**HRW: Algeria endangering lives of women**

April 25, 2017

Middle East Monitor

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170425-hrw-algeria-endangering-lives-of-women/>

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has condemned the number of domestic violence cases in Algeria and the “lack of diligence” of police investigations and the non-enforcement of sentences against the perpetrators of the assaults.

In a report presented by Ahmed Benchemsi, director of communication and advocacy for the MENA region for HRW, the NGO highlighted the “social obstacles that include pressures to preserve the family from all stigma and shame for the family in case the woman leaves home or reports abuse.”

The lack of shelters for women fleeing violence was also noted by the NGO and “the absence of measures to prevent violence, such as the use of curricula to modify discriminatory social and cultural behaviour.”

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Among those interviewed was mother of two, Selwa, 39, who was beaten by her husband for years. In September 2011, her husband undressed her and hung her from a ceiling beam to beat her with a broom before cutting at her chest with scissors. Selwa was then rescued by her sister-in-law, who helped her escape and file a complaint against her husband. The complaint however remained unanswered.

Thanks to the legal aid of the NGO that manages the home in which she has taken refuge, another complaint has been lodged with the public prosecutor. This second complaint resulted in the conviction of her husband and a payment of a fine and a six months suspended prison sentence.

HRW denounced “the disdainful attitude of the police to the victims,” very often encouraged to abandon the prosecution and forgive the perpetrator instead. The NGO concluded with recommendations such as amending Law No. 15-19, adopting comprehensive legislation fully which incriminates domestic violence, establishing a national database on all forms of violence against women and a protocol for Police intervention.