

Challenges and impasses of the Maria da Penha Law: Analysis of the effectiveness of women's protection in the state of Bahia

https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.003-076

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to present the main challenges and impasses in the applicability of the Maria da Penha Law in the fight against domestic violence in the state of Bahia, based on a context of increasing increase in cases of domestic violence in recent years, as well as the state that has the highest percentage of victims, and, despite legislative efforts, the full application of the Maria da Penha Law thus faces several obstacles, justifying the in-depth conduct of this investigation. In this sense, the study has as its general objective to analyze the effectiveness of the Maria da Penha Law in the protection of women, as specific objectives, firstly an analysis of the legislative evolution of the defense of women in Brazil was carried out; in the second moment, an analysis of the types of violence suffered by women and the protection mechanisms in force was carried out; in the third moment, the behavior of violence against women in the state of Bahia was verified. The methodology uses a literature review, which includes analysis of already published materials and secondary data collection from databases of the Union and the Secretariat of Public Security of the State of Bahia. Therefore, research is considered an important link to contribute and fill gaps in the academic literature, presenting a graphic overview of the profile of domestic violence and highlighting the need to improve policies to combat gender violence in the region.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Domestic Violence, Feminism, Legal Guardianship, Public Policy.

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INTRODUCTION

It is known that violence against women is a phenomenon that affects women of all social classes, races and ages. According to the Public Security Yearbook (FBSP, 2023), published in 2023, all indicators of domestic violence grew in Brazil, with an increase in the percentage of 7.2% for crimes of threat, 2.9% for aggressions due to domestic violence, and 13.7% in the granting of emergency protective measures.

Thus, it was shown by the same yearbook that in 2022 there were 245,713 cases of bodily injury in the context of domestic violence in Brazil; 9,562 in the state of Bahia. In addition, there were 49,940 calls to 190, referring to complaints of domestic violence in the same state, as well as an increase of about 20% in the number of threats against women in the state of Bahia, from 39,611 cases in 2021 to 47,658 in 2022. In addition, 16,282 emergency protective measures were distributed, of which 14,922 were granted.

The Maria da Penha Law was created with the objective of creating mechanisms to curb and prevent domestic and family violence against women, aiming to ensure the protection and comprehensive assistance to women in situations of violence. The Law was named in honor of Maria da Penha Maia Fernandes, who, after suffering two attempted murders by her ex-husband, fought for the aggressor to be punished and for the Brazilian State to take measures to protect women from domestic violence.

Although the Maria da Penha Law is an important achievement, its effectiveness in protecting women is not yet fully achieved.

Despite legislative efforts and public policies aimed at combating domestic violence, there are still challenges and difficulties in the effective application of the Maria da Penha Law, highlighting the need to improve public policies for the prevention and protection of women victims of violence.

The state of Bahia presents a specific scenario in relation to violence against women, with a significant number of victims of these crimes, as well as consolidating itself as the state with the highest increase in the percentage of these victims. It is necessary, therefore, to analyze the effectiveness of the Maria da Penha Law and its challenges for the guarantee of women's rights, based on the analysis of numbers provided by research institutions and government agencies, drawing a comparison between the increase or decrease of these numbers over the years.

It is also necessary to investigate the main challenges and impasses in the applicability of the Maria da Penha Law in this context for the promotion of more effective actions to combat domestic violence in this region, contributing to the protection and comprehensive assistance of women.

In this context, the scope of this research is to elucidate the main challenges and impasses in the applicability of the Maria da Penha Law and in the fight against domestic violence in the state of Bahia.



This study seeks to fill a gap in the academic literature by analyzing in a concrete and graphic way the profile of aggressions practiced in the domestic sphere, as well as a comparative analysis of the number of cases in the state of Bahia between the last few years. Based on this analysis, it is intended to identify the causes of the effective inapplicability of the protection of victims of violence. Based on these results, it is expected to provide subsidies for the formulation of more effective public policies to combat domestic violence and to guarantee women's rights.

This study is characterized by a qualitative approach, adopting literature review as a research method. The methodological procedure consists of the analysis of already published materials, including books, scientific articles, official documents and legislation related to the theme of domestic violence. In addition, a survey of secondary data was carried out through specialized websites, non-governmental organizations and institutions that work in the area, as well as published studies that document cases of domestic violence specifically in the state of Bahia.

The selection of sources prioritized publications that addressed the most common types of violence identified in the Bahian context. The criterion for inclusion of the documents was based on their relevance to the theme, topicality, and scientific contribution. On the other hand, the analysis of the collected data sought to identify patterns, frequencies and characteristics of domestic violence, aiming at a broad understanding of the phenomenon and its regional particularities.

HISTORICAL BIAS ON WOMEN'S PATRIMONIALIZATION

Throughout history, there has been a propensity to assign a subordinate status to women, often relegating them to the role of property or object of control, whether by society, family or partner.

In this sense, Engels (1984) presents a retrospective of family history, suggesting that there was a period of promiscuity in which relationships were shared without restrictions, men and women belonged to each other. For a long time, this reality was denied in order to preserve the male image, with arguments that even compared this promiscuity with lower animal species, ignoring the variety of sexual life forms found in mammals, including promiscuity, group union, monogamy and polygamy, as well as polyandry, exclusive to human beings (Engels, 1984).

According to Engels (1984), group marriage, characterized by mutual ownership between men and women, allowed relations without the constraints of today, including common incest. Over time, group unions gave way to the syndiasmic family, allowing polygamy for men and imposing severe punishments on women for adultery (Engels, 1984).

As ancient sexual relations lose their innocence due to economic development, the decomposition of ancient communism, and population growth, women seek the right to chastity and monogamous marriage (Engels, 1984).



The domestication of animals in the past, according to Engels (1984), generates new wealth and social relations, leading to changes in the family structure. The transformation of these riches into family property affects synasmic marriage and the matriarchy-based gens, resulting in the shift to patrilineal filiation and male hereditary law (Engels, 1984).

According to Engels (1984), with the man taking control of the household, the woman was degraded to a position of servitude, transformed into a mere instrument of reproduction and devoid of power. The female subaltern condition, evident in ancient Greece, remained, although disguised and attenuated in some contexts (Engels, 1984).

The essential feature of the family in question is its organization under paternal authority, involving both free individuals and slaves. To ensure fidelity and paternity, women are subjected to male domination (Engels, 1984).

The monogamous family is distinguished from syndicated marriage by more solid conjugal bonds, which can only be broken by the man, also conferring on him the right to infidelity. The position of women is degraded, and she is punished harshly if she tries to reintroduce old sexual practices. In this way, monogamy emerges as a form of enslavement of one sex by the other and evolves into the insertion of wage labor, accompanied by prostitution (Engels, 1984).

Monogamy allowed the emergence of modern sexual love, but not just as mutual love between spouses. In contemporary bourgeois marriage, according to Engels (1984), two approaches stand out: in Catholic countries, the parents choose the partner, leading to a pronounced male heteroterism and growing adultery in women; in Protestant countries, love is the basis of marriage, often masking hypocrisy (Engels, 1984).

The rise of industry has removed women from the home, altering the dynamics of male supremacy in the proletarian home, while modern legislation recognizes free and equal marriage contracts (Engels, 1984).

As far as marriage is concerned, even the most progressive legislation is considered to be entirely satisfied from the moment when the parties concerned have formally recorded their free consent. What goes on behind the scenes of the courtroom, in real life, and how this consent is expressed, are not questions that concern the law or the legislator (Engels, 1984).

Legal inequality, which we have inherited from previous social conditions, is not a cause but an effect of the economic oppression of women. [...] In the family, the man is the bourgeois and the woman represents the proletarian. In the same way, the particular character of the predominance of men over women in the modern family, as well as the necessity and manner of establishing an effective social equality between them, will only manifest themselves clearly when man and woman have, by law, absolutely equal rights. It is then that we must see that the liberation of women requires, as a first condition, the reincorporation of the entire female sex into social industry, which, in turn, requires the suppression of the individual family as the economic unit of society (Engels, 1984, p. 79-81).



Progress in the succession of forms of marriage was characterized by the progressive withdrawal of sexual freedom from women, but not from men. Before the Middle Ages, individual sexual love did not exist as we know it today, differing from ancient sexual desire by reciprocity and intensity (Engels, 1984).

According to the bourgeois concept, marriage was a contract of law, proclaiming it as a human right based on love, including as a right of women. Progress has moved from an inherited status to a freely consented contract, but this requires equality and freedom of disposition (Engels, 1984).

ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S DEFENSE LAWS IN BRAZIL FEMINIST EVOLUTION AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT IN BRAZIL

The evolution of women's rights in Brazil is a historical process marked by challenges, achievements, and significant transformations. Over the decades, women have fought tirelessly for recognition, equality, and justice in a society that, for too long, has perpetuated entrenched gender inequalities.

In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir released "The Second Sex," analyzing female oppression, psychological evolution, and circumstantial factors. As early as 1963, Betty Friedan published "The Feminine Mystique," denouncing the oppression of women in industrial society and taking up Beauvoir's ideas. These works boosted the feminist movement globally, weakening traditional perceptions about the role of women and amplifying contemporary women's thought, resulting in vigorous social movements (Alves; Alves, 2013).

The first Brazilian feminist activists, such as Bertha Lutz and Nísia Floresta, paved the way for discussions on the right to vote, education and gender equality. Their struggles paved the way for later achievements, such as women's right to vote in 1932 and the incorporation of gender equality principles into the 1988 Constitution (Costa, 2006).

The second phase of the feminist movement covers the period from 1960 to 1990, a historical moment in which feminist activists reassumed a prominent role, promoting social analyses of the place of women both in the family and in society in general (Souza, 2022).

Under the motto "the personal is political", this phase highlighted that private issues were relevant in the public arena. This has led to demands for women's financial independence, empowerment and control over their bodies, as well as full recognition of women's rights, including a life free from violence (Souza, 2022).

Despite the remarkable advances of the feminist movement in Brazil and around the world over the decades, deep inequalities between men and women persist, rooted in gender prejudices and



machismo. Feminism challenges the traditional roles of women and stands out as an independent movement, focused on women's interests (Alves; Alves, 2013).

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND THEIR EVOLUTION IN BRAZILIAN LEGISLATION

The course of Brazilian society was shaped by social, religious, and historical influences, resulting in a patriarchal system driven by machismo. This favored men in both the private and public spheres, while subjugating women to submission.

Faced with this scenario, the need to implement laws that would guarantee women equal rights, as well as legislative changes that would ensure them greater protection, was evident.

The legislative evolution in Brazil in relation to women's rights is marked by several important milestones. The "General Law" of 1827 allowed the existence of schools for girls, making their education possible. In 1932, the "New Election Code" expanded women's political rights, guaranteeing the right to vote and electoral participation. The "Inter-American Convention on Women's Civil Rights" of 1949 established gender equality, which was incorporated into Brazil in 1952 (Souza, 2022).

The Federal Constitution of 1988 brought advances, including gender equality, equal pay, and measures against domestic violence. The 1994 "Belém do Pará Convention" aimed to combat gender-based violence, followed by the criminalization of sexual harassment at work in 2001 (Souza, 2022).

The "New Civil Code" of 2002 eliminated patriarchal interpretations, seeking gender equality. In 2006, the "Maria da Penha Law" recognized forms of domestic violence. Law No. 12,015/2009 expanded the Penal Code to sexual crimes, while Decree No. 7,393/2010 launched the "Women's Service Center - Call 180" (Souza, 2022). The "Carolina Dieckmann Law" of 2012 punished invasions of devices, and Law No. 13,104/2015 typified "Femicide". In 2021, Law No. 14,132/2021 criminalized "Stalking", and Law No. 14,188/2021 prohibited psychological violence. The "Mariana Ferrer Law" (Law No. 14,245/2021) protected victims in hearings on sexual crimes, while Law No. 14,214/2021 instituted the "Program for the Protection and Promotion of Menstrual Health" (Souza, 2022). In 2023, Resolution No. 492 of the CNJ instituted the protocol for trial with a gender perspective, which brought as its main change, that of ensuring a fair trial for victims. This prevents them from being humiliated or subjected to vexatious treatment, such as what was seen in the Mariana Ferrer case (Mendes, 2023):

It violates the victim's right to the extent that he is questioned with questions asked, as if they were really shots coming from a firearm, during a hearing or even for what is brought into the case file. So, this perspective, this possibility of bringing to light a role that also needs to be played by the magistrate is fundamental: not to admit this type of behavior (Mendes, 2023, s.p.).



In view of the above, it can be observed that it took almost 200 years for us to effectively have laws to protect women, taking into account that much is still needed. Brazil's long history of gender inequality, dating back to the colonial and slave periods, created a context where change was necessary but difficult to achieve.

In this context, a timeline was developed to better represent the evolution of women's defense laws, as shown in Figure 1.

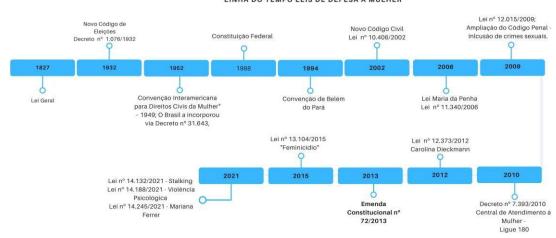


Figure 1: Timeline – Laws for the defense of women

Source: Prepared by the author based on legislation enacted by the National Congress.

Thus, it can be observed that before the 1988 Constitution, the laws for the protection of women in Brazil were at an incipient stage. The most significant breakthrough came in 1932 with the "New Election Code," which granted women the right to vote and to be elected.

However, these changes focused primarily on women's political rights, while issues of gender equality in other spheres of society were still largely neglected. It was only after the 1988 Constitution that there was a significant transformation in women's protection laws in Brazil, establishing a solid foundation for gender equality, covering areas such as work without discrimination, equal pay, extended maternity leave, and action against domestic violence.

In this sense, public defender Noêmia Landim (2022), head of Nudem in the State of Ceará, highlights the relevance of recent laws created in favor of women, however, according to her, the challenges in implementing these regulations still persist in large numbers (Landim, 2022):

Women's rights are constantly evolving. [...] So, since the Maria da Penha Law was published, we have had the placement of the crime of femicide as a qualifier of the crime of homicide. In 2018 we had [...] the creation of the crime of non-compliance with protective measures. [...] In 2020, we had an expansion of protective measures. All these innovations are not enough to change the situation of this sexist culture, this patriarchal culture (Landim, 2022, s.p.).



In this context, the enactment of the Maria da Penha Law in 2006 was an urgent and necessary response to the epidemic of violence against women in Brazil. As Dias and Souza (2010) rightly assert, before the enactment of the law in question, domestic violence was not treated as a crime, only cases of bodily injury resulting from domestic relations were punished more rigorously (Penal Code, article 129, paragraph 9) (Dias; Souza, 2010).

The survey carried out with the Specialized Police Stations for Assistance to Women (DEAMs) in 2005 revealed an alarming reality, with 55,000 cases of violence registered in the country's capitals alone. However, this number increased to 160,824 when the other cities were included, demonstrating the scale of the problem (Senado, n.d.).

It is essential to note that these numbers represented only 27% of the existing DEAMs, which indicates that many cases of violence were not reported. This underreporting was related to feelings of fear, shame and skepticism regarding the effectiveness of reporting, reinforcing the urgent need for specific legislation that would protect women and encourage reporting of assaults (Senado, n.d.).

Law 11.340/06, known as the Maria da Penha Law, has its origins linked to the history of Maria da Penha Maia Fernandes, born in Fortaleza-CE in 1945. Her marriage to Marco Antonio Heredia Viveros, which began in 1976, was initially marked by kindness, but evolved into a cycle of domestic violence with increased tension, violent acts, regret, and tender moments (IMP, 2018).

Maria da Penha's trajectory included two attempts of femicide by Marco Antonio: The first left her paraplegic, and the second involved private imprisonment and attempted electrocution (IMP, 2018).

Maria da Penha's complaint faced legal obstacles, with Marco Antonio's first trial taking place only in 1991, eight years after the crime. He was initially released due to defense appeals, and was finally sentenced in 1996 to 10 years and 6 months in prison (IMP, 2018).

Maria da Penha's story has become a symbol in the fight against the impunity of aggressors and the lack of protection for victims of domestic violence in Brazil. This narrative influenced the enactment of the Maria da Penha Law in 2006, highlighting the need for more effective measures to combat domestic violence and protect victims (IMP, 2018).

In this context, the jurist Alice Bianchini points out that:

It is important to highlight Maria da Penha's struggle for justice and the right to a dignified life without violence, because her courage, including and especially to take the case to an international level, allowed her to draft our law, considered one of the three most advanced in the world when it comes to combating domestic and family violence against women. This law was elaborated and thought of as a public policy of prevention and protection of women victims, and not as a punitive law (Bianchini; Ferreira, n.d., p.11).

In this sense, Law 11.340/2006 is a comprehensive legislation composed of seven titles that address various aspects related to domestic and family violence against women. Title I defines the



scope of the law, highlighting the joint responsibility of the family, society and public authorities in protecting women's rights. Title II typifies the different forms of aggression as domestic violence, while Title III addresses assistance to women victims, including preventive measures, police assistance, and social support (Brasil, 2006)

Title IV focuses on judicial proceedings and emergency protective measures. Title V establishes the creation of Courts for Domestic and Family Violence against Women, with multidisciplinary teams. Title VI deals with the transitional rules, and Title VII finalizes the law with several provisions, integrating support resources and the collection of statistics (Brasil, 2006)

With the implementation of the Maria da Penha Law, emergency protective measures, such as preventive detention and removal of the aggressor, began to be applied more effectively, resulting in an increase in complaints and the registration of cases of violence. Police authorities, health professionals, and social assistance agencies received specific training to deal with cases of domestic violence, which contributed to more reliable and representative data of reality, allowing for accurate monitoring of the situation and guiding public policies aimed at protecting women (Senado, n.d.)

In addition, the changes proposed in Law No. 14,550, of April 19, 2023 (Brasil, 2023), which modify the Maria da Penha Law have significant implications in the Brazilian legal context and in the protection of victims of domestic violence, *in verbis*:

LAW NO. 14,550, OF APRIL 19, 2023

[...] Art. 19:

§ 4 Emergency protective measures shall be granted in a court of summary cognition based on the testimony of the offended party before the police authority or the presentation of her written allegations and may be rejected in the event of an assessment by the authority of the non-existence of risk to the physical, psychological, sexual, patrimonial or moral integrity of the offended party or her dependents.

§ 5 Emergency protective measures shall be granted regardless of the criminal classification of violence, the filing of a criminal or civil action, the existence of a police investigation or the registration of a police report.

§ 6 Emergency protective measures shall be in force as long as there is a risk to the physical, psychological, sexual, patrimonial or moral integrity of the offended party or their dependents." (NR)

Article 2 Law No. 11,340, of August 7, 2006 (Maria da Penha Law), is hereby enacted with the addition of the following article 40-A:

Article 40-A. This Law shall apply to all situations provided for in Article 5, regardless of the cause or motivation of the acts of violence and the condition of the offender or the offended party (Brasil, 2023).

Recent amendments to the Maria da Penha Law simplify the process of granting emergency protective measures, allowing them to be granted based on the victim's statement to the police authority or their written allegations, regardless of criminal or civil actions, police investigations, or occurrence records (Brasil, 2023).



An important innovation is the expansion of the scope of the Law, applying it to all situations provided for in Article 5, without considering the cause of the acts of violence and the condition of the aggressor or victim. This broader scope aims to protect all victims of domestic violence, regardless of specific circumstances (Brasil, 2023).

These changes represent a significant step forward in the protection of victims of domestic violence in Brazil, reinforcing the commitment to combat this persistent problem and promote gender equality.

ANALYSIS OF THE TYPES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND LEGAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS FOR THE PROTECTION OF VICTIMS

CLASSIFICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The issue of types of violence against women is a crucial aspect in the understanding of contemporary social dynamics. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), violence is defined as the "intentional use of physical force, threat or act that causes injury, death, psychological damage, disability or deprivation", and can encompass a diversity of contexts and forms of aggression. (Dahlberg; Krug, 2006) In the context of violence against women, the WHO expands this definition, characterizing it as any "gender-based act that results in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, in both public and private life" (PAHO, n.d.). This comprehensive definition underscores the importance of recognizing both the explicit and subtle manifestations of gender-based violence.

In this regard, according to data presented by the Brazilian Forum on Public Security (FBSP), the least safe place for women is inside their own home, since about 53.8% of women who suffered some type of violence stated that the most serious episode occurred at home (FBSPa, 2023):

This percentage showed an increase of more than 10 percentage points compared to the first edition of the survey, conducted in 2017, when 43.3% of women responded that they had been victims of violence in their homes. In the 2021 edition, whose analyzed period included the height of social isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic, 48.8% of the violence suffered happened at home. [...] The residence is the main stage not only of the violence analyzed by the research, but also of the most serious type of violence, lethal: as shown in the 16th Brazilian Yearbook of Public Security, in 2021, 65.6% of femicides occurred in homes (FBSPa, 2023 apud FBSP, 2022b, p.30).

According to the same report, "The main perpetrators of violence are partners and ex-partners, who, together, are responsible for 58.1% of cases" (FBSPa, 2023, p.31). According to Mendes (2023) "The existence of "stereotypes" around the figure of women directly interferes in the judicial process - from investigation to trial - and is also linked to an idea that "women, incredible as it may seem, provoke their own violence" (Mendes, 2023).



The Maria da Penha Law establishes five categories of domestic and family violence against women: physical, psychological, moral, sexual and patrimonial (Chapter II, art. 7, items I-V). These different types of aggression do not occur in isolation, but often intertwine, resulting in significant impacts on women's lives (Brasil, 2006).

Physical violence, the first category, encompasses actions that threaten women's bodily integrity or health and ranges from aggression such as beating, strangulation, to injuries caused by weapons or sharp objects (Brasil, 2006). According to data from the Brazilian Public Security Yearbook (FBSPb, 2023), in 2022, 9,562 cases of bodily injury in the context of domestic violence were registered in the State of Bahia (FBSPb, 2023).

Next, psychological violence involves behaviors that cause emotional damage, undermine self-esteem, hinder personal development, and seek to control women's decisions and actions. (Brazil, 2006). Often, the person who suffers this form of aggression does not realize that offensive words, long periods of silence, tensions, manipulation of actions and desires, are all forms of violence that fall under the protections provided for in the Maria da Penha Law (Dias, 2016).

The legal protection is for the victim's self-esteem and psychological health. It consists of emotional aggression, which is as serious or more serious than physical violence. It occurs when the perpetrator threatens, rejects, humiliates, or discriminates against the victim. She shows pleasure when she sees her feeling afraid, inferiorized and diminished (Dias, 2016, p.7).

In this context, in 2022 there were 613,529 situations of threats with female victims in Brazil; of these, 47,658 were identified in Bahia (FBSPb, 2023).

In the sphere of sexual violence, the third category, there are acts that coerce women to participate in, witness or maintain unwanted sexual relations through intimidation, threat, coercion or force. This ranges from rape to the imposition of uncomfortable sexual acts, as well as manipulations aimed at forcing marriage, pregnancy or prostitution (Brasil, 2006).

In this context, Dias (2016) highlights:

Historically, there has always been resistance to admitting the possibility of sexual violence in the context of affective bonds. The tendency is still to identify the exercise of sexuality as one of the duties of marriage, to legitimize the man's insistence, as if he were exercising a right. The horrible expression "marital debt" seems to endorse this procedure, as if the woman had the duty to submit to the sexual desire of the couple (Dias, 2016, p.8).

Thus, due to the mistaken idea of seeing sexual subordination as an intrinsic obligation of marriage, the practice of rape by the spouse was not even identified, leading especially men to demand this obligation from their partners even through the use of physical force (Dias, 2016).

Property violence, on the other hand, involves conduct that retains, destroys or harms women's assets, values and economic resources. This includes practices such as the control of money,



the deprivation of necessary resources, and even the deliberate destruction of objects important to it (Brasil, 2006).

Finally, moral violence closes the list, including actions such as defamation, slander and injury, which affect the reputation and dignity of women, such as accusing them of betrayal, exposing their intimate life and issuing moral judgments about their conduct. (Brazil, 2006). According to Dias (2016):

Moral violence is always an affront to self-esteem and social recognition, presenting itself in the form of disqualification, inferiority or ridicule. In the face of new information technologies, the internet and social networks, moral violence against women has acquired new dimensions.

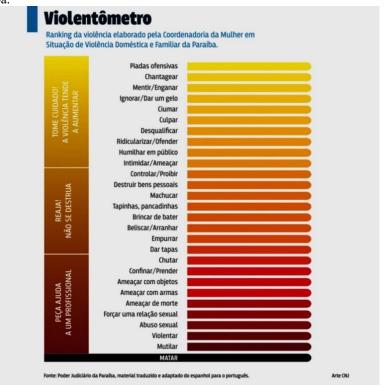
These are offenses disseminated in virtual spaces and on social networks (Dias, 2016, p. 10-11)

In 2018, the Court of Justice of Paraíba (TJPB) made available a visual resource called "Violentómetro" in the context of domestic violence, an instrument that plays a fundamental role in categorizing the various types of violence that can occur in family and intimate relationships (Otoni, 2018).

The classification provided by the *Violentómetro* (Otoni, 2018) helps victims to identify and understand more accurately the different signs of abuse, while promoting reporting and seeking appropriate assistance. In addition, the Violentometer helps professionals working in the legal and social assistance spheres to adopt a more precise and effective approach to the prevention, intervention, and punishment of domestic violence, always with the objective of ensuring the protection and well-being of victims (Otoni, 2018), as shown in Figure 2:



Figure 2: Violentometer: Ranking of violence prepared by the Coordination of Women in Situations of Domestic and Family Violence of Paraíba.



Source: National Council of Justice - CNJ (2018).

These manifestations of violence, present in both the public and private spheres, not only harm individual women, but also point to the persistent culture of discrimination and gender inequality ingrained in our society.

For a better understanding of this phenomenon, as Bianchini (2010) states, it is essential to recognize that violence against women follows a pattern that involves three distinct phases: (1) the beginning of tension, (2) the escalation to maximum tension and, finally, (3) reconciliation (Bianchini, 2010).

The intensity and frequency of aggression increase progressively, and this varies according to the circumstances of the couple's life. However, regardless of the variables that influence these circumstances, it has been observed that the cyclical repetition of these stages tends to aggravate violence, making it more severe and recurrent (Bianchini, 2010).

In addition, Bianchini (2010) describes the factors that usually lead women who are victims of domestic violence to remain in an abusive relationship, highlighting:

[...] fear that the aggressor will become even more violent, making threats if the aggressor denounces or abandons him; hope that the aggressor will change his behaviour by stopping the aggression; concern about maintaining the integrity of the family and shame of publicly exposing episodes of violence (Bianchini, 2010, s.p.).

In summary, the phenomenon of violence against women follows a cycle characterized by phases of increased tension, followed by episodes of aggression and subsequent reconciliation,



regardless of the circumstances involved. This recurrence in the cycle tends to aggravate violence over time, resulting in victims persisting in abusive relationships due to fear of threats, hope for change on the part of the abuser, concerns about family, and embarrassment.

Thus, addressing this issue requires a deep understanding of this pattern and the availability of compassionate support for victims seeking to break the cycle of abuse.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE STATE OF BAHIA

As already demonstrated, violence against women is an alarming problem that persists in our country, and the state of Bahia is no exception. With a rich and diverse culture, Bahia faces significant challenges when it comes to women's safety and well-being.

According to the Map of Gender Violence (2019), data on violence against women in Bahia already showed a situation during the period between 2014 and 2017, in which 32,758 cases of physical violence were registered in the state, of which women represented a significant portion, totaling 59% of the victims (MVG, 2019).

In addition, between 1996 and 2016, a total of 69,483 homicides were registered in the Mortality Information System (SIM) in Bahia, with women representing 7% of the victims. (MVG, 2019). Also, regarding the location of the homicides, 26% of the women died inside their homes, compared to 8% of the men. These data reveal the complexity of the issue of gender violence in Bahia and the pressing need for actions aimed at the prevention and protection of women in the state (MVG, 2019).

Thus, it is notorious that women's lives in Bahia are constantly threatened due to a society deeply rooted in machismo, which perpetuates the conception of women as submissive. This reality is evidenced by the alarming 1,975 cases of violence against women recorded by the Network of Security Observatories in 2021, coinciding with the 15th anniversary of the Maria da Penha Law (CESEC, 2022).

This sad scenario reveals that there was a case of violence against women every five hours during 2021, a punishment inflicted on those who defy the expectations imposed on them, often by partners or ex-partners, or who are objectified (CESEC, 2022).

In a set of 16,536 monitored cases, the category "femicide and violence against women" accounted for 1,975 occurrences, representing 12% of the total news monitored (CESEC, 2022).

As for motivation, it was identified that fights (21%), relationship breakups (14%) and jealousy (8%) were pointed out as the three main causes. Partners and ex-partners were the main aggressors (65%) and murderers (64%) of women, reflecting a colonial heritage rooted in society (CESEC, 2022).



Bahia, in particular, has witnessed cases of femicide that have gained great visibility in the local media, such as the tragic episodes involving young people such as Ana Gabriela Santos Ribeiro and Kezia Stefany da Silva Ribeiro, whose deaths were caused because they were women and whose aggressors were relationship partners (CESEC, 2022).

It is also worth mentioning that there were nine recorded cases of violence motivated by "alleged betrayal", such as in the tragic episode involving Valdenice Alves de Novais, who was buried alive by her partner, allegedly out of jealousy (CESEC, 2022).

It is crucial to point out that cases of sexual violence and rape, such as that of Erika Batista, whose rape resulted in death, are only the tip of the iceberg, as many victims face obstacles to reporting, due to shame and fear of exposure, as well as the slowness of the justice system in prosecuting and convicting the aggressors (CESEC, 2022).

In addition, the Secretariat of Public Security of the State of Bahia (2021) conducted a survey on the analysis of the behavior of crimes investigated in the context of violence against women, which represents a fundamental study to understand the dynamics and trends over the period analyzed (SSP/BA, 2021)

In 2021, the SSP/BA found 34,081 cases of threats against women and 12,772 victims of intentional bodily injury, as well as 119 attempts of femicide and 88 cases of femicide (SSP/BA, 2021). In 2022, there were 47,347 cases of threats against women and 22,485 victims of intentional bodily injury, in addition to 176 cases of attempted femicide and 108 cases of consummated femicide (SSP/BA, 2022).

The survey carried out by "Elas Vivem", in 2022, identified that Bahia was the state with the highest growth rate, compared to the 2021 bulletin, with a variation of 58% and at least one case per day (CESeC, 2023). It also reported that about 75% of the crimes were committed by partners or expartners of the victims and that the main motivations are fights and relationship breakups (CESeC, 2023).

Here, it is worth highlighting an important decision of the Supreme Court of Justice in this context, which provides for the increase of sentence as a result of the turpitude evidenced in threats made by the aggressor of the victim of domestic violence due to the non-acceptance of the end of the relationship, let's see the menu of the AgRg in HC 652779:

REGIMENTAL APPEAL IN HABEAS CORPUS. AGGRAVATED DECISION WHICH WAS NOT HEARD BY THE WRIT. THREAT IN THE CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. DOSIMETRY. BASE PENALTY. CONCRETE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT DENOTE THE GREATER REPREHENSIBILITY OF THE CONDUCT AND JUSTIFY THE EXASPERATION OF THE BASE PENALTY. PROPORTIONAL THRESHOLD. INITIAL REGIME. INCREASE. CONCRETE AND SUITABLE REASONING. ILLEGALITIES NOT CONFIGURED.

REGIMENTAL APPEAL NOT GRANTED. 1. The dosimetry of the sentence falls within a judgment of the judge's discretion, linked to the factual particularities of the concrete case and the subjective particularities of the agent, which can only be reviewed by this Court in



the case of non-compliance with the legal parameters or flagrant disproportionality. [...] 3. In this case, the motives for the crime were effectively more serious, insofar as the threats were externalized due to the end of the romantic relationship between the patient and the victim, which reveals turpitude, as well as due to the more serious circumstances of the criminal practice, which led to the exposure of the intimacy of the offended party. 4. Brazilian law does not provide for a fixed percentage for the increase of the base sentence due to the recognition of an unfavorable judicial circumstance, and it is up to the judge, within his or her free motivated conviction, to weigh the circumstances and quantify the penalty, observing the principles of proportionality and reasonableness. Previous. [...] 8. Regimental appeal not granted. (STJ - AgRg no HC: 652779 SC 2021/0078955-1, Rapporteur: Justice REYNALDO SOARES DA FONSECA, Judgment Date: 09/14/2021, T5 - FIFTH PANEL, Publication Date: DJe 09/20/2021)

Finally, in 2023, the Secretariat identified, in the period from January to August alone, more than 36 thousand cases of threats against women and more than 15 thousand victims of bodily injury in Bahia. In addition, in the first half of the year, there were 128 attempts of femicide and 62 victims of consummated femicide, in addition to 5 cases of bodily injury followed by death in the same state (SSP/BA, 2023).

The dissemination of alarming data on femicides, assaults, rapes and threats clearly demonstrate that policies for the prevention and protection of women need to be reinvigorated and expanded. The most recent figures reported by the Secretariat of Public Security only reinforce the need for comprehensive measures to combat gender-based violence in Bahia.

The introduction of a comparative graph, presenting the worrying data on violence against women in Bahia, is a fundamental step towards a more impactful and enlightening visual analysis. With this graph presented in figure 3, we can clearly observe the evolution of these indicators in the 2021-2023 periods, which will expand our understanding of the problem, as shown in Figure 3, let's see:



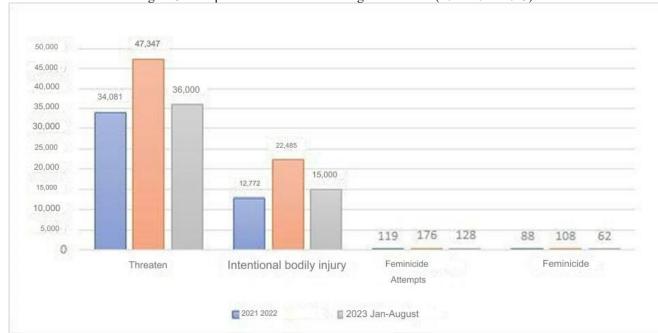


Figure 3: Comparative chart – Violence against women (2021-2022-2023)

Source: Prepared by the author based on data from the Department of Public Security of the State of Bahia.

The graphic data present information that points to a challenge to be faced by Bahian society, highlighting the urgency of comprehensive measures to combat gender-based violence, protect victims and promote a cultural change that leads to a safer and more equal society for all women in Bahia.

In the period from 2021 to 2022, there was a significant increase in cases of threats, intentional bodily injury, attempts and consummation of femicide. The numbers jumped from 34,081 cases of threats in 2021 to 47,347 in 2022, and victims of intentional bodily injury grew from 12,772 to 22,485. Attempts at femicide also increased significantly, from 119 to 176, as well as completed cases, which rose from 88 to 108. This abrupt growth suggests an escalation of gender-based violence in the region.

In 2023, even considering only the period from January to August, the data indicate a continuation of this worrying trajectory. More than 36,000 cases of threats and more than 15,000 victims of bodily harm have been recorded. In addition, there were 128 attempted femicides and 62 completed cases. These figures, if projected for the entire year, suggest a possible intensification of the problem.

Analysis of the data reveals a critical situation that requires immediate and effective action by the authorities and society at large. The fight against gender-based violence must be approached in a multidimensional way, aiming not only at punishment, but also at preventing and transforming the structures that feed this phenomenon.



MEANS OF PROTECTION FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The recognition of violence against women as a social and public health problem has driven the demand for government action in the spheres of safety, rights, and health.

Exploring the initiatives of institutions and support networks in response to female victimization, the Brazilian Forum on Public Security (FBSPa) addressed the reaction of the interviewees to serious aggressions in the last 12 months. The most prevalent result, accounting for 45% in the latest surveys, was the "did nothing" option, compared to 52% in 2017 and 2019. It is notable that a significant portion of victims still choose to remain silent, indicating that the fear of reporting persists, despite the existing specialized police stations (FBSPa, 2023).

Another set of questions focused on the reasons that prevented the interviewees from resorting to police institutions after the act of violence. The data revealed that 38% resolved the situation on their own, 21.3% did not trust police effectiveness, and 14.4% mentioned the absence of substantial evidence (FBSPa, 2023). This approach highlights that even with the presence of specialized resources, there is still a gap in victims' trust in these institutions in the face of the violations suffered (FBSPa, 2023).

In this regard, we can analyze that the defense of women against gender violence involves other procedural tools and legal resources in the country.

In addition to the aforementioned laws that aim to curb violence against women, there are also the so-called DEAMs (Specialized Police Stations for Women), which are specialized police stations located in several states of Brazil, of which 15 are located in Bahia, where victims of gender violence can file complaints and denunciations (Jornal do Sudoeste, 2019).

In addition, Call 180 offers support and specialized listening to women in situations of violence, registering and forwarding complaints to the competent authorities, in addition to receiving complaints, suggestions and compliments about the care services (Bianchini; Ferreira, n.d.).

In addition, Law 14,316/22 allocates at least 5% of the resources of the National Public Security Fund (FNSP) to combat violence against women. Initiatives include shelters, police stations, a public defender's office, medical care, funding for rehabilitation centers for abusers, and domestic violence awareness campaigns (Câmara, 2022).

In addition, there are also the "Brazilian Women's Houses", which offer services such as reception, screening, psychosocial support, police station, specialized court, Public Prosecutor's Office, Public Defender's Office, economic support, child care, temporary accommodation and transportation.

In addition, the "Services for Assistance to Women Victims of Sexual Violence - SAMVVIS" offer free support, through the SUS, to rape victims, including disease prophylaxis, medical



examinations, pregnancy prevention up to 72 hours after the incident, legal termination of pregnancy and psychosocial support (Bianchini; Ferreira, n.d.).

In the state of Bahia, women in situations of violence still have a variety of support and assistance services available. Among these options, the Reference Center for Women's Care (CRAM), present in Salvador and 31 municipalities in Bahia, stands out, which offers free assistance, including legal support, multidisciplinary services, psychological and social help (Jornal do Sudoeste, 2019).

Added to this, there is the NUDEM - Women's Defense Center, acting in medium and long-term emergencies, and the Special Action Group in Defense of Women (GEDEM), of the Bahian Public Prosecutor's Office, which also play essential roles in the protection of women's rights (Jornal do Sudoeste, 2019).

The State Coordination of Women, established by the Court of Justice of Bahia, and organizations such as "TamoJuntas" and "Coletivo Helenas" offer free legal, psychological and social support in various locations in the state. These initiatives aim to guarantee the rights and promote the necessary support for women in vulnerable situations (Jornal do Sudoeste, 2019).

In addition, Bianchini (n.d.) goes back to the importance of dialoguing with aggressors and offering help to change their stance in order to reduce violence against women, with the growing involvement of reflective groups on masculinity in Brazil:

In all these cases of violence, in addition to helping the victim and formalizing the complaint in the indicated and specialized channels for such care, it is necessary to talk to the man who perpetrated the violence. A crucial step in reducing the rates of violence against women is to also offer them some kind of help to change their attitude. [...] We are all within the same sexist and patriarchal system and, strange as it may seem, many men do not understand that their violent actions are wrong. A very interesting episode of the program Profissão Repórter, on the Globo television station, broadcast at the end of July 2021, shows some of the work done by the Tempo de Despertar project, which brings together men who respond for aggression to question their violent standards of masculinity (Bianchini; Ferreira, n.d., p.34).

Added to this, Article 695 of the Code of Civil Procedure (2015), by providing for the summons of the defendant to appear at the mediation and conciliation hearing in divorce proceedings, establishes an important modification in the summons process, let's see the provision:

Art. 695. Once the initial petition has been received and, if applicable, the measures regarding the provisional relief have been taken, the judge will order the defendant to be summoned to appear at the mediation and conciliation hearing, in compliance with the provisions of article 694.

§ 1 The writ of summons shall contain only the data necessary for the hearing and shall be unaccompanied by a copy of the initial petition, ensuring the defendant the right to examine its content at any time (Brasil, 2015).



This modification to Article 695 of the CPC, which separates the initial petition from the writ of summons, aims to prevent the respondent spouse from having immediate access to the full content of the claim, especially in cases of allegations of domestic violence. In addition, the change seeks to prevent the requesting spouse from being the target of reprisals from the requested spouse, providing greater security.

This amendment reflects the legislator's concern with the physical and psychological integrity of the parties, going beyond the criminal sphere and contributing to a safer environment in the divorce process. Article 695 of the CPC represents a step forward in the protection of victims, effectively addressing sensitive issues, such as violence against women, in the civil sphere.

In addition, article 14-A, introduced by Law No. 13,894/2019 to the Maria da Penha Law, plays a prominent role in providing an essential mechanism to ensure the safety and integrity of women seeking divorce in situations of violence, *in verbis*:

Article 14-A. The aggrieved party has the option of filing an action for divorce or dissolution of a common-law union in the Court of Domestic and Family Violence against Women. § 1 The claim related to the division of property is excluded from the jurisdiction of the Courts of Domestic and Family Violence against Women. § 2 If the situation of domestic and family violence begins after the filing of the divorce or dissolution of a common-law union action, the action will be preferred in the court where it is (Brasil, 2019).

Thus, by allowing divorce actions in the Domestic Violence Court and prioritizing violence actions, the provision strengthens the protection of women and contributes to the promotion of the safety and dignity of the victim.

These measures are not only in line with the purpose of the Maria da Penha Law, but also establish safe support mechanisms for victims of violence, representing notable advances in addressing and combating gender-based violence, thus contributing to the effective eradication of domestic violence in Brazil.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In the course of this study, an in-depth analysis of the applicability of the Maria da Penha Law in the State of Bahia and the challenges that affect the effectiveness of the protection of Bahian women was carried out. Several complexities were identified and, at the same time, solutions and alternatives were suggested to address them effectively.

One of the notable difficulties lies in the historical roots of gender inequality, which can be traced back to Brazil's historical patriarchy. This patriarchy contributed to the creation of a culture that often subjugated women, relegating them to the role of property rather than citizens with equal rights.



This structural inequality had an influence on both legislation and social norms, which often did not recognize gender equality.

The study traced a timeline that tracked the enactment of laws in defense of women, revealing that changes in laws reflect an increase in awareness and desire to combat discrimination and gender-based violence. This included the story of Maria da Penha and the creation of Law 11.340/06, which marked significant turning points in the protection of women against domestic violence.

The research also examined the types of violence against women, highlighting the various forms of violence faced by women, with a special focus on the State of Bahia. The means of protection available, such as protective measures and support services, have been identified as fundamental to assist victims of domestic violence.

In the specific context of gender violence in Bahia, the persistence of high rates of physical violence and rape was highlighted, with a significant impact on black women.

Added to this, the numbers of cases of violence against women in the state of Bahia between the years 2021 and 2022 had a significant increase, in addition to already having a high number only in the first half of 2023, which brings us back to the ineffectiveness in protecting women in the state, with alarming numbers that have only been increasing year after year.

In addition, the analysis of the relationships between victims and aggressors indicated that many aggressions are perpetrated by acquaintances of the victims, especially partners and expartners. In addition, most homicides occur on public roads and inside homes, highlighting the urgent need for attention to this persistent problem.

In Bahia, institutions such as the Specialized Police Stations for Assistance to Women (DEAMs), Dial 180 and forensic medicine services play a crucial role in providing legal support to victims. However, despite these resources, there is still a significant portion of victims who do not report violence due to fear, lack of trust in law enforcement institutions, or the absence of substantial evidence.

On the other hand, confronting violence against women requires firm action from the justice system. This means ensuring that laws are strictly enforced and that there is proper follow-up of cases, with effective punishments for perpetrators, and ongoing support for victims. The recent Law No. 14,550/23 is a step in this direction, but its impact will only be felt with consistent and determined application.

Still, effective protection of women requires not only the existence of legal mechanisms and support services, but also a cultural change in society that promotes the denunciation and punishment of aggressors.

It can be seen, therefore, that the decision of the Supreme Court of Justice to increase penalties for threats in the context of domestic violence is an important step, but effective law



enforcement and a change of mentality in society are essential to address this problem. The dissemination of alarming data on femicides, assaults, rapes and threats clearly demonstrate that comprehensive measures are needed to combat gender-based violence in Bahia and ensure the protection and well-being of victims. Many of these cases could have been avoided if there had been an effective break in the cycle of violence through the actions of the state and the justice system.

During this period of thorough analysis of crimes against women, valuable information was obtained on the factors that influence the rates of gender-based violence, enabling the implementation of more effective public policies and targeted strategies to prevent and combat this form of violence.

In this context, the dissemination of awareness campaigns and education on women's rights are essential steps to eradicate harmful beliefs and attitudes. This expansion can be achieved through the implementation of educational programs in schools and the development of public awareness campaigns.

The State plays a key role in strengthening public policies that effectively protect women, especially in a society where structural sexism is still prevalent. In this sense, the reinforcement of victim support institutions, such as the Specialized Police Stations for Assistance to Women (DEAMs) and Dial 180, is essential to ensure the safety of women.

Investing in prevention and intervention programs that help break the cycle of violence is a crucial measure. This involves implementing proactive actions that promote the safety and protection of women, as well as measures that contribute to the investigation and punishment of perpetrators.

In this sense, it should be noted that the effectiveness of protecting women requires not only the existence of legal mechanisms, such as the recent amendment of the Maria da Penha Law through Law No. 14,550/23, but also the effective application of these laws.

In addition, it is of paramount importance to ensure that victims have access to adequate support services, such as the Reference Center for Women's Assistance (CRAM) and the Women's Defense Center of the Public Defender's Office (NUDEM), which play a crucial role in assisting victims. Targeted support for those suffering from gender-based violence is an indispensable component of ensuring women's safety and well-being.

Finally, public policies must be aligned with national laws and international commitments, working to eliminate gender stereotypes and sexist patterns, ensuring women's rights and promoting their empowerment. The goal is to build a society where gender-based violence is unacceptable and where women are fully guaranteed their safety and freedom.

In view of this, it is a matter of national urgency that all sectors of society mobilize. Only by joining forces will we be able to aspire to a Bahia, and a Brazil, where violence against women is part of an overgone past.

7

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