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The Law on Protection Against Violence (*Gewaltschutz-gesetz*) was introduced in Germany in January 2002.

In 2005, 844 violations of the law were recorded in Berlin.

The law applies to all partnerships, ex-partners, neighbours, colleagues or strangers carrying out acts of violence through maltreatment, telephone or email terror or threatening behaviour.

In 2005, the police recorded 11,659 actual cases of domestic violence in Berlin. However, since February 2003, it is the perpetrators and not the victims who are required to leave the domestic household. Once the incident has been reported, the police will remove the perpetrator from the home for 14 days. A ban on contact can also be imposed. In 2005, 1,180 incidents of removal from the home were recorded in Berlin.

The police cooperate with the civil courts and the Youth Welfare Office in order to ensure that information is exchanged as quickly as possible.

Victims can apply to the family court for sole use of the joint household, even where the perpetrator is the only official tenant or owner of the home. By identifying a violent parent, children are spared the need to be housed in care.

Protection by the law requires the cooperation of the courts.

The existing family courts, in particular, often make unrealistic judgements, or women who are the victims of violence are not prepared to provide sufficient evidence in their statements to allow a charge to be brought and support the court in its judgement. A judicial order can, for example, be used by one parent to ensure that the other parent only has supervised contact with a child, even against the wishes of that parent.

Although much has changed for the better in the last 30 years, a great deal more still needs to be done.

The FFBIZ archive provides information on the first conclusions stemming from improvements brought about by the Law on Protection Against Violence (*Gewaltschutzgesetz*).