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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing: Tuesday 13 October 2026, 10.00am. Photo call with bereaved families: 9.30am, outside the Supreme Court

Criminal justice for domestic abuse-related suicide victims must not be sacrificed in forthcoming Supreme Court review of homicide law

On 13 October 2026, the Supreme Court will hear the case of *R v Field*, which has significant implications for the prosecution of domestic abuse-related suicide cases.

Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse, Centre for Women's Justice and Project Resist support and advocate on behalf of families who have lost loved ones to domestic abuse-related suicide. We have been granted permission to intervene by providing written submissions to the court defending the current approach of the courts in murder/manslaughter cases and to ensure that the principles of justice and fairness for victims are upheld.

The Supreme Court will determine the legal test of causation in homicide cases where the immediate act causing death is that of the victim. This will, in turn, influence police and CPS deliberations on prosecuting perpetrators who drive victims to take their own lives through domestic abuse, coercive control, stalking, harassment, sexual violence and other harmful behaviours. The current high threshold for proving causation already makes it difficult to secure successful prosecutions, particularly regarding vulnerable and traumatised individuals. We fear that any reversal or narrowing of the test may hinder these prosecutions even further and potentially exclude domestic abuse-related suicide cases from the ambit of homicide law altogether. To date, in England and Wales, only one conviction for manslaughter (in 2017) has been secured; other attempts to prosecute, notably in the earlier case of Gurjit Dhaliwal in 2006 and in the more recent case of Keina Dawes in 2025, failed.

However, we understand there are a number of pending prosecutions as the CPS has signalled a determination, where there is sufficient evidence, to hold those to account for causing the death through domestic abuse. The need to prosecute for manslaughter in such cases is pressing, particularly in the light of recent data from the Domestic Homicide Project that confirms that suicides following domestic abuse have overtaken the number of domestic abuse-related homicides for the third consecutive year. In 2025, 150 suspected suicides were recorded in England and Wales following domestic abuse, rising from 98 in 2024 and 93 in 2023. The majority of the victims were female while the suspects were male. The picture is even bleaker for Black and minoritised women. Although a consistent and reliable data set is unavailable, mainly due to routine under-reporting and under-recording, anecdotal evidence

suggests that the rates of suicide and self-harm among these women are disproportionately higher when compared with women in the general population. A primary contributory factor is the considerable barriers women face when reporting abuse. Cultural norms that encourage the internalisation of abuse and the perception of suicide as a socially acceptable exit strategy for women, alongside institutional barriers, serve to prevent access to protection and support.

This reality has led many of us to ensure that the manslaughter law remains relevant in addressing the growing crisis. As awareness of the links between domestic abuse and suicide grows and criminal justice responses begin to improve, tightening the legal test for causation will prove detrimental to families' efforts to hold perpetrators of abuse to account and to end the climate of impunity they currently enjoy.

Frank Mullane (AAFDA) says

"I see the despair and the sense of burning injustice in the eyes of so many families who lost someone to suicide following domestic abuse. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that at the moment, many persons, whose domestic abuse caused the suicide of their victim, are simply not held to account by the criminal justice system. We cannot make it harder to hold these abusers to account."

Harriet Wistrich (Centre for Women's Justice) says

"As our understanding of coercive and controlling behaviour increases, it is clear that many perpetrators of abuse deliberately target vulnerable women and exploit their vulnerability, pushing them sometimes to the edge. Perpetrators who do this should be held liable in circumstances where it is clear that their actions drove the woman to take her own life. It is crucial that the Supreme Court considers the wider implications of its judgment when considering the particular circumstances in the case of R v Field"

Pragna Patel (Project Resist) says

"Our intervention in this case arises from widespread concern that perpetrators of domestic abuse face little or no legal consequences for the serious harm that they cause, even when this drives their victim to suicide. Bereaved families in such circumstances insist that the state should meet its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 to punish perpetrators, protect victims and prevent further tragedies. As a result of their efforts, the link between domestic abuse, suicide and the law of homicide has come to be increasingly recognised by the courts. We urge the Supreme Court justices to ensure that these gains are not rolled back in their review of the law of homicide. We cannot and must not go backwards."

Notes

1. The case will be heard at the Supreme Court on 13 October 2026 at 10.00am. There will be photo opportunities outside the court at 9.30am with some bereaved families in attendance.
2. Background to the case can be found here: <https://supremecourt.uk/cases/uksc-2026-0062>

3. The three organisations can be contacted here:

- Project Resist comms@projectresist.org.uk
- AAFDA info@aafda.org.uk
- CWJ info@centreforwomensjustice.org.uk

4. Lawyers acting for the three interveners: Deighton Pierce Glynn Solicitors (Sarah Ricca and Clare Hayes) mail@dpglaw.co.uk and Katherine Hardcastle from Fountain Court Chambers