



Shadow Report on Follow-Up to Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Turkey

**by the
Committee against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

About Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation

Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation was established in 1990 to combat violence against women. The experiences of women who applied to Mor Çatı demonstrate their needs and the barriers they face as they try to distance themselves from violence. To combat violence against women and ensure gender equality, Mor Çatı, based on the information obtained from women, monitors and reports on the implementation of laws, regulations and international conventions, including Istanbul Convention and CEDAW, providing policy recommendations to decision makers such as the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Services, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior.

Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation welcomes the opportunity to submit this follow-up report to the periodic review of Turkey under the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

This submission focuses on **paragraph 33 of the Concluding Observations**, which urges the Turkish government to:

- Reconsider its withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention);
- Ensure all acts of gender-based and domestic violence, including those involving State authorities or entities, are thoroughly investigated
- Prosecute and appropriately punish perpetrators;
- Provide redress to victims or their families, including fair compensation and rehabilitation;
- Strengthen mandatory training on sexual and gender-based violence for relevant professionals, with specific attention to the needs and risks faced by LGBTQ+ individuals.

Istanbul Convention

Turkey has yet to reconsider its withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. On the contrary, attacks on the concept of gender equality are intensifying. On 2 May 2025, the General Directorate of Family and Community Services, operating under the Ministry of Family and Social Services, issued a directive to relevant institutions regarding the use of certain terms related to gender. The document advised government-affiliated bodies to refrain from using concepts such as “gender,” “gender identity,” “LGBT,” and “comprehensive sexuality

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education.”¹ Framed as a measure to “protect the family,” the directive baselessly claims that these terms threaten families, women, children, and society. This reflects a continuing refusal to acknowledge gender inequality as the root cause of male violence against women, as clearly stated in the Istanbul Convention. In terms of the existing legislative and policy framework to address violence against women, both the National Action Plan (2021–2025)² and the more recent Parliamentary Commission Report on VAW³ adopt a family-centered approach, deliberately avoid the term “gender equality,” and fail to recognize gender inequality as the root cause of violence.

Ending violence against women requires a structural and institutional shift grounded in gender equality, with holistic analysis and coordinated responses at its core. In Turkey, the current system, when it intervenes at all, focuses narrowly on high-risk cases and relies heavily on police, without involving social workers or support services. This security-only approach fails to address the complex, ongoing nature of violence and leaves women without the comprehensive support they need. The Istanbul Convention was crucial in promoting this kind of coordinated policy approach, but Turkey has withdrawn from it and shows no intention of returning.

Failures in law enforcement, investigation and prosecution processes

As outlined in our shadow report (2024)⁴, problems with law enforcement and the impunity of officials who fail to provide effective protection for women persist, with no meaningful progress made to date. Law enforcement is designated by law as the first point of contact for women seeking protection from violence. However, it is also where harmful practices are most frequently observed. A widespread culture of impunity allows these practices to continue without consequence. Many women who seek support from Mor Çatı report that the attitudes and behaviors of law enforcement personnel often discourage them from seeking help, entering shelters, or filing official complaints. These deterrent practices include patriarchal remarks, judgmental attitudes, providing false information to dissuade women from going to shelters, or ignoring their complaints or discouraging them from filing complaints by claiming it would be ineffective.

A recent example is the case of Ayşe Tokyaz, who was abducted and murdered by her ex-partner, former police officer Cemil Koç.⁵ Cemil Koç had been perpetrating violence against Ayşe, but she was afraid to report him because he had previously served as a police officer. In the case of Ayşe Tokyaz, her sister Esra Tokyaz went to the police station out of concern for Ayşe’s safety.⁶ However, instead of treating the situation as an emergency involving a serious

¹ <https://kaosgl.org/en/single-news/a-34-warning-34-from-the-ministry-of-family-to-its-directorates-against-lgbti-do-not-use-the-concepts-of-gender-gender-identity-or-sexual-orientation>

² <https://www.aile.gov.tr/ksgm/ulusal-eylem-planlari/kadina-yonelik-siddetle-mucadele-iv-ulusal-eylem-planlari-2021-2025/>

³ <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/556966/kadina-siddeti-arastirma-komisyonu-raporunda-aile-yili-izi-siddeti-aile-butunluguyle-perdeliyorlar>

⁴ <https://en.morcati.org.tr/reports/report-submitted-to-the-committee-against-torture-and-other-cruel-inhuman-or-degrading-treatment-or-punishment/>

⁵ <https://stockholmcf.org/turkish-authorities-detain-6-including-former-police-chief-over-harrowing-murder-of-young-woman/>

⁶ <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/seven-arrested-as-22-year-old-womans-brutal-killing-sparks-public-outcry-211580>



threat to life, the police officers dismissed the report, stating that Ayşe was an adult and thus capable of making her own decisions. Although Law No. 6284 allows for protective measures to be initiated based on reports from third parties, the officers neither took action nor provided any information about the law or available protection mechanisms. In a further breach of duty, Esra Tokyaz’s statement was shared with Cemil Koç—the very person she was filing a complaint against—putting her at risk and violating basic principles of confidentiality and protection.

In Turkey, there is no accessible or effective complaint mechanism for cases involving police negligence or misconduct in the context of violence against women. Many women do not file complaints against law enforcement due to fear of retaliation and a general lack of awareness about existing accountability channels. In the case of Ayşe Tokyaz, it was only after her sister Esra Tokyaz publicly shared her experiences that the issue gained public attention, prompting the Ministry of Interior to announce the appointment of a civil inspector and a police inspector to investigate the case. However, these procedures are neither conducted with transparency nor followed by thorough and independent investigations or prosecutions. As a result, law enforcement personnel are not held accountable, and no clear message is given that negligence, misconduct, or failure to fulfill legal obligations will have consequences. This continued impunity undermines efforts to combat violence against women and erodes public trust in the protective role of state institutions.

Failures in sentencing and execution of punishments

In line with the Committee’s concerns, serious problems remain in the investigation, prosecution and punishment of violence against women cases in Turkey and no progress has been made.

A striking recent example of sentence reductions applied by the judiciary in cases of femicide occurred in the case of Pınar Gültekin. In 2020, Cemal Metin Avcı first attempted to strangle Gültekin, then placed her—still alive—into a barrel in the fetal position, set her on fire, and poured concrete over her body before disposing of it in a river.⁷ The case was initially heard at the Muğla 1st High Criminal Court, where Avcı received a 23-year prison sentence due to the application of a sentence reduction for “unjust provocation.” Following an appeal by the Gültekin’s family, the case was sent to the 4th Criminal Chamber of the İzmir Regional Court of Justice. This court sentenced Cemal Metin Avcı to aggravated life imprisonment for “premeditated murder committed with monstrous intent.” However, the verdict was later overturned by the 1st Criminal Chamber of the Court of Cassation. In a majority decision, the Chamber ruled that Cemal Metin Avcı did not kill Pınar Gültekin with “monstrous intent or premeditation” and that he should benefit from a sentence reduction for “unjust provocation.” After the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation objected to this ruling, the case was reconsidered by the 1st Criminal Chamber. The Chamber ultimately rejected the objection in a narrow three-to-two majority vote.⁸

Besides, the Ministry of Justice has just recently prepared new execution law reform, passed in the Parliament as of June 2025, which effectively act as a covert amnesty, allowing many

⁷ <https://www.dw.com/en/turkeys-femicide-problem-all-eyes-on-court-verdicts/a-62165754>

⁸ <https://bianet.org/haber/high-court-upholds-reduction-in-pinar-gultekin-femicide-case-307163>



convicted individuals to be released before completing their sentences.⁹ Alarminglly, this amendment includes crimes such as sexual assault, child abuse, femicide, and assault against women and children. Women already face deep-rooted and layered barriers in accessing justice.

These include lack of access to legal information and support, excessive delays in investigations and trials, failure to enforce arrest warrants, and a widespread judicial attitude that resists punishing perpetrators. Judges often issue minimum sentences and apply discretionary mitigations in punishments, such as “good behavior” discounts. In many cases, prison sentences for crimes like intentional injury, threats, or insults are reduced to fines, which are then suspended through deferred judgments, meaning no penalty is actually enforced. Even when local courts issue convictions, higher courts, particularly the Court of Cassation, frequently overturn them, especially in cases of sexual violence. As a result of the 2023 execution reform, perpetrators of violence have already been able to transfer to open prisons or benefit from probation after serving only a brief period in closed prisons. Now, this new amendment risks releasing even those who have been convicted, effectively decriminalizing violence against women and children. This not only undermines the sense of justice but encourages perpetrators and renders the state’s mechanisms to combat violence ineffective.

The role of Family Courts in the fight against violence against women and their children

In Turkey, Law No. 6284 grants women the right to protective and preventive measures against violence. However, its implementation by Family Courts is deeply flawed. Protective orders are often issued for very short durations, sometimes as little as 15 days, and without individual risk assessments. Women are forced to reapply repeatedly, increasing their exposure to danger during the gaps between orders. Although Article 8(3) of the law states that no evidence is required to issue protective measures, some judges—such as those in the Antalya Family Court—demand unnecessary documentation, undermining the law and subjecting women to further trauma and discrimination.

Another major gap lies in the protection of children. Family Courts often fail to extend restraining or confidentiality orders to children or grant temporary custody to the women. Instead, they prioritise perpetrators’ visitation rights, frequently by ignoring the risk of ongoing violence, under the guise of preserving “family unity.” This has led to situations where women and children are exposed to further harm, including killing of women with their children. In the case of *S.E. v. V.A.*, the Constitutional Court found that the mother's right to life had been violated. S.E. had repeatedly asked the court to suspend father's visitation rights due to his ongoing violence, but the court refused. She was murdered during a supervised visit after her last injunction expired.¹⁰

⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cwynddlww4mo>

¹⁰ https://en.morcati.org.tr/reports/input-on-custody-cases-violence-against-women-and-violence-against-children/?utm_source=chatgpt.com



Additionally, due to current shelter policies, boys over the age of 12 are not allowed to stay in women's shelters, and no alternative safe housing is provided. As a result, women are forced to remain in violent environments either alone or with their children.

Recent years have seen cases where fathers, granted visitation rights by Family Courts despite histories of violence, have gone on to kill their children. These tragic outcomes reflect systemic failures in prioritizing safety and the best interests of women and children in legal proceedings.

Failures exacerbate in cases of migrant women

The investigation and prosecution of violence against women in Turkey are deeply flawed issues that are further compounded when the victims are migrant or refugee women. The murder of Jeannah Danys Dinabongho Ibouanga (Dina) is a stark example.¹¹ Her case illustrates extreme male violence against a migrant woman and the Turkish authorities' failure to provide adequate protection or justice. From local officials and university administrators to the judiciary, institutions not only failed to act but actively obstructed her access to safety and legal recourse. Even after her death, the state failed to uphold its obligation to conduct a thorough investigation and ensure accountability through prosecution and appropriate punishment. Finalized in December 2024, after Turkey's review by the Committee against Torture, this case is included as an Annex 1 to highlight these systemic failures.

Training on sexual violence, violence against women and gender-based violence

Regarding the strengthening of mandatory training on sexual and gender-based violence for relevant professionals, the key issue is the absence of monitoring, evaluation, and transparency. There is no publicly available information on whether these trainings have been implemented or how effective they have been. For example, the Parliamentary Commission Report refers to the "2025 Action Plan on Combating Violence Against Women," which outlines several training commitments undertaken by the Ministry of Interior. These include training police personnel, providing education to 100,000 gendarmerie staff, offering training to private security officers on domestic and gender-based violence, delivering awareness programs to 30,000 conscripts, training district governor candidates, and distributing a video training module titled "Combating Violence Against Women" prepared by the Police Academy to all public order units in 2025. It also mentions continuing international certificate programs through the Gendarmerie and Coast Guard Academy and ongoing training for Ministry staff by the Training Department. However, there is no information on whether these initiatives have been carried out or what their outcomes have been. This lack of transparency undermines the credibility and potential impact of these measures.

¹¹ <https://www.duvarenglish.com/turkish-court-acquits-only-remaining-suspect-in-gabonese-students-death-news-65400>