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PRESSEMITTEILUNG

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Effective protection against violence during and after the pandemic: Implement the Istanbul Convention at last!

February 1, 2021: On the anniversary of its national entry into force, the German Women Lawyers Association e.V. (djbb) reiterates the importance of fully implementing the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). "The past pandemic year has shown in all clarity that physical and psychological violence continues to be part of the everyday life of many women," says Prof. Dr. Maria Wersig, President of the djbb. "Protecting against and dealing with this violence is more relevant than ever. It must be a priority for the federal and state governments to finally implement the measures stipulated by the Istanbul Convention!"

The Istanbul Convention has been in force in Germany since February 1, 2018. It obliges federal, state and local governments to take comprehensive measures to prevent violence against women and domestic violence of any kind, to support and protect those affected, and to punish the perpetrators. The implementation of the Istanbul Convention is monitored by GREVIO (Group of experts on action against violence against women and domestic violence). The states have to demonstrate in evaluation rounds the extent to which they have implemented the required measures. The djbb has taken advantage of the existing opportunity and highlighted the existing deficits in a comprehensive parallel report (<https://www.djbb.de/presse/stellungnahmen/detail/st20-31>). Despite the existing regulations and measures against gender-based violence, as well as various approaches to expand protection and implement the requirements of the Convention, there is still considerable need for action in Germany.

Last year was dominated by the response to the Corona pandemic, the social and economic consequences of which are not yet fully understood. But even in the first months of the pandemic, a significant increase in domestic and sexual violence was observed in many places. The situation of women in violent relationships has worsened considerably, especially because access to protection and counseling is more difficult when victims are permanently subject to surveillance by the perpetrator as a result of company shutdowns, home offices or curfew restrictions. At the same time, not all women can receive the support and protection to which they are entitled, since counseling centers and women's shelters are still not available in sufficient numbers and facilities. The djbb therefore emphatically reiterates its demand for secure, needs-based and adequate funding for women's shelters and specialized counseling centers.

As a "shadow pandemic," violence against women is a problem that affects everyone. Gender-based violence against women is independent of age or financial background. One in four women in Germany has experienced physical and/or sexual assault by a relationship partner at least once during her lifetime. On average, every day a woman in Germany is life-threateningly attacked by her (ex-)partner; every third day a woman dies. However, violence against women is not a women's problem. It is a problem that concerns everyone. Because only in a society that is free of gender-specific violence can all people live in a self-determined manner and with equal rights.