tool for combating all forms of violence against women.

Obstacles faced in designing measures to prevent violence against women

Any attempt to change the status quo in a society inevitably runs into obstacles and difficulties. The following are the most significant difficulties in Yemeni society:

1. The fact that illiteracy is widespread, particularly among females;
2. The family structure and traditional attitudes in society;
3. The length of time it takes to change a society's attitudes and culture with respect to this subject.

With regard to the Government's role in caring for women who are subjected to violence in the family, we can affirm that the Government has run many awareness campaigns through the Ministry of Religious Endowments, mosque preachers, the Ministry's preaching and counselling section, and others from different spheres.

With regard to the requested information about police stations, women's shelters and medical and psychological treatment for women victims of violence, we can affirm that the Government recently set up a so-called "women's police service", consisting, to date, of more

than 800 policewomen. These officers have been trained and dispatched to places such as prisons, airports, ports of entry, and police stations, where women are found. As yet, there is no shelter for women who are subjected to violence.

As for access to medical and psychological care for women victims of violence, in some cases women are referred to hospitals and medical centres for treatment. However, this happens very rarely and it is difficult to put a precise figure on the number of such cases.

With regard to the degree to which violence against women by private actors is reported to the authorities, the number of reported cases is negligible. Very few cases are ever reported and many are covered up out of a sense of shame.

As for the measures taken to prosecute and punish violence against women occurring in the family or community, as already indicated, this kind of violence is not reported and only very few cases ever go to court. However, if a case does go to court, the perpetrators will be tried and sentenced.

With regard to the request for statistical information on the number of cases filed, the number of prosecutions initiated, etc., more precise data on this subject can be obtained from the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior.

As for alternative justice mechanisms established to handle violence against women perpetrated by private individuals, we can affirm that Yemen is an Islamic State which has a single court system, consisting of the court of first instance with competence for all cases that fall within its jurisdiction. Below the court come police stations and the Department of Public Prosecutions.
