

## **TWO DEFINITIONS**

Patriarchy is commonly described as „a system of social structures and practices, in which men govern, oppress and exploit women”. Patriarchal violence is then any kind of violence that creates or maintains men’s power and dominance, or avenges the loss of their power. Male dominance seems to be upheld primarily through violent means. These means are on a wide scale from verbal, psychological, economic and physical violence to sexual violence or murder. Another possible definition is that patriarchal violence is: „... a collective term for the violence that is found throughout the world and that is rooted in the patriarchal power structures it defends.” In contrast with the first one this second definition goes beyond the old familiar approach that regards the phenomenon of male violence as a manifestation of the traditional opposition of men and women. Even though it names violence against women as a basic form of patriarchal oppression, it pays attention to assaults against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) persons and to what are called honour related crimes.

## **THE PATRIARCHAL ICEBERG**

Patriarchal violence can be illustrated as an iceberg with only its top visible: murder, rape and severe physical violence against women, children, LGBT persons and such crimes committed in the name of honour. At the same time, the less dramatic forms of violence suffered by these groups are invisible in many ways and for many reasons. On the one hand, these forms of violence usually take place in the home; on the other hand these assaults are not considered violent by most. Throughout their socialization, members of the society come to realize the requirements of traditional gender roles. By following these requirements, they necessarily accept or serve male dominance or they become its beneficiaries. Patriarchal ideology becomes attached to other social institutions based on inequality (education, wealth, health care etc.). It is in accordance with traditional social norms and moral values, thus its reason for existence is hardly ever questioned.

## **HONOUR CRIMES**

Honour related crimes are different from other forms of violence against children and women. They are distinguished not by their physical appearance but by

the fact that they are accepted and encouraged by the whole community, including its social institutions. In societies where honour is identified as surveillance of women’s sexuality, these criminal acts are a means of control over individuals (especially women and girls). This equally justifies the killing of women who lost their honour and of men who assisted them. Adolescents, usually the younger male members of the family, often become secondary victims of honour crimes, as they are ordered to execute the honour related crime because they are underage and not punishable. It is a widely held misconception that honour crimes occur only in Muslim countries or the so called „underdeveloped” countries. However, we have to note, that „softer” forms of the phenomenon are to be found all over the World, while globalization „imports” more severe honour-related crimes to the „developed” countries. Worthy of note is the fact that in Hungarian honour crimes are called „honour affairs”, which is one typical manifestation of how patriarchal violence is minimized.

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST LGBT PEOPLE**

Until recently, little has been said about the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. International documents have mentioned these rights only in relation to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, and sometimes as a labour issue. Violence against LGBT people has in fact remained an issue not regulated in international law. The real cause of atrocities affecting LGBT people is that they do not conform to the gender requirements of male dominated society.

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

As many surveys on violence carried out in different countries make it clear, the primary victims of patriarchal violence are women and children. The reason of the invisibility of this violence cannot simply be attributed to the fact that it usually takes place in the home. Rather it is related to its widespread social acceptance. The tacit acceptance of these social norms serves as the basis for the other forms of patriarchal violence, as well.

## **SELF-SUPPORTING PROCESS**

It is not only the private life of individuals where manifestations of patriarchal violence cause unequal relations. Because it is generally accepted, gender based discrimination appears in social institutions and legislation. Since these have an important role in shaping ethical norms, they indirectly affect the attitudes of individuals. Thus, inequality is reaffirmed and it becomes impossible to question its justification. One example to illustrate the overarching power of male violence is that international legal documents have until recently mentioned violence against women solely as a public health issue even though violence against women violates women’s human rights. Related reports only shed light on the visible results; injuries and psychological consequences. Nowadays international legal documents regard violence against women a human rights issue. However, the international protection of human rights of LGBT people will have to be established in the future.

## **PATRIARCHAL VIOLENCE IN SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

Even though patriarchal violence, as a form of structural violence, can be found in each and every social institution, it is worthy calling attention to some of them.

### ***EDUCATION***

Education hands down traditional gender roles and hierarchical relations based on inequality towards the youngest. Access to education is a fundamental human right. Violation of this primary right will inevitably establish unequal relations in other spheres of life. In many parts of the World, girls have less access to education than boys. Later on, this puts them to a disadvantage in the labour market and influences their access to ownership of property. Discrimination in education affects LGBT people, as well. One example is the widely publicised case of the student, who was dismissed from the Károlyi Gáspár Protestant University in Hungary in 2004 because of being gay.

### ***REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS***

The term reproductive rights is a collective term for the different rights of a person related to reproduction. Family planning, safe motherhood, right to a safe and legal abortion, forms of contraception all fall under the

category of reproduction. Patriarchal violence is present in the field of reproductive rights, too. State decision-making (in which women are significantly under-represented) does not allocate funds to improve the access to contraceptives. Cases of forced sterilization of Roma women have repeatedly surfaced in Hungary recently. The generally held view that contraception is a duty of women/girls is severely discriminative. Systematic attacks against home delivery, primarily on the part of the health care system, are also a form of violent societal control over human reproduction. The fact that artificial insemination is only available to heterosexual couples or infertile women in Hungary is another discriminative practice against lesbian women.

### EMPLOYMENT

According to both national and international surveys, women's chances of finding employment are much worse than those of men. Stereotypes about women (they are lazy, sentimental, tend to gossip instead of work) systematically violate their fundamental rights to find employment. Women are often forced to choose between work and having children, which violates their reproductive rights as well. Women receive less salary for the same work as men, and their number is in reverse proportion to the prestige of a given profession. According to a wide-spread misconception, women raising children and taking care of the household "do not work." Just by estimating how much it would cost to actually pay a cleaner, a baby sitter and a cook every day it is easy to realize that above statement is a denial of women's work.

### PROPERTY

Just as patriarchal violence, poverty has gender. It has become a generally accepted view that women are far more exposed to poverty than men are. Women own only a negligible proportion of property in the World. It is customary for men to have access to the family's money; women have to ask them for money when they need some. Similarly, women often have access to the family bank-account only through the husband, since typically he is the account-holder.

Social control over knowledge, women's reproduction, positions and financial goods as it manifests in all the forms of patriarchal violence intertwines all spheres of

life. It frightens those it is directed against (women, children and LGBT people) and impedes the development of solidarity amongst them.

### **MEN'S RESPONSIBILITY**

The Stop-Male Violence Project has been the first group in Hungary to operate a telephone line for men who want to change their patriarchal attitudes or want to play an active role in combating violence against women and children. The Stop-Férfierőszak Vonal (Stop Male Violence Hotline), operating in Hungarian, can be reached every Thursday at the following phone numbers: 061-344-3802 and 06-40-200-744 (local call is charged) between 18.00 and 22.00 p.m.

This publication is based in part on Gerd Johnsson-Latham's Patriarchal Violence – An Attack on Human Security.

You may read more on male violence against women at [www.stop-ferfioszak.hu](http://www.stop-ferfioszak.hu).

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1364 Budapest Pf.31.  
[info@stop-ferfioszak.hu](mailto:info@stop-ferfioszak.hu)  
<http://www.habeascorpus.hu>  
<http://www.stop-ferfioszak.hu>

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## Do you know

## What patriarchal violence is?

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