

## **“That’s how we were raised” Perpetrator perspectives in relation to legislative changes targeting honour related violence in Sweden**

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Since July 1st, 2020, honour is viewed as an aggravating circumstance in criminal cases in Sweden, and it is suggested that honour related violence and oppression should become a criminal offence in its own right. Interventions directed towards victims of honour crimes have been implemented, but fewer have targeted the offenders. The purpose of this article is to mirror the Swedish legal and discursive framework against the perspective of the perpetrators. While we discuss findings with relevance for practitioners, particularly in the light of recent legislative changes, our main focus is set on subjective understandings of honour crimes. In particular, questions about the perpetrators’ norms and worldviews, their perceptions of the concept of honour, and their experiences of the Swedish justice system are investigated. Using court verdicts and deep interviews, we highlight important themes under the following four headlines:

- 1) Collectivism, norms, and traditions
- 2) Complexities of honour crimes
- 3) Marginalization, social vulnerability, and stereotyping
- 4) Reflections in retrospect

This article gives insight into some of the complexities that courts will have to handle given the recent and pending changes in Swedish

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legislation and provides knowledge that can be implemented in social and legal work to combat honour related violence and oppression.

**Keywords:** honour, perpetrators, offenders, honour crimes, honour as aggravating circumstance, honour violence.

## **Introduction**

Honour related violence and oppression has been a recurring theme within political and social work in Sweden during the last decades. Victims of honour related crimes are to be seen as a particularly vulnerable group, and interventions directed towards such victims – often young females – have been implemented, but fewer have targeted the offenders.

Since July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, honour is viewed as an aggravating circumstance in criminal cases in Sweden (Government Bill 2019/20:131). According to chapter 29, section 2 of the Swedish Penal Code, this is applicable if the motive for the crime was to preserve or restore a person's, a family's, or other similar group's honour, and it influences the assessment of sanction or penalty for the crime. The Government Bill states that honour related crimes are a violation of human rights. Against this background, the government states that there should be a possibility to assign a higher penal value for crimes based on notions of family honour. The preparatory works consider this to have a deterring effect on potential perpetrators (SOU 2020:57). Forced and child marriages have also been targeted through recent legislative changes, and the government has recently presented a proposal to make honour related violence and oppression a criminal offence in its own right.<sup>4</sup>

The Government Bill (Prop. 2019/20:131) argues that honour related violence and oppression is characterized by a strong collective element within a family or among relatives, meaning that the interests of the individual are subordinate to the interests of the family and that intimate relations are the concern of the whole family and will affect its reputation. Violence in such collective settings is approved and supported by relatives and often also a wider social circle such as the extended family or clan. It is further stated that the term “collective” does not only apply to family or close relatives but also to larger interrelated systems like clans. However,

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/12/regeringen-foreslar-ett-sarskilt-brott-for-hedersfortryck/>

the intention is not to include other associations or groups such as criminal networks or organisations sharing ideological views.

Overall, investigations capturing the perspectives of offenders in honour crimes are few, which will be discussed further in the section on previous research and theoretical perspectives. Rosquist (2020) has studied policy documents and verdicts in a Swedish context. In his dissertation, he concludes that even though the lawmaker’s policy documents are based on an understanding of honour crimes as rooted in gender and power structures, police and courts have focused almost solely on cultural aspects in their reasoning around motives and grounds for decisions. Gender and human rights arguments are in practice overshadowed by an “othering” culture discourse. The obvious difficulties in defining what is “essentially cultural” (in contrast to, for instance, religious or ideological) prompt careful consideration. With this article, we hope to provide insights into some of the complexities that courts will have to handle given the recent and pending changes in Swedish legislation.

The purpose of this article is to mirror the Swedish legal and discursive framework against the perspective of the perpetrators. We highlight the complexity of honour crimes and provide knowledge that can be implemented in social and legal work to combat honour related violence and oppression. While we discuss findings with relevance for practitioners, particularly in the light of recent legislative changes, our main focus is set on subjective understandings of honour crimes. In particular, questions about the perpetrators’ norms and worldviews, their perceptions of the concept of honour, and their experiences of the Swedish justice system are investigated. The results are then mirrored against the Swedish legal and discursive framework.

## **Methodology**

The study (Ouis & Cinthio, 2013) upon which this article is based has a qualitative approach, in which two types of empirical material have been explored. In order to find relevant cases, we investigated 64 verdicts of crimes that could be interpreted as motivated by honour. The Swedish Prison and Probation Services (SPPS) aided in the selection of verdicts to be studied. Our main criterion was that the crime should have a collective dimension. Thus, the offender should have been motivated by the norms and will of the collective and have experienced moral support from it for

the actions. Twelve highly relevant verdicts were finally selected and analysed in detail. We searched for fundamentally important and recurring themes, patterns and concepts that correlated with the research questions or served to expand them. These themes were then coded and classified into main- and subcategories as described below. We also used the interrogation records to look for the perpetrators' subjective views and explanations regarding the crimes. Furthermore, the verdicts shed light on what importance the courts had given to the honour component of the offense, and how they reasoned around aspects such as culture and religion.

The SPSS also provided names of convicts to be interviewed in the study. Thirteen individuals, among them one woman, accepted to take part in one or more interviews conducted in Swedish and/or Arabic by Cinthio during the years 2011-13. The length of the interviews varied between one and three hours.

The verdicts as well as the interviews have undergone a rather straightforward thematic analysis (Bryman 2018) and are equally included in the analysis of the empirical data. Topical meanings and significances within the material were extracted and sorted into codes, and the codes were divided into subcategories. These were discussed and analysed within the research group, and for this article they were clustered into four larger themes which are presented in the result section: Collectivism, norms, and traditions; Complexities of honour crimes; Marginalization, social vulnerability, and stereotyping; and finally, Reflections in retrospect.

Ethical approval was obtained for the study from the Regional Board of Ethics in Lund, Sweden (2011/332). In order to protect the informants, we have agreed not to present them or their crimes in detail. For the same reason, case numbers or the time period of the delivery of the verdicts are not specified. Quotes are not ascribed to any specific informant.

Several considerations are necessary when undertaking a study of this nature. One has to do with the obvious risk of pandering to xenophobic societal attitudes and political tendencies by publishing material obtained through interviews with perpetrators who all have migrant background. It is our hope that we contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics behind these crimes rather than to polarization. Another dilemma has to do with the very particular power imbalance between the researcher and a person who is not only a research subject but also incarcerated, thus

being deprived of fundamental liberties and in a position of dependency towards authorities and systems. In this case we have done our utmost to clarify the purpose of the study and the external, independent role of the interviewer, to ensure that participation was truly voluntary, and to make sure that the informants understood that they would face no negative consequences for refusing to take part but also that they would get no positive rewards for their contribution. Other reflections during the process had to do with the incentives behind some of the informants' choice to participate and share such amounts of highly personal information. None of them were native Swedish speakers and most of them were not enrolled in any treatment programs or benefitted from psychological or therapeutic support during their incarceration. Many expressed a great relief and even gratitude for being listened to and for the opportunity to speak freely in their mother tongue (Arabic). That the interviewer did not represent the authority of the SPPS may have contributed to the openness and generosity of the informants.

The fact that we as researchers could not check the stories against internal SPPS documentation needs to be considered in terms of reliability. Again, our purpose has not been to verify or disprove the factual content of the interviews, but rather to capture the way in which the perpetrators present themselves and explain their deeds. Finally, there is a risk that the perspectives of victims get blurred when the voices of perpetrators are in focus. We hope and believe, however, that the outcomes of our research will benefit those who suffer in contexts of oppressive honour norms, whichever position they are in.

## **Previous research and theoretical perspectives**

The dichotomy and interplay between notions of honour and shame has been the topic of an extensive field of anthropological study. Ideas of contrasting "shame" and "guilt" cultures were first presented by American anthropologists such as Mead, who in the late 1930s portrayed Western societies as ruled by "internal control" in the form of guilt and conscience, juxtaposing them to other systems - those of "primitive peoples", as she called them - where social interaction was claimed to be driven by fear of external shaming instead (Mead, 1937). Around a decade later, American anthropologist and folklorist Benedict popularized this distinction through

her book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Benedict, 1946) although receiving much criticism in scholarly circles regarding poor methodology and inaccuracies (see Lummis, 2007).

An important contribution to the discipline was made in the 1950s and 1960s when British anthropologists explored honour and shame among Mediterranean societies. In a now classic anthology edited by Peristiany (1966), it is argued that honour and shame are “universal aspects of social evaluations” rather than oppositions of concepts of innocence and guilt. General discussions about notions of honour and social status, as in the chapter by Pitt-Rivers (1966), are complemented with ethnographically tinged contributions by authors such as Abou-Zeid (1966), who researched honour and chastity values among the Bedouin tribe of Awlad ‘Ali in Egypt, and Bourdieu (1966), who performed fieldwork in Kabylia, Algeria. These studies observed and explained honour and shame as fluid concepts tied to social interaction on individual and group level rather than static features of culture (Merz, 2020), and resulted in a novel interpretation that emphasized complexity but also highlighted negative implications of an otherwise positively connoted term. We make use of some of these works in our article, for instance when investigating misconceptions around notions of honour and chastity. Within the tradition of anthropological research on honour norms, Norwegian scholar Wikan has contributed to the field by bringing her theoretical findings from Egypt, Oman, and Yemen into a Nordic context (Wikan, 2004).

To provide a deeper understanding of the complexity of family relations, collective, emotions and psychology, we use Joseph’s (1994) notion of “patriarchal connectivity” which denotes the psychodynamic processes by which one person comes to see him/herself as part of another. Joseph argues that connectivity between brothers and sisters is fundamental for the reproduction of patriarchy. Their relationship is characterised by the love between them, but also the brother’s right to control his sister and be the gatekeeper of her sexuality towards other men. The sister becomes her brother’s arena to show his masculinity, and his ability to uphold family honour by exerting social control over her. Failing to control his sister makes the brother lose his face in front of his male relatives, particularly her potential husbands within the endogroup, and so brothers may feel like they have both the right and the duty to use violence in controlling their

sisters. The notion explains fluidity of boundaries between family members, and how one's self can be intimately linked with the self of another person.

While "culture" may be a convenient term to fall back on, there is good reason to be careful. Over the years, slack generalizations around the role of different value systems in the "culture" debate have been justly criticized, and many have called for nuanced reflection as the ideas have gained increased attention due to political and scholarly interest provoked by honour killings in a European context. As put by Stewart (2015), the description of cultures through simplified categories like "honor and shame" may create division and distancing and ultimately function as "*othering*" labels (p 181). This ethnocentric approach, says Merz (2019), enables us to keep those others "*separate from the self*" (p. 133). He advises against such essentializing approaches and implores an ethnographically based "*dynamic and horizontal*" understanding rather than a "*vertical and categorical classification and demarcation of cultures*" (p. 136) in order to capture the complexity in the study of honour and shame.

As stated above, the honour violence discourse has influenced politics as well as public debate in many Western European countries. Abu-Lughod (2011) takes a broad view aiming to identify the political and cultural work that is done by the conceptualization of the "honour crime". She uses examples from different countries, where Sweden and the repercussions of the Fadime Sahindal case serves as one. Abu-Lughod argues that the term itself and the categorization that often follows upon it are doing harm by perpetuating ideas of stagnant cultures as the source and explanation of a much more complex violence. That violence against Third World women, unlike Western women, tends to be explained through a lens of culture and/or religion has been pointed out in transnational feminist research by, for instance, Abu-Odeh (1997) who discusses this problem in a comparative article about the "honour" of the "East" and the "passion" of the "West". Centering on a Norwegian setting, but with references also to the Swedish context, Razack (2004) highlights the dangers of culturalist responses to patriarchal violence within Muslim migrant communities. She identifies racist political explanations that, in their narrow focus on "*cultural deficit*" (p. 131) overlook "*the multiple factors that give rise to and sustain the violence*" (p. 132). She writes about the legal efforts to distinguish honour killings from other forms of violence against women, and, just like Abu-Odeh (1997),

makes a comparison with one-on-one “crimes of passion” where she argues that a separation on the grounds of the collective aspects of honour crimes in fact places gender in opposition to race and fails to recognize all the likenesses between violence occurring in minority and majority settings. On the other hand, an argument by Sen (2005) quite neatly sums up the approach of this article: although criticism against such culturalization that refuses similarities and connections between particular manifestations of violence against women is indeed legitimate, “*to deny specificity if it exists is also problematic*” (p. 50).

In general, studies investigating male offenders in honour crimes are scarce. Two reports from Turkey, Onal (2008), and an unpublished dissertation as well as subsequent articles from the same empirical material by Doğan (2010) reveal that perpetrators often felt forced by their families to commit the crime, which was preceded by thorough planning. A common finding in both studies was that all the murderers regretted their actions; moreover, they felt let down by their relatives after the crime and did not achieve the status they had expected afterwards. In an interview study from Iraq involving nine honour murderers (Hussein 2017), low education, as well as collective pressure based on rumours and feelings of shame and impotence, seemed to be characteristic of honour murderers.

Even fewer researchers have investigated the role of women in honour crimes. Among them is Sen (2005), who argues that the role of women in controlling other women, as well as the potential for women’s participation in killings, make out two of six key features of honour crimes. One British study, analysing 100 cases of honour related abuse investigations within the police (2012-14), found that mothers played a “massive” role in perpetrating honour violence against their daughters (Aplin 2017).

In Sweden, a couple of journalistic and practice-based books have focused on the role of men, either as offenders or victims in honour related violence and oppression, such as Güngör and Dervish (2009), Baladiz (2009) and Cinthio (2010). In a more recent study, Schlytter and Rexvid (2016) discuss the vulnerability of young men in honour settings and the responsibilities of authorities from a legal perspective. A recent study by Rosquist (2020), mentioned above, examines court cases; however, very few studies have focused on the correctional aspect of offenders of honour crimes in general. The study (Ouis & Cinthio 2013) on which this article is built was financed



by the Swedish Prison and Probation Service (SPPS) and the material was collected between 2011 and 2013. The SPPS have themselves produced some similar reports on honour crime offenders in recent years (Yourstone et al. 2018; Grip et al. 2020).

Finally, in order to frame some of the discussions about the individual informants and their relationships to violence, we utilize definitions coined by Norwegian psychologist Isdal (2017). His theories, based on extensive work with perpetrators of violence, have had great impact especially in the Nordic countries and are widely used among social workers and other practitioners.

## Results

The results of the analysis of 12 verdicts and 13 interviews are summarised under four thematic headlines: Collectivism, norms, and traditions; Complexities of honour crimes; Marginalization, social vulnerability, and stereotyping; and finally, Reflections in retrospect, which is based solely on interviews since it focuses on the perpetrators’ processes of change during incarceration.

### *Collectivism, norms, and traditions*

The informants describe childhood norms, especially regarding group loyalty, gender and sexuality, and responsibility for upholding family reputation and honour. They discuss how these norms were communicated and manifested in words and actions during their upbringing. They have all experienced patriarchal, authoritarian settings where violence was common and normalized. Their stories confirm how the value of an individual is closely linked to the role played in relation to the collective, as a representative of the family and an agent in the collective’s interest. One informant expresses:

As a brother, you have to be a protector. That’s how we were raised, if I’m to be honest. You have sisters... If dad is at home, then it is him, then we have no say. But in our case, dad did not exist. So, we took care of our mother and sisters. After all, we were like the men there, you could say, regardless of the fact that we were children.

Even as little boys, they were expected to protect their sisters, in line with the notion of patriarchal connectivity. These norms and expectations have been passed on to them through stories and concrete examples:

We have heard stories from my mother, we have heard stories from my father, we have heard stories from my uncles, those who are older, in the past (...) We learned in that way. Old stories. 'Aha! The neighbour who lives maybe ten to fifteen houses from us, something happened to him, his daughter was killed'.

Female chastity is a key component of this norm system, although consequences of violating the norm vary. *"The girl should be a virgin. If she is not, then it depends on her family what they do to her. Some of them kill her..."*. Many informants have parents and other relatives who still live in an environment strongly characterised by traditional norms of honour, and some speak of rather extreme traditions rooted in notions of honour and shame, where phenomena such as clan feuds and blood revenge are still customary (Stewart 1994; Ginat 1997; Abu-Rabia 2011). They give several examples of the fundamental social implications of a tarnished honour.

This honour thing, it was built by... It's your family that is your honour, your land, your belongings. The worst, worst of them, it's your family. When someone makes a move against your family and you do nothing, you have no honour.

The only female informant in our study describes a violent background with a particularly dysfunctional family-in-law. When asked why she could not accept that her daughter had a boyfriend, she says:

I knew my kids were getting girlfriends and boyfriends, but I didn't tell my husband (...) One may not accept a relationship directly, but some older person in the family could have mediated. Usually in our countries if a couple gets problems, older relatives can solve it. This could also have solved our problem in a good way.

Many of her statements reveal a collective mindset, such as the example above concerning elders in the family who can mediate and thus sanction a relationship. It should be noted that this particular case was framed by the

agreement within the extended family of an arranged marriage of the informant's daughter to a cousin.

For some informants, it seems that migration to Sweden did not affect their norm system much. They have lived at the margins of society; they do not master the language and they express a lack of social support. A few others grew up in Sweden or came here at a quite young age. They speak Swedish, they interact socially with native Swedes, they have gone to school and worked here, and have been taking part actively in society. The informants describe how old traditions and norms have faded with time. One of them shares how he felt "*a hundred per cent Swedish*" in his everyday life with work, family, and social life. He then explains that a specific incident involving family, both in Sweden and in the former homeland, caused old expectations and norms to resurface and create a strong pressure on him to act in accordance with tradition.

Facing a "*sharp situation*", when something has occurred which threatens the family reputation and challenges traditional honour codes, some informants describe that "*the culture of origin*" has taken over. They state that the pressure they have experienced from their relatives and ethnic group has led them to fall back on the foundations of their traditional upbringing which emphasises the collective social prestige and honour. Many times, the pressure has come from abroad: their relatives in another country have been notified, rumours cannot be stopped, and something must happen to set an example or administer justice.

The pressure came from the homeland, of course. And from the cousins here. Other Arabs. Our reputation, I mean, I had to do it. I was only thinking of one thing; I was thinking of my father; he would have had to turn his gaze down otherwise. We are five sons, and not a single one could do anything about the situation?

The same informant speaks about receiving a phone call from relatives abroad right after the deed, with one main message: "*You have lifted our heads up*".

Some younger men seem to have been influenced not only by the family's traditional expectations but also by the norm system of peers, with elements of sexism and violent macho ideals; a combination that may have further driven and legitimised the deed in question (see for instance Prieur 2004;

Gottzén 2013). Strong gender norms and stereotypes are key in the background contexts described by our informants, and also in many of the family settings post migration. Differences in the upbringing of daughters and sons is a theme that runs through most of the interviews, and in several verdicts, systematic negative treatment of girls is visible. Some examples are clearly related to notions of chastity, such as when a father stealthily follows his daughter from school to check on her, or when another forces his daughter to undergo gynaecological examinations to prove that she is still a virgin. Other verdicts contain strong narratives of gender-based injustice and of psychological and physical abuse, and the general impression from most families is that girls are subjected to stricter rules and are expected to behave differently than boys.

At the same time, the attitude expressed by some of the informants is that daughters are viewed as something extra valuable and that they must be cherished and protected in a different way than boys. This is more evident in cases where the violence has been directed at someone outside the family. Some informants describe that it was love and care for the sister or niece that was the driving force behind the crime committed. In some of the families, the sons seem to have become trapped between their expected role and their own emotions. This could be seen as an articulation of the dilemma of love versus control over female relatives within the system of patriarchal connectivity. They are torn between the loyalty to the father, who often privileges them, and affection for other family members who are subjected to the father's violence. Examples of boys trying to prevent or intercept violence against their mothers and siblings recur in the verdicts.

### *Complexities of honour crimes*

The Arabic notion of honour, *sharaf*, could be understood as a set of qualities that are traditionally considered respectable: honesty, loyalty, courage, pride and so on. In parallel and overlapping, there is another more precise concept; *'ird*, which connotes female chastity. In the words of Abou-Zeid (1966), "...sexual offences, however slight they may be, are offences against that particular and more specific kind of honour which is called *'ird*". *Sharaf* and *'ird* are connected to each other in such a way that the latter constitutes a part of the former, and *'ird* can, if lost through a violation of sexual norms or questioned through rumours, deflate the social capital or *sharaf* and thus adversely affect the larger family unit (Abu-Rabia, 2011).

Furthermore, as Abou-Zeid (1966) points out, "*...once lost, it cannot be regained.*" The same duality exists in many other languages, for instance, Persian, Kurdish and Turkish, where the concept *namus* corresponds to *'ird*.

Visible in at least one verdict but mainly illustrated through interviews, in several cases the informants (and their family members) seem to make a clear distinction between the two concepts and discussed their deeds in terms of preservation of family prestige (*sharaf*) rather than the notion of chastity (*'ird*). At the same time, they are very aware of the common Swedish discourse and interpretation, often lacking in nuances and not distinguishing between the two. In these situations, the violence was directed towards boyfriends of female relatives and did not directly affect the girl or woman in question; a scenario discussed further below. Even though the perpetrators in these cases consider themselves having defended family integrity and reputation through their actions, which in a Swedish context could be regarded as a typical manifestation of collectivistic honour notions, they do not accept the simplified clumping together of *sharaf* and *'ird*, i.e., equating and condemning everything perceived as "honour related" without distinction. The informants criticize how the aspect of honour had been given such a prominent role in the verdicts and describe how the term itself triggers negative reactions in court, partly explained by the strong emotions evoked among many Swedes whose understanding of "honour crimes" is based on cases such as the murders of Fadime Sahindal and Pela Atroshi. The informants in this study do not want to be associated with such examples, but rather frame their actions as revenge, stating things like: "*...honour is when the girls and women are punished*". In their own opinion, their actions were rather driven by protective care for their female family member. "*You know, when I hear such a thing, it will be a disaster! Although Sweden calls it honour. I don't care. That's my sister! She is my best! She is special to everyone*". Still, among the informants whose narratives focus on concerns about a female relative, notions of collective interest and patriarchal connectivity shine through:

You do it, somehow, to protect the family, so this won't happen another time around. If we hadn't done it, I believe we would have

been attacked again: 'Ah, then we can do this and that to their daughter!'.

In the general understanding of honour related violence, the typical victim is a young female relative such as the perpetrator's daughter, sister, or cousin; a girl or a woman who is being punished by her family members for her norm defying behaviour. Young men have been viewed as victims mainly in their involuntary role as oppressor of female relatives or when they fail to live up to the expectations of the family regarding gender identity, sexual orientation and/or marriage. However, in our material an alternative scenario appears, challenging the stereotype through another victim category, namely "the boyfriend" who is punished by family members of a female living in an honour context for being her partner or for approaching her in a way deemed to be improper.

Five different cases, involving a total of twelve perpetrators, contain some form of revenge against male "outsiders" (non-family members). In four of the five situations described, a group of people have attacked a person outside the family who is alleged to have had a relationship with a female family member. Three of those cases had a deadly outcome. In the fifth case, a betrayed husband attacked and killed the person with whom his wife had an extramarital relationship. This happened with the moral support and encouragement from relatives of both spouses and was explained as a necessary measure in order to protect the family honour.

The "outsider" could, in another sense, be an "insider" as well: in the cases we examined, having someone from one's own cultural sphere cross the line seems to have been particularly triggering for the perpetrators. The victim, then, is someone who should be familiar with the values and norms and thus understand what is expected from them.

And it wasn't a Swedish or a European guy who did it to us, it was an Arab. So that's maybe why I did what I did. Just because he was an Arab. And he knew what was at stake. (...) 'Would you accept that this would happen to your niece or mother?', I asked him there. (...) I think when they did this thing to us, they forgot they were Arabs.

Our findings are supported by previous research in the field. For instance, in an anthology edited by Welchman & Hossain (2005), the novel *Chronicle*

of a Death Foretold, written by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, is used to exemplify the scenario of the male “outsider” victim. In Marquez’s tale, two brothers in a Colombian village murder the man who is accused of having seduced their sister after she is revealed to have lost her virginity before marriage. The practice of *karo-kari* in the Pakistani context is another example of honour killings that claim numerous male lives every year. However, as Welchman and Hossain rightly point out, “*women remain the majority of victims and survivors of ‘crimes of honour’, and have fewer available remedies*” (p. 6). This overarching fact, supported by global statistics, has shaped the common understanding of honour violence in Sweden and as a result, policymaking, preventive work, capacity building and interventions have been based on an interpretation of the problem which almost exclusively emphasises young females as victims of honour violence within their own families. The murder of Abbas Rezai, committed by his girlfriend’s family in Högsby in 2005, is one of few cases involving an “outsider” victim that has been acknowledged in the Swedish general understanding of honour crimes, and it has not led to any visible difference in target group definition, priorities, design of social initiatives, or approaches on the political level or among relevant authorities.

One particular aspect of the cases with an external victim is the fear of future revenge from the victim’s family (see for example Ginat 1997). In some cases, there is an explicit threat of retaliation, either directed at the perpetrator himself or one of his children or relatives, or the demand of substantial financial damages (*diya*; blood money) to be paid to the victim’s family. An informant who has served a long prison sentence expresses the fact that it is only now, after the pending release, that the “*real problem*” begins. Other informants also confirm this, stating that it is stressful to worry about a possible act of revenge in the future directed at oneself or one’s children. For those who will be expelled from Sweden after completing their sentence, this aspect can be even more grave as they may be returning to a country where they lack legal and social protection and risk being confronted by vengeful relatives or face a traditional, clan-based court process.

As we can see, the collective aspects of honour related violence create specificities and problems that demand their own awareness and practical preparedness. Although existing within a structural framework of deep-

rooted patriarchy and gender inequality, honour contexts challenge the classic understanding of domestic violence. Here, we are rather looking at the control, oppression, and violence of the group - consisting of members of all genders - directed towards the individual, which could also be of any gender. Still, the issues of male victims and of women as perpetrators of honour crimes have been rather overlooked, both in public debate and in research. In this study, we had the opportunity to interview one female perpetrator, but the actual rate of women involved in planning and execution of honour related crimes might be substantially higher than what is reflected in court cases thus far - see for instance Aplin's study (2017) about the role mothers play in the violence against daughters.

Another finding which we believe is connected to the complex dynamic of honour and shame within certain settings is that in our interviews, a pattern emerges where perpetrators talk about themselves as victims. Norwegian psychologist Isdal discusses this self-victimization in terms of externalization of the violence: a process through which the perpetrator looks for justifications outside of the self, and in his own mind becomes a victim through the experience of being hurt, humiliated, or offended (Isdal, 2017.) In some cases, our informants identify as victims of the collective will by having committed a crime (and thus sacrificing their own freedom and well-being) with the purpose of defending their family honour. In other cases, the informants believe they are victims of a malevolent plot or conspiracy by other family members. In some instances, this is claimed to be about the wife's and children's alleged desire for a residence permit in Sweden, or possible financial gain for the wife; otherwise, there are no apparent reasons for why the family would have conspired against the perpetrator.

One possible explanation could be that in traditional, collective, patriarchal contexts, it is viewed as shameful when sensitive details within the private domain are exposed to external scrutiny. To report or testify against another family member in such a context could be unthinkable, and especially so if it means that the authority of an adult male is challenged. Relatives that break the code of silence and seek help from authorities are thus regarded as damaging the family honour. It can be difficult to deal with the realisation that both family loyalty and one's own position in the



hierarchy are being questioned, which is why the perpetrator seeks an explanation beyond himself and his behaviour.

***Marginalization, social vulnerability, and stereotyping***

In several of the verdicts and some interviews, an aversion towards Sweden and “Swedishness” appears even before contact with the judiciary. This can be described in terms of not accepting Swedish society, not wanting the wife to speak Swedish with the children or not allowing the children to take part in activities that are not part of one’s religious or cultural tradition. Some of the men have accused their partners and children of being “*too Swedish*” or have warned the children that they may be taken care of by social authorities and be placed within a “*Swedish alcoholic family*” if they complain to someone outside the family circle about how they feel at home. At the same time, it seems that the children take on responsibility in relation to the family economy or in contacts with authorities, largely because they speak better Swedish than their parents. In a couple of cases, it is also the children who have alerted the police or contacted a women’s shelter without the parents’ knowledge.

Some verdicts describe how the convicted person has isolated his wife from society, how he has forbidden her to have contact with her own family, go to school, use the computer, or meet friends. Such tendencies are echoed by the interviewed woman in our study who also identifies female isolation as a problem:

I think we should have gotten more information about the rules and laws so as not to have problems. It's not good to just sit at home, especially not for the women. For example, it could be that men forbid them to work or go to school. There should be some sort of centre only for women. (Here, she starts to cry.) If I had had that opportunity when I arrived, I wouldn't have had a problem. I just got money without going to school. It wasn't just me; it was all immigrant women. They didn't care how we were doing at home, if there were problems in the families or so on. In one family, for example, there was a lot of abuse, but they did nothing... the social services.

The informant adds that the main problem is ignorance, and that lack of information about Swedish rules and regulations is the real reason behind honour crimes:

Immigrants who come here must be fed. Not as chickens, with seeds, but with information and laws. Especially the women. They are the most limited. If I had received more information and knowledge, I wouldn't have been here now.

The issue of multiple social problems in families that our female informant points out is reflected in many of the cases we have studied. In several of the verdicts, testimonies of financial challenges appear in the form of violent conflicts over money. On some occasions, there seem to have been issues of gambling addiction on the part of the perpetrator; credit card fraud and counterfeiting for profit were mentioned in one case. Many come from economically marginalised families receiving social benefits. In contexts where financial problems arise, conflicts over money seem to be a common trigger for violence; people are said to have argued about rent, child support, credits, and loans.

The dynamic of honour and shame is interesting to consider also in terms of how issues such as debt, addiction or mental health are dealt with in the court cases. Although they might serve as explanations or make a difference in terms of penalty or correctional placement, it seems like the defendants tend to avoid such lines of reasoning in their defence. Perhaps the stigma of admitting to something which could be considered shameful in one's family context outweighs the possible benefits of using it as an argument. Gambling and interest-rate loans, as well as drinking alcohol, can be prohibited on religious grounds. In some of the verdicts, there were indications that the perpetrator had a gambling problem or alcohol and/or drug abuse. These aspects, however, were not raised by the defence as mitigating circumstances; neither have they led to any form of treatment during incarceration as the perpetrators seem to want to downplay or keep their problem secret - maybe because it could affect the family honour negatively. Furthermore, some of the informants may have been ashamed, based on the understanding of honour in their cultural and religious background, of talking openly about depression, mental illness, or suicidal thoughts even if they suffered from such problems.

In families where violence has been frequent, the situations that seem to have prompted abuse are remarkably unexceptional. Even though domestic violence episodes are sometimes related to issues of honour, they can also

be triggered by minor everyday occurrences such as the wife or the children not running errands or serving food quickly enough, being loud while playing and so on. The voices of the victims in the verdicts indicate that the violence is unpredictable and unprovoked, but also becomes a routine. The violent acts range from spitting and verbal abuse to pushing, kicking, punching with cables, belts, and other objects as well as with bare hands. The children's stories often show how the parent dismisses the violence as insignificant, while the violence has been perceived by the children themselves as grave and very threatening. Some stories tell of systematic and calculated abuse: for instance, one girl describes how her father usually takes off her eyeglasses before beating her in the face in order to prevent them from breaking, or how the dad removes her brother's and her socks before smacking them with a belt under the soles of their feet, because he “*knows that it doesn't hurt if the socks are still on the feet*”. In a couple of cases the perpetrators have a history of torture in prison before arriving in Sweden. In the material, however, nothing emerges to indicate that these men would have received any therapeutic help to process their former experiences.

There are also examples of violence motivated by concern for the family's reputation. In families with older children, these include conflicts about clothes, makeup, freedom of movement and relationships. Threats and verbal abuse are also prevalent in the physical abuse cases. Different motivations and explanations behind the abuse co-exist and merge, and it is not always simple to delineate the situations where the violence clearly stems from the perpetrator's honour being threatened.

One visible tendency in the interviews is that the men feel discriminated against and treated as “second-hand individuals” in Swedish society. A typical description is that in Sweden “*the woman comes first, in the second place come the children, then the pets and finally, the man*”. This experience of being male in what is perceived as an oppressive feminist society connects to the previously discussed self-understanding of being a victim. The informants also expressed being stereotyped and victimised by the Swedish court system. Various aspects of culture, tradition and religion seem to spark interest in the courts, but there is no coherent approach to these matters. For a deeper discussion on this topic, see Rosquist (2020) who in his dissertation shows that court records mainly focus on

assumptions about culture to explain honour crimes. This resonates well with the statements of the majority of our informants who say that the encounter with the Swedish judicial system had been characterised by lack of understanding and bias from the authorities through what we interpret as a form of “culturalization”. Most of them are of the opinion that they have received harsher sentences because they are not ethnic Swedes or because of their religious (in these cases Muslim) background. *“We were treated as Muslims first, then Arabs. We weren't Swedes there, it didn't matter”*, says one of them. Several of the informants state that the concept of honour itself evokes feelings of hatred among the public. They talk about irrelevant, prejudiced questions, about bad interpreters and misunderstandings, and also about what they perceive as unfair attitudes from the court: *“They think we're crazy, primitive, dangerous”*. Some of them downplay the honour aspect in the crimes they committed and point out that anyone would have acted like them given the same situation; it is only because they have a different ethnic background that these “honour” arguments are introduced: *“I swear, if we were Swedes, if my name was Erik Svensson, then they wouldn't have given me such a penalty. (...) They say it is ‘honour’ among us immigrants, but a Swede: jealous!”*. The overtones in the discourses described by Abu-Odeh (1997) and Razack (2004) – suggesting that Muslim men are in fact dangerous and uncivilized, and that honour violence has its own unique form, shaped by cultural notions, and should be judged differently and punished harder than other types of violence – are mirrored in the words of our informants. This being said, it is interesting that the informants are critical against what they perceive as culturalizing attitudes of the Swedish justice system, while they themselves use terms and notions referring to culture and ethnicity in describing and explaining events surrounding the crime.

The issue of ethnic and religious stereotyping in relation to honour crimes is discussed in depth in the mapping made by Baianstovu et al (2019); an extensive report which also points to the importance of socioeconomic factors when analysing honour related violence and oppression in the Swedish context. Our study confirms that social vulnerability related to financial problems, criminality, substance abuse and different forms of domestic violence as well as stereotyping and marginalization at the hands of majority society are important components in the social environment in

which honour related violence and oppression occurs. For a hands-on social work perspective, see Isdal (2017) who acknowledges the idea of structural powerlessness due to societal inequalities and limiting life conditions as a contributing factor in certain cases of family violence.

### *Reflections in retrospect*

The informants who were asked about alternative conflict resolutions at the time of their deeds never seem to have contemplated solving the problem by turning to Swedish authorities: *“Then, in 2004... there was no police existing in my world. The police, they have nothing to do with it. It is about my honour; I don’t give a shit about the police. I take the law into my own hands”*. At the same time, they express in hindsight that another solution would have been preferable; one that was not so violent and did not have such serious repercussions: *“But it went too far, that we killed that guy. There were lots of things we could have done to... You can punish someone in different ways, just let him live. That’s how I think now anyway”*. Everyone who was asked questions about what they think about the crime today stated that they wish they could turn back time to find a better way to act. *“It was not worth it”*, is a common reflection.

Regardless of the attitude towards the Swedish judicial system and its legitimacy, all informants have been found guilty and are now serving time away from their families. A common theme in the interviews is that of how relationships with relatives are affected by the incarceration, and what the future will be like because of this. *“A whole family is broken”*, says a father, who has been sentenced along with his sons. Even those who admit their guilt express that they feel bad about how their priorities in the moment of the crime now affect the family. A father talks about how his wife has struggled to fill the void after him and how the children will suffer from his choices for many years to come. He says that he has robbed them of their childhood. For those who have been sentenced to deportation, concerns about the future are even more evident.

Just as Onal (2008) and Doğan (2010 and onwards) show through their studies in the Turkish context, not only regret but also disappointment is a common theme in interviews with convicted offenders. The statements of some of our informants are characterised by a bitter insight: that the extended family structure taken for granted – the one that promised constant loyalty, solidarity, and support while at the same time providing

incentive and drive for the crime committed - proved to be an illusion. Parents, siblings, and cousins have not, as expected, looked after the perpetrators' families after they went to prison or shown any affection or appreciation. The perpetrators now feel that they sacrificed themselves for the common good without getting anything in return. *"Did I get any help from them? No. Have they paid off my debts? No. I don't want any reward for what I've done, but a letter... It's like it hasn't happened. It is forgotten"*. Some feel that the family now blames them for an incident that gained unwanted negative attention and harmed the social status instead of the opposite.

Two informants, both serving long-term sentences, have provided detailed accounts of how their personal attitudes were affected by the time spent in prison. They describe, despite their external differences, very similar feelings, experiences, and life trajectories. They have both gone from a situation where concerns about tradition and family honour have influenced and guided their values and actions to a new kind of existence, based on completely different considerations and a rejection of past ideals:

I've found myself. That has been the most important. (...) I came to reality now. I am who I am, I am this person now and I will be this person. I will not put any mask on my face or my thoughts. (...) I am as I am. It's a liberation.

They claim that the incarceration itself has been an essential factor for this change. However, both describe a process that has taken place without the support or guidance of the surrounding environment; a successive transformation that they themselves had to deal with and take responsibility for: *"You could say I have done the whole job myself."* They express that all the isolation and time alone has led to reflection and, by extension, insight and regret: *"You talk to two different persons. Then and now."*

Some informants mention a strengthened spirituality and better knowledge of what religion actually prescribes as an influencing factor for changed attitudes towards their deed. They claim to have been governed by "culture and tradition" as well as by an unquestioned family loyalty when committing the crime, while they have now reached an individual, personal morality based on new ethical and religious considerations. The interviewed perpetrators express remorse and guilt in a different way than before since they have gained insight into the value of a human life and that

no one has the right to take the law into their own hands. Although they believe that God will ultimately judge them, they have sought and found comfort, guidance, and support in their faith.

Some of them express very negative thoughts about the social structures they believe shaped them and their norms. They have formed a different view of human value and gender equality and talk a lot about the hypocrisy and injustice within honour contexts: *"He is a man, he can do what he wants, but she is a girl, she can't do the same. But by which right does it say...? Then I belong to falsehood. I lie to myself"*. Many discuss the need for change and democratisation in their former homelands and want to do away with old, oppressive structures: *"We live in a... lying society. That's why it gets like this. We follow culture and tradition."*

Finally, the interview situation for most informants seems to be a positive experience and a valuable opportunity for them to give their view on things they have not previously been able to talk about: *"I want us to talk deeply, to a hundred per cent... That is why I wanted to be here. I think we should talk about everything and tell the truth. One should not be ashamed or think that it is difficult"*. One of them points to his heart and says: *"For me... it is big here. It feels very nice to meet you and talk to you, really. I think I will feel much better. When you can talk openly, and to someone who listens. That's wonderful."*. Such a willingness to engage in profound conversations not only about personal emotions and relations, but also about circumstances surrounding the actual crimes and what led up to them, opens for meaningful qualitative interventions such as therapy and treatment. In the case of our informants, however, this opportunity seems to have been missed by the surrounding authorities. This and other implications of our findings for practitioners will be discussed below.

## **Discussion: The relevance of the results for social and legal work**

In this article, we have used court verdicts and deep interviews to illustrate that honour related violence and oppression is a complex and demanding phenomenon which requires knowledge and careful consideration on the part of social and legal practitioners.

We have shown how honour violence, albeit based in patriarchal traditions, sometimes defies the traditional understanding of gender roles through male victims and female perpetrators. It is our belief that there is a large unrecorded number of female instigators and perpetrators of honour crimes, and that welfare professionals and judiciaries must be aware of women's roles in honour contexts and direct attention to them as possible inciters and performers. Even if these women themselves may be oppressed within the overarching structure, it does not mean that they cannot be active in subjecting others to control and violence.

We have discussed the predicament of a "new" category of victims of honour killings: the male "outsider" belonging to another family, targeted for having approached a female member of the perpetrator's kin. In Onal's book, one of the boyfriends is asked why the girl's family does not try to kill him instead. He replies that it is because *"if they kill me, it will start a new blood feud. (...) If they only kill the girl, it won't start any new problems between the two families"* (Onal, 2008). Although a relevant response in the Turkish context, the dynamics in Sweden differ substantially. Here, the boyfriends may not have their extended families or clans present, or they may have a somewhat weaker family status compared to others. Thus, the financial and social risks of harming or killing boyfriends from other families may be lower. In addition to this, the killing of a female family member can cause social stigma in relation to Swedish society and may not be as easily justifiable as attacking an "outsider". The high representation of the "outsider" category in the cases studied is an important finding in terms of identifying and successfully protecting possible victims.

The narratives open for intriguing reflections in relation to recent legislative amendments. Our informants talk about strong family relations and loyalties, traditional norms, and cogent group pressure based on collective concerns. Their actions follow the pattern of patriarchal connectivity, and even those who have been well integrated into society have, in critical situations, felt that their values related to honour have been awakened and that they had to act according to the will of the group. So, what is the significance of such collective aspects from a legal perspective? What does it mean to the justice system if someone has been brought up in a collectivist mindset, in a context where notions of chastity and honour are fundamental and strong, and where expectations from kin group and peers



to act in accordance with these norms are root causes for the committed offense?

One obvious challenge has to do with legally encompassing the collective of involved persons when faced with the task of judging an honour crime. As we can learn from our informants, the norms are ubiquitous. Also, the encouragement and demands preceding the deed can be communicated over time and in subtle ways that are not easy to identify, prosecute, or prove. Is it possible to determine the true driving forces and hold accountable not only the literal perpetrator, but also the decision makers, the enablers, and the cheering section?

The notion of the collective also calls into question another implication of the recent legislative change whereby honour now constitutes an aggravating circumstance: the person who physically commits the crime can receive a harsher sentence, while they may in fact have been under substantial pressure to do so - or else risking punishment from within their own family system. It could be debated whether the collective aspect should constitute an aggravating or a mitigating factor. A person who performs a deed not on their own impulse, but rather because they feel obliged or even forced to do so by a surrounding group, could by one line of reasoning be perceived as a victim of structural circumstances and, as such, less personally responsible than a person who makes an autonomous choice (see Lernestedt, 2006, for a deeper discussion about conflicting worldviews, discrepancy between legal and moral guilt, and the risk of negative bias within the justice system towards persons who are not part of Swedish majority culture). For instance, in the trial following the murder of Maria Barin, a 19-year-old woman who was stabbed to death by her younger brother in 2012, the honour related aspects of the case were used in the arguments of both the prosecution, claiming it should be an aggravating circumstance, and of the defense, pointing to the fact that the boy was under pressure by older relatives.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, the concept - since it is given such importance - creates new complications and possible injustices. Since the Government Bill (2019/20:131) only refers to collectivism within extended family settings, the new law seemingly excludes contexts such as organized criminal networks or religious communities, although members of such groups might also be

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<sup>5</sup> Lund District Court, verdict 2013-01-29, case number B 2126-12.

subjected to oppressive hierarchies and norms, and to violence in the name of honour or chastity. Additionally, in certain cases the distinction may be hard to make since blood ties and other affiliations could very well coexist and intersect.

Another aspect of the complexity regards the very notion of honour, and the interpretation thereof. When the informants speak about their crimes, they differentiate between *sharaf* (overarching family honour) and *‘ird* (female chastity). The word honour, in the Swedish context, has come to be associated with chastity norms and killings of female family members, and they clearly wish to avoid this connotation. They prefer to talk about “vengeance” or “protection of family” instead of focusing on sexual transgressions. So, when the perpetrators themselves make distinctions between concepts such as respect, revenge, honour, and chastity, the question arises how the justice system should understand and handle this. Most likely, a lot of violence that occurs in society is motivated by notions of respect and revenge, but is that in itself enough to make it qualify as honour related? This query is highly relevant in the light of conflicts where disagreements between members of certain families have led to violent street clashes or “clan fights” between large kin groups.<sup>6</sup>

The legislative change means that the culpability of the perpetrator is judged in relation to the driving forces behind the act, which indicates that some murders are indeed worse than others - not just because of their brutality or the vulnerability of the victim; factors which are already taken into consideration regarding penal value, but because of the perpetrator’s beliefs. In the case of hate crimes in Sweden, defined by the offender’s attitude towards certain characteristics of the victim, the motive behind the crime may cause an increase in the severity of the punishment. However, in the legislative history of the penalty enhancement provision, there is no guidance on how to go about such delicate assessments, but it is left to the courts to decide the lawmaker’s intention in the adjudication process - a demanding interpretative task indeed!

A similar responsibility is now created by the higher penalty value ascribed to crimes based on notions of family honour. The value system of the individual(s) involved needs to be properly identified, so that the

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<sup>6</sup> See for instance case B 5760-21 (Lund District Court) regarding such an incident that took place on December 16th, 2021, in Lund, Sweden.

specific drive behind the deed can be distinguished from other potential reasons. This requires adequate knowledge within the justice system of the complexities of family dynamics and the individuals involved to avoid simplified interpretations of all acts of violence in certain contexts as being rooted only in notions of honour (just as there is a need to recognize honour norms that may be obscured when stereotypical characteristics are not met). It may be challenging to identify violence that occurs within a context where honour norms are prevalent, but that is not in itself caused by breaching of the norms, and to distinguish it from honour-based violence. However, if underlying factors are ignored, there is a risk that culturalization will make the implementation of the new legislation arbitrary and unjust.

A common trait in many narratives is that the perpetrators somehow see themselves as victims: of a sacrifice for the sake of family honour, of a family conspiracy, or of Swedish society in general, and of racism and stereotyping in the Swedish legal system in particular. The victim narrative could be interpreted as a result of living in a collectivistic setting in which individualism is underdeveloped, and the borders between the self and others are blurred. Personal responsibilities and free choices are less reflected upon; instead, the position within and sacrifice for the common good are emphasised in their stories. In this sense, they see themselves as subjected to circumstances and forces beyond their own power or influence. At the same time, ample research confirms the existence of bias on grounds of ethnicity within the Swedish justice system (Sarnecki 2006; Brå 2008; Torstensson 2010). The importance of social structures, inequality, and discriminatory practices needs to be recognized when initiatives to prevent and deal with honour related violence are engineered. The same goes for the effects of marginalization and perceived powerlessness, which have been proven to perpetuate and even strengthen negative honour norms (Baianstovu et al., 2019).

In the material, a picture emerges of family situations characterised by multiple social problems like domestic violence, criminality, economic marginalisation, and substance abuse. Such social vulnerability must be taken into consideration in preventive social work, when analysing the risk of honour related violence and oppression, and in tailoring programmes

and treatments for convicted perpetrators, which we will discuss as a final point.

Reflecting back on their experiences, the informants express disappointment with the events after the crime and the absence of appreciation from the collective. They feel let down by family members and the clan; some have also come to regret their crimes for this reason. They have gradually turned away from the traditional honour norms of the “*lying society*” and question traditions such as gender differences as they feel that they have changed identities: “*You talk to two different persons. Then and now.*” They show a strong desire to talk about their insights and problems but have not gotten much support in this process while incarcerated. It is worth noting that a remorseful attitude may not be primarily based on the penalisation or on regret for the sake of the victims, but rather on the lack of “honourable treatment” from family and relatives, and the gradual insight of an overwhelming personal loss. Some also question their actions based on a new religious awakening. Certain informants are afraid of blood feuds or revenge from the family of the victim. It somehow seems that disappointment with traditional honour culture is the main factor for regret in retrospect. To combat honour crimes, perhaps this insight should be used to shape interventions directed towards possible perpetrators.

Isdal (2017), in an updated version of his classic work *Meningen med våld* (The meaning of violence), lists four levels of reasons explaining from a perpetrator perspective why violence occurs. First, he points to individual factors, for instance being exposed to violence or trauma during childhood. He then mentions group related conditions, which involve mutual dynamics that incite violence and the fear of losing one’s position in the collective. The next level highlights societal reasons, such as social structures that condone violence, for instance masculinity norms. Finally, he states that violence begets violence: the practice of violence becomes in itself a reason for further violence since it “works” – it is usually efficient in achieving one’s immediate goals and creates a cycle of expectancy and repetition.

When looking at the interviews conducted in this study, we see that our informants are affected by all these levels of explanatory factors, and that many of them tick every box. They have grown up with violence directed towards themselves and not seldom between their caregivers, they are part of collectives which uphold norms that imply and sometimes demand

violent responses to certain transgressions, they have been surrounded by ideals and systems that legitimize violence on the societal level, and they have learned time and again that violence is a solution to relational problems.

Most of them, however, tell us that they have received no support during incarceration that in any way addresses their needs and problems. They have had to take responsibility for their own change, lead their own processes and do “*the whole job*” themselves. It seems that even though the need for development of qualitative methods targeting perpetrators of honour crimes was pointed out through our report (Ouis & Cinthio 2013, first version of this report was presented already in 2011), no such interventions are decided upon, let alone implemented. Thus, in the light of the proposed legislative addition of a specific “honour crime”, some crucial questions arise around how meaningful the sentence time will be when no specialized therapy is offered, and what kind of profiles we expect to reintegrate into society upon serving sentences for such violent crimes without receiving any treatment.

In order to prevent and combat violence and oppression rooted in notions of family honour and female chastity, we believe that societal structures need to recognize the complex nature of these crimes and to integrate relevant research findings in the planning and implementation of interventions and legal proceedings.

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