



November 23, 2018

### **Letter of Solidarity with Bulgarian women**

*ASTRA, Central and Eastern European Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, stands in solidarity with Bulgarian women. We are concerned with the developments in Bulgaria, the worsening status of women's rights and the lack of commitment of the Bulgarian Government to human rights. We would also like to voice our grave concern with Bulgaria rejecting the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. This move is a sign of total disregard for the serious and systematic attacks on women.*

For the past several months we have learned about the systematic killings of women perpetrated by partners and ex-partners in Bulgaria. We are disappointed by the Bulgarian decision-makers who share prejudiced opinions that domestic and sexual violence survivors have inflicted the violence themselves. Sadly enough, the reality is much worse - countless women across Central and Eastern Europe suffer in silence because of the widespread gender-based violence that they face at home, at work, in everyday life, but also the growing fundamentalism and backlash on women's rights in the region.

We say no to intolerance, to the persecution of sexual diversity and to cultural practices that undermine the health, body and soul of women. We cannot accept that attempts to maintain the current system in place are made at the expense of women! We condemn all forms of violence against women, in particular femicide, trafficking of women, physical and psychological violence, sexual harassment, genital mutilation, early and forced marriage, rape, also used as weapon of war, and impunity for those who commit these acts of horror.

We also say NO to a society that scorns the rights of women by not allowing them access to protection programs and resources that would enable them to break the circle of violence and live a life in dignity.

***We understand the hurt, confusion, isolation and betrayal that women in Bulgaria might feel. We express our international solidarity with the protest on November 26, 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria that will also voice our anguish with the growing violent wave of misogyny in the country and the region.***

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. We believe and stand with you.

In solidarity,

ASTRA Network

**ASTRA Network Members:** Albania - Albanian Family Planning Association; Armenia - Society Without Violence; Armenia - Women's Resource Center; Armenia - Women's Rights Center; Azerbaijan - Center "Women and Modern World"; Belarus - Women's Independent Democratic Movement of Belarus; Bulgaria - Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association; Bulgaria - Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation; Bulgaria - Gender Education, Research and Technologies; Bulgaria - Demetra Association; Bulgaria - Gender Alternatives Foundation; Bosnia and Herzegovina – Sarajevo Open Center; Croatia - B.a.b.e.; Croatia – CESI; Croatia - Women's Room; Georgia – HERA XXI; Georgia – Real People, Real Vision; Georgia - Women's Center; Hungary – PATENT; Kazakhstan - The Legal Center for Women's Initiatives "Sana Sezim"; Lithuania - Family Planning and Sexual Health Association; Latvia - Latvia's Association for Family Planning And Sexual Health; Macedonia - Association for emancipation, solidarity and equality of women; Macedonia – H.E.R.A.; Macedonia – Shelter Center; Moldova – Family Planning Association; Moldova - Reproductive Health Training Center; Poland - Federation for Women and Family Planning; Romania - A.L.E.G.; Romania - AnA: Society for Feminist Analysis; Romania - Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives; Romania - The East European Institute of Reproductive Health; Russia - Novogorod Gender Center; Russia – Russian Association for Population and Development; Slovakia – Pro Choice; Tajikistan – Gender and Development; Ukraine - Women Health and Family Planning; Ukraine - Charitable SALUS Foundation; Uzbekistan - Future Generation

**ASTRA Secretariat**

Federation for Women and Family Planning  
Nowolipie 13/15, 00-150 Warsaw, Poland  
ph/fax +48 22 635 93 95, [federa@astra.org.pl](mailto:federa@astra.org.pl)  
[www.astra.org.pl](http://www.astra.org.pl)