



# Violence protection for women in Germany

revised edition



A guide for women refugees, migrants and adolescents

With support from:



Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung  
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# Welcome message

Dear readers,

The Germany-wide 'MiMi Violence Prevention With Migrant Women for Migrant Women' project has been in existence since 2016. With this project, we aim to empower women and girls who are refugees, and to contribute to informing those affected by or at risk of sexualised violence about their rights and options for protection.



A look at the numbers highlights the need: there were 1.36 million first-time applications for asylum in the last three years, of which 463.000 or 34% were lodged by women. Not all of them need support with violence prevention, but many women have already witnessed or themselves experienced violence in their countries of origin or during their journey. For many, it is difficult to talk about sexual violence. Women also more often tend to remain within the immediate surroundings of reception centres and generally leave them less frequently than men. This is why this project makes use of the Ethno-Medical Centre's tried and true mediator approach: the mediators know from their own experience how challenging arriving in new surroundings – in a completely strange environment – can be. Especially when traumatic experiences are added into the mix.

Mediators go directly to the reception centres and shared accommodation facilities and enter the family environment. They then pass their knowledge on to women and young girls about human rights, children's rights to protection and women's rights, and show them how they can protect themselves from attacks. The mediators perform this task in a culturally, linguistically and gender-sensitive way.

I am pleased that, from 2018 onwards, the project now also places a stronger emphasis on prevention services for men, and is training them to be mediators. Only when women and men are equally involved, will we succeed at respectful coexistence without violence. I hope that we will be able to support you with this guide, dear readers, in your important work with refugees.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Annette Widmann-Mauz". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Annette Widmann-Mauz  
Minister of State in the Federal Chancellery and Federal Government Commissioner for Migration,  
Refugees and Integration



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# 1. Migrants, refugees and violence

## VIOLENCE AS THE REASON FOR SEEKING REFUGE

**One** of the reasons for women to flee their homeland is violence. This is to do with the fact that, across the globe, women still don't have the same rights as men: while 143 countries had included equal rights in their constitutions by 2014, on a global scale, traditional cultural and religious attitudes still value women less than men.

### **The legal situation:**

In 1949, the Commission for the Status of Women (CSW) was created. It was charged with improving the political, economic, social and *legal status* of women. In 1979, the Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was agreed. It had been ratified by 189 states by 2015. Germany also signed and ratified the convention.

**Gender-based violence is therefore a criminal offence and can be prosecuted in a court of law.**

This applies to e.g. sexual and domestic violence.

Sexual and domestic violence are also used to maintain male dominance over women. Examples are:

- Female genital mutilation, which is still being performed despite official bans;
- Unequal power relationships between women and men, e.g. *dependent relationships\**, where women are considered 'goods' and sexual acts 'currency'. This often results in forced marriages, but also in forced or poverty-driven prostitution and human trafficking.
- *Abuse* of women and children by members of government authorities (police, military and other officers of the state) in the country of origin, e.g. during arrests or interviews;
- Sexual violence perpetrated for political reasons, in order to dominate or uproot certain population groups through mass rape. This is called '*ethnic cleansing*'. Here, sexual violence is used as a weapon of war to humiliate or destroy communities. Women may be held prisoner in 'rape camps'.
- The neglect or, in extreme cases, the killing of children born as a result of rape during war. Surviving children have almost no protection in the communities of their mothers and no protection before the law. Like children who have lost their parents in war (war orphans), they are sometimes forced to work for the military or fight as child soldiers.

\* *Terms in italics are explained in the glossary*

Apart from violence against women and children, there are also other reasons for seeking refuge, e.g. war and *forced displacement*. The act of fleeing itself, however, can also be dangerous for women and children. They are often exposed to violence on the journey as well.

## **VIOLENCE DURING THE JOURNEY**

During the journey, women are at particular risk of becoming victims of violence. Pirates, robbers, security forces, people smugglers and even other *refugees* may harass them sexually or rape them. Border protection forces, for example, may detain and rape them over extended periods of time. Pirates may capture women and blackmail them into sexual acts – and only then allow them to continue on their journey. People smugglers help women and children to cross borders and may demand sex or money/valuables in return.



At increased *risk* of experiencing sexual and other forms of violence during the journey are:

- Women who travel alone – with or without children
- Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Young girls and unaccompanied children
- Children who married early – some with newborns
- Disabled and older people
- People who are unable to *communicate*.

On their journey, refugees often stay in camps for extended periods of time. These are often their only place of refuge while travelling. There, the risk of suffering violence is very high. In such camps, refugees depend on aid organisations, which are tasked with taking care of the residents and safeguarding their well-being. This can, e.g. for male refugees, lead to a personal crisis in which they see their sense of self and their position in society jeopardised. In some cases, they react with violence.

**There may be causes of and reasons for violent acts. However, these neither excuse nor justify violence by men towards women or children.**

## VIOLENCE IN REFUGEE ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES

An increasing number of violent acts against women are being reported in refugee accommodation facilities in Germany. More than two thirds of refugees are men, with the majority under 30 years old. There is a lack of *safe women's spaces* and *women-only facilities*.

Residency and asylum legislation makes dealing with violence against women refugees difficult. However, the immigration authorities are able to protect women. They can, for example, grant exceptions from the *residency rule* and offer accommodation in apartments or facilities in other towns or regions.

Legal protection in accommodation facilities can take the following forms:

- Police banning perpetrators of violence from the facility for the short term
- Longer term measures according to the *Violence Protection Act* (*Gewaltschutzgesetz, GSG*)
- Exclusion orders.

However, these measures only help in the short term. Violence against women and children in accommodation facilities is also perpetrated by fellow residents and accompanying partners. Close relationships of dependency often exist between partners. *Asylum seekers* and persons with *permission to remain until deported*, however, live relatively isolated lives in such facilities. They have difficulty accessing support or legal assistance near their

place of residence. Many do not dare to look for legal assistance. Some even fear they may lose their residency permit for Germany. When women apply for asylum, they must state their reasons for fleeing their homeland. Many are ashamed of mentioning sexual violence. This means their application ends up being based on their marriage continuing.

**Exercising legal rights does not influence applications for asylum.**

## **VIOLENCE AFTER THE JOURNEY**

Women and children refugees experience violence not only in accommodation facilities. It also occurs in the society of the *host country* generally.

Researcher Susanne Johanson found in her 2015 study that more than three quarters of women refugees in Germany report experiences of *emotional violence*, more than half have experienced physical and one quarter sexual violence. A survey of women refugees by Amnesty International also shows that in addition to experiences of violence during their journey, they report continuous fear of violence in Germany. The perpetrators were relationship partners, persons unknown to the victim, fellow residents and even staff in accommodation facilities. The different

forms of violence occurred in public spaces, at the accommodation facility or in the victim's own apartment.

Some people are fearful of leaving the refugee accommodation facility on their own. Reasons include fear of:

- Insults and verbal abuse from locals on the street
- Physical attacks and racist violence
- Discrimination or unequal treatment at school, during professional training or in the workplace.

In addition, there were more than 2200 attacks (e.g. arson attacks) on asylum seeker accommodation facilities in Germany between 2015 and 2017.

Apart from gender-specific violence, racist violence also has a strong presence in the lives of refugees. This is especially true for adolescents.

## 2. Types of violence

Violence occurs in a wide range of situations and in a variety of environments. In principle, violence is divided into three types.

- Direct violence
- Structural violence
- Institutionalised violence

**Every woman and every child has the same rights as men. There is also a right to assistance and protection from oppression.**

### DIRECT VIOLENCE

Direct violence is perpetrated by a person and directed towards people or objects.

#### **Example (Child):**

A father asserts that he loves his 12-year-old daughter more than anything. He explains to her that this is the reason why he likes cuddling with her. He wants to touch every part of her body and tells her: "This is what we do in our family – that's why you have to hold still and mustn't tell anyone." The father puts pressure on his daughter by explaining: "What we do is completely normal, everyone does it. Your Mum no longer wants to sleep with me, that's why you have to do it." He threatens that he will have to go to prison if she tells anyone. This is sexual abuse.

However, the child's boundaries may also have already been crossed much earlier, e.g. in situations of everyday life: Grandpa comes to visit every Sunday and demands a kiss hello from his granddaughter. However, the girl doesn't want to kiss him, but her needs are not respected.

The child can be better protected

- By learning to say "no" and
- If her relatives learn to respect her boundaries.

Sexual abuse in the family is a very complicated topic. If there are signs, it is best to get in touch with a *specialist counselling centre* without delay. The counsellors there are subject to *professional confidentiality*, meaning they are not allowed to tell others anything. They can also recommend what to do next and how you can protect yourself.

**Example (adult woman):**

For a period of years, a man has been talking his wife into having sex with him whenever he pleases. This means he also forces her to sleep with him against her will. She is obliged to satisfy him sexually. To get his way, he doesn't mind hurting her emotionally and also physically. Women often submit out of fear of being beaten, and because they think the man is acting within his rights. Many partners affirm this view by saying that it is her own fault if he becomes violent. "It would be better for you if you didn't resist and just played along.", he says. He believes he has the right to sleep with his wife even if she doesn't want to. But this is incorrect, and in Germany it is a criminal offence.

This type of direct violence seems obvious. However, women are frequently left alone because family and relatives

- Often don't believe that the husband of the victim of the violence could be acting like this;
- Are of the opinion that the man is within his rights and that the wife is naturally obliged to participate in sexual intercourse;
- Advise the woman not to think about it too much and to put up with it; that there wasn't any other option after all.

## STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

Structural violence is promoted by unequal power relationships. In the first instance, having power over others just means being able to influence their behaviour so that it coincides more or less with one's own wishes. This is not in itself a bad thing, and is part of any human relationship – especially between parents and their children, but also in every other type of relationship. The important thing is that others are not restricted in their right to self-determination.

**Example:**

When men are the ones earning the family income, they often have power over financial affairs.

Owning money is often crucially important. This is because it leads to dependency. Losing access to money and other goods leads to feeling insecure and threatened. It is for this reason that the person with the power can give others security, and also take it away again. They may in turn lose family members or friends. This is why power (structural violence) has a great influence on women and children in social structures dominated by violence.

Structural violence is also promoted by a lack of power balance in societies. The other members of the society often don't have any rights or are unable to defend themselves. They may not be entitled to decide what is good and important for them (e.g. where they would like to live).

Power is not always a negative. The person with power over another person should be aware of its significance and deal with it responsibly. Parents, for example, have power over children. The children depend on them. Parents should use this power to help and support their children. The same applies to using money to support the family, which should be done without abusing power.

## **INSTITUTIONALISED VIOLENCE**

Institutionalised violence is the type of violence that supports current power relationships through specially established or existing structures. This, among other things, prevents people from doing what is important to them (e.g. at work, at school, or in accommodation facilities where mealtimes are prescribed or where people depend on the care personnel).

In general, institutionalised violence is intended to promote order. Through rules, for example, a state ensures equal treatment for the whole population. The goal is living together peacefully and with mutual understanding. However, it is crucial that the situation is not abused by anyone, e.g. the police, the helping professions or even one's own family.

The different types of violence often interact with each other and can exist side by side. Several types of violence often occur simultaneously.

Violence exists in a range of cultures. There is also violence between different cultures. It is often promoted by so-called patriarchal societal structures. Here, men often have more, while women have fewer rights. They are less able to participate in public life (e.g. receive an education or participate in employment).

Common reasons are the inequitable distribution of wealth, poverty, or unjust relationships between rich and poor countries.



# 3. Violence against women and children

The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies violence against women as one of the greatest risks to the health of women globally. The United Nations says that violence against women includes any act that threatens or harms a woman physically, sexually or emotionally. It also includes *coercion* and *unlawful confinement*, both in public and in private. Accordingly, violence against women takes, among others, the following forms:

## Physical, sexual and emotional violence in the family:

- Violence inside and outside of marriage (e.g. beatings, sexual abuse, rape, *humiliation*, threats)
- Sexual abuse of children living in the household
- Violence in connection with a dowry
- Any traditional practice that is harmful to the woman (e.g. genital mutilation)
- Violence serving *exploitation*

## Physical, sexual and emotional violence in the community:

- Intimidation, sexual harassment, sexual abuse and rape in the workplace, in *educational institutions* and elsewhere
- *Human trafficking* of women and *forced prostitution*

## Physical, sexual and emotional violence perpetrated, or even merely tolerated, by the state

### The legal situation:

Using violence – physical or emotional ('Körperverletzung' – **bodily harm**) – is a criminal offence in Germany!

## WHO ARE THE PERPETRATORS?

In 90 percent of cases, the perpetrators are men – mostly from the immediate social circle of those affected. They come from all classes of society. They may be husbands, fathers, grandfathers, teachers, family friends, coaches, uncles, brothers, priests, therapists and many others. In cases of abuse of power or sexual abuse, the situation of the affected person, in most cases a woman or child, is abused in a particular way.

According to the WHO (World Health Organization), in certain societies women are particularly frequently subject to abuse by their *sexual partners*. In some such societies, equality between men and women does not exist. Gender roles for men and women are sometimes strictly

fixed and cultural norms determine a man's right to sexual intercourse. The feelings of the woman remain ignored. Such offences are often only punished leniently or even seen in a positive light.

Those affected often look for any explanations that may exonerate the perpetrator. This may lead to the violent offence being excused, and therefore motivate the perpetrator to repeat the offence. He may feel confirmed in his point of view, as in: "My action has no negative consequences." – "Nothing will happen to me!" – "Everyone fears and respects me!"

## THE CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Structural inequalities between men and women promote violence against women. It is reinforced by

### – **Patriarchal structures**

Such structures are built on a particular image of men and women. Masculinity often means power, strength and *dominance*, femininity means *forbearance*, *passivity* and submission;

### – **A strong sense of male entitlement and a concurrent idea of superiority**

Abuse often occurs in this context because the man believes he is within his rights – that his wife is at his mercy, including her body and everything that she does, to whom she speaks, how she dresses, where she goes.

– **The increasing independence of women (in everyday life and at work):** some men see it as a threat if their wives are becoming more independent from them financially as well as socially.

– **Men's helplessness (e.g. in the application process for asylum, lack of language skills, unemployment):** this can lead to frustration, which can turn into aggression towards the family. For the man, this may represent temporary emotional relief, followed by remorse – until the circle repeats itself.

– **Impending separation:** women who want to separate from their husband/partner are often at a much higher risk of violence. The man can't stand the thought of separation because he believes the woman to be his property.

Some men believe that exercising power and control, dominance, competition as well as physical violence are what make them a 'man' in the first place. This often conflicts with women's claims to equal rights and opportunities in society.

**In Germany, gender equality is the law.**

Women and men have often become used to their roles over a long period of time. Some might even think of violence as almost normal. These engrained gender roles must be changed in the long term. This may take a very long time, but is very important in order to end violence once and for all.

## EXAMPLES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Gender-based violence occurs mostly in a private setting, between sexual partners (domestic violence) and as sexual violence.

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

There is no exact definition of domestic violence. Mostly the term is used to denote the type of violence that a current or former relationship partner perpetrates on his current or former female partner. It is violence that occurs between adults in a family or in a couple. 90 percent of perpetrators are men, and women are the ones who are affected. Children are often affected at the same time.

Domestic violence is about control and *exercising power*. Characteristically, it mostly takes place in private. Here, the private environment or private sphere often also protects the perpetrator. Women and children don't want to and often can't talk about the offences. They are afraid of their husband's/father's violence. Many are also afraid that the police will break up the family if they talk about the violence taking place in the home, and therefore remain silent. They are trapped in a very stressful situation.

Domestic violence manifests as

#### – **Physical violence**

E.g. pulling hair, slapping, hitting, pinching, pushing, throttling, tying up and attacks with a range of objects (including weapons).

#### – **Emotional violence**

This includes condescension and ridicule of a female partner in front of others, constant criticism over small things, humiliations, false accusations, intimidation, threatening children or threatening to take children away, even death threats;

#### – **Sexual violence**

This includes forcing or coercing a person to perform sexual acts, rape and forced prostitution.

#### – **Social violence**

This manifests as controlling contact with other people or prohibiting contact, but also includes locking the person up. Sometimes the perpetrator completely isolates those affected from their family and social circle.

#### – **Financial violence**

The aim of this type of violence is to create financial dependency. The perpetrator prohibits those affected from working or forces them to work for him. This way he has sole control of the financial means.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence can be part of domestic violence, but in the end it goes much further.

It begins with the use of language that denigrates women. Often, there are lewd glances or verbal harassment. The forms it takes range from *sexual innuendo* and sexual harassment to rape and sexual abuse. These are not always clearly distinguishable and the lines are blurred.

This type of violence uses sexuality as a weapon. Sexual violence demonstrates the perpetrator's power and subjugates the victim at the same time. Sexual violence can appear in a range of forms. Sometimes, adults and adolescents perpetrate sexual violence against children, or children themselves act violently against other children. Victims may be

### – **Raped:**

the perpetrator penetrates the victim in different ways with his penis or objects  
– sometimes this is done by other persons or animals;

### – **Forced to perform sexual acts:**

the perpetrator forces the victim to perform sexual acts on herself, on him or on others in different ways;

### – **Sexually harassed:**

the perpetrator touches breasts or bottom against the affected person's will.

These offences are gross abuses of power; the perpetrator commits them knowingly and not by accident. He wants to satisfy his sexual urges or humiliate his victim. Such actions are punishable by law (criminal offences).

Sexual innuendo, however, is not punishable at law (it is not a *criminal offence*), but it can still be reported to the police.

**If you are a victim of one of the above-mentioned types of violence, there is no reason to have a bad conscience or even to blame yourself! You are not to blame, not even in part. You are also not responsible for acts of violence perpetrated on you. You do not have to understand, let alone excuse the perpetrator's behaviour. (Examples: "It was a mistake to go there." "I said something wrong." "Maybe the skirt really was too short").**

## SEXUAL INNUENDO

Sexual innuendo is sometimes unintentional; it often arises from ignorance and lack of sensitivity.

Often, sexual innuendo is a precursor to criminal sexual offences. **Experience shows that victims are often unable to defend themselves. The experience often comes as a shock to them and they are scared. This is why many of those affected can't stand up for themselves in the situation. However, they are in no way responsible for what is happening to them.**

**Clearly say or otherwise communicate:  
"Stop. This is the limit."**

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment intends to insult and denigrate another person. Touching someone on the buttocks or breasts can, for example, be sexual harassment.

Again important here: show your counterpart clearly, with words or actions, that you want him to stop the harassing behaviour. This can prevent violence. However, it is not always successful. If not,



it is possible to get help – some perpetrators cross limits on purpose!

## SEXUAL ABUSE

This particular form of sexual violence is called sexual abuse. It includes any sexual act by adults on girls or boys less than 14 years of age. It does not matter whether the girls or boys seem to participate of their own free will (agree) or whether they don't want to.

There is also another form of sexual violence. Some children (and some adults as well) are physically, emotionally, mentally – or because of weaker language skills – less powerful than the perpetrator. They are unable to give their free consent. This means that perpetrators abuse their position of power.

There are perpetrators who make contact with children and adolescents using a range of strategies (often via internet chat rooms) as precursors to acts of sexual violence. They indicate their interest in the person first and then form a relationship. The perpetrator finds out a range of personal details about his victim, which he can then use as threats ("I will tell your parents if you don't send me nude photos of yourself."). This type of precursor to an act of sexual violence is called 'grooming'.

### Example:

Girl, four years of age. All perpetrators in this case were partners or friends of the mother. One had purposely chosen the mother. He had looked for her using a personal advertisement and then noticed that she had a young daughter. This partner was looking for sex with children and quickly gained 'access' to the little girl as they were all living in the same household. The mother did nothing to stop the violence. She was afraid of being abandoned.

The perpetrator proceeds strategically and uses social structures as well as specific values and norms. This includes the taboo around sexuality, which often silences children and adolescents. An authoritarian parenting style can be another factor: if children are used to not contradicting adults and doing as they're told, it is harder for them to set limits and defend themselves.

Sexual abuse of children can cause the following types of emotional stress:

#### – Shame:

Children often believe that they, as victims, are to blame for the violence. They feel ashamed about what has happened to them. This feeling is often stronger than their anger towards the perpetrator.

#### – Misguided sense of responsibility:

Children feel like they have done something wrong or that they are to blame for the family breakup. For most children that are affected, this is a real dilemma.

– **Fear of getting into trouble:**

Children can also become victims of sexual violence at school or in other institutions. However, they don't want any trouble in the family, with teachers or friends.

– **Judgement:**

Children are afraid that other people might judge their experiences differently and that their own feelings might be wrong. They often aren't aware of their rights and don't know that the adult is doing the wrong thing and committing a criminal offence.

– **Secrecy enforced by the perpetrator:**

Children have great difficulty distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' secrets. Sometimes they would like to share a secret, even if the perpetrator pressures them not to.

**Example:**

A father has been sexually abusing his daughter over an extended period of time. The girl is in pain and intuitively knows that he is doing something wrong. The father explains to her that she is just prettier than her mother and that it is his duty as a father to show her what sex is all about. She feels guilty towards her mother and notices that the mother is pulling away from her. She also believes that she is responsible for the fact that her father is attracted to her because of her looks.

The girl was unable to get any support from her family. However, she trusted the mother of a girlfriend from school. She was able to tell this person what was happening to her at home. This way she was able to receive the support she needed to escape the abuse.

When children are being taken seriously by others around them, they learn that they can trust their own feelings. This makes it more likely that they will have the courage to speak to someone they trust about the abuse they are experiencing.

**DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION AS SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

Sexual violence is not always 'violent' in the sense of inflicting physical pain (e.g. by hitting). In many cases, sexual violence is disguised as affection, e.g. as loving caresses. However, they take place under dominance and coercion. This form of violence means that those affected find themselves in a difficult, ambivalent situation: the husband or father, grandfather or family friend implies that he wants to express love, but in the process transgresses physical as well as emotional boundaries and demonstrates his power. Those affected experience this as painful and disgusting. Using statements such as "you're so sexy" or "if only you didn't dress in such an alluring way ...", "your mother is just not as wonderful as you are ..." or "I can tell that your body responds, come on, you want it too, don't you ...", the perpetrator wants to make those affected feel like they are complicit. He talks the child into taking the blame for causing the sexual violence to occur. Some women also experience this shifting of responsibility for the actions.

Those affected sometimes also experience physical arousal, including orgasm, during acts of sexual violence. This is particularly awful for them. However, the body is only responding to sexual stimulation. There is no need to feel ashamed about it afterwards!

## THE EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

### EFFECTS ON INDIVIDUALS

Each person reacts to violence differently. However, experiencing gender-based violence is always a massive violation of the *personal integrity* of those affected. It can lead to long-lasting psychological *trauma*.

Many affected women and children carry life-long feelings of guilt and suffer tremendously. They would like to make sense of and understand what happened, as well as regain control of themselves and their lives. The attempt to understand the incident generally creates feelings of guilt. Women associate their own behaviour with the acts of violence.

#### The legal situation:

Sexual acts on or with children less than 14 years old are always a criminal offence.

§ 176 of the German Criminal Code (StGB) clearly states: it is also sexual abuse if children are forced to perform sexual acts on the perpetrator or other persons. A further important variant of the offence is to show children pornography to influence them that way.

Criminal law protects adolescents aged up to 18 years from sexual assaults by people with whom they are in what is called a *duty of care relationship*. This includes, for example, parents (also stepparents), teachers, educators, social workers and other personnel in educational institutions. For this age group, however, an assessment is made of the level of pressure or force applied to adolescents in order to abuse their dependency.

There are also penalties for adolescents (14 – 18 years) and young adults (18 – 21 years) if they abuse the predicament a girl/boy is in or pay money for sexual acts.

#### Example:

“If only I hadn’t come to this place...”  
or “If only I had agreed to sleep with him. I should just accept that he is my husband and has the right to sleep with me.”

The affected women are in a kind of shock after the offence, they sometimes don't feel in touch with themselves or their surroundings for days afterwards. They feel like strangers in their usual environment and have a feeling that everything they used to believe in doesn't exist any more. This state of mind is experienced as disorientation.

The behaviour of those affected, after the offence, is highly individual, there isn't a 'typical' pattern. Possible *responses* and *consequences* include:

– **Reporting a crime:**

After the offence has occurred, some women consider going to the police.

– **Seeking contact:**

Other women want to speak to those they are close to, access support services or talk with people they trust.

– **Breakdown:**

Many of those affected cry for hours, but can't talk, and clearly show their desperation.

– **Control:**

Others seem in control, calm and collected, thoughtful and serene. To them it is very clear that they have experienced violence and that the perpetrator is in the wrong, yet still they ask themselves what they did wrong.

– **Making excuses:**

For some, on the other hand, what happened doesn't necessarily seem like violence. They try to make sense of the violent behaviour, to excuse it and to see it as 'normal'. These women are often unable to trust their own feelings;

they have not learnt to let themselves feel disgust, fear, desperation, hate, grief or *powerlessness*.

– **Loss of self-esteem:**

One's sense of dignity, attitude toward sexuality and the connection with one's body can be affected for a long period of time.

– **Self-blame:**

Many react with shame and disgust toward themselves, or develop tortuous self-blame and feelings of guilt.

– **Emotional confusion:**

Many victims of violence are deeply confused about their own reactions during the incident.

**Example:**

A four-year-old girl grew up in an unusual environment where sexual violence was 'normal'. The mother didn't want to and couldn't protect the child; she was unable to ask for assistance because she didn't know that her daughter needed help. The daughter lost the sense of her physical self, her self-confidence and was disgusted with her own body.

In the end she no longer washed herself. At the same time, she desired attention: she had learned to get it through sex and convinced her school friends to perform sexual acts. This behaviour was observed and categorised as sexualised behaviour. This was the trigger for involving a professional.

Loved ones often reinforce all these sensations. Relatives, friends and acquaintances may react with rejection; often they don't believe or understand what has happened and blame the victim.

## **HEALTH EFFECTS**

It is not always possible to link the health effects of violent experiences clearly to the violence. Some *psychological* or *psychosomatic* complaints appear only later and then persist for a longer time.

Women who experienced violence even when they were children, and are now suffering from the long-term effects, often can't make the connection between their health complaints and what might have been an experience of violence.

It also often happens that the victims describe injuries sustained during a violent attack as resulting from 'an accident'.

The following symptoms can be the result of violence:

### **– Physical injuries:**

Bone fractures, damage to internal organs, brain damage as a result of blows to the head, badly healed scars all over the body, burns, acid burns, facial disfigurement, reduced vision or hearing, abdominal injuries from kicks or blows, and forced abortions.

### **– Injuries to the genital area:**

Rape can lead to anal and vaginal injuries and bleeding, urinary tract infections, sexually transmitted infections, infertility and miscarriage.

### **– Psychosomatic illness:**

Stomach ulcers, thromboses, chest pain, constant headaches, dizziness and many others.

### **– Emotional or psychological effects:**

Anxiety, disturbed sleep, distrust, *depression*, feelings of shame and guilt, *posttraumatic stress disorder*, flashbacks, feeling dirty and *stigmatisation*, difficulties with identity and personal boundaries, low self-esteem, despair, self-harming behaviour, persistent pain during sexual intercourse, strongly sexualised behaviour, eating disorders, compulsions, illegal and prescription drug dependency, suicide or attempted suicide.

Sometimes, those affected don't make a connection between emotional effects and experiences of violence. They don't see their health complaints as results of abuse, but as signs of their own 'inadequacy'. This often leads to a further loss of self-esteem.

## **FAMILY AND SOCIAL EFFECTS**

As social beings, humans depend on their networks, e.g. their family, circle of friends or workmates. However, experiences of direct violence often take place in a familiar environment – the perpetrators are rarely strangers – and one’s own social environment is therefore directly affected. Many women find it difficult to talk about the act of violence they experienced. They are afraid of being blamed (“What did you go there for?” or “You must have given him the eye!”). Many relatives and friends of victims of violence find it difficult to accept that violence is occurring around them.

Risks faced by those affected by domestic or sexual violence:

– **Fear of exclusion within the social environment:**

Being open about their experience of violence can lead to separation from a partner, loneliness, family breakdown or fear of (new) sexual relationships and violent attacks.

– **Strong feelings of isolation:**

After longer lasting experiences of abuse, progressive retreat from the environment may occur. The belief in one’s own safety may be lost. Consequences include increased isolation and, in particular, a change to one’s personal value system.



– **Financial dependency may at first make it seem like there is no way out:**

This leads to a strong sense of isolation. Despite fear of the perpetrator's violent behaviour, the feeling of not being able to live without him may be strong.

– **Passivity:**

Loss of self-confidence and self-esteem may lead to total subordination to the perpetrator, which is all about survival. The bond between perpetrator and victim may become so strong that the affected woman sees herself more and more through the eyes of the perpetrator.

– **Absence of a sense of responsibility for children:**

Frequently, those affected become ill with severe mental disorders (post-traumatic stress disorder, *borderline personality disorder*, *dissociative identity disorder*), and as a consequence may neglect their children.

– **Fear of change:**

Lifestyle and employment can change after separating from a partner: e.g. through termination or change of employment, problems at the workplace and unemployment.

– **Poverty:**

Separating from a partner makes many women poor or puts them at increased risk of poverty. This may include loss of accommodation, and homelessness. Women and children who lose their social networks through experiences of violence are at extreme risk of poverty.

Those affected suffer not only on account of their social *isolation*. Many women escape to a women's refuge and leave behind not only their familiar surround-

ings, but also their possessions. They often refrain from *reporting a crime* and forego maintenance payments or compensation.

Reasons include:

- Fear of renewed violent attacks
- Shame, because in most cases they think they are (in part) to blame and don't want to disgrace their family
- The knowledge that going through the *justice system* is difficult and not always successful
- Their experience of the patriarchal system: that men have a right to physically punish their wives and children, and can demand sexual acts from their wives.

## CROSS-GENERATIONAL EFFECTS

People who have experienced violence as children later often become perpetrators themselves or remain in the 'victim role'.

**Example:**

The mother of a four-year-old girl has herself experienced sexual violence from her father when she was a child. As a mother she was unable to protect herself and her daughter. Moreover, she had learned to get into relationships with men through sex. Her daughter has already taken this on at the age of twelve. The family worker asked why the mother hadn't protected her daughter from the assaults of her partners. The mother answered: "It seemed normal to me – I had experienced it the same way, after all."

## EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

Children who experience direct or indirect domestic violence later show similar secondary psychological effects to those affected themselves, and are also often severely traumatised.

*Secondary effects* include:

- **Reduced self-esteem:**  
Self-actualisation is severely limited.
- **Disappointment:**  
Experiencing weakness and powerlessness in a parent can reinforce a child's own sense of powerlessness.
- **Misjudgement:**  
Experiencing weakness and powerlessness in a parent can also lead to children taking the side of the perpetrator because they feel safer with him.
- **Following unsound role models:**  
Children who have experienced domestic violence often become perpetrators or victims themselves.
- **Physical injuries:**  
In most cases, children suffer – similar to their mothers – physical injuries as well as severe secondary psychological effects. Sometimes they want to help their mothers. If they have not already, it is then that they may finally become victims of direct violence themselves.

### – **The burden of the secret-keeper:**

Often, children still have to remain in contact with the outside world because of compulsory schooling. They are often put under pressure in situations of domestic violence. They may be afraid that their own father could go to jail because they were unable to keep silent. They may be talked into feeling guilty if the family is broken up by police intervention. They may be threatened with being institutionalised. In many cases, this is one of the reasons why children don't talk about what is happening at home. In addition, teachers in many schools are unable to deal adequately with suspected violence.

### – **Severe trauma:**

Complete denial and suppression of the experience can lead to social isolation, and even to suicide.

### – **Trigger for change:**

Many children leave their families and take their chances making a fresh start.

**Approach people you trust. Talk to them and to specialist counselling centres about assistance and protection for children who are experiencing domestic violence.**



## 4. Pathways away from violence

### LEGAL PROTECTION FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE IN GERMANY

**Children, women and men have equal rights and opportunities in Germany. This means that protection is equally available to all.** In Germany, victims of violence have the right to a range of protective measures. Every person has the right to live a life free of violence.

Partner violence can have many faces: insults, restricting personal freedom, control, aggression, threats, beatings, forced sex, stalking and harassment.

### EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

When a partner is becoming acutely violent, call the **police** by dialling **110** or go to a police station. The police are obliged to attend immediately in order to protect the person. The police can order the perpetrator to leave the shared home for up to 14 days. The police can also remand the perpetrator in temporary custody in order to enforce the ban on entering the home. If an offence has been committed, the police must take a report.

Women affected by violence can also turn to a women's refuge and take temporary shelter there with their children. It is very important to have a (female) doctor examine and document any injuries.

**All human beings are equal before the law. Women and children have the same rights as men and can make their own decisions. Religion and the law are separated.**

### COUNSELLING OPTIONS

Women affected by violence can get assistance, support and advice regarding further protection options from counselling centres, women's refuges, victim support services and violence prevention hotlines (see also the section on referrals). Specialist counselling centres provide information about next steps – independent of a crime being reported. Such a report can still be made later. Anonymous counselling is available on request.

Those affected by violence can also ask friends, relatives or neighbours for support.

If you plan to report a crime, always get legal advice.

**In principle, staff at specialist counselling centres, (female) doctors and lawyers are subject to professional confidentiality. However, in cases of possible endangerment of the welfare of a child they may be obliged to contact the Office for Youth.**

## **PROTECTION ORDERS UNDER THE VIOLENCE PROTECTION ACT**

“Who hits out, gets out” – the law protects every affected person from violence, harassment and stalking.

A person who has become a victim of violence, threats or stalking can apply for a **civil court protection order**, independently of *criminal prosecution*. Affected persons can receive support free of charge from violence counselling services to do this. Court interventions according to the Violence Protection Act (Gewaltschutzgesetz, GSG) cost money. People in need, i.e. people with no income or assets, can access *procedural cost assistance* (Verfahrenskostenhilfe).

Any person may lodge an application for a protection order at a family court (magistrates’ court) at their place of residence, at the place where the offence took place or where the person is currently staying.

With a protection order, the court can, for example, prohibit the perpetrator

- From approaching a place of residence
- From being in locations that women affected by violence (must) attend regularly
- From making contact
- From meeting the affected person.

Those sharing a home with a perpetrator can also apply for sole use of the accommodation.

Protective measures are ordered by the court for a certain period and communicated to the police. If the perpetrator breaches the protection order of the court, he commits an offence and the police can be called.

## **SEEKING LEGAL ADVICE**

While being represented by a (female) *lawyer* is not mandatory, seeking legal advice before reporting a crime is strongly recommended. Only then do you have the option of influencing the proceedings. Those affected may appear as joint plaintiffs. Violence counselling centres and support services can recommend experienced (female) lawyers.

Those who cannot afford legal advice have the option of applying for *legal aid* for an initial legal consultation. Legal aid vouchers are available at the magistrates’ court (Amtsgericht) of your place of residence.

Victims of crime who must appear as witnesses in a criminal case can also apply for a voucher for an initial legal consultation.

In addition, women affected by violence can appear as joint plaintiffs and arrange support from a (female) lawyer as joint plaintiff's representative. Under certain circumstances, the costs may be covered. You can enquire about the costs for joint plaintiff representation at the initial legal consultation or a violence counselling centre.

It is also advisable to arrange for *witness support* through a (female) lawyer when being questioned as a witness. Under certain circumstances, the costs can also be covered.

## FURTHER SUPPORT OPTIONS

Support is available not only from counselling services, (female) lawyers and women's refuges. A *person of trust* may also accompany a witness to questioning, however, this must be applied for ahead of time.

Women affected by violence can also make use of psychosocial court assistance. Psychosocial court assistants are specially trained and provide comprehensive support to victims who appear as witnesses and their loved ones before, during and after criminal cases. Professionals from other specialist counselling centres take on psychosocial support for day-to-day living to ensure that legal proceedings and support in daily life are kept separate, and that psychosocial court assistants cannot be accused of being unduly influenced.

**From January 2017, psychosocial court assistance is a legal entitlement.**

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER REPORTING A CRIME?

The statement of the affected person is of the utmost importance in the criminal prosecution of domestic or sexual violence, as other types of evidence are in most cases not available or only play a supplementary role. Only in extremely rare cases are there direct witnesses to the offence.

Those deciding to report a crime should expect to have to make several detailed statements (e.g. to the police **and** in court) regarding the offence, which can be very stressful. To be prepared, attending a specialist counselling centre is

important. Women affected by violence can access a (female) psychosocial court assistant for support throughout the proceedings.

Some among those affected are not prepared to make any statement at all, purposely deny the reported crime occurred or try to downplay it. They possibly do this out of fear of further violence or because they don't see any possibility of leaving their relationship with the perpetrator. If someone does not want to report a crime, there are usually reasons for it. Assistance and counselling on this and other issues are available from specialist counselling centres, independent of reporting a crime.



## **PROTECTING THOSE AFFECTED**

When a crime is reported, police often perform what is called a protective address: the police strongly impress upon the alleged perpetrator to refrain from contact with, or further violence towards the victim. This makes an impact on many perpetrators, and they comply. It is important that the affected person tells the police if contact or attempts to influence them have been made (including by third parties, e.g. relatives or friends of the perpetrator). Only then can the police take action!

## **CONTACTING THE POLICE**

In many police stations, there are specially trained female officers to work with victims of violence. The victim's (female) lawyer or another person of trust may also attend the interview. If there are language difficulties, it is advisable to ask the police to invite a professional interpreter to attend.

Making contact with investigating authorities such as the police compels them to take action.

If the affected woman decides at some point during the proceedings not to make a statement, this is only permitted if a right to remain silent exists on the basis of the fact that the woman would incriminate herself or a relative by stating the truth.

## **LEGAL PROCEEDINGS**

If it comes to a person being charged and a court case, this can be another source of significant stress for those affected. Being well prepared with the assistance of a specialist counselling centre, psychosocial court assistance or a (female) lawyer can allay many fears.

Reporting a crime is not an easy path to take. It is therefore very helpful to become well informed about the legal process and your own rights, as well as about possible victim protection measures and court assistance ahead of time.

 **It is not possible to retract a report of a crime.**

## TREATMENT, PENSION AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

If a person can make a believable argument that she has suffered damage to her health through an intentional illegal attack, she is entitled to government benefits on the basis of its health and economic effects. People who have been legally residing in Germany for less than three years are only entitled to safety net benefits.

The following benefits may be provided under the *Victims of Crime Compensation Act* (Opferentschädigungsgesetz, OEG):

- Curative and other treatment (incl. *psychotherapy*)
- *Pension benefits* (depending on the severity of health effects and, if applicable, calculated on the basis of previous income)
- *Social benefits* based on individual need (e.g. for workforce participation, care needs, household support and income supplementation)
- *Rehabilitation interventions* (e.g. a stay at a health resort)

## ENDING VIOLENCE TOGETHER

Beginning with specialist counselling centres, promoting *self-protection* for a violence-free life for women is actively pursued as a goal. Conversations to this end are conducted on a peer-to-peer basis. These aim to strengthen self-determination and increase self-esteem in those affected. Women also explore where opportunities and barriers may be encountered along the way.

They also find out that – and how – they can take charge and defend themselves, and that every woman affected by violence has the potential to liberate herself from its grip. In turn this requires, in addition to empowering the women (especially regarding their rights and their opportunities for self-actualisation), empowering men to become aware of how they can deal even with difficult situations without using violence.

**Having experienced violence does not mean remaining a victim for life – there are ways to leave violence behind.**

# Glossary

<b>Abuse</b>	The extreme exploitation of a person. Sexual acts on and with children/adolescents or persons who are unable to defend themselves (people in need, prisoners etc.)
<b>Borderline personality disorder</b>	A type of personality disorder characterised by unstable personal relationships, moods and self-image
<b>Child welfare</b>	The state of wellbeing of a child
<b>Coercion</b>	To force a person to do something
<b>Communicate</b>	To exchange/transfer information
<b>Consequences/ secondary effects</b>	Health damage or effects resulting from certain circumstances, e.g. psychological complaints developing because of experiences of violence
<b>Criminal offences</b>	Acts in breach of current criminal laws
<b>Criminal prosecution</b>	Legal prosecution of criminal offences
<b>Dependent relationship</b>	A relationship where one person is dependent (e.g. financially or emotionally) on another
<b>Depression</b>	A mental illness characterised by diverse presentations of reduced performance, depressed mood, loss of interest and motivation
<b>Dissociative identity disorder</b>	Profound disturbances of the personality through traumatic experiences. Two or more different personalities exist within one person
<b>Dominance</b>	Relationship between two people where one person has a leading role and therefore dominates
<b>Duty of care relationship</b>	A relationship where one person is entrusted with the care of another who is dependent on them in some way (e.g. teachers have a duty of care towards their students)
<b>Educational institutions</b>	Institutions with an educational mandate based on government or municipal regulations. They include schools and kindergartens, as well as institutions such as libraries, museums and interest groups
<b>Emotional violence</b>	A type of violence where those affected are emotionally harmed through direct threats, insults or intimidating/controlling behaviour
<b>Endangerment of the welfare of a child</b>	A situation where a child is not doing well, and his or her welfare is at risk, e.g. when a child is exposed to domestic violence

<b>Ethnic cleansing</b>	The often violent removal of certain (religious) population groups from a region/country
<b>Exercising power</b>	To dominate/control/exploit a person
<b>Exploitation</b>	Unjust or unfair relationships between people or groups. It refers to abusive gains made on the basis of the victim's situation of need or weakness
<b>Forbearance</b>	A person's tendency to give in
<b>Forced displacement</b>	Forced emigration of the local population or parts thereof to another state
<b>Forced prostitution</b>	Human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation
<b>Gender-based violence</b>	Violence against people based on their gender
<b>Gender equality/equal rights and opportunities</b>	Guarantee of equal rights and opportunities. The equal status and treatment before the law regardless of gender, age, background, religion etc.
<b>Host country</b>	A country that takes in refugees and migrants, or where people settle
<b>Human trafficking (of women)</b>	The immigration of a woman based on false promises, deception or fraud, i.e. if she is made to pay off debts or excessive fees to agents or for services rendered, if she is subject to violence, coercion or threats, or if she is forced to work under conditions of exploitation
<b>Humiliation</b>	Deliberately insulting or demeaning acts by another person
<b>Isolation</b>	Loneliness/social exclusion of a person
<b>Justice system</b>	The collective authorities responsible for enforcing rights
<b>Lawyer</b>	Independent representative and advisor in all legal matters. Lawyers work under so-called legal professional privilege (protecting the privacy of communications between the lawyer and the client) and are also bound by professional confidentiality. These rules protect the relationship between lawyer and client
<b>Legal aid</b>	A government social benefit intended to enable people on a low or no income to access legal advice and representation. Legal aid is a form of assistance for exercising rights outside of court proceedings
<b>Legal situation</b>	The laws applying to a particular question
<b>Legal status</b>	The laws that exist in relation to a particular topic
<b>Passivity</b>	Apathy, inaction, indifference

<b>Patriarchal structures</b>	A type of society where men principally have more power and rights than women
<b>Pension benefits</b>	Entitlement to payments on the basis of social status/age
<b>Permission to remain (until deported)</b>	The permission to remain documents the suspension of deportation (no legal residency)
<b>Personal integrity</b>	The consistency of a person's actions with their values and moral beliefs. Here: the intactness of a person's personal and moral boundaries
<b>Person of trust</b>	A person who is deeply trusted
<b>Posttraumatic stress disorder</b>	Type of mental illness that occurs after shocking or life-threatening experiences (trauma)
<b>Powerlessness</b>	A sense of powerlessness is the feeling of helplessness and inability to do anything in a situation
<b>Procedural cost assistance</b>	Financial support in cases of insufficient income/assets to conduct a court case
<b>Professional confidentiality</b>	The legal obligation on a range of professional groups not to pass on private information to third parties
<b>Psychological</b>	Relating to the mental/emotional state of a person
<b>Psychosomatic</b>	Physical illness that can be partly or entirely traced back to emotional causes
<b>Psychotherapy</b>	Therapy for the treatment of mental disorders or emotional effects
<b>Refugees and asylum seekers</b>	Asylum seekers are persons seeking protection on the sovereign territory of the Federal Republic of Germany from political persecution, or deportation or another form of forced return to a state where they are threatened by persecution or other serious harm
<b>Rehabilitation interventions</b>	Reintegration of a physically/mentally ill person into society
<b>Residency rule</b>	Obligation on refugees/asylum seekers in Germany to remain in a designated geographical area
<b>Responses</b>	Behavioural reactions to different situations
<b>Reporting a crime</b>	Telling the police or office of public prosecution about a crime. Anyone can report a crime
<b>Risk</b>	Circumstances that increase the probability of becoming ill, e.g. with a mental illness, because of experiences of violence
<b>Self-protection</b>	Ability to protect oneself from danger

<b>Social benefits</b>	Government assistance for those in need, provided within a social justice framework. They include rent assistance, unemployment benefits and social security benefits, among others
<b>Sexual innuendo</b>	Sexual innuendo can be unwelcome remarks, jokes, body language or other communications (e.g. email, facebook messages) of a sexual nature. It is a type of violation of personal boundaries. Any act that disregards the wishes, or the physical, emotional, cognitive or linguistic inferiority of another person to satisfy one's own needs is a violation of boundaries
<b>Sexual partner</b>	A partner with whom a person has a sexual relationship
<b>Specialist counselling centres</b>	Specialist counselling centres focus on a range of issues and generally offer information, counselling, support and options for further action, as well as referrals within their area of expertise
<b>Stigmatisation</b>	A process whereby individuals or groups are judged negatively on the basis of some of their characteristics and placed into certain categories
<b>Trauma</b>	An experience that the person is unable to overcome and that consequently causes long-term mental illness
<b>Unlawful confinement</b>	Holding (locking up, abducting etc.) a person against her will
<b>Victims Of Crime Compensation Act (Opferentschädigungsgesetz, OEG)</b>	Law governing compensation and services for victims of crime and those left behind
<b>Violence Protection Act (Gewaltschutzgesetz, GSG)</b>	The law code governing civil law protection measures for victims of violence
<b>Witness support</b>	Legal assistance/support for witnesses
<b>Women's refuges/ women-only facilities</b>	Facilities and accommodation offering protection and support exclusively to women

# Referral information

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**Anti-Diskriminierungsstelle des Bundes**

Glinkastraße 24

10117 Berlin

Ph.: 030 185551865

Opening hours: Monday – Friday

9 am – 12 noon and 1 pm – 3 pm

Email: [beratung@ads.bund.de](mailto:beratung@ads.bund.de)

[www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de](http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de)

**Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency**

Legal advice in cases of discrimination, referral to regional professional services.

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**Bff – Bundesverband Frauenberatungsstellen und Frauennotrufe Frauen gegen Gewalt e.V.**

Petersburger Straße 94

10247 Berlin

Ph.: 030 32299500

Opening hours: Monday – Thursday

10 am – 5 pm, Friday 10 am – 2 pm

Email: [info@bv-bff.de](mailto:info@bv-bff.de)

Fax: 030 32299501

[www.frauen-gegen-gewalt.de](http://www.frauen-gegen-gewalt.de)

**German Federal Association of Rape Crisis Centres and Women's Counselling Centres**

Germany-wide organisation working for women affected by violence. Database of regional counselling centres, hotlines and women's refuges available at:

[www.frauen-gegen-gewalt.de/organisationen.html](http://www.frauen-gegen-gewalt.de/organisationen.html)

Information also in Arabic, English and Turkish

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**Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Kinderschutz-Zentren e.V.**

Bonner Straße 145

50968 Köln

Ph.: 0221 569753

Email: [die@kinderschutz-zentren.org](mailto:die@kinderschutz-zentren.org)

Fax: 0221 5697550

[www.kinderschutz-zentren.org](http://www.kinderschutz-zentren.org)

**Child Protection Centres Inc.**

Counselling for children and families affected by violence and severe crises, prevention services, possibility of short-term residential care for children.

Database with regional child protection centres available at: [www.kinderschutz-zentren.org/zentren-vor-ort](http://www.kinderschutz-zentren.org/zentren-vor-ort)

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**Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Täterarbeit Häusliche Gewalt (BAG TäHG e.V.)**

Hohenzollernring 106

13585 Berlin

Contact person: Danelia Krüger

Ph.: 0162 1398443

Email: [danelia.krueger@bag-taeterarbeit.de](mailto:danelia.krueger@bag-taeterarbeit.de)

**Federal initiative for working with perpetrators of domestic violence**

Intercultural umbrella organisation for working with perpetrators of domestic violence in Germany, also offers victim protection services and works in violence prevention.

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**Deutsche Gesellschaft für Prävention  
und Intervention bei Kindesmisshand-  
lung und -vernachlässigung e.V.**

Sternstraße 9 – 11  
40479 Düsseldorf  
Ph.: 0211 4976800  
Email: [info@dgfpi.de](mailto:info@dgfpi.de)  
Fax: 0211 49768020  
[www.dgfpi.de](http://www.dgfpi.de)

**German association for child abuse and neglect  
prevention and intervention**

Coalition of individual professionals and professional institutions from across Germany and neighbouring countries whose common goal is to advocate for improving child protection.

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**Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte**

Zimmerstraße 26/27  
10969 Berlin  
Ph.: 030 259359-0  
Email:  
[info@institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de](mailto:info@institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de)  
Fax: 030 259359-59  
[www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de](http://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de)

**German Institute for Human Rights**

The institute informs the public about the state of human rights in Germany and abroad, and contributes to the prevention of human rights violations, as well as to the promotion and protection of human rights.

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**Frauenhauskoordinierung e.V.**

Tucholskystraße 11  
10117 Berlin  
Ph.: 030 33843420  
Email: [info@frauenhauskoordinierung.de](mailto:info@frauenhauskoordinierung.de)  
Fax: 030 338434219  
[www.frauenhauskoordinierung.de](http://www.frauenhauskoordinierung.de)

**Association of Women's Shelters**

Germany-wide organisation working for women affected by violence.  
Database of regional counselling centres, hotlines and women's refuges available at:  
[www.frauen-gegen-gewalt.de/organisationen.html](http://www.frauen-gegen-gewalt.de/organisationen.html)  
Listings searchable also by languages offered and other service characteristics.

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**Hilfetelefon Gewalt gegen Frauen**

Ph.: 08000 116016  
Hours of operation: Monday – Sunday,  
24 hours  
[www.hilfetelefon.de](http://www.hilfetelefon.de)

**Violence against women helpline**

Free and anonymous telephone counselling, also in the following languages: Albanian, Arabic, Bulgarian, Dari/Farsi, English, French, Italian, Kurdish (Kurmanji), Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese.  
Email counselling, chat by appointment  
24 hour emergency service

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**Hilfetelefon Sexueller Missbrauch**

Ph.: 0800 2255530

**Sexual abuse helpline**

Free and anonymous telephone counselling in cases of sexual violence.  
Directory of regional support organisations, including for refugees.

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**Jugendportal zwangsheirat.de**

Brunnenstraße 128  
13335 Berlin  
Ph.: 030 4050469930 (free of charge)  
Opening hours: Monday 3 pm – 6 pm,  
Tuesday + Thursday 10 am – 1 pm  
Email: [info@frauenrechte.de](mailto:info@frauenrechte.de)  
Fax: 030 40504699-99  
[www.zwangsheirat.de](http://www.zwangsheirat.de)

**Forced marriage youth portal**

Crisis telephone line against forced marriage. Provides online counselling, a blog, as well as a search function for counselling services across Germany.

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**KOK – Bundesweiter Koordinierungskreis gegen Menschenhandel e.V.**

Kurfürstenstraße 33  
10785 Berlin  
Ph.: 030 26391176  
Email: [info@kok-buero.de](mailto:info@kok-buero.de)  
Fax: 030 26391186  
[www.kok-gegen-menschenhandel.de](http://www.kok-gegen-menschenhandel.de)

**KOK – German NGO network against human trafficking**

This association is committed to the fight against human trafficking and exploitation on the regional, national and international levels, as well as to the recognition of the rights of those affected and the human rights of migrant women.

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**Krankenhäuser****Hospitals**

See the regional listings in your telephone directory or ask at refugee services, doctors' practices, health insurance offices and other contact points

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**Notfall-Nummern**

112 (Ambulance/Fire Brigade)  
110 (Police)

**Emergency telephone numbers**

Free assistance in health emergencies (ambulance), fire (fire brigade), personal danger (police)

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**Notruf und Beratung für vergewaltigte Frauen und Mädchen e.V.**

Kasseler Straße 1a  
60486 Frankfurt am Main  
Ph.: 069 709494  
Email: [info@frauennotruf-frankfurt.de](mailto:info@frauennotruf-frankfurt.de)  
Fax: 069 79302795  
[www.soforthilfe-nach-vergewaltigung.de](http://www.soforthilfe-nach-vergewaltigung.de)

**Emergency telephone line and counselling for women and girls who have been raped**

Provides all the important information regarding medical assistance after rape, including securing evidence in a confidential manner.

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**Nummer gegen Kummer  
Telefon-Beratung bei Sorgen und Nöten**

Child and youth helpline:

Ph.: 116111

Operating hours: Monday – Saturday

2 pm – 8 pm

Parent helpline:

Ph.: 0800 1110550

Operating hours: Monday – Friday

9 am – 11 am and Tuesday + Thursday

5 pm – 7 pm

**‘The numbers to press when you’re in distress’ –  
telephone counselling in case of worry and distress**

Free and anonymous from mobiles and landlines.

Germany-wide counselling assistance for children,  
adolescents and parents in case of crisis or suspected  
risk to the welfare of children (child protection).

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**TERRE DES FEMMES**

**Menschenrechte für die Frau e. V.**

Brunnenstraße 128

13355 Berlin

Ph.: 030 4050469930

Operating hours: Monday 3 pm – 6 pm,

Tuesday + Thursday 10 am – 1 pm

Email: [info@frauenrechte.de](mailto:info@frauenrechte.de);

[beratung@frauenrechte.de](mailto:beratung@frauenrechte.de)

Fax: 030 40504699-99

[www.frauenrechte.de](http://www.frauenrechte.de)

**TERRE DES FEMMES**

**Human Rights for Women**

This charitable human rights organisation for women  
offers individual telephone and online counselling.

Counselling available in German and Turkish.

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**Unabhängige Patientenberatung  
Deutschland**

Ph. Arabic: 0800 33221225

Tuesday: 11 am – 1 pm

Thursday: 5 pm – 7 pm

Ph. German: 0800 0117722

Monday – Friday: 8 am – 10 pm

Saturday: 8 am – 6 pm

Ph. Russian: 0800 011 77 24

Monday – Saturday: 8 am – 6 pm

Ph. Turkish: 0800 0117723

Monday – Saturday: 8 am – 6 pm

Online patient counselling service  
available at [https://online.patienten-  
beratung.de/](https://online.patienten-beratung.de/)

**Independent patient advisory service for Germany**

Information about the German health system (independ-  
ent from health insurance providers!), free telephone  
counselling from mobiles and landlines. Counselling  
available in Arabic, Turkish, Russian and German.

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**Weisser Ring**

Victims of crime and violence helpline:  
116 006  
[www.weisser-ring.de](http://www.weisser-ring.de)

**White ring**

Free and anonymous telephone counselling, emergency/crisis intervention, referral, legal assistance, personal support

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**Zentrale Informationsstelle****Autonomer Frauenhäuser**

Markt 4  
53111 Bonn  
Ph.: 0288 68469504/-05  
Opening hours: Monday + Friday  
9 am – 1 pm, Wednesday 2 pm – 5 pm  
Email: [zif-frauen@gmx.de](mailto:zif-frauen@gmx.de)  
Fax: 0228 68469506  
[www.autonome-frauenhaeuser-zif.de/de/autonome-frauenhaeuser/adressliste](http://www.autonome-frauenhaeuser-zif.de/de/autonome-frauenhaeuser/adressliste)

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**Central information service of independent women's refuges**

Database of regional women's refuges



# Protection and safety from violence for women and adolescent refugees in Germany

This guide contains information around the topic of 'protection and safety' from violence for women and adolescents who are refugees or migrants in Germany. With this guide, we would like to inform you about your rights and protection options in Germany. We offer information on, among others, the following topics:

- Violence before, during and after seeking refuge
- Causes, types and effects of violence
- Who perpetrates violence?
- Pathways away from violence
- Referral information for those affected and their families

This guide was developed as part of the Germany-wide 'MiMi – Violence Prevention with Migrant Women for Migrant Women' project.

It can be ordered on the [www.mimi-gegen-gewalt.de](http://www.mimi-gegen-gewalt.de) and [mimi-bestellportal.de](http://mimi-bestellportal.de) websites.

With support from:



**Ethno-  
Medizinisches  
Zentrum e.V.**



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