



**Turkey's Compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of
Discrimination Against Women
Alternative Report Related to Domestic Violence and Femicide**

Submitted by The Advocates for Human Rights

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for the 82nd Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

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The Advocates for Human Rights (The Advocates) is a volunteer-based nongovernmental organization committed to the impartial promotion and protection of international human rights standards and the rule of law. Established in 1983, The Advocates conducts a range of programs to promote human rights in the United States and around the world, including monitoring and fact finding, direct legal representation, education and training, and publications. The Advocates is committed to ensuring human rights protection for women around the world. The Advocates has published more than 25 reports on violence against women as a human rights issue, provided consultation and commentary of draft laws on domestic violence, and trained lawyers, police, prosecutors, judges, and other law enforcement personnel to effectively implement new and existing laws on domestic violence.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Violence against women remains a major issue in Turkey. Protections for Turkish women are diminishing; as rates of femicide increase, the Turkish government has withdrawn from the landmark Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). This decision, coupled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, is rendering women – especially those in precarious contexts – increasingly vulnerable to violence, abuse, and discrimination.
2. In 2012, the Turkish government passed Law No. 6284, an act which integrates the requirements of the Istanbul Convention into Turkish law. Nevertheless, Turkey’s Human Rights Association’s Women’s Committee reports that women continue to suffer violence due in part to institutional resistance to implementing Law No. 6284.¹ Rates of femicide have been increasing significantly in the absence of adequate social and legal protections for women,² and it is reported that three Turkish women are killed each day by intimate partners or vigilante groups.³
3. In 2020, anti-femicide activists reported that members of their associations had been detained by the Turkish state.⁴ Women’s organizations have been subjected to legal harassment, and their platforms have been deliberately excluded from Turkey’s mainstream media outlets.⁵ Violence against Turkish women is occurring within cultural and legal frameworks that punish female activists and shields perpetrators of violence from the consequences of their actions using rhetoric that plays upon so-called family values.
4. The Advocates for Human Rights has received direct information about femicides, domestic violence, and retaliatory measures against women’s organizations from Turkish civil society organizers. The firsthand experiences of The Advocates’ Turkish partners confirm that Turkey is not fulfilling its obligations under international human rights law to protect women from femicide, violence, and state repression.

Turkey fails to uphold its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

5. As a signatory of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Turkey is obliged to ensure the effective protection of women against any act of

¹ David Lepeska, *Can Turkey curb violence against women and put more women to work?*, Ahval News, January 12, 2020, <https://ahvalnews.com/turkey-women/can-turkey-curb-violence-against-women-and-put-more-women-work>.

² Pinar Tremblay, *Turkey's rate of murdered women skyrockets*, (September 14, 2014), <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2014/09/turkeywomenmurder.html>.

³ Christiane Amanpour, *Interview with Elif Shafak, Violence against women in Turkey a 'human rights crisis'*, CNN March 20, 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/tv/2021/03/19/amanpour-elif-shafak-turkey-domestic-violence-melek-ipek.cnn>.

⁴ We Will End Femicide, “2020 Platform Report.”

⁵ Interview with Turkish NGO.

discrimination (Art. 2). Turkey is also required to guarantee women the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men (Art. 3).⁶ Turkey has agreed that life and security of the person are fundamental human rights through the Turkish government's ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 2002 (Art. 6) (Art. 9).⁷

I. Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (List of Issues paragraph 2)

6. In its 2021 List of Issues, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women expressed concern regarding backsliding as a consequence of Turkey's withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.⁸
7. In its reply to the 2021 List of Issues, Turkey asserted that the "the protection and prevention mechanism... established for victims through the Convention is, in fact, already available under the Law No. 6284."⁹
8. In March of 2021, President Erdoğan published a decree¹⁰ to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention.¹¹ The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, called Turkey's decision "a very worrying step backwards. It sends a dangerous message that violence against women is not important, with the risk of encouraging perpetrators and weakening measures to prevent it."¹²
9. In 2019, conservative and religious groups began to push public opposition to the Istanbul Convention.¹³ In May 2020, a conservative Muslim group, comprised of journalists from the far-right daily *Yeni Akit* and former AK Party lawmakers, known as the Turkey Thinking Platform, presented President Erdoğan with a report urging withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. The report claimed the treaty damages the religious, social, and cultural codes of

⁶ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979, Art. 2, Art. 3

⁷ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, Art. 6, Art. 9

⁸ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, *List of issues and questions in relation to the combined eighth periodic report of Turkey*, (16 March 2021), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/TUR/Q/8, ¶ 1

⁹ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, *Replies of Turkey to the list of issues and questions in relation to its eighth periodic report*, (25 February 2022), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/TUR/RQ/8, ¶ 3

¹⁰ *Decree Withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention dated March 19, 2021*, Official Gazette of Turkey, March 20, 2021, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2021/03/20210320-49.pdf>.

¹¹ Council of Europe, "The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence," CETS No. 210 (Aug. 1, 2014 (entry into force)), <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008482e>.

¹² United Nations Human Rights Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, "Turkey: Withdrawal from Istanbul Convention is a pushback against women's rights, say human rights experts," March 23, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26936&LangID=E>.

¹³ See e.g., Dicle Eşiyok, *Turkish Islamists say laws protecting women threaten the family*, Ahval News, July 15, 2019, <https://ahvalnews.com/domestic-violence/turkish-islamists-say-laws-protecting-women-threaten-family>; Altay, "Fighting for gender equality: The Istanbul Convention."

society and weakens the institution of the family.¹⁴ The group also suggested that women are becoming more masculine and men are becoming more feminine, noting, incorrectly, that the Istanbul Convention attempts to eliminate gender.¹⁵

10. The Human Rights Association Central Women's Committee reports that in practice, “the provisions of Law No. 6284 are not applied.”¹⁶ A secretary of the Central Women’s Committee of the Human Rights Association explains that “men are not being penalized [for violence against women] and the male-dominated legal system... applies unfair, reduced sentences to male perpetrators of violence against women.”¹⁷ The resulting culture of impunity emboldens violent offenders and leaves women unprotected.

II. Discriminatory stereotypes and harmful practices (List of Issues paragraph 8)

11. In its 2021 List of Issues, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women requested that the Government of Turkey provide information on steps taken to eradicate culturally embedded prejudices that confine women to gendered roles within their families and communities. The Committee also requested that Turkey provide evidence of campaigns intended to portray women as active participants in economic, social, and political spheres. The Turkish government was also asked to provide information regarding the impact of those campaigns.¹⁸
12. In its reply to the Committee’s List of Issues, Turkey responded that it had outlined “certain goals” relating to media sensitivity in The Strategy Paper and Action Plan on Women’s Empowerment.¹⁹
13. While the Turkish media perpetuates harmful stereotypes, discriminatory beliefs about the role of women also stem from the policies, practices, and statements of the Turkish government. Opposition to gender equality appears throughout the Erdoğan government and the AK Party’s public policies. These harmful stereotypes are present throughout Turkey’s economic policies,

¹⁴ *Islamist platform to no longer submit advisory report to gov't on Istanbul Convention amid public reaction*, duvaR. English (August 4, 2020), <https://www.duvarenglish.com/women/2020/08/04/islamist-platform-says-it-will-no-longer-submit-advisory-report-to-govt-on-istanbul-convention-amid-public-reaction>.

¹⁵ *Islamist platform to no longer submit advisory report to gov't on Istanbul Convention amid public reaction*, duvaR. English (August 4, 2020), <https://www.duvarenglish.com/women/2020/08/04/islamist-platform-says-it-will-no-longer-submit-advisory-report-to-govt-on-istanbul-convention-amid-public-reaction>.

¹⁶ *IHD: The State Should Abandon the Policy of Impunity for Violence Against Women*, BIA News, Nov. 25, 2019, <http://bianet.org/english/women/216271-ihd-the-state-should-abandon-the-policy-of-impunity-for-violence-against-women>.

¹⁷ 2 Hamdi Firat Buyuk, *Women Face Rising Violence in Male-Dominated Turkey*, Balkan Insight, Sept. 2, 2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/09/02/women-face-rising-violence-in-male-dominated-turkey/>; Christina Asquith, *Turkish Men Get Away With Murder*, The New York Times, Feb. 23, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/opinion/ozgecan-aslan-and-violence-against-women-in-turkey.html>.

¹⁸ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, *List of issues and questions in relation to the combined eighth periodic report of Turkey*, (16 March 2021), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/TUR/Q/8, ¶ 4.

¹⁹ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, *Replies of Turkey to the list of issues and questions in relation to its eighth periodic report*, (25 February 2022), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/TUR/RQ/8, ¶ 8.

which reinforce the idea that women are caregivers to the family and the nation's safety net.²⁰ These policies also contribute to the low levels of growth of women's participation in the labor force,²¹ and the growing implementation of a conservative religious ideology in education that, for example, has eliminated gender equality from the curriculum of the national education system.²² President Erdoğan's goal of every Turkish woman having three children is further evidence of how the government's policies and stereotypes are linked.²³

14. President Erdoğan and AKP have advocated replacing "gender equality" with "gender justice."²⁴ Gender justice shapes the treatment of women through the lens of Turkish national customs and identity, in which women are complementary, but not equal to men. Instead, women's primary role is to produce and care for children and other family members.²⁵ The government, however, portrays gender equality as a Western idea imposed by those who disregard Turkey's cultural identity.²⁶

²⁰ Ürün Güner, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Gender Equality in Turkey," TPQ (Turkish Policy Quarterly), Sept. 24, 2017, <http://turkishpolicy.com/article/872/one-step-forward-two-steps-back-gender-equality-in-turkey>; Alev Özkazanç, *Gender and authoritarian populism in Turkey: the two phases of AKP rule*, openDemocracy, Feb. 3, 2020, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/rethinking-populism/gender-and-authoritarian-populism-turkey-two-phases-akp-rule/>.

²¹ Cigdem Gedikli, *Occupational Gender Segregation in Turkey: The Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions*, Journal of Family and Economic Issues 41 (2020), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10834-019-09656-w>. The Turkish Statistical Institute's "Women in Statistics 2018" report said the employment rate among women above the age of 15 was 28.9% less than half the rate for men, 65.6%. *Official figures show gender inequality in Turkey's labor force*, Hurriyet Daily News (March 8, 2019), <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/official-figures-show-gender-inequality-in-turkeys-labor-force-128345>.

²² Funda Karapehlivan, *Constructing a "New Turkey" through Education*, Heinrich-Boll-Stiftung, Oct. 1, 2019, <https://tr.boell.org/en/2019/10/01/constructing-new-turkey-through-education>; Ayşe Durakbaşa and Funda Karapehlivan, "Progress and Pitfalls in Women's Education in Turkey (1839-2017)," *Encounters in Theory and History of Education* 19 (2018), file:///C:/Users/Margaret/Downloads/11915-Article%20Text-25699-2-10-20181130.pdf; Batuhan Aydagül, *Turkey's Progress on Gender Equality in Education Rests on Gender Politics*, Turkish Policy Quarterly, June 26, 2019, <http://turkishpolicy.com/article/956/turkeys-progress-on-gender-equality-in-education-rests-on-gender-politics>; Alev Özkazanç, *Gender and authoritarian populism in Turkey: the two phases of AKP rule*, openDemocracy, Feb. 3, 2020, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/rethinking-populism/gender-and-authoritarian-populism-turkey-two-phases-akp-rule/>.

²³ Erdogan has proclaimed that it is every woman's duty to have at least three children. Stuart Williams, *Have 'at least 3 kids', Erdogan tells Turkish women*, Business Insider, June 6, 2016, <https://www.businessinsider.com/afp-have-at-least-3-kids-erdogan-tells-turkish-women-2016-6>. Gul Tuysuz, *7 times Turkish President 'mansplained' womanhood*, CNN, June 19, 2016, <https://www.cnn.com/2016/06/09/europe/erdogan-turkey-mansplained-womanhood/index.html>; Özlem Altıok, *Reproducing the Nation*, Contexts, May 20, 2013, <https://contexts.org/articles/reproducing-the-nation/>.

²⁴ Ayşe İdil Aybars, Paul Copeland, and Dimitris Tsarouhas, "Europeanization without substance? EU-Turkey relations and gender equality in employment," *Comparative European Politics* 17, no. 5 (2019), 171 http://repository.bilkent.edu.tr/bitstream/handle/11693/50056/Europeanization_without_substance_EU_Turkey_relations_and_gender_equality_in_employment.pdf?sequence=1.

²⁵ Elif Godasoglu Kucukkalioglu, "Framing Gender-Based Violence in Turkey," *Les cahiers du CEDREF* 22 (2018), <https://journals.openedition.org/cedref/1138>; *Motherhood should be women's priority: Turkish President Erdogan*, DW, Nov. 24, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/motherhood-should-be-womens-priority-turkish-president-erdogan/a-18083263>; "Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: 'Women Not Equal to Men'"; *Turkey President Erdogan: Women Are Not Equal to Men*, BBC News, Nov. 24, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30183711>; Ben Cohen, "Turkey's Islamist President Erdogan Attacks Women's Rights Activists as 'Enemy of the Nation'," March 11, 2019, <https://www.algemeiner.com/2019/03/11/turkeys-islamist-president-erdogan-attacks-womens-rights-activists-as-enemy-of-the-nation/>.

²⁶ *Turkey's Erdogan says men and women should race 100 metres to see if they are equal*, Ahval News, Nov. 28, 2018, <https://ahvalnews.com/women/turkeys-erdogan-says-men-and-women-should-race-100-metres-see-if-they-are-equal>; "Gender Justice the 'Turkish' Way: Anti-Gender Politics in the Land of AKP," Interview with Alev Özkazanç, visiting Scholar at the University of Oxford with the research project on anti-gender movements and gender violence in Europe and Turkey, *Euromed Rights* (Mar. 5, 2020), <https://euromedrights.org/publication/gender-justice-the-turkish-way-anti-gender-politics-in-the-land-of-akp/>.

III. Gender-based Violence Against Women (List of Issues paragraph 9)

15. In its 2021 List of Issues, the Committee requested further information on efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women. The Committee specifically requested information on steps taken to "ensure that no victim of rape or harassment is forced into marriage with the perpetrator" and "ensure that irrelevant criteria, such as good conduct in court, do not serve as grounds for reducing the sentences of perpetrators of gender-based violence against women."²⁷
16. In its Replies to the List of Issues, Turkey states that the Turkish Penal Code "does not prescribe that any relationship and affinity between a perpetrator and a victim may create an impact that directly leads to impunity."²⁸ Turkey also stated that "good conduct abatement" is regulated and is a "discretionary motion that can be awarded subject to legally specified preconditions without any distinction between the offences concerned."²⁹
17. Gender-based violence against women remains a serious problem. Eight percent of men agree that violence should be ignored in order to preserve the family.³⁰ As of 2022, 68 percent of women surveyed consider violence to be the most pressing social issue facing Turkish women.³¹ Eighty-seven percent of women and 83 percent of men agree that the Turkish government fails to take necessary measures to prevent violence against women.³²
18. In 2012, the Turkish government passed Law No. 6284, an act which integrated the requirements of the Istanbul Convention into Turkish law. Nevertheless, Turkey's Human Rights Association's Women's Committee reports that women continue to suffer violence due in part to institutional resistance to implementing Law No. 6284.³³
19. Turkish lawyers report that police do not take seriously women who experience violence when they attempt to file reports.³⁴ One lawyer recently told *National Public Radio (NPR)* that "Women who have been beaten go to the police and are told, 'Don't file a complaint, it will

²⁷ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, *List of issues and questions in relation to the combined eighth periodic report of Turkey*, (16 March 2021), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/TUR/Q/8, ¶ 9 (b)(g).

²⁸ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, *Replies of Turkey to the list of issues and questions in relation to its eighth periodic report*, (25 February 2022), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/TUR/RQ/8, ¶ 90.

²⁹ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, *Replies of Turkey to the list of issues and questions in relation to its eighth periodic report*, (25 February 2022), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/TUR/RQ/8, ¶ 111.

³⁰ "Survey: Public Perceptions of Gender Roles and the Status of Women in Turkey," gender.khas.edu, accessed May 13, 2022, <https://gender.khas.edu.tr/en/survey-public-perceptions-gender-roles-and-status-women-turkey>.

³¹ "Survey: Public Perceptions of Gender Roles and the Status of Women in Turkey," gender.khas.edu, accessed May 13, 2022, <https://gender.khas.edu.tr/en/survey-public-perceptions-gender-roles-and-status-women-turkey>.

³² "Survey: Public Perceptions of Gender Roles and the Status of Women in Turkey," gender.khas.edu, accessed May 13, 2022, <https://gender.khas.edu.tr/en/survey-public-perceptions-gender-roles-and-status-women-turkey>.

³³ Lepeska, "Can Turkey curb violence against women and put more women to work?"

³⁴ "'We Don't Want to Die': Women in Turkey Decry Rise in Violence and Killings," *National Public Radio*, Morning Edition (September 15, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/15/760135010/we-dont-want-to-die-women-in-turkey-decry-rise-in-violence-and-killings>.

just make your husband angry.”³⁵ When domestic violence cases do reach Turkish courthouses, judges are often overly lenient and willing to hand down reduced sentences if defendants plead “intolerable provocation.”³⁶

20. Recent legislative proposals could allow the perpetrator of sexual assault to diminish their punishment if they marry their victim. In the most recent iteration of this legislation, section 103 of the Penal Law would be amended to allow those convicted of certain sexual offenses to be released from prison if: (1) the age difference between the convicted sex offender and the victim is less than 15 years; (2) the victim is at least 13 years old at the time of the incident; (3) there is no criminal complaint, and; (4) the offender and victim marry (even if the marriage is below the legal age for marriage).³⁷
21. Femicide is also an increasing problem. There are, however, no reliable numbers on femicides or violence against women. According to a Turkish lawyer, 2009 is the last year that the Turkish government maintained credible statistics on violence against women.³⁸ The government’s numbers showed that, between 2003 and 2010, femicides increased 1,400 percent.³⁹
22. Women’s rights activists report that three women are killed per day in Turkey compared to one woman per day in the UK.⁴⁰ The Turkish Gendarmerie’s report on femicides from 2008 to 2017 highlighted a significant increase in the number of women killed (2,487) after 2013. The report found that 62 percent of the women were killed by their husbands, ex-husbands, or

³⁵ “‘We Don’t Want to Die’: Women in Turkey Decry Rise in Violence and Killings,” National Public Radio, Morning Edition (September 15, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/15/760135010/we-dont-want-to-die-women-in-turkey-decry-rise-in-violence-and-killings>.

³⁶ Nicole Tung & Dalia Mortada, “In the Kingdom of Men Women in Turkey endure a culture of violence,” International Women’s Media Platform (May 28, 2018), <https://www.iwmf.org/reporting/in-the-kingdom-of-men-women-in-turkey-endure-a-culture-of-violence/>; Deniz Kandiyoti, “Locating the politics of gender: Patriarchy, neo-liberal governance and violence in Turkey,” *Research and Policy on Turkey* 1, no. 2 (July 7, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23760818.2016.1201242>.

³⁷ Rebekah Evans, *Turkey wants to introduce law allowing rapists to marry their victims to avoid prosecution*, EXPRESS, Janyart 23, 2020, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1232560/turkey-news-women-rape-marriage-law-marry-your-rapist-latest-bill>; Kate Dannies, *Turkey’s ‘marry your rapist’ bill is part of a disturbing global pattern*, The Washington Post, Jan. 29, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/01/29/turkeys-marry-your-rapist-bill-is-part-disturbing-global-pattern/>; Sarah Tor, *Turkey’s ‘marry your rapist’ law has taken women’s rights right back to the 1950s*, Independent, Jan. 23, 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/turkey-marry-your-rapist-bill-law-statutory-rape-a9298906.html>. The marry your rapist bill was first introduced and killed in 2016 and at the beginning of 2020 a new version was set to be formally introduced, which has not yet occurred. Uzey Bulut, *Turkey: Women’s Rights Abuses Widespread and Systematic*, Gatestone Institute, International Policy Council Mar. 21, 2019, <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/13911/turkey-women-rights-abuse>.

³⁸ Pinar Tremblay, *Turkey’s rate of murdered women skyrockets*, Al Monitor, Sept. 14, 2014, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2014/09/turkeywomenmurder.html>.

³⁹ Pinar Tremblay, *Turkey’s rate of murdered women skyrockets*, Al Monitor, Sept. 14, 2014, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2014/09/turkeywomenmurder.html>.

⁴⁰ Christine Amanpour, *Interview with Elif Shafak, Violence against women in Turkey a ‘human rights crisis’*, CNN, Mar. 20, 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/tv/2021/03/19/amanpour-elif-shafak-turkey-domestic-violence-melek-ipek.cnn>.

boyfriends, 28 percent by other relatives, and 10 percent by stalkers, neighbors, or others.⁴¹ Lack of reliable numbers has prompted several NGOs to begin publicizing femicides and male violence against women and demanding change.⁴² For example, *Anıt Sayaç*, a digital database formed in 2007, records the names of the identified female victims of gender-based violence and the number of women who die by femicide by year.⁴³ The digital database recorded 409 femicides in 2020.⁴⁴ Both the We Will Stop Femicide Platform and the *Bianet* Male Violence Monitor also collect and publish data on femicides.⁴⁵

23. Femicides gained national attention starting in 2015 when a minibus driver attacked university student Özgecan Aslan as she rode home.⁴⁶ He attempted to rape her and when she resisted he ultimately killing her.⁴⁷ Her death led to mass protests.⁴⁸ Two subsequent femicides, those of Sule Cet in 2018 and Emine Bullunt in 2019, became the focus of further nationwide protests.
24. Turkish media's coverage of femicides and violence against women tends to focus on the victim's culpability in her death and what mitigating factors may excuse the individual accused of murder.⁴⁹

IV. Killings and forced suicide in the name of so-called "honor" (List of Issues paragraph 10)

25. In its 2021 List of Issues, the Committee requested information on "specific steps taken to investigate and punish all crimes in the name of so-called 'honor,'"⁵⁰ including any steps to "dismantle the concept that the honour and prestige of a man and the family are intrinsically

⁴¹ Beril Eski, *The Murder of a Ballerina*, *The New York Times*, Feb. 4, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/04/opinion/turkey-women-murders.html>.

⁴² See, e.g., *Male Violence Monitor*, *bianet news* (English) (2021), <https://bianet.org/english/gender/134394-bianet-is-monitoring-male-violence>; "We Will Stop Femicide Platform (English)," *We Will Stop Femicide Website* (2021), <http://www.kadincinayetlerinidurduracagiz.net/for-english>; Anıt Sayaç, "Digital Momument for Women Dying from Violence (English)," *Anıt Sayaç (The Monument Counter) Website* (2021), <http://anitsayac.com/>; <https://memorializeturkey.com/en/memorial/the-monument-counter-a-digital-memorial-for-women-killed-by-violence/>.

⁴³ Anıt Sayaç, "Digital Momument for Women Dying from Violence (English)," *Anıt Sayaç (The Monument Counter) Website* (2021), <http://anitsayac.com/>

⁴⁴ Anıt Sayaç, "Digital Momument for Women Dying from Violence (English)," *Anıt Sayaç (The Monument Counter) Website* (2021), <http://anitsayac.com/>

⁴⁵ "We Will Stop Femicide Platform (English)," *We Will Stop Femicide Website* (2021), <http://www.kadincinayetlerinidurduracagiz.net/for-english>; "Male Violence Monitor," *bianet news* (English) (2021), <https://bianet.org/english/gender/134394-bianet-is-monitoring-male-violence>.

⁴⁶ Christina Asquith, *Turkish Men Get Away With Murder*, *The New York Times*, Feb. 23, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/opinion/ozgecan-aslan-and-violence-against-women-in-turkey.html>.

⁴⁷ Selin Girit, *Turkey rallies over murder of woman who 'resisted rape'*, *BBC News*, Feb. 15, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31476978>.

⁴⁸ Nil Köksal, *Özgecan Aslan's killing a 'breaking point' in Turkish fight to end violence against women*, *CBC News* (February 16, 2015), <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/%C3%B6zgecan-aslan-s-killing-a-breaking-point-in-turkish-fight-to-end-violence-against-women-1.2958885>.

⁴⁹ *Women In Turkey Are Determined To Stop Femicide "Women In Turkey Are Determined To Stop Femicide - Murders Of Women*, *Business World*, Jan. 4, 2021, <http://www.businessworld.in/article/Women-in-Turkey-are-determined-to-stop-femicide-murders-of-women/04-01-2021-361288/-Murders-Of-Women>."

⁵⁰ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, *List of issues and questions in relation to the combined eighth periodic report of Turkey*, (16 March 2021), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/TUR/Q/8, ¶ 10.

associated with the conduct or presumed conduct of women related to them, which is based on patriarchal attitudes and serves to control women and curb their personal autonomy."⁵¹

26. In its Replies to the List of Issues, Turkey states that "commission of the offense [honor killings] on customary grounds" is an aggravating factor and carries the highest possible sentence of life imprisonment.⁵² Turkey considers honor killings to fall under the umbrella of "customary grounds" and does not consider "motives arising from such notions as culture, customs, traditions, and honor" mitigating circumstances for any offense.⁵³
27. Incidents of "vigilante violence" against women began to increase in 2016. Vigilante violence is defined as male-perpetrated violence to enforce a gendered public moral order against an unknown female.⁵⁴ There are reports of men assaulting women for wearing shorts,⁵⁵ smoking cigarettes, sitting cross-legged in public, engaging in public displays of affection, and exercising in parks.⁵⁶
28. For example, a young woman tried to intervene when two men physically assaulted her aunt and mother because her aunt was smoking. In response, one of the men extinguished the cigarette on the young woman's neck.⁵⁷
29. Small business owners have also reportedly intimidated mixed-gender groups for consuming alcohol in public spaces. Café and art galleries involved in activities perceived as immoral, such as serving alcohol during an art exhibition, may find themselves in danger or their businesses threatened by groups of religious-nationalist youth.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, *List of issues and questions in relation to the combined eighth periodic report of Turkey*, (16 March 2021), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/TUR/Q/8, ¶ 10. (d).

⁵² Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, *Replies of Turkey to the list of issues and questions in relation to its eighth periodic report*, (25 February 2022), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/TUR/RQ/8, ¶ 128, 130.

⁵³ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, *Replies of Turkey to the list of issues and questions in relation to its eighth periodic report*, (25 February 2022), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/TUR/RQ/8, ¶ 128, 130.

⁵⁴ Esra Sarioglu, "Vigilante Violence against Women in Turkey: A Sociological Analysis/Turkiyede Kadina Yonelik Vigilantist Siddet: Sosyolojik Bir Inceleme," Article, *Kadin/Woman 2000* 19 (2018/12// 2018), https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A577908718/EAIM?u=umn_wilson&sid=EAIM&xid=8866051f.

⁵⁵ Members of the Turkish government apparently joined in inciting vigilante violence, in that they "publicly encouraged verbal harassment of women wearing shorts. *Women In Turkey Are Determined To Stop Femicide* " *Women In Turkey Are Determined To Stop Femicide - Murders Of Women*, Business World, Jan. 4, 2021, <http://www.businessworld.in/article/Women-in-Turkey-are-determined-to-stop-femicide-murders-of-women/04-01-2021-361288/- Murders Of Women.>"

⁵⁶ Esra Sarioglu, "Vigilante Violence against Women in Turkey: A Sociological Analysis/Turkiyede Kadina Yonelik Vigilantist Siddet: Sosyolojik Bir Inceleme," Article, *Kadin/Woman 2000* 19 (2018/12// 2018), https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A577908718/EAIM?u=umn_wilson&sid=EAIM&xid=8866051f.

⁵⁷ Esra Sarioglu, "Vigilante Violence against Women in Turkey: A Sociological Analysis/Turkiyede Kadina Yonelik Vigilantist Siddet: Sosyolojik Bir Inceleme," Article, *Kadin/Woman 2000* 19 (2018/12// 2018), https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A577908718/EAIM?u=umn_wilson&sid=EAIM&xid=8866051f.

⁵⁸ Esra Sarioglu, "Vigilante Violence against Women in Turkey: A Sociological Analysis/Turkiyede Kadina Yonelik Vigilantist Siddet: Sosyolojik Bir Inceleme," Article, *Kadin/Woman 2000* 19 (2018/12// 2018), https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A577908718/EAIM?u=umn_wilson&sid=EAIM&xid=8866051f.

30. When women have sought police protection from vigilante violence, police may participate in, rather than stop the harassment. Two women in Izmir reported that after they sought help from police officers after being harassed on the street the police officers chastised them for their clothing and told them, “You actually deserve more with these outfits.” One of the police officers proceeded to beat the two women.⁵⁹

V. Marriage and Family Relations (List of Issues paragraph 24)

31. In its 2021 List of Issues, the Committee requested information on steps taken to prohibit child and forced marriage. The Committee also asked Turkey to provide further information on measures to combat stigmatization of single mothers, including enforcement of alimony.⁶⁰
32. As discussed above in paragraph 20, the proposed legislation to mitigate punishment for men who marry the women whom they sexually assault could permit child and forced marriage. While the legal age for marriage in Turkey is 18, the proposal would allow “iman” marriages of girls as young as 13, as long as their spouse is not more than 15 years older.
33. Some parents may consent to a daughter’s marriage to her rapist to avoid perceived harm to the family’s honor.⁶¹ UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, and UNDP have all opposed previous proposals for amnesty for perpetrators of sexual violence through forced or child marriage.⁶² The Special Rapporteur on violence against women also argued that these proposed laws would contravene Turkey’s obligations under international human rights treaties and that culture is not a justification for forced and early marriage.⁶³
34. Other proposed bills seek to limit a woman’s access to divorce. A legislative proposal by the Nationalist Action Party would limit the period during which alimony could be paid to five years. Removing a women’s rights to alimony will severely restrict her ability to divorce.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Esra Sarioglu, "Vigilante Violence against Women in Turkey: A Sociological Analysis/Turkiyede Kadina Yonelik Vigilantist Siddet: Sosyolojik Bir Inceleme," Article, *Kadin/Woman 2000* 19 (2018/12// // 2018), https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A577908718/EAIM?u=umn_wilson&sid=EAIM&xid=8866051f.

⁶⁰ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, *List of issues and questions in relation to the combined eighth periodic report of Turkey*, (16 March 2021), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/TUR/Q/8, ¶ 24.

⁶¹ "Feminist Meeting on the Istanbul Convention," (Online: Women's Platform for Equality, Oct. 15, 2020); Rebekah Evans, *Turkey wants to introduce law allowing rapists to marry their victims to avoid prosecution*, EXPRESS, Janyart 23, 2020, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1232560/turkey-news-women-rape-marriage-law-marry-your-rape-latest-bill>; Sarah Tor, *Turkey's 'marry your rapist' law has taken women's rights right back to the 1950s*, Independent, Jan. 23, 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/turkey-marry-your-rape-bill-law-statutory-rape-a9298906.html>.

⁶² Press Release, UNFPA UNICEF, UN Women, UNDP, Joint UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women and UNDP Statement on Turkey's Draft Bill on Sexual Abuse against Children, Nov. 21, 2016, <https://www.unfpa.org/press/joint-unicef-unfpa-un-women-and-undp-statement-turkeys-draft-bill-sexual-abuse-against>; Yakin Erturk, *A move to set free child sex abusers: in the name of "our culture"*, openDemocracy, Dec. 2, 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/midnight-motion-to-set-free-child-sex-abusers-in-name-of-our-culture/>.

⁶³ Yakin Erturk, *A move to set free child sex abusers: in the name of "our culture"*, openDemocracy, Dec. 2, 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/midnight-motion-to-set-free-child-sex-abusers-in-name-of-our-culture/>; UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women Yakin Erturk, Short Intersections between culture and violence against women

⁶⁴ Emel Altay, *Fighting for gender equality: The Istanbul Convention*, Inside Turkey, Jan. 6, 2020, <https://insideturkey.news/2019/12/25/fighting-for-gender-equality-the-istanbul-convention/>.

Depriving women of financial support should they choose to divorce their husband restricts women's options, especially for those who are not able to find a job easily.⁶⁵

VI. Reprisals against women human rights defenders

35. Since Turkey's last review, the Turkish government has restricted civil society, especially women's right organizations. Since 2014, the government has criticized and targeted women who self-identify as feminists. The government has also increasingly cracked down on women's marches by cancelling permits and the police use of tear gas.⁶⁶ State officials have closed or fined some women's human rights NGOs.⁶⁷ The government has also excluded NGOs that support the Istanbul Convention from consultation and funding.⁶⁸
36. The government has shrunk space for civil society by targeting human rights organizations and placing undue restrictions on them. One woman working at an environmental organization described the situation as very dangerous.¹ Local authorities monitor her organization very closely, including checking grant funding and requesting legal documents regularly.² In one example, local authorities fined the organization 50,000 liras (about 3200 USD) for not adding an ID number to some of their papers.³ These financial burdens limit human rights defenders' ability to carry out their work.
37. Private entities have brought lawsuits against women's organizations to undermine their credibility and create increased financial burdens for them from legal fees. One organization working to prevent and prosecute femicides recently had several petitions filed against them, claiming they are "disintegrating the family structure by ignoring the concept of the family under the guise of defending women's rights."⁴ The court has claimed that the number of complaints filed against the organization indicate a strong indication of crime.⁵

⁶⁵ Emel Altay, *Fighting for gender equality: The Istanbul Convention*, Inside Turkey, Jan. 6, 2020, <https://insideturkey.news/2019/12/25/fighting-for-gender-equality-the-istanbul-convention/>.

⁶⁶ *Turkey bans Istanbul International Women's Day rally for second year*, The New Arab (UK), March 8, 2020, <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2020/3/8/turkey-bans-international-womens-day-rally-in-istanbul>; ristina Jovanovski, *Protesters: Turkey Not Implementing Laws to Protect Women*, The Media Line, Nov. 26, 2019, <https://themedialine.org/people/human-rights/protesters-turkey-not-implementing-laws-to-protect-women/>; *Erdogan accuses women's march of disrespecting Islam*, Reuters, March 10, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-womens-day-turkey-erdogan/erdogan-accuses-womens-march-of-disrespecting-islam-idUSKBN1QR0JT>; Ben Cohen, "Turkey's Islamist President Erdogan Attacks Women's Rights Activists as 'Enemy of the Nation'," March 11, 2019, <https://www.algemeiner.com/2019/03/11/turkeys-islamist-president-erdogan-attacks-womens-rights-activists-as-enemy-of-the-nation/>; Bulut, *Turkey: Women's Rights Abuses Widespread and Systematic* Alev Özkazanç, *The new episode of anti-gender politics in Turkey* Engenderings, LSE (London School of Economics) 20, 2019 <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/gender/2019/05/20/new-episode-anti-gender-turkey/>; *International Women's Day: Clashes, Coronavirus And Women Prepare To* <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/08/813477367/international-womens-day-2020-clashes-coronavirus-and-women-prepare-to-strike>.

⁶⁷ *Turkey: Women's Rights Defenders in the Crosshairs* Federation of International Human Rights 12, 2019 <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/turkey-women-s-rights-defenders-in-the-crosshairs>.

⁶⁸ "After 2015," Funda Ekin, a Turkish lawyer explained, "the little cooperation we had (with the AKP government) was cut entirely. People perceived to be in the opposition are shut out. They don't invite women's rights activists anymore to work on important issues together." *Violence against women, Turkey's new normal* The Arab Weekly 3, 2020 <https://the arabweekly.com/violence-against-women-turkeys-new-normal>. In its 2018 published review, GREVIO acknowledged the exclusion of the women's rights groups that had been instrumental in formulating the Istanbul Convention and the national legislation implementing it. Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), *Baseline Evaluation Report Turkey* (2018), 29-31., <https://rm.coe.int/eng-grevio-report-turquie/16808e5283>.

38. Suggested recommendations for the government of Turkey:

- Repeal the executive order to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention and uphold obligations to combat and prevent domestic violence.
- Implement Law No. 6284 on domestic violence to effectively protect women.
- Conduct training with law enforcement on the importance of treating domestic violence cases through the lens of the dynamics of power and control.
- Punish all instances of law enforcement retaliation against women reporting incidents of domestic violence.
- Promptly investigate and punish all cases of femicide and forced suicide.
- Publish statistics on the number of femicides per year, in consultation with women's NGOs, including forced suicides.
- Amend legislation to make crimes in the name of "honor" a specific aggravating factor separate from crimes committed in the name of custom for any offense.
- Pass legislation to ensure judges cannot arbitrarily use their discretion to diminish punishments for perpetrators of violence against women based on good conduct in court.
- Promptly and independently investigate and punish all crimes in the name of so-called honor.
- Conduct awareness-raising campaigns to prevent the spread of discriminatory and harmful stereotypes about women.
- Immediately withdraw all legislation currently being considered in Parliament to legalize impunity for perpetrators of rape who marry their victim.
- Establish legal safeguards to ensure no victim of rape is forced to marry the perpetrator.
- Implement concrete measures to prevent child and forced marriage.
- Withdraw proposed legislation to limit the payment of alimony in order to increase women's access to divorce.
- Abolish legislation placing arbitrary restrictions on civil society organizations, especially women's rights organizations.
- Ensure the freedom of expression and opinion of all women's rights NGOs and hold open consultations with them about domestic violence legislation.
- Cease all retaliation against women protesting increased rates of femicide and Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention.