



KEY THEME¹

Article 2

Domestic violence

(Last updated: 31/08/2023)

Introduction

The issue of domestic violence – which can take various forms, ranging from physical assault to sexual, economic, emotional or verbal abuse – transcends the circumstances of an individual case. It is a general problem which affects, to a varying degree, all member States and which does not always surface into the public sphere since it often takes place within personal relationships or closed circuits and affects different family members, although women make up an overwhelming majority of victims (*Kurt v. Austria* [GC], 2021, § 161). In this respect, children who are victims of domestic violence are particularly vulnerable and are entitled to State protection (*ibid.*, § 163).

State obligations in brief

Article 2 substantive limb:

- The obligation to secure the right to life by putting in place effective criminal law provisions to deter the commission of offences against the person backed up by law-enforcement machinery for the prevention, suppression and punishment of breaches of such provisions (*Opuz v. Turkey*, 2009, § 128).
- The obligation to take preventive operational measures to protect an individual whose life is at risk from the criminal acts of another individual (*Opuz v. Turkey*, 2009, § 128).

The test: For this preventive operational obligation to arise, it must be established that the authorities knew or ought to have known at the relevant time of the existence of a real and immediate risk to the life of an identified individual from the criminal acts of a third party and that they failed to take measures within the scope of their powers which, judged reasonably, might have been expected to avoid that risk (*Kurt v. Austria* [GC], 2021, § 158).

The first limb of this test requires the authorities to immediately respond to allegations of domestic violence. The authorities must establish whether there exists a real and immediate risk to the life of one or more identified victims of domestic violence by carrying out an autonomous, proactive and comprehensive risk assessment. The reality and immediacy of the risk must be assessed taking due account of the particular context of domestic violence cases.

If the outcome of the risk assessment is that there is a real and immediate risk to life, the second limb of the test - which requires the authorities to take preventive operational measures that are adequate and proportionate to the level of the risk assessed – must be met (*Kurt v. Austria* [GC], 2021, § 190).

¹ Prepared by the Registry. It does not bind the Court.

Article 2 procedural limb:

- Duty to investigate when individuals have been killed as a result of the use of force by private individuals (*Branko Tomašić and Others v. Croatia*, 2009, § 62, and *Tkheldze v. Georgia*, 2021, § 50).

Noteworthy examples

- *Kurt v. Austria* [GC], 2021 – the Court clarified the scope, and developed the content of, the State's duty to take preventive operational measures to protect an individual whose life is at risk from the criminal acts of another individual in the context of domestic violence;
- *Opuz v. Turkey*, 2009 – the Court concluded for the first time that there had been a violation of Article 14 in a case of domestic violence;
- *Talpis v. Italy*, 2017 – the Court tailored the "real and immediate risk" test to the domestic violence context (§ 122);
- *A and B v. Georgia*, 2022 – the Court underlined that when the perpetrator of domestic violence was a serving police officer and had abused his official status, the State's obligation to investigate and, where appropriate, to punish was more stringent (§ 48); see also *Gaidukevich v. Georgia*, § 61, for a recapitulation of general principles on the nature of the investigative duty where a person is killed by a non-State actor as a result of the alleged negligence of State agents;
- *Y and Others v. Bulgaria*, 2022 – the Court clarified the methodological approach when assessing the preventive operational obligation *post-Kurt* and consolidated the principles regarding gender-based discrimination (§§ 90-111 and 123-136; to similar effect, see also *Landi v. Italy*, 2022, (§§ 79-94 and 102-109) where the Court took note of the impact of legislative reform put in place following its earlier findings in *Talpis v. Italy*, 2017 (§ 103)).

Domestic violence under other Articles of the Convention

There is a natural interplay, notably, between Articles 2, 3 and 8 of the Convention in the context of domestic violence since they aim to protect from infringement of physical and psychological integrity.

Noteworthy examples:

- *Volodina v. Russia*, 2019 – (concerning Articles 3 and 14) provided a comprehensive review of case-law principles under Articles 3 and 14 in the context of domestic violence. In its discussion regarding burden of proof under Article 14, the Court finds that, once a large-scale structural bias had been shown to exist, an individual applicant did not need to prove that she had also been a victim of prejudice (see §§ 111-114 and, for recent authority, *A.E v. Bulgaria*, 2023, §§ 116-122). See also *Tunikova and Others v. Russia*, 2021, indicating general measures to address the issue of domestic violence as systemic problem (§§ 148-158).
- *Galović v. Croatia*, 2021 – (concerning Article 4 of Protocol No. 7) applied the principles established in *A and B v. Norway* [GC], 2016, §§ 130-132, regarding the conduct of dual proceedings, to the particular context of domestic violence. The Court found that the minor-offence proceedings and the criminal proceedings in question formed a coherent and proportionate whole, which enabled both the individual acts and the ongoing pattern of domestic violence to be punished in an effective, proportionate and dissuasive manner (see §§ 116 and 123).

- [J.I. v. Croatia](#), 2022 – (concerning Article 3) under the procedural limb the Court referred to the need on the part of the authorities to protect a particularly vulnerable victim of incestuous rape and domestic violence from intimidation and repeat victimisation (§ 97).

See also:

- [N. v. Sweden](#), 2010 – risk of being subjected to domestic violence if deported (Article 3);
- [Hajduová v. Slovakia](#), 2010 – threat of domestic violence (Article 8);
- [M. and M. v. Croatia](#), 2015 – domestic violence concerning a minor (Articles 3 and 8);
- [Volodina v. Russia \(no. 2\)](#), 2021 – cyberviolence in the context of domestic violence (Article 8);
- [Giuliano Germano v. Italy](#), 2023 – police caution imposed on the applicant in stalking-prevention proceedings in the context of allegations of domestic violence (Article 8, §§ 125-131).

Recap of general principles

- For a recapitulation of general principles under Article 2 see [Kurt v. Austria](#) [GC], 2021, §§ 157-190; [Y and Others v. Bulgaria](#), 2022, § 89 (abridged version for preventive operational duty);
- For a recapitulation of general principles under Article 3 see [Tunikova and Others v. Russia](#), 2021, §§ 75, 78, 86, 95, 103-105, 114 and [De Giorgi v. Italy](#), 2022, §§ 69-70 (abridged version for preventive operational duty);
- For a recapitulation of general principles under Articles 2 and 3 see [Talpis v. Italy](#), 2017, §§ 95-106;
- For a recapitulation of general principles under Article 8 see [A. v. Croatia](#), 2010, §§ 58-60 and [Malagić v. Croatia](#), 2022, §§ 56-60;
- For a recapitulation of general principles under Article 14 see [Volodina v. Russia](#), 2019, §§ 109-114; [Y and Others v. Bulgaria](#), 2022, § 122.

Further references

Other key themes:

- [Discrimination through violence \(Article 14\)](#)

Press factsheets:

- [Domestic violence](#)
- [Violence against women](#)

Other:

- [Istanbul Convention](#) (CoE website to the Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence).

KEY CASE-LAW REFERENCES

Leading case:

- *Opuz v. Turkey*, no. 33401/02, ECHR 2009 (violation of Articles 2, 3 and 14);
- *Kurt v. Austria* [GC], no. 62903/15, 15 June 2021 (no violation of Article 2).

Other cases under Article 2:

- *Kontrová v. Slovakia*, no. 7510/04, 31 May 2007 (violation of Articles 2 and 13);
- *Branko Tomašić and Others v. Croatia*, no. 46598/06, 15 January 2009 (violation of Article 2);
- *Durmaz v. Turkey*, no. 3621/07, 13 November 2014 (violation of Article 2 (procedural));
- *Civek v. Turkey*, no. 55354/11, 23 February 2016 (violation of Article 2);
- *Halime Kiliç v. Turkey*, no. 63034/11, 28 June 2016 (violation of Articles 2 and 14);
- *Talpis v. Italy*, no. 41237/14, 2 March 2017 (violation of Articles 2, 3 and 14);
- *Penati v. Italy*, no. 44166/15, 11 May 2021 (inadmissible Article 2 (substantive) and no violation of Article 2 (procedural));
- *Tkheldize v. Georgia*, no. 33056/17, 8 July 2021 (Article 2 in conjunction with Article 14, (substantive and procedural));
- *A and B v. Georgia*, no. 73975/16, 10 February 2022 (violation of Article 2 (substantive and procedural) in conjunction with Article 14);
- *Y and Others v. Bulgaria*, no. 9077/18, 22 March 2022 (violation of Article 2 (substantive); no violation of Article 14 in conjunction with Article 2);
- *Landi v. Italy*, no. 10929/19, 7 April 2022 (violation of Article 2 (substantive); no violation of Article 14 in conjunction with Article 2).

Domestic violence under other articles:

- *Bevacqua and S. v. Bulgaria*, no. 71127/01, 12 June 2008 (violation of Article 8);
- *E.S. and Others v. Slovakia*, no. 8227/04, 15 September 2009 (violation of Articles 3 and 8);
- *A. v. Croatia*, no. 55164/08, 14 October 2010 (violation of Article 8);
- *Hajduová v. Slovakia*, no. 2660/03, 30 November 2010 (violation of Article 8);
- *Kaluczka v. Hungary*, no. 57693/10, 24 April 2012 (violation of Article 8);
- *Valiulienė v. Lithuania*, no. 33234/07, 26 March 2013 (violation of Article 3);
- *Eremia v. the Republic of Moldova*, no. 3564/11, 28 May 2013 (violation of Articles 3 and 14 in respect of 1st applicant and Article 8 in respect of second and third applicants);
- *B. v. the Republic of Moldova*, no. 61382/09, 16 July 2013 (violation of Articles 3 and 8);
- *Mudric v. the Republic of Moldova*, no. 74839/10, 16 July 2013 (violation of Articles 3, and 3 in conjunction with Article 14);
- *T.M. and C.M. v. the Republic of Moldova*, no. 26608/11, 28 January 2014 (violation of Article 3 in conjunction with Article 14);
- *M. and M. v. Croatia*, no. 10161/13, ECHR 2015 (extracts) (violation of Article 3 (procedural) and no violation of Article 3 (substantive) as regards the first applicant; no violation of Article 8 as regards the second applicant; violation of Article 8 as regards the first applicant; violation of Article 8 as regards the second applicant (length of custody proceedings);

- *M.G. v. Turkey*, no. 646/10, 22 March 2016 (violation of Article 3 in conjunction with Article 14);
- *Bălșan v. Romania*, no. 49645/09, 23 May 2017 (violation of Article 3 in conjunction with Article 14);
- *Ž.B. v. Croatia*, no. 47666/13, 11 July 2017 (violation of Article 8);
- *D.M.D. v. Romania*, no. 23022/13, 3 October 2017 (violation of Article 3 (procedural); violation of Article 6 § 1);
- *Volodina v. Russia*, no. 41261/17, 9 July 2019 (violation of Article 3 in conjunction with Article 14);
- *Buturugă v. Romania*, no. 56867/15, 11 February 2020 (violation of Articles 3 and 8);
- *Volodina v. Russia (no. 2)*, no. 40419/19, 14 September 2021 (violation of Article 8);
- *Galović v. Croatia*, no. 45512/11, 31 August 2021 (no violation of Article 4 of Protocol No. 7);
- *Tunikova and Others v. Russia*, nos. 55974/16 and 3 others, 14 December 2021 (violation of Article 3 (substantive and procedural); violation of Article 14 in conjunction with Article 3);
- *De Giorgi v. Italy*, no. 23735/19, 16 June 2022 (violation of Article 3 (substantive and procedural));
- *M.S. v. Italy*, no. 32715/19, 7 July 2022 (violation of Article 3 (substantive) for the period between 19 January 2007 and 21 October 2008; no violation of Article 3 (substantive) for the remaining period; violation of Article 3 (procedural);
- *J.I. v. Croatia*, no. 35898/16, 8 September 2022 (violation of Article 3 (procedural); no need to examine the remaining complaint under Article 3; no separate issue under Article 14 in conjunction with Articles 3 or 8);
- *I.M. and Others v. Italy*, no. 25426/20, 10 November 2022 (violation of Article 8);
- *Malagić v. Croatia*, no. 29417/17, 17 November 2022 (no violation of Article 8; no separate issue under Articles 6 and 13);
- *Ghișoiu v. Romania* (dec.), no. 40228/20, 29 November 2022 (Articles 3 and 8: manifestly ill-founded);
- *A.E v. Bulgaria*, no. 53891/20, 23 May 2023 (violation of Articles 3 and 14 in conjunction with Article 3);
- *Gaidukevich v. Georgia*, no. 38650/18, 15 June 2023 (violation of Article 2 (substantive and procedural) read in conjunction with Article 14);
- *Giuliano Germano v. Italy*, no. 10794/12, 22 June 2023 (violation of Article 8).