

## THE GENDER CHARACTERISTICS OF TORTURE AND GENDER TRAUMA

**KONSTANTINA SKLAVOU<sup>1</sup>**

Correspondent author: Konstantina Sklavou  
University of West Attica

<https://doi.org/10.37602/IJSSMR.2024.7520>

### SUMMARY

*Women participated actively in this entire historical, social and political course of the country, as (co-)fighters, mothers, companions, sisters, friends, widows and many accompanied by the tragic loss of their children, as has already become clear from the theoretical treatment of the subject. Their role, their action, their contribution and the consequences they suffered remain unseen and invisible, in danger of being lost in the oblivion of time. This is what the present research effort aims at, seeking to highlight the trauma, the gendered dimension of violence and torture, and especially the specificity in state power and crimes against women. The multifaceted action and presence of women throughout the freedom struggles in all historical periods from 1923 to 1974 is important to highlight so that women become visible and from the term his story, we move from his story to her story.*

**Keywords:** trauma, gender violence, political violence, tortures.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The most extreme form of human-to-human violence is torture, which is often used as a mechanism to enforce state power and can even result in the taking of life. The term torture, according to the UN, covers any act in which physical and/or mental pain or intense suffering is intentionally inflicted on a person to extract a confession or punishment<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, according to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and in particular Article 1, "the term torture means any act by which physical or mental pain or severe suffering is intentionally inflicted on a person for the purpose, inter alia, of obtaining information or confessions from that person or from a third person, to punish him or a third person for an act which he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, to intimidate or coerce him or a third person, or for any other discriminatory reason, in any form whatsoever, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by a public official or any person acting in an official capacity or with his instigation or consent or acquiescence.

In addition, under the Optional Protocol to the Convention<sup>3</sup>, "torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are prohibited and constitute serious violations

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work University of West Attica

<sup>2</sup> Adopted for signature, ratification and accession by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 39/46 of 10 December 1984 Entry into force: 26 June 1987 in accordance with Article 27 Text: Annex to General Assembly Resolution 39/46. <https://www.asylumlawdatabase.eu/>

<sup>3</sup> Adopted by Council Decision No. 39/46 of 18.12.2002. A/RES/57/199 of the UN General Assembly<sup>3</sup> Entry into force: 22.6.2006, in accordance with Article 28, <https://www.asylumlawdatabase.eu/>

of human rights"<sup>4</sup>. Torture is committed in conditions of detention of the victim, so it is understandable that the victim's position should be characterised as weak and unable to react effectively. In addition, they cause unbearable pain, externally on the surface of the skin or in internal organs, and severe stress, as the person being tortured, in addition to pain and suffering, faces both the fear of what will happen next and the fear of death. Torture is a way of inscribing power relations in the human body (Syracu, 2021). Victims of torture are the practical evidence of the extreme degrading and inhumane treatment that can be inflicted from person to person (Haritou-Fatourou, 2012). On the other hand, they are also a serious method of setting an example, in order to bring about the submission of the many, seeing what can happen to themselves. Finally, all methods of torture constitute a serious violation of the freedoms and rights of the people of any society and a blow to the functioning of the democratic constitution, its forms and functions<sup>5</sup>.

## 1.1 Torture and trauma based on sexual identity

The word trauma is Greek. The etymology comes from the ancient Greek word "trauma" and the verb "to wound" which means to hurt. Originally the word was used in medicine (trauma, injury) because it refers to a violent dissolution of the continuity of the skin tissues because of an external factor - cause (fall, impact, entry of a foreign body, etc.), which exceeds the natural strength of the tissues or organs. In psychology the word trauma signifies, by analogy, the mental damage that can be caused by an event or incident, which is stored in the memory of the person and can affect him/her in the long term (Kosteletos, Koliass, Stephanis, 2020). That is, a psychological or emotional shock that compromises health and mental integrity in the immediate and long-term, as well as the individual's ability to "repair" and recuperate them. Many theorists have tried to capture the dimensions and effects of trauma through their science. The study of it has experienced periods of intensive research alternating with periods of oblivion. According to Herman (1992) research began in the 19th century, was abandoned and restarted after many years in England and America, after World War I and II and then after the Vietnam War. In recent years (initially through the struggles and demands of women's movements), research has focused on the calibration of trauma in the context of domestic violence, especially sexual violence, and on trying to trace the relationship between traumatic experiences and their consequences, both direct (insomnia, numbness, nightmares, mental disconnection and others) and indirect long-term (substance use, delinquent behavior, post-traumatic stress and others) (Herman, 2015).

It seems that research on psychological trauma and the emergence of its serious effects has always run up against "strange" obstacles. They must constantly counter the tendency of people to diminish or refute the victims' accounts so that the facts are kept in obscurity. The treatment of victims is framed within a strange bipolar, with the dialogue often reduced to arguments about whether they deserve 'care or isolation'. Whether they should be treated 'with respect or

---

<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, according to the same texts, "Each State Party shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in each of the territories under its jurisdiction. No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or threat of war, internal political instability or any other state of emergency, may be invoked as a justification for torture. An order from a superior or public authority may not be invoked as a justification for torture.

<sup>5</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 5, "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." <https://unric.org/>

contempt'. Leo Eitinger (1980), wanting to describe the unequal struggle of victims, the attempt of the perpetrator to avoid accountability for his crimes, and of society to achieve oblivion, states "...a veil of forgetfulness falls over everything that is painful and unpleasant. The two sides stand face to face. On one side are the victims who, presumably, want to forget but cannot. On the other side are those who both want very much to forget and succeed in doing so...in this silent and unequal dialogue, the weakest is the loser..."

Women of our sample, their families and relatives paid a heavy blood tax. The fate of women in war is not the same as that of men, as they are treated as spoils, as conquest and a means of conquering the territory, life and dignity of the defeated. Women were raped, mutilated, killed, driven to suicide, brutally tortured, witnessed the death of their children and loved ones, paraded naked and pilloried, hanged, burned to death, beaten, slaughtered along with the embryos they carried, and in cases where they were 'lucky' to survive, lost their homes, loved ones, property and scarce possessions (Lakka, 2019). Unfortunately, not only from the conquerors, but also from their collaborators, who according to sources were ruthless and even surpassed the Germans in cruelty in many cases.

The active and dynamic participation of women in the National Resistance, visible and invisible, was a one-way street (Tympa-Dimitriou, 2010). The love for their children and their companions, but also the strong feeling towards their collective identity, their homeland, their nation, their cities, their villages, their neighbourhoods, led them to transform the ideology of the 'mother and good housewife' into that of the fighter for a just and free life. A life that women already knew what it was like to be deprived of. Faced with the opportunity of a common struggle that would make them equal and many times better than men, they did not hesitate for a moment to participate and pay the heavy price. Beyond the recorded events, the historical struggles and the official struggle, women fought a parallel battle that even today has not been accurately recorded<sup>6</sup>. The destruction, the executions, the loss of records, the difficulty in recording events on the spot, the disorganization of the state apparatus, and the erasure of collective, historical memory over time, combined with the character of actions, which were identified with the daily struggle for survival in the micro-societies and micro-groups in which they lived, placed the struggle of many women and girls on the unseen side of the historical identity of the struggles for freedom. In the national liberation struggles there is a "dark number" of heroes and heroines, but women outnumber men in this number<sup>7</sup>. The male-dominated society, the promotion of male heroes, the crimes against women that could not be confessed and stigmatized, led to the underestimation of the enormous effort of women in the

---

<sup>6</sup> "When I asked (Stamatia Barbatsis) if there were any rebels from her village in the ELAS, she replied, 'And what were we? Because we didn't take weapons?' It is estimated that in the regular army there are seven "smokeless" soldiers for every combatant. In guerrilla warfare the ratio was one guerrilla to 13-14 civilians. In the EAM Resistance, the majority of the auxiliary services of the guerrilla were performed by women. Although they were not considered soldiers - as in the regular army - they were...', p. 53, in Verveniotis (2017).

<sup>7</sup> Greek resistance was also offered by the mother of the fighter, the hostage, the prisoner, who waited hours, midnight, months and years for him at the gates of agony and expectation, and he did not come and did not receive his message. [...] The ability to transform, by everyone, the regime of slavery, with its hunger, illnesses, torture and executions, into a regime that had to be overthrown, this was an affirmation of life and an affirmation of the struggle for life, this meant resistance. Resistance defines the concept of offering for the salvation of the whole, the supreme concern for the social whole, for the nation. Glezos, M. (2009). *National Resistance 1940-1945*. Athens: Stochastis, pp. 61-63.

National Resistance, whether they were on the front line or supporting their male comrades, relatives and fellow fighters.

As far as torture is concerned, the gender dimension is evident, as it is also present in many experiences that women have described in writing (Apostolopoulou, 1981; Petroula, 1986; Theodorou, 1996; Stefanidou-Karanikola, 2006; Tympa-Dimitriou, 2010), but also in the evidence that emerged through the interviews about the female body, women's reproductive capacity, the humiliation of their female identity, offensive behaviour, the projection of women as atheists, communists, prostitutes, immoral and unsuitable for any role and of course that of mother. In the above, the aim was not always to inflict pain, but to psychologically break women, which is why often the main element of the threats was their children or other loved ones. For each woman, depending on her age, characteristics and life situation, the methods of interrogation and torture were different. In one common place, however, the interviewees referred to their moment of torture by men who acted or even watched as a moment of subjugation, control of their femininity and sexual and psychological degradation, and emphasized the "rage" and "satisfaction" they got from it all. This is why the torturers never accepted women being called political prisoners. The torture of women therefore carried a clear stigma of gender differentiation and male domination, while it has yet to be established in its entirety, as it carried and still carries a serious social stigma. Some women even now do not feel ready to talk fully about their experiences.

## 2.0 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

For this research paper, archival and bibliographic research was conducted, but primarily the data was obtained as primary material through oral interviews with a sample of women. The systematic recording of texts, textbooks and historical archives contributed to the collection of existing material on the time periods under review, while oral narratives were used to explore and analyze the accounts that emerged from the women's experiences and their history as they experienced it. Data collection and processing was based on the qualitative research model.

## 3.0 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this proposal is to highlight the multifaceted action and presence of women throughout the struggles that took place during the occupation, the resistance, and the subsequent march towards the years of the Seven Years and the dictatorship in Greece. Women participated actively throughout this historical, social, and political course of the country, as (co-)fighters, mothers, comrades, sisters, friends, widows and many accompanied by the tragic loss of their children. Their role, action, contribution, and the consequences they suffered remain unseen, in danger of being lost in the oblivion of the years. The present research effort seeks to highlight these experiences by recording their personal testimonies and experiences, but also the impact of violence, especially state violence and its crimes, on all aspects of individual and collective life.

The research questions of the study, which may also be working hypotheses, are formulated as follows:

Gender-based violence and torture of women, due to the intense social stigma, remain uncharted territories, at the initiative of women themselves who wish not to verbalize their experiences even today.

The extreme expression of state violence and organized attempts to subjugate power through state crimes and torture, includes a range of gendered practices to control women's sexuality and reproductive capacity.

### **3.1 Contribution of the research**

The choice of the research topic was based on the study of existing literature and the researcher's personal interest in the population under study. The literature investigation, the study of historical sources and the review of relevant articles and research showed that this dimension has not been studied. Mostly, individual writings of personal stories of female fighters or interview records also individually from women were found, which according to Van Boeschoten (2003), focus on historical, political, ethnic/patriotic, and military aspects. Therefore, this paper is expected to shed light on the unseen as well as the visible side of women's struggle in each historical period from the inter-war period until 1974 with the fall of the dictatorship, emphasizing consequences on their personal, family, professional and social lives, but also highlighting their narrative as a means of documenting the effects of the interpretative and relativistic contours of the dimensions under study (Mantzoukas, 2007). According to Boglis (2017), civil violence is not simply about a count of the dead. It is a total social phenomenon that must always be studied in relation to its actors, the forms in which it manifests itself (acts with a strong symbolic content, e.g. rape of women, beheading of rebels, etc.) and the specific historical period.

### **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

The aim of the analysis in this research project is to structure and organize data to produce new knowledge, through primary data, but also through the management of existing sources and information (written and digital). To design the main research process, a) the theoretical framework of the topic was extensively studied to accurately formulate the general purpose and specific research questions and b) all available literature and theoretical material (Sklavou, 2008). The completion of the theoretical review was followed by the process of designing and constructing the research tool.

The processing of the personal narratives is based on thematic analysis (Tsiolis, 2014; Galanis, 2018; Braun, Clarke, 2006). Based on this method, predefined categories will be constructed to group the data according to the axes of the research tool. The main objective was to detect through the interview's behaviors, experiences, beliefs, and facts in order to then lead to conclusions about the research dimensions under study. The emphasis on the qualitative model in the process helped to highlight perceptions based on the experiences of the interviewees themselves. After all, the open and non-standardized format of interviews in qualitative research does not aim to verify a theory, but to highlight new associations and issues (Kyriazi, 2001).

The interaction to seek and find information during the interview helps to enhance the participation of the interviewees and reveal their views. In addition, the exploration of



behaviors in qualitative research is about understanding the diversity of each research subject, as narratives constitute a different testimony and a unique truth (Kallinikaki, 2010). Finally, data collection through the tool of semi-structured individual interviews, which is a source of data collection in qualitative research and contributes to an in-depth approach to the subject through a non-standard interview format, with flexible questions, which can be redesigned on the spot.

The study of the topic will move historically through the time sequence of the years 1923 - 1974, which is divided chronologically into the following periods:

1923 - 1940 the interwar era

1941 - 1944 the occupation and the National Resistance

1944 - 1945 the period after the Liberation

1946 - 1949 the Civil War

1949 - 1967 Post-Civil War Greece

1967 - 1974 the Military Dictatorship.

The research focuses on the study of the gendered constitution of memory, individual or collective, personal, or public, specialized through the study of women's discourse, oral and written personal testimonies (depending on the historical period). The process therefore involves the recording of all available oral or written testimony, so that, taken as a whole, they constitute the outline of history, both official and personal, through the eyes and experiences of women, in specific dimensions, which relate to the following: women's profiles, women's narrative, the role of the paternal family in women's struggle, gender dimension in the struggles, torture as a means of exercising state power, gender dimension of torture, the rule of silence and the game of survival, ties between them as a prophylactic mechanism, life in exile and prison and the struggle for survival, fear versus a sense of duty, consequences of torture, the impact of state violence on women's lives - paternal family, the impact of state violence on women's lives, marital family and children (next generation), faced with torturers in later years and women's view of today.

## 4.1 Sample

The sample in qualitative research is not quantitatively large to draw valid conclusions, it is usual to be a two-digit or even a single-digit number (Mantzounos, 2007). A large sample does not serve the objectives of qualitative research, on the contrary it may even work negatively, as increasing the sample size may lose the qualitative characteristics or individualization in the cases that qualitative research is aiming for (Bordage, Dawson, 2003). Our sample consists of 10 women, who developed various forms of actions, from the Greek civil war, experienced state violence and the violation of their rights and the consequences of all the above in their own lives and those of their intimate partners.

Finally, the finding of the sample was mainly carried out using the snowball technique, which was initiated through a small core of women through relevant associations, namely the Society of Friends of the Memorial Site of the Anti-Dictatorship Resistance in Thessaloniki and the Association of Imprisoned and Exiled Resistance Members 1967 - 1974 (SFEA). It is not the purpose of this research to record many women, but to focus on an in-depth study of the findings in order to identify and analyze all the hypotheses of the research. The selection of the

sample cannot be considered random, as mentioned above, they were identified through this organization. However, an effort was made to make the sample very largely representative of the population in characteristics.

## 4.2 Data collection tool

Data collection was carried out through the tool of individual interviews, which is a source of data collection in qualitative research and contributes to an in-depth approach to the topic (Kallinikaki, 2010). Interviews were also chosen over other tools as they capture the meaning and importance that each individual attaches to things and how they perceive it by participating in a process or activity. Observation and interviews are two tools that help to elicit qualitative data and information regarding a variety of behaviors (Cohen, Manion, 1994). According to Howard and Sharp (2000), the flexibility provided by the interview process helps to transmit information directly from the respondents to the interviewers. The individual interviews conducted were semi-structured, lasting 1 ½ - 2 ½ hours. As for the content of the research dimensions, they were phrased in a natural way and in the flow of the conversation, so that they had a clear meaning, did not distract the interviewees and sensitive issues were raised in oblique questions rather than in a direct manner (Kanaki, 2022). During the interviews, clarifying questions or comments were asked to enhance participation or to elaborate on the content of some topics.

## 4.3 Data processing and analysis

The aim of the analysis in this research work is to structure and organize an analytical record of coding and themes emerging from the interviews to generate new knowledge through primary data (Howard, Sharp, 2000). On this basis, the analysis and processing of the data was carried out with the software program NVivo (Kanaki, 2022), one of the software used in data analysis in qualitative research. Specifically, the interview transcripts were recorded, codes were created from the research dimensions, and we proceeded to formulate themes to classify the responses from all interviewees into the corresponding axis. The main objective was to trace experiences, attitudes, values, beliefs, and facts through the interviews, so that we could then draw conclusions through the relationships underlying the research categories. After the interviews were transcribed into texts in the form of the written word, they were studied by the researcher to obtain an overall sense of meaning, verbal and non-verbal. After the data collection was completed, the overall presentation of the interview texts in the form of dialogues followed, and categories were created to classify the data, based on the axes of the research tool in NVivo. Each axis included responses with specific characteristics to further process the collected information and draw research findings. Finally, the findings were discussed in relation to the overall purpose and research hypotheses and in relation to the theoretical approach to the topic, their confirmation or refutation was justified. In data processing, numbers were not represented by percentages, but were rendered as such due to the small sample size (Blalock, 1960).

## 4.4 Ethical and moral issues

Prior to each interview, a telephone call was made to the women in the sample to get to know each other, to inform them in detail about the research and its purpose, the confidentiality of personal data, as well as the researcher's details, and to agree on the time and place of the

interview. All interviews were conducted in physical presence, except for two which were conducted remotely due to serious health problems or for precautionary reasons, given the continuity of the pandemic during the period of the research. At the start of the interviews, the necessary time was taken to familiarize and acquaint respondents with the process, during which further questions about the purpose of the survey, the process and the use of the data were resolved. Participants were also informed of confidentiality issues, their consent for recording the interviews was sought and recorded, as well as their consent to participate in the research process.

The personal data of the research participants remained confidential throughout the research process and anonymity was maintained at all points of reference in the interviews and no information was used for which consent was not given. Every effort was therefore made to ensure full protection of personal data during the processes of sample selection, obtaining consent, data collection and analysis. The procedures are subject to the relevant legislation regarding the safeguarding of personal data (applicable provisions in Greece and Regulation 2016/679/EU of the European Union).

## 4.5 Barriers

Several obstacles arose in this research, which to some extents were anticipated and addressed as far as possible. First, the issue of the aggravated health of some women, which was prohibitive for some even to participate in the process. There were women alive whose mental health did not allow them to be included in the sample, while others, due to chronic and serious health problems, postponed interviews, thus moving the completion of the whole research process in data collection in time. Finally, the reduced number of surviving women, as many have passed away in recent times, coupled with the refusal of some to participate in the research, made the process of finding the sample complex.

## 4.6 Demographic characteristics

The women in the sample, aged 71 to 100, were born and raised in Greece (Athens, Thessaloniki and provincial cities) in turbulent and difficult times. However, they received a remarkable education (almost all university degrees) and worked in prestigious professions, producing remarkable scientific work. One woman did not manage to study (she attended a domestic science school) because of the mentality that girls do not get an education and the problems of survival, and one did not pursue her profession because she had the exclusive care of the home and children. Almost all of them stressed the prioritization of education and training in their parental family and indicated that even if their parents did not practice high-profile professions, their thinking was imbued with progressiveness, democratic and humanitarian values. Of the ten women, seven had families and children of their own (on average two). One woman reported divorce without subsequent marriage and two reported cohabitation or cohabitation. Of the seven married women, only three have their husbands alive. The paternal family also served as a starting point for their later actions, as all families had a past with similar experiences... struggles, persecution, exile, imprisonment and serious loss of human lives, but also through strong emotional ties that still exist. The women in their stories place themselves and their actions in time. Each one describes her own story, experience, important moment, great fear or her own trauma that still accompanies her. To



these must be added the pre-existing memories of childhood with persecution and imprisonment of their parents or relatives. In describing their experiences, they talk about the difficult conditions of their daily lives, the removal from their homes or studies, the deprivation of loved ones, poverty, hunger and the general difficulty of survival.

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The women in the sample who were arrested and tortured report physical, sexual and psychological violence by the torturers for longer or shorter periods of time. They suffered arrests, interrogations, imprisonment or solitary confinement, exile and spent considerable time in illegality. After all, violence and abuse of dissident women was a standard state practice, either to extract testimonies and information, to punish them mentally and physically or to make an example of other fighters and fighters. Women prisoners were tortured for many hours or in stages, by specially trained torturers, alternating between the roles of 'good guy' and 'bad guy', in the presence of other men or other victims, some of whom played the role of torturers and some of whom played the role of observers. In addition to convoy torture, torture included beatings, systematic or otherwise, burning with cigarettes, isolation from the outside world, deprivation of food and water, deprivation of personal hygiene facilities and places, observation of other torture, threats to themselves or their families, attempted rape by one or more men, mock executions, electric shocks, standing up, and others. The conditions of detention were also deplorable, the cells were very small, dirty, lacked air and light, especially in solitary confinement, where the detainees were kept in total darkness without food and water for days, and used their cell as a latrine:

*"they only allowed me one visit and they only washed me once, so they took me there and sat outside watching me bathing naked, then I made a decision either to take a bath which I needed so much or not to take a bath and let them see me, I didn't mind, I felt such deep contempt for their eyes and their words.... I have hated standing ever since, standing just as soon as you go to faint they pour water on you and keep going..."*

*"and they bring me back to Bouboulinas, in solitary again, the second time is easier, because you know what's waiting for you...on the roof M was holding me.... on a broken curb he had there and he was telling me he was going to throw me down, I believed it of course and I would have gripped him so tightly I was thinking from his weight to take him down with me, I must have bled him from the tightness, then he took me into the laundry room and continued to torture me, Next door was a gynecology clinic and to keep the women from hearing the screams they put motorcycles in operation, all you wanted in the torture was to die, to be redeemed, the only thing you weren't afraid of at that moment was death... ."*

*"the worst was the security, there were girls who went through Bouboulinas, EAT ESA, I was caught and my father was caught, they said you are responsible for them, but he had health issues and they let him go.... we were transferred to the prison, and we stayed there for so many years..."*

An attempt was made to investigate the gendered characteristics of terrorism and torture of women who were persecuted or arrested during this period. It appears that the regime of terrorism formed a mechanism of interrogation and psychological violence based largely on their gender and maternal role. Women reported experiencing gender-specific violence and

degrading practices, in addition to the usual torture of incessant beatings, phalanxes and beatings with objects. They reported being interrogated with threats concerning their loved ones, especially their children, in particular the threat of their removal to orphanages or the deprivation of their mothers because they themselves would be executed by the torturers. Torture with electric shocks for the purpose of miscarrying a pregnant woman, humiliating and degrading questions, insults, linking the women's struggle with attempts to cover up lovers and stripping the tortured body in public were also reported. Finally, the torturers described women as immoral and prostitutes or even unfit mothers to discredit their struggle and resistance and also aimed to a large extent at controlling their reproductive process, so as not to perpetuate their species and pass on communism to future generations:

*"You swear it will never happen to you again, there's no logic to it. Especially we women had an extra one, we were prostitutes who were caught in Sygrou, nothing to do with political prisoners, we were verbally, verbally belittled... Maybe since then, maybe since always I have been able to bear the pain, that is, think that I never once gave them the pleasure of seeing me crying, or of having me cry once, a mask of stoicism with bitten hands, and I had a motto which I used to say, I'm a political prisoner, I'm not a woman on the street, don't ask me about things I don't know because all the time their whole concern was to find out who has a long penis, how everyone makes love... . I told them get a doctor to examine me I have nothing to do with it, how will I know the things you ask me, how everyone is and how they make love, from the EAT ESA I came out 45 kg...".... "all this misogyny that exists anyway, anyway they think the male gender is the dominant gender, imagine in 1973 being both a prisoner and a woman..."*

*"The threat and violence was given, but also with sexual innuendo, there were girls who have been raped, I was not among them, but I was not treated any better.... immediately they tracked me down, after they didn't catch us we got discouraged, they only caught me and my husband but we didn't talk and they didn't catch anyone else, neither before nor after, and I persisted I took it all on myself not because I thought I was stronger, but I thought that because I was pregnant they wouldn't torture me, which wasn't true and it had the effect it had, I was three and a half months pregnant, I didn't show but I had the tests in my bag, M..... saw them and said what the hell, we're not going to let you do it like your face... .and their language was very vulgar, sidewalk words..."*

*"Gender plays a very big role, they were rabid, they were rabid, they hadn't decided if we were hiding the husband or the boyfriend, it was worse the torture of women, in us it was also this rage, especially in young girls.... because don't forget that we were all little girls, they didn't want to believe that we were fighting for something that was beyond them, and they wanted to tell us that we were hiding our boyfriends, you know.... they couldn't accept it they didn't consider us capable of independent thinking, they considered us street women....".*

The women who were imprisoned and/or tortured "learned" ways of survival at the hands of their torturers. One of these was non-response and, most importantly, not to become verbally provocative or abusive or to not respond in a way that would anger the torturers. Many of them responded in a monotonous manner by repeating that they were political prisoners and not prostitutes or simply said they knew nothing and denied any involvement in events:

*"I was called one morning to the commander's tent in the police station and told to become a snitch to turn people in. I said, Commander, you have finished university, you have done a lot of courses, and you are in a position to judge who is telling the truth and who is lying, I... did the uneducated....am an uneducated person who knows who is telling the truth and who is lying and I don't want to take people to my neck. I can sit down and work...."*

*"I kept denying what they told me, I kept saying no I don't know him, no I didn't take the drugs to my father, I could say yes because they presented it as a given that they knew, because a lot of kids were clueless so they would break something and the sock would start to come off, they'd take something for granted and they'd take it for granted and the story would go on and then they'd put facts together and go to the next guy and they'd say the other guy told us everything and they'd give a little information and so on and so on... "*

*"What I never did there, what I never did, I heard others do it, was to swear at them, I didn't swear at them, they didn't hear anything out of my mouth....Why would I swear at them? To get more of a beating? I was looking at how the time was going to go by, and they were going to come out so I wouldn't come out crippled. You saw what happened to other competitors. People came out not only semi-crazy, but they also came out crippled psychologically, anyway they all came out crippled.... I am proud of one thing, I managed not to give any name, not to say anything about anybody, and to come out healthy with this method that is to say, to play a little silly and always noble, that is, in the interrogator I always spoke in the plural, I don't know anything, don't ask me anything, I am a political prisoner...".*

In case the prisoners made the mistake of opposing in any way, the rage of the torturers grew:

*"...they brought me water and I woke up and he looked at his tie and said, why did he see a bug, and he said you have bugged me and unfortunately I replied, in my house I didn't have any, here I got them, well...what did I want, I broke the rule of silence that was the law for us, I shouldn't talk because he got angry and crushed me.... I couldn't count the time he was beating me.... they had a sense of time on their hands."*

## 6.0 DISCUSSION

From the theoretical and research part, it is concluded that gender-based violence and torture of women, due to the intense social stigma, remain uncharted territories, at the initiative of women themselves who wish not to verbalize their experiences even today. Also, the extreme expression of state violence and organized attempts to subjugate power through state crimes and torture, includes a range of gendered practices to control women's sexuality and reproductive capacity.

Women who have been tortured report cruelty, brutality and lack of emotion from torturers. They recalled the events with intensity and expressed with difficulty what happened, even though the time that has passed is more than 50 years. Many of the physical scars have been erased but the mental ones persist and still torment them (Karagiannis, 2010). Women reported nightmares, intrusive ideas, anxiety, and sadness, unpleasant feelings that come back with sounds, images and much more with random events. Some women were confronted on random occasions with their torturer's years later or even close to that time in those years, for example in depositions. In these events the women were very upset and there the duration of the trauma

over time can be seen which is proven by research data, namely the duration the persistence of psychological trauma over time (Hirigoyen, 2000). The consequences of psychological violence have a much longer duration than those of physical and sexual violence, even when the violence ceases, even though it does not concern visible after-effects, i.e. whether trauma or injuries etc. are detected.

The effects of torture and trauma in the immediate future and over time have been varied in quantity and quality (Herman, 2015). Pain, fear and trauma were dealt with through struggle and dedication to it, but the consequences persisted and persist in the lives of women. Respondents reported serious physical health problems, gynecological and otherwise, but most importantly a serious impact on their mental health and on their family, professional and social lives. There has been an impact on their relationships with their husband, their children, their professional life and their everyday life. Reliving traumatic events in nightmares, in images or even hearing about current events was reported, especially by women who had suffered torture.

Regarding the impact on women's lives, many narratives show the longevity of the trauma over time, i.e. the persistence of mainly the psychological over time. The consequences of psychological violence are much longer lasting than those of physical and sexual violence, even when they cease to exist, even though they do not involve visible after-effects, i.e. trauma or injuries, etc. (Colombini, 2002). Despite the severe effects on all levels of their lives, women possessed psychological resilience, which they attributed either to their close family and social environment, to their relationships with their partners then and now, to their own individual characteristics and, of course, to the imperative need for survival.

Women's identity, in all its dimensions, is a sufficient condition for ensuring an equal and correct democratic history. The depiction of women's history and everyday life is about a process of overthrowing marginalization and invisibility that is systematically pursued and largely achieved. Women's participation in the struggles furthermore marked to a certain extent the overthrow of dominant gender relations and roles and much more, the empowerment of women. Obviously, there are experiences and memories that will never become narratives, but women's history is an important piece in the puzzle of capturing the 'lost' stories in the historical narrative and the multiple impacts on their lives and those of their environment (Avdela, Psarra, 1997). However, women's narrative, for which very little space and time has been devoted over the years, is important to highlight because of its specificity and gender characteristics, as it differs significantly from the recording of events, situations and experiences of those of male (co-)combatants or the analysis and simple quotation of facts about the political, national/patriotic or historical context at hand.

## REFERENCES

- Apostolopoulou, N. (1981). *I don't work...I don't write off!* Athens: Synchronic Era.
- Archambault, F. (2016). Mount Moucher and the construction of memory in France after World War II. In S. S. Lazu, V., S. Lazu, V., S. Lazu, V., S. Lazu, V... Jukas, L. Flitouris, (Eds.), *Occupational Violence 1939 - 1945* (pp. 249 - 274). Athens: Asini.
- Avdela, E., & Psarra, A. (1997) (Eds.). *Silent stories in historical narrative. Women and gender in historical narrative*. Athens: Alexandria.

- Blalock, H. (1960). *Social Statistics*. USA: McGraw Hill Book Company Inc.
- Boglis, P. (2017). *The Greek society in the Occupation 1941-1944*. Athens: Alexandria.
- Bordage, G., & Dawson, B. (2003). Experimental study design and grant writing in eight steps and 28 questions. *Med Educ*, 37, 376-385.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3 (2), 77-101.
- Cohen, L., & Manion, L. (1994). *Educational research methodology*. Athens: Metahmio.
- Colombini, M. (2002). Gender-based and Sexual Violence against Women during Armed Conflict. *Journal of health management*, 4, 2, 167 - 183.
- Eitinger, L. (1980). The Concertation Camp Syndrome and its Late Sequela. In Dimsdale J.E. (Ed.) *Survivors, Victims and Perpetrators* (pp. 127 – 162). New York: Hemisphere Publishing Corp.
- Galanis, P. (2018). Data analysis in qualitative research. Thematic analysis. *Archives of Hellenic Medicine*, 35(3), 416 - 421.
- Haritou-Fatourou, M. (2012). *The torturer as an instrument of state power. Psychological origins*. Thessaloniki: University Studio Press.
- Herman, J. (2015). *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence-From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. Basic Books: New York.
- Herman, J. (1996). *Violence - aftermath, trauma, treatment*. Athens: Thetili.
- Howard, K., & Sharp, J. (2000). *The scientific study. A guide to the design and management of university research projects*. Athens: Gutenberg.
- Karagiannis, D. (2010). *The injustice that hurts*. Athens: Armos.
- Kallinikaki, Th. (2010). Qualitative data production. In: Kallinikaki (Ed.), *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research* (pp. 149 - 194). Athens: Topos.
- Kanaki, Ch. (2022). *Hellenic Journal of Social Sciences, Hellenic Journal of Social Sciences, American Psychological Society*. 7th American edition. Athens: Klidarithmos.
- Kosteletos, I., Koliass, K., Stephanis, N. (2020). Adverse Childhood Psychotraumatic Experiences and Schizophrenia. *Psychiatry*, 31, 23 - 35.
- Kyriazi, N. (2001). *The Sociological Research*. Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
- Lakka, L. (2019). *Due to Laocracy*. Athens: Eymaros.



- Manzoukas, S. (2007). Qualitative research in six easy steps. Epistemology, methods, and presentation. *Nursing*, 46(1), 88 -98.
- Papamichael, S., Sklavou, K. (2020). The social construction of gender and gender violence: Feeding the cycle of inequality. In: H. Tsouromanis (Ed.), *Criminology: Periphyton Alexifoton?* (pp. 279-291). Athens: Sideris.
- Sklavou, K. (2019). Violence against women in armed conflicts: pre, during and post. *Dialogues in clinical neuroscience & mental health*, 2(4), 254-258, doi: 10.26386/obrela.v2i4.138
- Sklavou, K. (2008). *Domestic violence and social integration of foreign women*. Athens-Komotini: Sakkoulas.
- Stefanidou-Karanikola, E. (Ed.) (2006). *Women's camps. Chios, Trikeri, Makronisos, Ai-Stratis 1948 - 1954*. Athens: Alfeios.
- Syrkou, A. (2021). *Trolleybus. The panorama of torture in late antiquity*. Athens: Kardamitsa.
- Swaine, A. (2018). *Conflict-Related Violence against Women. Transforming Transition*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Theodorou, V. (Ed.) (1996). *Women Exiles in the Civil War Camps. Chios, Trikeri, Makronissos, Ai-Stratis 1948 - 1954*. Athens: Kastaniotis.
- Tsiolis, G. (2018). Thematic analysis of qualitative data. In: *Theoretical-Methodological Contributions and Case Studies* (pp. 97-125). Athens: Kritiki.
- Tympa-Dimitriou, L. (2010). *Through my own eyes. Memories from my childhood until today*. Athens: Tympa-Dimitriou.
- Turshen, M. (2001). The Political Economy of Rape: An Analysis of Systematic Rape and Sexual Abuse of Women During Armed Conflict in Africa. In C. Moser and F. Clarke(eds.) *Victors, Perpetrators or Actors: Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*. London: Zed Books.
- Van Boeschoten, R. (2003). *Reverse years. Collective memory and history in Ziaka*. Athens: Plethron.
- Vervenioti, T. (2021). *The civilians of the Greek civil war. The dynamics of memory*. Athens: Koukkida.
- Vergivenioti, T. (2017). *The narrative of Stamatia Barbatsis. The historical reading*. Athens: Koukkida.
- Verveniotis, T. (2013). *The Woman of Resistance. The entry of women into politics*. Athens: Koukkida.

Verveniotti, T. (2004). Women of the Left facing the dilemma: politics or family? In M. Mazower (Ed.), *After the War. The reconstruction of the family of the nation and the state in Greece 1943 - 1960* (pp. 121 - 138). Athens: Alexandria.