THE CHALLENGE OF FEMICIDE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN TURKEY

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Abstract

Violence against women in Turkey is a tangible manifestation of the way that Turkish men have used force to exercise dominance over Turkish women. It is considered by many in society as natural, cultural and possibly unchanging. Violence is, inarguably, a critical social challenge throughout Turkey and has not improved, even as the world is addressing it more and more. Violence against women is a crime against human rights, which this study attempts to address.

The aim of this paper is to discover the reasons for femicide and violence and to determine whether a change in the legal system can ultimately resolve the problem. Indeed, in present-day Turkey it is very difficult to verify the precise levels of violence against women. The paper concludes that unless there is a fundamental change in attitudes towards women, especially on the part of men, violence against women and femicide will continue to be major challenges and will remain to be properly addressed by lawmakers. Furthermore, because attitudes towards women are not good in Turkey, official statistics regarding violence against women are unreliable, making it that much more difficult to implement targeted, effective measures to address violence against women and femicide.

Defining Violence Against Women

Violence, as defined by the World Health Organization (2002), is "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, development or deprivation." This definition includes power, which is important for this paper, as it includes malevolent actions that do not include physical violence or the threat

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thereof. This will inform the discussion of violence against women in Turkey and will allow for a more nuanced understanding of gender-based violence, including femicide, in Turkey.

This paper will adopt a definition of "violence against women" that follows the concept of gender-based violence as defined by the European Institute for Gender Equality: "Gender-based violence against women" shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately (EIGE, 2015). This phenomenon exists in many countries throughout the world (Bachman et al., 1994). The working idea is that since women have been generally expected for centuries to suffer in silence (Davidson, 1978; Martin, 1981; Pleck, 1987), violence against women became a widespread social problem, the subject of various meetings, seminars, action plans, legal forms, research, political discussions and debates, as well as a human rights issue (WHO, 2005; Altınay and Arat, 2007; NRDVAW, 2009; Almutairi et al., 2012; MFSP, 2015). In the literature, violence has been defined as psychological, economic, emotional, physical, political, social, environmental and sexual. Psychological violence is defined as "psychological battering and emotional abuse" (Coker et al., 2000) as well as, but not limited to, "bullying, threats, intimidation and sexual harassment" (Jackson and Ashley, 2005). Economic violence is extensive and includes, but is not restricted to, "limited access to funds and credit; controlling access to health care, employment, education, including agricultural resources; excluding from financial decision making; and discriminatory traditional laws on inheritance, property rights, and use of communal land" (Fawole, 2008). Emotional violence includes humiliation, scorning, insulting, threatening physical violence/death, abandonment, separation from children and being shouting at (Karaoglu et al., 2006). Physical violence includes being hit, pushed, slapped, kicked, or otherwise physically harmed (Karao lu et al., 2006). Political violence is defined as the presence of rebellion or civil war and threatens the stability of a political regime (Muller and Weede, 1990). Social violence is defined as violence between individuals and small groups of people (Fox and Hoelscher, 2012). Environmental violence can occur when "development plans threaten the livelihoods of people and their possibilities of cultural reproduction by appropriating, transforming, and destroying natural resources and the environments in which these are embedded" (Narchi,

2015). Sexual violence includes being compelled to have sex due to physical or verbal threats (Karao lu et al., 2006) as well as unwanted sexual contact.

Domestic violence towards women affects women everywhere. Women in big cities and rural areas; the rich and the poor; the young and the old—all are vulnerable. When the United Nations Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995 revealed many examples of violence against women, it was impossible to ignore the various modes of violence to which women have been subjected. Women's vulnerability to violence is an important point to stress as we create strategies to eradicate this problem. This violence was described by the Secretary-General of the UN as the most shameful and unresolved human rights violation today. Violence in a broader definition includes verbal abuse, physical harassment, femicide, sexual assault, rape, intimidation at work, trafficking in women and coercion (UNIFEM, 2003:8).

Most studies point to the universality of violence in regards to gender based violence, and a considerable number of studies also note the impact of political conflict in terms of gender-based violence (Burke et al., 1988; Levinson, 1989; Heise et al., 1994; Gidycz et al., 2001; Livingston et al., 2002). Political conflict rigorously hampers women's willingness to report exposure to violence and distorts data recording or collecting. Many feminist theorists (Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Rowbotham, 1992; Yllo, 1993; Mooney, 1992; Radford, Friedberg and Harne, 2000; Renzetti, Edleson and Bergen, 2001) draw attention to violence against women and postulate that the feminist paradigm particularly emphasizes domestic violence, which is primarily a culturally supported male enterprise.[i] Therefore, feminist economists and women's rights advocates, notably Diane Russell in *Femicide in Global Perspective* (Russell and Harmes, 2001), have drawn attention to violence against women and have called for integrating gender-based perspectives with micro policies (i.e., policies aimed at assisting individuals) and not just macro, state-level policies. Although some men claim that violence against women does not necessarily affect women's well-being, safety or emotions, there are debates regarding the adverse impact of violence on women's employability, attainment of rights, mortality, poverty and literacy—areas still controlled predominately by men.

Violence against Women in Turkey

Turkey is not exempt from criticism vis-à-vis violence against women despite the rhetorical claims that women are respected in society. The "National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey, 2009" reported the percentage of women who experience violence at any time in their lives is 39.3 percent; nearly 4 in 10 women in Turkey have experienced physical violence from their partner (NRDVAW, 2009). In contrast, the worldwide rate is at least 1 in 5 females who have been physically or sexually abused by a man or men at some point in their lives (WHO, 2002; Nouri et al., 2012).

The European Institute for Gender Equality, citing Art. 3 a, Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, describes violence against women in the following way: "Violence against women is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (EIGE, 2015). Even though many of these modes of violence against women are common in Turkey, very little attention has been given to the matter until recently, when the murder of Ms. Alsan sparked a national outcry (Girit, 2015), and reliable statistics are difficult to obtain. Many cases are not reported to the authorities, as women used informal means to seek help (Ergöçmen et al., 2013).

Hence, domestic violence is an increasingly important topic to scrutinize. The first "No Violence" march in Turkey was held in 1987; this was the initial campaign for empowerment for Turkish women. A study by the Foundation for Women's Solidarity (Kadin Dayanisma Vakfi in Turkish), an Ankara based NGO, indicates that 47 percent of interviewees reported being exposed to mild types of violence in their lifetimes by their husbands; 35 percent said their husbands used moderate forms of violence and 16 percent reported being frequently subjected to violence. A survey carried out by the Prime Minister's Office (2001) shows that 23 percent of women of middle- and upper-income families experienced violence. However, this figure rose to 71 percent when the women were asked questions about whether or not they experienced any

specific types of violence. The Purple Roof Foundation (1997) conducted a survey of 1.259 women between 1990 and 1996 to analyze statistics on violence. They reported that 88 percent of women are living in a hostile environment and 68 percent were subjected to violence, when the broader definition is used. In addition, the study on family violence against women determined that 48 percent of women are subjected to physical violence. The prevalence of emotional violence is 39 percent, economic 35 percent, sexual 41 percent, verbal 27 percent and divorce threats 19 percent (DGWS, 2009).

One of the main challenges in understanding the reasons for domestic violence in Turkish society is the lack of reliable statistics. Official statistics and nationwide surveys on the prevalence of violence against women and its impact on economic and social well being are very limited. Statistics are generally provided by women's organizations, platforms, associations and some state institutions. The main reason for not having reliable data is that most Turkish women do not report violence due to shame, a lack of awareness, a fear of murder and a fear of more violence (Ibilo lu, 2012). Also, the collection of data on the national level is, in most cases, is collected by and unfortunately, only accessible to the government. Although violence against women is a trending topic in Turkey, the likelihood of reporting these incidents to the authorities is very low (Ergöçmen et al., 2013). Much of the research, commentary, strategies, policies, reforms and interventions to date have defined/refined the definitions of the specific forms of domestic or sexual violence rather than making much-needed connections to health/human rights, shelters or cultural relativism. Research must link violence with causal factors in society if a solution is to be found. Turkish culture allows for decidedly aggressive behavior, resulting in hyper-masculinity. As a result, far from being taboo, violence against women tends to be seen as accepted behavior (Awwad, 2011). As the traditional status of men has become more pronounced in the last decade, the gains that women have made in equality have declined dramatically. Analyzing recent gender-based violence in Turkey provides a valuable reminder of how serious the challenge still is. It also provides a fresh understanding of the problem today.

Discussion

The Example of the Murder of Ozgecan Alsan

Women are stabbed, burned and even hanged; yet violence against them has been hidden from society for years. Sexual assault, rape, harassment and violence are the enduring problems facing women in society. It has been with us for many years and nothing has changed; it is still a critical problem. As highlighted above, statistics from women's organizations indicate that the number of women who were killed by their families, husbands, ex-husbands and partners is significant.

Although the majority violence against women cases are committed by intimates, it took a high profile act of violence against women perpetrated by a stranger to spark national outrage and set off a national discussion of the problem. February 11, 2015 a bus driver murdered Ozgecan Arslan. This murder became a turning point in the discussion of femicide and violence against women in Turkey (Girit, 2015). After the particularly brutal murder of Aslan, femicide, which had been on the rise for at least the last 10 years, has started to appear more frequently in the media. There were also many other women who were killed in their homes and on the streets in Istanbul and in Antalya just a few days later (Todays Zaman, 2015). Unsurprisingly, with these high-profile killings, the high-pressure approaches to stop this violence against and murder of women have garnered the attention of many and induced them to boycott murder on the streets or attempt to force the government to enact strict laws regarding the murder of women (Girit, 2015).

Violence against women, generally by men, inhibits their freedom to participate in the social, economic and political life of communities and also marginalizes them from every process that shapes their lives in Turkey. This violence not only terrorizes the lives of women, but also damages their relationships, both personal and social. Many women survive the violence, yet the fear of this experience continues to affect all aspects of their lives for years to come (Jekayinfa, 2004).

Violence against women is not unusual in Turkey. It is a pervasive form of harassment in all divisions of age, class, geographical region and education (Müftüler-Baç, 2012). The problem in Turkey, however, is that violence against women is still unknown or hidden by statistics. The real data about violence against women can be obtained from "The Platform of We Will Stop Femicide," an organization that

advocates for women's rights in Turkey.[ii] National statistics focus primarily on macroeconomics and likely very little on political, social and micro-economic trends. Even most statistics are not delineated by gender, and the women involved conceal violence against women as a result of under-reporting. According to the UN (1995a), the main reason for this is that violence occurs primarily in the home, and the family remains silent out of fear of reprisal, or the lack of support from the government.

There is usually a lack of consensus within society that all forms of violence against women are wrong. The one common argument, one that has been made for decades now, is that the modernization of women is perceived as a humiliation for men, and men use this as a reason to lash out at women. (Lackey and Williams, 1995). They perceive that gains in rights for women must mean a lessening of rights for men. From the perspective of the economic and social change of the country, there is often a real risk for women as targets of men. The unequal power relationship between men and women ensure men's dominance over women, especially in times of economic instability and crisis. Statistics show that economic hardship, conflict in social relations and cultural alterations exacerbate the condition for women. The majority of women in Turkey are most likely to experience a form of violence from their parents, husbands, partners and sons. Even though they are aware of the protests against violence, they feel it is important to subordinate women and consolidate power over them (Yüksel-Kaptano lu, Türkyılmaz and Heise, 2012).

Manifestations of Violence against Women
Violence against women in Turkey includes physical violence against wives and partners, which is often accepted, such as wife beating; sexual abuse or rape; sexual violence against girls and women with unknown perpetrators; violence against children in child marriages; honor killings because of moral laws and customs; and violence as torture. As some believe that some types of violence against women should not be considered a crime, this only makes it more difficult for victims to live with the stress of violence, as they have to deal with the stress from the violence plus the knowledge that society does not consider it a problem.

Table 1: Manifestation of gender violence

	Family	Community (Cultural or Religious)	The State (Policies, Laws, Remedies)
Forms of Gender Violence	*Physical Violence* Femicide Coercion Battering *Sexual Violence* Rape Incest Abuse *Psychological Violence* Bride Price Polygamy *Emotional Violence* Confinement Threats Early or forced marriage	*Physical Violence* Battering Chastisement Coercion Sati *Sexual Violence* Rape *Workplace* Sexual Violence Harassment Intimidation Mobbing *Commercialized Violence* Trafficking Forced prostitution	*Political Violence* Illegitimate detention Forced pregnancies Tolerating violence against women Non-recovery of legal infrastructure *Custodial Violence (Police, Military)* Torture Rape

Source: Schuler, M. (1992:14).

As Table 1 represents, violence can exist in societies in various forms. The types of violence are re-defined in Turkey. Rather than

preventing violence against women, it maintains a steadfast belief in the traditional culture that dominates Turkish society. Thus, gender relations in Turkey remain abysmal. Nonetheless, during social and economic upheaval, gender roles are redesigned again, depending on the new circumstances. Especially when economic conditions worsen, poverty and unemployment become serious problems; the security of the family is under threat and men realize that their identities as breadwinners within the family are breaking down. This is when violence and domination over women often worsens and escalates (Bittango, 1999). Also, unhappiness and uneasiness within the family and societal relations, which are sources of chaos and socio-economic depression, adversely affect the individual's mood and social relationships. Consequently, communication problems within the family can cause domestic violence. The violence can be physical, sexual, psychological, verbal or economic. Violence is a social problem as much as it is an issue of human rights, and as the family is part of society, domestic violence against women can spill over into society at large. It should not be regarded only as a family matter or explained using a family-centric perspective. How violence is presented and accepted in society is important. However, violence is not seen as a problem if it is adopted as a lifestyle and accepted as a means of problem solving. In this context, violence has a connection with the social and cultural life of a society. Some of the many types of violence against women are discussed below:

- *Physical violence*. From minor injuries to murder, a wide range of actions can be classified in this category (Heise et al.*,* 1999). Punching, kicking, shoving, beating, burning, slapping, bruising, and preventing women from receiving health services are all examples of physical violence. A nationwide study on Turkish domestic violence with 1.800 married women from 56 provinces by Altınay and Arat (2009) shows that husbands or partners expose 35 percent of women to physical violence and, regrettably, 50 percent of them did not report it.
- *Psychological violence*. Frightening, threatening, preventing women from communicating with relatives or friends, swearing, damaging household furniture, belittling and teasing are just some examples as described by Logar (2006). Because it is normalized, it is not universally regarded as a crime or a violation of women's rights although it is considered a crime in some countries such as

the United Kingdom. This type of violence can lead to depression, anxiety, suicide, the loss of personal identity and medical problems like heart disease (Desjarlais, et al., 1995).

- *Sexual violence.* It is not surprising to see *sexual violence* in a male-dominated society where sexuality is defined within the framework of the limits of gender stereotypes, and where women commonly have no voice over their own bodies. Rather, their sexual identities are kept under the domain of their families or their husbands (Walker and McNicol, 1994). Sexual violence includes marital rape, gang rape, forced or arranged marriages, forced prostitution, incest, forced childbirth or abortion, and injury to sexual organs (Sallan Gül, 2012). Controlling the sexuality of women is a powerful tool to enforce male domination over women. Although it is very difficult to conduct research on sexual violence in Turkey, field research in 19 settlements in Southeastern and Eastern Turkey among 599 women by Ilkkaracan (2004) indicates that 16 percent of women are "often" subject to sexual violence in the form of rape by their husbands or partners, and 35 percent of women said they "sometimes" are.

- *Economic violence.* Roles and responsibilities that are assigned according to gender, such as men being labeled the "breadwinners," results in *economic violence* against women (Moser, 1993). In patriarchal societies like Turkey, economic violence is one of the most common methods to control and subdue women. With this method, husbands or boyfriends take on the burden of providing for their families, and wives or girlfriends are expected to not question where and how their partners spend their money (I ık, 2007). To control the income of women and prevent women's economic independence, women are commonly not allowed access to necessary resources. They are often forced to work in undesirable environments or are prevented from taking part in any activities, which might develop their professional skills. They may also be denied the right to spend money and are sometimes prevented from owning property. In a study of 155 women by Güler et al. (2005), 55 percent of respondents accept economic insufficiency as the main reason for the increase in violence inside the family. Disputes are the second reason, at 50 percent, while alcohol consumption is the third, at 12 percent.

- *Social violence.* The predominant causes of violence against women are arguably the existence of a traditional patriarchal social value system in society. The general attitude of people towards violence and women's sexual identity reflects not only the perspectives of individuals and groups, but also the community. The mentality of "he loves me, so he can beat me" is a belief system, which legitimizes violence against women. Unfortunately, over centuries, beating the wife or daughter is seen as a right of men, even a "duty" in some cases, and supported by the proverb "Spare the rod and spoil the child." Women are subject to emotional violence when they are isolated, insulted, monitored, taken away from children, or threatened by bodily harm or death to a family member. In a study held in Konya by Çivi et al. (2008), most women who are subject to domestic violence experienced emotions of insecurity, suicidal thoughts, despair and sleeping problems.

The most current report by National Research on Domestic Violence against Women (2009) collected data on the causes, extents, forms and consequences of violence from 12,795 women in all regions of Turkey, including both rural and urban areas. The ages of the women interviewees were between 15 and 59, and 86 percent of them responded to the questions. The time period of experiencing violence includes both lifetime violence and instances over just the previous twelve months. The types of violence are categorized as physical, psychological, sexual, economic and emotional.

The scale of violence that women experience is directly linked to their unequal status in society. Many women are exposed to psychological, physical and biological violence from the opposite sex. Of course, there are many different reasons behind this tragedy. First of all, women hold only 19 percent of the seats in parliament (Arslan, 2015), meaning that women in public decision making and influential roles is low. Furthermore, of 110 ambassadors representing Turkey abroad, only 11 percent are women (DGSW, 2014). Although female academics are better represented, at 39 percent, men predominantly hold the higher-level positions at universities. As of 2010, only 10 percent of rectors and 13 percent of deans were female in Turkish universities (Atabek and Atabek, 2015). And it is not just in higher education; disparities exist at

the most basic levels as well. The new illiteracy figures released by the government show that there are great disparities between men and women: 2.2 million of the 2.7 million people who are illiterate in Turkey are women (Todays Zaman, 2015). Ending violence against women starts with women's strategic and practical[iii] gender interests, which tackles social, economic and political change (Molyneux, 1985: 233). Practical interests are those, which are shared by all women in society and their roles in the gender division of labor. On the other hand, strategic gender interests are those that provide opportunities for women to challenge inequality as well as modify gender relations in that society (March et al., 1999). At the outset, women must change their behavior to avoid violence, and the most appropriate way to do this is for them to support women's empowerment and to overcome the economic, social, cultural and political barriers to equality with men. Since the issues of strategic and practical interests are intertwined, equal powers with equal human rights for women are needed to create equality at all levels of society.

Femicide and the Continuing Struggle for Gender Equality in Turkey

Femicide as a term has been used in literature for almost two centuries, but for the purposes of this paper, Diane Russell's definition will be used. She defines femicide as "the killing of females by males because they are female" (Russell and Harmes, 2001). This definition does not limit femicide to personal, impersonal, public or private actors. Any of those actors can commit femicide. Just as violence against women can be rooted in social, economic, cultural, political and religious inequalities, so too can femicide as a form of violence against women. Many of the interferences, policies, research, and reforms to date have emerged in relation to specific forms of violence rather than attempts to determine the cause. The term "femicide" is used in this paper to emphasize the sexist justifications behind the killing of women in Turkey.

Both regional and national conflicts are widespread, and authoritarian institutions as well as the community do not appear able to stop these forms of violence. In Turkish society, there is a consensus, it would seem, that cultural norms legitimize physical and sexual violence. Violence against women in Turkey has been on the increase, notably in the last year (Asquith, 2015). On the other hand, defining violence within marriage is the most difficult manifestation of all forms of violence

against women in Turkey. Cultural norms have developed several different justifications in years past where jealousy and violence may be considered a husband's commitment to the marriage in some cases.

However, marriage in general seems to give the husband a rationale to abuse his wife, and women are helpless to challenge it. According to Adu-Kofi (1997), forty-five percent of men in Turkey believe that disobedient women deserve beating and psychological pressure. However, domestic violence is not characterized as an act of violence, but instead a family issue. In this case, assault is seen as an activity, which involves two people who share the same home, and is considered a private matter. Legal actions can be taken only if women show their disapproval of their husbands' behavior.

Cultural sensitivity generally legitimates the concerns when women are brave enough to report this violence, as evidenced by the widespread protest that came after the murder of Ms. Aslan (Grit, 2015). In many cases, women see the family as an important part of their identities and crucial for their lives. As Akpınar (2003) says, "Gender norms in the Turkish cultural context consider marriage in the private sphere as a lifelong contract and prohibit public intervention into the private sphere." Thus, violence against women in the domestic sphere can be seen as a private matter; it could be seen as embarrassing for it to be discussed publicly.

The Directorate General on the Status and the Problems of Women research in 1990 indicates that 18 percent of married women are physically exposed to sexual harassment, and the major reason for it is that men perceive the women as having "low moral standards". When women seem to violate what is perceived as morality, their husbands abuse or assault them (CEDAW, 1996). Yet femicide has more than doubled in the past ten years; almost every day, the news reports the murder of at least one woman. Some of them are even hidden and not reported. Since January 2015, in three months' time, sixty-four women were murdered, and it shows no signs of slowing down (Anıtsayaç, 2015).

Table 2: Statistics on domestic violence and femicide between 2008-2015

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
Murdered Women	62	110	183	122	155	226	283	274	1415
Women exposed to domestic violence	11.317	18.296	24.912	29.031	39.321	8.2205	118.014	28	277.1115

Source: Directorate General on the Status of Women; Directorate General of Security; Commander of the Turkish Gendarmerie Forces, Association for Support of Women Candidates.

According to data obtained from the Ministry of Justice, the murder rate of women skyrocketed by 1400 percent between 2002 and 2009. While 66 women were murdered in 2002, this number rose dramatically in 2009 to 1,126. There are many reasons behind this increase, such as women who do not submit to violence as they had in years past, and men who are losing economic dominance and taking out their frustration on their wife's and families. Additionally, women are not always willing to be passive and men see this as a challenge to their traditional authority and use violence to try to "put women in their place". Evidently, violence against women's bodies and gender rights has reached an unprecedented level in recent years. It should be noted that this rise could be attributed to better record keeping, better reporting of cases, an increase in cases or a combination of all of the above. Further research needs to be done to tease out the nature of this rise in domestic violence cases. In addition, Turkey has shown a critical drop on the Global Gender Inequality Index[iv] since 2009. While Turkey ranked 106 in 2009, it dropped 19 places compared to previous years and is currently at 125th place, proving that despite legislation to ensure gender equality in every aspect of life and the strengthening of the legal framework to protect women from violence, women are still struggling with inequality.

Table 3 Reasons for the murder of women in Turkey between 2009 and 2014

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Demand for divorce	28.7	16.5	25.4	29.2	31.6	32.7
Psychological crisis	3	6.1	6.6	10.5	10.1	8.2
Rejection	4.5	10.6	6.7	6.4	6	6.3
Jealousy	32.8	11	16.9	22.7	13.7	13.8
Money	8.1	7.7	5	0	0	0
Refusal of men	1.9	16	14	0.05	6	6.9
Honor killing	0.9	0	9	3.4	0.4	0.7
Crime of hatred	0.7	0	0.9	1	0	0
Unknown	10.6	25.4	11.7	10.2	11.8	7.3
Sexual attack	2.7	1	0	0.05	0	0
Women's decision about their life	6.1	5.7	3.8	10	20.4	24.1
Forced suicide	0	0	0	6.5	0	0

Source: Stop Women Homicide, Platform of Us Will Stop Femicide, Morçatı.

Most of the statistics above are gathered from women's organizations and associations, and by interviews. Legal and judicial institutions, which are in charge of compiling data on cases of violence against women, do not provide accurate statistics due to a lack of acknowledgment of violence as a crime, under-reporting and under-recording by legal authorities, police or health officers, and/or women's own reluctance to report the violence. NGOs play a vital role in furnishing the required information on the scope of violence against women. They also play a key role in raising awareness of the magnitude of violence against women and its impact on society. Much of the femicide in Turkey appears to stem from the husband or partner's

jealousy, an unwillingness to divorce and women's decisions about their lives. These murders signify the sense of ownership that men have over women's sexuality (Arın, 2001). Men cannot stand the idea of being deceived, being left or losing control over women, which is the ultimate weapon available to men. Unfortunately, the deaths of these women are often minimalized in the press, and reported as if they had committed suicide. Therefore, discrimination and unequal power that woman face, as well as the threat of violence in all walks of life; will only increase male domination over women.

Emerging from the Silence: What Needs to Change

Violence against women is another form of discrimination. Rapid changes dramatically affect the extent and forms of violence in society. Domestic violence is higher at times of social and economic instability but it is not exactly clear if it is a trigger for domestic violence (Benson et al., 2003). What the government must do, therefore, is ensure that anti-discrimination policies are enforced, and address gender-based inequalities in all areas. Human rights are very difficult to enforce and it is still a significant determinant of access to gender identity. In Turkey, human rights are a very controversial topic in which political, social, cultural and legal forms and norms conflict. This often results in the failure of laws to deal with women's concerns, lack of legal support, and lack of education and financial access. Therefore, the full participation of women in economic, social and political life will increase their roles in every area of life. The existing violence against women not only minimizes women's desire and energy to resist what they face, but also undermines their self-confidence and decreases their willingness to fully participate in society (Heise et al., 1994). As stated by World Bank (1993), women who are exposed to violence and suffer from physical and psychological violence in any form cannot make consistent and rational decisions. To break the widespread silence of women in society and to remove hazards, there must be awareness policies, rules, laws and projects offered by the government, institutions, organizations, associations and people themselves.

A large portion of violence against women is the result of patriarchy in Turkey. The social, economic and political context is still dominated by men, and norms, beliefs and values sanction violence within the community. Numerous studies at the national level (Gulcur,

1999; Hemmasi and Prorok, 2000; Ilkkaracan; 2000, Kandiyoti, 1988; Yüksel, 1990) and at the international level (Brownmiller, 1975; Bunch and Carrillo, 1991; Caputi, 1989; Firestone, 1972; Griffin, 1971; Russell, 1975; Walby, 1990) show that patriarchy is one of the structural terms that justify violence against women. This is due to the assertion of masculine power over women, and is a means of controlling women's economic, social and political lives. However, patriarchy creates inequities between men and women's relationships in society. It has the power to control culture, laws, traditions, values, social institutions and, in some cases, legal policies. It affects men's perceptions and expectations of women, such as the image of women becoming more complex and producing conflicts by emphasizing sexuality, beauty and physical attitudes.

Therefore, there are two levels of the patriarchal system in Turkey. The macro level is law, market and bureaucracies, and the micro level is families, organizations and interactions. Within the country, social, cultural and political frameworks are determined in patriarchal and Islamic traditions, which challenge women's progress deeply in reforming, redesigning and gaining significant policies, laws and acts of discrimination and inequality. The uprising known as "Arab Spring" in the region has demonstrated the existing balance within Turkish society and has exacerbated the inequality and violence against women by shifting the cultural and political scene and increasing the gap between gender inequality and human rights. As a tradition in Turkish society, regarding sex role socialization, men are largely expected to be the breadwinners in a household. Despite economic growth, women are not well represented in the job market. However, as women in Turkey seek greater autonomy, more of them are entering the market (lkkaracan, 2012).

Nonetheless, attitudes towards women and employment are influenced by traditional gender roles. The more men cling to traditional and patriarchal concepts of gender roles and maintain dominance over women through gender role socialization, the more we see violence towards women and even femicide itself become acceptable. Men dominate the power structures in a patriarchal society and legal system designed to promote only their interests, where women are deprived in many fields. The major problem is that these outcomes in Turkey depend not only on men, but also on some women who are still not aware of their

rights and do not comprehend the necessity of gender equality. Therefore, traditional masculine roles, dominance and hierarchy continue unabated, they together represent a single factor defined as patriarchy. If patriarchal ideology continues to give men priority and increases their status in hierarchy, it will continue to have tragic outcomes for women.

Strengthening legal interventions to violence against women

Unless criminal laws in Turkey protect women from violence and punish the perpetrator, they are unlikely to provide effective solutions for the reduction of violence against women. As an example, passing laws and policies to tackle violence against women cannot be the solution if the government does not combat the problem in tandem with women's associations, organizations and NGOs.

To protect women from domestic violence, the Turkish government started to introduce legal reforms, and was one of the vanguard countries with the adoption of Law 4320 (DGSW, 1998). At that time, there had not been any laws protecting women from violence. It was not until mid-2002 that family courts were established to enforce the laws. With the efforts and support of women's NGOs, the Turkish Civil Code was reformed in 2001. With the redesigned Civil Code, gender equality during marriage and after divorce was reformed. The marriage age was raised to 17 and the new Code entitles women to an equal share of assets accumulated throughout the marriage. In addition, with the new Turkish family law, the husband is not considered the head of the family anymore; every decision within the marriage theoretically requires equal input from both the husband and the wife. Men no longer possess any rights over women. To be effective, however, enforcement of the new Code is critical. After long debates about the acts and the articles, the amendment to the Turkish Penal Code was agreed upon in 2004 and went into effect in 2005 (MOJ, 2004). However, the new Turkish Penal Code, Law 5237, stated that the main aim of the law was to protect the rights and freedoms of individuals, provide progressive definitions of sexual crimes and criminalize marital rape. It also eliminated all references to patriarchal concepts like chastity, honor, morality, shame or indecent behavior, and it criminalized sexual harassment at the workplace (MOJ, 2004). Many of these reforms constitute gains for women's rights. Domestic violence against women is now an offense with a minimum penalty of three to eight years in prison.

In addition, in early 2007, a protection order system began allowing a person subjected to abuse, rape or violence by family member(s) to apply to the family court, either by herself or through a prosecutor. But those reforms and major changes in Civil and Panel Codes are theoretical. Violence against women has, in practice, continued to increase from day to day, and femicide has risen over the years. To prevent this femicide and strengthen women's rights against violence, the efforts of NGOs including Women for Women's Human Rights, KA-DER, Mor Çati, KADAV, THKD[v], the Women's Coordination Group and many other civil society organizations do not have enough power to change the situation. Four in ten women in Turkey are subject to violence regardless of their age, education, economic freedom or class.

The effect of media on violence against women
Violence against women permeates the media in TV series and news programs. People become desensitized to such violence on TV and on soap operas. Yet already, traditional and cultural values have had a great impact on male dominance and the image of men over women in society. Print media (newspapers, magazines), broadcast media (television, radio), and film and social digital media (the Internet) inadvertently encourage violence through portrayals of gender stereotypes. Women are all too often represented as victims of violence or as sexual objects in the media (Hansawasdi, 2001; Jeenjaroen, 2001; Maison, 2001; Ratsaranuwat, 2001). In recent years in Turkey, violence and abuse inside and outside the family has reached a shocking level; thus, it is possible to see or read about torture, abuse, rape, femicide and assault every day in the media. The campaigns supported by women's associations or organizations are not very helpful in keeping these issues alive. Therefore, editors, writers and publishers should report gender violence and help change the public attitude towards the problem.

Educational campaign
However, simply reporting the issues is not enough, especially as it can lead to desensitization. Increasing the awareness of gender stereotypes and the adaptation of changed policies and rules would be a great way to mitigate violence against women. Culture is changeable; however, it can be very difficult to persuade people by simply saying, "You love her and are her husband/father/brother or whatever", but that does not mean you

can beat her or have dominance over her. People need more reasons to change their behavior than just being told to do so. One way to address this is to organize trainings, seminars, courses and meetings for men that discuss issues regarding gender equality, human rights and gender power relations. Also programs can be set up that bring men and women together to have open but safe discussions between men and women about gender, violence and social roles. The Directorate General on the Status of Women can organize such events jointly with women's associations and institutions by providing adequate resources from the government.

Equality in Rights and Life

Symbolic acts and regulations until now have essentially created gender-motivated violence. The cultural realm reminds women about the importance of understanding how males have dominance over women. The cultural invisibility of women regarding human rights shows itself in a number of ways from both secular and sacred notions. To draw attention to gender-based violence as a violence of human rights towards women, the cultural sphere that overflows with spirituality, traditions, values, beliefs and hearsay should be broken up. Rethinking human rights to include cultural reforms from within plays a vital role, as religion, patriarchy and even politics shape public understanding of violence, rape, femicide, torture and assault in campaigns, politics, acts, regulations and policies.

Furthermore, when the justifications for femicide are examined, it seems that a lack of social sensitivity with regards to femicide, as well as a lack of enforcement by the government, has played a major role in the rise of femicide over the last decade. Of violations against women's human rights, physical violence ranks first in affecting them culturally, politically, legally, economically, socially, sexually and emotionally. Empirical and social research has shown that women are frequently subject to violence from their families or close relationships. Although some improvements have been seen, today gender equality exists only in the imagination. The dependency of women on men and the conventional wisdom of following in men's footsteps will not ensure a solution to violence against women, even if equality were provided legally. Therefore, implementing legislation effectively and equally, and increasing public awareness, must be used to find a just solution. The

laws should be regulated on the basis of social justice, with acceptance of violence becoming a prime threat to human rights as well as a cause of humiliation for women. Of course, it is important to regulate the laws, but how can a legal change be effective in enabling social change? Gender roles are embedded in society. First of all, women are classified as either honorable or dishonorable in society; after becoming mothers, they have a sacred duty to their children. The perception of having different identities must be clearly understood, and prejudices must be eliminated to bring about gender equality. Hence, the socio-economic status of women should be readdressed and equal opportunities in education should be adopted as a social policy to eliminate discrimination and violence. Otherwise, the status of underprivileged women will always leave them unprotected against all types of violence, abuse, sexual harassment and rape (Yüksel-Kaptano lu et al., 2012).

Concluding Notes

The perception among activists and the public at large is that violence against women in Turkey is bad and is getting worse. However, it is difficult to accurately measure this. The difficulty in making a comprehensive comparison of the levels of violence against women throughout the years is due to the fact that very little accurate data exists that documents violence against women before and after crises or socio-political changes. In Turkey, economic and political instabilities have turned people increasingly fundamentalist, and patriarchal beliefs have been directly linked to the increased violence towards women and femicide. Therefore, this study emphasizes the effects on women, who are obligated by patriarchal cultural pressure and male dominance, and are faced with violence more than other women. Research, activists, NGOs, movements and feminist groups have defined various forms of violence against women. Of the defined types of violence, Turkish women face the most common types as do women in other countries: physical, psychological and sexual violence. Men's propensity to control women in every area of life has continued, and the violence, femicide and torture are masked by cultural, religious, patriarchal and traditional ideologies. Although it is an alarming issue and is on the public agenda, the legal system is so blinded by traditional family values and cultural legacy that very little has been done to equalize societal roles.

In the face of such a monumental problem, the first step is to recognize the systematic ways to stop femicide and violence against women. It is also necessary to maintain a high level of action and thought in either the private or public eyes. Broad alliances are required to tackle the problem from all sides. Lawyers, economists, health professionals, bureaucracies, educators, campaigners, police officers, NGOs and many other national agencies are all important for mobilizing people on the issue and propping up the struggle. The psychological profiles of abused women and the economic cost of violence against women, as well as the future results of the violence that faces women, must be thoroughly explored. Although a lack of statistical data is the main problem in analyzing abused women, the reasons for domestic violence and femicide, and the goals of interventions, should be clearly defined to empower women and equalize their rights in society. Since the issue requires commitment and dedication to continue, the media plays a vital role in implementing the right messages to the right people at the right time. They must be involved in these actions regularly and mention the existing threat of increased violence and femicide. Otherwise, more women will give up hope of a life without violence, abuse and femicide.

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[i] As Dobash and Dobash (1992) criticize all studies on intimate violence and try to criticize the general disagreement among couples—male and female—on the amount of violence, Mooney (1992) discusses the causes of domestic violence and states that violence is found in a patriarchal social structure which embodies male power over women. Radford et al. (2000) looks at the definition of violence against women and also discusses violence against children. In addition, he focuses on domestic violence, sexual harassment, pornography, rape and the sexual abuse of children. Rowbotham (1992) puts the women's movement into context and tries to explain what a 'women's movement' is, how violence can be distinguished from 'women in movement.' Using the approximate arguments, the same results can be obtained regarding male dominance over females and the social and legal remedies for taking actions toward violence (Renzetti, Edleson, and Bergen, 2001; Yllo, 1993).

[ii] Some of these publications are as follows: Daya a Kar ı Dayanı ma Kampanyası [Campaign Against Battering], 1988; Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation, 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2003; ahmaran, 2003; KAMER, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Women's Solidarity Foundation, 2005; Amargi, 2005; EP DEM, 2006; D KASUM, 2007; Kırk Örük, 2007; EP DEM, 2006; D KASUM, 2007; Kırk Örük, 2007.

[iii] Molyneux's differentiation between practical and strategic gender interests provides a useful theoretical and methodological distinction to the article. If the strategic gender interest is for a more equal society than a strategic gender interest, it could be identified as the abolition of the sexual division of labor. On the contrary, if the practical gender interest is for women's survival, a practical gender interest could be the solution to the existing problem.

[iv] The index is based on a range of factors that influence the status of women in a society, like maternal mortality rates, adolescent fertility rates, percentage of seats in parliament, population with at least secondary education, labor force participation rate and births attended by skilled health personnel.

[v] KA-DER—Association for Support of Women Candidates—was founded in 1997 and aims to increase the number of women in politics and decision-making positions so as to achieve the equal representation of women and men. Mor Çati—The Purple Roof Foundation—was founded in 1990, and since then continues to consult with women and strengthen the fight against domestic violence. KADAV—Women's Solidarity Foundation—was founded in 1991. This center provides psychological and legal counseling. Between the years of 1991 and 1996, 806 women contacted the center. THKD—The Women's Rights Commission and the Turkish Women's Juridical Association—provide legal counseling for abused women. These institutions engender hope and indicate a consistent trend towards acknowledging women's issues and developing more foundations to guarantee the exploration and enforcement of women's fundamental liberties.