

9 Oct 2021

**Shadow Report to the UN Torture Committee
Regarding the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel,
Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment by the
Swedish Network Gömda kvinnor (Women in hiding)**



Let us live in freedom and give us back our human rights

Sweden October 2021

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Introduction

The network Gömda kvinnor would like to thank the UN committee against torture for the opportunity to present our alternative report next to Sweden's 8:th periodical report regarding the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. We hope that our report will be a useful tool while auditing Sweden's report.

This is the first time the network Gömda kvinnor is turning in an alternative report to the committee and our hope is that the convention will observe and audit the flaws of the report and be made aware of the living terms we, the hidden women and children, is forced to live in. Our hope is that the audit made by the convention will lead to a thorough examination of Sweden's ability to abide to the laws of the UN convention and thereby make Sweden take real action against the violence men subject towards women. Our hope is that this audit will bring Sweden to fully act against the exclusions, limitations and ongoing threats against our lives. The continuously psychological bearings subjected to women in hiding limit our lives of constant fear and insecurity these fears affect us daily all because of men oppressing women and children they are supposed to love and protect.

Furthermore, the extended threat to our personal security enabled by the Swedish authorities, the legal system and inability to correct the systematical flaws that endangers not only the women but also their children. These factors enable a prolonged suffering and makes it possible for the perpetrator to continue to exert more control and violence against abused women. We have chosen to use the term "Eftervåldet" (after violence), following prolonged violence to shine light on how a perpetrator uses the legal system and other societal institutions to hinder, hurt or find hidden women and children. The network Gömda kvinnor are women who with the aid of society is living somewhere in Sweden with or without her own children. The members of the network Women in hiding live hidden because we have fled from men whom we have or have had a relationship with. In order to survive the assaults, the threats and harassment from said men, society has granted us protective measures in order to hide us from the perpetrator finding us again and, in some cases, we are also forced to remain hidden from our own families.

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The network Women in hiding was founded in January 2020 by a group of women in hiding who joined forces to create change for women in the same situation. We have protested ever since on many places around Sweden through silent manifestations against Swedish society and the systems that force us to stay hidden. Grey sprayed shoes and paintings with written messages is a manifestation to shine light on our situation. We have made an appeal for help to all those who live freely in our society to see and hear our cries for help. We aim to make our voices heard and need help to create the necessary changes in the system so that we, the women in hiding, also get to live secure lives in freedom. Changes need to be made in order to ensure that we also get the opportunities and rights as everyone else. The possibility to be a part of the society securely, which is not the case today. The members of the network Gömda kvinnor want society to focus its resources on restricting the men who are causing the violence rather than the victims of violence. The current system is forcing surviving women and children to live hidden in secrecy with constant fear for repercussions for an indefinite time, in many cases the rest of their lives.

It is the Swedish Tax Agency that has the task of investigating the need for protection in Sweden. The Tax Agency has established by their investigations that we, the women within the network need our identities protected through civil protection. This procedure follows the laws of the Public Access to Information and Confidentiality Act (SFS 2009:400) and protected population register (SFS 1991:481). The protection aims to make it difficult for our perpetrator to find us by removing us from public systems. Unfortunately, the shortcomings in the protection systems are extensive and our protected personal data are *repeatedly disclosed by different authorities*. The consequences of these systemic deficiencies and negligence result in our members having to flee again and seek refuge elsewhere, in the worst cases the consequences have been fatal.

In Sweden, there are three stages of protection that a woman who has been subjected to violence can apply for, the first two steps are investigated and granted by the Swedish Tax Agency: a) classified personal data, which is the lowest level, b) protected population registration which is the middle level and c) figured personal data which is the highest protection and is the protection level that the police investigate and grant.

According to the Swedish Tax Agency's external version report for May 2021, it appears that

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9342 women over the age of 18 live with granted protection in Sweden, the corresponding figure being 4876 for men. It also emerges that 9720 children (under the age of 18) live with a grant of protection. The report shows that 7673 women have been granted classified personal data and 1669 women who have been granted protected population registration (Skatteverket 2021). According to the Tax Agency's administrator for protected personal data, no statistics are kept on the reasons why people have been granted protected personal data and thus there are no statistics over how many of the women who have been granted protection due to domestic violence. It is also not known exactly how many women and children that live hidden in Sweden due to a violent man. However, the Tax Agency's administrator states that a large proportion of the women who have been granted protection have been given the protection precisely because they have been subjected to violence and threats by a man with whom they have had a relationship.

According to a report *Deadly violence in close relationships* published in *Shortcut to Research nr 9* by Lotta Nyberg and the National Centre for Women's Peace (NCK, 2021) violence poses a societal problem with severe and long-term consequences for the women who has been exposed to it and for society in general. The study by Nyberg shows that the risk greatly increases to escalate into deadly violence when the woman has decided to or is trying to leave the perpetrator, often because the man considers the breakup to be a betrayal of him and his control over her, whereas the woman lacks the right to leave him (Nybergh 2016). A survey carried out in 2020 by the Swedish Crime Prevention Council (BRÅ) shows that women who are murdered are mostly murdered by a current or former partner, where the usual motive is jealousy or separation (BRÅ 2020). It is the consequences of these men's violence, threats and harassments that is forcing women like us to flee our homes and, with the aid of society, leave everything behind to go underground in order to survive.

With our alternative report, we hope that the review by the Convention will encourage the Swedish Government to take the necessary measures and fully assume its responsibility to stop men's violence against women and to remedy and change the systems that keep us restricted and hidden, where instead the violent men who form the basis of the threats directed to our safety are restricted instead. Today, women in hiding are punished for crimes that we ourselves have not committed, we pay for it with our freedom indefinitely with our physical

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and mental health for crimes that someone else has subjected us to. The price we pay to protect ourselves and our children from further violence, intimidation and harassment is great, where the responsibility for maintaining our protection is laid upon ourselves to uphold. We are made responsible for maintaining our own protection and the knowledge to handle this at all the different authorities involved we meet is inadequate. The report will continue to refer to the Women in Hiding, "Gömnda kvinnor" Network as the Network and the UN Torture Committee as the Committee.

In our alternative report, we will identify several areas that the Network believes the Committee needs to examine. The report will be based on the list of issues allocated to the Swedish State by the Committee adopted at its 59th session (CAT/C/SWE/QPR/8) and Article 2(6), Article 14(27) and further problems with paragraph 30. The Network hopes that through its review, the Committee can bring real change to our life situation and our human rights. Our aim is to draw the Committee's attention to review of these articles and other areas in Sweden's report based on the specific expertise and experience that we, the women within the Network, possess by living in hiding in Sweden ourselves. We experience and suffer under the consequences daily and are forced to live under the conditions that we wish the Committee will pay attention to.

We, the women in the Network, would like to thank the committee for taking the time to read our shadow report and hopefully review the articles and paragraphs that we highlight in the report. We would also like to draw your attention to the fact that you can visit our Instagram and Facebook page to take part in our everyday life and get insight on the systemic flaws that hidden women experience daily and testify to. (Instagram: gomda.kvinnor and www.facebook.com/GomdaKvinnor). We would also like to inform the Committee that the National Organization for Women's Shelters and Women's Shelters in Sweden (ROKS) supports and shares our requirements and analyses that we present in this alternative report produced by the Network.

Respectfully

The Network of Women in Hiding

The 10-year national strategy

In the 10-year national strategy, decided by the Swedish Government in November 2016, the aim was to strengthen the protection and support for women and children exposed to violence, where more effective law enforcement and improved knowledge and method development was supposed to be increased. Although within the Network women testify to a flawed protection system, in which the women themselves are responsible for maintaining the granted protection. Women testify that they do not receive the support and protection they need and the quality of the support and protection vary greatly between different regions and municipalities in Sweden. Women within the Network testify that the Swedish authorities disclose their protected personal data to the men from whom they are hiding from. The perpetrators are able to obtain information about the women in hiding such as whereabouts, confidential personal data and contact details. These systems and handling deficiencies result in women and children are being put at immediate risk of death and are forced to uproot their existence and seek refuge in new places over and over. Women testify that they themselves are given the responsibility to seek protection and support in the new municipality, where social services are not helpful, even though it is statutory under the Act (2011:328). The Act states that people who, due to violence or other abuse, need to move to another municipality have right to support through the Social services. Women in hiding testify of repeated rejections of their applications under Chapter 2a. 8§ 2 SOL, to get help with housing and protection in another municipality. Within the Network, women testify to how they are forced to move repeatedly for over a year, uprooting that has consequences for the basic need for the women and children as well as their human rights to freedom, security and education for the children.

Women within the organization further testify of insecurity, fear and exclusion, a life on the run with a constant level of threats. An existence that can be equated with the existence that people experience during an ongoing armed war. The Network believes that the Swedish state has failed to protect women and children exposed to violence from violent men, where in most cases the woman herself is forced to seek protection for herself and her children without the support or help of society. The Network sees that the additional financial costs together with the physical and psychological strains that arise as a result of the violence are placed solely as the women's responsibility, even though the reason why the women needs to flee

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again has been caused by systemic deficiencies and negligence by the Swedish authorities. The financial consequences for women in hiding is a huge burden, many of those women are unable to cope with the high costs of repeatedly having to flee. Many women in hiding end up having large debt at the Enforcement authority because of the loss income, division of residence and high legal fees. The most common and dangerous consequence enabled by the shortcomings within the system and the state is the failure of protecting the women and children in hiding. If the women and her children is found by their perpetrator the result has in several cases ended in fatal violence often witnessed by the children.

The Network suggests:

- That an investigation must be made to reveal and measure the suffering and hardship women in hiding endure when they are exposed due to the state's inability to fully protect them from violence, threats, persecution and harassment.
- That an investigation is made to find a way to grant women and children in hiding indemnity for the suffering they endure, as well as compensation for the additional costs that follows as a result when they are forced to live hidden and on the run constantly.
- To examine how Sweden comply with the law (2011: 328) and how the Social services act according to the 2A chapters. 8§ 2 SoL, to help victims of violence.

Through this review, the Network is hoping for increased protection and help for women in hiding and improves in a way where the Social services take responsibility observing the legislation. The legislation states that the Social services are to ensure that victims of domestic violence are assisted with a secure permanent living in another municipality to escape further violence, threats, persecution and harassment. Collaboration between the municipalities is vital in order for victims to quickly get support and safe accommodation.

Legislation

Within the Network, women testify of the torture-like acts they were subjugated to by their perpetrators, actions that take place within the walls of their own home and this is witnessed by the children in the household. The women testify how the prosecuted men are free to move around unhindered in the society until the date of the trial consequently causing victims to flee and seek refuge in women's shelters to escape further violence, harassment and death threats.

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Women testify that they, together with their children, are placed at women's shelters and become hidden by society to be protected from further violence, threats and harassment from their perpetrators. The same perpetrators who continue to move around freely and unhindered in the society. Women testify to how they apply at the police for restraining orders but their pleas are often turned down. In a survey made within the Network itself in September 2021, 175 people received the question if they received their restraining order granted, 117 people responded no and 58 people yes, the result shows that 67% of the pleas was rejected.

Furthermore, the women in hiding testify that even if they have been granted a restraining order the men repeatedly violate them without any major or no consequences from the judiciary. Due to the design of the legislation which only grant restraining orders for short periods or intervals the psychological stress experienced by the women in hiding is dire and a direct result of constantly having to renew them by applying for renewal themselves.

Based on the experiences that exist within the Network, the law that became effective on July 1, 2018 does not give sufficient protection against harassment and persecution. The electronic monitoring of restraining orders is not used to the extent that it was intended. The design of the conditions today hinder women who is living with granted protection to apply for electronic monitoring of restraining orders since they must *reveal their current protected address* in order to get it. The formation of the restraining order is designed in a way that forces the woman to notify the legislator and perpetrator the name of the city in which she hides thus exposing her whereabouts. The electronic monitoring does not give protection in a way that men are stopped or limited in advance. They can easily find the women because the prohibition area is usually narrowly restricted and only includes a small area around the woman's residential address and workplace.

The network suggests:

- The design and legislation of restraining orders should be reviewed; massive changes must be made for the restraining order to give any realistic protection.
- Electronic monitoring of restraining orders should be used to a greater extent, where an electronic monitoring of the perpetrator is used up until the date of trial in those cases where the perpetrator is released from detainment prior to the trial. The monitoring should limit the

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perpetrator to a specific area, such as housing and workplace.

- Expanded restraining orders with electronic monitoring must be compatible with the protected population register.
- When a restraining order is granted, the perpetrator must be limited to a specific area such as housing and workplace
- The restraining orders should be designed in a way that they can be granted indefinitely. And through that protect the women and stop the perpetrators from finding continued ways to exercise violence, threats and harassment towards the woman.

The Network is grateful and positive to the prior legislative changes that became effective on January 1, 2019, where a new protective institution was c of protected population registration indefinitely, where it is up to the individual to decide whether the protection should be ceased or no longer is needed to the Swedish Tax Agency. This change led to a mental relief and increased security for the women who have been granted the protection, by limiting the previous possibility for the Swedish Tax Agency administrators to decide on its own initiative to cease. Unfortunately, women who were granted protected population registration bear witness concerning the deficiencies the different authorities have protecting their protected personal data and residence. Protected personal data is disclosed by Swedish authorities to unauthorized persons, in police investigations, social services, courts, etc. An investigation that the Network carried out in August 2021, it showed that 59% of the women who had been granted protected personal registration had their information disclosed by a Swedish authority.

The Network suggests:

- An investigation of the governmental systems that exist today must be made. The systems have several shortcomings that expose the women to direct danger and these systematical flaws endangers their safety and life.
- Ensure that an examination will be carried out concerning the negligence of the employees at the relevant authorities who disclose protected information of women in hiding; employee negligence must be reported by the authority itself, it cannot be designed as it is today where the exposed woman must report the disclosure where she is forced to reveal her protected information on that said form in order to report it.
- That there should be a review of the interaction between the authorities of the victims to

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violence, where the review points out the importance of national common guidelines, strategies and action plans. Women should receive equal support and protection regardless of where in the country she seeks help.

- Establish an independent review authority, to which affected women can apply for assistance to notify relevant authorities of the negligent handling of protected personal data.

The Network is positive to the new children's protection law 4 chapter. 3 § in the Penal Code (BrB) imposed on July 1, 2021, the purpose of the new law is to strengthen the protection of children who are forced to witness crimes committed between related parties. These children are according to research at increased risk of suffering from both mental and physical health issues. There is no requirement that the children understands that they are witnessing a crime or that the children can express their experiences. However, the Network has concerns about how and to what extent the new law will be practiced. These concerns are based on the experience we, the women in hiding possess on how the judiciary investigates and verdicts in cases of domestic violence based on the laws in Chapter 4 in the Penal code referring to crimes against violation of freedom and peace Criminal Code (1962: 700) (4 a §). These concerns are also based on the fact that the perpetrators often are released from custody until the trials, forcing women to leave their homes and seek protection for themselves and their children. In reality, this means that the perpetrator can move unhindered in society and continue with his life and work unhindered while the women and children are hidden away at a new hidden location, leaving their lives behind and uprooting the children from their environment, school and friends.

Studies have concluded that the children are negatively affected by the worries and fear they experience concerning their life situation, hidden away and first-hand experience the threats of violence, menace, persecution and harassment that are aimed at the women and the children. Before the children in hiding start in new school in a new town they are forced to lie about themselves and learned to repeat a fictitious life story. At the new, hidden location most children choose not to participate in leisure activities after school because they are afraid to let information slip and risk revealing their real identities causing the hidden family having to move once again. It also leads to a feeling of being dishonest and being forced to act in front of their peers and in all new relationships. Children in hiding end up in exclusion within the

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school and their educational and academic results suffers greatly from having to move and change schools often. The children also end up excluded in society because they cannot take part of it in the same way as their peers due to failed academic achievements. Fear and insecurity characterize these children and their mental health and development are affected in a negative way.

Support and protection

According to Chapter 5. Section 11 Social service law (2001: 453), the country's municipalities must provide support to women and children who have suffered from domestic abuse. It specifically stresses the importance that women who are being or have been exposed to violence or other kinds of abuse might be in need of support and help to change their situation. Survivors of domestic abuse testify to how the ability to provide said support and protection varies greatly between the country's municipalities. Same shortfall of knowledge on how to investigate domestic violence at the relevant authorities varies greatly. According to the Social service law, various forms of psychological and social support are to be offered to the fleeing women and children. It also states that economic and practical help should be offered. We claim that Sweden's Social services lack in equality practicing this law. Women further testify about how they by themselves need to seek protection and find new accommodation when they are forced to move because their protected personal data is cleared by the negligence of the authorities. Women in hiding have to pay for the costs themselves incurred by the acute move, but also for name changes and protective equipment such as assault alarms and home alarms.

The waiting times for trauma treatment in the Swedish health care system are very long, a victim may have to wait years in order to be able to get proper treatment for their experiences of violence and trauma if at all. Women of the Network testify that they do not receive the support and help in processing the traumas that they and the children were exposed to, women testify about how they themselves and their children are denied processing trauma treatment from healthcare officials due to the stress that their current life situation as living in hiding means. The insecure living conditions and ongoing trauma such as enforced right of contact between children and the perpetrators, but also ongoing legal processes are often justifications to why processing trauma treatment is denied or postponed. The psychiatric caregivers often

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regard that the right of contact between the perpetrator and the children along with the threat from the perpetrators are so large that the women and children will continue to live in an ongoing trauma even though they managed to escape the perpetrator.

The lack of or long waiting times for trauma treatment of the victims of domestic violence is a serious concern for the national organizations of women's shelters and girls' shelters in Sweden (Roks). ROKS on duty organizations has by their own initiative started charity work to collect money from the public to pay for private trauma treatment.

The Network suggests that:

- Women should not have to pay for their protection themselves. The woman should be provided with free alarm technology in the form of person alarms and alarms for their homes.
- Victims of domestic abuse should be provided with the opportunity to change first and surnames free of charge, it should also be allowed to change the first and surnames of the children without a signature from their father, (the perpetrator they are hiding from). The purpose of the name change of the children is to increase the protection and make it harder for the perpetrator to find the child and its mother.
- The women and children should be offered a protected or temporary social security number in order to help women when they are in contact with authorities and other activities, through a protected number, the personal data of the women is protected and reduces the risks of exposing their whereabouts to the perpetrators when the authorities fail to protect them. A protected number also means that the personal data of the women such as names or residence does not have to be or registered in any of the systems.
- Trauma treatment, support and processing for women and children who are victims of domestic violence should be a prioritized matter in healthcare.
- A review must be made on how women in hiding can take part in and be offered the national care and vaccination programs included in the Swedish public health care system. A review is needed to examine how women in hiding and their children get excluded from the public health program of including dental care, summaries to cell sample, vaccination, mammography, etc.

Many women and children who are victims of domestic violence receive protection and

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support through women's charity organizations around Sweden. These organizations possess a long tradition of knowledge and experience to meet and support women and their children who are victims of violence, however, a decision from the Social service department is required before the women and the children is granted aid from these organizations. The Network believes that these requirements prevent and complicate the situation for exposed women to seek protection and support. Today, women cannot seek protection themselves when they need it and have to wait for a decision from the Social services. The Network raises great concern over development seen within the non-profit womens' shelter organizations in Sweden. A reduction of their activities has taken place, even though there is an increased need for the support activities and protected shelters. The Government has in the budget bill for 2022 presented a proposal for permanent funding and government grants along with a reform for protected shelters for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. The Network welcomes the proposal of giving permanent funds and government grants to the womens' help organizations in Sweden, despite this, the Network consider these funds to be insufficient.

The proposal that the government presents through SOU 2020: 16 ie SOU 2017: 112 - *A window of opportunities*, is supposed to strengthen the children's rights perspective for children in sheltered housing. The Ministry of Social Affairs proposes that the Social Committee should be a new power to immediately place a child in protected housing together with a guardian even if there is a lack of consent from the other guardian. This proposal raises several concerns since the experience from within the Network shows that abused women lack the necessary trust in the authorities such as the Social services, the police and healthcare. The law poses a risk that women will be hesitant to seek help out of fear that the children will be taken from the mother and into custody by the Social services. The reform will lead to distrust and insecurity for the women who needs to seek protection and support. The Network also believes that the government does not present any palpable plan of action on how the necessary changes for women and children will be executed in order to stop being forced to live hidden in Sweden. We lack a solid contingency plan from the government on how they plan to stop the exclusion, mental suffering and danger the thousands of women and children who is forced live hidden in Sweden today. We ask for a strategy for the women and children so that they can have their own freedom back.

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The Network also raises concern about the government's proposal SOU 2018: 32 *Breaking a violent behavior*, where the Social services themselves are ordered to take responsibility to treat the perpetrators. Based on the experiences within the Network, where the lack of protection and treatment of abused women and children is evident; the Network states that the Social services lack the knowledge to make the proper assessments whether perpetrators violent behavior has ceased or assessing the perpetrators risk of relapsing into violence.

The network suggests:

- Abused women themselves should be able to seek protection from an organization without a decision from the Social services. With that possibility, more women would have the courage to leave the violent relationships and seek protection.
- The Network believes that the Swedish government violates: the UN Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, UN Human Rights Conventions and the UN Convention of the rights of the Child.
- That the Committee closely examine the conditions that women and children in hiding are forced to live by and fully investigates the crimes and violations of their fundamental human rights that they are suffering from daily.
- The Network pleads to the Committee to call on the Swedish government to stop the exclusion, mental suffering and dangers the thousands of women and children who is forced to live in hiding endure. Women and children in hiding need their freedom reinstated.
- The Committee calls on the Government not to implement Reform SOU 2020: 16 ie SOU 2017: 112 - *A window of opportunities*, based on the fears that it will lead to reduced possibilities for abused women to seek protection and support.
- Social services lack the skills required to treat with a perpetrator who exercises violence towards women and children and a better treatment alternative must be composed.

The Swedish Government have published recommendations for the different authorities with guidelines for follow-ups, method and training materials, including a manual on how the Social services and Health care should be working with women who have experienced domestic violence. Although the Network claims from our own experience that there are

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major shortcomings and a huge ignorance within all said authorities as well as in the Swedish judicial system from handling cases of domestic violence. A major ignorance primarily experienced within the Swedish courts, Judges, Prosecutors, Board members and investigators who are all imposed to the work of passing sentences in criminal cases involving violence against women and children as well as in disputes of custody, housing and right of contact. Today, a parent who abused the other parent or their children for various crimes can be entitled to custody, housing and right of contact with their children. Even when mother and children are forced to live in hiding with protected population registration from the violent parent the court rules that the perpetrator has the right to contact and that the abused woman in hiding is responsible for ensuring that she hands the children over to the violent parent herself even though the court has knowledge of the perpetrator's previous violent acts towards the same woman. Even if the woman is living with hidden identity, has an ongoing restraining order and other authorities such as the police enforcement has made assessments that great danger prevails for a woman's life and safety she is ruled and forced by law to hand over the children to the perpetrator. The court's decision to the right of contact constitutes danger to the woman's life and creates major risks that the family's protected place of residence will be exposed forcing the family to move again. The current laws states that women in hiding must hand over the children to their perpetrators even against the children's own will. If a woman refuses to hand over the children to the perpetrators granted right to contact, she risks severe penalty from the court and in the worst cases the woman is risking the custody of their children.

The network suggests that:

- That an audit is made around custody, housing and verdicts where violence has occurred. A review of the judge's ability to follow the UN Child convention in their verdicts and a risk analysis on the safety and protection of the woman and child.
- The Committee impose the Swedish courts to use current legislation that is aimed at protecting children from violence. The child's right to a safe upbringing without violence must be ruled over a parent's right to see his child, where the child should be protected from being forced to the perpetrators right to contact and joint custody with the violent parent.
- The judges, prosecutors, board members and investigators who are acting in the work of judging in cases involving violence against women and children must possess a relevant

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education in the matter.

- That the Committee calls on the Swedish state, based on the legislation of the Child Convention and the Istanbul Convention, that a parent of a child who does not want to / dare to meet the other parent should not be forced to pay a penalty, or otherwise punished when protecting the child from a violent parent.
- that the right to contact between children and the violent father should not happen as long as the woman and the child is forced to live in hiding.
- The Istanbul Convention must be made to law in Sweden.
- The Swedish courts must comply with the laws stated within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child who are a law in Sweden.

Other problems

- The legal penalties and damages, tort, that the courts rules the perpetrators liable for fails to stand in proportion to the injuries and suffering that the women have endeavored. Even after the men finished serving their sentences, the violence, threats and harassment towards the women continue and is thus forced to continue to live hidden for an indefinite future.
- The abused women and children are living in hiding and end up excluded from society. They cannot take part in or live their lives by the same terms as everyone else in society, they are deprived of their identities and the right to live in freedom.
- As a consequence of the violence, women in hiding have to break with family, friends and relatives due to the threat of these men. The women have to leave their jobs, the children are uprooted from their school and their friends. A life in isolation and social exclusion characterize the reality of many women in hiding. Out of fear of being revealed and forced to re-escape, the women and the children are not able to acquire new friends or participate in leisure activities. The moving and difficulties to show proper work documents or grades without exposing to much about the past create large difficulties for women in hiding in their aim to seek new professional employment and they are often forced to live on welfare to survive.
- The network believes that the Swedish state violates several laws and regulations within the UN Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

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Women in hiding are waiting with anticipation for the Government's referral on the action program to intensify their actions in ending men's violence against women, also called 40 point program. Right now, in this moment, nearly ten thousand women and children are living in fear for their lives every day because of violent men. The fear is real and constant, women in hiding are trying to survive, mend and rebuild a life after the violence, threats, persecution and harassment. We, the surviving abused women, cannot wait for the investigation results, while the government investigates its action proposals, a woman dies every third week in Sweden, murdered by the raging violence towards women. Change is needed now.

Men's violence towards women affects everyone, that abused woman is someone's mother, a daughter, a sister, a friend. A woman in hiding lives a life in the shadows of society, she is there but cannot be seen, she can be your neighbor, the woman in front of you in the store or the mother who picks up her child next to yours at school.

When the network started in 2021, we made a plea to the public to make our voices heard, today we have made an appeal to the UN Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment: We ask that the torture, the inhuman degrading treatment and punishments that we, the women in hiding, endure daily shall cease so that we can live our lives in freedom and regain our human rights.