

London Legal Group
Alternative report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against
Women – Turkey

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Introduction

This alternative report is drafted by the London Legal Group (LLG), a network of lawyers who provide advice on and actively participate in legal and advocacy activities before international courts and institutions, including the European court of Human Rights (ECtHR), United Nations Human Rights Council and Treaty and Charter bodies, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

This report is a response to the Turkish government's State Report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereafter "the Committee") under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The report provides an NGO perspective on the progress made by Turkey in implementing CEDAW.

LLG welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Committee in advance of its examination of Turkey's compliance with its obligations under CEDAW. LLG seeks to work constructively with the Committee and the Turkish government.

PART I: Articles 1, 2, 3, and 5

Women's rights in Turkey: norms and provisions

Turkey is a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),¹ and, therefore, it is under the obligation to comply with both with Article 1 of the Convention, providing a definition of “discrimination against women” and Article 2, imposing an obligation to “condemn discrimination against women in all its forms” and “agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women”.²

Turkey ratified CEDAW in 1985, and, since then, a number of steps have been taken to comply with the positive obligations enshrined within the Convention. Turkey's legislative system includes provisions concerning discrimination between men and women, imposing an obligation on the Turkish Government to use all the appropriate measures to create equality between the genders. A closer look at the situation of women in Turkey, however, reveals that, despite the above mentioned efforts, women in Turkey still face discrimination and are far from being considered equal to their male counterparts, as traditional patriarchal values and a male-dominated society still prevail. In January 2015, Turkey underwent its second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle during which Turkish authorities received over 50 recommendations encouraging the government to take further measures on anti-discrimination and equality, in order to address gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices in different areas, from education to public life.³ The pressing need to address such issues is confirmed by recent data included in the 2015 Global Gender Gap Report demonstrating how Turkey only ranks 130 out of 140 countries assessed on economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival rates, and political empowerment.⁴

The equality and non-discrimination principles are protected under Turkey's domestic legal framework. For instance, Article 10 of the Constitution of Turkey establishes that “everyone is equal below the law without distinction as to language, race, colour, sex, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion and sect, or any such grounds”.⁵ Gender, therefore, is explicitly included in the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination. Such principle is re-stated in the following paragraph of the Article, specifically directed at targeting inequalities between men and women, who are said to enjoy equal rights, whose existence in practice the State has the obligation to ensure.⁶ Article 41 of the Turkish Constitution, moreover, states that family is “based on the equality between the spouses”, an important step undertaken by Turkey to ensure equality within the family.

In addition to the Constitution, the amended Turkish Civil Code⁷ scraps the principle of the supremacy of men over women in marriage: not only the language of the new Civil Code does not include terms such as “husband” and “wife”, both replaced with “spouses”, but the husband is no longer identified as the head of the family as spouses

¹ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, 18 December 1979, 1249 UNTS 13. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3970.html> (last accessed on 7 June 2016).

² UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, 18 December 1979, 1249 UNTS 13; Article 2. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3970.html> (last accessed on 7 June 2016).

³ UPR Info, *Database of UPR Recommendations*. Available at <http://www.upr-info.org/database/> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁴ World Economic Forum, *Gender Gap Index Report - Turkey, 2015*. Available at <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=TUR> (last accessed on 23 May 2016).

⁵ Grand National Assembly of Turkey, *Constitution of the Republic of Turkey*, 1982; Article 10.1. Available at: https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf (last accessed on 7 June 2016).

⁶ Grand National Assembly of Turkey, *Constitution of the Republic of Turkey*, 1982; Article 10.2. Available at: https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf (last accessed on 7 June 2016).

⁷ Grand National Assembly of Turkey, *Turkish Civil Code*, 2001. Available at http://www.tusev.org.tr/usfiles/files/Turkish_Civil_Code.pdf (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

are considered equal partners. Legal age for marriage, moreover, is now 17 years or both women and men. Provisions of property law, furthermore, have been amended to implement a new regime, on the basis of which women are entitled to an equal share of the assets accumulated during the marriage.⁸

In 2004 the Turkish Parliament passed thirty-five amendments that aimed at reforming the Turkish Penal Code.⁹ The new provisions recognise women's entitlement to their own sexual and bodily autonomy and rights: sexual crimes against women are now identified as crimes against individuals rather than crimes against society. "Custom killings", moreover, are categorised under voluntary manslaughter and harsher punishments are provided. Lastly, rape victims may lawfully exercise their right to have an abortion until the 20th week of gestation.¹⁰

Despite the above mentioned provisions, equality between the sexes struggles to be implemented in practice. This is due to the persistence of cultural and social attitudes that reinforce the traditional role of women as wives and mothers, rather than individuals. A staggering example of the struggle of Turkish women to have their rights recognised outside their family life are the statements made by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2015: "you cannot put women and men on an equal footing. It is against nature."¹¹ Women's participation in public life, although increased in recent years – in the 2015 parliamentary elections the number of women MPs increased from 79 to 98 – is still low compared to the global average: according to data provided by United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, "women now hold 17.8 per cent of 550 seats in the Parliament, which is far below parity or even the global average of 22 per cent."¹² The country's low level of women's representation in public institutions and, therefore, in the decision-making process, adds to the key factors contributing to broadening the gender gap in Turkey.

In 2012, despite protests by women's rights organisations, Turkey's Ministry of Women and Family Affairs was replaced by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies:¹³ yet another example of how women in Turkey as still perceived to be worthy of protection and respect only as part of their family unit. More recently, a draft report prepared by a parliamentary investigation commission raised concerns about a range of controversial recommendations for legislative amendments that, if passed, "could destroy gains in women's rights".¹⁴ Among such amendments, the report states that it was proposed to ensure personal impunity in cases of sexual abuse

⁸ Women Living Under Muslim Laws, *Turkey: New Civil Code Ensures Equality in the Family*, 26 November 2001. Available at: <http://www.wluml.org/node/662> (last accessed on 26 May 2016).

⁹ Grand National Assembly of Turkey, *Turkish Penal Code*, 29 September 2004. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/res/cld/document/tur/2004/criminal_code_law_no_5237_html/Turkey_Criminal_Code_Law_No._5_237_2004.pdf (last accessed on 8 June 2016).

¹⁰ Grand National Assembly of Turkey, *Turkish Penal Code*, 29 September 2004; Article 99. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/res/cld/document/tur/2004/criminal_code_law_no_5237_html/Turkey_Criminal_Code_Law_No._5_237_2004.pdf (last accessed on 8 June 2016).

¹¹ BBC News, *Turkey President Erdogan: Women Are Not Equal to Men*, 24 November 2014. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30183711> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

¹² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, *Elections Herald An Increase In Women Mps In Turkey, But More Progress Is Needed*, 12 June 2015. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/6/elections-herald-increase-in-women-mps-in-turkey-but-more-progress-is-needed> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

¹³ iKnow Politics, *Turkey: Replacement Of The Ministry Of Women And Family Affairs*, 30 Ma 2012. Available at: <http://iknowpolitics.org/en/news/world-news/turkey-replacement-ministry-women-and-family-affairs> (last accessed on 31 May 2016) and Bianet, *Women Policies Erased from Political Agenda*, 9 June 2011. Available at: <http://bianet.org/english/women/130607-women-policies-erased-from-political-agenda> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

¹⁴ Hurriyet Daily News, *Parliamentary Commission's Draft Report on Divorce Sparks Controversy*, 17 May 2016. Available at <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/parliamentary-commissions-draft-report-on-divorce-sparks-controversy.aspx?pageID=238&nID=99285&NewsCatID=338> (last accessed on 23 May 2016).

where both the perpetrator and the victim are under the age of 15.¹⁵ The report also recommends amending provisions on child sexual abuse which result in marriage, proposing to amend the Penal Code to allow for probation in cases of “unproblematic and successful marriages”.¹⁶ The report, furthermore, includes potential amendments in relation to the law on preventing violence against women, not only restricting the provision of protective and preventive services, such as shelters and psychological assistance, but also calling for the establishment of compulsory sessions with a professional intermediary in cases of domestic violence or divorce, in order to protect the sanctity of the family.¹⁷ Currently, the Turkish government is in the process of drafting a new comprehensive anti-discrimination law, which includes provisions to protect women’s rights in relation to employment, and to establish a Human Rights and Equality Body. While this represents a step forward in addressing discriminatory practices, the new draft law raises some concerns in relation to the new Human Rights and Equality Body. The latter is yet to comply with the Paris Principles:¹⁸ while it is described as an independent institution, it would be *de facto* closely linked to the government. Eight members of the board would be chosen by the Council of Ministers, while the remaining three would be nominated by the President himself.¹⁹ According to the new law, moreover, civil society organisations, already left out of the drafting process, would not be entitled to submit applications to such body.²⁰

Another pressing issue related to the implementation of women’s rights in Turkey, furthermore, is the so called “double discrimination” suffered by women and girls belonging to ethnic. These girls and women not only are discriminated on the basis of their gender, merely for not being male, but they often become victims of the discriminatory behaviour adopted by Turkish State authorities against specific groups of people. An example of this is Turkey’s attitude towards the Kurdish minority: as it will be examined in the following sections, Kurdish women are often discriminated in relation to their education, healthcare, and access to the labour market. As recently highlighted by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Turkey is yet to take the necessary steps to “address inequalities faced by members of the Kurdish community in gaining access to economic, social and cultural rights on equal footing with the rest of the population” and adopt special measures in relation to Kurdish women and enjoyment of their rights.²¹

The above paragraphs demonstrate that, despite a legal framework that includes provisions establishing the non-discrimination and equality principles, which may seem to be aligned with Turkey’s international obligations under CEDAW, such provisions are not upheld in practice. The general attitude of Turkish State authorities towards the role of women, and particularly women belonging to ethnic minorities, not only represents a step back in the

¹⁵ Hurriyet Daily News, *Parliamentary Commission’s Draft Report on Divorce Sparks Controversy*, 17 May 2016. Available at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/parliamentary-commissions-draft-report-on-divorce-sparks-controversy.aspx?pageID=238&nID=99285&NewsCatID=338> (last accessed on 23 May 2016).

¹⁶ Hurriyet Daily News, *Parliamentary Commission’s Draft Report on Divorce Sparks Controversy*, 17 May 2016. Available at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/parliamentary-commissions-draft-report-on-divorce-sparks-controversy.aspx?pageID=238&nID=99285&NewsCatID=338> (last accessed on 23 May 2016).

¹⁷ Hurriyet Daily News, *Parliamentary Commission’s Draft Report on Divorce Sparks Controversy*, 17 May 2016. Available at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/parliamentary-commissions-draft-report-on-divorce-sparks-controversy.aspx?pageID=238&nID=99285&NewsCatID=338> (last accessed on 23 May 2016).

¹⁸ UN General Assembly, *Paris Principles*, 20 December 1993, A/RES/48/134. Available at: <http://enoc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Paris-Principle.pdf> (last accessed on 18 May 2016).

¹⁹ Daily Sabah, *Parliament Approves Bill to Form New Human Rights Institution in Turkey*, 7 April 2016. Available at: <http://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2016/04/07/parliament-approves-bill-to-form-new-human-rights-institution-in-turkey> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

²⁰ Minority Rights Group International, *Minority Rights Group International (MRG) Urges the Government of Turkey to Amend the Draft Law on the Future Human Rights and Equality Body – Press release*, 8 March 2016. Available at <http://minorityrights.org/2016/03/08/minority-rights-group-international-mrg-urges-the-government-of-turkey-to-amend-the-draft-law-on-the-future-human-rights-and-equality-body/> (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

²¹ Hurriyet Daily News, *UN Committee Warns Turkey Over Discrimination and Human Rights Violations*, 19 January 2016. Available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/un-committee-warns-turkey-over-discrimination-and-human-rights-violations.aspx?pageID=238&nID=94022&NewsCatID=339> (last accessed on 17 May 2016).

implementation of women's rights, but it is also damaging in relation to the pressing need to change the patriarchal structure of the Turkish society, and fight prejudices and stereotypes still attached to women and girls. Turkey's domestic legal framework, paired with the blatantly discriminatory remarks by Turkish State authorities and the above mentioned proposed amendments to fundamental legal provisions implementing women's rights, do not comply with Turkey's international human rights obligations, particularly under CEDAW's Articles 2, 3 and 5. Under the Convention, Turkey, as a State party to the Convention, has a duty to take all appropriate measures to abolish "customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women" and "to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped roles for men and women". As interpreted by the Committee, CEDAW's Article 2 imposes and obligation to "take a wide variety of steps to ensure that women and men enjoy equal rights *de jure* and *de facto*":²² an obligation that the Turkish government is yet to comply with.

Recommendations

- *Turkish State authorities should take positive measures to promote equality of women, also through the drafting and the implementation of national action plans and other relevant policies and programmes, in line with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.*
- *Turkish State authorities should allocate adequate human, structural and financial resources to implement policies and strategies aiming at the protection and promotion of women's rights, and ensure that such policies and programmes are implemented in practice.*
- *Turkish State authorities should strengthen measures to address inequalities faced by members of the Kurdish community, and in particular Kurdish women, in relation to their access to economic, social and cultural rights.*
- *Turkish State authorities should abstain from performing, sponsoring or condoning any practice or measures that violates women's rights. Turkish State representative should refrain from promoting discrimination against women by issuing discriminatory statements.*
- *Turkish State authorities should allocate human and financial resources in order to develop and establish a system to monitor and evaluate, on the basis of indicators and benchmarks, the implementation of women's rights in Turkey. Such monitoring system should provide data disaggregated by sex, age, and ethnicity.*
- *Turkish State authorities should take positive steps to strengthen efforts to achieve full equality, including by ensuring greater participation by women in Turkey's political life.*

²² UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *General Recommendation No. 28*, CEDAW/C/2010/47/GC.2, 19 October 2010; para 9. Available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/CEDAW-C-2010-47-GC2.pdf> (last accessed on 24 May 2016).

Right to education

Under Article 10 of CEDAW, Turkey undertakes to “take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education”. Although the Turkish government has attempted to implement some administrative reforms to increase educational opportunities for women and girls, access to education still remains problematic in Turkey, particularly in relation to rural areas and girls and women belonging to disadvantaged groups, such as the Kurdish population. The frequent changes in the education system, moreover, have had a negative impact on young girls: in 2012, the Turkish Grand National Assembly passed a new law establishing the so called 4+4+4 Compulsory Education System, which replaced the 8 years of compulsory uninterrupted primary education.²³ The 4+4+4 system divides education into three four years periods: first level of mandatory elementary education (children aged 5-8), second-level of primary education (children aged 9-12), and secondary education (high school). Under the new law, primary education, therefore, is divided into two levels: after the first four years period, students have the choice to attend either a general or a religious/vocational middle school. The new legislation establishing the 4+4+4 system, furthermore, allows students, pending the parent’s approval, to be home schooled from the age of 12.²⁴

The new law also includes provisions on the reopening of religious schools (*Hatip*), originally banned in 1997: recent data shows that, over the past few years, the so called *Hatip* schools increased in number, going from only 537 in 2012 to 2,074 in 2013.²⁵ This is particularly worrying, as regular high schools following educational programmes that would prepare young students for higher education are rapidly being transformed into *Hatip* or vocational schools. The new 4+4+4 school system, moreover, is likely to negatively affect girls more than boys, as the increasingly religious approach to education, as well as the possibility of home schooling, risk perpetuating and reinforcing the traditional role of girls and women as wives and mothers. According to statistics provided by Egitim Sen, a Turkish teachers’ union, in its report on Gender Inequality in Education, in 2014 36,401 girls who graduated from middle school decided not to continue their education.²⁶ These concerns are further supported by the general unwillingness demonstrated by the Turkish authorities’, including by the Ministry of Education, to tackle gender discrimination: school textbooks are still mainly focused on presenting women as mothers and defining men as the head of the family.²⁷

The gender gap in education, moreover, is even wider if regional economic disparities are taken into consideration: high levels of poverty in the South East of Turkey, a predominantly Kurdish-populated region, contribute to render education a privilege rather than a right for girls belonging to ethnic minorities. It is reported that in 2014 in Turkey’s rural Eastern and South-eastern regions, a staggering 45% of girls still remained illiterate. On average only 54% of girls in the south-east region of Turkey continue with their education after primary school, in some provinces this figure goes up to 80%. Kurdish girls also obtain less adequate education with 38 pupils per classroom

²³ US Department of State, *Human Rights Report – Turkey*, 2015; p. 59. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253121.pdf> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

²⁴ Ozlem Ilyas Tolunay, *Women in Erdogan’s Turkey*, New Politics Vol. XIV-4, 2014. Available at: <http://newpol.org/content/women-erdo%C4%9Fan%E2%80%99s-turkey> (last accessed on 26 May 2016).

²⁵ Ozlem Ilyas Tolunay, *Women in Erdogan’s Turkey*, New Politics Vol. XIV-4, 2014. Available at: <http://newpol.org/content/women-erdo%C4%9Fan%E2%80%99s-turkey> (last accessed on 26 May 2016).

²⁶ Ozlem Ilyas Tolunay, *Women in Erdogan’s Turkey*, New Politics Vol. XIV-4, 2014. Available at: <http://newpol.org/content/women-erdo%C4%9Fan%E2%80%99s-turkey> (last accessed on 26 May 2016).

²⁷ History Foundation and Centre for Sociology and Education Studies at Istanbul Bilgi University, *Promoting Human Rights In Textbooks*, 2014. Available at: http://tarihvakfi.org.tr/media/documents/16_6_2015_17_20_35698e.pdf (last accessed on 26 May 2016).

compared to the country average of 32 pupils per class.²⁸ One of the crucial factors preventing girls from continuing their education is a lack of schools in the region with families not wanting their daughters to travel far to school.²⁹ According to a 2015 study conducted by the Education Reform Initiative, “socioeconomic status not only determines whether one can attend private schools or not, but also affects the type of public school attended. In secondary education, children from low-income families are predominantly concentrated at public vocational schools”,³⁰ which are poorer in quality. Precarious economic and social conditions, paired with the ban to provide education in languages other than Turkish, represent an increasing obstacle for Kurdish girls to gain access to higher education.³¹ As reported by the Association for Women’s Rights in Development, access to education still remains one of the most significant obstacles faced by Kurdish women: “They start their formal educational journey with a language other than their own and this brings many challenges – estrangement to their own culture, incomprehension of the lessons thought, and discrimination within the school system”.³² Although, in September 2013, the Turkish Government launched its “democracy package”, which recognised the right of Kurdish people to Kurdish education in private schools, and eased the restrictions on the use of the letters *q*, *w* and *x*, which are used in Kurdish, but are not part of the Turkish alphabet, restrictions still apply on the use of the Kurdish language in official contexts.³³ The above mentioned reforms did not meet the expectations: Kurdish-language education is still prohibited in public schools, and, due to financial constraints, access to mother tongue education in private schools is still unreachable for most Kurdish children.³⁴

The above mentioned shortcomings by the Turkish government in guaranteeing girls’ access to education, particularly in relation to children and women belonging to ethnic minorities, constitute a violation of Turkey’s human rights obligations under CEDAW, both in relation to Article 2, and the obligation to take all appropriate measures to address discriminatory practices, as well as under Article 10, imposing an obligation to eliminate discrimination against women in the area of education and ensure “the same conditions [...] for access to studies in rural as in urban areas.”

Recommendations

- *Turkish State authorities should immediately take the necessary measures to keep girls in schools, and guarantee that they continue their official and higher education, particularly in relation to girls belonging to ethnic minorities.*
- *Turkish State authorities should take appropriate measures to ensure that the new 4+4+4 education system will not adversely impact on girls’ education, particularly in the poorer areas of the country.*
- *Turkey’s Ministry of Education should immediately take steps to ensure the elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education, particularly by addressing stereotyped roles in school textbooks and teaching materials.*

²⁸ Hacettepe University, *Turkiye’de docum ve dogum sonu hizmetlerden yararlanma*. Available at: http://www.huksam.hacettepe.edu.tr/Turkce/SayfaDosya/turkiyede_dogum_sonrasi.pdf (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

²⁹ Hacettepe University, *Turkiye’de docum ve dogum sonu hizmetlerden yararlanma*. Available at: http://www.huksam.hacettepe.edu.tr/Turkce/SayfaDosya/turkiyede_dogum_sonrasi.pdf (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

³⁰ ERG, *Yeni Yayinlarimiz*, pp. 9-10. Available at: <http://erg.sabanciuniv.edu/sites/erg.sabanciuniv.edu/files/enews/EIROzetDegerlendirmeENG.25.12.15.SON.pdf>

³¹ World Policy Blog, *Girls of Hope: Fighting for Education in Turkey*, 29 May 2015. Available at: <http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2014/05/29/girls-hope-fighting-education-turkey> (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

³² AWID, *Kurdish Women: Resilience in the Face of Double Discrimination*, 12 April 2013. Available at: <http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/kurdish-women-resilience-face-double-discrimination> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

³³ London Legal Group, *Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Turkey*, 2014; para 14.

³⁴ Rudaw, *On language day, Kurds Demand Education in Mother Tongue*, 16 May 2014. Available at: <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/turkey/16052014> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

- *Turkish State authorities should amend the Constitution of Turkey to allow the Kurdish language to be used in public offices. Turkish State authorities should take immediate steps to allow Kurdish education in public schools.*

Right to work

Under Article 11 of CEDAW, Turkey undertakes the obligation to “take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment”. The above mentioned barriers for girls and women to gain access to education, however, not only negatively affect young girls’ development, but they also have an impact on their future, as data shows how women often are left out of the labour market due to their lack of education. As stated in the 2015 US Department of State’s Human Rights Report on Turkey, women continue to face discrimination in employment and are generally underrepresented in managerial-level positions in business and government.³⁵ According to recent data, Turkey has one of the lowest rates of female employment among the countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).³⁶ In 2013, as showed by official statistics provided by the OECD, the employment rate for Turkish women between 15 and 64 years old was 28.7%, meaning that the vast majority of women in Turkey were out of the labour market.³⁷ More recent data provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TSI) prove how the gender gap between men and women was still affecting women’s enjoyment of their right to work: in 2014, only 30.8% of women, as opposed to 71.5% of men, were considered to be part of the labour force, while 40.7% of them were recorded as “housewives”. While the latter figure has decreased, if compared to the 54% in 2013, the large number of women who are still perceived as being merely housewives constitutes yet another consequence of the patriarchal attitudes that relegate women to their role as mothers and wives.³⁸ Women’s unemployment rate, furthermore, is still significantly higher (11.9%) than men’s (8.7%) in Turkey.³⁹

While lack of access to the labour market affects the vast majority of women in Turkey, it represents an even more unsurmountable barrier for girls and women belonging to ethnic minorities. According to a 2013 study carried out by the Association for Women’s Rights in Development, the situation of Kurdish women is exacerbated by prejudice against their ethnic and linguistic identity:⁴⁰ while women are generally excluded from the labour market, as, due to cultural and social stereotypes, they have heavier workloads at home, “for Kurdish women, armed conflict, village evacuations and forced migration further impoverish women”.⁴¹ Official statistics provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) are not disaggregated on the basis of ethnicity, specific data in relation to Kurdish women, therefore, is not available: according to the Association for Women’s Rights in Development, however, “inferences that can be deduced from data collected indicate that Kurdish women engage less in the

³⁵ US Department of State, *Human Rights Report – Turkey*, 2015; p. 72. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253121.pdf> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

³⁶ Ozlem Ilyas Tolunay, *Women in Erdogan’s Turkey*, New Politics Vol. XIV-4, 2014. Available at: <http://newpol.org/content/women-erdo%C4%9Fan%E2%80%99s-turkey> (last accessed on 26 May 2016).

³⁷ OECD, *Employment and Labour Markets: Key Tables from OECD – Employment Rate of Women*, 16 July 2013. Available at: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/employment-rate-of-women_20752342-table5 (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

³⁸ UK Home Office, *Country Information and Guidance – Turkey: Women Fearing Gender Based Violence*, 2016; p. 33. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/503719/CIG_-_Turkey_-_Women.pdf (last accessed on 30 May 2016).

³⁹ Equal Rights Trust, *Submission to the Human Rights Council at the 21st Session of the Universal Periodic Review*, 2014; para 16. Available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54c10b264.html> (last accessed 30 May 2016).

⁴⁰ AWID, *Kurdish Women: Resilience in the Face of Double Discrimination*, 12 April 2013. Available at: <http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/kurdish-women-resilience-face-double-discrimination> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

⁴¹ AWID, *Kurdish Women: Resilience in the Face of Double Discrimination*, 12 April 2013. Available at: <http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/kurdish-women-resilience-face-double-discrimination> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

labour market, earn lower wages and work in more precarious conditions than either Kurdish men or non-Kurdish women.”⁴²

The consistent gender gap between men and women in Turkey in relation to employment, as well as Turkish authorities’ shortcomings in addressing discrimination against Kurdish woman in gaining access to the labour market are not compatible with Turkey’s obligations under CEDAW’s Article 11. The Turkish government, as demonstrated by the above mentioned data, is falling short of its obligation to take all appropriate measures to end discrimination against women in the field of employment.

Recommendations

- *Turkish State authorities should establish a national action plan aimed at reinforcing the participation of women in the labour market.*
- *Turkish State authorities should implement measures to address ethnic discrimination towards girls and women belonging to minority groups in relation to their right to gain access to the labour market.*

Right to health

Under Article 12 of CEDAW, Turkey undertakes to “take all appropriate measure to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of healthcare in order to ensure, on a basis of equality with men and women, access to healthcare services, including those related to family planning”, and to provide services relating to pregnancy such as pre and post natal care to all women. One of the main legislative instruments in relation to women’s access to healthcare in Turkey is represented by the 1983 Law No. 2827 on Population and Planning, which also includes provisions on sexual and reproductive rights. According to Article 5 of the Law on Population and Planning, abortion can be carried out until the 10th week of gestation:⁴³ although, originally, under such law, spousal consent was required in order for women to have an abortion - a discriminatory provision not only towards women in general, as their bodily autonomy and their right to health was not upheld, but also in relation to married women, as their marital status negatively affected their right to have access to healthcare services - the entry into force of the 2005 Penal Code addressed such shortcomings. Article 99 of the 2005 Turkish Penal Code legalises abortion during the first 10 weeks, and establishes that women’s consent is sufficient to perform the procedure.⁴⁴

Despite Article 99 of the Penal Code, the implementation of women’s right to have access to abortion in the event of rape remains problematic in Turkey. Turkish authorities, for instance, have repeatedly made discriminatory statements in relation not only to rape victims, but also on their right to have an abortion.⁴⁵ In September 2011, the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors suggested that “women who are rape victims can marry their rapists”. In 2012, moreover, the then Minister of Health Recep Akdag stated that “the State can look after the

⁴² AWID, *Kurdish Women: Resilience in the Face of Double Discrimination*, 12 April 2013. Available at: <http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/kurdish-women-resilience-face-double-discrimination> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

⁴³ Bianet, *Abortion in Turkey: Legal But Banned in Public Hospitals*, 5 February 2015. Available at: <http://bianet.org/english/women/162060-abortion-in-turkey-legal-but-banned-in-public-hospitals> (last accessed on 31 May 2015).

⁴⁴ Grand National Assembly of Turkey, *Turkish Penal Code*, 29 September 2004. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/res/cld/document/tur/2004/criminal_code_law_no_5237_html/Turkey_Criminal_Code_Law_No.5_237_2004.pdf (last accessed on 8 June 2016).

⁴⁵ Bianet, *Abortion in Turkey: Legal But Banned in Public Hospitals*, 5 February 2015. Available at: <http://bianet.org/english/women/162060-abortion-in-turkey-legal-but-banned-in-public-hospitals> (last accessed on 31 May 2015).

babies of the raped women if necessary". In the same year, furthermore, the Chair of the National Assembly's Commission of Human Rights described the practice of abortion as being worse than rape.⁴⁶

In addition to the discriminatory remarks by Turkish government officials, it is common practice, although not required by law, for a permit from the State prosecutor allowing the abortion to take place to be demanded from rape victims by doctors. This practice, paired with the generally slow bureaucratic process to be carried out before the surgery, negatively impacts on women's right to have an abortion, as the permit from the State prosecutor often takes more than twenty weeks – the legal abortion period – to be issued.⁴⁷

In 2012 a draft law was proposed by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), in order to introduce the right for doctors to refuse performing abortions on the ground of personal belief or conscience. While the draft bill was dropped, access to abortion still remains limited due to both the antagonising rhetoric of government officials and the changed attitude of doctors and medical professionals, which negatively impact women's access to healthcare.⁴⁸ Although lawful until the 10th week, abortion is still restricted in practice, as most public hospitals tend to limit abortions to the first eight weeks. It has been reported, moreover, that "women demanding abortions are sent home to think about the operation for a full two or three days. They are also made listen to the heartbeat of the baby", in order to convince to change their minds about the operation – a practice that has been deemed unethical by the Turkish Doctors' Union.⁴⁹ According to recent reports, a telephone inquiry⁵⁰ revealed that "only three out of 37 state hospitals agreed to provide non-emergency terminations, of which only one offered abortions between the 8th and the 10th week of gestation",⁵¹ and that "at 17 of the hospitals an abortion was only offered for cases of a medical emergency, while the 12 remaining hospitals refused to provide termination altogether".⁵² A new messaging system, furthermore, has reportedly been introduced: fathers are informed of their daughters' pregnancies, adding further pressure on women and girls, particularly in the case of sex outside of marriage, which is still largely labelled as unacceptable in Turkey.⁵³

Women belonging to minority groups, such as the Kurdish community, often face even more obstacles when trying to exercise their right to health. According to a research paper published by the Hacettepe University, 60% of pregnant Kurdish women receive no pre-natal care, compared to 22% of Turkish women, and 88% do not benefit from public health facilities. There are only just over 400 health centres available to women in the south-east

⁴⁶ Ozlem Ilyas Tolunay, *Women in Erdogan's Turkey*, New Politics Vol. XIV-4, 2014. Available at: <http://newpol.org/content/women-erdo%C4%9Fan%E2%80%99s-turkey> (last accessed on 26 May 2016).

⁴⁷ Ozlem Ilyas Tolunay, *Women in Erdogan's Turkey*, New Politics Vol. XIV-4, 2014. Available at: <http://newpol.org/content/women-erdo%C4%9Fan%E2%80%99s-turkey> (last accessed on 26 May 2016).

⁴⁸ International Women's Health Coalition, *Access to Abortion in Turkey: No Laughing Matter*, 17 February 2015. Available at: <https://iwhc.org/2015/02/access-abortion-turkey-no-laughing-matter/> (last accessed on 30 May 2016).

⁴⁹ Ozlem Ilyas Tolunay, *Women in Erdogan's Turkey*, New Politics Vol. XIV-4, 2014. Available at: <http://newpol.org/content/women-erdo%C4%9Fan%E2%80%99s-turkey> (last accessed on 26 May 2016).

⁵⁰ Bianet, *Abortion in Turkey: Legal But Banned in Public Hospitals*, 5 February 2015. Available at: <http://bianet.org/english/women/162060-abortion-in-turkey-legal-but-banned-in-public-hospitals> (last accessed on 31 May 2015).

⁵¹ The Guardian, *Istanbul Hospitals Refuse Abortions As Government's Attitude Hardens*, 4 February 2015. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/04/istanbul-hospitals-refuse-abortions-government-attitude> (last accessed on 30 May 2016).

⁵² The Guardian, *Istanbul Hospitals Refuse Abortions As Government's Attitude Hardens*, 4 February 2015. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/04/istanbul-hospitals-refuse-abortions-government-attitude> (last accessed on 30 May 2016).

⁵³ The Guardian, *Istanbul Hospitals Refuse Abortions As Government's Attitude Hardens*, 4 February 2015. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/04/istanbul-hospitals-refuse-abortions-government-attitude> (last accessed on 30 May 2016).

region of Turkey and out of these 84% don't have midwives.⁵⁴ Due to this lack of health facilities infant mortality in region accounts for 24% of the country's total.⁵⁵

Women's right to have access to the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination is guaranteed under Article 12 of the CEDAW, which also imposes a positive obligation on State parties to ensure access to "appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period." Despite this, the attitude of Turkish authorities towards sexual and reproductive rights still shows a "traditional" approach to these matters: in May 2016 President Erdogan stated that family planning and contraception are not for Muslim families, and that "nobody can interfere in God's work. The first duty belongs to mothers".⁵⁶ In June 2006, moreover, President Erdogan urged women to have at least three children, as a woman's life would be "deficient" or "incomplete" without them.⁵⁷ This kind of attitude towards women's right to health results in a clear violation of Turkey's obligation to not only respect, protect and fulfil women's right to healthcare, but also to "ensure that legislation and executive action and policy comply with these obligations."⁵⁸

Recommendations

- *Turkish State authorities should take appropriate steps to comply with their duty to protect and promote women's access to health services, particularly taking immediate steps to address the current gap between legislation and its implementation. Turkish State authorities should take all the necessary measures to ensure that the current legislative provisions on abortion and sexual and reproductive health are duly implemented by all hospitals, both public and private.*
- *Turkish State authorities should immediately take steps to prosecute doctors and medical personal imposing unlawful and arbitrary on abortion, and should ensure women's access to their rights.*
- *Turkish State authorities should refrain from issuing discriminatory statements in relation to women's sexual and reproductive rights, and women's freedom to have access to health services such as abortions.*

Violence against women

Turkish State authorities have taken some legislative steps in order to prevent violence against women: in March 2012, Turkey passed Law No. 6284 on the Prevention of Violence against Women and the Protection of the Family, and, in the same year, Turkey ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Under the provisions of the Law on the Prevention of Violence against Women and the Protection of the Family, all women, including children and other family members, as well as victims of unilateral persistent stalking, are protected. The bill, however, does not include provisions in relation to

⁵⁴ Hacettepe University, *Turkiye'de docum ve dogum sonu hizmetlerden yararlanma*. Available at: http://www.huksam.hacettepe.edu.tr/Turkce/SayfaDosya/turkiyede_dogum_sonrasi.pdf (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

⁵⁵ Hacettepe University, *Turkiye'de docum ve dogum sonu hizmetlerden yararlanma*. Available at: http://www.huksam.hacettepe.edu.tr/Turkce/SayfaDosya/turkiyede_dogum_sonrasi.pdf (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

⁵⁶ The Guardian, *Recep Tayyip Erdogan: No Muslim Family Can Accept Birth Control*, 30 May 2016. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/30/recep-tayyip-erdogan-no-muslim-family-can-accept-birth-control> (last accessed on 30 May 2016); and Reuters, *No Muslim Family Should Engage in Birth Control: Turkey's Erdogan*. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-erdogan-women-idUSKCN0YL1RR> (last accessed on 30 May 2016).

⁵⁷ The Guardian, *Turkish President Says Childless Women are 'Deficient, Incomplete'*, 6 June 2016. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/06/turkish-president-erdogan-childless-women-deficient-incomplete?CMP=share_btn_fb (last accessed on 6 June 2016).

⁵⁸ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *General Recommendation No. 24, 1999*; para 13. Available at: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/INT_CEDAW_GEC_4738_E.pdf (last accessed on (30 May 2016).

the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of crimes against women. The law, moreover, does not include references to specific forms of violence against women, such as rape and sexual harassment.⁵⁹ The Law, furthermore, does not provide protection to women in same sex relationships as there is no reference to “sexual orientation” or “gender identity”.⁶⁰ In 2012, the Turkish Government updated the National Action Plan (NAP) on Combating Domestic Violence against Women for the years 2012-2015: the purpose of the NAP was to ensure the translation into practice of the current legislation on violence against women. According to reports submitted during Turkey’s second cycle Universal Periodic Review in 2015, the NAP lacks adequate planning and budgeting, and does not provide any evaluation and monitoring system to measure its actual effectiveness.⁶¹

Nevertheless, violence against women remains an epidemic in Turkey: in 2015, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions, noted that “Violations of the right to life of women in Turkey are a serious challenge, especially in the context of domestic violence and ‘honour killings’”.⁶² According to the US Department of State, moreover, the Turkish government “did not effectively or fully enforce these laws or protect victims, who often waited days or weeks to report incidents due to embarrassment or fear of reprisals.”⁶³ It has been reported that the number of murdered women increased from 66 in 2002 to 847 only in the first nine months of 2013. According to news reports, more than 1,100 women have been killed by men in Turkey between 2010 and 2015: in 608 cases, women were killed by their husbands or ex husbands, while in 213 cases the murderers were somehow related to the victims (e.g. fathers, brothers, sons).⁶⁴ Such murders were often carried out for futile reasons, such as “dying their hair red, buying a new dress, not cooking potato croquettes, not passing the salt, or just being irritating”.⁶⁵ The number of cases of violence against women has reportedly been increasing in 2016,⁶⁶ with 17 women killed, 15 raped, and 155 sexually harassed only in April.⁶⁷

While domestic courts have embraced the practice of issuing restraining orders to prevent the perpetrators from coming into contact with their victims, it has been reported that such orders were rarely implemented by law enforcement officials.⁶⁸ Recent data shows that, in April 2016, 18% of the homicides where women lost their lives

⁵⁹ Letter from Rapporteur on follow-up Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, 8 March 2013. Available at: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/CEDAWfollow-up_Turkey.pdf (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁶⁰ Equal Rights Trust, *Submission to the Human Rights Council at the 21st Session of the Universal Periodic Review*, 2014; para 16. Available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54c10b264.html> (last accessed 30 May 2016).

⁶¹ UNCT, *Universal Periodic Review of Turkey 2015 - UNCT Submission*, 2015; paras 12 – 14. Available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54c109084.html> (last accessed on 30 May 2016).

⁶² UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions -Addendum Follow-up to country recommendations: Turkey*, A/HRC/29/37/Add.4, 6 May 2015; paras 36 – 37. Available at: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session29/Documents/A_HRC_29_37_Add_4_en.doc (last accessed 26 May 2016).

⁶³ US Department of State, *Human Rights Report – Turkey*, 2015; p. 54. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253121.pdf> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁶⁴ Hurriyet Daily News, *More Than 1,100 Women Killed in Five Years Across Turkey*, 25 November 2015. Available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/more-than-1100-women-killed-in-five-years-across-turkey.aspx?pageID=238&nID=91666&NewsCatID=509> (last accessed on 24 May 2016).

⁶⁵ Hurriyet Daily News, *More Than 1,100 Women Killed in Five Years Across Turkey*, 25 November 2015. Available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/more-than-1100-women-killed-in-five-years-across-turkey.aspx?pageID=238&nID=91666&NewsCatID=509> (last accessed on 24 May 2016).

⁶⁶ Hurriyet Daily News, *413 Women Killed Across Turkey Since Start of 2015 According to Media*, 17 February 2016. Available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/413-women-killed-across-turkey-since-start-of-2015-according-to-media-association.aspx?pageID=238&nID=95308&NewsCatID=339> (last accessed on 24 May 2016).

⁶⁷ Bianet, *Men Kill 17 Women in April*, 6 May 2016. Available at: <http://bianet.org/english/women/174528-men-kill-17-women-in-april> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁶⁸ US Department of State, *Human Rights Report – Turkey*, 2015; p. 56. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253121.pdf> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

were committed despite protection orders or complaints for protection orders to be issued.⁶⁹ Government counsellors allegedly encouraged victims of domestic violence to remain in abusive relationship to avoid breaking up families.⁷⁰ Reduced sentences were often given to perpetrators, due to their “good behaviour” during the trial or due to “provocation” by women being used as an extenuating circumstance.⁷¹

Turkey’s shortcomings in addressing and eliminating violence against women represent a violation of the State’s obligations under CEDAW. Gender-based violence falls into the definition of discrimination enshrined in Article 1 of the Convention, as, according to the interpretation of the Committee, it constitutes a form of discrimination in itself, which has serious repercussions on women’s ability to enjoy their rights and freedoms.⁷² As such, the lack of implementation by Turkish authorities of the legislative instruments available to address violence against women violates CEDAW’s Article 1, both taken alone and in conjunction with other Articles protecting specific rights, such as the right to health.

Shelters

The Law on the Prevention of Violence against Women and the Protection of the Family imposes an obligation on the government to provide specific services to victims, such as shelters and temporary financial support. According to a 2015 report by the Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Policies, however, there are only 135 women’s shelters in Turkey,⁷³ a country populated by 78 million people, that are able to reach only 3,375 women. According to the US State Department, some of these shelters implement policies and practices that are contributing to causing more harm to the victims, such as invasive searches, removal of victims’ cell phones, and restricted entry and exit hours.⁷⁴

Domestic regulations, furthermore, impose an obligation on Turkish State authorities to establish a state-funded women’s shelter for every 100,000 persons: given the above mentioned numbers, Turkey is currently not complying with such regulations.⁷⁵ It has been reported that in most cities with populations above 100,000, such as Adana, it is not uncommon to have an inadequate number of shelters, or no shelters at all.⁷⁶

A nationwide domestic violence hotline was established by the Turkish government, but such service, according to civil society organisations, was not able to provide specific and effective help to victims of domestic violence, as its name was changed to “Hotline for Family, Women, Children, the Disabled and Families of Martyrs and Veterans”, broadening its original scope.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ Bianet, *Men Kill 17 Women in April*, 6 May 2016. Available at: <http://bianet.org/english/women/174528-men-kill-17-women-in-april> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁷⁰ US Department of State, *Human Rights Report – Turkey*, 2015; p. 56. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253121.pdf> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁷¹ US Department of State, *Human Rights Report – Turkey*, 2015; p. 56. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253121.pdf> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁷² Committee on the elimination of Discrimination against Women, *General Recommendation No. 19*, 1992; para 1. Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁷³ US Department of State, *Human Rights Report – Turkey*, 2015; p. 55. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253121.pdf> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁷⁴ US Department of State, *Human Rights Report – Turkey*, 2015; p. 55. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253121.pdf> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁷⁵ Reuters, *Fight against Domestic Violence Stalls in Patriarchal Turkey*, 22 July 2014. Available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-turkey-women-rights-idUKKBN0FR0BV20140722> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁷⁶ US Department of State, *Human Rights Report – Turkey*, 2015; p. 55. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253121.pdf> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁷⁷ US Department of State, *Human Rights Report – Turkey*, 2015; p. 55. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253121.pdf> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

The reduced number of state-funded shelters, as well as the lack of other effective services specifically directed at providing immediate help and assistance to victims of gender-based violence are not compatible with Turkey's obligations under CEDAW, which, as stated by the Committee, include the duty to provide appropriate protective and support services for victims.⁷⁸

Honour killings

The 2005 Turkish Penal Code now includes a number of provisions addressing the issue of honour killings.⁷⁹ In particular, Article 29 states that "family members and relatives who commit custom killings [...] cannot benefit from a reduction of penalty." Article 82, moreover, dealing with aggravating circumstances for homicide, was revised to include custom killings. Article 38, furthermore, states that both the perpetrator of an honour killing and the family council taking the decision to perpetrate the act should equally be considered responsible for the crime.

Despite the above mentioned provisions, which represent important steps forward in terms of addressing the phenomenon of honour killings in Turkey, some of the amendments to the Penal Code raise some concerns, and have been interpreted as tools adopted by Turkish State authorities to link the awful practice of honour killings to specific ethnic groups. For instance, the term "honour" (*namus*) never appears in the Turkish Penal Code in relation to the act of killing an individual: rather, the new criminal provisions, such as Article 82, merely refer to murders perpetrated in the name of "custom" (*tore*). By referring to custom, rather than to honour, Turkish State authorities aim at building a link between such killings and local, ethnic communities, taking one more step toward a process of "ethnicisation" of honour killings. In particular, "Turkey has developed a novel method of singling out the Kurds as barbaric 'others' in need of modernisation and assimilation: the linkage of honour killings with the Kurdish minority."⁸⁰ Instead of directly addressing the issue, and treating such crime as a human rights violation, Turkey seems to be trying to portray honour killings merely as a Kurdish issue, affecting only Kurdish populated areas.⁸¹

Despite the legislative efforts to amend the Penal Code and establish harsher punishments for honour killings, the phenomenon is still far from being eradicated and sentences are often relatively mild, compared to the seriousness of the crime. While life imprisonment can be imposed by courts in cases of honour killings, it is not uncommon for sentences to be reduced due to mitigating factors, as sentencing still remains largely within the judge's discretion.⁸² According to the law, courts are allowed "to take into account anger or passion caused by the 'misbehaviour' of the victim", that might have triggered the actual act of killing:⁸³ "most judges in Turkey remain

⁷⁸ Committee on the elimination of Discrimination against Women, *General Recommendation No. 19*, 1992; para 24 (b). Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁷⁹ Grand National Assembly of Turkey, *Turkish Penal Code*, 29 September 2004. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/res/cld/document/tur/2004/criminal_code_law_no_5237_html/Turkey_Criminal_Code_Law_No._5_237_2004.pdf (last accessed on 8 June 2016).

⁸⁰ Corbin B., *Between Saviors and Savages: The Effect of Turkey's Revised Penal Code on the Transformation of Honor Killings into Honor Suicides and Why Community Discourse is Necessary for Honor Crime Eradication*, Emory International Law Review. Available at: <http://law.emory.edu/eilr/content/volume-29/issue-2/articles/between-saviors-and-savages.html> (last accessed on 26 May 2016).

⁸¹ Corbin B., *Between Saviors and Savages: The Effect of Turkey's Revised Penal Code on the Transformation of Honor Killings into Honor Suicides and Why Community Discourse is Necessary for Honor Crime Eradication*, Emory International Law Review. Available at: <http://law.emory.edu/eilr/content/volume-29/issue-2/articles/between-saviors-and-savages.html> (last accessed on 26 May 2016).

⁸² US Department of State, *Human Rights Report – Turkey*, 2015; p. 57. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253121.pdf> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁸³ US Department of State, *Human Rights Report – Turkey*, 2015; p. 57. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253121.pdf> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

social conservatives who interpret the law as offering light punishments to honour killers.”⁸⁴ Due to the harsh punishment established for honour killings, it is reported that girls and women are sometimes pressured to commit suicide to preserve their family’s reputation. Honour killings, moreover, are often unreported and ignored, as, on the one hand, some may perceive “honour” as a possible justification for a murder, and on the other, such murders are often “made to look like suicide.”⁸⁵

Under CEDAW’s Article 5(a), Turkey has the obligation to take appropriate measures to modify social and cultural patterns that discriminate against women, including traditional attitudes by which women are regarded as subordinate to men or as having stereotyped roles, which perpetuate widespread practices, including violence.⁸⁶ According to a 2005 United Nations General Assembly resolution, moreover, States are under the obligation to investigate and prosecute honour based crimes.⁸⁷ Turkey’s domestic framework, however, while including legislative measures addressing gender-based violence, still lacks provisions specifically mentioning honour killings. This is due to Turkish authorities’ unwillingness to consider such crimes as more than a custom practice strictly linked to specific minority groups (i.e. the Kurdish community): such approach to honour killings has resulted in gaps in the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of gender-based violence, and represents a violation of Turkey’s international human rights obligations under CEDAW.

Violence and trafficking of Syrian Women

The humanitarian crisis in Syria has resulted in millions of refugees fleeing to Turkey to seek shelter since 2011. The recent controversial agreement between the Turkish government and the European Union signed in March 2016,⁸⁸ moreover, is bound to result in more Syrian refugees to be returned to Turkey. Syrian women in Turkey are often victims of sexual harassment, human trafficking, prostitution, rape, as well as forced marriages. According to a 2014 report by the Association for Human Rights and Solidarity with the Oppressed (Mazlumder),⁸⁹ Syrian refugees are particularly at risk of being taken advantage of, due to their financial hardship and insecure living conditions, and girls and women are the individuals most at risk of being sexually exploited. It is not uncommon for Syrian female refugees belonging to the Kurdish minority to be double discriminated, as they not only are likely to be exploited and sexually harassed, but, being Kurds, they also often do not receive the help they need by Turkish relief personnel.⁹⁰

“Smuggling refugees” has become a fruitful source of income for Turkish criminal gangs, who have built a carefully studied system to bring refugees into the country, and take advantage of women and girls who have crossed the border illegally and without a passport: parents are given 2000 – 5000 Turkish liras (\$700 - \$1700) for their young

⁸⁴ Corbin B., *Between Saviors and Savages: The Effect of Turkey’s Revised Penal Code on the Transformation of Honor Killings into Honor Suicides and Why Community Discourse is Necessary for Honor Crime Eradication*, Emory International Law Review. Available at: <http://law.emory.edu/eilr/content/volume-29/issue-2/articles/between-saviors-and-savages.html> (last accessed on 26 May 2016).

⁸⁵ US Department of State, *Human Rights Report – Turkey*, 2015; p. 57. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253121.pdf> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁸⁶ Committee on the elimination of Discrimination against Women, *General Recommendation No. 19*, 1992. Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm> (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁸⁷ UN General Assembly, *Resolution A/RES/59/165*, 20 December 2004. Available at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A%2FRES%2F59%2F165&Lang=E (last accessed on 25 May 2016).

⁸⁸ The Guardian, *Refugee crisis: What Does the EU’s Deal With Turkey Mean?*, 18 March 2016. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/18/eu-deal-turkey-migrants-refugees-q-and-a> (last accessed 31 May 2016).

⁸⁹ Mazlumder, *The Report on Syrian Women Refugees*, 2014. Available at: [http://www.mazlumder.org/webimage/files/The%20Report%20on%20Syrian%20Women%20Refugees\(2\).pdf](http://www.mazlumder.org/webimage/files/The%20Report%20on%20Syrian%20Women%20Refugees(2).pdf) (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

⁹⁰ Gatestone Institute, *Turkey: The Business of Refugee Smuggling, Sex Trafficking*, 3 April 2016. Available at: <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/7756/turkey-refugees-sex-trafficking> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

daughters, who are then sold either as prostitutes or as sex slaves.⁹¹ In most of the Turkish cities where Syrian refugees have settled, prostitution has drastically increased: data shows that, while the phenomenon seems to involve mostly young girls and women between 15 and 20 years old, children as young as 13 are also being sexually exploited. “Syrian girls are offered between 20 and 50 Turkish liras (\$7 - \$18). Sometimes their clients pay them with food or other goods for which they are desperate”.⁹² Many Turkish men, moreover, reportedly practice polygamy with Syrian girls or women, despite it being illegal in Turkey.⁹³

According to a report published by the End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes initiative (ECPAT), there is evidence that “modern slavery in Turkey is the highest in Europe due to the prevalence of trafficking for sexual exploitation and early marriage”:⁹⁴ it is feared that refugee camps for Syrians in Turkey have become a lawless environment, where men from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States are said to “purchase” cheap teenage brides.⁹⁵ According to the Human Rights Association of Turkey (IHD), furthermore, many refugee women are forced to engage in prostitution not only by being sold to Turkish men, but also inside refugee camps built by the Turkish Prime Minister’s Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD):⁹⁶ “women are forced into prostitution because they want to buy bread for their children”.⁹⁷

The sexual exploitation and trafficking of Syrian refugees, both women and girls, constitute a violation of Turkey’s international obligations under CEDAW. Not only Article 6 imposes an obligation to take all appropriate measures to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women, but according to the Committee’s Recommendation No. 30, “trafficking in women and girls constitutes gender-based discrimination”.⁹⁸ Turkey, as a State party to the Convention, is under the obligation to “prevent, prosecute and punish trafficking and related human rights violations that occur under their jurisdiction, whether perpetrated by public or private actors”.⁹⁹ Turkish officials, not only have reportedly allowed such violations to occur in refugee camps in Turkey, but have also allegedly denied human rights organisations access to such camps,¹⁰⁰ preventing them to investigate allegations of rape, sexual harassment, prostitution and trafficking, and failing to comply with their obligations under CEDAW.

⁹¹ Gatestone Institute, *Turkey: The Business of Refugee Smuggling, Sex Trafficking*, 3 April 2016. Available at: <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/7756/turkey-refugees-sex-trafficking> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

⁹² Gatestone Institute, *Turkey: The Business of Refugee Smuggling, Sex Trafficking*, 3 April 2016. Available at: <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/7756/turkey-refugees-sex-trafficking> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

⁹³ Gatestone Institute, *Turkey: The Business of Refugee Smuggling, Sex Trafficking*, 3 April 2016. Available at: <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/7756/turkey-refugees-sex-trafficking> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

⁹⁴ ECPAT, *Global Monitoring Status Of Action Against Sexual Exploitation Of Children – Turkey*, 2015; p. 12. Available at: http://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/A4A_V2_EU_Turkey_FINAL.pdf (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

⁹⁵ International Business Times, *Syrian Refugee Crisis: Girls Sold as Sex Slaves to Old, Wealthy Arabs*, 21 May 2014. Available at: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/syrian-refugee-crisis-girls-sold-sex-slaves-aged-wealthy-arabs-1448716> (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

⁹⁶ Gatestone Institute, *Turkey: The Business of Refugee Smuggling, Sex Trafficking*, 3 April 2016. Available at: <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/7756/turkey-refugees-sex-trafficking> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

⁹⁷ Gatestone Institute, *Turkey: The Business of Refugee Smuggling, Sex Trafficking*, 3 April 2016. Available at: <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/7756/turkey-refugees-sex-trafficking> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

⁹⁸ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *General Recommendation No. 30*, CEDAW/C/GC/30, 18 October 2013; para 39. Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/GComments/CEDAW.C.CG.30.pdf> (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

⁹⁹ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *General Recommendation No. 30*, CEDAW/C/GC/30, 18 October 2013; para 39. Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/GComments/CEDAW.C.CG.30.pdf> (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

¹⁰⁰ Gatestone Institute, *Turkey: The Business of Refugee Smuggling, Sex Trafficking*, 3 April 2016. Available at: <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/7756/turkey-refugees-sex-trafficking> (last accessed on 31 May 2016).

Child marriage

Yet another consequence of the persisting Turkish society's patriarchal and traditional mind-set, relegating the role of women to being mothers and wives, is child marriage, which remains a widespread issue in Turkey. According to a 2015 report by the ECPAT,¹⁰¹ Turkey has the second highest rate of child marriages in Europe, with an estimate 14% of girls married before reaching the age of 18: such numbers, however, might be even higher, considering that most child marriages are often unregistered. While the legal age for marriage was raised to 17 in 2002, the Turkish Civil Code allows for marriage at the age of 16,¹⁰² with the consent of the court. It is reported that nearly 20,000 families filed applications to marry off their under 16 girls in 2012,¹⁰³ and that judges, mainly male, are usually prone to allow teen marriages.¹⁰⁴ Accountability for family members and all individuals involved in child marriage is still lacking. In a recent case, a man who held a religious wedding with a 14 years old child was acquitted: the public prosecutor not only argued that both the marriage and the intercourse had occurred with the girl's consent, but also that the man had simply committed a mistake in thinking his wife "looked over 20 years old."¹⁰⁵

Despite data not being provided by official bodies gathering statistics, it has been reported that one third of marriages in Turkey involve underage girls: in 2015 during a conference tackling the issue of child marriages, it was stated that there were 181,036 child brides in the country.¹⁰⁶ The recent influx of refugees from Syria, as discussed above, has increased the phenomenon of child abuse, including child marriage. According to a 2015 report published by ECPAT, there is strong evidence that child trafficking is currently happening between Syria and Turkey, by so called "matchmakers" who smuggle Syrian girls "who have been pre-ordered by age."¹⁰⁷

The widespread practice of child marriage in Turkey constitutes a violation of the State's obligations under CEDAW. As stated by the Committee in a 2014 unprecedented joint Recommendation/General Comment in collaboration with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, CEDAW includes specific references to the elimination of harmful practices, including child marriage,¹⁰⁸ and imposes an obligation on State parties to adopt appropriate legislation, policies and measure to eliminate such practices. Turkish authorities, not only do not appear to have taken any meaningful step to address the issue of child marriage, but, as demonstrated above, they have actively contributed to create a climate of impunity towards perpetrators of this specific type of child abuse.

¹⁰¹ ECPAT, *Global Monitoring Status Of Action Against Sexual Exploitation Of Children – Turkey*, 2015; p. 14. Available at: http://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/A4A_V2_EU_Turkey_FINAL.pdf (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

¹⁰² UNFPA, *Child Marriage in Turkey*, p. 1. Available at: <http://eeca.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/unfpa%20turkey%20summary.pdf> (last accessed on 7 June 2016).

¹⁰³ Hurriyet Daily News, *Child Marriage Make Up One Third in Turkey*, 7 December 2015. Available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/child-marriages-make-up-one-third-in-turkey.aspx?PageID=238&NID=92170&NewsCatID=339> (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

¹⁰⁴ ECPAT, *Global Monitoring Status Of Action Against Sexual Exploitation Of Children – Turkey*, 2015; p. 14. Available at: http://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/A4A_V2_EU_Turkey_FINAL.pdf (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

¹⁰⁵ Hurriyet Daily News, *Turkish Court Says Man's Wedding with 14-Years Old a "Mistake", Rules for Acquittal*, 30 May 2016. Available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-court-says-mans-wedding-with-14-year-old-a-mistake-rules-for-acquittal.aspx?pageID=238&nID=99839&NewsCatID=509> (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

¹⁰⁶ Hurriyet Daily News, *Child Marriage Make Up One Third in Turkey*, 7 December 2015. Available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/child-marriages-make-up-one-third-in-turkey.aspx?PageID=238&NID=92170&NewsCatID=339> (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

¹⁰⁷ ECPAT, *Global Monitoring Status Of Action Against Sexual Exploitation Of Children – Turkey*, 2015. Available at: http://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/A4A_V2_EU_Turkey_FINAL.pdf (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

¹⁰⁸ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Joint General Recommendation No. 30 and General Comment No. 18*, CEDAW/C/GC/31 – CRC/C/GC/18, 14 November 2014; para 31. Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/627/78/PDF/N1462778.pdf?OpenElement> (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

State violence against Kurdish women

While the above mentioned forms of violence against women are perpetrated by non-state actors, there is another type of violence, strictly linked to the current situation in the South-east region of Turkey, that is being perpetrated against Kurdish women by Turkish state actors in the context of the internal conflict between State authorities and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The excessive use of force by law enforcement officers against protesters during demonstrations has characterised the past few months, with curfews established in Cizre and Diyarbakir in 2015 and counter terrorism operations carried out by Turkish security forces, which resulted in widespread human rights violations and the death of hundreds of civilians. The current situation in the Kurdish region of Turkey has raised some concerns within the international community: the United Nations Committee against Torture, in its 2016 concluding observations on Turkey, expressed its concern in relation to extrajudicial killings of civilians, including women, in the course of counter terrorism operation in the Kurdish region of Turkey.¹⁰⁹ A recent statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, furthermore, underlined how the internal conflict between Turkey's security forces and the PKK has often resulted in "unarmed civilians, including women and children, being shot by snipers in south-eastern Turkey".¹¹⁰ Due to the on-going conflict between the Turkish government and the PKK, Kurdish women often become victims of violent acts carried out by Turkish security forces during counter terrorism operations. As this complex internal situation intensifies, women and girls in curfew areas, such as Diyarbakir and Cizre, are disproportionately impacted by the conflict and are at an increasing risk of becoming victims of human rights violations.

On the one hand, in Turkey's Kurdish-populated areas, women and girls, as the rest of the civilian population, are often unlawfully targeted during security operations, as evidenced by the Committee against Torture in its 2016 concluding observations on Turkey, which referred to the case of the alleged killings by police snipers of two unarmed women, Masallah Edin and Zeynep Taskin, in the Cudi neighbourhood of Cizre.¹¹¹ On the other hand, as it has been reported, security forces are said to continue to use sexual violence and the threat of rape as a means of harassment and intimidation against Kurdish women.¹¹² According to a recent report,¹¹³ Turkish special forces use "women's bodies as a messaging tool", including an alleged case of rape of a woman in Cizre, whose naked, brutally beaten body was shown in pictures shared on social media. The latter, however, is not an isolated case. It has been reported that, in August 2015, following a fight that broke out between security forces and alleged PKK militants in the Varto district of Muş province, a female alleged PKK militant was killed, stripped naked and photos of her naked corpse were distributed on social media by a security service member.¹¹⁴ The body, believed to belong to Kevser Elturk, had signs of torture such as rope marks around her neck and broken bones. Three unidentified members of the security service also appeared in the photo around her corpse, but no investigation

¹⁰⁹ UN Committee Against Torture, *Concluding Observations On The Fourth Periodic Report Of Turkey*, 2016, para 13. Available at http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCAT%2fCOC%2fTUR%2f23920&Lang=en (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

¹¹⁰ BBC News, *UN Deplores Turkish Military Abuses in Kurdish Areas*, 10 May 2016. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-36261011> (1 June 2016).

¹¹¹ UN Committee Against Torture, *Concluding Observations On The Fourth Periodic Report Of Turkey*, 2016, para 13. Available at http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCAT%2fCOC%2fTUR%2f23920&Lang=en (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

¹¹² IHD, *Dünyada ve Türkiye'de Kadın*, 6 March 2015. Available at: <http://www.ihd.org.tr/dunyada-ve-turkiyede-kadin/> (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

¹¹³ Global Fund for Women, *Spotlight On Turkey: Women On The Ground Discuss Growing Crisis, Threats*, 2016. Available at: <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/women-discuss-crisis-in-turkey/> (last accessed 7 June 2016).

¹¹⁴ Diken, *Muş valiliği, çıplak PKK'lı kadın cesedi fotoğrafının gerçek olduğunu duyurdu*, 16 August 2015. Available at: <http://www.diken.com.tr/mus-valiligi-ciplak-pkkli-kadin-fotografinin-gercek-oldugunu-duyurdu/> (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

has been initiated by Turkish State authorities.¹¹⁵ In the Sirnak district of Cizre, moreover, two women were murdered by the security services and had their photographs taken after being stripped naked by the forces. The photos were then distributed on social media. According to JINHA news agency both the bodies appeared to have signs of torture and mutilation after death. The governor of Sirnak has argued that the photos were a propaganda tool aimed at casting a shadow on the “success of the operations in Cizre” and that “security forces will continue their operations to ensure the safety of our people.”¹¹⁶

Although violent acts against Kurdish women perpetrated by state actors now represent a widespread phenomenon, Turkish State authorities have yet to take measures to address the issue, as well as to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators. According to Gülser Yıldırım, the People’s Democratic Party MP for Mardin, in the last 15 years 241 police officers, 91 soldiers, 17 special forces officers, 15 village guards and 45 guardians have been accused of rape but none have been prosecuted. Not only the violence itself, but also the lack of accountability of the perpetrators constitute violations of Turkey’s international human rights obligations, including under CEDAW.

Recommendations

- *Turkish State authorities should immediately take steps to end all forms of gender-based violence. Provisions of the Turkish Penal Code should be amended to replace the term “custom” with “honour”.*
- *Turkish State authorities should take all the necessary measures to ensure that gender-sensitive training of judicial and law enforcement officers and other public officials should be implemented.*
- *Turkish State authorities should implement a new National Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women, including provisions specifically providing the necessary financial and structural resources to implement the plan, as well as establishing indicators and benchmarks to monitor the effectiveness of the measures introduced to prevent and address violence against women.*
- *Turkish State authorities should encourage the compilation of statistics and research on the extent, causes and effects of violence, and on the effectiveness of measures to prevent and deal with gender-based violence.*
- *Turkish State authorities should take steps to change the narrative of gender based violence in the media, to counter the image that honour killings are exclusively related to ethnicity and custom.*
- *Turkish State authorities should take positive measures to ensure that restraining orders against perpetrators of violence against women are duly implemented by law enforcement officials.*
- *Turkish State authorities should take measures to ensure that support services for victims of family violence, rape, sex assault and other forms of gender-based violence, including shelters, specially trained health workers, rehabilitation and counselling are provided, and are equally distributed within the country.*
- *Turkish State authorities should take immediate steps to promptly investigate cases of sexual exploitation and human trafficking of Syrian women and girls refugees, both inside and outside refugee camps. Perpetrators, both state and non-state actors, should be duly prosecuted and specific measures should be adopted to protect women and girls from being exploited or trafficked.*

¹¹⁵ IMC, *Cizre’de kadını öldürüp çıplak fotoğraflarını paylaştılar*

11 February 2016. Available at <http://www.imctv.com.tr/cizrede-kadini-oldurup-ciplak-fotograflarini-paylastilar/> (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

¹¹⁶ IMC, *Cizre’de kadını öldürüp çıplak fotoğraflarını paylaştılar*

11 February 2016. Available at <http://www.imctv.com.tr/cizrede-kadini-oldurup-ciplak-fotograflarini-paylastilar/> (last accessed on 1 June 2016).

- *Turkish State authorities should amend the Turkish Civil Code and raise the minimum legal age of marriage for girls and boys to 18 years.*
- *Turkish State authorities should take immediate steps to address child abuse in the form of child marriage, investigating and prosecuting perpetrators.*
- *Turkish State authorities should take immediate steps to investigate and prosecute members of security forces accused of perpetrating violent acts Kurdish women in the context of security operations in the South-east of Turkey.*

Conclusion

Despite being considered one of the most modern countries in the region, Turkey still does not comply with its international human rights obligations in relation to the implementation of the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Turkish State authorities, as demonstrated in the previous sections, do not seem to have undertaken enough steps to comply with their positive obligations under CEDAW, particularly in relation to women's right to gain access to education, employment and health, and to solve the issue of violence against women.

While the domestic legal framework does include provisions enshrining the prohibition of discriminatory behaviours, also explicitly in relation to women and girls, statements by government representatives, paired with proposed amendments to current legislative instruments, and a general unwillingness to address common stereotypes and discriminatory practices against women, including violence against women, constitute strong evidence that Turkey has yet to comply, *de facto*, with its obligations as a State party to CEDAW.

The London Legal Group calls on the Turkish government to address such shortcomings by taking immediate steps to adopt legislative, administrative and judicial measures, to improve the situation of women in Turkey, including those belonging to minority groups, in order to comply with its international obligations under CEDAW.