

From Local to Global / Global to Local:

What a

Difference

30 Years

Make!

What a Difference 30 Years Make!

From Local to Global / Global to Local:



**From Local to Global / Global to Local:
What a Difference 30 Years Make!
Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR)**

EDITOR

Liz Erçevik Amado

COORDINATING EDITOR

İrem Gerkuş

TRANSLATION

Emrah Serdan, Gülşah Seral, Irazca Geray,
İpek Tabur, Merve Ünsal, Neylan Bağcıoğlu

COPY EDITING

Irazca Geray, Liz Erçevik Amado

PRE-STRUCTURAL EDIT

Esen Özdemir

INTERVIEWS

Esen Özdemir, Liz Erçevik Amado

DESIGN

Ece Eldek
www.eceeldek.com

PRINTING HOUSE

12.matbaa
Huzur Mahallesi Ahmet Bayman Caddesi
No:25 34396 Sarıyer/İstanbul
Sertifika No: 46618

*We thank Derya Acuner and Tuğçe Canbolat for their contribution to the initial work on the volume.
Unless indicated otherwise, all photos are from Women for Women's Rights – New Ways' archive.*

ISBN: 978-605-71625-8-8

First Edition

© Women for Women's Human Rights – New Ways Association

www.wwhr.org

Ağa Çırağı Sok. Pamir Apt. No:7 Kat:2 Daire:7 34437 Gümüşsuyu / İstanbul

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior
written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations.

**From Local to Global / Global to Local:
What a Difference 30 Years Make!
Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR)**



In remembrance

Over the past 30 years, Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) has been shaped by the efforts, contributions, and support of countless individuals. Unfortunately, this book only features a very small number of those who have crossed paths with WWHR and contributed to our work and struggle in various ways. Every person who has been part of our team since 1993 holds a special place in the organization. With some, we collaborated on publications; with others, we organized advocacy campaigns, packed boxes in the office, crafted protest banners; with many, we organized global meetings, built solidarity networks both in Turkey and beyond, and ensured that no detail was overlooked in our activities. Together, we thought about how to ensure sustainability and transform ourselves, and in times of need, we reached out to you for support. Solidarity is something woven carefully, and each stitch contains your contributions.

We are fortunate to have been guided, supported, and inspired by so many people over these 30 years. The trainers and participants of the Human Rights Education Program for Women (HREP) and the members of the solidarity networks we built both in Turkey and internationally have played a crucial role in our shared struggle.

We are deeply grateful to all of you. And we are proud to stand side by side.

Since 1993, we have sadly lost some friends along the way who made significant contributions to WWHR and we miss them dearly.

Fulya Ayata not only encouraged constructive reflection on our organizational structure but also enriched our team with her insightful experience from other rights movements. Her contributions to the Human Rights Education Program for Women (HREP), especially in developing *The Purple Newsletter*, were invaluable. Even when her health challenged her, she remained a source of inspiration with her unwavering spirit. Dicle Koğacıoğlu's support after the 1999 earthquake and her work with children at our Rehabilitation Center in İzmit were profoundly impactful. Her academic writings and contributions to the booklet *We Have Reproductive Rights!* continue to influence the feminist movement today.

We have also lost three HREP trainers, Nejla Demir, Çiğdem Akbaba, and Sermin Turhan, whose contributions were pivotal to the program's success and our collective solidarity. Their impact lives on through the women they worked with.

Recently, we lost Sevna Somuncuoğlu, a dear friend and significant figure in Turkey's women's movement. Her legacy continues through the Demir Leblebi Women's Association, which she co-founded.

We also mourn three fellow activists from the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR): Ahlem Belhadj from the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD), Toni (Zaitun) Kassim from Sisters in Islam (SIS) in Malaysia, and Nasreen Huq from ActionAid in Bangladesh. These leaders were instrumental in advancing feminist and sexual rights movements in their countries and shaping the vision and discourse of CSBR.

We will continue to honor them all with love and gratitude.

Women for Women's Human Rights Team 2024

8	Foreword	146	2010-2023
10	From the Kitchen Table to the Parliament...	184	Through our eyes (2010-2023)
12	Introduction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign for the Law on the Prevention of Violence • The Abortion cannot be Banned Campaign • Turkey's 6th Periodic Review by CEDAW • 2012 International AWID Forum, Istanbul • Feminist Principles and Institutionalization • Dissolution of Social Services • HREP's Enduring Impact • Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) • CSBR's Journey through Changing Contexts • Campaign against the Sexual Abuse of Children • HREP and Municipalities: New collaborations amidst challenges • New Advocacy Tools for a Changing Era • Campaign for the Right to Alimony • The Istanbul Convention Keeps Us Alive! • Expanding the HREP Network • Gender Equality Seminars (GES) • HREP, Grassroots Women's Organizations, and Advocacy • The February 6, 2023 Earthquake • Our Approach to Organizing: Sustainability and solidarity
20	Milestones		
26	1993-1999		
36	Through our eyes (1993-1999)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginnings • Sexuality and Sexual Rights: A feminist affirmative perspective • The Women's Movement in Turkey in the '90s • Launching LLPW with Ümraniye Women's Center • Action-research • LLWP Trainer Manual and Pilot Implementations • Advocacy at the 1997 CEDAW Periodic Review • Campaign for the Protection Order Law no 4320 • Collaboration with Social Services: Institutionalizing LLWP • The 1999 Earthquake • A Feminist Approach in the Field 		
68	2000-2009		
92	Through our eyes (2000-2009)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign for the Reform of the Civil Code • Campaign for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code from a Gender Perspective • Campaign for Full Equality in the Constitution • UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) • Breaking Taboos: <i>Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies</i> • Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR) • A Path to Women's Solidarity: HREP and community centers • HREP's Journey: Learning, organizing, mobilizing • Exploring New Institutional Partnerships for Promoting HREP • Economic Rights and Caring Labor • Advocacy for Rights-based Transformation • CSBR's Journey: Transnational solidarity, activism and advocacy • We Stand Together: Organizational and cross-movement solidarity 	236	From Our Partners and Fellow Activists
		282	Select Publications

Foreword

Founded in 1993 by a small group of women preoccupied with the accessibility of women’s human rights in Turkey and violence and discrimination, Women for Women’s Human Rights (WWHR) emerged during a time when the women’s movement in Turkey was gaining strength, yet feminist organizations were few and limited to major cities. Even the idea of “organizing” itself was often met with apprehension. Everyone involved has played a crucial role in sustaining the organization and advancing the feminist struggle over these past three decades. As a result, our 30-year story is intertwined with the broader (her)stories of Turkey, its institutions, our rights, and feminist movements both locally and globally.

As an independent feminist organization grounded in a rights-based approach, we recognize that our vision for a just world requires not only advocacy and the creation, compilation, and dissemination of knowledge but also solidarity and mutual empowerment. Since our inception, we have actively engaged with movements and organizations at the local, national, regional, and international levels, fostering collaboration in the fight for gender equality.

The foundation of this struggle was laid by Pınar İlkkaracan, Leyla Gülçür, Karin Ronge, İpek İlkkaracan, and Gülşah Seral, who shaped the mission and values of Women for Women’s Human Rights. We are profoundly grateful to them for establishing this organization and ensuring its progress through their tireless efforts. We are very fortunate that they began this journey and united us in this shared cause.

Why did we undertake this book? As a team, we believed it was crucial to preserve the collective memory of WWHR from its founding to the present, to celebrate our past experiences, and to document the (her)story of the feminist movement we are part of. In preparing this book, it was inspiring to uncover traces of those who had contributed to WWHR over the years. From shared notebooks and emails used to organize daily tasks to campaign documents, various editions of our publications, and photographs—each item told a story. Viewing photos of individuals, whether familiar or not, engaged in office work, implementing HREP, participating in certification ceremonies, attending national and international meetings, protesting, and sharing moments of joy was profoundly empowering. What resonated most was the realization that, despite evolving conditions and methods, we have all remained committed to nurturing the dream of a world where equality and freedom prevail, driven by the same unwavering excitement, persistence, and determination.

It is important to acknowledge those who contributed to the creation of this book. We extend our gratitude to Esen Özdemir, Tuğçe Canbolat, and Derya Acuner, who supported us from the inception of this project and played a crucial role in its preliminary stages. A special thanks is due to the book’s editor, Liz Erçevik Amado, who approached this project with remarkable determination and perseverance. Liz meticulously managed the entire process, attending to every detail to ensure the book’s completion. Without her dedication, this book would not have been possible. We are also truly thankful to Derya Acuner, Gülşah Seral, and Irazca Geray for their continued support and commitment at challenging junctures. We are fortunate to have you with us.

As a feminist organization, reaching 30 years is a great joy and a serious responsibility. It is impossible to recount every challenge and success of the past three decades, yet throughout this time, we have never wavered from defending women’s human rights in Turkey and around the world, fighting for equality and freedom, and standing side by side against the violence, discrimination, exploitation, and oppression we face. As we look ahead, we are committed to continuing these efforts until the world we envision becomes a reality.

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who has tirelessly and optimistically supported our feminist struggle and solidarity over the past 30 years and to all the comrades who have walked this path alongside us. We are grateful for your presence and the journey we have shared!

Women for Women’s Human Rights Team, 2024

From the Kitchen Table to the Parliament...

The idea of founding the Women for Women's Human Rights was born at a kitchen table—something many women can relate to. It was a hot August day in 1994. Leyla Gülçür and I were sitting at a kitchen table in a house just behind the train tracks in Feneryolu, with papers and pens spread out in front of us, hard at work. It had only been a few days since Leyla returned from New York, where she was pursuing her PhD, and I had just returned from Berlin, where while doing my doctorate studies in psychology I had lost myself in activism. A year earlier, Leyla had invited me to join her research on violence against women, funded by a grant she received. That day, we had met to compile the data from our research—hers in Ankara and mine in Berlin—to write our report on violence against women.

Both of us intended to stay in Turkey for a while. Between 1991 and 1993, Leyla and I had been intensely involved in the preparations for the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (1993). From Chile to the Republic of Fiji, thousands of women worked together under challenging circumstances and without the conveniences we take for granted today—such as the internet. We communicated via letters and since even fax machines were a luxury at the time, we often relied on friends with access to them. Despite these challenges, the campaign was fueled by extraordinary effort and excitement, culminating in a success that filled us with joy. A groundbreaking decision was reached at the 1993 Vienna Conference: *Women's rights are human rights!*

What is now a mainstream, universally accepted concept was revolutionary at the time. With this decision, women's rights, previously treated as secondary, became recognized as fundamental human rights. Violence affecting billions of women and girls worldwide was only acknowledged as a human rights violation after this landmark decision. This recognition also led to the monitoring of discrimination and violations of women's human rights by UN bodies beyond the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Member states were now held accountable for preventing violence against women and girls.

As we sat at the kitchen table that day, reflecting on our experiences, the idea emerged to use the research funds we had received to establish a women's organization in Turkey. It took only a few minutes to settle on the name: *Women for Women's Human Rights*. Inspired by the success of the international women's movement—a movement we were proud to have contributed to through our reports and data—Women for Women's Human Rights embodied a core principle of the feminist movement: **from local to global and global to local...** This principle has guided us ever since. As you will see in the stories and testimonies in this book, we have consistently worked to connect the local with the global and vice versa. This approach has been a beacon, providing hope even in the most challenging times.

Our greatest strength has always been the extraordinary women who walked alongside us—not just our small team. This includes the hundreds of Human Rights Education Program for Women (HREP) trainers and the thousands of participants from across Turkey; the organizations and feminist allies with whom we collaborated in countless solidarity and advocacy networks; and the journalists, members of parliament, public officials, local administrators, lawyers, academics, social workers, UN staff, homemakers, musicians, artists, students, and many others—tens of thousands of supporters—who tackled these issues with the same feminist and results-driven spirit. We owe them all immense gratitude on behalf of all women. The successes and achievements depicted in this book were made possible by their efforts. Together, we walked the halls of Parliament many times between 2000 and 2004. Together, we stood in front of Parliament and successfully reformed the Turkish Civil Code and the Turkish Penal Code to help women live safer, more equal lives. We worked side by side to ensure that our rights became enshrined in international human rights law through UN conventions.

We titled the book *From Local to Global/Global to Local: What a Difference 30 Years Make!* And indeed, so much has happened over these three decades! The following pages recount the 30-year journey of a women's organization committed to advancing and realizing the rights of women and girls (a journey that, unfortunately, is still ongoing). We extend our deepest gratitude to Liz Erçevik Amado and İrem Gerkuş, who worked tirelessly, day and night, and poured their hearts into preparing this book.

Highs and lows have always marked the progress of social movements. Establishing a social norm can take centuries, with phases of success, reactionary backlashes, and temporary setbacks—a recurring historical pattern. In difficult times, staying focused on the goal, identifying opportunities early, building networks instead of acting alone, and moving flexibly between local and global will, as in the past, remain critical strategies for the feminist movement.

Introduction

“We apologize for the delay in sending this report. Our network connection has been down this past week, and we could not get a fax receipt,” the cover letter of our 1994 narrative report reads. Thirty years may be a brief snippet in history, but it does have temporal substance: Individuals, societies, movements, and organizations evolve in three decades. “Change,” as the cliché goes, “is the only constant,” and our story has been one of striving to instigate and claim agency over change toward an order of equality, non-discrimination, and freedom. Feminist movements and the women’s human rights struggle—in Turkey and around the world—have collectively been exposing and upending patriarchal discriminatory legal, social, and political systems of power, holding accountable the perpetrators—be it the state, the international system, society, or individual men. Oftentimes, I think there may not be a more ambitious social goal, a more massive undertaking: in a world where more than half the population is subject to so many forms of discrimination and violence perpetrated and/or disregarded by so many, persisting in the fight for equality and freedom.

I have struggled with how to write this text and realized it would have to be personal. Material, technical details seem to matter—delving into the archives to find handwritten team meeting notebooks and “to do” lists; how we thought yahoogroups and having a server were miracles; the first 1994 publication of the booklet *We Have Rights!* now in its 27th edition. Having been a part of the WWHR team in various capacities since 2002, countless memories drift in—finding myself at the 2002 Women’s Shelters Convention, barely a novice, to be amazed (albeit slightly intimidated) to meet so many incredible feminist activists, adamantly arguing for hours to reach a consensus on the outcome declaration; the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR) groundbreaking NGO statement, delivered in Arabic no less, at the United Nations (UN) 2004 Arab Population Forum calling for the safeguarding of sexual rights applauded by the audience; toiling over not just the articles but also the justifications of the Penal Code Reform draft law to make sure they did not interevent our demands with minor changes in wording; the instant online international mobilization around our #UNITED4ISTANBUL campaign for the Istanbul Convention when I finally understood the power of virtual organizing.

Feminist movements have achieved so much over the centuries despite the uphill battle, and WWHR has proudly been a part of this force for 30 years. We have strived to contribute to this endeavor through a holistic, universal, intersectional, interlayered understanding of rights. While compiling this volume, I have come to visualize our vision and approach as two intersecting Venn diagrams. One of the circles traces our four overarching objectives, which have evolved while also staying true to the same essential philosophy: advocacy on all levels for socio-political and legislative change and non-discriminatory social norms; building and partaking in cross-movement solidarity and advocacy networks; supporting grassroots organizing and women’s empowerment through women’s human rights training; and creating and disseminating a diverse body of feminist knowledge through various media to fortify these efforts. The second circle is geographical, traversing the local to the national, regional, and international contexts. Both circles translate into, inform, and reinforce one another, with the premise that we effectuate sustainable change towards gender equality through this multipronged approach.

Women for Women’s Human Rights (WWHR) was founded in 1993 during one of the pivotal periods of advocacy and advancement in women’s human rights on the international level: “Women’s human rights” were explicitly recognized at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, albeit almost half a century after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948, which had only included one reference to “the equality of women and men” in its preamble. Women’s and girl children’s empowerment, women’s reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender equality, and their intrinsic link to development constituted the core of the 1994 International Conference on Population on Development (ICPD) Programme of Action; state parties declared that they were “committed to ensuring a gender perspective reflected in all their policies and programmes” in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. Meanwhile, the women’s movement in Turkey, the first independent social movement to mobilize following the 1980 coup, was challenging the patriarchal order, undertaking milestone campaigns against domestic violence, sexual harassment, and legal discrimination against sex workers. The premise that “the personal is political” was becoming firmly rooted in feminist discourse.

Against this backdrop, two feminists, Pınar İlkkaracan and Leyla Gülçür, preoccupied with how to effectuate change in Turkey through their experiences in the international feminist movement, founded WWHR as a non-formal organizing initiative. At a time when there were only a handful of women’s organizations in big cities, they envisioned multifaceted strategies extending from the local to the global to translate back to the local and shaped the longstanding aims of WWHR together with Karin Ronge, İpek İlkkaracan, and Gülşah Seral. Starting from the premise that knowing our rights and mobilizing collectively will lead to realizing these rights, they developed a legal literacy program that would later evolve into the Human Rights Education for Women (HREP); conducted feminist action-research; and published extensively. It is no easy feat to persevere as an independent feminist organization. As I compiled this volume, I am once again left in awe of their foresight in shaping our vision and working principles.

Thus, persistence might be the first word that comes to my mind in thinking of WWHR. I see this reflected in our solidarity and allies across movements; advocacy strategies and dozens of campaigns; HREP now in its 29th year; our enduring national and international networks; our awareness raising materials and publications. Two features make our efforts distinct for me: first, none are conceptualized or implemented in a vacuum, and second, in their durability, they are dynamic rather than static.

WWHR began to devise its efforts around a proactive advocacy effort both in Turkey and on the international level from the outset; it worked to change codified law and customary discriminatory norms and localize international achievements (whilst contributing to the global context from the grassroots). In the 1990s, we succeeded in achieving these with our campaign for a protection order law and the expansion of HREP. At the same time, looking back, I see how WWHR's aim to contribute to feminist knowledge through multi-genre, multi-lingual, multi-medium publications on diverse subjects complemented these efforts.

In dozens of campaigns, we have always tried to work with our solidarity networks, combine various methods, and impact policymakers and simultaneously public opinion. We made sure to document and disseminate our achievements, as well as our shortcomings and the lessons we learned. We endeavored to show that international human rights norms apply in all spheres, including our daily lives. We also tried to flesh out how experiences and knowledge-sharing in different countries contribute to rights struggles. We learned that daily follow-up and meticulous coordination in advocacy are as important as shaping the discourse of campaigns, and we never tired of the logistical work we carried out in the background.

In my opinion, the Campaign for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code (TPC) from a Gender Perspective, which we coordinated in the early 2000s, CSBR, which we co-founded and worked as the international coordination office, and HREP, which quickly expanded nationwide through our partnership with the General Directorate of Social Services (GDSS), were some of our most significant contributions to the feminist struggle in the 2000s.

From the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to CEDAW processes, from ICPD Conferences to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we have contributed to advancements at the UN level as part of the international feminist movement. We have increased the representation of Turkish and Muslim countries at the international level and rendered visible the—in many ways rather revolutionary—struggle of feminists from the Global South. We have always been active in the negotiations, many of them strained, in drafting outcome documents, resolutions, and declarations in government or NGO delegations.

In our penal code reform campaign, we joined forces with the LGBTQI+ movement and formed an advocacy alliance of this kind for the first time in Turkey. As the TPC Women's

Platform, we practically rewrote the sexual crimes section of the law after three years of breakneck campaigning. As a result, we achieved probably one of the most radical law reforms in Turkey, removing concepts such as “honor,” “morality,” and “chastity” from the law and abolishing the perspective that maintained that our bodies and sexuality were commodities of the family and society. I think the social transformation we created as a feminist movement at that time continues to have a significant impact to this day, as the government persistently attempts to jeopardize our rights, yet cannot conservatize society and take away our gains.

I believe each of us who has worked at WWHR has espoused the organization's holistic approach of not just outcome-oriented but also process-based strategies, and diverse but complementary work areas and regions. Yet, we all must have an aspect of our work that stands closest to heart. For me, it is CSBR. By the time I was introduced to and enthralled by CSBR's discourse and members, it was 2003. The consensus was adopting a holistic, positive, rights-based approach to sexuality to build a solidarity network for strengthening SRHR advocacy, nationally and internationally. As our coalition expanded into South and Southeast Asia, I learned that religion and faith are not monolithic and that we can pursue rights-based work for legal change without excluding religion, while not denying how patriarchal readings of Islam shape our societies. Rather than being trapped in Western discourses or disheartened by prejudices and discrimination in our societies, we could promote the rights of women and all non-normative sexualities outside the heteronormative order.

With core values stating, “Sexual and bodily rights are universal human rights based on the inherent freedom, dignity, and equality of all human beings and are central to the advancement of women's human rights, gender equality, and democracy,” CSBR organized groundbreaking annual activities like the CSBR Sexuality Institute and the international One Day One Struggle (ODOS) campaign. Like WWHR, CSBR has evolved but continues to organize trainings and ODOS campaigns, produce publications on Islam and sexual rights, and support struggles in member countries.

To return to the national context, our comprehensive, participatory 16-week feminist training program HREP, which has reached over 17,000 women to date, was institutionalized through our collaboration with GDSS. This partnership, which may still be considered a unique model in Turkey, has enabled HREP to be run by professionals like social workers, using state resources. I remember celebrating the renewal of our partnership protocol with GDSS for 10 years in 2005 with cautious optimism: we were driven by the momentum of past years, but the ever-present political volatility, the government's—at times explicit and at times implicit—anti-equality discourse preoccupied all of us, our team, trainers, and ally administrators at GDSS. The second honeymoon with GDSS was indeed short-lived, as GDSS began to lean towards conservative, family-oriented policies and programs, and the Ministry of Women and Family was replaced by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies in 2011, thereby effectually undermining the position of women as individual citizens first and foremost.

We had already begun seeking alternative courses for the program's sustainability. We initiated collaborations with other institutions and decided to turn to municipalities and concentrate on our cooperation with independent grassroots women's NGOs. In addition to focusing on metropolitan cities and their environs for extensive outreach, we focused on the Southeastern region with Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) municipalities with predominantly Kurdish populations. This strategy was valuable in that it led to the further localization of the program and diversified its outreach, expanding the HREP network in the Kurdish region while supporting and strengthening the local women's NGO partners.

The women's movement had long faced conservative attacks, particularly from the religious right-wing and nationalist political actors. Still, their portrayal of the women's movement as a "marginal group of urban women out to destroy the fabric of the family and, by extension, society" became more pronounced after 2010. The then-Prime Minister Erdoğan's statement, "I do not believe in the equality of men and women, men and women are different, they are complementary," at a public conference with women's NGOs in Istanbul—as a group of us were lobbying during Turkey's Periodic CEDAW Review in New York no less—was a new level of brazenness. I remember our feminist delegation sitting stunned on the steps before the UN headquarters, trying to decide how to respond and convey this to the Committee without sidelining our priority issues.

Even in this context, we did manage to successfully conduct an extensive campaign for the new law on violence (no. 6284) from 2011 to 2012. This was the last time the government was open to working and negotiating with the women's movement, albeit reluctantly. In the end, though the law was drafted based on the principles of the Istanbul Convention, references to "gender" were excluded from the law, presaging the brutal attacks on sexual orientation and sexual identity that were to follow. The subsequent step of drafting the statutes of the law was abruptly disrupted by Erdoğan's attack on abortion with his twisted simile, "each abortion is murder, each abortion is Uludere," citing the incident in which 34 Kurdish civilians were killed by the Turkish military. A widespread feminist mobilization thwarted any legal backlash against abortion, but the political hostility towards SRHR and obstacles hindering access to safe abortion increased dramatically, prevailing to this day. These were followed by the attempts to change sexual crimes and child abuse articles of the penal code to legitimize forced and early marriages and efforts to curtail alimony rights, indicating that the pro-family, anti-woman approach of the government was spreading to all spheres.

However, this period also witnessed what could be deemed another milestone achievement towards gender equality with the SDGs, including achieving gender equality as a stand-alone goal (Goal 5) and establishing gender equality as an intersectional principle fundamental to development. While the SDGs are still far from being a reality and conservative forces continue to work at the UN to curb language on gender equality, SRHR, and GBV, the goals constitute solid foundations for pushing for the pivotal role of gender equality in Agenda 2030. WWHR was one of the main actors in the international advocacy efforts in this process, again linking the feminist movement in Turkey and abroad.

Marked by political turmoil, increased state oppression, militarism, nationalism, and entrenching of security policies in Turkey, this era was defined by the 2016 coup attempt, which unhinged the government's escalating hostility since the Gezi uprising, leading to blatant attacks on human rights defenders and independent organizing. Continuously extended states of emergency were used by the government to justify violence and oppression, restrict freedom of expression and organizing, appoint trustees, and dissolve NGOs, starting with women's NGOs, particularly in the Kurdish region. Activists, politicians, and journalists—among many others—were imprisoned without indictments, while nationalism and conservatism fed into each other in an attempt to justify these attacks and promote an anti-rights, anti-women, anti-gender discourse through misinformation campaigns and twisted political discourses.

The utterly unlawful, perhaps for some even inconceivable, withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, beyond the sharpest irony given its name and signature in Istanbul in 2011, happened against this backdrop in 2021, with the government and its allies ultimately declaring—as they had done countless times over the past decade—yet now in the most shrill and unabashed tone, we will not uphold equality, human rights, democracy and don't have to abide by international or national law: We intend to undermine gender equality and persecute LGBTQI+; treat women as secondary citizens confined to long outdated traditional familial roles; and have no intention of combatting violence against women.

Yet I don't think they expected the instant, vigorously organized, extensive mobilization of the women's movement, feminists, and women in general, echoing the determined struggle for gender equality in Civil and Penal Code reforms or preventing backlashes in gained rights in alimony, sexual crimes, and abortion, among others. If we manage to see the glass as half full, Turkish society and people worldwide learned what the Convention was and why it is important and started to support it widely thanks to the withdrawal.

Each era has its peculiarities, for better and worse, and the past five years have unfortunately been marked more by the latter. But what I have learned over the past two decades is that the struggle for rights and equality de facto excludes the sense of hopelessness and defeat, and rightfully so. For many of us prone to pessimism and nostalgia, it's easy to romanticize the advances made in the 1990s and early 2000s. Still, those were also years when even GBV was not fully recognized; wars, conservatism, and oppression were as prevalent; LGBTQI+ right to exist was under constant threat; patriarchy and feminism were foreign, illegible concepts for many. From where I stand, our movements and WWHR as part of them have traveled so far and achieved so much since. Looking at the new, dynamic, persistent WWHR team, the ever so strong and empowering HREP network, our partners and allies in Turkey and abroad, the diversifying and bold feminist and women's movements, innovative advocacy strategies, and activism transforming the curse and blessing of the virtual global world and social media, I also see how public opinion, legislation, and social practices have progressed in the grand scheme of things and how patriarchal norms, societies, and states continue to be profoundly challenged and transformed. At the same time, in this day and age, I think

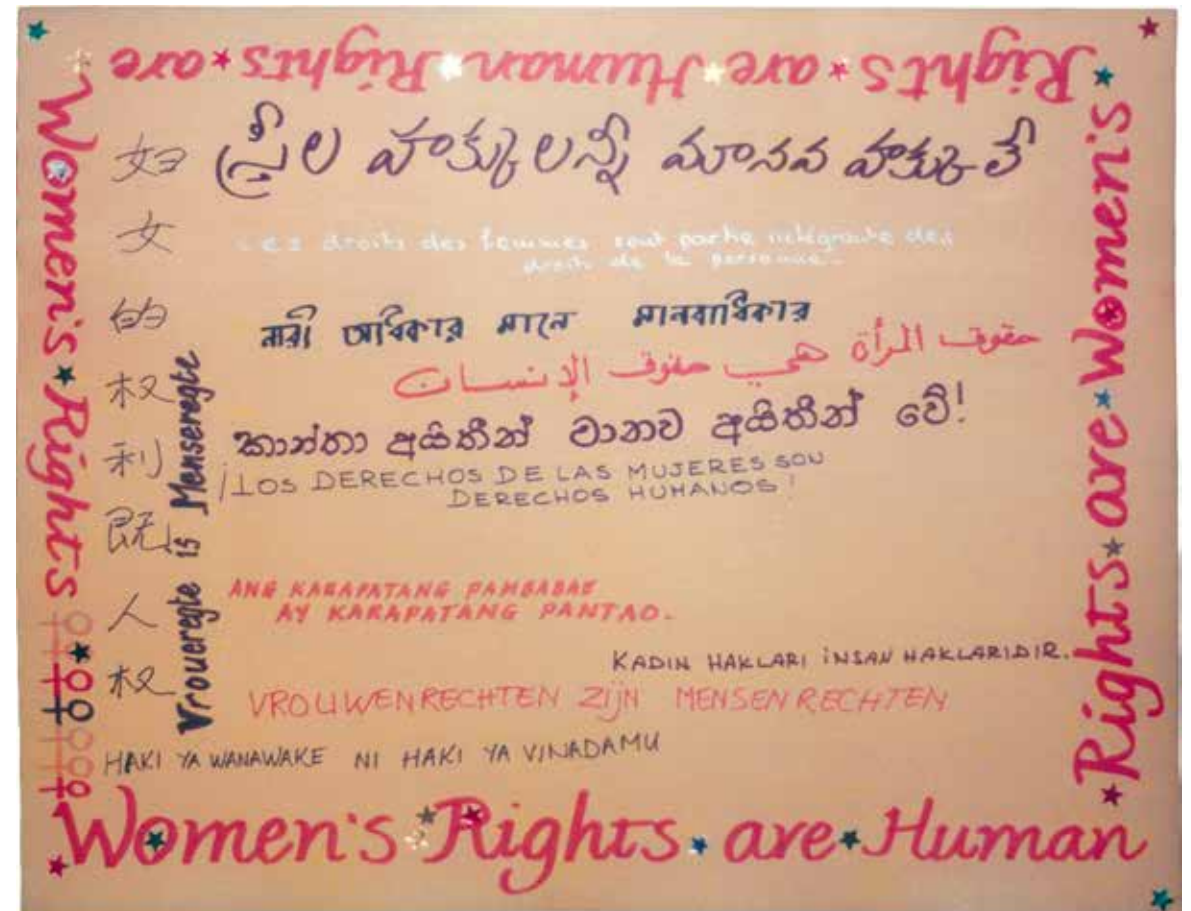
it is further important to strengthen cross-movement rights-based alliances, recognize the intersectionality of rights, and be inclusive.

This volume has been years in the making. Initially planned for our 25th anniversary, we have had to postpone it and even considered giving up the idea since we, like all of us in these movements, can find no time or energy for anything other than keeping up the struggle. Yet, we have maintained since the outset that documentation and production of all sorts of feminist knowledge is invaluable. We hope this volume serves as a contribution to this end while allowing us as WWHR to take a step back and revisit our (her)story to inform our future and recall the path we traveled with countless activists over the past 30 years.

We have tried to recount our story in the context of the feminist and women's human rights movements through both a chronological account and stories of—unfortunately, very few—the women who have been integral to our team at different times, with contributions from our partner organizations and women we worked with side by side over the years. We've been able to include very few due to space constraints. Needless to say, we are grateful to all included here and much beyond for your solidarity, support, inspiration, and commitment to advancing gender equality.

This book is a collective feminist undertaking, and I am grateful to the entire WWHR team for helping shape the volume at various stages and their contributions during the editorial process. Our designer, Ece Eldek, visualized our story beautifully, and our translators and copy editors made the volume ring true in both languages. To extend further personal thanks, Asena Günal, Damla Eroğlu, Derya Acuner, and Ebru Batık have come to the rescue many times. The last few weeks before a book is sent to the designer are uniquely stressful and fun. During those days and nights, Gülşah Seral, Özlem Şen, and Sena Çakır never left us alone. Irazca Geray has eased my burden, corrected my mistakes, and helped carry us to the finish line. Last but not least, my sincere gratitude goes to our coordinating editor, İrem Gerkuş, without whom this publication would neither be possible nor the process as enjoyable.

I have thought often of three amazing feminist advocates and personal friends who have passed while working on this volume. Fulya Ayata, who was a light of her own, is one of the most incredible people I have ever met, with her resilience, intelligence, and creativity. Toni (Zaitun) Kassim from Sisters in Islam (SIS) in Malaysia was not only one of the adamant, inclusive feminists I knew but also one of the driving forces of CSBR. Ahlem Belhadj, the co-founder of the pioneer feminist organization ATFD in Tunisia and a CSBR was an unwavering women's human rights and SRHR advocate. I am grateful to them for their mentorship and all they taught me about solidarity and the power of organizing.



From the Center for Women's Global Leadership Training, 1992. From Canan Ann's archive.

1993

“The human rights of women and girls” were recognized as “an integral, indivisible, and inalienable part of universal human rights” at the United Nations (UN) World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.

Women for Women’s Human Rights (WWHR) was founded in Istanbul as an independent feminist organizing initiative. It borrowed its name from the concept of “women’s human rights,” coined the same year.

1995

At the UN World Conference on Women (Beijing Conference), member states were tasked with promoting gender equality and incorporating a gender perspective into key policies and programs.

The first pilot implementations of the Legal Literacy Program for Women (LLPW), developed by WWHR in collaboration with the Ümraniye Women’s Center (ÜKM), took place in Ümraniye and Gülsuyu, Istanbul.

1997

Pilot group implementations of the LLPW took place in Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa, and Gaziantep.

In collaboration with the Equality Monitoring Committee and Mor Çatı (Purple Roof), WWHR spearheaded the drafting of Turkey’s first CEDAW Shadow Report and advocacy during the CEDAW review process.

1998

Following a two-year campaign, the Law on the Protection of the Family (Law No. 4320) was adopted, allowing women to obtain restraining orders against domestic violence.

The Trainer’s Manual for Women’s Human Rights and Legal Literacy, consisting of 16 modules, was completed.

A partnership protocol was signed between WWHR and the General Directorate of Social Services and Child Protection Agency (GDSS) for LLPW. Following the first institutional training of trainers, LLPW reached 350 women through groups established in community centers across seven provinces.

1999

As a result of the campaign to End Virginitiy Examinations, a directive was issued stating that virginitiy examinations could only be conducted with the consent of women and girls.

2000

Through the advocacy efforts of the Equality Monitoring Platform, coordinated by WWHR, the UN General Assembly’s 23rd Special Session (Beijing+5) Outcome Document included “honor killings,” early and forced marriages, and marital rape as violations of women’s human rights.

2001

The name of the LLPW was changed to the Human Rights Education Program for Women (HREP) to emphasize its rights-based perspective.

As a result of the Full Equality in the Turkish Civil Code Campaign, which had been ongoing since 2000 with the participation of 126 women’s organizations, a new Civil Code that established equality between men and women within the family was enacted.

Activists working on sexual rights in Muslim societies established the first solidarity network advocating for these rights in the MENA region at the Women, Sexuality and Social Change in the Middle East and Mediterranean Symposium.

2002

HREP was being implemented in 44 community centers and women’s organizations across 28 provinces in total, with the participation of social workers and representatives from independent women’s organizations.

WWHR, in collaboration with women’s NGOs and feminist lawyers from various regions of Turkey, established the Penal Code Women’s Working Group and launched the Turkish Penal Code Reform Campaign from a Gender Perspective.

2004

The three-year Turkish Penal Code Reform Campaign from a Gender Perspective, led by the Penal Code Women's Platform with WWHR as secretariat, secured women's sexual rights in the new Penal Code. Sexual crimes were redefined from a gender perspective and categorized as crimes against individuals, not society.

An amendment to Article 10 of the Constitution affirmed, "Women and men have equal rights. The state is obliged to ensure this equality." Changes to Article 90 recognized the supremacy of international human rights law at the constitutional level.

The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR) became a bi-regional advocacy network with the inclusion of organizations from South and Southeast Asia.

2005

The number of women participating in HREP reached 4,500, and grassroots women's organizations emerging from HREP totaled 15 across 10 provinces.

2008

The first CSBR Sexuality Institute, an international training on sexuality and sexual rights in Muslim societies, was organized.

2009

İpek İlkkaracan developed the "purple economy" model, centered around gender equality and valuing care work. WWHR began an international study on reconciling work and family life through a gender equality lens.

The One Day One Struggle! (ODOS) campaign, organized annually by CSBR, was launched on November 9 with 16 simultaneous actions in 11 countries.

2010

The number of women participating in HREP reached 10,000.

During Turkey's 6th CEDAW Periodic Review, then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated in a meeting with women's organizations, "I do not believe in gender equality; men and women are different and complementary," reflecting the government's anti-equality stance.

2011

The Ministry of State for Women and Family Affairs was replaced by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, and the Social Services and Child Protection Agency was dissolved.

Turkey became the first signatory of the Istanbul Convention (The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence).

2012

As a result of the Platform to End Violence's campaign, comprising 300 women's organizations with WWHR in its secretariat, the Law on the Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women (Law No. 6284) was enacted.

Following then-Prime Minister Erdoğan's statement comparing abortion to "murder" in reference to the Uludere massacre, national and international campaigns repelled efforts to ban abortion, though de facto restrictions increased.

2013

HREP expanded through partnerships with municipalities and local women's NGOs, reaching 12,000 women in 54 provinces.

2014

The Istanbul Convention came into effect.

Despite intense campaigning, a bill on sexual offenses (Articles 102-105 of the Penal Code) passed, introducing provisions that risk criminalizing peer sexuality and reducing penalties for child sexual abuse, undermining the sexual rights of women and children.

2015

All member states, including Turkey adopted the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Due to the efforts of feminists, including Pinar İlkkaracan from WWHR, “achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls” became a standalone goal (Goal 5). Furthermore, the intersectionality of gender equality with all 17 goals was underscored in the SDG Political Declaration.

2016

WWHR signed Institutional Partnership Protocols with municipalities to formalize collaborations for HREP.

After the coup attempt, the state of emergency intensified repression, nationalism, and militarism. The Kurdish movement, feminists, human rights defenders, rights-based organizations, public employees, journalists, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals were targeted. Trustees were appointed to HDP-run municipalities, and women’s organizations in the Kurdish region were closed.

The Penal Code 103 Women’s Platform, with WWHR as part of its secretariat, successfully repealed a provision in Article 103 of the Penal Code that allowed for considering child consent in sexual abuse cases. However, a new provision raised the penalties for only the abuse of children under 12 years of age, not those between 12 and 15.

2017

WWHR launched Gender Equality Seminars (GES) for municipalities, the private sector, civil society, and local governments.

2018

The presidential system was instated, limiting Parliament’s role and shrinking the space for rights-based movements and civil society.

A proposed Penal Code amendment to increase penalties for child sexual abuse and introduce chemical castration was withdrawn after opposition from 160 women’s and LGBTQ+ organizations.

2019

The government proposed a bill to limit alimony rights. The Alimony Rights Women’s Platform, consisting of 160 organizations and coordinated by WWHR, successfully campaigned for its withdrawal.

2020

Women and civil society organizations were heavily impacted by the pandemic’s social and political effects, with the ban on in-person activities used as a tool for political repression. Amendments to the law on associations further subjected civil society to arbitrary inspections.

Women’s platforms successfully mobilized to block further attempts to amend Article 103 of the Penal Code, which sought to legitimize violations like marital rape, forced and early marriages, and child abuse.

2021

The number of participants attending the Gender Equality Seminars exceeded 5,000.

On March 20, 2021, Presidential Decree No. 3718 announced Turkey’s unlawful withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. Women’s organizations organized some of the most widespread and impactful campaigns in recent years, rallying public support for the Convention.

2023

Over 28 years, over 17,000 women participated in HREP through 1,000 groups in 57 cities. HREP’s institutional partners reached 20. HREP participants continue advocating for rights through women’s organizations they established or joined, local governments, and the women’s movement across all regions of Turkey.

1993,

1999,

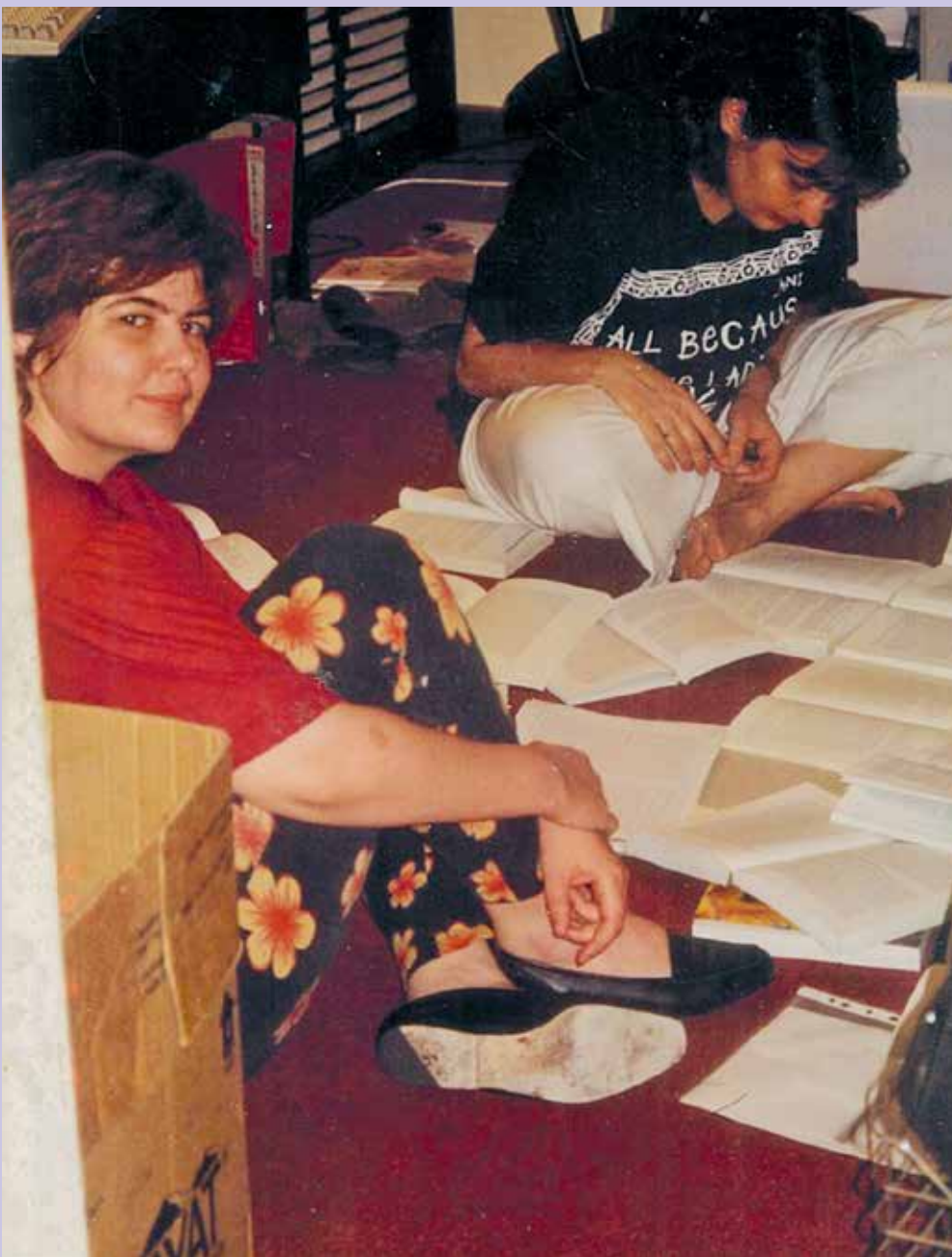
1993

Women for Women’s Human Rights (WWHR), based in Istanbul, was founded in December 1993. It borrowed its name from the UN World Conference on Human Rights organized in Vienna, where the term “women’s human rights” was coined. “The human rights of women and of the girl-child” were finally recognized as “an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights,” and governments were called on to take legal measures to promote “the equal status and human rights of women.” Considering the fact that the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights contained only two references to women and no reference to gender, this was a milestone achievement.

WWHR adopted a holistic approach rooted in grassroots organizing and building solidarity networks to advocate for legal, social, and political change by connecting the local, national, and global levels. To this end, it began conducting action-research on women’s human rights and rights violations, developing a legal literacy program, and creating and disseminating feminist literature and resources.

One of our first activities was **a field research on domestic violence conducted in Ankara.** At a time when research on domestic violence in Turkey was scarce, the study employed a multi-dimensional, feminist definition of domestic violence, covering its physical, psychological, sexual, and economic manifestations. Results indicated that 89% of the respondents had been subjected to one form of psychological violence, while 39% of them had faced at least one type of physical domestic violence.

At this time, when little attention was paid to violence in other countries as well, and there was a lack of systematically gathered data on domestic violence, WWHR also undertook **a research project on the status of immigrant Turkish women living in Berlin,** bearing in mind that migrant women experienced twofold discrimination based on their gender and status as an ethnic minority. The percentage of women experiencing violence in Ankara and Berlin were comparable, while a much larger percentage of women in Berlin sought formal strategies and social support mechanisms to cope with violence.



“We always said, from the local to the global, from the global to the local. From the outset, we attached great importance to bringing an issue voiced in some remote town to an international meeting and simultaneously bringing back what was discussed there to the grassroots, sharing this information through HREP.”

Gülşah (Seral)

1994

WWHR continued its field research in Istanbul as part of the international Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) network established in 1984. WLUML was a platform for information sharing and solidarity for women affected by Muslim laws both codified in legislation and/or resulting from customary practices. It was undertaking a research project on discriminatory laws, social norms, and best practices geared toward advocacy strategies in 25 Muslim societies. WWHR conducted the Turkey leg of the research, a particular case as it was the only secular state in this geography, while women’s lives continued to be shaped by religious and customary patriarchal norms and practices.

We organized informal community meetings with women in Ümraniye, Dudullu, and Kartal neighborhoods of Istanbul to identify women’s needs and build solidarity on the local level. These meetings also served as background for the field research in Istanbul and the Legal Literacy Program for Women (LLPW) developed by WWHR, which later evolved into the Human Rights Education Program for Women (HREP).

The first edition of the illustrated booklet *We Have Rights!* was published. Providing an accessible resource on women’s legal rights, the booklet included fictional anecdotes on women’s human rights and was one of the first of its kind to target women from all socioeconomic backgrounds, including women with low literacy levels.

1995

The UN 4th World Conference on Women, also known as Beijing 1995, was organized with the participation of 189 member states. Reaffirming that women's rights are human rights, the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (PoA) called on member states to integrate gender and equality between women and men in all policies and programs. **We participated in the conference and subsequently contributed to drafting Turkey's National Action Plan to Implement and Monitor Beijing PoA.**

WWHR produced *It's Time to Say No!*, the first documentary in Turkey on domestic violence. Through women's stories, the documentary presented strategies to overcome violence; drew attention to the shortcomings of the legal framework, and served as a training and advocacy tool.

The pilot implementations of LLWP were conducted in Ümraniye and Gülsuyu, Istanbul, with participants from different socioeconomic backgrounds, including women with lower literacy levels, women who had migrated to Istanbul recently, and Kurdish and Alevi women.

Leyla Gülçür conducted a research on migrant sex workers from the ex-Soviet republics and Eastern Europe in Turkey to unearth the complex system of discrimination they face legally, socially, sexually, economically, and racially. The first such study focusing on migrant sex workers' experiences from a feminist perspective, "The 'Natasha' experience: Migrant sex workers from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in Turkey" was published in *Women's Studies International Forum* in 2002.

1996

WWHR made field visits to Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa, and Gaziantep in Southeastern Anatolia to meet women's and human rights organizing initiatives, build solidarity, and explore partnership opportunities for its action-research. The research and our legal literacy program, designed with a participatory method with women from our first local partner ÜKM in Istanbul, were thus expanded in this region.

The pilot LLPW Trainer Training (ToT) was organized in Istanbul and 12 groups were conducted by our first trainers. The program's main objectives were defined as informing women of their legal rights, collectively devising strategies to realize these rights and overcome rights violations, and facilitating grassroots organizing. The program, designed with a participatory and holistic approach, employed a three-phase methodology: Conducting the program modules with trainer candidates; implementation of the program in the field supported by supervision visits; evaluation meetings with trainers to assess and improve the program's impact.

The pilot implementations reaffirmed the program's success in its twofold aim to instigate personal change and promote organizing: Only two months into the program, there were

women who asserted their civil rights in marriage, overcame domestic violence, established municipal marketplaces to sell their handicrafts, and organized parliamentary petitions.

Sıcak Yuva Masalı [The Myth of a Warm Home] was published by the renowned publishing house Metis. Addressing domestic violence and child abuse from a feminist perspective, the volume included chapters on laws pertaining to domestic violence, findings of the Ankara and Berlin research studies, international mechanisms, and women's personal experiences.

WWHR co-founder Pınar İlkaracan published an article titled "Women's Movement(s) in Turkey: A Brief Overview" to discuss the particular case of women's movements in Turkey as a predominantly Muslim society in a secular state. The article noted that the women's movement had failed to bring a substantial critical approach to militarism in Turkey and the state discourses on Turkish identity rejecting and/or disregarding all minorities, and proposed that issues around sexuality and critiques of the heterosexual model should become a more integral part of the feminist agenda.

1997

WWHR conducted LLPW with women from three of the largest cities in Southeastern Turkey (Gaziantep, Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa), where the armed conflict between the Turkish military and the PKK, the Kurdish Workers' Party, had been ongoing since the 1980s. The region was prioritized due to adverse conditions stemming from the armed conflict, the predominance of customary patriarchal practices, and the lack of social services for women, and to bridge the gap between women's advocates in the west of the country and those in the east and southeast. WWHR also began preparing the *Legal Literacy Training Manual* to be used by group facilitators.

In collaboration with the Equality Monitoring Platform (Eşitlik İzleme Platformu – EŞİT-İZ) and the Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation (Mor Çatı), WWHR drafted the first CEDAW Shadow Report for Turkey's Periodic Review by the Committee. This was the first year the CEDAW Committee formalized the shadow reporting practice to integrate women's NGOs' input in the review process. Through our advocacy, the Committee's Concluding Observations included almost all points raised in our shadow report: the recommendation to lift all its reservations to the Convention; the reform of the Civil Code; legal measures against so-called honor killings and other customary practices; the establishment of shelters. This effort to use international mechanisms on the national level to pressure the government was an important milestone that evolved into a strong advocacy tool for the women's movement in Turkey.



Now Organized! Rally, March 8, 1997



1998

The protection order law no. 4320 was adopted, allowing women to get restraining orders against their husbands, children, or relatives perpetrating domestic violence. WWHR led the parliamentary lobbying efforts of the two-year-long campaign with support from the Women's Status General Directorate. Though it fell short of including domestic partnerships, this law was one of the few examples of its kind at the time.

Following the pilot implementations and needs assessments based on participants' feedback, the 350-page *Legal Literacy Training Manual* comprised of 16 modules was finalized.

A partnership protocol was signed between WWHR and the General Directorate of Social Services and Child Protection Agency (GDSS) to implement LLWP at community centers across the country. This was a turning point for the program in terms of expanding outreach and the first example of such a partnership between a feminist organization and a state institution in Turkey. Since community centers were mostly located in socioeconomically disadvantaged urban areas, they catered to the women in the community through various social services, offering a safe space as a state institution. This corresponded with the program's aim to reach diverse groups.

The first institutional Trainer Training (ToT) was conducted in collaboration with GDSS. The 19 social workers who participated in the ToT started 18 LLWP groups in seven cities.

WWHR hosted the international training institute on *Feminism in the Muslim World* organized by WLUML and the Center for Women's Global Leadership in Istanbul and organized networking and strategy-building meetings with local women's NGOs and international activists.

1999

WWHR was invited to join the National Committee for Human Rights Education (HRE) in view of its advocacy efforts grounded in LLWP to contribute to the National HRE Action Plan. Our contribution to the plan included: the integration of human rights into the curriculum, human rights training for NGOs, the reinforcement of a democratic legal system, and the promotion of a culture of peace. The principle of a gender sensitive approach in HRE programs was also integrated into the plan.

The women's movement's longstanding campaign against virginity testing led the Ministry of Justice to issue a decree that mandated consent for virginity tests upon the crime of "deflowering" which was an offense subject to complaint.

Over 18,000 people lost their lives in the devastating Marmara earthquake that hit northwestern Turkey on 17 August. **In collaboration with GDSS, WWHR established a Rehabilitation Center in İzmit to provide rehabilitation services, especially for women, children, and the elderly.** Securing four tents covering 190 m² and establishing a volunteer

group, the center opened its “tent flaps” to 400 children on 6 September. WWHR team members went to the Rehabilitation Center weekly for a year, holding support and awareness raising groups with women, workshops with children, and distributing booklets to assist women in stopping the increased domestic violence in the affected area.

WWHR was invited to participate in the Global Video Conference organized by UNIFEM on 8 March and delivered a statement during the Video Conference at the UN General Assembly. The session was also broadcast live on the public TV channel TRT2, thus ensuring national outreach.

Research articles based on our field studies on the status of women in Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, and Istanbul were published by the History Foundation of Turkey. The research on women’s right to employment indicated that the gendered division of domestic labor and restrictions to women’s freedom of movement were the major obstacles to women’s participation in the labor force. The women and internal migration research revealed that, as opposed to earlier findings and the assumption that migration was liberating for women, the impact was more complex, depending on their familial relations, whether the migration was forced, and whether the women had the right to mobility. The analysis on women’s status and citizenship showed that while in the East, violations of women’s civil rights were more prevalently curbed by customary norms, restrictions on women’s freedom of movement were equally prevalent in the West and the East and the rural and the urban contexts. The research on women’s sexuality in eastern Turkey showed that blatant violations in this sphere were predominant, i.e., half the women were married without their consent, and half the women had been subject to marital rape, which at the time was not criminalized in Turkey.

WWHR received the Leading Solutions Award given by the Association for Women in Development (AWID) in recognition of its contributions to advancing gender equality and social justice.

"Legal Guide for Women, WWHR", Hürriyet Pazar, 29 September 1996

through our eyes

BEGINNINGS

Pinar (Ilkkaracan)

Two years after I began my undergraduate studies, the 1980 coup d'état took place, a process that profoundly influenced, hurt, and transformed me. Let alone organizing any demonstrations, even student club meetings were banned at the university. Police at the school entrance—police everywhere, actually. There was that feeling of being stuck, a desperation.

Yet, informal feminist meetings were still organized during the state of emergency; I started attending these. The discrimination that girls and women were experiencing due to their gender was quite blatant, but the discourse wasn't really grounded in Turkey at the time. Perhaps due to the generation differences and the consequent hierarchy, we, the younger women, could not participate; we mostly listened.

Then, in 1988, I went to West Berlin for my PhD. Berlin was a deliberate choice as I was frustrated with the political oppression in Turkey after the 1980 coup. There were numerous bustling social movements—to use the term from the time—in Berlin. That 1980s Berlin was something incredible. Hundreds of social movements. I wanted to participate in political actions and be an activist. I jumped at every opportunity. First, I started with political activism for refugees. I became even more aware of the discrimination between men and women when I began to work with refugees. Domestic violence, already present in some families, was snowballing in these families, and women who wanted to separate from their husbands could not. She either had to accept domestic violence or be deported from Germany and sent back to her country. I heard this from so many women! The women not being able to leave that cycle of violence even though those laws that are supposedly in the name of humanity... And even though it is so blatantly clear, the unwillingness of the present

“The logo had to be something simple but meaningful and this is what I came up with: The three feminas at the corners of the triangle symbolize women. The triangle symbolizes networking and solidarity. And the edges of the triangle are open, symbolizing the ever-growing developing networks, infinity.”

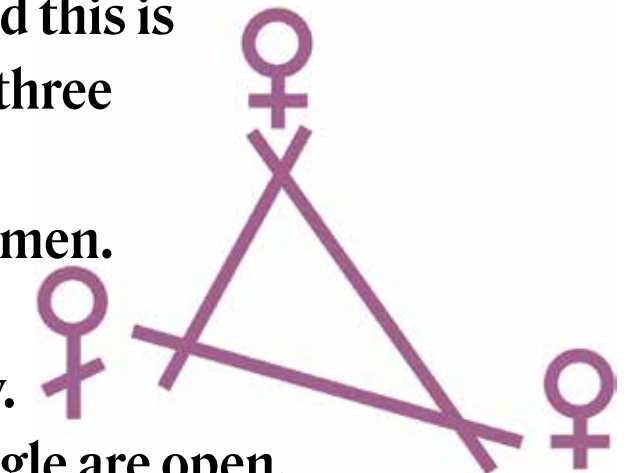
Pinar (Ilkkaracan)

system, the German judiciary, the UNHCR to see this, or rather to “refuse to see this.” I think that is where my sharp feminism began. A relatively democratic country, its institutions, the laws that were claimed to be written in the name of humanity, and even the United Nations disregarded such discrimination.

After a while, I also started working in the women's movement, in many women's organizations, and in 1989, I began to work at a shelter in Berlin. Since Berlin receives a lot of migration, at the shelter there were women from all over the world. Around 40 percent were migrants. Working at that shelter marked a turning point in my life. It radically changed my view of life, politics, society, and the power dynamics between women and men. That is why I deeply value the Purple Roof (*Mor Çatı*), the feminist organization that opened the first independent women's shelter in Turkey and all the women's shelters across the world!

Our shelter was the largest shelter in Germany. The capacity was for 100 people, but most of the time, there were at least 120-150 women and children at any moment. Working at a shelter for a long period of time is something else. Violence against women is so international, so infinite... There is no limit to what men can do, ranging from torture to murder. What we call the cycle of violence.

After working in Berlin for five years as a feminist activist, first with refugee women and then in the shelter, I returned to Turkey in 1993. At the time, the democratization movement had begun. I asked myself whether I should stay in Berlin—I am from Turkey and



should be doing this kind of work in Turkey. Thinking I did what I could do in Berlin and that I could contribute a lot to Turkey led me to return here to found Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR).

Right around this time, Leyla (Gülçür) and I met. She had received funds to conduct the Turkey leg of the comparative research on laws and traditional customary practices that impact women in Muslim communities, supported by the solidarity network, WLUML, which worked on women's status in Muslim countries. She said, "Let's do this research together." I said, "Let's, but only if we start a women's organization here with part of this money." She thought it was a great idea. And that's that. We had begun our research in 1992 and had to turn in that research to the donor that funded the project. The funder was unaware that we would establish a women's organization. They did not have such a request anyway. We set aside a substantial amount of the money we were supposed to receive for the research to establish WWHR. And when we returned to Turkey in 1993, we initiated the organization.

Our name is Women for Women's Human Rights. Why? That's important! Both Leyla and I had worked for the 1993 UN Human Rights Conference organized in Vienna. The conference was a landmark; for the first time, the United Nations declared that "women's rights are human rights." That is why the association's name is Women for Women's Human Rights. We are trying to introduce and promote this term in Turkey. It's not simply "women's rights." It is "women's human rights".

Then, we developed the logo. I used design software on the computer for the first time. We were renting a room in the office of a friend who was also a computer geek. Thankfully, because we don't own a computer, I would use their computer at night; I learned how to use the software and designed the logo. I will never forget this: we needed custom stationery, we needed to write to the ministry, official institutions, the press, other places... We didn't have the money to have someone else design the logo. We were paying the rent for the office, the stationery, electricity, water, etc., from the funds that Leyla had received. We were left with little money, which barely paid for our basic living expenses. So, I sat down and designed a logo. It had to be something simple but meaningful and this is what I came up with: The three feminas at the corners of the triangle symbolize women. The triangle symbolizes networking and solidarity. For me, it symbolized the networks in Turkey and across the world. And the edges of the triangle were open, not closing, symbolizing the ever-growing developing networks, infinity.

We also began to meet with as many feminist organizations as possible with Leyla in those years, Ankara Women's Solidarity (*Ankara Kadın Dayanışma*), The Women's Library (*Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi*), Purple Roof, etc. We were shocked that there were so few feminist or rather truly grassroots feminist organizations. The meetings were lovely and warm, but we realized there were few publications and little research. For example, no research on violence against women. There was nothing except Purple Roof's brochures. Existing organizations mainly consisted of educated urban women; what were women who were less educated doing? This was a big question mark.

Leyla (Gülçür)

When I was interning at a women's institution called the International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) at the beginning of the 1990s, they said, "We happen to know another feminist woman in Turkey. Her name is İpek İlkkaracan." They also told her about me when they talked to İpek, and we finally met and became friends. I later began to work with a women's organizations network called Women Living under Muslim Laws (WLUML). Women from different countries were doing activism in Muslim countries. From Algeria to Pakistan to Bangladesh. They said, "We are beginning a research project spanning 25 countries, and we want Turkey to be a part of it. Would you conduct the research in Turkey?" And I said yes. The project aimed to consider legislation and traditional customary practices impacting Muslim women. At that time, İpek introduced me to Pinar, and that's how Women's Human Rights began. At the end of 1993, we both returned to Turkey and launched the WLUML research. They looked at the following things in other countries: "Which codified law or Islamic laws and practices are pertinent for women, and which are not? Is there such a distinction? Where do we have space for activism?" As the law is secular in Turkey, we were somewhere in between. It was difficult to do something parallel or similar to other countries run by Islamic law. So we said, "OK, what is missing in Turkey? We are missing awareness around violence. Let's research violence and customary laws—especially around sexuality—that shape women's lives; let's look at those." In our violence research, we saw that—as we all know already—women suffer tremendously from violence, especially when we take into account psychological violence. Pinar conducted the research with immigrant women from Turkey in Berlin, and I did it with women in Ankara. In contrast to Berlin, Turkey did not have any agencies that women could appeal to when they were subject to violence in the 1990s. There were no shelters, nor could they go to the police. Appeals to authorities were almost 1%, next to none. This was a significant output.

On the other hand, there were very few international-scale activities in Turkey as well, so we strategically began to focus on UN Conventions. The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was held in 1994 and Beijing in 1995. As we were involved in international processes, we said, "None of these agreements are used for activism in Turkey. However, Turkey is a signatory. Why do we not use them; how could we use them?" So, we saw an entry there, a possibility, and tried to promote them locally.

I remember those years with joy. It was a fascinating, positive process. Of course, there were difficulties, problems, and ugliness, but we persisted. We worked very long hours. We were also a bit chaotic, as one would expect. We learned how to make a budget for an organization from scratch. The issue of salaries, who would be on salary, and how the bookkeeping would be done. But everything was very exciting as possibilities appeared endless.

Temmuz -
Ağustos 1995

Sekreter Dergisi,
Yıl: 4, Sayı: 17

HAYDİ!

Kadın Hakları İçin İş Başına!

Dünya Uluslararası Kadın ve Hukuk Projesi olarak sürdürülen feminist çalışmalar iki kadın öncülüğünde 1993'ten itibaren "**Kadının İnsan Hakları Projesi**" olarak nihayet Türkiye'de de yürütülüyor.

Pınar İLKKARCAN (Psikoterapist) **Leyla GÜLÇÜR** (Toplum Psikoloğu)

Bu projeyi sizlerle paylaşmak istiyorlar. Onlara destek olmak ve birlikte çalışmak için telefonunuzu bekliyorlar. Aşağıda bu projenin ayrıntılarını ve irtibat telefonlarını bulacaksınız.

Ne dersiniz, artık birşeyler yapmanın zamanı geldi değil mi?

Projenin koordinatörlüğünü yürüten **İLKKARCAN** ve **GÜLÇÜR** projeyi şöyle anlatıyorlar.

KADIN HAKLARI PROJESİNİN İÇERİĞİ

Kadının İnsan Hakları Projesi; Türkiye'de de kadınların haklarıyla ilgili bilgi kaynakları oluşturmaya ve bunları Türkiye'nin her bölgesindeki kadın vatandaşlara ulaştırmayı amaçlayan bağımsız bir feminist projedir. Uluslararası deyimleriyle "*Non-Governmental Organization*" (hükümet dışı kuruluş) özelliği taşıyan bu proje diğer uluslararası NGO'larla işbirliği halinde çalışmaktadır. Birlikte çalıştığımız uluslararası hükümet dışı kuruluşlardan biri olan *Women Living Under Muslim Laws* (WLUML), müslüman toplumlarda / ülkelerde yaşayan kadınların hukuksal, toplumsal ve geleneksel yaşam koşullarını araştırarak, kadınlar arası bilgi akışı, dayanışma ve karşılıklı destek ağını oluşturmaya çalışan bir organizasyondur. *Women Living Under Muslim Laws*'ın yürüttüğü *Uluslararası Kadın ve Hukuk Projesi*'nin Türkiye çalışmalarını biz *Kadının İnsan Hakları Projesi* olarak yürütüyoruz.

KADIN VE HUKUK PROJESİ

"*Kadın ve Hukuk Projesi*" 25 ülkede kadın haklarına tesir eden olumlu ve olumsuz yasa maddelerini ve geleneklerinden oluşan sosyal uygulamaları inceleyerek kadının toplumsal statüsünü geliştirmeyi amaçlayan uluslararası projedir. Türkiye'nin, bu projeye katılan 25 toplum / ülke arasında Ortadoğu'daki tek laik müslüman ülke olarak, kadın statüsü konusunda öncül ve örnek oluşturacak bir rol oynayacağı beklenmektedir. Buna rağmen, 1926'da kabul edilen Medeni Kanunla, Türk Kadınına o zamanın şartlarına göre, birçok ülkedeki kadınlardan daha ileri haklar tanınmış olmasına rağmen,

bu hakların kadınlar tarafından öğrenilip kullanılmasında eksiklikler olduğu birçok araştırmacı, yazar ve komisyon raporlarıyla tesbit edilmiş bulunmaktadır.

Kadının İnsan Hakları Projesi, Türkiye'de "Kadın ve Hukuk Projesi'nin" gerçekleştirilmesini ve uygulanmasını üstüne alarak, Kanada'daki "*International Development Research Centre* (IDRC)" den sağlanan maddi kaynakla Aralık 1993'de çalışmalarına başlamıştır. Birçok Kadın aktivist, meslek ve bilim kadınının katıldığı bu projenin amacı, kadının kendi statüleri hakkında bilinçlenmelerine yardımcı olacak ve bu statüyü geliştirecek yöntemleri kendilerinin geliştirmelerini sağlayacak bilgi akışı ve malzemeleri oluşturmaktır.



PINAR İLKKARCAN

PROJENİN AMAÇLARI

Bilimsel araştırma ve bulgularla toplumsal alanda gerekli olan çalışmalar arasında bir köprü kuracak ve dayanışma ağları oluşturacak olan bu projenin amaçları;

✓ Türkiye'de kadının statüsüne ilişkin hukuksal,

geleneksel ve töresel yasaları ve uygulamaları araştırma ve kadının statüsünün geliştirilmesi için gerekli önerileri saptamak.

✓ Kadının statüsünü geliştirme konusunda çalışmalar yapan çeşitli kuruluş ve gruplar arasındaki bilgi akışını artırmaktır.

✓ Araştırmamızdan elde edilen bulgulardan yararlanarak, kadınların hukuksal konulardaki bilincini artırmak için, broşür, video filmi ve kitapçıklar hazırlamak ve bunların ülke çapında dağıtımını sağlamak.

✓ Kadınların kendi statülerini geliştirmek konusunda kendi kendilerine yardımcı olmalarını ve bu konuda kendi kendilerine yöntemlerini geliştirmelerini sağlayacak atölye çalışmaları, merkezi ve bölgesel eğitim programları hazırlamak.

✓ Araştırma bulgularımızın ışığında uluslararası "Kadın ve Hukuk Projesi"ne katkıda bulunmak ve Kadın ve Hukuk Konusunda hazırlanacak olan uluslararası araştırma raporunu diğer ülke araştırmacılarıyla hazırlamak.

✓ Uluslararası hükümet dışı kuruluşlarla bilgi akışını ve karşılıklı desteği geliştirmek.



LEYLA GÜLÇÜR

ARAŞTIRMA BOYUTLARI

Araştırmamız, üç genel boyutu kapsıyor. Bunların birincisi; kadının aile içindeki konumunu; mesela evlilik biçimlerini (medeni nikah, imam nikahı), evlilik ve boşanmalardaki hakları ve miras haklarını kapsamaktadır. İkinci boyut; kadının kamusal alandaki konumunu, mesela politik yaşama katılım haklarını dini yaşama katılım haklarını ve ekonomik haklarını kapsamaktadır. Üçüncü boyut ise kadının bireysel alandaki konumunu, mesela psikolojik, cinsel ve fiziksel şiddete maruz kalmama hakkını ve cinselliği yaşama hakkını kapsamaktadır.

PROJENİN ÇALIŞMALARI

Kadının İnsan Hakları Projesi çalışma grubu, projenin ilk aşamasında aşağıdaki belirtilen konular üzerinde çalışmalar yürütmeye karar verdi:

✓ **Hukuk Araştırması** : Kadın statüsüyle ilgili mevcut

hukuk maddeleri ve bu maddelerin yürürlükteki uygulamalarıyla ilgili bir araştırma raporu, Avukat *Canan ARIN* tarafından hazırlandı. Bu bulgular, hazırlanması planlanan çeşitli eğitim malzemelerinin temelini oluşturacaktır.

✓ **Arşiv Araştırması** : Türkiye'de 1975'den günümüze kadar kadın konusunda çıkan araştırmaların ve bu konuda yazılmış eserlerin bir özet ve bibliyografyasını oluşturacak olan arşiv araştırması İstanbul Üniversitesi Öğretim Üyesi Dr. *Serpil ÇAKIR* tarafından hazırlandı.

✓ **Alan Çalışması** :

a- *Aile içi şiddet konusunda araştırma*: Aile içi şiddet, kadının aile içi konumunu ve haklarını inceleyen bir araştırma, Ankara'da ve Berlin'de yaşayan Türk kadınlarıyla anket çalışması şeklinde yürütülmüştür. Bu çalışmaların raporları hazırlanmıştır.

b- İstanbul'da seks işçisi olarak çalışan eski Sovyetler Birliği'nden veya doğu Avrupa'dan gelen ve halk arasında "Nataşa" adıyla tanınan göçmen kadınların yaşamlarını ve haklarını inceleyen röportaj-araştırma yapılmıştır ve raporu hazırlanmıştır.

EĞİTİM VE BİLGİLENDİRME AMAÇLI BİLGİ DAĞITIMI

Yapılan tüm çalışma ve araştırmaları, değişik okur-yazarlık seviyesindeki kadınlara ulaştırabilmek için çeşitli biçimlerde hazırlamaktayız. Mesela, yukarıda bahsedilen çalışmaların raporları bir kitap halinde çıkarılacaktır. Ayrıca, bu çalışmaları daha düşük okur-yazarlık seviyesindekilere ulaştırabilmek için çizim ağırlıklı broşür ve kitapçıklar halinde basacağız. Bunların yanı sıra, kadın ve aile içi şiddet konusunu içeren eğitim amaçlı bir video filmi hazırladık. Bu film şu anda İstanbul'un çeşitli semtlerinde halk evlerinde ve kadın kuruluşlarında gösterilmektedir.

1995-1996 İÇİN ÖNGÖRÜLEN ÇALIŞMALAR

Kadının İnsan Hakları Projesi çalışma grubu, Temmuz 1995'ten itibaren ikinci aşama çalışmalarına girmeyi planlamaktadır. Bu çalışmaları iki ayrı proje oluşturacaktır. Birinci proje, Türkiye'nin çeşitli bölgelerinde yaygın olan gelenek ve göreneklerin bu bölgede yaşayan kadınların yaşamlarını nasıl etkilediğini inceleyen bir araştırmayı oluşturacaktır. İkinci proje ise, "yasal okur-yazarlık" kavramını oluşturan bir eğitim projesini teşkil etmektedir. Kadınların hayatlarını etkileyen yasaların belirlenmesi ve bu yasaların uygulanmasının grup halinde tartışılması, bu eğitim projesinin ana hatlarını içerecektir.

KADININ İNSAN HAKLARI PROJESİ'nde aktif olarak görev almak istiyorsanız aşağıdaki telefonlardan bilgi alabilirsiniz.

İRTİBAT TELEFONLARI : (0216) 385 12 62 - 359 60 31

SEKRETER 27

"Let's get to work for women's rights!" Sekreter no.17, July-August, 1995

26 SEKRETER



Turkish Daily News, 25 December 1999

İpek (İlkkaracan)

I worked at UNIFEM at the beginning of the 1990s, specifically on countries in Asia and Africa. When we got together with Pınar, my sister, I would tell her about what I do at UNIFEM, and she would tell me about what she does at the shelter in Berlin. We talked about what we can do in Turkey in our conversations. Around the same time, UNIFEM had a sister organization, an NGO called IWTC. I believe it is one of the first international women's organizations. They told me at UNIFEM that there was this woman from Turkey at IWTC, and her name was Leyla Gülçür, that we should meet. "She is also a feminist; you would get along so well," they said. Leyla was similarly hearing about me at the IWTC. We met and became close friends, and I introduced Pınar to Leyla. Then they returned to Turkey to found WWHR and begin their research on "Women and Law" under the umbrella of WLUML.

Once this project progressed, smaller projects, or rather mini sub-projects, began to emerge. Leyla conducted research on sex workers. They wanted to produce booklets and films and publish books to do advocacy. I had experience writing project proposals and budgets for projects, so I supported them from abroad for these activities. When Leyla returned to the US in 1996, Pınar said, "İpek I can't do this alone. If Leyla is leaving, then you should come here." So, guess we could say Leyla and I swapped places. The plan was to work part-time at WWHR because I also wanted to continue writing my PhD dissertation that I had begun at the New School in New York, but of course, that's not how it worked out. We worked more than full-time, let alone part-time. First, you do a lot of the work on your own as resources are limited. Second, we were able to reach out to women and make a difference; we received such demand and positive feedback from these encounters on the local level that we could not say no to the women we worked with. You say, "This is my obligation. Let me also take this on. Let me train with this group, too; prepare this pamphlet as well." So, in the end, we began to work in many fields with huge enthusiasm, working 24/7.

Karin (Ronge)

My connections with the feminist movement began when I worked with young people and disabled people, and later at an independent women's shelter in Berlin, where I worked with women and children who had experienced domestic violence. I was deeply involved in feminism, feminist theory, and women's movements in Germany. Working on issues such as violence against women and children, the effects of violence, and their right to live in a non-violent environment, and advocating for human rights in general and women's and children's rights in particular shaped me and made me an activist.

The children we worked with had either witnessed violence inflicted on their mothers or had been directly subjected to violence. Some, mostly girls, had also been sexually abused by a family member. When I started working at the shelter in 1987, violence against women and girls, and the rape and sexual abuse of girls and boys, were still not fully recognized by society. We campaigned for the government to accept that ending violence against women and girls was the responsibility of the government and the state.

Pınar was my colleague at the shelter in Berlin. She focused on developing strategies to influence local and national legislation on combating violence. She emphasized the importance of building solidarity networks and forming alliances with various stakeholders and researched good global examples of advocacy for legal change. Pınar and I were also responsible for the communication policy at the shelter. We also played a role together in the establishment of the Berlin Initiative Against Violence Against Women (BIG e.V) during the process of reforming the law on violence against women in Germany.

When Pınar and Leyla decided to establish the WWHR, I was actually involved from the very beginning. I helped produce our documentary *It's Time to Say No!* I accompanied Pınar to the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995, faxing statements to partner organizations in Europe to establish international connections. In 1995, I took a year off from the shelter and came to Turkey. At that time, Pınar asked me to help the WWHR temporarily. I started to support her on various issues. I took on tasks such as running the office, renovations, accounting, and organizing the logistics of the meetings. Later, accounting became one of my responsibilities.

So, I was pretty much in the background at the beginning, and then I got more directly involved in our activities. I was a partial supervisor for WWHR's trainings, helping to prepare training materials and publications. In the 2000s, I ran theater workshops at the annual CSBR Sexuality Institutes of our Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR). In 2008, I organized an international conference in Istanbul under the theme of "Fighting Early and Forced Marriage" as part of the European Exchange Program to develop advocacy strategies and share good practices.

“We said, let’s work on positive rights and try to advance them. Sexual rights, the right to pleasure, the right to be with whoever you want, LGBTQI+ rights... But let’s construct these based on positive rights rather than violations.”

Leyla (Gülçür)

SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL RIGHTS: A FEMINIST AFFIRMATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Pınar (İlkkaracan)

Both Leyla and I were women who had worked independently on feminist sexuality. What brought Leyla and me together was this common idea, this common feminist understanding. We also realized that no one else was working on sexuality. When I fully grasped feminism, I understood better how important it is for women to live their sexuality positively and to enjoy their bodies. I already knew this from my own experience, and I also realized to what extent sexuality can be used to oppress women.

There was no woman in the shelter in Berlin who did not have problems with sexuality. Women do not necessarily have to have experienced sexual violence. It’s hard to explain, but the man does not have to attack the woman, tear off her clothes and rape her. For example, a woman does not want to have sex after the violence, but her husband wants to be intimate, and the woman feels obliged to; this is a very important form of sexual violence. When I asked, almost all the women in the shelter told me that they could not have sex after the violence they experienced and this was painful. So I formed support groups on sexuality with women in the shelter. Although I initially had a hard time getting the team at the shelter to agree to do these groups, I finally convinced them. I said, “I can take 10 people,” and 35 people applied immediately. Those groups went very well. I learned a lot from that experience and from those women. I saw how violence affects sexuality and how this can be turned into a positive thing through what they told me. With this in mind, Leyla and I decided that WWHR should also focus on women’s sexuality from a feminist perspective.

In September 1995, I attended the Beijing Conference, a first for me. What happened at that conference shocked and agitated me. A coalition of women’s organizations from all over the world wanted the following paragraph to be included in the declaration: “The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence.” This paragraph caused a storm at the conference, and with

the opposition of the Vatican and some Catholic and Muslim fundamentalist religious organizations, it became the most controversial and most fought-over article. Until the last minute, it was not even clear whether it would make it into the declaration. This block openly declared a woman’s body and sexuality do not belong to her; women have no rights; they implied we decide for them. These rights are well-established now, but at the time, it was a turning point. Later, this became an international political struggle. I experienced this very personally: who are you to tell me that my body and sexuality do not belong to me! Working on sexuality was our intention from the beginning, but this experience at Beijing led us to concentrate work much more on sexual rights.

Leyla (Gülçür)

Pınar was working specifically on sexuality. While we were talking about what we could do, I was vehemently putting forward the idea of “positive rights.” This is also the approach of CSBR. Both here and around the world, women’s organizations generally emphasize and focus on “negative rights,” that is, violence and violations of women’s human rights. No one was focusing on “positive rights” back then. I was saying, “Let’s not just work on that. Let’s also try to advance positive rights in some way.” What do we mean by positive rights? For example, sexual rights, the right to pleasure, the right to be with whoever you want, LGBTQI+ rights. But let’s construct these based on positive rights rather than violations.

THE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT IN TURKEY IN THE ‘90S

Zelal (Ayman)

I came to Istanbul for my undergraduate studies in the 1990s. I come from a political family, but Istanbul is where I learned about the women’s movement and politics. Left-wing politics, socialist politics, Kurdish politics, feminist politics... Women’s organizations were just beginning to emerge from at that time. When I was a student, there was the Women’s Research Center at Istanbul University; I started going there, and I joined feminist consciousness-raising groups. The Short Skirt (*The Eksik Etek*) group was one of the first consciousness-raising groups. We published a magazine in 1994-95. At that time, our attempts to respond to common problems with a joint activism and organizing had begun; feminist institutionalization was starting. On the one hand, there were small student groups like us, young women’s groups, and on the other hand, action platforms had begun to sprout. The first was the March 8 Women’s Platform based in Istanbul. If I’m not mistaken, it was 1995; the March 8 Women’s Platform was a group that included independent feminists and women’s groups, as well as women from unions, political parties, and other mixed organizations. We were trying to take March 8 from the hands of institutions dominated by men. And we succeeded. In 1997, we organized the Now Organized Rally; this rally was a milestone in terms of independent women’s organizing...

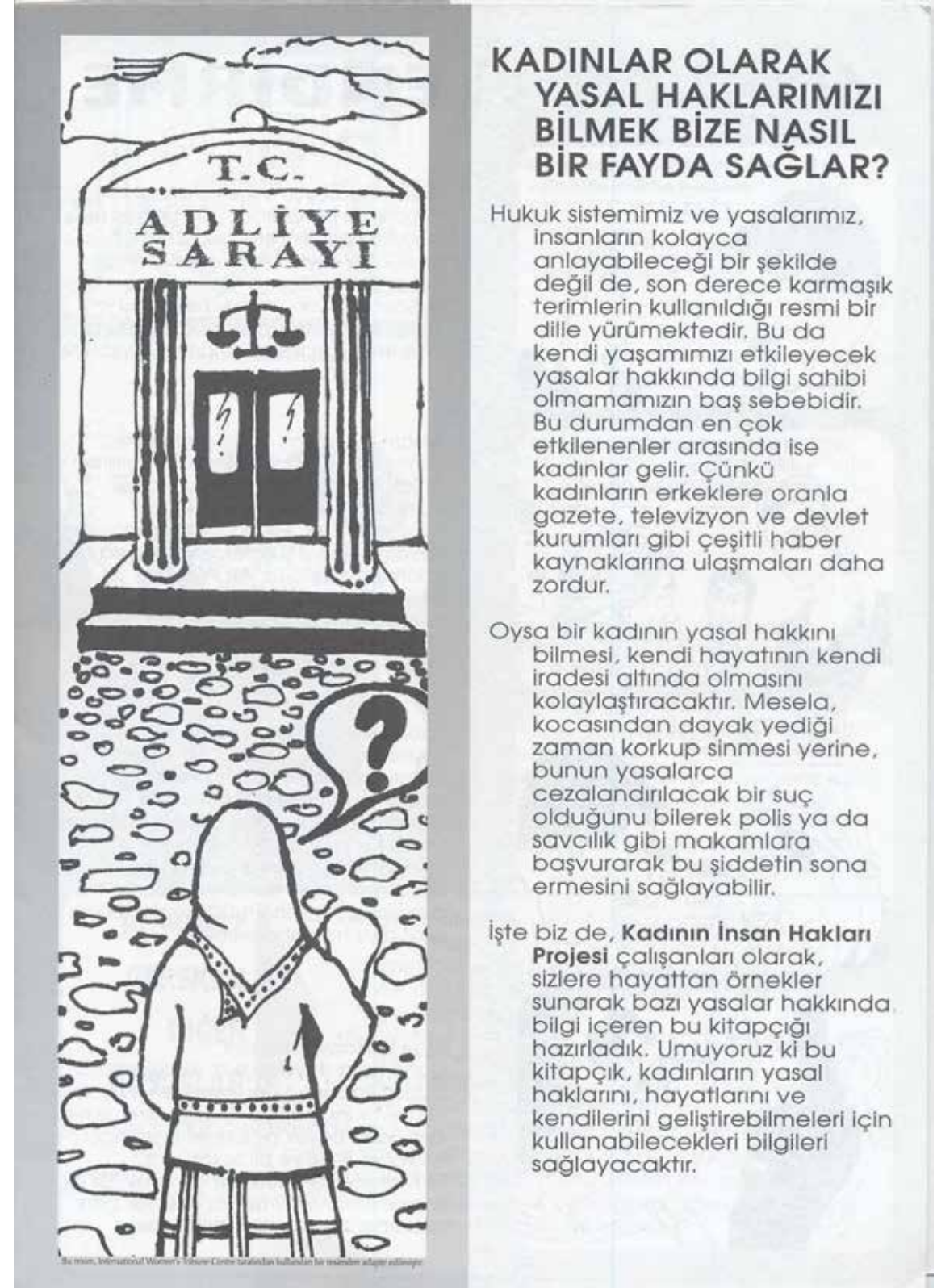
Purple Roof had also been established around that time. There was the Women's Library. The Women's Solidarity Foundation and shelter organizations in Ankara... Of course, WWHR was also founded at that time. Relationships were not distant like they are today. We would always meet somewhere. There were only a few offices. We would use each other's offices. Face-to-face relations were very strong. Of course, there was no WhatsApp or e-mail groups like today. The movement was not as big. Since we were small, we needed each other a lot. For example, if we needed to fax, we would use someone's office. Even to make a phone call, we would ask, "Can we come and use your phone?" Because it was very hard even to find a phone. Coming face-to-face was very valuable. We would see each other, look into each other's eyes, fight if we have to, build our struggle, our solidarity, and work side by side physically...

LAUNCHING LLPW WITH ÜMRANIYE WOMEN'S CENTER

Pınar (Ilkkaracan)

After the research we conducted in Ankara and Berlin, we immediately started working to reach out to women of lower literacy levels and published the series *We Have Rights!*, which they could read easily and with pleasure, written in a simple language, with illustrations. The booklet targeted women with limited education with stories they could identify with about women's issues and rights. At the same time, we prepared a documentary on violence called *It's Time to Say No!* with Asuman (Sanver) and Karin (Ronge). The documentary received a lot of coverage in the press. In the meantime, the Ümraniye Women's Center (ÜKM), a local women's NGOs, called me to ask if they could screen the film. Partly they are women who shaped WWHR. Maybe they shaped the association even more than we did.

At that time, we had made this film and were thinking about how to reach more women. We said, okay, we will send it to women's organizations. But our goal is to distribute it throughout Anatolia. We sent it to the entire press. When ÜKM said they wanted to screen the film, I said, "Could I come with my video?" I was over the moon with joy. I fell in love with them, and they did with me. After showing the film, they said, "Wait a minute, don't go anywhere now; you are exactly what we were looking for." "We can't reach the women here or grow in number. How are we going to do this?" This is how our women's human rights training program (HREP) was born. After the film screening, we had a wonderful conversation. They said, "This film and the booklets are great, but they are not enough; we need to find better ways to reach women." Filiz (Afacan) put her heart and soul into this. While they were wondering how we could do it, I told them about the consciousness-raising groups in Germany. I always had in my mind the need for women to organize. These consciousness-raising groups inspired HREP. It was born as a program that motivated and strengthened women toward independent collective organizing step by step, starting from the first week over the course of 16 weeks.



We Have Rights!, First Edition

The women at ÜKM were from the Kemalist social democrat CHP party, but CHP used the women's issue as a tool to gain votes, ignored their rights in the private sphere, saw equality as a secondary problem, etc. These women were much more advanced than CHP in their analyses of women's issues. I can't tell you how good I felt. In other words, they weren't saying, "Atatürk saved women, or CHP will save women." They were saying, "Women need to work for women." I trusted them a lot in that regard. We had numerous meetings. What do women lack? What are women aware of? Women are not aware of many forms of discrimination or their rights. Such issues arose, and then the details followed.

But they didn't bring up the topic of sexuality; I did. They brought up all the other issues. When I said, "Why didn't you say sexuality?" They were stunned. I explained why I found sexuality to be so important. Then they said, "You're right." We organized the first sexuality groups. It became the most popular group, and that's how sexuality was added to the training program.

Of course, the immediate question was where these groups would be held. Most women could not come to ÜKM because either there was no public transportation, they did not have money, or their husbands did not allow them to leave their neighborhoods. They said, "We will go to the women's homes. We can go, but you should prepare the materials for us." That is how the first training materials were prepared. Every week before they went to the groups held in the women's homes, I would prepare the information notes that would later form the basis of the current training manual; I would photocopy pages for the modules and send them. Me being a psychotherapist also played a role because the program needed a group facilitator to lead and moderate the group. So, I conducted group facilitating trainings for all women who'd go out to the field. How to manage a group, communication skills and techniques for the group facilitator, dealing with difficult members, etc. That is how it all started.

The training needed to be formed around women's needs, and it took its final form with the feedback they received; it was constantly updated and improved with the information coming from the field. In the meantime, none of us knew how this work would go or what it would bring. We were all excited. It may or may not be successful. We think it will. An instance I will never forget: one of the group facilitators cried when she told us what she experienced in her group: although she said she could take 15 people in the group, 27-28 women wanted to join, she said, "I can take at most 15 people," and the women were disappointed. According to research, the group should have a maximum of 15 people. If there are more people, people cannot speak freely, and subgroups that can harm the group begin to form. This was a house in a shantytown. The woman who owned the house opened the windows. At least 10-15 women were at the windows; they said, "We will just listen." That was a significant emotional turning point for me. We are on the right track, and women are hungry for it. At that time, it was said so often that "Women would not show up in Turkey; they do not self-organize." I cannot explain it; those women have given me so much strength. If you offer what women need, they organize, they mobilize so wholeheartedly! If I remember correctly, women from ÜKM conducted around 15 groups in that first year.

Filiz (Afacan)

I moved to Istanbul in 1985 and opened my pharmacy in Ümraniye, a neighborhood close to a shantytown. I was bored to death; I did not know what to do with myself. My husband would often go to the municipality at the time and he met Gürdal Okutucu at the public relations department, a former MP. He tells Okutucu, "My wife is very interested in these kinds of social projects. She doesn't know anyone here; let us know if an opportunity comes up for her." That is how I met Gürdal. She said that, as the municipality, they were considering organizing a women's conference that year and that they were establishing various commissions. She suggested I lead the health commission and find other healthcare workers to join. I said of course. We talked to women across all neighborhoods of Ümraniye. We started researching what health problems ailed women. There were other commissions too; the migration commission, cultural issues, and difficulties of assimilation and adjustment, etc. At the conference, we gave presentations for three days and filled the whole room talking about these issues. Then, yes, all the problems were aired, but what could we do? We decided there should be a foundation or a women's association so that women could have access to information and get support to participate in social life. I think it was a year later my friend Gürdal said, "Let's become an association. I will prepare the bylaws; we have lawyers at the municipality." At that time, they wanted ten copies of the bylaws; we could barely afford the photocopies. Anyway, we somehow founded the association ÜKM. I became its founding president. It must have been 1990. We started an employment project for women. Women produced handicrafts at home, and they sold them. But we said, "These women should get out of the house." This project became very successful. Women did jobs like assembling pens and wholesale clothing for ready-made garments. Many women eventually got jobs in different fields. They even went to courses on childcare and received certificates. We worked so hard... Everyone asked me how we set it up and who gave us the money. No one gave us money. We had no money. But we gave everything we had, ourselves, thinking, let's serve women, let's do this, let's do that, we were overjoyed. We were five or six women. I mean, there were not a lot of us... But we could gather 100-200 women immediately when wanted. We held tea parties, we didn't fit in the halls. We organized these to earn money. Otherwise, we wouldn't consider tea an activity; we needed income to pay the rent.

Around that time, Pınar came to us. I'm not sure where she heard of us. But around then, I was featured on women's shows on TV. They would call me all the time. I even participated in Ali Kırca's popular politics program, *Siyaset Meydanı*. I would also take women with me, and they talked about what they learned and what they did. It was wonderful... I took women who were taking courses on carpet weaving. They talked about what changes took place in their lives; they told their own stories. We were very popular around then. A journalist even told me they had heard of me while they were in the US and came and interviewed me.

We were doing incredible work, and it was all on our own. Looking back, I'm very proud of myself. We were only a few women. I have a stronghold of a friend, Leman Meriç. Her and I. She would do the accounting. She would organize the bookkeeping and the

records. She was also a volunteer at the association, teaching. When women began to come to the association, there was more work. I don't remember precisely, but I have this image of Pinar coming there and sitting down. First, I was sitting at the table, and she was talking.

I did not understand the project at first. But it was obvious that it was a great project. She said, "We are going to train group leaders." She said that the project was on legal literacy. When she told me about it, I said, "I will find you the women; many women here could become leaders; we can do this." We began the work, and the group facilitation training was launched. We would each take to the street, reach the homes, and tell the women. What their legal rights were, and what they could do. Everyone would go to a different neighborhood. For example, one group would go to the Kazım Karabekir neighborhood, another to İnkılap, another to İstiklal, and one to Dudullu. That's how we split up. I think we were seven or eight groups.

Then we would give Pinar the feedback we were receiving. We often visited WWHR's small office. But we received the training ÜKM; Pinar would come and hold the training session. How could we become leaders, what could we say, what could we do, how would we approach women, how would we gather people? She showed us the way. It was difficult, but it wasn't that difficult. We finally got people to accept us and went into their homes. Eight or ten women would be there, and we would tell them, and they would listen to us very carefully.

This was very novel to us as well. We would go there and did not know who we would encounter. Anyway, we established our groups. Then we would be in one house one week and another the next. We talked to many women. They would ask us questions, and we would respond. We were at one house one day and another the following week. We talked to many women. We would invite them to our association. "You could learn many things there and get a chance to leave the house and make use of your time. We have courses there, all for free." But most importantly, they were learning what their rights were. Even before the civil law was changed, we would learn about rights we already had and tell them.

When we shared with the women what we knew, there were things that they understood and accepted, but also things that they didn't accept. We would give their feedback to WWHR every week. Pinar would take notes. Sometimes, even I did not understand. I would say, "Say this more directly; if I don't understand it, how could we tell the women?" In many instances like this, things went back and forth because we had jumped into a huge project without knowing anything.

We would gather a maximum of eight women at each house visit. It was not 20 or 30 people. Since each week it was a different group of women, we repeated everything from beginning to end. We talked about domestic finances and their home life. We talked about giving birth and even went into their bedroom, so to speak. "We were all subjected to violence, and we didn't even know. We were thrilled that our husbands were not beating us," was part of the feedback. We went into neighborhoods primarily inhabited by families of Kurdish origin, where lots of people did not speak Turkish, and I was accepted even in those neighborhoods. As I was a pharmacist, a shopkeeper, I had dealt with all sorts of people. So



"Now Women Know More," *Pazartesi*, September, 1996.

they were never shy with me. We would tell them that we were an association, were open to all women, and did belong to political party A, party B, and Party C. We said, "Whoever comes to the association leaves their political identity outside; that's how they can enter."

We would talk about violence. We talked about what constitutes psychological abuse, physical violence, and economic violence. Most women were not aware that they were being subjected to abuse. But most were subjected to violence. Some were suffering from economic violence, and some from psychological abuse. A woman said, "When I was a newlywed, I went to my mother's house one day. My husband came home, took down all the curtains, and soaked them in water inside the tub." I asked him why. He said, "To punish me. I would have to wash and iron them because I had visited my own mother. Now I understand that my husband subjected me to psychological violence." Many had suffered from physical violence. They didn't know what to do. We tried to support them.

I went into neighborhoods and streets I had never known; I knocked on doors. I was never timid about this. I always said that I would be thrilled if we benefited one woman. If one woman had become more aware and realized things and could then take action, we would have achieved so much—even a single woman.

I always had tremendous respect for WWHR. They achieved so much by finding the women, the smaller associations, or the women to reach out to. We also vastly benefited from them. I think we helped them as well. I believe that we achieved great things together. Pinar was the first to tell us about global women's movements and what happened in India and Afghanistan. We know about these movements thanks to her. She facilitated such encounters.

Many women who came to the association became business owners. Some started making Turkish dumplings at home and selling them. Some set up a pen manufacturing workshop. Some worked in childcare. When we helped those women a little bit economically, we also empowered them. They contributed to their home budget. Men say, “What do women do at home? They don’t do any work.” Pinar would tell us if you iron, it costs this much; if you cook, if you clean, it costs this much; in other words, her monthly salary is ten times her husband’s. This is how much it would cost if they paid for those services, etc. When we told these to the women, they would say, “Oh, it’s true!” They started to become more aware. So, when their husbands said, “I work. What are you doing at home, lying around all day?” they started to object, saying, “What do you mean, what do you do? Do I sit around all day? Let’s see how much you would pay for this work that I do. Your salary is not enough to pay for all of it.” They would come and tell us, “I said this, I did that...”

Maybe our program with WWHR ended, but our work together continued for years. But then we started to have some financial difficulties. We didn’t go to anyone for help. I said, “I’ll add my pharmacist friends to the association. I’ll add a few people, at least a dozen pharmacists. Let’s cook at home.” Pharmacists always need lunch. We cooked the food in our homes, brought it to the association, and set up tables there. We would offer the women three or four different dishes for 10 liras or 5 liras as long as they came there. We made up the rest from our own pockets to just pay our rent. Our only concern was the rent. If someone had paid our rent, we would stay open forever. We did everything ourselves. We just kept going for 20 years. Finally, when my mother and father got sick, I had to be there for them, and we had to close the association. I was devastated, as if I had lost a child. I put in so much effort... But I made an impact on others. And they impacted me, too. I gained a lot.

ACTION-RESEARCH

İpek (İlkkaracan)

I think it was a very bold undertaking, our action-research. I probably wouldn’t be as courageous today. When you are younger and less experienced, you are more courageous and fearless. It is a very labor-intensive process, but it is worth the effort. Beyond merely academic research and a publication geared toward academics alone, action-research basically means including the research subjects in the process as its active practitioners, enabling them to have a say in determining the research framework, thus developing the analytical framework together and empowering the women in this process as the agents of the research. It is very different from merely extracting information from them and analyzing it. What is the regular practice today? You contract a research company. You say, “Conduct a survey with this many women; ask these questions.” They do that and give you the data. You analyze and publish that as an article or a report. You do not even know if the results of that research ever reach the women who provided you with the information. There is actually no exchange between them and the research team. Whereas in action-research, what did we do? We



"Honor as the pretext of violence," *Cumhuriyet*, 6 December 1996.

did not work with a survey company or pollster. Our survey in Istanbul was conducted by grassroots women’s groups, the women we trained, ÜKM members. ÜKM was anyways one of the first independent local women’s organizations in Istanbul. We had also started the pilot implementations of HREP in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia. Grassroots groups of women from different cities had begun to emerge there as well. So, we took the East and Southeast research to them. We said, “We’re doing the training, plus there is this research. Would you like to do it with us?” They said yes. We explained the research framework in our mind, showed them our draft survey, and asked them, “What do you think?” and they gave their feedback. We finalized the research framework with them and went into the field with these friends.

Naturally, it is a completely different thing for a local woman who has been through the women’s consciousness raising process to conduct the survey as opposed to a complete stranger knocking on your door and saying, “Ma’am, I have a few questions for you, would you spare me an hour of your time?” Plus, the women who participated in the research were told, “We have such and such get-togethers, this training, why don’t you come on over.” Looking back, I see that setting out to do this as action-research already in ’96-97 was actually a very original, apt, and brave undertaking. But, of course, also very arduous.

LLPW TRAINER MANUAL AND PILOT IMPLEMENTATIONS

İpek (İlkkaracan)

In 1996–97, we started traveling to Diyarbakır for the East and Southeast research. At the time, Gülşah (Seral) had joined us. Gülşah, Karın, Pınar and I... The initial name of the program was the Women’s Human Rights and Legal Literacy Program with Women (LLPW). We were structuring it through a legal literacy perspective. Filiz (Kerestecioğlu) also joined us as a feminist lawyer. And Ferhan (Özenen), a psychologist; was providing supervision to the trainers. With this group, we were writing the drafts of each fascicule. For instance, the

legal section was written mostly by Filiz, and I would edit it, make additions. The section on violence was written by Pınar and Karin, while Gülşah was editing, suggesting additions, cuts, revisions. As such, we divided up the sections according to our fields of expertise. On the weekends, I would go to the East and Southeast. I left the office on Fridays and flew to Diyarbakır. The entire team, coming from Urfa and Antep, who participated in the training and also conducted the research, met up in Diyarbakır. We did the trainer training (ToT) on Saturday and Sunday from morning till night; usually covering two modules. I handed out the fascicules of the relevant modules. So, we first implemented the training with the trainers, that is to say, the group facilitators. There, they made suggestions: “This exercise went well. This story as a narrative example was spot-on. Here this was missing. This part wasn’t understood. Instead of this, the following example can be given...” I would go back on Monday morning with the feedback I received from them and relay the feedback and comments to whoever had written that module. And the team would revise and finalize it. That is how our 300-page *Trainers’ Manual* came to be. The year was ’97.

The first model was as follows: We will give the ToT to women’s organizations, and with our support and supervision, they will conduct the training with their own groups in their own locality, like the neighborhoods of Ümraniye or the different towns of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, and thus we will expand our outreach. But we saw that if you do not have the skills, knowledge, and experience in group work, then you cannot become a trainer merely by completing a 16 session ToT; it may not be enough. “Oh no, we’re doing something wrong!” we said. It had gone well in Ümraniye but we could not ensure its continuity. Surely, Ümraniye and the East and Southeast of those years were also different. I think the gap is somewhat bridged today, but in the late ’90s it was a different matter. We also saw in the Southeast that a program developed for the empowerment of women had the potential of turning into something that could harm the participants. So, we said, “Let’s go to Social Services.” They had community centers and social workers at these centers. Perhaps we could do this training as it should be done. That is how our relationship with the General Directorate of Social Services (GDSS) began in 1998.

Gülşah (Seral)

My first contact with WWHR was in the winter of ’96. It was for a translation. I did not even have a computer back then. I would handwrite the translation then come to WWHR and type it in the computer. I began working at WWHR in ’97; they were doing the Woman and Law research and had started the groundwork of HREP. Pınar had already done the initial needs assessment and the first implementations in Ümraniye and Gülsüyu. If I remember correctly, she had produced a structure, draft texts, and contents for 12 modules. We were in very close contact with ÜKM; we were doing the groups with them. Then İpek undertook the second pilot implementation in the East and Southeast. I had prepared one of the modules, with the support of Karin who is a pedagogue. That was emotionally very good for me. Of course, so was the entire program but the part I wrote always had a special place, the module on Gender Sensitive Parenting and the Rights of the Child.

“We would write the draft of each module as a team. Then, we would go to Diyarbakır, meet with women there from the region, Urfa, Antep and conduct the session. Women made suggestions, “this was spot-on, this was missing...” Then we could come back with the feedback and make the revisions, this is how our 300-page Trainers’ Manual eventually came to be.”

İpek (İlkkaracan)

We implemented that module for the first time in Diyarbakır. I remember having a very hard time in the first meeting when women shared very intense, very sad experiences. But it was also very exciting. You design something in your mind, put your heads together, deliberate on how it would work, whether to say this or that... And then you implement it. It was a module that we based on the needs assessment and the question of “How should we raise our children?” But fifty people can convey such a subject in fifty different ways. Are the things we selected, the practices, exercises, discussion points appropriate or not? It was very exciting also in terms of observing all these. I must have spent at least the first hour of that four-hour session red as a beet. On the other hand, both for this session and the overall implementation I began to think: “Such subjects must be handled well, the group must be held together, including the people who do not speak in the group, also emotionally.” I remember thinking that such knowledge of the field, group facilitation, and certain skills must be supported in other ways as well. Nevertheless, irrespective of how intense and touching the subject might be, sometimes one must only bear witness, which I think has been confirmed time and again over the years. If that woman has managed to be in that group session that day, she has somehow dealt with it one way or another—psychologically—be it in a healthy or unhealthy way. Sometimes it is such an empowering thing to bear witness to the person at that point of her existence, to bear witness within the group environment no less. I was very taken by this.

ADVOCACY AT THE 1997 CEDAW PERIODIC REVIEW

İpek (İlkkaracan)

We also launched our international advocacy efforts from the outset. It was 1997, and the practice of CEDAW shadow reporting was just being institutionalized. For the first time, women's organizations from the relevant countries were invited by the CEDAW Committee to official review sessions where the governments presented their periodic review reports. The NGOs were to present an alternative "Shadow Report" to that government report from their own standpoint. Coincidentally, Turkey was also being reviewed that year. They asked us, "Would you prepare the first shadow report on behalf of Turkey?" So, we embarked on that too. At the time, there were less than a dozen independent women's organizations in Turkey. We decided to organize with them as a coordination group and said, "Let's not present this only as WWHR, join us, let's prepare a report together."

The Platform for the CEDAW Shadow Report of 1997 might be one of the first practices of working as a network in Turkey. We are talking about 30 years ago; this was a new initiative for the CEDAW Committee as well. Following the government delegation's presentation of the official report, the committee members directed questions to the official delegation, informed by the background they received from the NGOs and the shadow report. Naturally, those questions are very important because the committee's general recommendations to the government of Turkey emerge from that discussion. Thus, we have a space to influence those recommendations, which is very empowering. I will never forget those days: We enter the hall for the presentation. The government delegation will present its report. Dear Yakın Ertürk is on the official delegation. Imagine! In '97, Turkey is run by such a government that the official report is already quite feminist. Sometimes I think about our advocacy with the government in the '90s, and I wonder at the change. When you say the history of the organization, it is simultaneously the history of Turkey. It is the history of the public institutions, of the relationship between civil society and public institutions, and the transformation of democracy in Turkey. On the CEDAW Committee there was Feride Acar. In the government delegation, there was Yakın Ertürk. I am not exactly sure if Yeşim Arat was there too, but our government had set up a delegation comprised of feminist academics. Their suggestions of course tallied with ours, they told us, "The shadow report you presented strengthened our hand. We can say, 'It's not us but the women's groups from Turkey who say this. See, the Committee too supports their demands.'" There was such an incredible interaction on that platform.

On our return to Turkey, the General Directorate of Women's Status and Issues (GDWS) called us. They said, "We thank you very much for your contributions. We will publish a book summarizing this entire process; it will feature the government's official report, a summary of the Committee's discussions, and its recommendations. We want to include your shadow report as well." A public institution was calling an independent women's organization and saying that they want to publish their reports together with our shadow report. Our



"Women protest delay in violence law.", *Cumhuriyet*, 21 December 1997.



"Protest against virginity testing"

shadow report revealed the shortcomings of the government report and obviously included criticisms. Despite that, they had no reservations about putting it in an official publication. Today, looking back at these experiences of the late '90s, the extent of regression in the democratization processes of Turkey becomes ever more striking.

CAMPAIGN FOR THE PROTECTION ORDER LAW NO 4320

Pınar (İlkkaracan)

When I came back to Turkey, what I essentially had in mind was to ensure the enactment of a protection order against domestic violence, similar to the effort I had spearheaded in Berlin for the we had passed in Germany.

It was the end of my third year working at the shelter in Berlin. The first year at the shelter, you are astounded by the prevalence and dimensions of the violence that women experience. The second year, you are more active and perhaps can be more helpful. Anyways, in the third year, I almost lost it. Like Sisyphus, you know, say we help 500 women, a thousand new women come, all subjected to violence! We also carried out political actions, but nothing changed. I said, "Let's do something different." I had a hard time convincing the team but finally they said, "Ok, go research, let's see what we can do." I started researching the measures taken around the world. But it was very difficult back then. You correspond via letters...What's happening in Brazil, what do they do about this in the States, in India, in other countries? I found Ellen Pence's Domestic Abuse Intervention Program in Minnesota, found her articles. Thus, I discovered the "protection order" which we later adopted also in Turkey. This was great, because at least the woman and children subjected to violence would not have to leave their home. The state would have to protect them.

Of course, it was not something that could be done with our shelter alone, so I strived to bring together the four shelters in Berlin to collaborate towards this goal. That was my first experience in building a platform. We got in contact with the ministry. We were not on good terms with the ministry at the time, because conservative Christian Democrats were in the government. The minister responsible for gender equality was weak, did not know anything about violence against women and thought that she had to stay away from feminist organizations. She did not take kindly to our demand for a "protection order." So, we began to exert pressure through the press and public opinion. Our message was: "Violence against women does not end with giving financial support to the independent shelters founded by feminists, new strategies are required to end violence." We worked very hard, and through pressure, lobbying, and campaigning, we got the protection order enacted in Germany. It took three years; it was not an easy campaign at all. For me it felt very good to be able to pass a law through activism, that such a thing was possible, that this protection order worked well. I returned to Turkey with that feeling. In 1993, the oppression of the '80s was still continuing in Turkey, the state did not want associations or any form of organizing. However, the GDWS was founded in 1990, and Selma Acuner was appointed as its General Director. Everyone

was speaking very highly of Selma. On a visit to Ankara, we made an appointment with her as well. But when we got to her office, she was packing up, Işıl Saygın had fired her that morning. What Selma had done was an incredible thing, very hard to come by in Turkey. The then minister Işıl Saygın had given an interview on the importance of virginity, defending the value judgments about virginity in Turkey. And Selma, as the General Director of GDWS, had given an interview criticizing this and explaining the taboos on this subject. And Işıl Saygın had fired her. Anyways, we sat and talked. Selma is truly, wholeheartedly a feminist. That gave me a lot of hope: so, it is possible, there can be a feminist General Director of GDWS in Turkey.

Then in 1996, we sent our book on domestic violence *The Myth of a Warm Home* to the then General Director of GDWS, Narinç Ataman—also a feminist from the Foundation for Women's Solidarity and the shelter—and asked for an appointment. I wrote her a letter saying, "Would you please read the section on international strategies, let's please pass the protection order law in Turkey." When I got there, she greeted me enthusiastically. That is how the law no 4320 advocacy process began.

Narinç being a member of the Foundation for Women's Solidarity (Kadın Dayanışma Vakfı) was a wonderful coincidence, she always backed us up. Işıl Saygın was not too cooperative at first, there was the coalition government with the [conservative Islamic] Welfare Party at the time. After Narinç convinced Saygın and started the work and the draft law came to the parliament, a group of women began to hold demonstrations in Istanbul. We were conducting the coordination with the directorate, the negotiations at the Parliament, and the press campaign. Making sure to highlight GDWS in our communications with the press, we issued statements in support of them. The women's movement did not have much pull back then, to the contrary, the press and the public opinion were hostile toward feminism and the feminist organizations. The Welfare Party opposed the law with vigor, there were [liberal conservative party] ANAP members who also opposed it, but they hid behind the Welfare Party. Nevertheless, during that period, whichever Welfare MP or group deputy chair we asked, we were immediately given an appointment. Later on, [the current governing party] AKP did not grant us audience for months.

This is what I always heard from Welfare: "Ms. Pınar, you are well-intentioned, but this law will break the families apart. You cannot see that. Plus, such a law does not comply with our religion." Very fatherly, as if I was a little girl trying to do good but cannot recognize certain things, whereas they do. We had no trouble getting appointments from [conservative, nationalist party] MHP as well. Their discourse was: "You cannot see the harms of this law. This will dynamite the basis of the Turkish people; families will fall apart."

But our connection, constant communication with GDWS was very important. We lobbied in the true sense of the word and carried out a press campaign. With Narinç's influence, the women's ministry too began to back the law. One way or another, at the end of a two-year campaign, the Law no 4320 was adopted in Turkey. We had prepared its draft based on the law in Germany, but of course, they truncated it more and more, and it was not

enacted exactly as we wanted. I objected to the extraction of certain things like the exclusion of divorced or unmarried women from the scope of the law, which were very crucial, and the alteration of its name from “Law to Protect Women” to “Law to Protect the Family.” Nevertheless, given the conditions of the time, it was a miracle for the protection order to be legislated by a coalition government with Welfare and MHP in its ranks.

ipek (İlkkaracan)

Here is one of our favorite anecdotes from the Protection Order Law Campaign: Members of Erbakan’s Welfare Party raise their objections in the parliamentary commission saying, “A law that interferes with such domestic issues does not comply with our traditions!” We write to WLUML asking, “The conservative party here says the protection order law does not comply with Islam. Do any of you have a protection order law?” We find out that Malaysia has one. At the time Erbakan is constantly pointing at Malaysia as an exemplary economic model: “We will be like Malaysia. Turkey will develop like Malaysia.” It is constantly about Malaysia! Then it turns out that Malaysia has a protection order law. We ask our colleagues, “Can you send us a short translation, a summary of the law asap?” They do. We give it to our allies—some MPs, some experts—who enter the parliamentary commission discussions. And Welfare’s entire argument collapsed then and there. Plus, a women’s organization from Italy called us and said, “We’ve been doing advocacy for years to pass the protection order law in Italy. How did you pull it off in Turkey?” That too was a proud moment.

Before WWHR, violence was not an area I specifically worked on as a feminist. Therefore, the advocacy process for the protection order law was an important learning process for me as well. Friends on our team and at Purple Roof had explained it as follows: Right now, when a woman is subjected to violence by her husband, there is only one thing she can do in terms of the law, to file a criminal complaint. Whether you are battered by a stranger on the street or by your husband at home, it is treated under the same article and punished by imprisonment. Within the current dynamic of economic dependency, the imprisonment of a man who thus loses his job is synonymous with condemning the woman and her children to poverty. First, many women would not want that. Second, there is the social pressure. You become “the woman who put her husband in jail.” People say, “What now, he flicked you, and you sent him to jail?” Women want to use this option only in the direst circumstances. Whereas this protection order is, I think, a social-legal innovation. It is quintessential to human nature, a sort of ergonomic law. In order to protect the woman faced with violence, the violent spouse is told, “I punish you not with jail but a restraining order, you will stay away from the home.” There, the woman takes a breather, the man is given a very serious message. The lawmaker and the law enforcement officers tell him, “You cannot do this. If you act this way, we will not let you go home or near your family.” But he does not go to jail, keeps his job. If needed, the woman may be given an alimony. She does not become the woman who put her husband in jail either. At worst, you become the woman who sent her husband packing because he hit her. These are very different things.



"Women's rights training at Gazi", *Milliyet*, 6 April 1999

COLLABORATION WITH SOCIAL SERVICES: INSTITUTIONALIZING LLPW

Pınar (İlkkaracan)

I know Professor Sevda Bekman from Boğaziçi, a cofounder of AÇEV. She told me, “A very progressive person, Bülent İlik, is going to be appointed as head of the General Directorate of Social Services (GDSS). He aims to establish community centers in Turkey.” Back then, there was no such concept in Turkey, later I find out that all across the world, it is mostly women who frequent the community centers. A light bulb went off in my head, our program is perfect for the community centers. They need such a program, and it is a great chance for us to realize our goal of facilitating grassroots women’s organizing. Through GDSS will have a space to conduct our groups and we will reach the women. By doing the ToT with social workers, we will enable them to support the organizing as well. So off we went to GDSS with our training manual in our hand; it was 1998.

I began to tell him about the program: “We developed this program, it’s called Women’s Human Rights, it has a 250-page manual, we worked very meticulously on it. You, too, are doing a wonderful job; the community centers are extremely important. I think we have the



HREP Trainer Training, 2000

very program you need.” Mr. Bülent says, “All these are true, let me see the book.” There are two modules of sexuality training in the manual. It is unheard of at that time. That you will go to the state and say, “women’s sexuality, vagina, orgasm, sexual rights...”! It is out of the question. We cannot give him the manual. I say, “Let me first get your opinion.” He again says, “Let me have the book.” Then I somehow felt we could be frank and said, “Mr. Bülent, I will give you the manual, but I have a request, if you touch a single word in the book, we cannot do this program with you because it is a holistic program, if one word is extracted something will be left out and we won’t be able to reach our goal.” He smiled and said, “Let me have the book Ms. Pınar.” He came to the sexuality section, smiled again, and said, “Now I understand why you wouldn’t give me this book. But in fact, you’re right on the spot. I myself worked in Anatolia for a long time. I know, I also worked with women. They have a tremendous need for such a thing. I approve it as it is.” There were such people back then. Narınc Ataman, Bülent İlik, Selma Acuner... They were spinning that entire wheel of state with great effort amidst privations.

We immediately went to Ankara to conduct the first trainer training. Women social workers from various cities had come. The logic of the training requires everyone to take each other into their confidence, so it is a closed group. But there were also three people from the General Directorate who had come to keep an eye on us. Perhaps Mr. Bülent was trying to make sure we did not do anything untoward. Perhaps it was also to introduce the program to the department heads. One of them was antsy. We tried to explain that

“As we began collaborating with social services, the program gradually found its home. Social workers already have a background in group facilitation and working on the local level. And if they are also interested in gender issues, this is an ideal combination for the implementation of the program. Thus, magnificently, HREP began to be implemented in about 15 cities and spread rapidly.”

(İpek İlkcaracan)

it is a closed group, but she insisted, “I will listen to everything!” I should say this woman later became a feminist and supported us a lot. In fact, the entire GDSS was transformed. Everyone embraced the program and acted like a part of it for years. I am grateful to all of them. Things changed a lot after AKP came to power. But the GDSS and the trainers defended HREP, they devised intricate strategies to continue the program all the way until the community centers were shut down.

On the other hand, women’s organizations started to spring up one after another. HREP contributed the emergence of many feminist women’s organizations ranging from Çanakkale ELDER to Van Women’s Association (VAKAD). Just like we had imagined it would.

ipek (ilkcaracan)

When we met Mr. Bülent and said, “We want to implement this program in your community centers,” he grasped our intention immediately. He already had field experience, knew the logic of social services, and gave weight to the issue of gender. With such a background, he understood what we were talking about from the outset. When he looked at the manual, he said, “I cannot believe it. This is exactly what we were looking for. Let’s sign a partnership protocol and start right away.” At the time, GDSS was opening these community

centers and receiving a flood of applications from women; the social workers were swamped. They received so many individual applications that they had no time but to give counseling to women. Everything happened in the wink of an eye. That protocol was signed, then the first ToT in the heat of August in 1998... Pınar, Gülşah, Karin, and I went to Ankara to give the 15-day long training, the first trainer training within the scope of the protocol.

The social workers who received the ToT, then went back to their respective cities and began to implement the training in the field. The program thus gradually found its home. GDSS social workers already have a very significant formation in conducting group work and working in the field on the local level. On top of that, if a social worker is volunteering to participate in the HREP Trainer Training that means she is interested in gender issues and women's problems. This is an ideal combination for the proper implementation of the program.

Then, magnificently, HREP began to be implemented in about 15 cities and spread rapidly. Before long, it reached about 25 cities. In 2002, local organizations founded by HREP participants like YAKAKOP and ELDER said, "We too want to implement the program." Thus, over time, women organized at the grassroots also began to implement HREP. If you asked me what I am most proud of having done in my life, I would first say HREP.

Nigar (Etizer Karacık)

I am a social worker who met WWHR at a very young age, and fortunately so. I worked in the field from the community centers' initial founding stages until they were shut down. In that sense, I am very lucky because that was an incredible experience.

At my trainer training, İpek, Pınar, and Gülşah were there, supported by Karin. They are wonderful women. You can tell right away. It is a team that builds a more equal relationship from a very kind, knowledgeable, professional position. Plus, they employ social work principles. I was most struck by that. I saw it right away, understood what they were doing. I thought, "All right then, we are on a par with these women and together we will do something for the women of this country." They made us feel this so beautifully, that sense of togetherness, that everyone's idea is invaluable... Plus, the program was so apt, almost tailor-made. It was a ready-made program for the community centers. I immediately wanted it to become a routine part of the community center. Such a carefully, thoroughly developed program. Throughout the entire implementation as well, there were no problems with its design or content. How could you put so much thought and effort into it? How could you be so thorough?

I remember the games in the training. We were always cautious when sharing something personal. We were doing this training in a hall within a state institution. What if the word gets around! I was telling something private about myself, or another friend was, but we were worried about its confidentiality, what if it is heard by the higher-ups? The WWHR team kept saying that confidentiality is very important, that they would take utmost care of it, and they also showed it with their actions. But they too were worried about how they would ensure it.

For example, I remember Gülşah getting up time and again to close the door. Like a guard... I remember very well all the details of how they would come into the hall before any of us and check it thoroughly for our safety and comfort, even checking the chairs to make sure their legs were sturdy. Plus, the magical part for me is that this group spirit has lived on since 1998.

After the ToT a dream took shape in my mind: The sooner I start this work in the field with as many women as possible, the larger our community in Çanakkale will be. Soon as I returned from the training, I opened eight groups, which is incredible because HREP groups are very intense, it's a heavy workload. There were 25 women in each group, one group would come in the morning and the other in the afternoon. But I told myself, "You never know, we are collaborating with the state; what if tomorrow they say, 'No, we're not doing this anymore,' let me get this done now, train at least 200 women, and then enable them to organize on their own. Then this work can go on in the civilian front with or without me." Those 200 women were always the pioneers in Çanakkale until the community centers were closed down. I sometimes marvel at my level of concern. But this collaboration with the state ran smoothly for years. Frankly, I appreciate this too. Both WWHR and GDSS, the administrators, all of us truly committed to the program. We created a wonderful example of State-NGO collaboration in this country. I kept opening groups until the year the protocol ended. I ended up doing HREP with over a thousand women. This is a great achievement for me, an incredible professional feat.

I think that being a participant before becoming a trainer is integral to the program. You should first inspect the beam in your eye... See yourself, take a look, where do you stand? It is extremely important to first be a participant. When you become a trainer, you should be able to more or less identify with what the women might be feeling. Learning the ropes, the language, how to behave... When we were participants, we copied the trainers' behaviors to a tee. It was a master-apprentice relationship. This part was very important. Because it was designed so beautifully, down to the minutest detail of what you will say or do... The information was constantly updated. Whenever something new came up it was immediately relayed to us, which truly eased our work. But despite the protocol with the state and the fact that we are sent on assignment, it is unfortunately not so easy to explain it to the administrators in the field. You are told, for instance, "Why, no need to do that program, do this instead." It has been an endless battle. So, we must not leave it up to their intentions, it must definitely have a foothold in the civil society so that if things go sour on this side, it can continue on the other side.

THE 1999 EARTHQUAKE

Zelal (Ayman)

The earthquake affected us all. We talked with the women, and we all went to the field. That is when we established the Women's Solidarity Foundation (KADAV) in İzmit. WWHR also worked there. As KADAV we first built a tent, then we offered income-generating workshops, vocational training courses, and counseling support against violence... This and similar projects were done also by WWHR and other women's organizations as well. KADAV's purpose of foundation was to support women in disasters so that was our primary work. Later we always kept in touch with WWHR. For instance, we brought three women from KADAV working on the field into the HREP network of trainers. It was beautiful to have feminist organizations side by side, always exchanging and sharing, without discriminating against anybody.

Gülşah (Seral)

When we understood the severity of the situation, perhaps on the second day after the earthquake, we decided to put our tasks on hold for at least a month and work for the earthquake zone. Pages and pages of lists of needs were coming in. Meanwhile, Dicle (Koğacıoğlu) was on the field. We were proceeding with the news we got from her and organizing the delivery of the relief materials sent from all across Turkey. Everyone was involved in the process. Few people had email of course, so most things were done over the phone.

Meanwhile, we were talking about what we could do. We have to go to the field; we have to see for ourselves. We have a HREP protocol with GDSS, but it is very new. We thought about using the collected money to establish something like a rehabilitation center. We decided to do this in collaboration with GDSS Kocaeli Provincial Directorate. We met with them, a site was identified, it was quite big. We decided to put up a large tent on that site. We also received three small tent donations. I remember being very tired emotionally during those first weeks. One day on the phone, I was trying to find body bags for example. Hearing that the ice-skating rink in Kocaeli was used as a morgue froze my blood. When we were setting up the tents in İzmit, the aftershocks were still continuing, as the ground shook, it was very strange to feel that tremor rise from my legs up my body. It was an environment where one could not feel safe in any shape or form. Our center was set up right by the tent city. I went there once a week for a year to be with the women. We distributed the booklets, talked about our rights; meanwhile, with Pınar, we discussed what can be done in such situations after natural disasters, and prepared a brochure. Pınar and Karin also worked with the children.

A FEMINIST APPROACH IN THE FIELD

Gülşah (Seral)

It is probably the combination of numerous factors that have made it possible for HREP to be sustainable for almost 30 years. The most fundamental one, I think, is the needs assessment that underlies the program. Not only the group facilitators but the participants also make a great effort and contribute to it. I think that the approach at the core of the program, that is, "I hear you, I am ready to hear you, let us together hear one another and learn from each other," and the reflection of this feminist ideology in the field has been crucial for its sustainability. Another enabling factor is WWHR's capacity as an association—because it's no easy feat to conduct this type of program. There is the logistics, the trainer training, the field implementation, the supervision, and of course we have a relationship with all the trainers. The fact that we still live in a very patriarchal society is actually another factor that enables the continuity of HREP. I wish we did not need such a program anymore. But we are not there yet. So, thankfully there is HREP.

As a team, like all feminists, even if we get tired, guess we are also a bit stubborn in terms of keeping up the struggle. Especially at the start, WWHR's effort to bridge the international women's movement and the local women's movement was very important. We said, "from the local to the global, from the global to the local." From the outset, we attached great importance to bringing an issue voiced in a district of some remote town to an international meeting and simultaneously bringing back an issue discussed at an international meeting, sharing and spreading this information through HREP, later for example via the *Purple Newsletter* or now our social media accounts, and before the advent of mass media by using other means such as our regular letters to the trainers. Because information is empowering. Not everyone has to speak English, French or German in this country. I think the right to access information is sacred. Having UN level information discussed in local HREP groups is perhaps a more systematized version of this. Having this information shared on social media accounts today is perhaps a more updated version.

I am very fortunate to have been at WWHR! First of all, thanks to HREP, I was allowed to touch the lives of many women and, to a small extent even men, from all walks of life. I see this as a tremendous blessing. My friends in our team and the feminist perspective have greatly influenced who I am today. I am still constantly learning things. My horizon is further expanding, and my teammates are truly my companions.

2000-2009

2000

Women participating in LLWP in Çanakkale, who had initiated their organizing efforts in 1998 by opening a marketplace and establishing a municipal women's council, founded the Çanakkale Association to Promote Women's Handicraft and Women's Counselling Center (ELDER) and included in their bylaw the participation in LLWP as a requirement for membership. This first local NGO emerging from the program continues to be an active part of the national women's movement today.

WWHR played a key role in both the preparations for the **23rd Special Session of the UN General Assembly (Beijing+5) and advocacy during the special session.** We established and coordinated the national Equality Watch Platform. Through intensive lobbying, many of our priority issues, such as the recognition of "honor" crimes, forced and early marriages, and marital rape as women's human rights violations were included in the Outcome Document. Another important gain was securing the inclusion of women from our platform in the official government delegation, which became standard practice in the following years and led to Turkey's adoption of a progressive stance in UN processes until the government's hostile approach to feminist NGOs became more pronounced in the 2010s.


Upon our return from Beijing+5, we started working on the dissemination of information on the process and its outcomes. The national conference titled **The Repercussions of International Gender Politics in Turkey: The State, Civil Society, Democratization during the Beijing+5 Process** was organized in collaboration with Anakültür. Women's NGOs, academicians, and state officials, including the Ministry of Women and the Family, participated in the meeting, which called for state accountability in the implementation of Beijing+5 decisions.

The reader *Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies* (Pinar İkkaracan, ed.), which was the first compilation on the subject, was published. Bringing together diverse genres such as theoretical articles, research, literature, personal accounts, and cartoons, the anthology showed that the taboos, discriminatory oppressive practices, legislation, and social norms around sexuality in Muslim societies were as diverse as they were similar and that "the sexual oppression of Muslim women is not the result of the 'Islamic' vision of sexuality, but a combination of political, social, and economic inequalities throughout the ages." The book was also published in Turkish in 2003 and in Arabic in 2005.

The second booklet of the *We Have Rights!* series, *We Have Sexual Rights!* was published. Offering a positive approach to all sexual rights, including the right to sexual pleasure, the booklet contains the international human rights perspective and does not reduce women's sexuality to reproduction.

Turkey

Building Feminist Solidarity:



Women Hold Conference on Sexuality And Social Change

Nineteen women, academics, representatives of nongovernmental organizations and international organizations, from Algeria, Egypt, France, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen gathered in Istanbul, Turkey, between September 28 and 30, 2001 for a Conference on Women, Sexuality and Social Change in the Middle East and the Mediterranean, organized by Women for Women's Human Rights—(WWHR) New Ways.

Participants confronted some of the pressing issues that directly affect the lives of women in this region, such as: links between sexuality and the politics of power; virginity; laws and sexuality; sexual harassment; violence against women; honor crimes; female genital mutilation; sexual norms; values and behaviors of men and women; freedom of mobility; reproductive and sexual health and human rights; desire and pleasure; political movements and sexuality.

Participants called for the recognition of the right of individuals, women and men, to enjoy a sexual life in accordance with their values and with respect for others. This entails not only the

off our backs
page 18 march-april 2002

16 PAZARTESİ, 30 Nisan 2001

Hürriyet

Dağ eylemine jandarma engeli

Medeni Kanun'daki 'paylaşılabilir mal ayrılığı'na karşı çıkan 100 kadının Beydağları'ndaki eylemini jandarma engelledi, izinsiz gösteri yapamayan kadınlar, sonunda 50 jandarma gözetiminde piknik yaptılar.




Bildiriyi okuyamayınca e-mail yolladılar
Kadınlar basın bülteni okumaları engellendi diye bir yıl beklediler. Devletin bülteniyle Cumhuriyet'ten, Başbakan, Adalet Komisyonu Başkanı ve medenî kanunla ilgili çıkan ANİP'li bültenlere karşı Beydağları'na bildiri e-mail ile gönderdiler.

NTALYA'da sivil toplum örgütleri ve sivil partiler bir araya gelip kadın Medeni Kanun'da 'ortak mal' yerine 'paylaşılabilir mal' ayrılığı'na karşı gösteri düzenledi. 100 kadının Beydağları'ndaki eylemini jandarma engelledi. 30 Nisan'da Antalya'dan yola çıkan, 3 ayı aşkın süre Beydağları'na giderek 2 bin metre yükseklikteki Bektaşlı Kayak Merkezi'ne ulaştı. Kadınlar buradan 50 metre yükseklikte bulunan Bakırtepe'ye çıkarak bildiri okudular. Ancak 200 metre kadar yürüyüş yaptıkları, Antalya İl Jandarma Komutanlığı'na bağlı jandarma üni hareket etti. Gözetim izni olmadan girişimleriyle engel oldu. Bir grup kadın elindeki 'Medeni Kanun'un 511'inci maddesi, kadınların da doğurulan biter, 'Yaşamın kadın dayanışması' yazan dövizlerle Bakırtepe'nin eteklerine kadar geldi. Bu sırada kadın medenî kanun Hürriyet Karabekir, basın bülteni okumak istedi. Jandarması, "Eyleminizi izlemeye engel oldu. Basın açıklaması ya pazartesi" diyerek bildirinin okunmasını engel oldu. Karabekir, "Daha da mi sesimizi kesmek istiyoruz" diyerek tepki gösterdi. Jandarmalar, Karabekir'in elindeki basın bülteni okumaya izin vermediler. Kadınlar bu sırada, medenî kanunun 511'inci maddesini okumaya başladılar. Bu sırada kadınlar 50 jandarma ile karşılaşarak piknik yaptılar. Basın açıklaması ya pazartesi" diyerek bildirinin okunmasını engel oldu.

Almanya DİHK / ANKARA, DHA

"Gendermaire Stop the Mountain Demonstration", Hürriyet, 30 April 2001

- Single parents were given the right to adopt a child.
- The default matrimonial property regime became the joint ownership of acquired property. It was the most controversial issue during the campaign. The initial draft, which foresaw an equal division of all property acquired during marriage, was met with fierce resistance from the nationalist and conservative parties. As a result of the intensive campaign, the joint property regime that recognizes the economic value of women's invisible labor was accepted. Eventually, joint property regime was accepted, yet at the last minute, the opposition parties added a clause to make this new regime applicable only to property acquired after the new Civil Code entered into force.

Immediately after the adoption of the new Civil Code, WWHR held the first local training on the reformed law in collaboration with EL-DER in Çanakkale. This conference, also attended by local government officials, aimed not only to inform women about their new rights but also to pressure state officials at the local level to take action to guarantee its implementation.

Women, Sexuality and Social Change in the Middle East and the Mediterranean Symposium brought together activists and academicians working on sexuality and sexual rights in the Middle East and Maghreb (MENA). This landmark meeting included participants from Algeria, Egypt, France, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen. It was also significant in that it was held immediately following 9/11 amidst a very militarist and anti-Islamic global context and a constraining atmosphere in the region. The press statement issued at the end of the meeting affirmed that the right to sexual life "entails

not only the right to determine one's sexual behavior, but also the right to seek pleasure," and noted that "sexuality is not a personal and private issue but is linked to systems of power and domination in society." Delivered in Turkish, English, and Arabic, the statement was published in newspapers and journals such as *Reproductive Health Matters*. The symposium also laid the foundations of the solidarity and advocacy network, the **Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR)**.

2002

The 4th HREP ToT was organized, also including participants from local women's NGOs. Women's Solidarity Foundation (KADAV), Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality Center for Research and Application on Women's Issues (DIKASUM), Çanakkale ELDER, and Van YAKA-KOOP became HREP organizational partners. The number of HREP trainers increased to 95 while the program outreach expanded to 28 cities.

WWHR launched the **Campaign for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code from a Gender Perspective** by establishing a women's working group (WG). Aiming to proactively develop a comprehensive overview of recommendations to the Draft Law from a gender perspective, we organized monthly WG meetings with feminist lawyers, academicians, and NGO representatives from all regions of Turkey. The group concluded that the patriarchal discriminatory approach of the penal code needed to be reformed holistically to safeguard women's sexual, bodily, and reproductive rights.

When the conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in the 2002 elections, the WG reevaluated its strategies and initiated a long-term advocacy campaign with the foresight that our demands would be met with resistance from the new government. The WG drafted and disseminated a detailed proposal with demands for the necessary amendments formulated word by word, organized a conference on gender and the penal code, and held press conferences.

The continued campaign against virginity testing resulted in the cancellation of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education statute clauses that allowed virginity testing in high schools. The phrase "determining the chastity" used to legitimize virginity testing and define girls' sexuality through so called morality was also removed from the statutes.

WWHR co-organized the international meeting on **Deconstructing Masculinity and Femininity in the Middle East and Maghreb** in Beirut, Lebanon in collaboration with the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women (LECORVAW). Geared toward strengthening our regional network for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and deconstructing traditional taboos and norms of masculinity and femininity, the meeting built on the outcomes of the Sexuality Symposium. The impact of fundamentalism(s) on the control of women's bodies was identified as a common thread challenging the work around sexuality.

As a result of the advocacy efforts of WWHR in collaboration with the women's movement, **Turkey ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.**

Following the international backlash led by the conservative politics of the Bush administration in alliance with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation countries and the Vatican at the UN, the **5th Asian and Pacific Population Conference to be held in Bangkok** was critical for sexual and bodily health and rights. WWHR acted as a coordination point between the International Sexual and Reproductive Rights Coalition (ISRRC) and the NGOs in Turkey, while lobbying the Turkish government to be included in the official delegation of Turkey. We were not invited to the delegation, yet we managed to work with them for Turkey to adopt a progressive position at the conference. The Plan of Action adopted at the end of the Conference included a commitment to further the SRHR despite the opposition of conservative forces.

2003

HREP Evaluation and Coordination Conference was organized to share the findings of the independent evaluation study of HREP. Conducted on the national scale covering the period from 1995 to 2003, the research revealed that the program succeeded in dispelling the fears and misconceptions around "feminism" and "grassroots organizing" and the major factors contributing to the program's impact were the length and comprehensiveness of the program; the participatory principle; preventive nature of its approach; the integration of global gender equality norms, and collaboration with GDSS. 74% of the participants indicated their decision-making power within the family increased, while 29% joined the workforce. 41% participated in grassroots organizing activities after HREP. 85% of the participants who faced domestic violence were able to stop or reduce the violence.

In line with one of HREP's new objectives to promote institutional change regarding perspectives on gender equality, the program was conducted with policewomen and public health workers.

2003 was a year when grassroots organizing initiatives emerging from HREP gained notable momentum:

- Women in the Gazi district of Istanbul established the *Kybele Women's Cooperative* organizing awareness raising events and opening a restaurant catering to the community.
- EL-DER began to conduct trainings on violence against women (VAW) to the police force and counselling services for victims of domestic violence.
- HREP participants in Van co-organized conferences with the Chamber of Commerce and the Van Bar Association.
- *Istanbul Okmeydanı Purple Paper Recycled Paper Production Atelier* secured a studio space from the municipality, where women began to manufacture and sell their products.
- In Edirne, HREP participants established the *Yıldırım Women's Working Group* and conducted a campaign to support a woman candidate for local elections.

- In Diyarbakır, the *Fatihpaşa Women's Candle Production Group* began to sell their products in a national supermarket chain.
- Participants in İzmir and Samsun mobilized to form associations to work on VAW and support community centers.
- In Sapanca, participants started to assist women survivors of the 1999 earthquake to obtain sustainable housing.
- In Ankara, HREP participants were elected to the board of directors of the *Sincan Community Center Support Association*. They began to provide community trainings on strategies against violence.

The Workshop on Sexual and Bodily Rights as Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa was co-organized by WWHR and the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies. NGO representatives, researchers, and academicians from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, Morocco, Pakistan, Turkey, Pakistan, the USA participated in the workshop, where activism for holistic legislative change especially in penal codes; sexual orientation, and sexual pleasure and desire as a human right were discussed.

The Campaign for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code from a Gender Perspective continued with full momentum. The report on the recommended amendments was revised and disseminated extensively in the parliament. What made the report unique was the comparison of the draft law and our demands, formulated word by word, for over 30 articles. The working group expanded to become the Turkish Penal Code (TPC) Women's Platform including over 40 women's and LGBTQI+ NGOs, who lobbied MPs and government officials and garnered public support through media campaigns.

WWHR co-organized the international high-level conference Dialogue on the Turkish Penal Code, Gender & International Human Rights Law in collaboration with the UN Special Rapporteur on VAW Yakin Ertürk and the Middle East Technical University to break the government's resistance and a national conference on **Grassroots Organizing and the TPC Reform**, bringing together 50 HREP trainers and local organizations. HREP participants and grassroots initiatives in Ankara, Çanakkale, Diyarbakır, Istanbul, and Izmir launched actions, including petitions, demonstrations, action alerts, and press conferences.

2004

HREP was chosen as a "best tactic" in the international project New Tactics in Human Rights coordinated by the Center for Victims of Torture (USA) and the Helsinki Citizens Assembly (Turkey), for being a unique program utilizing institutional and financial support from the government to implement a holistic women's human rights education throughout Turkey. The project identified several factors for the creation and sustainability of the partnership: the success of the pilot program and tested content; the partnership protocol giving WWHR full oversight; the integration of HREP in community center activities so trainers could implement the program as part of their job description.

As of December, **15 independent women's grassroots organizing initiatives** that had emerged from HREP were working in 10 provinces. **Van Women's Association (VAKAD)** was founded, which became the only NGO providing support on VAW in Van for many years until it was closed by a presidential decree in 2016.

WWHR began to organize a series of HREP Network and Regional Grassroots Organization Meetings to facilitate collaborations, joint advocacy efforts, and strategy exchange. ELDER played host to the first meeting for the Western Regions (Marmara and the Aegean) and followed in the next years by one co-organized with VAKAD for the Eastern Region and with trainers in Ankara for the Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, and Black Sea Regions.

WWHR was approached by The Body Shop International to partner in an awareness raising campaign against domestic violence. The Body Shop reached WWHR via the Purple Paper Recycled Paper Production Atelier founded by HREP participants. The campaign aimed to raise public awareness on the issue of domestic violence and also provide financial support to grassroots organizing initiatives emerging from HREP by selling their products.

The new Turkish Penal Code was accepted in the Turkish Parliament on 26 September. As a result of the three-year-long campaign, the new law included more than 30 amendments that constituted a major step towards gender equality and protection of the sexual and bodily rights of women and girls in Turkey. This was ensured through our insistence on a rights-based approach and language to replace the discriminatory perspective of the old law structured around controlling women's sexuality.

The platform's demand to criminalize discrimination based on sexual orientation was not included in the law, even though it was approved in the Sub-Commission. Yet, our persistence for this demand served to generate awareness on LGBTQI+ issues and strengthen ties between the women's and LGBTQI+ movements. Additionally, the government's last-minute proposal to criminalize adultery almost derailed the efforts and brought final negotiations to a halt; however, through the quick and strong advocacy of the women's movement and public outcry, the proposal never made it to the table.

The new Turkish Penal Code:

- States in the first article that the aim of the law is to "protect the rights and freedoms of individuals";
- Presents progressive definitions and higher sentences for sexual crimes;
- Criminalizes marital rape;
- Brings measures to prevent sentence reductions for perpetrators of honor killings;
- Eliminates all references to patriarchal concepts like chastity, honor, morality, shame, or indecent behavior;
- Abolishes the previous discriminations against non-virgin and unmarried women;
- Abolishes provisions granting sentence reductions in rape and abduction cases;
- Criminalizes sexual harassment at the workplace and considers sexual assaults by security forces as aggravated offenses.

An amendment was proposed to change the constitutional equality article. Women's groups advocated for the inclusion of a provision stating that "The State shall take all necessary legislative and institutional measures to achieve de facto equality between women and men. Temporary special measures taken for this purpose shall not constitute discrimination." Despite pressure from women's groups and women MPs of the opposition party, the amendment was passed only to include the provision, "The State is responsible for realizing equality between men and women" without any reference to special measures or positive discrimination. Yet, another gain in the reform process was the amendment of Article 90 to recognize the supremacy of international human rights law over national legislation in matters pertaining to "fundamental rights and freedoms."

The UN Arab Population Forum was the final regional meeting within the scope of ICPD+10, for the review and reaffirmation of the ICPD Plan of Action. WWHR coordinated the participation of CSBR members at the Forum. The coalition issued an NGO statement at the plenary session in Arabic. The statement called on Arab governments to reaffirm ICPD without reservations and take the necessary measures to prevent human rights violations related to sexuality. Endorsed by 30 leading NGOs from the region, the statement was the first of its kind issued in a UN meeting in the Arab region, declaring sexual rights as human rights. The statement addressed previously taboo issues such as discrimination based on sexual orientation, abortion, HIV/AIDS and demanded a rights-based approach in all spheres to promote sexual and reproductive health. The rapporteur of the Forum referred to the statement in the closing session and included it in the Forum outcome report.

The regional meeting on Sexuality and Human Rights in Muslim Societies in South / Southeast Asia organized by WWHR in cooperation with the Women's Health Foundation in Jakarta included 23 participants from Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Turkey. Creating an opportunity for dialogue on pivotal human rights issues related to sexuality and sexual politics, the meeting served to institutionalize CSBR as a bi-regional network of NGOs from the MENA and South and Southeast Asia regions.

2005

The total number of HREP participants reached 4500, including women working in the public sector, such as health professionals, teachers, and lawyers from bar associations.

The TPC Women's Platform, coordinated by WWHR, drafted the CEDAW shadow report and participated in the periodic review. The report focused on the recent and upcoming legislative changes in Turkey pertaining to discrimination against women and gender equality, namely: our remaining demands for the TPC; the effects of the ongoing Public Administration reform process on women; the inclusion of special temporary measures for de facto gender equality in the constitution; the need for an Equality Framework Law; and the amendment of the joint property regime. All the issues raised in our shadow report were included in the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee to Turkey. WWHR also



"Women Storm the Parliament", Posta, 5 May 2004

facilitated the participation of NGO representatives from Ankara, Istanbul, and Van in the Review Session.

WWHR facilitated the participation of CSBR members at the 49th Special Session of the UN CSW on Beijing+10 with the aim of contributing to the international efforts to safeguard SRHR and provide an opportunity to render visible the efforts of activists working on SRHR from our regions, often stigmatized by the international community. With 18 prominent activists from Bangladesh, Egypt, Lebanon, Malaysia, the Philippines, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen, some of whom served on government delegations, network members participated in the international NGO caucuses for SRHR advocacy and the working groups on resolutions. The delegation also delivered an NGO statement, which was highly acclaimed both by governmental and NGO delegations as one of the most progressive statements.

WWHR organized a bi-regional meeting titled Gender, Sexuality and Law Reform in the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia in Istanbul for NGO and intergovernmental agency representatives, experts, and academicians working on issues of gender, sexuality, and law reform on national, regional and international levels. The plenary sessions included case studies of successful campaigns, strategizing for SRHR advocacy, advocacy at the UN level, and contextualized issues of gender, sexuality, and law reform in the region through analyses of emerging trends and discourses. *Gender, Sexuality and the Criminal Laws in the Middle East and North Africa: A comparative study* was also published this year as an advocacy tool and resource, examining the similarities and differences of criminal codes in the region with respect to sexuality. The study provided insight into the tribal, religious, and colonial backgrounds of these laws in relation to honor, adultery, marital rape, homosexuality, sex work, and FGM.



CEDAW Working Group



"Report on Kurdish Women to CEDAW," *Gündem*, 25 January, 2005.

The increased interest and discussion among CSBR members to create spaces to address the contested domain of LGBTQI+ issues both within the network and on the national and international levels culminated in the consultation meeting **titled Inclusive Approaches to Sexuality in Muslim Societies organized in Beirut**. Emerging points included the need for an inclusive approach in addressing sexual rights; the possibility of using different frameworks (i.e. health, personal rights, right to privacy) to advocate for SRHR; and the necessity to build alliances with other movements. The most significant outcome of the meeting was the consensus that rather than adopting a Western discourse, there was a need to create an alternative, innovative discourse from a Southern perspective. Thus, the term **“non-conforming sexualities”** was coined to encompass sexualities that fall outside the heteronormative, patriarchal social constructs of “expected and accepted” sexual behavior. This was suggested as an inclusive definition that can include—in the broadest sense—any person, preference, conduct, which does not conform to the norms of a heteronormative patriarchal society, i.e., women who choose not to get married, women with multiple partners, women who express their sexual desires openly, etc.

2006

Our 12-episode documentary *The Purple Series*, depicting our rights in different spheres and how women changed their lives after participating in HREP, was aired on the national TV news channel NTV. The episodes were conceptualized around HREP modules, including interviews with trainers, participants, feminists and experts, depicting stories of transformation ranging from overcoming violence in the family to participating in local politics, asserting sexual rights to starting businesses. Part of the aim of the series was to counter the dominant discriminatory trend in Turkish television victimizing women and provide an accessible and empowering visual resource. *The Purple Series* was subsequently broadcast on local TV channels in Ankara, Diyarbakır, İzmir, Samsun, Sivas, Van, and Yozgat.

HREP participants founded the Yozgat Women’s Association to Promote Women’s Labor, which continues to work in collaboration with local women’s cooperatives selling produce and women’s handicrafts.

With a group of women’s NGOs, researchers, and academicians working on economic rights, WWHR co-initiated the Women’s Labor and Employment Initiative (KEIG) to promote women’s economic rights and employment. One of its most important advocacy efforts this year was to ensure the representation of women’s NGOs in the Europe – Turkey Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) for its report on women’s employment.

WWHR facilitated the participation of a delegation of CSBR members from Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Tunisia, and Turkey at the UN High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS). In addition to advocacy efforts during negotiations, our delegation organized two panels on “Sexuality and HIV/AIDS in South/Southeast Asia” and “Sexuality Education in Muslim Majority Countries and the Fight against HIV/AIDS.”

Women's Purple Series on TV



The New Anatolian / Istanbul

Today for the first time on Turkish TV you'll be able to see a women's program where women talk about their rights and how they've changed their lives. TNA recently had a chance to preview this new program and the human rights training it is based on. The first part of the 12-week series will be aired today on news channel NTV at 12:30 p.m.

"Purple Series with Women" brings women's remarkable stories of transformation to the TV screen and is a co-production of the Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways Foundation (WWHR) and NTV. The series was realized with contributions by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), SDC and the Body Shop.

At a press conference held this week to promote the new series, Nurdağ Torunca, director of Family, Women and Social Services at the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) and Melem Ağdök spoke of their happiness at having contributed to the program.

As Torunca stressed, unlike other TV shows that portray women as forever crying and oppressed victims, this documentary will feature the stories of women who have claimed their rights to change their lives. The goal of the program is to contribute to the spread of gender equality and human rights awareness in Turkey.

The Purple Series is about women who have learned to exercise their rights in all areas of life ranging from civil rights to violence issues, sexuality to economic rights, and reproductive rights to founding organizations. Renowned artists and writers have also contributed to this documentary by providing opening and closing messages for each episode. Some contributors include Ayşe Kulin, Derya İlyaslı, Em Üstün, Gülşen Ergen, Gül-

riye Sarıel, Hilmiye Koçyığıt, Turkan Soray and Zeynep Oral.

The series is based on the success stories of women who took part in the Women's Human Rights Training Program that has been implemented across Turkey for the past decade. Readers will remember TNA's detailed coverage of this training program as carried out in social centers in cooperation with the WWHR and

see me behind the wheel they said, 'Let's go home and raise the kids,' said Damjan. Now she says that every time she gets her paycheck she brings something home for her kids and tells them, 'Look, your mother worked and bought this for you.' The pleasure of buying things with my own money is unlike anything else, she says.

Zozan Özyüce, who received



SHÇEK. As of last month, over 4,000 women in 36 cities have completed this 16-week-long training course, which has proven to be the most comprehensive and sustainable human rights training program in Turkey. The program has also received international recognition as it was selected as "one of the world's best tactics for the implementation of human rights" by the International Best Tactics Program, which reviews strategies from all around the world.

For once on TV audiences will see strong women who have taken control of their lives. Among the women featured in this documentary is Senay Damjan, a housewife in Çanakkale who decided she wanted to become a bus and then a truck driver and now works for the Çanakkale Municipality. "At first when my male colleagues

her training in Van, got together with her co-trainers to found the Van Women's Association. She recalls the first day they put up their huge banner with the organization's name on it and within minutes a woman appeared at their door. This woman had been used to pay a gambling debt. Since then they have provided legal and psychological counseling for hundreds of women, and for some they found employment. The TV program shows women who established equal and healthy relations with their spouses and family, went back to school, started having a say about their own bodies and sexualities, were elected as militants (local officials), started working outside the home, and organized their own needs, and founded associations and cooperatives.

TNA SPOKE WITH AYZEN ATALAY, NTV'S PRODUCER OF THE PURPLE SERIES

TNA: How and why did NTV agree to make a documentary on women?

ATALAY: I've been doing the program "The Rhythm of Life" on NTV for the past six years. Five years ago I went to Çanakkale to interview women who were taking this training. Though it was a remarkable program, at the time with my reporter mind I thought, "Wow! It make things worse for these women when they realize that they don't have what they're entitled to?" In the news business the general approach is to focus coverage on the problem, as they do in case of helpless or battered women. I decided to show that there are people who work to overcome these problems. That's the standpoint of "Rhythm of Life." On my first visit to Çanakkale I thought it was merely a well-intentioned effort, but a year later when I interviewed the Çanakkale and Gazi Mahallesi (Istanbul) women who took the training I saw there had been a great difference. Standing across from me were women with self-confidence who knew what they wanted to do. In Gazi they had started a business which closed down the following year but this time they were set on opening a kindergarten. Over the years I saw them developing themselves. We don't have social centers everywhere, and not everyone has the chance to go these centers, my family or I don't for example. As a reporter I wondered what it would be like to bring this training to the TV. Evidently the WWHR had this idea as well, so things came together.

TNA: What was the most difficult part in making the show?

ATALAY: It required a different broadcasting style, which was challenging in the "The Rhythm of Life" also. You have to persuade your colleagues that we can hint at ways to solve problems even though news generally focuses on the problems themselves. For instance when reporting about a battered woman we can also give information about relief mechanisms available for these women.

This requires taking a different approach, so most of our problems were dealing with our own colleagues. We had no problems with the training program itself because over the course of 10 years it has become a very well-established and structured program.

TNA: Did you face any problems in shooting the sessions or interviews?

ATALAY: None at all. These women invited us into their lives with great ease. It might sound overly romantic, but it was like they found the cure for a grave disease and they wanted to share it with all afflicted people. They explained such intimate and private things about their families and themselves that actually at some points we stopped and asked them, "Are you sure you want to share this with us, it's going to be shown on TV," and they said, "Please do, so that other people can share and learn too." There was someone from the WWHR with us at all times so the women saw an institution they trusted. After a while they would forget all about the cameras and the cameramen and the interviews turned into conversations where they spilled their hearts out. I personally learned a lot from these women and am indebted to them.

TNA: What did you learn?

ATALAY: İli Sabriye Bilgin—whom you'll see on our program—a 22-year-old illiterate woman, who was deserted by her husband the day she walked out of hospital with her second baby, can put up a successful life struggle where she learns Turkish, English and computers and today both her daughters have their own jobs, then I know that I don't have the luxury of feeling tired or defeated, that I have to get up and continue. As Gülşüm Kanat from the Purple Roof Foundation once told me, "No woman is saved." These women on the program made me realize that there is a solution to all the problems that we as women face whether we're educated or have vocations.



The attack on Lebanon in July 2006 came as a major stumbling block for SRHR and human rights in the region, fueling increasing conservative, militarist, and nationalist ideologies. In response to the war and militarism in the region that would curb progressive spaces, CSBR launched an online publication titled *Of War, Siege, and Lebanon*.

Since its foundation, one of the objectives of CSBR was to support the efforts on the national level to promote sexual, bodily, and reproductive rights, moving forth from the parallels in our legal and socio-political contexts, as well as learning from the diversity in Muslim societies. In this scope, we co-organized two meetings, **the international consultation on Trends in Family Law Reform in Muslim Countries** in Malaysia in collaboration with Sisters in Islam (SIS) and **Women, Sexual Rights and Reproductive Rights: Gains, freedoms, resistances** with Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (ATFD). The former aimed to address the backlash in family law in Malaysia with contributions of religious scholars from Iran and Morocco, offering more progressive interpretations of Islamic law to use in advocacy. The latter, which was the first-ever meeting on sexual rights in Tunisia, was organized under very constraining political circumstances due to the immense state and police pressure and oppression in the country, including refusal to issue visas, blockage of ATFD's bank accounts, and police surveillance. Despite all these obstacles, the conference drew wide interest with over 100 participants and helped devise strategies for campaigns for penal code reform and sexuality education.

2007

The quarterly HREP bulletin, *The Purple Newsletter*, was launched to create mass outreach, networking, and awareness raising. The newsletter, with input from HREP participants, trainers, local women's organizations, and feminists, was conceptualized to increase HREP's visibility and connect HREP participants, grassroots organizations, and the national women's movement.

A new addition to our *We Have Rights!* booklet series on our sexual rights in the reformed penal code was published to increase awareness of our newly acquired rights on the local level.

The institutional partnership protocol with GDSS was renewed for 10 years. This was a milestone for establishing a more sustainable partnership, also thanks to the determined efforts of the trainers and administrators to make the program an integral part of community center services.

Pınar İlkkaracan, and the two organizations she co-founded, WWHR and CSBR, were awarded the Gruber Foundation International Women's Rights Prize for their efforts to reform Turkish laws to advance gender equality and make these laws accessible to women at the grassroots level, instigating advocacy efforts to promote sexual, bodily and reproductive rights in Muslim societies, and working on the international level for the advancement of women's human rights.



Protest Against Erdoğan's Anti-Quota Remarks, 2007

The **CSBR General Assembly / Strategic Planning Meeting** was organized with the participation of 29 members from 10 countries. For the upcoming three years, CSBR identified several priority working areas:

- An international comparative research on sexual and bodily rights in Muslim societies;
- A training on sexuality and sexual rights aiming to solidify a common language on sexual and bodily rights, improve advocacy skills, and build knowledge from a theoretical and practical framework;
- An annual international one-day campaign in respective member countries for the promotion of sexual and bodily rights in Muslim societies;
- Advocacy at international UN and non-UN platforms to increase the visibility of activists in Muslim societies working on sexual rights and health.

Two articles by Pinar İlkkaracan based on her research on the penal code campaign were published in international journals: **Re/forming the Penal Code in Turkey from a Gender Perspective: The Case of a Successful Campaign** and **“How Adultery Almost Derailed Turkey’s Aspiration to Join the European Union?”**

2008

The **6th HREP ToT** was conducted with participants from 18 cities and the program expanded to Giresun, Hatay, and Zonguldak. **Ayvalık Independent Women’s Rights Initiative became an organizational partner of HREP.**

HREP Regional Evaluation, Capacity Building and Planning Meetings were held for the Central Anatolia, Marmara, Mediterranean, Black Sea, East and Southeastern Anatolia Regions throughout 2008-2009 to discuss the program’s sustainability given the emerging challenges such as rising conservatism and regressive changes in the GDSS administration.

WWHR began to explore possible future collaborations with other public institutions. We organized a conference with participants from various state institutions such as ministries of justice, national education, health, employment, the Presidency of Religious Affairs, municipalities, and international agencies. This led to generating interest in the program from the Presidency of Religious Affairs, General Directorate of Employment, and General Directorate of Security Forces; HREP was implemented with all of them in various capacities.

On 8 March, *The Purple Series* was aired on local channels in 13 cities, Amasya, Ankara, Aydın, Balıkesir, Burdur, Denizli, Diyarbakır, Edirne, Kayseri, Mardin, Mersin, Muğla, and Nevşehir.

CSBR organized the first international institute on sexuality and sexual rights in Muslim societies in Malaysia. **The CSBR Sexuality Institute** brought together leading sexual rights activists, academics, and researchers from 14 countries throughout Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The program was designed to cover a holistic curriculum on SRHR in Muslim societies, combining historical, theoretical, and conceptual frameworks of sexuality



1st CSBR Sexuality Institute, Malaysia, 2008

with emerging issues, contemporary discourses, and field experiences. Another unique aspect of the Sexuality Institute was that it introduced feminist readings of Islamic texts. Composed of lectures, discussions, group work and exercises, roundtables, panels, site visits, and film screenings, the Institute sought to provide a comprehensive overview while also engaging participants’ own experiences. Themes of the sessions included **gender and sexualities through theoretical, historical and conceptual frameworks**; sexual diversities and non-conforming sexualities; **body mapping**; sexuality and power; **the evolving definitions of sexual rights**; Sharia and sexuality; **sexual orientation and Islam**; sexual health; **HIV/AIDS, gender and politics**; youth sexuality; **sexuality education**; and sexuality and war. CSBR Sexuality Institutes, which were held until 2017, created a unique space as most participants had to work in isolated and arduous contexts. The opportunity for exchange, scholarship, and advocacy building to collectively counter the dominant religious right-wing discourse claiming sexual and reproductive rights are Western imports that aim at the disintegration of Muslim communities was deemed the most important aspect of the training.

CSBR prioritized participation in international human rights, feminist and academic circles in addition to its UN advocacy since its foundation. In this context, WWHR facilitated the participation of 16 CSBR members at the International AWID Forum and organized two panel sessions on **Building a diverse and inclusive movement to break new ground: The Experience of CSBR, and Movements for social change and law reform in Muslim societies: Mobilizing for sexual rights amidst increasing political turmoil, militarization and conservatism.**

An edited volume by Pinar İlkaracan titled *Deconstructing Sexuality in the Middle East: Challenges and Discourses* was published by Ashgate Publishing. Comprised of nine chapters depicting different sexual rights struggles in the constantly changing contexts of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Palestine, and Turkey, the book explored the role of sexuality in political and social struggles and the politicization of sexuality and gender in the region.

As a partner of the **Active against Forced Marriage Conference Series**, part of a multilateral project of the European Commission's Daphne Program, WWHR co-organized the Turkey conference of the series, bringing together project partners from six countries including NGOs, consulates, EU and UN representatives, and state agencies.

The attempt of the government to reform the Social Security Law proposed major backlashes with regard to women's human rights. The government proposed to remove the obligation to open daycare centers for enterprises employing more than 150 women, which had been a major achievement of the women's movement. The draft law also fell short of providing unemployed women with social security benefits. WWHR co-coordinated an advocacy working group with KEIG. As a result, the removal of the daycare center obligation was retracted. However, other discriminatory measures remained, such as forestalling health insurance and retirement eligibility, leaving women dependent on fathers and husbands for access to cost-free health care, and lack of social security for homebased work, revealing the increasingly conservative, family-oriented approach of the government.

2009

Eight HREP groups were conducted with 110 Quran instructors working under the Presidency of Religious Affairs.

HREP participants founded the Çankırı Women's Solidarity Association in Central Anatolia and the Karabağlar City Council Women's Assembly in İzmir, both of which began to implement the program as part of their activities.

HREP was implemented in partnership with ILO and İŞKUR (Turkish Employment Agency), in the framework of their project titled Project on Active Labor Market Policies for Advancing Gender Equality through Decent Employment for Women in Turkey. HREP trainers conducted 32 HREP groups with 720 women as part of the vocational trainings in Ankara, Gaziantep, and Konya. This project also laid the foundation for future collaborations with ILO.

Upon the completion of its comparative international research on the burden of care and women's employment, WWHR co-organized an international conference with Istanbul Technical University Women's Studies Center, KEIG and İŞKUR titled **Towards Gender Equality in the Labor Market: Work-Family Life Reconciliation Policies** with the participation of parliamentarians, employer organizations, women's NGOs, trade unions, international agencies, and researchers. The research project included case studies from France, Mexico, the Netherlands, the Netherlands, Spain, South Korea, Sweden, and Turkey. The research

findings focusing on legal and institutional frameworks to discuss what models can lift the burden of care on women and increase their participation in the workforce were presented at the conference.

İpek İlkaracan coined the term "purple economy" and formulated an economic framework that recognizes the centrality of care work for a gender equal economic order. This framework builds upon the feminist assessment that the conventional gender division of labor is a fundamental source of gender economic gaps in time-use, employment, earnings, and jobs segregation.

Purple Economy is structured around four pillars:

- A universal social care services infrastructure
- Regulation of the labor market for work-life balance
- An efficient physical infrastructure reducing women's unpaid work burden in less developed rural contexts
- An alternative egalitarian macroeconomic policy framework

Purple Economy proposed an economic model based on gender equality and shared care work complementing the green economy towards a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient economic order. WWHR continues its national and international advocacy efforts to promote the purple economy framework and policy agenda. The concept has served to guide feminist social science research, as well as being adopted by international agencies, international women's organizations, and feminist NGOs in Turkey in advocacy and training programs.

The Parliamentary Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (KEFEK) was established. Women's organizations had demanded that the commission be instated as the "Commission on Equality between Women and Men." Although its mandate was limited, KEFEK created a space for the women's movement to advocate on issues such as law-making processes and maintain constructive relations with MPs and political parties.

CSBR launched its annual simultaneous international campaign on sexual rights in Muslim societies titled **One Day One Struggle! (ODOS)**. The campaign aimed to raise public awareness on sexuality and sexual rights in national contexts; contribute to our advocacy efforts; increase the visibility of CSBR, and set a precedent for changing the understanding of sexual and bodily rights in Muslim societies internationally. The first ODOS Campaign consisted of simultaneous actions held on November 9 to complement the advocacy efforts on the pertinent issues in the national contexts. Campaign activities ranged from workshops and conferences to demonstrations, exhibitions, media campaigns, and artistic performances addressing various issues such as sexuality education (Tunisia), FGM (Indonesia), stoning for adultery (Aceh, Malaysia), and femicide (Palestine), among others.

Table with 3 columns: Ülke, Erkek İstihdam Oranı, Kadın İstihdam Oranı. Includes rows for Türkiye, Avrupa Birliği, OECD Ülkeleri, Avrupa, Türkiye, Afrika, Latin Amerika, Orta ve Doğu Asya, Güney Amerika, Güney ve Orta Asya, Güneydoğu Asya, Güney ve Orta Asya, Güney ve Orta Asya, Güney ve Orta Asya.

Kadın istihdamında gerilemeye çözüm aranıyor

KEİG ve KİHP-Yeni Çözümler Derneği'nin düzenlediği panerede 'İstihdamda kadın-erkek Eğiştirme Doğru Adımların Atılmasını Yönelik İlgilenmiş Genekün Politikalar' uluslararası boyutta tartışıldı.

Kadın İstihdamında Gerilemeye Çözüm Aranıyor. Kadın istihdamında gerilemeye çözüm aranıyor. KEİG ve KİHP-Yeni Çözümler Derneği'nin düzenlediği panerede 'İstihdamda kadın-erkek Eğiştirme Doğru Adımların Atılmasını Yönelik İlgilenmiş Genekün Politikalar' uluslararası boyutta tartışıldı.

İş yaşamında kadının seçme özgürlüğü yok

Fransız Ekonomist Prof. Dr. Silvana Kaptanyev Avrupa'daki kadın durumunu değerlendiriyor. Kadınların istihdamda seçme özgürlüğü yok.

İş yaşamında kadının seçme özgürlüğü yok. Kadınların istihdamda seçme özgürlüğü yok. Kadınların istihdamda seçme özgürlüğü yok.

Güldis Akçit Babelera doğum izni tasarımasını sunuyor. Güldis Akçit Babelera doğum izni tasarımasını sunuyor.

İş-öle yaşamı dengesizliğimiz tesicilendi!

İş-öle yaşamı dengesizliğimiz tesicilendi! İş-öle yaşamı dengesizliğimiz tesicilendi!

İş-öle yaşamı dengesizliğimiz tesicilendi! İş-öle yaşamı dengesizliğimiz tesicilendi!

İş-öle yaşamı dengesizliğimiz tesicilendi! İş-öle yaşamı dengesizliğimiz tesicilendi!

Ülke temsilcileri deneyimlerini paylaştı. Fransa ve Hollanda'da durum, Meksika ve Güney Kore'de durum.

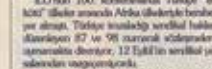
ANAMİYATLI VE SERTİSİ. Anamiyatlı ve sertisi. Anamiyatlı ve sertisi.

Çözüm için nereden başlamak? ESİTLİK BAKANLIĞI: Kadınların iş yaşamında...

REİS ERKEK ALGISI. REİS ERKEK ALGISI. REİS ERKEK ALGISI.

"Emekçinin" adını anmamak!

Haber emekçinin "adını" ve "işçi"nin "adını" anmamak! Emekçinin adını anmamak!



Nihal Kemaloglu, emekçinin adını anmamak! Emekçinin adını anmamak!

DOÇ. DR. İPEK İLKKARACAN EMEK PİYASASINDA TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYETİ ARAŞTIRDI

İlkkaracan'a göre kadın ancak bekar ve üniversite mezununa eşitlerde erkekler eşit oluyor. Evlilikle birlikte üniversite mezununa kadınlarda işgücüne katılm yüzde 85'ten yüzde 73'e iniyor. Çünkü evlilik demek çocuk demek, çocuk bakımından kadın sorumlu tutuluyor. Doç. Dr. İlkkaracan 'Cumhuriyetin son 50 yılına baktığımızda en yaygın kadın mesleği, ezici çoğunlukla tam zamanlı ev kadınlığı' diyor. Hal böyle olunca sosyal devletin birçoğuna yaşlı bakım hizmeti daima rafa kalkıyor.



En yaygın kadın mesleği tam zamanlı ev kadınlığı



Evlenen kadını yaşamından çıkarıyor. Evlenen kadını yaşamından çıkarıyor.

Evlenen kadını yaşamından çıkarıyor. Evlenen kadını yaşamından çıkarıyor.

REKOR BİZDE: İstihdam oranları karşılaştırması. Rekör bizde.

REKOR BİZDE: İstihdam oranları karşılaştırması. Rekör bizde.

REKOR BİZDE: İstihdam oranları karşılaştırması. Rekör bizde.



MÜCADELENİN İÇİNDEN GELİYOR

Mücadele Çiğdem, mücadele içinden geliyor. Mücadele içinden geliyor.

Mücadele Çiğdem, mücadele içinden geliyor. Mücadele içinden geliyor.

Mücadele Çiğdem, mücadele içinden geliyor. Mücadele içinden geliyor.

İSTİHDAMIN ÜÇLÜSÜ. REİS ERKEK ALGISI. GEÇİMLİ KAZANIMLARI KAYBETTİK. SFÖME. İstihdamın üçlüsü. Reıs erkek algısı. Geçimli kazanımları kaybettik. Sföme.

"Solutions to promote women's participation in employment," , Kazete, 12 June 2011

"Full time homemaking is the most common job for women," , Akşam, 18 June 2011

through our eyes

CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM OF THE CIVIL CODE

Selen (Lermioğlu)

The campaign for a Civil Code taught us all in the women's movement many things. We organized a campaign of that magnitude for the first time; it had to be built on a consensus. Back then, the internet and e-mail weren't as commonly used. It was 2000, but I remember we still reached a million women. The campaign didn't remain within the movement. Women's groups were reaching out to women in their own cities and neighborhood markets. They listened to their problems and talked about what the Civil Code would mean for women in their everyday life. In fact, I remember that those conversations helped the women's movement turn to economic issues as well... Women were following the price of green peppers or apples they were buying weekly, and quite rightly so. It was essentially tracking the cost of living and the rise of inflation. While we were drafting the Civil Code, discussing divorce, property division, etc., we also began to discover areas where women were quite empowered in their daily lives.

The biggest issue during the campaign was the division of property. In a parliament comprised entirely of men, we were trying to pass a law so that these men would share their property equally with their wives. It was an issue that almost all men contested, regardless of party affiliation. That was difficult for us. We engaged in serious campaigning and lobbying.

Since we couldn't talk about their wives, we explained it by giving their daughters as an example. It taught us a lot.

You have to remember that very few people were using the internet in those days. So, we were still trying to communicate in person or over the phone. We had in-person meetings that took longer; were directly in contact. We couldn't send group e-mails or make decisions over email; we didn't have time to work on texts collectively. I remember constantly sending or waiting for faxes. Still, I was really surprised that there was a movement that could mobilize this fast.

Zelal (Ayman)

We first formed a platform with the participation of 126 women's organizations, each representing different groups in the 2000s. It was the first platform we had of that scale. WWHR was conducting the parliamentary lobbying. I was at KADAV (*Women's Solidarity Foundation* - WSF) at the time, and they were very active in the field, with demonstrations and campaigns. and I was a part of the secretariat. We held meetings at WWHR and WSF and did very good work together. The penal code campaign came right after that. During the penal code campaign, WWHR began to coordinate the secretariat more professionally, so our work was more structured. Right after the protection order law campaign of 1997-98, we moved on to the civil code, which was a major catalyst for a major legal and political transformation in terms of the economic compensation of women's invisible domestic labor. When the new Civil Code was enacted in 2002, we started the penal code campaign.

I think there were three elements that connected us as the women's movement of the time: First, improving the existing laws; making them more secular and egalitarian—all these motivated us greatly. It brought women from all walks of life together. The relatively more established organizations—WWHR, WSF, Purple Roof, and the Foundation for Women's Solidarity in Ankara—were carrying the torch, and tried to share whatever resource they had, be it information, office space, financial support, or human resources. Second, there was a united front against violence towards women. We all said, "shelters are necessary, solidarity centers are necessary, the state should do their part, and the laws must be reformed to that effect." Strengthening women's organizing was a hugely important priority, as well. The period between 1995-2005 can be seen as a time of increased mobilization and the emergence of new women's organizations.

Pınar (İlkkaracan)

Women first proposed a change to the Civil Code in 1951. When we founded WWHR in 1993, the Turkish Women's Union was still campaigning for Civil Code reform. We were all fed up. Women had been trying for years—the new Civil Code is discussed in the '80s, the '90s, and it never passes! It's 2001. The women's movement had come a long way in two decades, but still, no reform. Finally, we did it. How? Hanging around the parliament,

writing letters to the commission—that alone won't work. You must form public opinion and work with the press. We conducted a real campaign. We protested across the country. We worked with the press, one-on-one in various cities. That's how we did it.

We were in the secretariat during the campaign. Some nights we had to issue a press release or write letters to 20-25 journalists. Those personalized letters were very important. "Dear so-and-so, today you wrote this or that about the Civil Code, but tomorrow they're discussing the such-and-such article in the commission; it's very important; please write about this..." We worked until 3 or 4 in the morning. Some organizations wouldn't have the time. But say you needed to send a press release. There's no way to get approval from 120 different organizations. You have half an hour before you send it, maybe an hour. We'd pass it over to the Women's Assembly e-group, and we'd add, "We have half an hour, any objections, send them immediately." You need to move fast sometimes during a campaign. But we never had any issues. We had a lot of trust, respect, and love for each other. Nobody said, "I didn't see this," or "Why did you write that?" Never happened.

One scene I remember vividly. During the campaign, we made appointments with deputy group chairmen from different parties. One appointment fell on 8th March, quite accidentally. It wasn't on purpose; we were constantly going there anyway. And that appointment was with the nationalist party, MHP, chairman—a patriarchal guy. I just happened to be walking a few steps ahead as the chairman arrived with a bunch of roses. He gave me one, since it's 8th March, you know. When they had only a short time ago opposed the Civil Code and rejected our demands. So, I took the rose and threw it on the ground. I said, "We don't want roses; we want rights!" All the women in the room threw their roses on the ground. It became a spontaneous protest.

CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM OF THE TURKISH PENAL CODE FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Pınar (İlkkaracan)

Two things to note about that time: The euphoria that came after the success of the Civil Code and being in the parliament so often that we knew seventy percent of the MPs personally. Who would vote on our side and who would not. There was a lot of positive press when the Civil Code passed. The public opinion was in favor of women, too. The whole women's movement was united and had a lot of momentum. And we were always spearheading the legal issues. What could be next?

The accession period with the EU had begun by then. Turkey was going to reform the Turkish Penal Code (TPC) in the medium term. What does that mean? Everyone was busy with short-term reforms. I said, the TPC will come up sooner or later, so let's take the lead there. Let's be proactive and not reactive. As WWHR, we organized a meeting in January

Kadınlar Meclis'e yürüdü

Kadın örgütleri temsilcileri Medeni Kanun için vekillerin kapısına dayandı. MHP'li Bıçakçoğlu'nun 'gül jesti' bile hanımları yumuşatmaya yetmedi

MEĐENİ Kanun değişikliđi yasa tasarısının, evliliklerde yasal mal rejimi olarak, "evlilik süresince edinilmiş malların eşler arasında eşit paylaşımını" öngören 202. maddesinin, DSP, MHP ve FP'lerin oylarıyla değiştirilmesine tepki gösteren 46 kadın örgütünün temsilcileri, dün TBMM'ye gelerek, Adalet Komisyonu'nun, tasarının bu maddesine muhalif üyelerinin "kapsısına" dayandılar. Bayanların tepkisini gül hediye ederek yatıştırmaya çalışan MHP Trabzon Milletvekili Orhan Bıçakçođlu, maddenin değiştirilmesi için komisyonunda tekriri müzakere yapılmasına karşı olduğunu ve yenilenmesine karar verilmesi halinde, oylamaya katılmayacağını söyleyince, hanımlardan beklemediđi bir tepki gördü.

'ÇİÇEK YERİNE OY İSTERİZ'

Kadınların istediđi mal paylaşımı rejiminin en ateşli muhalifleri arasında yer alan MHP'li Bıçakçođlu, odasının darlığı nedeniyle 46 örgütü temsil eden 12 bayan ziyaretçiyi, halkla ilişkiler binasının koridorunda kabul etti. Bıçakçođlu, "Sizi çiçeklerle karşılamak istedim" diyerek, tüm bayanlara tek tek 1 adet gül verdi. "Bu güllerle bizden özür mü diliyorsunuz? Çiçeğinizi değil, oyunuzu istiyoruz" diyerek bu jesti kabul etmeyen hanımlar, Bıçakçođlu'nun "Ben istediğiniz yönde tavır takmadığım" sözü üzerine gülleri aldılar. Edinilmiş malların paylaşımı rejiminin uygulamada sorun çıkartacağını ve boşanma halinde eşler arasında daha büyük tartışmalara yol açacağını savunan Bıçakçođlu, "Biz niye İsviçre'nin eskittiđi, vazgeçtiđi bir yasayı kabul edelim?" diye sordu. Hukukçuların da, bu rejimin uygulamasına yönelik tereddütleri bulunduđunu kaydeden Bıçakçođlu, "Bu kabul edilirse, nikah kıyacak adam bulamazsınız" diye konuştu.

'VEBALİ MHP'YE KALIR'

Hanımlar ise, DYP ve DSP'lilerden destek sözü aldıklarını vurgulayarak, "Eđer bu yasa çıkmazsa, tüm vebalı MHP'nin üstüne kalacak. Nüfusun yüzde 51'ini oluşturan kadınların oyunu küçümsemeyin" uyarısını dile getirtiler. Bıçakçođlu bu çıkış üzerine hanımlara, "Eđer komisyonunda bu madde için tekriri müzakere açılırsa, oylamaya katılmam. Bu da size destek anlamına gelir. Ben katılmazsam, tasarı komisyonundan geçer. Ama asıl önemli olan TDMM Genel Kurul'unda olacak" açıklamasını yaptı. Bunun üzerine hanımlar da, "Güllerinizi iade ediyoruz. Komisyon toplantısının yapılacağı çarşamba gününe kadar sizde ödünç kalsın. Bizim için oy vermeniz, güllerimizi alırız" diyerek, MHP'li vekilin yanından ayrıldılar.

GÜLLER ELİNDE KALDI

Sizi çiçeklerle karşılamak istedim.

Çiçeğinizi değil, oyunuzu istiyoruz.

Bu rejim kabul edilirse nikah kıyacak adam bulamazsınız.

Kadın örgütlerinin temsilcileri, edinilmiş malların paylaşımı rejimine geri dönülmesi için destek istedikleri MHP'li Orhan Bıçakçođlu'nu yaptıkları eleştirilerle terlettiler, Kadınlar MHP'li vekilin hediye ettiđi gülleri de iade ettiler. Fotoğraflar: Ali EKEYILMAZ

20 Mart 2001

SABAH GAZETESİ, 20 MART 2001

"Women March to the Parliament", Sabah, 20 March 2001

2002 with the women who had been active during the previous campaign. We said, let's form a new initiative; let's be proactive and work for the reform of the penal code. We talked about lessons learned. We said, let us be the ones to write the law. And so, the TPC Women's Working Group (WG) was established.

For me, advocacy is all about seeing the opportunity. They were predicting reforms during the EU accession period, though there was no talk of penal law reform. "Well, let's take the lead there!" Seize the opportunity. We had good relations with the parliament and the press, so let's use that. We invited representatives from bar associations, from Diyarbakır, for example. We tried to ensure regional equality. We invited NGOs, feminist academics who'd worked on the issue. This strategic WG went through all the articles one by one. Some of them were horrible: one said that if a woman was married off to her rapist, the man's sentence is overturned. Or let's say that the woman is raped by seven people, and one of them marries her, and then everybody is free to go, as well. I can't forget this. The woman will be traumatized for life after the trauma of being raped. A lawyer friend once said, "In rural areas, sometimes the whole village comes together and tells the woman, forget what the courts said. You'll marry this man; you have to." She is pressured by the entire village and is married off without even a trial.

At WWHR, we say that the law is not for lawyers but for ourselves. Same for HREP. We're human beings, we're citizens. We have the right to understand and to write the laws. So we sat down and rewrote them. We were coordinating the secretariat. We sat down and rewrote the articles one by one. After a while, it was clear that there was no use revising them individually. The law is terrible, the section titles are terrible. For example, rape and sexual assault are clearly crimes against the individual. This is also the case in international law. But in Turkey, they are categorized under crimes against the family and society. Such absurdities. Finally, we realized that we needed to change the entire penal code, not just revise articles, but also change the section titles and overall perspective. The WG met every two weeks. Brazilian law was relevant to us due to honor killings, so I sought the help of Brazilian friends. We discussed how it was done elsewhere, using examples from around the world, and how we should do it. This is how we rewrote the Penal Code, which took a year. Of course, since we knew 70% of the members and had convinced them on the Civil Code, we thought we'd be able to pass the Penal Code in the parliament. We were in touch with the MPs, asking them to support us. We also had our comparative booklet ready that year, so I thought it would all go rather smoothly. We knew it would also be challenging because the women's movement had not worked on the Penal Code or sexual rights before.

All the while, Turkey is in political turmoil. On February 19th, 2001, the President throws the constitution at his Prime Minister, and the economy sinks into chaos. Elections are held in November 2002, and AKP wins. For the first time, an Islamist party forms a majority government by itself. We had been at work for a year when they suddenly came to power. We held an emergency meeting after the election. "So this happened. What do we think?" The mood was pessimistic, and we were feeling terrible, but we also had worked

like hell for a year. At WWHR, this was all we were thinking about. "We can't leave it now," I said. For the sake of future generations, and after all this effort! Of course, most people were thinking that since an Islamist party came to power, it was all over. I think I was more courageous than some since I knew about Muslim societies and countries and what reforms related to women had been done there. I didn't think we couldn't talk to those at AKP or nothing could be done.

But then, request appointments from AKP, but don't get any response from the ministry. Such disrespect towards citizens and women! You're a parliament elected by the people, at their service. Refusing to meet with NGOs and women's organizations, the impertinence! We had good relations with the press, so after six months, I called all the well-known columnists we knew. These people aren't giving us a meeting, not even responding, I said, it's unheard of. Our minister is busy, they say, but are reluctant to give a written reply.

Ferai Tınç, Zeynep Oral, Ruhat Mengi, Emel Armutçu, Meliha Okur, many many others... Ferai is one of *Hürriyet's* best columnists, and she wrote about this at least three times. "I'm calling on the Minister of Justice. These women have written to you, and you haven't responded. They've been calling your chief of staff, and he's not responding either." Zeynep Oral wrote several times. It became a story in the press. Finally, we got a response saying we could meet with the AKP Deputy Group Leader. We had our booklet with all our demands. We went to meet with him as the entire TPC Women's Working Group, booklet in hand. Some advisors and MPs were also present. Cemil Çiçek, the Minister of Justice, wouldn't meet with us, but we said that's fine. "Here's our demands. We've been working on the Penal Code for a long time, and we want it written this way. We've already written it, so just pass the laws exactly as written." And we handed over the booklet. I remember the look of astonishment in their eyes. "What do you mean?" They had no clue. If we won the TPC campaign, this is how. We initiated it and we were perfectly prepared before they even started. We were three points ahead of them.

So they took the booklets. Before we left, we asked about our next meeting, and they said they would give us a call. Of course, they never called us, but we had opened a door of sorts. We went for the second time. We asked what they thought, and they said, "We reject the whole thing." I was truly shocked; I had never expected this. As we were working, we realized that some articles were eighty years old. Some of them were completely outdated—in terms of international law, women's rights, human rights, and science.

So, ok, at the time, some countries were still debating whether marital rape was a crime or not. I was expecting an objection from the AKP on that issue. But, for example, a woman is raped and is married off to her rapist. This was taken from the penal code of Italy during Mussolini's time. I wasn't expecting them to oppose such a thing. I expect even them to be shocked that such a provision still exists in the penal code. There is something called intra-familial sexual abuse, which is now recognized and condemned in Turkey and throughout the world. The whole country now talks about this. In the old law, sexual abuse of a child is still considered rape if the child is under 15, and the child is asked to testify in court, whether

40'ın üzerinde kadın örgütünün oluşturduğu platform üyeler 'Bu tasarı yasalaşursa AB'ye anlatamayız' diyorlar

Kadınlar TCK Tasarısı'na direniyor

Dokuz kadın örgütünün başını çektiği, daha sonra yeni katılımlarla genişleyen TCK Kadın Platformu, bu konuda sesini en fazla duyuran sivil toplum oluşumu oldu. Platformun en aktif üyelerinden oluşan TCK Çalışma Grubu üyeleri, Tempo için bir araya geldi ve yeni tasarımı masaya yatırdı

HABER | Nazire Kalkan

FOTOĞRAF | Çağrı Kılıççı

AB ile müzakere sürecinde, Türkiye bir kez daha kendi kalesine gol atmak üzere. Avrupa Komisyonu, 6 Ekim'de yayınlanacak olan İlerleme Raporu'nda, mercek altına alınacak olan konulardan birinin de kadın hakları olduğu biliniyor. Buna karşılık hükümetin, yasalaşması için uğraştığı yeni Türk Ceza Kanunu Taslağı'nda yer alan kadın aleyhine düzenlemeler açıkça AB normları ile çelişiyor.

Kadın Hakları, Avrupa Birliği'nin son anda ortaya attığı ya da Türkiye'ye dayatıldığı yeni bir koşul değil. 1999'da Türkiye'ye resmen adaylık statüsünü kazandıran Helsinki Zirvesi'nde, Türkiye'nin gönüllü olarak yükümlülük altına girdiği bir alan. Türkiye, müzakere sürecini başlatmak için Medeni Kanun'da, Türk Ceza Kanunu'nda ve Çalışma Yasası'nda kadınlar aleyhine olan hükümleri yürürlükten kaldırmayı taahhüt etmiş bulunuyor.



TCK Çalışma Grubunun üyeleri, Helsinki Zirvesi sonucunda, Türkiye'nin, Medeni Kanun'da, Türk Ceza Kanunu'nda ve Çalışma Yasası'nda kadınlar aleyhine olan hükümleri yürürlükten kaldırmayı taahhüt etmiş olduğunun altını çiziyorlar.

Gerek AB ile birlikte hazırlanan Katılım Ortaklığı Belgesi'nde, gerekse Türkiye'nin kendi hazırladığı İkinci Ulusal Program'da kadın - erkek eşitliğini tam olarak sağlamak için yasalarda gerekli değişiklikleri yapmayı kabul etti. Avrupa Birliği Komisyonu'nun hazırladığı ikinci İlerleme Raporunda da bu konu açıkça yer almaktaydı. Son iki yıldır Meclis'ten birbiri ardına geçen uyum yasaları ile pek çok meseleyi

hallettiğimiz gibi, kadın sorununu da çözdüğümüzü zannettik. Ne yazık ki büyük çoğunluğun düşündüğünün aksine, bekarlık kontrolleri ve namus cinayetleri tarihe gömülemedi. Yeni TCK tasarılarında "namus, ar, haya, genel ahlak, tahrik, müstehehlik" gibi muğlak kavramların arkasına gizlendiler o kadar. Büyük tartışma yaratan zinanın çıkış noktası ise çok daha ilginç. Zina ne aylar süren çalışmalar bo-



➤ KADINLAR ÖRGÜTLENDİ

TCK Kadın Platformu nedir?

Yeni hazırlanan Türk Ceza Kanunu'nda, kadın aleyhindeki düzenlemeleri ortadan kaldırmak amacıyla 9 kadın örgütü bir araya gelerek TCK Kadın Çalışma Grubu'nu başlattı. Diğer kadın örgütlerinin katılımıyla sayılan 40'ı aşan grup, TCK Kadın Platformu'na dönüştü. Platformun içinde yer alan belli başlı bazı kadın örgütlerini şöyle sıralayabiliriz: Türk Kadınlar Birliği, Ankara Kadın Dayanışma Vakfı, KADER, KADAV, KATAGI, İstanbul Barosu Kadın Hakları Uygulama Merkezi, İzmir Barosu Kadın Komisyonu, İzmir Barosu Kadın Hakları Uygulama Merkezi, Diyarbakır Barosu Kadın Komisyonu, Kadının İnsan Hakları/ Yeni Çözümler Vakfı, Mor Çatı, Cumhuriyet Kadınlar Demeği, İstanbul Valiliği İnsan Hakları Masası, İstanbul Valiliği Kadının Statüsü Birimi.

yunca ne de alt komisyonlarda dile getirilen bir konu olmadı. Dolayısıyla tasarıda da yer almıyor. Konu AKP tarafından, tasarı alt komisyonlardan geçtikten sonra gündeme getirildi.

Medeni'den sonra TCK

Bugün gelinen noktada tıpkı Medeni Kanun'da olduğu gibi tarihi bir fırsatın kaçmak üzere olduğu anlaşılıyor. Üç yıldır yürürlükte olan yeni Medeni Kanun'un toplumsal yaşantıyla şu ana kadar herhangi pozitif bir etkisi görülmediği hukukçular tarafından yaygın olarak dile getir-

len bir görüş. Aynı, hatta daha beteri TCK'nın başına gelmek üzere. 14 Eylül'deki olağanüstü Genel Kurul'da TCK ve bu maddeler görüşmeye açılacak.

Kadın örgütleri, tasarını öncelikle cinsel özgürlükler alanına yeni müdahaleler



CANAN ARIN

"Tasarı, 'Kadınların hayatı ve bedeni, ailenin erkeklerine aittir' mantığını pekiştiriyor"

getirdiği, en başta da namus cinayetleri ve bekarlık kontrollerinin önlenmesi konusunda açık ve net bir tavır koyamadığı için eleştiriyorlar. "Bu haliyle Türk Ceza Kanunu çıkmadan sakatlanmıştır" yorumu yapıyorlar.

Dokuz kadın örgütünün başını çektiği, daha sonra yeni katılımlarla genişleyen TCK Kadın Platformu, bu konuda sesini en fazla duyuran sivil toplum oluşumu oldu. Platformun en aktif üyelerinden oluşan TCK Çalışma Grubu üyeleri, Tempo için bir araya geldi ve yeni tasarımı masaya yatırdı.



"Reject the mentality, not the article," , *Yeniden Özgür Gündem*, 4 November 2003

it was consensual or not. I think it was a show of strength, like, *who are you to sit down with us and discuss your demands?* We were frustrated when they said they rejected the whole thing. We said we'd come back, that they can't reject everything, life doesn't work that way. "This is not how the law works anywhere else," I remember saying. "Your ideas are very wrong." Sure, some issues can be discussed, but some are already outdated in the Turkish Penal Code. I said, "It seems like you haven't looked at the penal code at all."

The EU accession process had actually started during the previous coalition government, and AKP was then intent on continuing it but had not taken up the penal code. It was partly thanks to us that they woke up to it. "Oh, there's a Penal Code, and it's part of the EU program, and it needs reform!" Anyway, they were forced to start working on the penal code because of our persistence. A sub-commission was established. Today, laws are passed through omnibus bills and presidential decrees, completely stripping the parliament of its legislative power. Back then, the one-man politics hadn't reached this level, and they formed a justice commission with MPs and experts on the penal code. We worked with them directly for two years. It was a big opportunity for us that the sub-community chairman was Hakkı Köylü. I still like him very much. Though a conservative, he was a fair, respectful chairman, open to debate, and he appointed three academics to the commission: Adem Sözüer, İzzet Özgenç, and Ahmet Gökçen.

There was an MP from CHP on the commission, Orhan Eraslan. He was incredibly helpful. He supported and defended our points at least as much as we did. Professor Adem

Sözüer was likewise. He had been a strong supporter of Erdoğan when he was imprisoned for his poem. İzzet Özgenç had close ties to the AKP, and he was heavily criticized for it. But he is a scholar who stands for justice and the law; I can attest to that. We were in constant contact with Eraslan and Sözüer, and we held countless meetings. Eraslan convinced Sözüer on many issues and gained his support. All three were very skilled in debate, and we were very lucky to work with them.

And, of course, there was our ally, MP Gaye Erbatur from CHP. She was incredible. She mobilized CHP and had them give us their unanimous support. Without them, this reform would not have been possible.

We had done an incredible job. Our booklet was incredible; no one could find anything to object. We studied various laws from around the world, as well as their justifications. All our answers were ready—New Zealand laws are like this, Australian laws are like that, and German law like this... This was our greatest strength. For instance, Germany is not necessarily a country to be taken as a model, with their patriarchal laws, but even there, the articles concerning women have changed over time. I sat down and studied what happened in society, why and at what time, and how those changes occurred. We discussed them with Sözüer, and he was impressed and came in our support. I was able to back up many of our demands from an Islamic perspective. I firmly believed that everything we advocated can be defended from also an Islamic perspective.

While the commission was discussing the articles, the team would sit at WWHR until 5 in the morning, writing letters to allies in the press, asking them to write about whatever issue was on the agenda, and they did. When the commission members woke up in the morning, they'd see these in the news. The very topic they were going to discuss that day had become a headline! That was so fun. Meanwhile, we were always visiting the parliament; we spent two years on the road. The organizations in Ankara arranged our trips, they welcomed us; we'd have breakfast near the parliament early in the morning, do a final prep meeting, and then head on to the parliament. They always took care of the logistics. Ankara Women's Solidarity, the Republican Women's Association, the Turkish Women's Union, KA-DER Ankara. When we couldn't make it in time to the parliament from Istanbul, they would always be there.

The article about marrying the victim with the abuser was one of the most striking anecdotes here. I thought that this article would be one that even the AKP, provided they had any conscience, would change. At the time, Doğan Soyaslan was Chief Advisor to the Minister of Justice. He was called the professor of professors. Up until then, we had done a great press campaign; the penal code was the hot topic in the press, on every front page, and in every news program. Our various demands and their justifications made headlines every day. All the news programs talked about this. One day, NTV invited Doğan Soyaslan for an interview about that article and asked him, "You have two daughters. Let's say one is raped and in court, and she is asked, 'Will you marry your rapist? If you do, he will not be punished.'" And he said, "This naturally does not concern my daughter. This article is for the poor girls in Anatolia. My daughter is not what we are discussing, but what can the poor

Kadınlara bu tasarımı kabul ettiremezsiniz

ÇÜNKÜ ■ Şikayet olmazsa tecavüzcü hakkında dava açılmıyor
■ Evlilik içi tecavüz, tecavüz kabul edilmiyor
■ Tecavüz ettiği kadınla evlenen erkek cezadan yırıyor

Kemal GÖKTAŞ / ANKARA

Avrupa Birliği'ne uyum kapsamında yapılacak çok önemli bir 'reform' niteliğinde olarak sunulan yeni Türk Ceza Kanunu tasarısının cinsel suçlara ilişkin bölümleri, kadın kuruluşları tarafından sert biçimde eleştiriliyor. Tasarımı 'mevcut TCK'daki kadın-erkek eşitliğine aykırı hükümleri aynen devam ettirmekle' eleştiren kadın kuruluşları tasarımı eleştirileri ve değiştirilmesini istedikleri düzenlemeler şöyle:

Cinsel suçların yeri değişsin

■ **TCK ne diyor?:** Cinsel suçlar topluma karşı işlenen suçlar başlığı altında ve 'Genel Ahlak ve Aile Nizamı Aleyhine Cürümler' kısmında düzenleniyor.

■ **Tasarı ne diyor?:** Cinsel suçlar "topluma karşı" suçlar bölümünde bulunuyor.

■ **Kadınlar ne istiyor?:** "Kisilere karşı" işlenen suçlar bölümünde yer alsın.

Namus cinayetine indirim kaldırılmalı

■ **TCK ne diyor?:** Namus cinayetlerinde 'haksız tabiri' indirimi uygulanıyor. 24 yıllık ceza 8 yıla iniyor.

■ **Tasarı ne diyor?:** Namus için işlenen cinayetlere haksız tabiri indirimi yapılmaması düzenleniyor. Buna göre adam öldürmenin cezası tasarıda en az 20 yıl iken, "namus" gerekçesiyle işlenen cinayetlere 15 yıldan 5 yıla kadar düşürülecek.

■ **Kadınlar ne istiyor?:** Namus cinayetlerinin önüne geçilmesi için tipik kan gülmeye sebebiyle işlenen cinayetlerde olduğu gibi, "ağırlaştırıcı hal" olarak alsın.

Tecavüz suçunun takibi şikayete bağlı olmalı

■ **TCK ne diyor?:** Tecavüz suçu 'takibi şikayete bağlı' suç olarak düzenleniyor. Yani tecavüze uğrayan kişi şikayete olmazsa tecavüzcü hakkında dava açılmıyor, açılması dava düşüyor.

■ **Tasarı ne diyor?:** 'Tasarı, bu konuda herhangi bir değişiklik getirmiyor.

■ **Kadınlar ne istiyor?:** Tecavüz şikayete bağlı olarak değil "kanun hükmü" adına takip edilsin.

Evlen-kurtul formülü tecavüzü meşrulaştırıyor

■ **TCK ne diyor?:** Kadın kaçırma ya da tecavüz edenler, mağdurla evlenirse dava 5 yıl eritiliyor ve bu süreçte boşanma olmazsa ceza ortadan kalkıyor.

■ **Tasarı ne diyor?:** Kadın kaçırma ya da tecavüz eden sanıklara, mağdurla evlenmeleri halinde ceza verilmiyor ve dava 5 yıllığına erteleniyor. Toplumda hakim olan namus anlayışı nedeniyle tecavüze uğrayan kız ve kadınlar, tecavüzcülerle zorla evlendiriliyor. Yasa en az 5 yıl evli kalmayı düzenlediği için 5 yıl boyunca kaçırıldığı veya tecavüz ettiği kadınla evli kalmak, bundan sonra onu yüzüstü bırakıyor.



Cocuğa karşı işlenen suçta "rıza" alınmaz

■ **TCK ne diyor?:** 15 yaşından küçüklerle, 'rzalarına olarak' cinsel ilişkiye girenlerin cezası indiriliyor. Tecavüz edenlere en az 10 yıl hapis veriliyor. Ancak 15 yaşından küçüklerle "rızasını" alarak cinsel ilişkiye girenlere verilecek ceza 5 yıla düşürülüyor.

■ **Tasarı ne diyor?:** 15 yaşından küçüklere tecavüz edenlere 10 yıldan 15 yıla kadar hapis verilirken; rıza ile ilişkiye girenlere 4 yıldan 6 yıla kadar ceza verilecek.

■ **Kadınlar ne istiyor?:** Çocuklara karşı işlenen cinsel suçlarda "rıza" aranmasız diyen kadınlar, 15 yaşından küçüklerin cinsel ilişki için "rzalarının" alınmaması indirim getirilmesine karşı çıkıyor ve bu suça daha ağır bir cezadan verilmesini istiyor.

Tecavüz sadece cinsel organla olmaz

■ **TCK ne diyor?:** Tecavüz ancak cinsel organ yoluyla olur.

■ **Tasarı ne diyor?:** Tecavüz ancak cinsel organ yoluyla olabilir. Cop veya başka bir aletle tecavüz ise daha az hapis öngören "kötü muamele veya irza tasaddi" suçları kapsamında değerlendiriliyor. Tecavüzün cezası en az 7 yıl hapis iken, irza tasaddinin cezası ise 2 yıldan 4 yıla kadar hapis.

■ **Kadınlar ne istiyor?:** Mağdura cinsel organın yanı sıra cop ya da başka cisimlerle yapılan fiillerin "tecavüz" sayılması vahim sonuçlara yol açabilir.

Evlilik içindeki kötü muamele de tecavüzdür

■ **TCK ne diyor?:** "Evlilik içi tecavüz"

sekinde bir suç yer almıyor.

■ **Tasarı ne diyor?:** Eşini zorla ilişkiye zorlayan kocanın fiilinin tecavüz değil, ile efradına kötü muamele suçunu oluşturacağı belirtiliyor.

■ **Kadınlar ne istiyor?:** Evlilik içi tecavüz açıkça suç olarak sayılsın.

Evlili-bekar kadın ayrımlı kalsın

■ **TCK ne diyor?:** Evli kadın kaçırma en az 7 yıl hapis cezası öngörülürken; kadın evli olmaması halinde cezanın alt sınırı 3 yıl olarak belirleniyor.

■ **Tasarı ne diyor?:** Bekar kadın kaçırma 3 yıldan 6 yıla, evli kadın kaçırma ise 4 ila 7 yıla kadar hapis öngörüyor.

■ **Kadınlar ne istiyor?:** Bu ayrımlı kalsın. Kadın kaçırma, evli olup e-madigma bakımından aynı ceza versin.

Psikolojik baskıyla ilişki tecavüz sayılır

■ **TCK ne diyor?:** Psikolojik baskıyla tecavüz suçu yok.

■ **Tasarı ne diyor?:** Bu konuda bir düzenleme yer almıyor.

■ **Kadınlar ne istiyor?:** Birçok tecavüz olayında, mağdur psikolojik baskı altında kalarak ilişkiye mecbur bırakıyor. Psikolojik baskıyla cinsel ilişki e tecavüz sayılmalı ve cezalandırılmalı.

İşyerinde taciz de suç sayılsın

■ **TCK ne diyor?:** TCK'da cinsel ilişki suçlarında 'işyerinde taciz' ayrımcılık.

■ **Tasarı ne diyor?:** İşyerinde taciz, ■ **Kadınlar ne istiyor?:** İşyerinde tacizler için de patronlarca gerçekleştirilen tacizler cinsel suç kabul edilsin ve cezaları artırılsın.

YENİ TCK MECLİS'TE

Eski Bakan Çelikel'in hükümleri çıkarıldı

Önceki hükümet döneminde Bakanlar Kurulu'na sevk edilen ancak seçimden sonra kadük haline gelen tasarı, Adalet Bakanı tarafından yeniden ele alındı. Ancak Hükümetin TBMM'ye sevk ettiği yeni TCK tasarısında önceki Adalet Bakanı Aysel Çelikel'in tasarıda eklediği ve kadınlar lehine düzenlemeler getiren değişikliklere yer verilmedi. İşte Çelikel'in tasarıya eklediği ancak AKP hükümetince çıkarılan düzenlemeler:

■ Cinsel suçlar topluma değil, bireye karşı işlenen suçlardır.

■ Psikolojik baskıyla cinsel ilişki kurmak tecavüz sayılır.

■ Tecavüz eden kocaya 8 yıla kadar hapis verilir.

■ Evli olsun olmasın kadın kaçırılana 4 yıldan 7 yıla kadar hapis cezası uygulanır.

■ Evlenmek için hakim izni şartı aranır.



ÇELİKEL KOYDU ÇİÇEK ÇIKARDI
Adalet eski Bakanı Aysel Çelikel'in (öste) kadınlar lehine yaptığı düzenlemeleri yeni Bakan Çiçek (altta) itibar etmedi.



KADIN HAKLARININ TEK SAVUNUCUSU

Nispet Çubukçu AKP İstanbul Milletvekili... Adalet eski Bakanı Aysel Çelikel'den bayrağı devralan Çubukçu, dün toplanan TBMM Adalet Komisyonu'na tasarrım kadınlarla ilgili maddeleri üzerinde görüş bildiren tek isim oldu. Çubukçu, Adalet Komisyonu'na verdiği öneride enesinin (aile içi cinsel ilişki) de suç olmasını istedi:

ENSEST DE CEZALANDIRILSIN

"Çocuklara karşı girilen cinsel ilişkimlarda, babaları beraber amca, dayı ve ağabeyler de fiilin sanığı oldukları araştırmalarla tespit edilmiştir. Toplumumuzda nadir görülen ensest ilişkiler aile ve toplum yapısını çöktürmektedir. Cezasının çok ağır olması, şikayete bağlı olmaması bu konuda caydırıcılığı neden olacaktır."



Nispet Çubukçu

girls in Anatolia do? They have to get married." I was in front of the TV. Such an arrogant, vile display of superiority, looking down on the public in that manner. And a professor of law is saying this! I jumped from my chair, flapping my arms and legs. We won, I said, it's over! And it was true. After Soyaslan said that, the entire press and public opinion sided with us against AKP. People believed that whatever women said and wanted was right. I believe we won that campaign there and then.

Karin (Ronge)

The work of WWHR on the local level and the experiences of participating women equipped us with strong arguments for our campaigns. WWHR initiated campaigns advocating for the enactment of a protection order or the reform of the Turkish Civil and Penal codes. The other important leg of successful campaigning was intensive networking with other women's organizations and allies from the LGBTQI+ movement, the bar associations, the media, other influential actors, and some politicians.

Was it easy? Not at all, criticism from even within the women movement(s) in Turkey on what we advocated for and with whom we collaborated were sometimes quite, let's say, disrespectful, unfair, and sometimes even rude. One critique was that changes in the law don't have much an impact on women lives. True, if not properly implemented, or women are kept uninformed about their rights. But what if there is no law frame defining gender equality and granting women rights to self-determination and bodily integrity? Then patriarchal traditions and customary laws, like early and forced marriages or homicides in the name of honor, which sometimes differ from one village to the next city or change depending on the religious background, remain dominant. And violence against women and girls goes unpunished as it is framed as a private matter.

Gaye (Erbatur)

The most important work I did with WWHR was the Turkish Penal Code Campaign. We worked together throughout. On 8th November 2002, I was elected as an MP from Adana. Women had come together to form a working group to change the Penal Code at the time. They had worked on which articles needed to be changed and drafted amendment proposals. The issue of "honor" was very important, especially since women's "honor" was defined as chastity and was under men's control. This needed to change, honor killings were very common. It was difficult, but the women truly succeeded. After I became an MP, around March or April of 2003, a group of women from the campaign visited the Parliament. I remember Canan (Arın), Hülya (Gülbahar), and Pınar being there. They visited the MPs and gave us their booklets regarding the amendments they wanted. Their lobbying in the entire Parliament was excellent. At the time, a Penal Code reform was not on AKP's agenda and wasn't being discussed in Parliament. The women had started it before it even came on the agenda. There were negotiations with the EU, the Penal Code was not yet on the table. When AKP began to address the reform in October 2003, the Penal Code Working

Group came to the Justice Commission. I wasn't a member, but I attended the meeting because it was of vital importance to women. A sub-commission was formed there, consisting of three AKP and two CHP MPs, all men. I spoke with our MPs and expressed my wish to attend the meetings. They were very pleased. I attended all sub-commission meetings. I was a little late to the first one. When I entered, I was taken aback. A group, only men, sat around the table, working on the Penal Code. When I walked in, I believe the fourth article was being discussed, and there was a change that the women demanded. I immediately intervened, objected, and made a speech about the need for its change. That was approved, and that's how the whole thing started. Afterwards, I constantly met with Pinar, Hülya and Canan. We worked together. Whenever there was a deadlock in the commission, I would call them—whoever would pick up. I got information on what to do and say and would inform them about what they should lobby for that day and request their support. We built true solidarity with women during this period. Whenever a proposed change got stuck, women sent constant faxes to the commission, parliament members, and administrators. Women's organizations in Ankara also visited the Parliament and talked to the commission members in person. There were deadlocks on several issues like marital rape and marrying the victim with their abuser. I also remember that I fought very hard on the issue of abortion. The commission members approved abortion up to 10 weeks of pregnancy, but we wanted it to be 12 weeks. We thought women might need that extra time. Also, in the previous abortion law, the husband's or a man's consent was required for an abortion. We wanted the criminal penalty for the consent obligation to be removed. I worked on that. We worked hard to ensure that women could have an abortion if they wanted, without husbands' consent. Unfortunately, despite all our efforts, we couldn't pass the 12-week limit at the time, but the consent provision was removed. Some other things we didn't manage to pass, either. But on the issue of marital rape, the MPs from CHP made a great effort, and we succeeded in defining marital rape as a crime. Of course, there were times when I felt frustrated because I was the only woman attending these meetings. Sometimes I felt very lonely, but on the other hand, I received support from the women deputies in my party and convinced the party leader when it was necessary. As female members of the CHP, we drafted a document in line with the demands of the women's organizations, stating that we absolutely demanded these changes, and we handed it out to the commission members. AKP's women MPs did the same thing. So, women MPs collaborated to ensure that the changes women wanted were reflected in the penal code. This, in my opinion, led to many changes constituting a victory for women.

Selen (Lermioğlu)

The Penal Code Campaign was an amazing effort. We were constantly in touch with the WWHR, always talking with Liz or Pinar. Our friends did an excellent job of incorporating the international experience. The experiences of international women's organizations, the translations of these laws, etc. We held meetings frequently, sometimes lasting for hours. Sometimes we were busy with other things, but there was always communication and



"Women demanded it and the Penal Code was changed," Türkiye'de Akşam, 22 October 2003

exchange of information. If, for instance, we didn't reach a conclusion during a meeting, that was to be continued, we wouldn't leave it at that. The age of consent, for example. We had long debates about the age of consent. Should it be 16, or should it remain at 18? We would ask, "Well, how did the other countries handle this?" and WWHR would immediately work on it and bring it to us. That was a tremendous support. We could see why other countries had made their decisions so, as we were also connected with women's movements in those countries. We asked how it should be in Turkey, and what each option would entail, what about adolescent sexuality. After long discussions, we collectively agreed on 16 as the age of consent. This is just one example, we had lengthy discussions on every article, and WWHR facilitated them. Today, we can see the positive reflections of this. When AKP tried to amend the sexual abuse law again a few years ago, we had already reached an agreement on the age of consent because we had debated it. When they suddenly brought up the issue of adultery at the last minute, we were prepared to respond immediately. We could speak through a shared political language. There are things left undiscussed, that's true, but we are addressing them as they come to our attention.

It was also crucial for the campaign to remain proactive. When explaining advocacy campaigns to women's movements, I always try to use the Penal Code Campaign as an example. It's important to be proactive, not reactive—to anticipate what's coming and

“At WWHR, we say that the law is not for lawyers but for ourselves. Same for HREP. We’re human beings, we’re citizens. We have the right to understand and to write the laws. So, we sat down and rewrote the penal code. They had no clue. We initiated it and we were perfectly prepared before they even started. We were three points ahead of them. If we won, that’s how we did it.”

Pınar (İlkkaracan)

consider where the country might be heading. Because then, you have time to engage in deeper political discussions and build a consensus. We started working before the change was even on the docket. We were able to create those solidarity networks and get ready. Who was in the parliament? We could get real-time information from the women MPs and the commission members we were in touch with.

Being proactive also allowed us to develop strategies based on demands. For example, marital rape is a difficult article to pass. But we made great gains when the parliament saw a group that presented justified and informed arguments. They weren’t prepared. They had nothing to respond with. We also didn’t bring up marital rape too much during our lobbying or with the media, we included it in our general list of demands. We tried to let it “slip through”, so to speak. After it was accepted, that was when we publicized it.

Other advocacy groups weren’t as proactive. Journalist associations weren’t this prepared. Even legal professionals and bar associations weren’t as prepared. No one was ready except the women’s movement. That’s why things didn’t turn out entirely positive for them. Of course, there were articles that weren’t accepted or didn’t come out in the way we wanted, but we managed to get nearly ninety percent accepted. The advances in technology, e-mail, and e-groups also made things a bit easier for us.

Zelal (Ayman)

With the Penal Code Campaign, WWHR proactively fortified and strengthened its secretariat model. Secretariat, coordination... Thanks to this, we began to create alternative drafts to the government’s proposed law, along with lawyers and feminist activists like myself. This was an entirely new approach to organizing. It was an important model for the entire women’s movement. And we accomplished something worthwhile. It was a spirited period that spanned three years. It began immediately after the Civil Code, without taking a breather.

I remember Köksal Toptan was the Chairman of the Justice Commission during the campaign. We had meetings with him. The Penal Code was about to be passed. Some journalist associations and human rights organizations made some last-minute objections about a few articles so that they could be changed further... Köksal Toptan said something to them along the lines of, “Well, you should have worked as the women’s organizations did! Prepared your drafts and articles in advance and frequented the Parliament as much as they did.” Adultery was a critical last-minute issue in the Penal Code. Tayyip Erdoğan—then Prime Minister—said that they would criminalize adultery only days before the law was to be passed, and it led to us organizing a mass rally in Ankara, gathering again many signatures, making press statements, and ultimately thwarting the attempt...

Of course, we used the EU accession process and our relations at the parliament. At the time, the parliamentary system was very strong. Relations with party officials, women MPs... We tried to use the media effectively. We followed the process and the news very closely. Who said what, who did what. That was our whole life. Even a tiny newspaper article could be crucial for us. We were constantly giving statements, constantly appearing on the news with our protests and press releases, which made us very visible and effective.

The media, the parliament and internal organization were key considerations for us. We were trying to organize internally. I think successful and result-oriented campaigns lie in spending at least fifty percent of the effort on building a solid internal organization based on consensus. It was important for every constituent of the movement to understand and embrace this issue. That’s why moving in unison as a platform, the idea of being one and making sure everybody embraced it was a very important strategy for us. Working together, not being divided, regularly meeting, systematically and thoughtfully... Feminist lawyers made an incredible contribution there. We could talk for hours about a single article, and that article would only be written that way.

Irazca (Geray)

I began working at WWHR at the beginning of the Penal Code Campaign. We were working on a publication, possibly *Beijing+5*, and I believe there was also a HREP training. When I started working, there was a kind of hustle and bustle. I was like, “What’s the Penal Code?” I had no idea, I’m not a lawyer or anything. We all worked together, trying to understand what the current Penal Code was saying. Is that in Arabic or Ottoman Turkish?

TCK'yı bizi de koruyacak şekilde düzenleyin

EŞCİNSELLER MECLİS'TEYDİ



Gay ve lezbiyenler, CHP'li Eraslan'a taleplerini iletti

Lamda İstanbul Eşcinsel Sivil Toplum Girişimi Üyeleri, Meclis'te, CHP Niğde Milletvekili Orhan Eraslan'la görüştü. Gay ve lezbiyenlerin talep ve şikayetlerini dinleyen Eraslan, "Düşüncelerimi komisyona iletacağım. Ben sadece alt komisyon üyesi olarak görevimi yaptım. Son karar komisyonundur" dedi.



CHP'li Eraslan

TBMM'yi ziyaret eden gay ve lezbiyenler, TCK'nın mevcut haliyle eşcinsellere karşı işlenen suçlara suç ortaklığı yaptığını savundu. CHP'li Orhan Eraslan'a taleplerini ileten eşcinseller TCK tasarısının ayrımcılığı giderecek şekilde düzenlenmesini istedi

Gay ve lezbiyenler, Türk Ceza Kanunu Tasarısı'nın kendilerine yönelik ayrımcılığı ve yaşadıkları mağduriyetleri giderecek şekilde düzenlenmesini istedi. Lamda İstanbul Eşcinsel Sivil Toplum Girişimi üyesi bir grup gay ve lezbiyen, Türk Ceza Kanunu Tasarısı üzerindeki çalışmalarını geçtiğimiz günlerde tamamlayan alt komisyonun üyesi CHP Niğde Milletvekili Orhan Eraslan'ı ziyaret ederek, önerilerini dile getirdi. Girişim Sözcüsü Öner Ceylan, tasarıdaki ayrımcılığı yasaklayan maddelerde korunma altına alınan kesimler arasında eşcinsellerin de konulmasını istedi. Eşcinsellere yönelik suçların indirime tabi olmaması ve eşcinselliğin tahrik nedeni sayılmaması gerektiğini kaydeden Ceylan, teşhircilik suçunun da kılıf-kryafet ve dav-

ranış biçimleri nedeniyle yaptırma uğrayan eşcinselleri kapsamayacak biçimde düzenlenmesini önerdi.

İTİLMEK İSTEMİYORUZ

Geçtiğimiz günlerde İstanbul'da adı bir kaçırılma olayına karışan travesti Hülya ile söz alan diğer eşcinseller, normal bir işte çalışmak, farklı işleme tabi tutulmamak istediklerini belirterek, "Bizler de insanız. İtilip kakılmak, hor görülme istemiyoruz, seks işçiliği yapmak istemiyoruz" diye konuştular.

TCK'nın toplumun tümünü ilgilendiren temel kanunlardan biri olduğunu, 78 yıl sonra değişikliğe uğrayacağını belirten CHP Niğde Milletvekili Orhan Eraslan, bu görüş ve önerileri değerlendirmek üzere toplanacak alt komisyona eşcinsellerin önerilerini iletceğini söyledi.

Görüştim, taleplerime katılıyorlar demedim

Orhan Eraslan (CHP Niğde Milletvekili TCK Alt Komisyonu Üyesi): Biz Türkiye'nin her yurttaşının vekiliyiz. Her düşünceden görüş bizim için önemli. Gelenlerin eşcinsel olması her taleplerinin doğru ya da yanlış olduğu anlamına gelmez. Neyin değişeceğine komisyon karar verecek. Kendinden otam herkes koruyabilir. Ancak farklı insanların düşüncelerini alabilmek ve onları yansıtabilmek demokradiktir. Onlarla görüşmem taleplerine katıldığım anlamına gelmez. Alt komisyon üyesi olarak görevimi yaptım.

Yasa eşcinsellere karşı işlenen suçlara ortak!

Yeşim Başaran (Kaos GL üyesi): TCK'daki 124. maddede ayrımcılıklar tanımlanıyor. Ancak cinsel yönelimleri nedeniyle ayrımcılığa maruz kalanlar yok. Eşcinsel olduğu için isten çikarılanlar için de düzenleme istedik. Başarının "haksız tahrik" i düzenleyen 29. maddesi de değişmeli. Eşcinsel cinayetlerinde failere haksız tahrikten indirim uygulanıyor. Bir kişinin sadece eşcinsel olduğu için öldürülmesi hafifletici neden sayılmamalı. TCK mevcut haliyle, eşcinsellere karşı işlenen suçlarda suç ortaklığı yapmış oluyor.

"Make the law also protect LGBT", Vatan, 25 May 2004

TCK passes without adultery amendment

Hammered out in a flash



The TCK bill, which was sent back to the Justice Commission because of the adultery clause, is passed by Parliament in an emergency session and will become applicable on April 1, 2005

ANKARA - TDN Parliament Bureau

The Turkish Parliament swiftly hammered out the last two articles remaining in the Turkish Penal Code (TCK) on Sunday, before approving the entire bill. The TCK, which was withdrawn to Parliament's Justice Commission due to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's insistence on criminalizing adultery, was approved by Parliament

Articles concerning building pollution will be applicable when the bill becomes law. Other articles on pollution will go into effect in two years

in an emergency session on Sunday without the amendment. Consequently, Erdoğan has kept the promise he made in Brussels about

not including an amendment in the TCK on adultery.

However, the amendments proposed by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) during the debates in the commission and General Assembly created some consternation among the deputies. The opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), which has supported the bill since the beginning, criticized AKP efforts to delay the

application of certain articles.

In accordance with a proposal made by the AKP, the TCK will become applicable as of April 1, 2005. (The bill had originally said that the TCK would become applicable one year after it became law.) However, articles on those who pollute the environment will become applicable two years from now. As a result, article 181, "Purposefully Polluting the

It's not legible. "So first, let's figure out what that law says, where they took it from, and see what those countries are doing now... What's the status in Switzerland and France?" We looked at how violations of sexual rights were handled in the Penal Code and aimed to change it accordingly. I thought we would just change a single section, but we literally took it and combed through the whole thing. That's where I gained legal literacy; it still benefits me in entirely different situations today. It was necessary to translate and understand the current law and other laws, make comparisons, and do it from a feminist perspective. The goal was to clearly determine what we wanted in our own language. That was difficult. First, we made an Excel table: The current law says this, such and such law says this, we don't understand this article, does it say that, is it problematic, etc.

Then we organized the first WG meeting with women from İzmir, Diyarbakır, Ankara... That's when I saw those amazing women across Turkey. Kemalists, Kurds, Turks... How to put it? Our political stances might have been different, but the fundamental feminist outlook was the same. For example, in a bride kidnapping case, a feminist lawyer said, "Don't word it that way. In the Black Sea region, that is the way to get married. They call it kidnapping, but the girl actually wants to get married. They just don't have the means. We shouldn't ask them to forbid it. That would be anti-feminist." In other words, the women in the working group brought diverse practices from different parts of Turkey to that table. And in time, the Excel table began to shrink. We got in a headspace of "This is the current law, and that is what we want." That took months. In the end, we produced a booklet that explained what the current law said and what we wanted word for word in a table. But it wasn't like, "Do it like that" – the whole thing was debated to the very punctuation, from start to finish. Should we say "one" there, put an "or" there, add an "and" there? It was that detailed. We gave our amendment proposals to the parliamentary sub-commission in a format they could easily copy and paste. Then the government presented it to the EU and said that "We"—meaning the AKP—"changed the Penal Code." It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that we wrote that law.

Then there's the matter of every campaign having concurrent components. Sure, you drafted the law, but who will advocate for it? How will you explain it, and to whom? There's the Justice Commission, the advocacy, lobbying, media... For every amendment, they launch a parliamentary sub-commission, then it goes to the Justice Commission, and then to the Parliament General Assembly. Pınar was following this process. There was also the matter of ensuring widespread street mobilization and, of course, the media presence. During the formation of the Penal Code Women's Platform, there were over a hundred signatory organizations across Turkey. All those organizations had their own local and national networks, thousands of such examples... That might have been when the close ties between the women's movement and the LGBTQI+ movement were first established, Kaos GL and Lambda joined the platform then. And afterwards, we walked side by side. Everyone could have gone back to their own agendas, but that didn't happen. People organized and embraced it. It was truly everybody's campaign. I can't say how many faxes we sent out for months from dozens of organizations.

Ve 'devrim' başladı

AB için son ödev olan yeni TCK'ya start verildi. AKP ve CHP, özgürlükler ortak önergıyla çenışletecek

Türkiye'nin AB'ye uyum kapsamındaki son ev ödevlerinden biri olan Türk Ceza Kanunu (TCK) Tasarısı için Meclis düğmeye bastı. Olağanüstü toplanan TBMM, dün jet hızıyla tasarının 75 maddesini kabul etti. Genel Kurul'da tasarının tümü üzerinde görüşlerini açıklayan Adalet Bakanı Cemil Çiçek, AKP ve CHP milletvekillerini "uzlaşmayı bozmamaları" yönünde uyardı. Adalet Bakanı olarak kendisinin TCK gibi toplumun her kesimini ilgilendiren bir yasayı gündeme getirerek risk aldığı belirtilen Çiçek "Adalet Bakanı olarak (Böyle gelmiş böyle gider) diyip netametli bir tasarıyı gündeme getirmek yerine işi öylece bir yere bırakıp bakanlığın tadını çıkarmak vardı, ana ben siyasi hayatım boyunca zor olana seçtin" dedi.

KABUL EDİLEN MADDELER

Tasarının dün kabul edilen maddeleri şu düzenlemeleri içeriyor.

■ **RASTGELE CEZA YOK:** Kanunun açıkça suç saymadığı bir fiil için kimseye ceza verilemeyecek ve güvenlik tedbiri uygulanamayacak. Böylece ne hükümetler ne de belediyeler vatandaşlar için yasada olmayan cezaları koymayacak.

■ **MAGANDALARA AĞIR CEZA:** Olası kast tanımı ilk kez TCK'ya girdi. Böylece trafik canavarları, düğün'e muşlardan sonra ateş eden magandaları düşük cezalar almalarının önüne geçildi.

■ **TÖRE CİNAYETLERİNE İNDİRİM:** Mahkemelerin töre cinayetlerinde ceza indirimini için kullandıkları "haksız tahrik" maddesi değiştirildi. Bu değişiklik ile töre cinayetlerine indirim kalktı.

Adalet Komisyonu Başkanı Köksal Toptan'ın verdiği bilgiye göre şu maddeler yeniden düzenlenecek:

■ Hakaret suçunu düzenleyen 125. maddede cezanın alt sınırı 6 aydan 3 aya inecek.

■ İfade özgürlüğüyle ilgili maddeye "Açık ve yakın tehlikenin ortaya çıkması" koşulu eklenecek.

■ "Türk milletini, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ni, devletin kurum ve organlarını aşağılama" başlıklı maddede, bu suçu işleyen kişiye verilecek ceza 1 yıldan 3 yıla kadar yerine, 6 aydan 1 yıla kadar uygulanacak. Ayrıca, eleştiri amaçlı açıklamaların suç oluşturmaması için bu maddeye bir fıkra eklenecek.

AKP ve CHP, 'devrim' niteliğindeki tasarıyla uzlaşmayla ve TBMM'yi geçecek tasarının pazartesiye kadar yasalaştırma kararı aldı. İki partinin uzlaşması sonucu, 346 maddelik tasarının, sabah saat 11.00'den gece 22.00'ye kadar çalışılarak, pazartesi günü tamamlanması hedefleniyor. **ANKARA**

KADINLAR MECLİS'E YÜRÜDÜ



Töre kurbanı Güldünya'nın fotoğrafını taşıdılar



Türkiye'nin çeşitli yerlerinden 7 kadın platformu ve 80 kadın örgütünün üyeleri, namus cinayeti, bekâret kontrolü ile ilgili maddeler için Meclis'e yürüdü. "Devlet elini bedenimden çek", "Bekâret kontrolüne son" "Kadınlara özgürlük" gibi Türkçe ve Kürtçe pankartlar arasında, töre kurbanı Güldünya'nın fotoğrafının altında "Katillerini TCK koruyor" dikkat çekti.



Genel Kurul'u doldurdular

CHP, TBMM'ye gelen her kadın örgütünden 10'ar kişiyi Genel Kurul'a aldı. Pankart açmaması ve slogan atmaması için uyarılan kadınlar dinleyici localarını doldurdular. **ALİ EKEYILMAZ**

"And the 'revolution' started - women at the parliament," , Sabah, 15 September 2004

CAMPAIGN FOR FULL EQUALITY IN THE CONSTITUTION

Selen (Lermioğlu)

Since the constitutional amendment proposal came up rather out of the blue and our time was limited, we couldn't be as proactive as we were in the Penal Code, but it was still a good campaign. KA-DER handled the coordination. Hülya (Gülbahar) and I were handling the secretariat work. WWHR, Purple Roof and WSF were also in the working group. We were somewhat reactive there. In May 2004, while our Penal Code campaign was still ongoing, we received a constitutional draft. It must have been leaked. I mean the government did it on purpose, to signal such a document was being worked on. Lessons learned help—each time we add something new. And we worked a lot then as well. We held frequent meetings and carried out much of the work over e-mail groups. We set up one large group and also had our secretariat and technical group. The Constitution was a political issue, of course. You have the question of mother tongue, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Those issues were more prone to creating differences. Violence, sexual abuse, rape, women's groups were united; in consensus on these. But when sexual orientation or the Kurdish issue came up, we found ourselves in the middle of something we knew would cause a lot of disagreement. The strategy then became something along the lines of: This is the Constitution, and we probably won't reach consensus, but at least let's straddle a political line that won't block each other too much. It was a time when we were always in touch with Muslim feminist NGOs like Başkent and AKDER because we wanted to be able to talk, and we managed that. But the moment we said that gender identity and sexual orientation should be included in the equality and anti-discrimination articles, our friends said, "We cannot sign this." And we expected that. They excused themselves from the platform. But we thought strategically and said, "We understand, but please don't oppose it in your own statements." And they really didn't stand in the way. The mother tongue question created another tremendous dissent. But we talked directly, face to face, with the women's organizations that were more quote-unquote, Kemalist. We spoke with non-feminist organizations, or those that did not call themselves feminist but were so in practice... We didn't want to exclude them because most of us wanted to reach a consensus on the issue. Did we have disagreements? Sure, but only a few. We were still able to succeed. They signed our document. But it was a bit more challenging. Again, we made all the decisions together. We were in daily contact. At the time, different groups were working on different issues. We decided to get involved in all of them, attend every meeting, and present our demands. If we could become members, we would; if not, we'd still attend the meetings and work to ensure that they at least included our demands for equality. We constantly engaged in advocacy, everywhere at all times. We were lobbying the government and political parties, while also advocating in the civil sphere. We ensured that most civil platforms included the demand for equality. We discussed and worked extensively on Article 10, the article of equality. We highlighted our concern with the formulation of the article: "Women, the elderly, and children are groups in need of



"Campaign for de facto Equality," Özgür Gündem, 23 May 2004

protection." We made our first press statement on this article in the draft, before any other group. We also explained to the commission chair why the article shouldn't be formulated that way, and he agreed. He said, "You're absolutely right, we'll change it." The dress code issue also emerged at the time, and we responded swiftly... With the lessons learned, we were able to carry over a more effective and well-established machinery to the Women's Constitution Campaign. There were probably over 120 organizations within the platform. It was a good number for the time.

UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW)

Gaye (Eratur)

Another area I worked on with WWHR was the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and Conferences (CSW). In 2002, when I was elected to the parliament, I attended the ECOSOC meeting in Bangkok at Pınar's insistence. Pınar said no MPs were attending that meeting, that it was critical because the Bush administration wanted to roll back gains made in Beijing in 1995 and Cairo in 1994, especially on abortion, and that

it would be good if I lobbied there. So, I went as a newly elected MP, and I learned a lot there. I was the only MP in the official delegation. At the time, there was no WhatsApp or smartphones but Pinar and I continuously communicated via e-mail and messages. Pinar told me to speak with certain people. By talking to them and introducing myself, I was able to participate actively in the meetings. Turkey played a very important role. We fully supported the resolutions adopted in Beijing and Cairo. We managed to prevent any backlash there. I find this important because World Women's Conference reviews can be platforms for reversing the rights gained. Fortunately, women worked hard, resisted, and prevented it.

BREAKING TABOOS: WOMEN AND SEXUALITY IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

Pinar (İlkkaracan)

In the 90s, I traveled to Muslim countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh to meet various women from feminist NGOs at the invitation of WLUML. I started visiting local women's organizations working on issues like harassment and rape, but sexuality was a taboo. There was little to go on, but I started collecting what I could; someone would hand me a story or a poem written by a female poet a century ago. I started a personal archive, then I conducted extensive research and contacted academics studying sexuality in Muslim societies.

I saw that I had collected quite a bit. I had the idea of publishing this as a book, but of course, we wanted it to be used for activism, so we needed to publish it ourselves and distribute it for free to reach activists. That's how *Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies* was born. Back then, I didn't know how hard it would be to publish a book like that without a publisher. If it weren't for Gülşah's meticulous work, that book wouldn't have come out. After a lot of work, we published it in 2000. It received much more attention than we had anticipated. We sent it to people by post. Most of them were asking for 10 or 20 copies to give out to other organizations in their countries.

The positive feedback was overwhelming... But I was afraid. It was a very radical book for its time, especially the section on lesbianism—even the mention of homosexuality was against the law, a taboo in many Muslim countries back then. Despite this, I even received congratulatory letters from imams. That I wasn't expecting. A letter from an imam in Fiji! Somehow, the book reached him, and he sat down and wrote us a congratulation letter. This led us to think that perhaps we could do activism on this issue in Muslim countries. That's when the idea of building a network that worked on sexual rights in Muslim societies was born.

COALITION FOR SEXUAL AND BODILY RIGHTS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES (CSBR)

Pinar (İlkkaracan)

I visited organizations and academics working on sexuality in many countries before founding the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR). That's always been my strategy, go, meet in person, have a conversation. Get to know the people you'll be working with individually, before establishing a network. And let them get to know you. I don't believe that a network forms by just organizing a meeting. You need to build a relationship of trust. I was thinking of establishing a Middle East network. Turkey is a Middle Eastern country. For instance, "honor killings" don't just happen in Turkey, but in many parts of the Middle East. I traveled to Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Palestine, etc., looking for organizations that worked on sexuality. Some dealt with forced marriages, others with "honor killings", and some with sexual violence. But no one looked at it holistically through the lens of sexual rights.

We identified 21 people and brought them together at a conference in Istanbul, at the Pera Palace Hotel. I insisted on holding the meeting there because of its special history. In a sense, I thought we women were rewriting the history of the Middle East and the Ottoman Empire concerning our sexual rights in this historic hotel.

The meeting was planned, everything was ready, and then 9/11 happened. No one in the world was traveling, including diplomats. We wrote to everyone. I called the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "We have a meeting; what should we do? Is there any danger for Turkey?" They said, "Absolutely not. Do not hold such a meeting." We wrote to everyone, saying, "Let's postpone, because we are responsible for your safety," etc. But everyone, except for one person, said, "Even if we die, we will come to that meeting. The topic of sexuality is very important, and we must do this." It was a huge risk for us, but we held the meeting anyway. It required a bit of feminist courage.

We decided to establish a solidarity network at the meeting. We held a press conference afterward. The media interest was incredible! Muslim society, sexuality, women, rights... the media was fascinated. It was a very sexy topic. The room was packed. The conference had ended the previous evening, and there was a press conference at 10 the next morning. We had to write the press statement, which we finished at 5 in the morning, working all night. There were arguments, noise, chaos... Some said, "We can't say sexual rights." Others said, "It's a Western term," for example. CSBR later contributed significantly to establishing the term "sexual rights" in these countries, but we couldn't use it in the press release at the time. However, all the participants were deeply feminist—the leading feminist organizations in their countries. The statement included the word sexuality many times. It repeatedly said that violations of sexual rights are violations of women's human rights. The statement

Sexuality as a component of human rights

Jordan Times, Amman

Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies Edited by Pinar Ilkkaracan Istanbul, Women for Women's Human Rights, 2000, Pp. 455

WOMEN FOR Women's Human Rights (WWHR), founded in 1993, is an autonomous human rights NGO based in Turkey. By publishing 'Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies', WWHR has ventured into a field largely unresearched and still considered taboo by many, despite the growing body of literature dealing with gender.

The reasoning behind the book's focus is clearly stated in the preface: "Sexuality is an integral part of our lives, our relationships, and our communities. And whether rural or urban women, illiterate or highly educated, we all face violations of our human rights in this area.... Sexuality continues to be used as a basic tool for patriarchal control of women and for oppression of society at large."

Editor Pinar Ilkkaracan is very explicit that 'Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies' does not claim to be the final word on the subject, nor to speak for all Muslim women. Nevertheless, the scope of the book is impressive in terms of its subject matter, the diversity of the backgrounds of the contributing authors and their styles of presentation. Topics covered range from Islam's concept of female sexuality, the question of virginity, honour crimes, female genital mutilation, sexual abuse and rape, to love, marriage and sexual fulfilment. These topics are addressed in the context of various societies, with examples

drawn mainly from Turkey and Arab countries, including Jordan and Palestine, but also from Pakistan, India, Iran, Malaysia and the Muslim community in the UK.

The authors include women from all these countries and from many walks of life: academics, feminist activists, doctors, poets, writers, psy-

chologists, journalists and lawyers. This gives a multi-disciplinary perspective on the topics at hand.

Concerning Arab countries, the book includes reprints of important writings by Fatima Mernissi, Nawal Saadawi, Leila Ahmed, Evelyne Accad, Mervat F. Hatem, Alifa Rifaat, Lama Abu Odeh, Nahid Toubia

and Aida Seif Al Dawla.

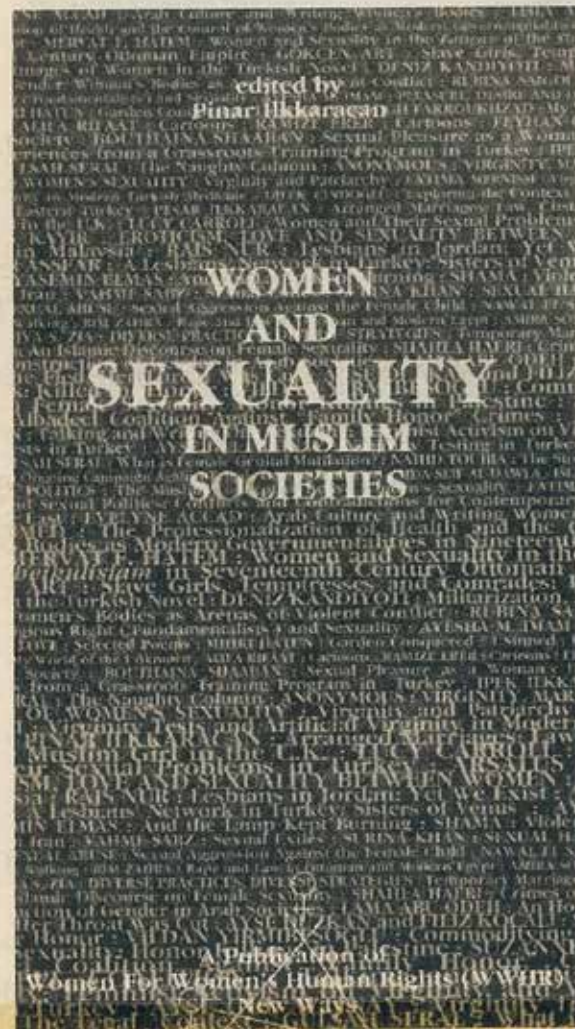
The contributions are a mix of historical studies and current analysis. Some are scholarly research papers; others are the results of field surveys, training programmes to empower women, or campaigns for women's rights. Still others are personal accounts, poems or cartoons. As a result, although the book appears rather dense at first glance, it is highly readable; there is never a dull moment.

A recurring theme in the book is that Islam does not have a monolithic view of the various issues related to women's sexuality; nor do harmful practices, such as honour crimes or female genital mutilation, derive from Islamic teachings.

Some of the most startling examples of variation in Muslim society are to be found in Bouthaina Shaaban's eye-opening account of visiting the Tawariq society in Algeria southern Sahara. Here she found that men, not women, cover their heads; teenage boys and girls are encouraged to get to know each other well before marriage; marriage partners are freely chosen, and women are as likely as men to seek divorce. There is no social stigma placed on divorced women or on children born out of wedlock; wife-beating is almost unheard of; and it is totally unacceptable for a man to order his wife to cook dinner for him.

— Sally Bland

WWHR: Kadirin Insan Haklari Projesi İnönü cad. Saadet Apt. No: 37/6 Gümüşsuyu 80090 Istanbul, Turkey E-mail: wwwhr@superonline.com



Apr. 30, 2001

included the phrase, "Women and men have the right to live their sexuality according to their own values."

First, the statement would be read in Turkish and English; participants said let's also read it in Arabic. It was a great idea. Then we sat down, going over the translations word by word. That was very important. "Should we translate it this way or that way in Arabic?" It took hours. The smallest letter can change the whole meaning in Arabic. Amal Bashar from Yemen read it, starting with "Bismillahirrahmanirrahim." I can't describe the shock on the press members' faces. It's funny now, but at the time, it was very new for feminists to start a press statement on sexuality with "Bismillahirrahmanirrahim".

That's how we started in the Middle East. We met once a year, and we said, "Let's invite organizations we know." For example, Tunisians would then invite someone from Palestine. The meeting and our press release received a lot of attention. News spread that women from Muslim societies had come together to work on sexuality in the Middle East. We received so many e-mails. "What are you doing? This is amazing!"

Irazca (Geray)

That was back in 2001... I was expecting the symposium to be a chaotic mess, but it didn't turn out that way. I had no idea what to expect; I didn't know any of these women, and I had no clue what sexual rights even were. I was 24. So, I was supposed to be dealing with the logistics. There were interpreters, translation booths, cables running across the middle of the meeting room. I was constantly worried that someone would trip over the cables and fall. But then the discussions started, and while I was keeping an eye on the cables, I was also thinking, "Oh my God, what are these women talking about?" Seeing those powerful women from North Africa, the Middle East... right in front of me! I'll never forget the ones from Palestine, especially Nadera Kevorkian, and Aida Seif El Dawla from Egypt. It stirred up something entirely new for me, both emotionally and intellectually. I've never worked in a place that excited me as much as this did. It was thrilling. 9/11 had just happened. We went ahead with the meeting plans. All the women who were coming had confirmed. They were already living in very difficult places, and they were still going to come. Then, after 9/11, everything came to a halt: flights, everything. The whole world stopped. And it was the Middle East, after all. How would it work? People said, "Let's cancel this, this isn't the right time." We thought they probably wouldn't come. But all those women said, "Enough, our demands keep getting postponed, sidelined, no, we refuse this, we reject being put on the backburner again!" I don't think a single person cancelled. And all the languages—English, French, Turkish, Arabic... That was the first time I saw how differently feminism could be understood. Not just within one country, but across these regions; how it could be understood and lived differently, yet still find such clear common ground. And then there was the issue of religion. There were countries and individuals who didn't identify as Muslim, like me. I was thinking, "I have no religion, no faith, what am I doing here?" Years later, I saw that there were women in the coalition promoting women's rights using the Quran in

“9/11 happened, the whole world came to a halt... And it was the Middle East, after all. We thought they probably wouldn’t come. But all those women said, “Enough, our demands keep getting sidelined; no, we refuse to be put on the back burner again!” And after three days of discussions in Arabic, French, English, Turkish, we began the press statement with “Muslim societies” and ended with “the right to pleasure.”

Irazca (Geray)

Asia, and it was an eye-opener. The courage of those women... Anyway, that first meeting was amazing. It wasn’t calm at all; a lot of shouting and arguing. In the end, we had to come up with a declaration. The discussions went on until morning... We needed to produce a one-page document, just a few items... The right to sexual pleasure, getting that into the text... After hours of debate in Arabic, French, English, Turkish... We started with “Muslim societies” and ended with “the right to pleasure”.

Pınar (İlkkaracan)

In the early 200s, there was a strong global movement to advance sexual rights. I was sending information and materials to the coalition, and we were discussing them among ourselves. In Muslim societies, radical Islam or the radical right opposes anything Western, and that movement is very strong. It’s not something to take lightly. So the activists weren’t opposing the content, but since the term “sexual rights” first emerged in the West, they feared radical Islam and the far right would say, “You copied this from the West! You’ve taken a Western term, which means you’re betraying your people!” They were afraid of this. But

then we had a meeting in Malta in 2003, where the concept of “sexual rights” was accepted by everyone and added to the coalition’s name.

With our initiative and the recognition of the coalition in the region, NGOs in the network began to engage with LGBTQI+ issues. But it was only by crossing borders, breaking barriers—both internal and international—that they encountered sexual orientation and gender identity, which led to a transformation. I always emphasize the importance of crossing borders and barriers, both internal and international, for the feminist movement or social movements.

In the Middle East, for any organization to work on sexuality, even on issues like “honor killings” or forced marriage, let alone LGBTQI+ matters, is extremely political. I believe this is still the case, but back then, it was even more so. These were deeply political, radical organizations. However, there were no organizations working on LGBTQI+ issues in their own countries. Through CSBR, the topic of homosexuality entered the agenda of these groups in the Middle East for the first time. The coalition and the local organizations started supporting them. For example, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) was inspired by the coalition. Its founder, Hossam Baghat, came to Istanbul and said, “We started our NGO thanks to you.” They also played a pioneering role in Egypt and the Middle East. CSBR acted as a catalyst in the formation of many organizations in the region.

I’ll never forget this: In 2003, we started receiving letters from women’s NGOs in Asia. I knew some, others I didn’t. They said, “You’ve started something like this in the Middle East, and we really need it too. Can we join?” I brought it up at our meeting: “Asians are saying this.” Everyone responded, “What does that have to do with anything?” So I replied, “Why don’t you establish your own organization or network in Asia?” Then Shazia Premjee from Aahung, a sexual health and rights organization in Pakistan, wrote: “Let me explain the situation as a Pakistani. Is Pakistan in the Middle East or Asia? Do we have ‘honor killings’? Yes. Do you have them too? Yes. There are also many other human rights violations related to sexuality. Clerics coming from the Middle East to Asia bring with them human rights violations against women, the traditions, customs, all in the name of Islam. Saudi Arabia finances them, and they spread from the Philippines to Malaysia and Indonesia. The practices that violate women’s rights in the Middle East are brought to Asia by these clerics. Radical Islamists are working together; we women, feminists, also need to work together.” It was an excellent analysis; very convincing. And that’s how CSBR expanded to Asia.

Dédé (Oetemo)

I met Pınar in 2003, at the Reproductive Health and Rights Conference in Bangkok. As an Indonesian, I had learned a lot from my Muslim colleagues and students about sexuality and various gender identities in the context of *fiqh* and *hadiths*. I gave a presentation on the topic at the conference. After my presentation, Pınar approached me and asked to be introduced to my colleagues. I was part of a broad network of feminists, LGBTQI+ activists, and those working on sexual and bodily rights in Indonesia. Pınar also met organizations

like Sisters in Islam (SIS) in Malaysia, ARROW, and the Women's Health Foundation (WHF) in Jakarta, as well as Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, a rising politician from one of Indonesia's Islamist parties and a sexual rights activist. Later in 2004, WWHR and WHF co-organized a meeting in Jakarta. Activists, academics, and organizations from the MENA region came together at this meeting. We discussed various topics such as early marriage, sexual and bodily rights, and LGBTQI+ rights. From the beginning, we had a queer feminist perspective, which was crucial. This is how CSBR emerged and expanded into South and Southeast Asia.

We used e-groups to organize, this was before Facebook. We shared information, wrote petitions, and issued action alerts to support the sexual and bodily rights advocacy our partners were conducting in their countries. For example, I remember the campaign we ran against the re-criminalization of adultery in Turkey. We also worked at the UN, the CSW, ICPD, etc., where we engaged in lobbying and advocacy activities and organized parallel events.

Karin (Ronge)

We were also questioned why CSBR is called "Coalition for Sexual & Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies". Why Muslim societies, why emphasizing a religious discourse? Because the members of the network live in countries with mostly Muslim majorities: politics, laws, and societal life are very often based on religious interpretations and traditions; religious arguments of right or wrong are misused to oppress people who differ. But not only in Muslim societies, in every country and culture in the world—also in secular ones—religion plays an important role in the construction of patriarchy and the discrimination of women, girls, and LGBTQI+, as rising conservatism and right-wing movements show us. We should definitely be prepared and develop counter arguments as activists.

The extensive exchange of diverse opinions is often the best to develop strategies. Sometimes, it is necessary to get out of one's own bubble to develop new approaches; new ways of thinking and acting. This was also incredibly important for WWHR's work at the UN level. Problems women in Turkey are facing are not unique; it's often a worldwide problem, like violence against women. But we need different approaches. Every country has different legislation, and it is very important to share good practices as well as mistakes to find the best approach for advocating women's human rights on all levels, locally and internationally. I think it became even more important in Turkey after AKP came to power.

A PATH TO WOMEN'S SOLIDARITY: HREP AND COMMUNITY CENTERS

Nigar (Etizer Karacık)

Women in Çanakkale who participated HREP immediately started to organize and set up a marketplace. I had already conducted groups with 200 women in the first two years. This quickly evolved into the idea of establishing an association. We met with the women, drafted the bylaws, and were ready to establish the association. We were so excited. We were going to go to the police station to register. I'll never forget, it was a Wednesday. We were supposed to meet in front of the station at 10. We arrived, but no one else was there. These women, who usually arrived on time, even before me, hadn't shown up. What to do? We called, but no one answered. Two women eventually showed up, but we needed seven. They said, "Their husbands didn't give them permission." There wasn't time to go and convince the husbands. I said, "This can't happen. We can't turn back now. We'll be embarrassed in front of the police; they're expecting us." Meanwhile, our group of elderly women were at the community center. It was quite funny. They had their choir practice, but these women were also a group committed to gender equality. I went in and said, "We need your help. Something happened. Who will come with us to the police? But you'll have to form the first board of directors." These women were around 70 years old. They finished their singing and stood up. "We'll come. If it's going to open a path for the younger women and be of any help to them, we'll do it. And our husbands won't mind; they're six feet under." So, we went to the police. Our association was actually founded thanks to the power of these elderly women, who paved the way for the younger ones. They formed the board for the first six months. Then, with the events we organized, the younger women gained courage. Later on, the younger women's husbands realized there was nothing to be afraid of and felt more at ease.

The solidarity within the groups was wonderful. One woman was newly divorced and attending the group for the first time. All the members gave her incredible support. "Do you have a place to stay? Do you have furniture? I have an extra, take this..." They set up a home for her. Another woman from a different HREP group helped her find a job.

I recall so many things! One day my trainer friend Nuran and I were at the market, and a watermelon seller recognized us. He said, "Lady, my wife and sister are attending your program. And it's been great. They've stopped fighting since they started attending. "That's wonderful," we said, "we're so glad. They've probably changed you too." He replied, "How could I not? They keep talking about it all the time. Going on and on, 'We have rights, we have rights!' You give them those pamphlets, and they're making me read those too."

When it came to the sexuality sessions, they didn't want to talk about it at first. If they shared any experiences, it was always about someone else. But on the other hand, they also wanted to talk. In HREP, the topic of sexuality is separated from reproduction. It focuses entirely on a woman discovering her own sexuality—getting to know her body and respecting

it. But how about your story? Transitioning to that part is a bit challenging. But once they do, it brings incredible relief. After the sexuality module, the whole group atmosphere changes. Their way of looking at each other, supporting each other, changes. The order of the modules has a logic. If this topic were discussed earlier, they might not talk about it at all because they don't yet trust each other or know that it would remain confidential. A key aspect of the program is the principle of confidentiality, and as women come to believe it, they share more readily.

I'll never forget this: One day, I came to work, and a man had left a flower on my desk. "Who brought this?" I asked. Later, I found out... "Thanks to you, my relationship with my wife has improved," this man said. I asked, "What relationship?" "You know, that kind of relationship... intimacy. Our marital relationship has improved. We still argue, still fight, but our marital relationship has improved tremendously." He didn't say sex life, he said marital relationship. So, I asked, "How did it improve?" The woman had told him, "This isn't just your thing. I can enjoy it too. This also concerns me, so I have a say in this." The man said, "When she relaxed, I relaxed." So he had decided to come, despite his embarrassment. "Whatever you're doing, it's for the good of the country and the nation. You're doing something good for the families of this country. Whatever you're doing, keep going. And may God bless you," he said. I never thought I'd hear "God bless you" in connection with those topics.

Another one: we had a woman, an assistant staff at the community center. During the sexuality module, we wrote the names of sexual organs on the board and talked about them very openly. After we left, she saw the board. She ran to the director and said, "Ma'am, those crazy women downstairs are telling women inappropriate things. Do you know about this?" And the director said, "No way! Really? Listen carefully to what they're saying. Let me know what they're up to." So she followed us around like a spy. But our director was a wonderful woman who totally supported us. She actually told the assistant to listen because she wanted her to learn about these things. A few months later, the director told her, "You've changed tremendously. Something has happened to you in these four months." The assistant replied, "It's like I've graduated from a university just by listening to these groups. These women have taught me so much. I never realized I had so much to share. I want to join and tell my own story." She joined the next group. She had only gone to primary school but said, "I graduated from the HREP university. And I have a diploma now."

Community centers provided an excellent environment. They offered an ideal space for working with women, a safe space. When the community centers closed, we were concerned about where and with whom HREP would continue. However, by the time the centers closed, the program was already well-known. Both in Çanakkale and across the country, HREP had become a recognized name in many places. Even though we were worried when the centers closed, soon after, applications for new HREP groups began to come. Despite the closure of the community centers, I continued to run HREP groups for four years in state institutions, using the meeting rooms of the provincial directorate or other places. Twenty women would come and say, for instance, "We want to take HREP." I would tell them, "Write a petition, apply, and I'll arrange a place." The administrators couldn't turn down those petitions.

“We managed to sustain HREP through organizing with women who participated in the program. They demanded it. Because by then, thousands of women had personally discovered its importance, benefits to themselves and others, and, of course, to society. Also, all our trainers are fantastic women; everyone found a way. So, it's not that simple, even if you say it's over, it won't end, it will grow stronger.”

Nigar (Etizer Karacık)

We continued our work wonderfully. Meanwhile, municipalities and universities started to provide spaces, and HREP groups continued there.

What did I do in Çanakkale? I opened four community centers. The first was a public institution, but the others were opened in neighborhoods as civil initiatives. We opened them with the support of ELDER, the association founded by HREP participants, other civil women's groups, and the municipality. They are still operational. We achieved this with women who organized through HREP. They went to the municipality and demanded, "This can't be done with the municipality alone, it has to be done with us." There's even a speech by the mayor, saying, "We are doing this with HREP women." Nothing ended, but we struggled a lot, and we are really struggling in these recent years. But that's life. We keep fighting, and we'll continue to fight.

Maybe if the community centers had closed within the first few years, the negative impact would have been much greater. But after all those years, the negative impact was only a bit of lost energy, strength, and time. Then we stood strong again in the field. Because by then, thousands of women had personally discovered the importance of this program, its benefits to themselves and others, and, of course, that it was a program contributing not just to women but to society as well. It also has to be said that our trainers are all fantastic women, so everyone found a way. Even if you say it's over, it won't end, it will only grow stronger. If it



"Women are Organizing", Çanakkale Gündem, 3 August 2000

were going to end, it would have ended in the first five years, but now it won't. As we say, "It's over when we women say it's over!"

I'm the mother of two daughters. Doğa is 30 years old, the same age as the association. I call her a WWHR child. I think the association must have polished my eggs. Something wonderful came from within me. Do you know why? Because I could speak freely, I could talk about my own sexuality freely. I found the strength to transform my experiences. I had the feeling of doing something very important, it's not something that can be measured with money or status. To me, WWHR means finding myself. And once I found myself, it meant I could tell other women, "It's been done before, so you can do it too." I know that a more democratic, a more equal country is possible for my daughters, and I am working to help create that.

Karin (Ronge)

HREP, which we called the legal literacy program for women initially, aims to empower women by learning and exercising their rights granted by laws. But WWHR's aim has always been broader: in meeting as a group over a longer period in neighborhoods and community centers, women experienced solidarity and support; they not only learned about laws and rights but also how to stand up together to fight against injustice, discrimination, and oppression. And they became encouraged to start their own projects, platforms, and organizations. They became agents not only for their own lives and decisions but also resource persons for their communities. As Margaret Schule and Sakuntala Rajasingham say, "Legal literacy is situated at a crossroads in which law, education, gender, and political action intersect." ("Legal Literacy: A Tool for Women's Empowerment," WLD Publications, UNIFEM OEF International, 1992.)

The impact of HREP for most of the women attending was sometimes incredible. At a meeting in Gazi neighborhood community center with the director of the Global Women Fund at the time, Kavita Ramdas, one of the women told her story about how much her life and that of her family had changed since she participated in HREP. She started to work and earned the respect of her husband for the first time. Oh, she also met resistance at first, but with the support of her peer group, she could withstand the badmouthing of her broader family. She said the best thing that happened was that she and her husband fell in love with each other after so many years of estrangement on both sides as her marriage had been arranged as she was quite young.

Another woman talked about how her relationship with her daughter had dramatically changed after the training. She understood that she had treated her daughter the very same way she had been treated as a girl: disregarded for her abilities, forced to keep quiet, discriminated against as a girl. After HREP, she started to communicate openly with her daughter and support her in all her decisions. She said it is not only men who oppress women and girls; women very often support patriarchy, therefore both need to change, men as well as women.

As WWHR started to implement HREP at state run community centers all over Turkey, we were strongly supported by state actors, and it didn't change as AKP came to power at first. Slowly over the years, this changed. We got some criticism on our HREP brochures like we should not publish training materials on sexual rights of women but rather on decency and honor of women. We did not give in; we did not change the themes and messages of our training materials or our publications, which are another imported tool for information and experience sharing.

HREP'S JOURNEY: LEARNING, ORGANIZING, MOBILIZING

Ebru (Batik)

We did supervision visits after the trainer training, and the first one I attended was in Van with Zelal. I felt like I was in a documentary, to be honest. We were with the women of Van, who speak half in Kurdish and half in Turkish. The training session was ongoing, while children were coming in and out, with their mothers chasing them around. There were elderly women as well as very young women, all passionately talking. It was Müjgan's group, I remember that clearly. She managed the women beautifully, sweet yet firm, she would scold them but also make them feel completely at ease. I was really impressed. When I introduced myself and said I worked with HREP, they would welcome me warmly: "Oh my dear, welcome!" You quickly became part of that community, like you'd been there for ten years, waking up in that house every morning. Then we would move on to Adana, the same thing. It felt like one big family. It was like visiting an uncle, then an aunt, later staying with cousins for a few days... It was like a huge community spread across Turkey.

I first heard about local organizing through WWHR. In my mind, organizations would usually have a president, a vice president, a board. But the idea of local women organizing "based on their own needs" as the saying goes... that was new to me. For instance, it wasn't about working *for* the children but working *with* the children. That's what organizing meant at WWHR: working together. It wasn't about doing something for others, everyone was doing something for themselves, but we were moving together—that felt really good. That was beautiful to me. I think this is also why HREP groups naturally transformed into solidarity networks and led to local organizing. And why the association worked well with these local organizations. We might have appeared more privileged and bourgeois, but it wasn't like that within the association. There was the sense that we all had something to learn from each other and we were beautiful together, which I believe resonated deeply in the local organizing efforts.

“Organizing meant working together at WWHR. It wasn't about doing something for others, everyone was doing something for themselves, but we were moving together—that felt really good. That was beautiful to me. I think this is also why HREP groups naturally transformed into solidarity networks and led to local organizing. And why the association worked well with these local organizations.”

Ebru (Batik)

Evre (Kaynak)

I started coordinating HREP at a very young age. I thought I knew a lot, but quickly realized that I knew nothing. It was actually HREP trainers and the women at WWHR who truly educated me. I learned incredible things from them. İpek is one of the women from whom I've learned the most in my life. I learned a lot from the trainers as well. Nigar is a person who's changed my life, for instance. I learned what it means for a woman to hear her own voice. People talk about the women's movement and empowerment and often focus on women feeling good and having self-esteem. But HREP showed me that change wasn't about that. It was about transforming life, about creating real change. Women joining the workforce, organizing... It wasn't just about how women felt but about how they lived and true transformations. Seeing how these changes could happen through human rights programs and solidarity between women was truly striking for me. I believe I benefited from the program just as much as the participants. I don't see myself as coordinating the program but more as a beneficiary.

When the gods would destroy they first make mad - Euripides, Great poet (483 B.C.-408 B.C.)



A COURTESY PHOTO BY THE TRAINING FACILITATOR

Learning to exist as a woman

PAZLA GERYK
The New Anatolian / Istanbul

1

When the gods would destroy they first make mad - Euripides, Great poet (483 B.C.-408 B.C.)

When the gods would destroy they first make mad - Euripides, Great poet (483 B.C.-408 B.C.)

When the gods would destroy they first make mad - Euripides, Great poet (483 B.C.-408 B.C.)

When the gods would destroy they first make mad - Euripides, Great poet (483 B.C.-408 B.C.)

When the gods would destroy they first make mad - Euripides, Great poet (483 B.C.-408 B.C.)

When the gods would destroy they first make mad - Euripides, Great poet (483 B.C.-408 B.C.)



Closing day of the Graduate Women's Association, graduates of the program on 12 July 2005

domestic violence, 81 percent reported increased self-confidence, 54 percent returned to school, 74 percent increased their say in decision making at home, 95 percent improved their relations with the family, 90 percent became sensitive people on human rights and citizenship, and 14 percent got together and founded organizations.

22 magnificent women
"In speaking to the names of the 22 magnificent women here," said Selah Gökdoğan who received her facilitator certificate during the ceremony, "I already know about women's rights and that they were being ignored in every area of life. We thought we had the awareness but during the training we saw that up to now we were lacking the skill to do anything about it. Today we'll go back to our towns with specific goals in mind. We promised each other we would succeed, and I know we'll return as women who have created social change."

Equals since the dawn of republic, what women need training?
Program coordinator İpek İkkaracan

İkkaracan: "There are a lot of services that the state isn't providing for women and the innocents of civil society are limited. Women have to learn to help themselves. We will live in a patriarchal society and this should also be ended. This can happen only if there are independent women's organizations that work together. Women's organizing is necessary also for women's personal, social and political empowerment."

INA: Where do the 15 organizations working under WHERP stand within the women's movement?

İİ: It's a marvelous thing. These groups have become the first feminist women's organizations in their provinces that actually have a women's perspective, while there are women's organizations that lack this perspective. The associations in Çanakkale and Van were the first ones they created a model, motivation and sense of power for other groups to organize on the grassroots level. Plus, there's solidarity among these local organizations. They affect the local administrations and municipalities in their province and cause the local politics to change and become more gender sensitive.

Why become trainers?

I learned the art of struggle through the WHERP. I used to sort of avoid, but I'm a ghost no longer I said!
Perhaps one would want to be a trainer simply to have those words spoken by a fellow woman. We asked the newly certified trainers why they wanted to become trainers and what purpose the training would serve for women in the field, and which women they would include in their groups.

"I'm a university graduate and work as a financial adviser," said Zeynep Özgür, director of the Van Women's Association (VANKEV). "I'm a member of a union. I've been through a university degree, until I took this training a few years ago I was living within the traditional boundaries of society. This training gave me the tools to put the things I knew into practice. After the training I founded VANKEV together with women who thought like me. Recently we opened a women's counseling center. We're a relatively small organization located in an area where the feudal structure is very dominant. We also founded the organization we've done a lot and currently we're trying to open a women's shelter. As a trainer I'll be able to help this movement spread even more and affect more women and fields."

Gülten Demirel is the project manager at the Women's Counseling Center in Van. "I took the trainer's training to better communicate with the women who apply to our counseling center," she said. "From the opening of our association a year-and-a-half ago and the center nine months ago around 500 women applied to the association and close to 200 to the center. Sixty percent of the applicants come to us due to violence. My first group will be with women from unions and cooperatives. Then I'll open groups with the rural Kurdish women who were forced to migrate to Van. I'll conduct these groups in Kurdish since they don't know Turkish and English."

Women's organizing of women
Pinar İkkaracan emphasized that one of the initial reasons for starting the program was to change the status quo. "Women's organizations were concentrated in three major cities," she said. "Women wanting to organize around their needs in the rest of Anatolia had no tools to do so we aimed to offer such a tool. Also we wanted to break a prevalent misconception that lawyers know the laws but regular citizens can't. Citizens can learn and defend their rights. Enabling a woman to immediately use her legal rights to the degree that she can take her issues to court is the final phase of this awareness."

What's the main goal?
"The training is a multi-purpose program, yet its ultimate goal is to enable women to organize around their own needs and demands," added

İkkaracan. "There are a lot of services that the state isn't providing for women and the innocents of civil society are limited. Women have to learn to help themselves. We will live in a patriarchal society and this should also be ended. This can happen only if there are independent women's organizations that work together. Women's organizing is necessary also for women's personal, social and political empowerment."

11 YILDA 4 BİN KADININ KATILDIĞI EĞİTİM PROGRAMININ RAKAMLARLA ANATOMİSİ

Kendimi de değiştirdim kocamı da

Eğitim programının yarattığı değişim



"ÖNCEDEN HAYALET GİBİYDİK"

İpek ASCI
Eğitim programcısı

"Kadınların İnsan Hakları Eğitimi" projesi tam on bir yıldır Çanakkale'den Van'a Türkiye'nin dört bir yanındaki kadınların sorunlarının çözümü için mücadele ediyor ve büyük değişimler yaratıyor. Ortaya çıkan tablo gösteriyor ki, hepimizin değişime "I changed myself and my husband," Vatan, 12 February 2006



İpek İkkaracan Pinar İkkaracan

Projenin mimarları

Kadınların İnsan Hakları Eğitimi Programı'nın koordinatörleri Pinar ve İpek İkkaracan, 14 yıldır kadın hakları konusunda çalışıyor. 10 kardeş, emel ve eğitimci yarattığı değişim, en sık eleştirilen eğitim programı olarak televizyona taşındı. NTV'de gösterilmeye başlanan ve "Kadınlar... Mor Dur" isimli tapan bir belgesel dizisi tanıtımlarında Türkçe Soray, Ece Ulu, Gülben Ergen, Hilmiye Köçüğü ve Ayşe Kulin gibi ünlüler de rol alarak, kadınların bu eğitime davet ediyor.



→ Kadınların yüzde 54'ü medeni hakları, yüzde 50 ekonomik hakları, yüzde 82'ü sosyal hakları "özellikle" dedi.
→ Yüze 74'ünün özgüveni arttı.
→ Yüze 71'i eşlerinin artık onlara daha iyi davrandığını söylüyor.
→ Yüze 63'ünün çocuklarına karşı davranışları daha olumlu oldu.
→ Yüze 67'si programa katıldktan sonra aile içi şiddetin tamamen bittiğini, yüzde 211 azaldığını, yüzde 151'den arttığını söyledi.
→ Yüze 67'si programa katıldktan sonra aile içi şiddetin tamamen bittiğini, yüzde 211 azaldığını, yüzde 151'den arttığını söyledi.
→ Yüze 67'si programa katıldktan sonra aile içi şiddetin tamamen bittiğini, yüzde 211 azaldığını, yüzde 151'den arttığını söyledi.
→ Yüze 67'si programa katıldktan sonra aile içi şiddetin tamamen bittiğini, yüzde 211 azaldığını, yüzde 151'den arttığını söyledi.
→ Yüze 67'si programa katıldktan sonra aile içi şiddetin tamamen bittiğini, yüzde 211 azaldığını, yüzde 151'den arttığını söyledi.
→ Yüze 67'si programa katıldktan sonra aile içi şiddetin tamamen bittiğini, yüzde 211 azaldığını, yüzde 151'den arttığını söyledi.

Yirmi beş yıllık bir mücadele sonunda değişti Medeni Kanun, 54 ek maddesi getirilmesine rağmen Medeni Kanun kadın haklarından habersiz. "Değersiz" der gibi bakılıyor. Halkın sokak ortasında öve ve namaz adına cinayetler işleniyor ve her katliyanın beki üç kuşak sonra bir değişim yaratılacağına inanılıyor. Dahası, kadın bilginlere de adanmış ya da eşinin ataerki zihniyeti yüzünden bütün çabalarını sonuçsuz kalacağına inanılıyor.
→ Oysa 1997'nin best aygıtının "Kadınların İnsan Hakları Eğitimi"nin ortaya koyduğu rakamlar bu kadınlar için bir ışık. Çarşı 16 hafta süren bu programa katılan 4 bin kadının yüzde 67'si aile içi şiddetin durduğunu, yüzde 57'si de iş hayatına katıldığını söylüyor. Dahası, yüzde 74'ü açık açık "özgüvenim arttı" diyor. Yüze 67'si kendisine daha çok bakmaya başladığını, yüzde 71'i ise "kocam artık bana daha iyi davranıyor" diyor. Eğitim çalışmalarının önemli sonucu da burada ortaya çıkıyor.
Kadınların bilginlerini, tabii ki sadece gücünün açılması değil parçalanıyor kadınlerin de değişiyor. Çünkü bu program sadece eğitimi değil, aynı zamanda bedenleri üzerinde halkın saldırılarını da önlemeye çalışıyor. Çünkü sadece beden değil ruhu da onları koruyor. Kadınların bu büyük değişime sebep oluyor. Menela Çanakkale'de yaşanan su olayları gibi: Adam başlangıçta eşinin eğitimine gitmesine izin vermiyor. Bir gün "Ne yaptın karım?" diye çağırıyor. Eğitimden önce evde oturuyordu. "Yuvayı korumak gerekirdi" diye. Ama şimdi yuvayı koruyor. Söyle diyor: "Eğitimden önce, tekme atıyordum. Ne yaptın söyleyin, kadınlarda arkadaşlarımızı anlatıyorduk. Ancak bu değişimin nedeni sadece sosyal maddelere yöneltilen, Çarşı Anlatıyor'da yaşanan ve daha önce kendileri "bir büyük gülmüyor, aynı bedenin yitir" sözleriyle taft

KADIN POLİSLER DE HAK ARIYOR
Kadın hakları gündemine aile içi olarak eğitim seviyesi düşük, ekonomik değeri olmayan kadınlar gelir ve çok çok çabuk kadın bu sorundan kendileri muaf tutar. Oysa ki kadın şöyle değil. İlk çok çabuk kadın da evinde dayak yediği ve kazandı; para üzerinde hak talep gilemediği bilinen bir yer. Buna en çarpıcı örnek yine Anlatıyor'da. Kadınlarda hem fiziksel hem de maddi açıdan kendileri sorumlu değerin düşünülüyor bir meslek grubundan. Kadın kadın polislere şiddet (özellikle görevli olan kadın polislere). Eğitim programının etkilerinden biri olan ekonomik haklar konusunda kadınlar çok meraklı. Fark ediyor ki kadın polislere bizzat masanın yatığı hesaba benzerlik kadın evlerinde. Örneğin sorunlarda ne mi oluyor? Herkesi yakıp yakmadan kadınlar bir bir geliyor. "Tabii kadın polislere eğitim, görevlerini düşünürken başka bir şey kalmaz. Örneğin de 4330 sayılı Ailelerin Korunmasını yöneten kanunun uygulanmasında. Buna göre

"I changed myself and my husband," Vatan, 12 February 2006

The job required a lot of travel, but I always traveled with joy. Van was an experience in itself. In places like Diyarbakır and Van, where many women were more restricted, the courage of these women and how it transformed the women's movement and their daily lives—that was incredibly powerful. People feel hopeless about the state of human rights work in Turkey sometimes, don't they? This program showed me that there's no need to lose hope.

Another valuable feature of the program was its ability to cater to different learning styles. You didn't need to be literate or work within social services to internalize, understand, and utilize the program. It is accessible to women from all sorts of backgrounds, from those who couldn't read or write or who had never been in a formal education environment to lawyers and highly educated women with university degrees. Regardless of her status, every woman faces discrimination in some way. That's for certain. İpek, Pınar, and Leyla, the creators of this program, these women may come from higher educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, but they too have faced discrimination simply for being women. So, the program isn't based on encyclopedic knowledge; it's grounded in lived experiences. Whether it's about sexuality, economic rights, or something else, when someone develops something based on a need they know and have experienced firsthand, it can truly lead to change. And at that point, socioeconomic differences, educational differences, and other disparities vanish. We see this in sexuality or women's participation in the workforce in everything.

Through HREP and WWHR, I realized that everything I thought I knew about women was wrong. I learned that women in Turkey and the women's movement here are truly revolutionary. I saw this with organizations like Purple Roof, Amargi, Lambda, KAOS, and countless others, as well as with HREP trainers and participants from all over the country. I experienced that WWHR is a revolutionary organization, both in its work with HREP and the feminist movement in Turkey, as well as within Muslim societies through the CSBR.

Ebru (Batık)

There's something funny about HREP groups, and I love that about the program. It always surprises you. For instance, if I didn't know anything about the program, I'd assume younger women would be more open to talk, and older women would be more reserved. But my experience in the groups was the complete opposite. Married women with lower education levels, high school or less, were very comfortable discussing issues like violence and sexuality. As the socioeconomic level rose and the age group got younger, women were more inhibited. In my group with younger women, I ended up talking the most. They were so reticent. I kept saying, "We're going to have so much fun, it'll be a great session," but no one would share anything. I mentioned this to Gülşah, and she said, "It's not just you. Younger women are actually more conservative about these topics, they don't talk about them as much." For older women, sexuality is such a natural part of life. But with younger women, there's a hesitancy. "Should I say this? Or that? Could I say I experienced this or not?" It was a bit of a sociological contradiction. The same was true for discussions about

violence. Middle-aged women in neighborhood groups were more open, while the more educated or younger groups feared judgment and criticism. It could be something people struggle to admit to themselves. One participant said, "I've had all this education. I'm a master's graduate, a PhD student, a social worker, but I lived with this for years. Admitting it is very painful for me."

Evre (Kaynak)

I went to Zonguldak for supervision. It is a relatively conservative city. I attended the group as a supervisor, just listening. The participants were a bit older, and it was a session about sexuality. I didn't know how it would go, so I was wondering, "What will happen? How will this go?" During the tea break, the women chatted with me, saying, "It's obscene, but it's so nice to talk about these things." Sexuality might be seen as something "obscene", but here the women were, able to talk and share about it together.

Saba (Esin)

Once I delved further into HREP, I thought, "What a wonderful thing to be part of." I can't remember if it was my first year at WWHR, but we had a big meeting where all the trainers came together. I had been calling everyone beforehand, so everyone knew my name, but no one had met me in person. Everyone arrived at the hotel, and in the evening, we were supposed to welcome them. Everyone was asking, "Where's Saba? Who is this Saba who's been calling us and booking our flights?" They were all keen to meet me. It was wonderful to see so many women together... I felt so strong and proud, even though I didn't know yet what would be discussed at the meetings. Hearing the women's feedback and reading about it in the *Purple Newsletter* is amazing. And to see how women's lives had changed after participating in the training...

You can see the difference in trainers between the first and tenth days of the trainer training. It's a huge transformation. That really impressed me. For example, women who were very quiet and closed off during the first few days, not sharing much, would have their whole demeanor, their way of speaking, and even their comments change after reaching certain milestones. I could truly see the difference. It's like they light up; you can see this glow around them. Of course, they were already strong women, but they left even stronger. It's wonderful to be part of that. And then they go on to touch the lives of others, working with other women in their own fields. It spreads like roots. That's a beautiful feeling.

EXPLORING NEW INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROMOTING HREP

Evre (Kaynak)

When I first started, the partnership with GDSS was running very smoothly. It worked so well because HREP and WWHR managed to transform the relevant departments in Ankara's social services, along with the women in administration. Many of the people working there were essentially feminists. As a result, there was incredible collaboration and a very strong partnership. HREP was unique in that it mobilized state resources to empower women. Did the program change? I don't think its fundamentals ever changed. It was built on such a strong foundation. There were updates, of course, but it remained a program grounded in solid research and knowledge. One of the valuable aspects of WWHR is how well it blends professionalism with activism. It's not just a purely professional organization stuck in its own mold of research, nor is it solely focused on activism. It beautifully balances both sides. If we look at how HREP started, there's a very detailed research study behind it. So, it has wonderfully combined scientific methods with activism.

İpek (İlkkaracan)

Even though our protocol was renewed for 10 years, by 2007-2008, GDSS staff had started to grow uneasy. In 2007, Selma Aliye Kavaf became minister. When we went to congratulate her on her appointment, the conversation didn't really go anywhere. She didn't ask, "What is HREP? What do you do?" or anything else. GDSS directors at the time were either uninterested or had a negative stance toward the program. We went to see the last GDSS director, İsmail Barış, to congratulate him. He said, "I've reviewed your program and visited the community centers. But I'm not happy at all." We asked, "What's wrong, sir? Your feedback is very important to us." He said, "For one, the women implementing this program are all divorced." He was referring to his own staff, public servants. "Is this program aimed at destroying the family?" I first heard this absurd connection between women's rights and the destruction of the family from İsmail Barış.

As we saw the threat gradually rising, Evre and I were constantly thinking about what to do. By then, HREP must have been around for 15 years. We thought, "Let's hold an introductory meeting so that people can hear directly from trainers and participants about what HREP really is." We decided to invite embassies, people from the UN, the EU, and ministries and say that we've had a wonderful partnership with GDSS so far, and now we can also work with other institutions, like the Ministry of Education. Some of the trainers had worked with teachers and nurses, and when the program is implemented with professions that serve other women, its impact multiplies. Working with teachers or nurses not only raises their personal awareness but also affects the many women they interact with for their work. It also helps these professionals incorporate gender equality into their work.



Cities where HREP has been implemented

So we organized this conference, and İsmail Barış was supposed to give the opening speech, but just two or three minutes before the event started, he arrived and said he wouldn't speak on behalf of GDSS. He was that opposed to the program. But after that, the speeches from the trainers and participants were so powerful that some people in the audience were moved to tears. There was a dinner afterward, and a man approached me and said, "May I speak with you?" "I'm the department head of Religious Affairs. We have female clerics, from the religious schools. They visit homes and counsel women. But they're facing so many issues related to violence and harassment and they don't know what to do. Since you're open to collaboration, would you train our clerics?" I said, "Of course, we would." So, the collaboration offer came from the Directorate of Religious Affairs first. However, one cleric later took it upon herself to meet with İsmail Barış and said, "Do you know what's going on in this program that your General Directorate is running? They're saying that women have sexual rights, that sexual pleasure is a basic human right for women. There's all kinds of disgraceful things going on in this program." The implementation was successful, but this incident was one of those things that backfired.

ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND CARING LABOR

İpek (İlkkaracan)

Between 2008 and 2010, we conducted a comparative research and advocacy project focused on work-life reconciliation policies. At that time, WWHR also co-founded the Women's Labor and Employment Initiative Platform (KEİG). The Women's Penal Code Platform inspired us in this process. Just as this was an effective coalition of women's NGOs for legal reforms, we aimed to create a similar platform to address economic issues and policies. As discussions around work-life balance and care policies were just beginning to emerge internationally, we introduced this discourse to Turkey. Our research aimed to compare Turkey with six OECD countries, analyzing the strategies these countries used, their successes, and where Turkey stood in comparison, and make policy recommendations. We had an international research team from six OECD countries, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, South Korea, and Mexico, and three of us from Turkey: Yıldız Ecevit, Kadriye Bakırcı, and myself. I focused on the economic aspects, Yıldız on the sociological side, and Kadriye on the legal perspective regarding work-life balance in Turkey. Since the concept of work-life balance was still new in Turkey, even the Turkish terminology wasn't fully developed.

WWHR later published the first book in Turkish on this subject. The book, *Towards Gender Equality in the Labor Market: Work and Family Reconciliation Policies*, became a reference in many subsequent studies. At the time, we presented our findings to Fatma Şahin, the Minister of Women and Family. She invited us to a meeting with the AKP Women's Branch, where I gave a presentation to women MPs from AKP. They were persuaded that care work at home—like elderly care and childcare—was a serious constraint on women's time and couldn't be solved just by offering women jobs or vocational courses. It required a comprehensive approach, including access to social care services, care leave, and synchronizing working hours with nursery hours. Fatma Şahin was so impressed that she said, "Let's immediately work on legislation for work-life balance." She asked me to join her in a meeting with the Minister of Labor, saying, "I can't explain it as well as you can." We met with the Labor Minister, who responded very positively. Work on legal regulations began, but unfortunately, we couldn't get far with the desired legislation due to changing national priorities.

However, this research and advocacy effort also sowed the seeds for collaboration between ILO and HREP. After the research was completed, we organized a major high-level conference. It was an incredibly motivating conference for everyone involved. The ILO Director Gülay attended the meeting and said, "Work-life balance policies are, of course, very important, but raising awareness among women is also crucial." I suggested, "Then let's go to İŞKUR (the Employment Agency) together and propose women attending vocational courses also participate in HREP." She immediately agreed and İŞKUR accepted it, and we formed a three-way partnership. The pilot project in three cities was very successful. However, as with previous efforts, this initiative also faced resistance later on, and unfortunately wasn't sustainable.

“One of the things I’ve learned from WWHR is how interconnected everything is. Advocacy can’t be done on just one platform or with just one tool; it can’t rely solely on lobbying, publications, or protests. You have to weave everything together, combine all your tools, and constantly push forward.”

Irazca (Geray)

ADVOCACY FOR RIGHTS-BASED TRANSFORMATION

Selen (Lermioğlu)

I define advocacy as the various activities an organization, group, or even an individual activist carries out to achieve rights-based improvements in a particular area or issue. Many methods can be used in advocacy, in my opinion. Campaigns, media, lobbying... Some people try to separate advocacy from lobbying, but I don't. I see lobbying as one method of advocacy. Whether you're trying to change a law, replace a minister, address issues in implementation, or push for more shelters to be opened, you're essentially trying to create transformation within an institution using various tools. Advocacy can also happen internally; I can advocate within my own organization if I believe something isn't being done correctly. I think WWHR does this too, and it does so from a rights-based perspective. It identifies a problem and develops a solution. For example, HREP is exactly that. "There's a gap here; women's human rights are being violated in this country. This is the issue I've identified, and here's how I'll show it." You might present statistics, data, or personal stories—whatever works. "I've developed a program to address this, and I'm going to implement it. As GDSS, you're obligated to support this because it's your responsibility, not mine. You're the one responsible, so you must support this advocacy." WWHR also does similar work internationally, like at the UN. They talk directly with MPs and ministries when necessary, though that's been harder recently. Meanwhile, they campaign for rights-based issues. Lobbying alone can wear

out easily if it's not backed by wider grassroots campaigns and actions involving the women's movement.

Irazca (Geray)

Let's say when there's a campaign, like in 2009 when the Equal Opportunities Commission was being established—we wanted it to be called the “Women and Men Equality Commission.” Still, they ended up naming it the “Equal Opportunities Commission.” That became our priority. Our ally MPs were about to enter the meeting that day, and they needed background material from us: What exactly should they advocate for? What wording should go into the law? Why do we prefer “women and men's equality” over “equal opportunities”? We constantly had to prepare texts for them, providing the ammunition they needed to lobby on our behalf. They had to be able to say, “This is what women's organizations want,” and also back it up with legal arguments, comparisons with other countries, etc. It was about feeding them the right information and research.

I remember one morning, I was taking the bus to the office. One of the MPs hadn't received the document she needed before heading into the relevant committee meeting. I was on the phone saying, “No, it's not like that, you should say it this way.” It felt strange, someone like me, who usually handles paperwork, telling an MP what to say. Then I was talking to some feminists who were headed to parliament that day, still on the bus, people around me were antsy. Eventually, the man beside me asked, “Are you a spy?” I was telling one person something and then calling another, “But don't tell anyone!” Then someone would tell me something, and I'd pass it on to someone else, everything was urgent. That morning, stuck in traffic with four strangers on a bus, I felt like we were filming *Mission Impossible*.

Gaye (Erbatur)

I attended CSW sessions in 2005 and 2010. 2005 was truly an unforgettable experience. For 15 days, we lobbied in the UN corridors. Pinar and Selma (Acuner) did fantastic work; they worked wonders. They spoke on many issues. These meetings are tough, with strained negotiations, but we had learned how to lobby by then. Every morning, we had breakfast with representatives from the Turkish Embassy because we needed to guide them. They weren't as knowledgeable about women's issues as Pinar and Selma, so we used those breakfasts to explain why we wanted certain changes. Over time, even if they didn't fully understand, they started to echo our points. We also lobbied the delegations from other countries. Our days were spent in the corridors, constantly talking to different delegations, explaining how crucial these rights were, and urging them to convince their countries. Whether they were from civil society or official delegations, we kept emphasizing the importance of human rights. The fact that I was an MP became a key element of persuasion in these conversations.

Irazca (Geray)

I remember the 2008 CSW was particularly challenging. In previous CSWs, the government delegation had been closer to women's organizations, and it had been easier for us to participate in official delegations and have a say. But that wasn't the case anymore. Luckily, Selma (Acuner) was there. She's really amazing. The CSW has its own language, its own dynamics, and you watch in awe, wondering how they manage to navigate it all. The diplomacy involved, chasing down government delegations in the corridors and even into the lavatories, is something else. Ultimately, we're trying to push for a language of gender equality, while countries like the US and Saudi Arabia are working to push the text in a much more conservative direction. They don't just want to avoid recognizing sexual rights, they want to strip away rights we've already won. And we're fighting to ensure that the language in these final documents reflects our rights, so they can be useful to us later. Those documents do help, even if just a little. When I work with the state or with women in HREP, I can say, “CEDAW says this, CSW says that.” That's why fighting for the right language at the UN is so important. One of the things I've learned from WWHR is how interconnected everything is. Advocacy can't be done on just one platform or with just one tool; it can't rely solely on lobbying, publications, or protests. You have to weave everything together, combine all your tools, and constantly push forward. Sometimes you can't achieve what you want, but that's where publications come in handy. For example, the materials you produce during a campaign can help mobilize people and the media. That's why we have so many types of publications: one for the campaign, another for after the campaign, one for women's organizations, another for MPs to get the message across, another for academia. Our target audience is always different. Things don't turn out how we want, but you can use those materials in future campaigns or share them with other countries as examples. For instance, the materials we produced on HREP and the penal code campaign were used in many trainings, including international ones. It's important not to think, “Well, that's over, it's done,” once a campaign ends. You have to go back, gather everything, and see what worked, what impact it had, what fell short. Doing that kind of archival work is crucial. This process of self-critique becomes an invaluable resource, not just for you but for other organizations and communities.

We also aimed to participate in international feminist spaces and strengthen solidarity. For instance, we attended the AWID conference in South Africa with various CSBR member organizations from different countries. It was beautiful. At AWID, I saw the connection between local and national efforts. I realized that so many organizations worldwide work the way we do. We're not alone. This is how women work: not just confined to one city or group but expanding, drawing in one person, then another, each pulling their weight. At AWID, organizations from all over the world brought their local contexts. Even though we were an organization based in Istanbul, I felt like I had come with groups from Çanakkale or Van. They were with me in spirit, reflected in our publications and in the HREP experiences that we shared. We worked to represent the HREP network wherever we went, and even if we didn't have the resources to bring everyone, we took HREP materials, shared women's stories, presenting the HREP experience.

CSBR'S JOURNEY: TRANSNATIONAL SOLIDARITY, ACTIVISMS AND ADVOCACY

Dédé (Oetemo)

At our General Assembly in 2007, almost all members met, and we formalized the network. We drafted our Core Values and Principles. After that, new members had to endorse the Core Values before joining the network. We also had the process of asking for two references from member organizations, so we knew we were on the same page. Then, in 2011, Nasawiya, a feminist collective from Lebanon, took over as the coordination office, and after the collective closed in 2015, our organization GAYa NUSANTARA took over the coordination. Some of our members had participated in the CSBR Sexuality Institute, which I think was helpful in convincing them because they were already familiar with the network and activities.

The combination of the two regions was useful. The Islamic feminist approach and working with Islamic texts on sexuality issues in Asia brought an important perspective. In Indonesia and Malaysia at least, we do work with progressive interpretations. If you don't work with these texts, ignore people working with this perspective, you don't go very far. For example, Dr Inayah Rohmaniyah, a progressive Muslim scholar at the Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University in Yogyakarta, was a trainer at our Sexuality Institute and she could talk about sexual rights as human rights and also look at texts. This combination was great. Maybe activists in MENA do not use texts the same way, but this perspective helped them too. And in terms of organizing people, we actually all came together.

Irazca (Geray)

In 2009, CSBR launched the “One Day One Struggle” (ODOS) Campaign, which was an incredible, ever-energized, and stressful experience. We organized simultaneous actions across more than 10 countries on November 9, with CSBR members from various countries organizing events around sexual rights and sexuality at the same time. These events could be anything—trainings, meetings, film screenings, or street demonstrations—tailored to each organization's specific needs and capacities and focused on critical issues impacting sexual rights in their respective countries. It was wild.

One year, for the action in Turkey, we reached out to the Boyalı Kuş theater company and asked if they could do something different so it wouldn't just be a dry, typical panel. They ended up putting on a fantastic performance. The topic was “unjust provocation”, one of the provisions we had been unable to change during the TPC reform. We had fought for the removal of unjust provocation reductions in femicide cases, but when AKP introduced the adultery issue at the last minute, that change was sidelined.

“Through the collaboration between the Middle East, North Africa, South and Southeast Asia, yes, we worked on sexual rights in the context of human rights, but also with progressive textual interpretations of Islam. This was a unique combination. And combining feminism and queer activism in CSBR was crucial; it made us diverse and inclusive.”

Dédé (Oetemo)

We held the panel and Boyalı Kuş performed a pantomime-style show on unjust provocation, starting in Taksim Square and continuing all the way down the avenue. It was very powerful: no words, just a silent performance, with hundreds of women walking behind them along the tram route. Organizing that, while also coordinating simultaneous actions across 10+ countries with 10+ organizations, was intense. We had to manage the local press in each country, the international press, and then document everything to create a publication with the campaign visuals afterward. It was a challenge, but of the best kind.

Ortak Mücadele Hep Birlikte 09.11.2009
 Cinsel ve Bedensel Haklar için Uluslararası Kampanya

HAKSIZ "Haksız Tahrik"

Bangladeş, Endonezya, Filistin, Kıbrıs, Lübnan, Malezya, Mısır, Pakistan, Sudan, Tunus, Türkiye

8 Kasım 2009 Pazar

Beden benim kime ne!

Filistin'den Bangladeş'e, Türkiye'den Sudan'a cinsel haklar için eylemdeyiz. Yarın, 11 ülkede yüzlerce insan hakları savunucusu cinsel ve bedensel haklar için sokaklarda ve konferanslarda olacak

PINAR İLK KARACAN

Yarın, 9 Kasım 2009'da, dünyada kendi konularında ve çapında bir ilk olan bir kampanyaya başlıyoruz. Önce Day, Önce Struggle / Ortak Mücadele-Hep Birlikte başlığı altında yürütülecek uluslararası kampanya, Tunistan Endonezya'ya uzanan çok geniş bir coğrafyada, insan hakları konusunda çalışan yüzlerce sivil toplum örgütünü taraflardan ayırma anda gerçekleştirilecek. Kampanyanın konusu: Cinsel ve bedensel haklar.

Müslüman Toplumlarında Cinsel ve Bedensel Haklar Koalisyonu (Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies - CSBR) tarafından başlatılan kampanyanın genel koordinatörlüğünü Türkiye'deki Kadınlar İnsan Hakları Yeni Ürünler Derneği, 11 ülkede 25 sivil toplum örgütünün ulusal düzeyde yerel koordinatörlerini de içeren bir şekilde yürütüyor. Herin konusu her yerde çapa itibarıyla bir ilk olan bu kampanyaya sağlanan geniş katılım, cinsel ve bedensel haklar konusunda Müslüman toplumlarında tabandan gelen geniş çaplı bir değişim gereksiniminin tüm dünyaya yayılan ilk sarıya seslerinden ve göstergelerinden biri.

Kampanyaya Bangladeş, Endonezya, Filistin, Kuvveyt Kıbrıs, Türk Cumhuriyetleri, Lübnan, Malezya, Mısır, Pakistan, Sudan, Tunus ve Türkiye'den kadınlara sivil toplum örgütleri, ortak basın açıklamalarında cinsel ve bedensel haklara ilişkin insan hakları ihlallerinin tüm Müslüman toplumlarında önlemleri bir yarıya tüm dünyada okuyucu gibi son on yıl içinde gidilen artarak kalmış. Türkiye, Türkiye'de sadece geçen Ekim ayında (2009) yaşanan gibi, Sudan'da 2008 yılında yaşanan olayların bir yansımasıdır. Bu gelişmelerin insan dışı açısından önemini düşünmek için yeni bir soruyu soruyoruz: Endonezya'nın yeni çıkarılan bir yasa, rına yavaş kademelerle uygulanması gibi Filistin'deki utanc duvarının gölgesinde yaşamak zorunda bırakılan kadınların cinsel ve bedensel hakları savunma nım aküleri tarafından ihlal ediliyor." Akında, Batıda son yıllarda özellikle a

Eylül olaylarından beri artan bir şekilde yarımların aksine, Müslüman toplumlar cinsel ve bedensel haklar konusunda çok geniş bir çeşitlilik gösteriyorlar. Örneğin ruhanı cinayetleri, Türkiye ve çeşitli Ortadoğu ülkelerinde son derece yaygın ve yaygın konularla taraflardan cinselliğin uygulanması bir "genel"ken. Güneydoğu Asya'da da Sobara altı Afrika'daki Müslüman ülkelerde sınırsız cinayetleri ve rastlanıyor. Ejinsellik, Ortadoğu'nun birçok ülkesinde cinselliğin bir suçları, dünyanın en büyük Müslüman nüfusuna sahip Endonezya'da yaygın olarak kabul gören. Fakat, bu ülkelerde, tüm Müslüman toplumlarında ortak olan durum, kampanya katılımcılarının da sıklıkla çektiği gibi, cinsel ve bedensel haklara saldıranların ortak davası olduğu. Bu da kampanyanın ortak zeminini oluşturuyor.

11 ülkede 9 Kasım günü ve hafta boyunca düzenlenecek etkinlikler ve yürüyüşler, sokak tiyatrolarından geniş katılımlı konferanslara kadar son derece geniş bir çeşitlilik gösteriyor. Her ülkede, bir araya gelen sivil toplum örgütleri, kendi seçtikleri bir konuyla ulusal bu kampanya düzenliyor: Örneğin Sudan'da Sağlık Bakanlığının da katılımıyla, cin

maydamda Tiyatro Boyalı Kadınlar gerçekleştireceği sokak performanslarından bir basın açıklaması yapacak ve TMMOB'da düzenlenecek bir panelle "haksız tahrik indirimlerini" protesto edecek. Türk Ceza Kanunu'nda 2004 yılında gerçekleştirilen geniş çaplı reformla ve kadınlardan yıllardır süren mücadelelerine rağmen, mahkemeler kadınlara veya zanlılara ya da eşineyle ilgili cinayetlere katliamlara dokunmazlık sağlamaya devam ediyor. "Beşzayı tahrik" "iyelik bir şekilde saat sorulu", "sak banyo yapıyor" gibi nesnel bile katillerin (özellikle cinayetlerde haksız tahrik indirimini almak için gerçekleştirilen) kabul edilip yapıyor.

Ortadoğu'dan, ağır suçları gören, penaltı ve satılmakta tehdit edilen kadınlara, yasadıkları şiddet nedeniyle yaşamlarını sürdürmelerinde, ağır tahrik indiriminden yararlanıyorlar. Örneğin Adana'da, tecavüz cinayetleri evlerinden 14 yaşındaki Rabia Y. eşinden ağır şiddet gördü. Kadına davaya vuruldu, ayakları demir borularla kırıldı, bacağı parçalandı, dişleri kırıldı, hericiler baş vuruldu... Müseyene okup darp raporu aldı ve boşanmak için müzacest etti. Ama bu yeterli değildi, kocasının geleceği ve satma ve öldürme gibi tehditlerle karşıladı. Tüm bu işlemlere dayanmayan Y. kocasını silahla öldürdü. Adana 5. Ağır Ceza Mahkemesi Mart 2008 yılında aldığı kararda, Rabia Y'nin tüm suçlarının "ağır" değil, "hafif" haksız tahrik olduğuna hükmetti. 24 yıl ağır hapis cezası verdi. Bu ülkelerde de görüldüğü gibi, "haksız tahrik" indirimi, Türkiye'de yapılmaya devam eden cinayetlerin çoğalmasında önemli bir rol oynuyor. 11 ülkede, yüzlerce örgütlenmiş, katil ve katilim katılacağı bu uluslararası kampanya, cinsel ve bedensel hakların insan hakları olarak kabul edilmesinde tarihi bir adım ve tüm dünyaya yayılacak güçlü bir ses.

Kampanya 9 Kasım 19.30'da Taksim Meydanı'nda Tiyatro Boyalı Kadınlar performansıyla başlıyor. 20.00'de TMMOB'da cinsel suçlarda "haksız tahrik" uygulamalarının tartışılacağı bir panel var. Tel: 0112-231 00 20

WE STAND TOGETHER: ORGANIZATIONAL AND CROSS-MOVEMENT SOLIDARITY

Hülya (Sahan)

It's been nearly 20 years since I joined WWHR. When I first started, Karin welcomed me and explained what I'd be doing: sorting mail, cleaning, packing materials. They gave me the office key the first day, which surprised me. I said, "But I've just started," and they replied, "We trust you." After that, Karin and I worked more closely, and beautiful friendships developed. They taught me about knowing your rights. I learned that a woman didn't have to endure violence from her husband, and if it became unbearable, divorce was an option. There was no need to stay silent and accept insults. We didn't have to put up with it, as our family always told us, "You must endure it because you're a woman." The association taught me, "You don't have to put up with it, you have rights."

We worked together late into the night at the office. While working on the Gruber Prize, I remember Pinar, Karin, and Liz rushing around the office. Karin and I were running from one room to another, trying to finish everything on time, everyone going back and forth, all in a hurry. Finally, we managed to finish everything. After, when the prize was awarded, we all had a wonderful celebration at the office. I think WWHR has been very successful over the past 20 years, with all the legal changes and fast-paced work. We've worked hard and earned results step by step.

Saba (Esin)

I joined WWHR in 2007 as an office assistant. At first, I saw it as just a job. I had mostly worked in more corporate environments, so I expected to go to work, do my tasks, and leave in the evening. But over time, I became much more involved. I expected there to be a hierarchy. There's always a president or a board, and everyone reports to someone else. But I remember my first team meeting; it felt very different. Everyone sat around the table, sharing their thoughts and opinions. It struck me as very egalitarian. There's a hierarchy in terms of roles, of course, but it was a very inclusive environment where everyone's input was valued. It felt great knowing I'd be working in such a space.

When I first started, everyone wrote welcoming e-mails. I remember getting messages from İpek and Pinar saying, "Welcome to the team! We're so happy you've joined us. This association is a big part of our lives, and we hope it becomes a big part of yours too." I thought, "How could this become such a big part of my life?" But my job description expanded over time, and I became more deeply involved in everything. At WWHR, you don't just do one rigid task; you have to be flexible. Eventually, it became like home for me. Even though I no longer work there, WWHR is a part of me.

ODOS Campaign, "My Body Belongs to Me!", Radikal İki Pazar, 8 November 2009

The founders, Pinar, İpek, Leyla, and the others, and the many women who were part of the organization at different times, are all incredible. They're hardworking, dedicated, highly knowledgeable, and not focused on just one issue. I admire them all. They are always in touch with other women's organizations, supporting each other and keeping up with the evolving political landscape. Their ability to foresee things and make collective decisions is impressive. They'd sit together and say, "This should be done this way, or that should be handled this way." The open communication within the organization is another strength. People who join the association tend to stick around. Even if someone leaves, they don't disconnect completely, so the knowledge and support don't vanish either. It's like a wind that keeps pushing forward. WWHR is where I found myself. It's not just about learning things for myself but also about being part of something that touches the lives of other women.

Irazca (Geray)

Such amazing women, and all so different. It's the same story: different backgrounds, different lives, whether from CSBR, the Turkish Penal Code Women's Platform, or HREP groups—everyone came from different places, but as soon as we found that common language, it was as if we'd known each other for a hundred years. It felt like that with everyone. It's like a seed was planted, and from there, everything blossomed. It was the same with LGBTQI+ rights, being able to break that taboo and talk openly about LGBTQI+ issues wherever HREP was implemented. Every place has its own taboos, but you can share the different experiences from both Turkey's regions and CSBR members' countries.

WWHR has shown hundreds of women that "we are stronger together". CSBR, too, connects seemingly unrelated regions, but in reality, they're deeply connected. For example, in 2001, I used to think Turkey was unique in its secularist hang-ups, but North Africa turned out to be more challenging. During that famous meeting, a woman, either from Algeria or Syria, said, "Let's stop using the word Muslim". That's their personal experiences. That's her truth. But our societies *are* Muslim, what can we do? Over time, we in the MENA connected with women from South and Southeast Asia. Women in those regions can use religion to claim their rights. For instance, at a later CSBR meeting, a Muslim politician from Indonesia said, "My God is a feminist." Her culture and understanding of religion were very different from those in North Africa. They debated; one person criticized religion, while the other defended their belief in it. Our strength was bringing these different cultures, experiences, priorities, and needs together.

Gaye (Erbatur)

In 2007, I attended the Gruber Prize ceremony where Pinar received the award, largely due to her work with CSBR and the penal code campaign. I was incredibly proud to see a woman from Turkey receive such an international honor. The room was packed during the ceremony, and afterward, Pinar introduced me to the crowd, saying, "The woman behind the success of the Turkish Penal Code reform is here." It felt like we were showing a tremendous

solidarity that strengthened us all. I think WWHR's defining characteristic is solidarity. They always worked with women, for women. Everyone in the organization was always just a phone call away, ready to ask, "How can I help?" You knew that when you reached out to these women, they would guide you in the right direction and genuinely support you. So many women at the association touched my life and were important to me, especially İpek, Pinar, Liz, and Şehnaz. Through them, I learned that solidarity in the women's struggle is crucial. If we are engaged in political activism, we must stand in solidarity with each other; socially, politically, and across all movements. We've changed many laws in favor of women during my time in Parliament from 2002 to 2010. I played an active role in those changes, lobbying and advocating tirelessly, but the women in civil society were the ones who guided me. It was with their leadership that I carried out this fight. But changing laws isn't enough; implementation is just as important. Otherwise, we can't create real change. Change and transformation aren't easy, especially in a country like ours where the family institution is so significant. Everything remains hidden within the family. We have been trying to make what happens within families visible, but unfortunately, we haven't been able to dismantle the patriarchal structure in our country. We're still fighting against that patriarchal mentality.

2010- 2023

2010

Following the **7th HREP ToT**, the total outreach of the program reached **10,000 women**. 19 independent grassroots women's initiatives in 14 cities emerged from the program to date. In addition to GDSS, HREP continued to be implemented with 10 local women's NGOs in nine cities.

HREP participants in Marmaris, Muğla founded the Marmaris Women's Solidarity Association.

Towards Gender Equality in the Labor Market: Work-Family Life Reconciliation Policies edited by İpek İlkkaracan was published by Istanbul Technical University Women's Studies in Science, Engineering, and Technology Center and WWHR.

TPC Women's Platform and the Executive Committee for NGO Forum on CEDAW-Turkey submitted a shadow report and coordinated advocacy efforts during Turkey's **6th Periodic Review by CEDAW**. Though the Concluding Comments fell short of outlining certain concrete steps, they included a number of specific recommendations raised in the shadow report, such as adopting "comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and clear prohibition of multiple forms of discrimination against women"; adoption of special temporary measures including quotas; amendments to abolish discriminatory provisions in the civil code regarding property regimes and use of maiden surname and the 300 day waiting period foreseen for women to remarry upon divorce; amendments to the penal code for the explicit definition of honor killings as aggravated homicide; taking comprehensive measures to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS; and designing and implementing long term strategies to eliminate gender stereotypes, discriminatory attitudes, and harmful traditional practices such as forced and early marriages.

During the CEDAW review, Prime Minister Erdoğan said, "I do not believe in the equality of women and men, women and men are different; they complement one another" at a conference with women's NGOs in Istanbul. This was an open declaration of the government's anti-equality discourse, marking another turning point in their hostile approach.



“Our 6284 campaign was a very determined, successful effort that united and mobilized all of us to pass a law against violence in the post-2005 period. While not everything we aimed for made it into the text, we achieved our goal. We managed to pass a comprehensive law with over 40 articles crafted in alignment with the Istanbul Convention.”

Zelal (Ayman)

The second annual CSBR One Day One Struggle Campaign (ODOS) was organized in 12 countries (Bangladesh, Egypt, Ghana, Indonesia, Iran, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, and Turkey) by almost 50 organizations. Campaign events brought together hundreds of people at panels, workshops, video and film screenings, theater performances, photo exhibitions, and press conferences to assert that sexual and bodily rights are universal human rights based on inherent freedom, dignity, and equality. In Turkey, HREP participants organized the action throughout the country, claiming “Sexual Rights are Human Rights!” in public events in Ankara, Antalya, Çanakkale, Diyarbakır, Hatay, Istanbul, İzmir, Muğla, Van.

2011

The Ministry of Women and Family was changed to the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, indicating the government’s family-oriented policies and reluctance to recognize women as individual citizens. The changes in the Ministry’s mandate led to the dissolution of GDSS, a major stumbling block for HREP. Prime Minister Erdoğan announced the new ministry with the statement, “We are a conservative democrat party; family is important to us,” foreshadowing the government’s increasingly discriminatory and anti-equality stance.

Completing its 10-year mandate, WWHR handed over the CSBR Coordination Office to Nasawiya in Lebanon.

When the draft law on the prevention of violence against women was proposed in September, 50 women’s organizations came together to present their demands to the Ministry of Family. WWHR and five women’s NGOs formed a technical group to coordinate the campaign and establish the Platform to End Violence. Numerous meetings were held with the Ministry to lobby for the inclusion of our demands. When the Parliament signed the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence) in November, advocacy efforts gained momentum to harmonize the law with the provisions in the Convention. However, at the end of December, the Prime Minister removed the phrase “those in intimate relations” and the term “gender equality” to limit the scope of the law, leading to nationwide protests.

2012

Law no. 6284 on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence against Women took effect on 8 March. This was the largest campaign undertaken by the women’s movement after the penal code reform, including 300 women’s groups that combined



Platform to End Violence Press Statement

tools of parliamentary lobbying, demonstrations, and media campaigns. WWHR was one of the organizations leading the strained negotiations with the Justice Commission and the ministry, especially with the last-minute attempt to limit the scope of the law. In the end, the new law was more comprehensive and progressive than its predecessor, with references to international conventions, the establishment of Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers, the definition of stalking as a form of violence, and the provision of compulsory imprisonment for violators of protection orders. However, the platform's demands to rename the law as "Protection of Women from Domestic Violence and All Forms of Violence," to include violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, to mandate gender equality education in the formal curriculum, and to regulate the prohibition on reconciliation and mediation were rejected. Nonetheless, this reform was noteworthy since it entailed significant advancements in a political environment that was becoming increasingly conservative.

The advancement of ICPD to safeguard SRHR at the UN level had been one of WWHR's major work areas since its inception. **In recognition of her decades of work in this field, Pınar İlkaracan was elected to serve on the official ICPD High Level Task Force**, a policy board with members of government, civil society, and the private sector to work with the UN toward fulfilling commitments in scope of the 20th anniversary of the ICPD PoA. The task force met regularly for two years, developed policy recommendations, and advocated to ensure that SRHR are addressed as a fundamental part of human rights and freedoms.



TURKCELL

TURKCELL

Bankitap

KÜRTAJ HAKTIR
ULUDERE
KATLIAM!

KÜRTAJ DEĞİL
YASAKLAMAK
CİNAYET!

AKP♀
ELİNİ
BEDENİMDEN
♀ÇEK!

KÜRTAJ DEĞİL
YASAKLAMAK
CİNAYET!

12 haftaya kadar
GÜVENLİ
KÜRTAJ HİZMETİ

KÜRTAJ DEĞİL
YASAKLAMAK
CİNAYET!

TÜRKİYE'DE
12 HAFTA
OLSUN!

RESTRICTING
ABORTION
MEANS
BANNING!

Anımsadık:
12 hafta
İsveç: 18 hafta
Yunanistan: 12 hafta

İSVEÇ
18 HAFTA

Press release of the 'Abortion Cannot Be Banned' petition, 2012

HREP participants founded the **Feminist Workshop (FEMA)** in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus; the **Purple Branch Women's Solidarity Association** in Bursa, and the **Karya Women's Association** in Muğla; all three organizations have been working on gender equality and VAW since their inception.

WWHR played a key role in the Forum Planning Committee of the 12th International AWID Forum held in Istanbul. Recognizing the opportunity to connect women's rights advocates in Turkey with their counterparts worldwide and deeming it important for AWID to finally hold a Forum in a Muslim majority country, WWHR pushed for the organization of the Forum in Istanbul. 27 HREP trainers participated in the Forum, WWHR members delivered keynote speeches, and organized panels on care issues and Kurdish women's rights.

The 2nd Independent Evaluation Study of HREP was published covering the period between 2005 and 2011. The research revealed that in the private sphere, over 90% of the participants had improved their familial relations, had more influence in family decisions, and were committed to gender sensitive parenting. Of those participants who faced domestic violence, 85% were able to end or reduce the violence. While around 40% of the women indicated partaking in and/or initiating grassroots organizing activities, over 90% of the trainers stated that the program had a positive impact on social service policies carried out at community centers.

In May 2012, one of the most significant threats and backlashes in terms of sexual and bodily rights was Prime Minister Erdoğan's statement that abortion was tantamount to "murder" with reference to the botched military operation in Uludere massacre that claimed the lives of 34 Kurdish civilians in southeastern Turkey based on faulty intelligence. The attack on abortion was also an extension of Erdoğan's insistence that women should have at least three children. WWHR, together with the women's movements, launched national and international campaigns, co-coordinating the international leg with an action-alert collecting 220 international institutional signatures. A total of 900 institutional and 55,000 individual signatures nationwide supported the action-alert. As a result of the persistent efforts, the government had to back down on its attempt to ban or restrict access to abortion, though this attack led to serious restrictions in access to abortion in practice.

2013

WWHR had been pursuing alternatives for new partnerships following the dissolution of GDSS. **2013 was a year when we revised our strategy for HREP field implementations.** The ToT was held with women from municipal counseling centers for women in addition to women's NGOs, and collaborations with local governments, local women's and rights-based organizations were strengthened.



2013 Trainer Training Evaluation Meeting

Gender Equality Seminars (GES) were held with departments of the Ministry of Family and the Union of Chambers of Agriculture to increase HREP's visibility, establish new partnerships, and promote gender equality in public institutions.

The number of HREP trainers reached 200. In addition to municipalities, HREP institutional partners now included FEMA, Antalya Women's Counseling and Solidarity Center, and Muş Women's Roof Association. **By the end of 2013, HREP had reached 12,000 women in 54 provinces.**

HREP participants established the Muş Women's Roof Association. The association, which worked primarily with girls and young women and on gender equality issues with men, was closed down by a presidential decree in 2016, but its rights were restored in 2022.

As one of the initiators of **The Cairo+20 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Platform in Turkey**, WWHR had joined the international advocacy efforts for the inclusion of a "standalone gender equality goal" and a gender perspective in all targets of the SDGs together with the international Women's Major Group (WMG), an official stakeholder in the UN Processes, and also **co-coordinated the Europe and Central Asia Regional Consultation**

on the Post-2015 Development Agenda Inclusive and Sustainable Development held in Istanbul to establish a common advocacy ground for emerging outputs in SDGs.

2014

The booklet series *We Have Rights!* and the TV documentary series *The Purple Series* were translated into Kurdish, providing the first such readily accessible resource material in Kurdish. These became tools to better implement HREP with women whose mother tongue is Kurdish and are also noteworthy in that they contribute to establishing feminist terminology in Kurdish.

As a result of our advocacy work at the ICPD High Level Task Force and the Cairo+20 Platform in Turkey, we ensured the participation of representatives from the Cairo+20 Platform in the official delegation at the ICPD+20 Review Session, thus making sure the Turkish government took a more egalitarian stance despite all the political setbacks in the country. Even though the demands for furthering the ICPD agenda were not met, the fact that governments recommitted themselves to upholding the priorities and principles of the ICPD agenda lays important groundwork for carrying these forward via the post-2015 framework for development.

The Istanbul Convention came into force on 1 August. Turkey was the first signatory and the first country to ratify the Convention. WWHR co-founded the Istanbul Convention Monitoring Group – Turkey, consisting of women’s rights and LGBTQI+ organizations. The Monitoring Group then expanded into the Istanbul Convention Monitoring Platform – Turkey, consisting of 88 women’s and LGBTQI+ organizations. One of the major activities of the Platform this year was advocacy for the election of a feminist member to the GREVIO Committee, Professor Feride Acar, who served as the committee’s president for three terms.

WWHR cooperated with the International Sexual Rights Initiative to submit a report to the UN Human Rights Committee for the 2nd Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Turkey on the right to access safe abortion, outlining the current legal and de facto situation in Turkey and recommendations for accessible and safe abortion. WWHR also contributed to the NGO report to UPR coordinated by the Human Rights Joint Platform.

In June, AKP brought a bill proposing certain amendments to the sexual crimes sections of the TPC, marking the first step of the yet ongoing attempts to curtail the sexual rights of women and children. Proposed under the guise of increased penalties for sexual crimes and abuse in an omnibus law no less, the changes implied potential criminalization of sexual relations between youth and introduced distinctions in the sexual abuse of children based on age that could lead to sentence reductions. The Platform to End Violence mobilized against the proposal with the slogan “Retract the Changes to the TPC: So-called Increase

in Sentencing means Impunity in Practice,” however the proposal was adopted by the conservative right coalition.

Following the President Erdoğan’s statement, “You cannot make women and men equal; it is against the laws of natural creation,” WWHR launched a campaign called **Constitution, Not Creation: Women and Men Have Equal Rights #JusticethroughEqualRights**. Signed by 79 women’s and LGBTQI+ organizations, our statement was published as a full-page ad in daily *Hürriyet* and supported widely in social media.

2015

HREP’s outreach exceeded 13,000 with the completion of 750 groups in 57 cities over 20 years.

HREP participants in İzmir founded Çeşme Women’s Entrepreneurship Cooperative.

Addressing the three main pillars of sustainable development, namely economic, social, and environmental and consisting of 17 goals, the SDGs were adopted by all UN member states, including Turkey. **Goal 5, “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” was adopted as a standalone goal, thanks to the efforts of the global women’s movement.** Additionally, the intersectionality of gender equality and all SDGs was recognized in the Political Declaration. WWHR was among the organizations that played a key role in the advocacy and negotiations throughout the process.

While there has been very limited progress towards achieving the SDGs with just 15% of the countries on track as of 2023, and several member states persisting in their efforts to curb language on gender equality, SRHR and gender based violence (GBV), the SDGs continue to offer a solid foundation for the international feminist advocacy efforts toward the pivotal role of gender equality in Agenda 2030.

CSBR’s annual ODOS campaign took place in eight countries with events organized simultaneously by 20 organizations. In Turkey, WWHR and Lambdaistanbul organized a panel on Sexual and Bodily Rights of Refugee Women and LGBTQI+ while Kaos-GL held a workshop on Psycho-Social Support for LGBTQI+ activists.

Women’s Peace Initiative, of which WWHR is a member, launched a campaign in response to the escalating violence in South and Southeast Turkey. WWHR issued a statement on 25 November supported by 68 NGOs to draw attention to the rights violations caused by the conflict and underscore that gender equality is an integral part of peace.

GAYa Nusantara, a leading NGO based in Indonesia, working on intersectional sexual rights and LGBTQI+ rights, became the CSBR International Coordinating Office.

Pinar İlkaracan was awarded the **Joan B. Dunlop Award** by the International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC) for working to build healthy and safe communities for women and girls.

2016

We published a new booklet of the *We Have Rights!* series, *We Have Economic Rights!* that addressed economic rights in the context of economic independence and the burden of care on women.

The 9th and 10th HREP ToTs were held; the first with NGOs and municipal counseling centers for women in the Aegean Region, and the second with municipal staff from Ankara, Bursa, and Istanbul. **The number of municipal HREP partners reached 25.**

HREP participants founded the Women's Empowerment, Culture, Education Solidarity Association (KAD-GÜÇ) in Karabağlar, İzmir.

HREP Institutional Partnership Protocols were developed to support the sustainability of the collaboration with the municipalities. The protocol, which constitutes a formal basis for HREP implementation, not only enables trainers to carry out the program within their job description but also promotes a gender equality perspective in municipal partners. **The first protocols were signed with the municipalities of İzmir Güzelbahçe, Seferihisar, Balçova, Gaziemir, Karşıyaka and Aydın Kuşadası.**

We developed a training manual and a 10-module Women's Human Rights Training (WHRT), in collaboration with ILO for the More and Better Jobs for Women Project. Carried out in cooperation with municipalities in Ankara, Bursa, and Istanbul, the training reached 800 women.

WWHR participated in the advocacy and lobbying efforts around Turkey's 7th Periodic Review by CEDAW as part of the NGO Forum on CEDAW – Turkey. Our shadow report focused on the increasingly conservative/fundamentalist approach to women with a discourse built around the family and morality, the increasing discrimination based on sexual orientation and sexual identity, and the exacerbating effect of the state-led oppression and violence creating a martial law like environment, curbing all human rights and freedoms.

After the coup attempt in July, state oppression, nationalism and militarism increased further. Instated within days and extended seven times at three-month intervals with



"Women's human rights training with municipality staff", *Bizim Anadolu*, 18 October 2017

Presidential Decrees, the State of Emergency affected everyone, primarily the Kurdish movement and politicians, feminists, rights defenders, rights-based organizations, journalists, women, and LGBTQI+s. More than 100,000 public employees were dismissed by presidential decrees. Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) MPs were stripped of parliamentary immunity, government trustees were appointed to municipalities, and politicians were unlawfully imprisoned. Women's organizations in the Southeast became one of the first targets and were closed down. Police attacks and detentions during protests became standard practice and individual rights and freedoms were curtailed under the guise of security. Trustee appointments and the closure of women's NGOs in the Eastern and Southeastern regions also disrupted the implementation of HREP:

- With the closure of the Women's Roof Association in Muş, the Youth HREP program for girls between the ages of 15 and 18 was suspended.
- HREP's implementing partners, Adıyaman Women's Life House Association and VAKAD were shut down by presidential decrees.
- Seven HREP trainers in municipalities lost their jobs due to trustee decisions. Approximately 70 women's counseling centers in municipalities across the region were closed or rendered ineffectual.

AKP submitted a proposal to the Justice Commission to revise the sentences foreseen by the TPC for the sexual abuse of children. In order to prevent any amendment that would lower the age of consent and pave the way for forced child marriages—hinted by the government for some time—WWHR established the TPC 103 Women's Working Group and assumed its secretariat. Through our persistent demands, we were able to participate in the Justice

Commission sessions. However, on 17 November, at midnight, while the bill on sentence durations was being voted at the Parliament General Assembly, AKP and MHP proposed a last-minute amendment that could imply amnesty for child molesters if they married the victim. In response, WWHR swiftly expanded the Working Group into the TPC 103 Women's Platform with the participation of 126 women's organizations and issued a statement; we launched a social media campaign, contacted national and international media, and began lobbying the MPs, the Justice Commission, and party officials. The advocacy efforts and public reaction bore fruit, and the bill was sent back to the Justice Commission. At a time when it was hard to get the government to back down, the campaign was a noteworthy success. The proposal for amnesty for abusers was withdrawn. However, a new provision that foresees different sentence durations for the crime of child abuse based on age (under 12 vs. between 12 and 15) was adopted.

Women's Peace Initiative continued its activism in response to the escalating state violence in the Southeast. Launched with a press conference, declaring **"We side with life, not death!"** the initiative's statement was endorsed by 165 NGOs and 10,000 individuals and sent to the parliament. The campaign continued with a peace watch in Diyarbakır attended by women from across the country.

The Parliamentary Commission to Investigate Cases of Divorce, Factors Adversely Affecting the Integrity of the Family and Determining the Measures to be taken to Strengthen the Family Institution published a report. The report was another step towards curbing women's human rights and the formalization of discriminatory, patriarchal, conservative state policies under the concept of "the sacred family." The report, which suggested the decriminalization of forced and early marriages, marriages to the rapist (if the marriage was "successful" for five years), limiting women's rights to inheritance, and introducing the burden of proof in cases of violence, was protested by the women's movement.

WWHR participated in the first **SDG High Level Political Forum (HLPF)** and was one of the first organizations to present a shadow report in this newly established UN mechanism. Subsequently, we organized an international webinar on "The role of the Women's Major Group in National Voluntary Reviews to HLPF: Lessons learned from 2016 and how we can engage for 2017." We also launched a public awareness social media campaign on the first anniversary of the adoption of SDGs and produced the **Encounters** video series on the intersectionality of gender with other goals, supported by an SDG Briefer on Goal 5 and social media content.

2017

HREP Partnership Protocols were signed with İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, Karabağlar Municipality (İzmir), Kadıköy Municipality (Istanbul) and Çankaya Municipality (Ankara). **A total of 10 municipalities thus became institutional HREP partners.**

The Lotus Women's Association in Kocaeli was co-founded by women from HREP. They continue to work in Kocaeli and in the disaster zone following the 2023 earthquake.

Gender Equality Seminars (GES) were implemented for mixed groups with various institutions, including private companies and HREP partner municipalities.

The government proposed a "Draft Law for the Amendment of Population Services and for the Law on Victim's Rights." Women's organizations, including WWHR, mobilized under the coordination of the Women are Stronger Together Platform for the campaign titled **"These Laws Cannot Pass Like This!"** Despite protests all over Turkey, amendments against the principle of equality, which could lead to early marriage and child abuse going unprosecuted and unpunished, were added to the law.

The CEDAW Committee adopted General Recommendation no. 35, which was a milestone in that it recognized the prohibition of gender-based violence as a norm of international customary law; expanded the definition of violence to include violations of SRHR; and defined different levels of liability of State, calling for approaches to promote women's autonomy and the repeal of any laws or policies excusing and facilitating violence. WWHR was one of the NGOs who contributed to the language of the recommendation.

The **8th CSBR Sexuality Institute** was organized in Kyrgyzstan. Previously organized in countries like Egypt, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Tunisia, the institute served to build capacity for over 150 NGO representatives from 36 countries in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

2018

The presidential system came into force through a referendum and the parliament was rendered redundant. This was a turning point for the escalation of threats to our rights and gains and rising conservatism and militarism. In this context we adopted three strategies: strengthening local efforts, continued advocacy at international mechanisms, and lobbying opposition parties to prioritize gender issues.

The number of women participating in HREP exceeded 15,000, with over 900 groups implemented to date. Protocols were signed with Narlıdere Municipality (İzmir) and Şişli Municipality (Istanbul), bringing the number of institutional municipal partners up to 13.

HREP participants established the Çiğli Women's Platform in İzmir.

In April, the Draft Law on Amendments to the TPC and Certain Laws was tabled again. WWHR issued a statement endorsed by 160 women's and LGBTQI+ organizations and launched a social media campaign against the bill, which proposed increasing penalties and using methods such as chemical castration in cases of sexual abuse against children. Demanding compliance with international conventions, we called on the government to adopt rights-based, protective, and preventive measures in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, especially children's, women's, and LGBTQI+ organizations. The bill was withdrawn.

We worked in the coordination group of the Istanbul Convention Monitoring Platform to submit a Shadow Report to the GREVIO Committee for the Review of Turkey. The report focused on shortcomings in the implementation of the Convention, flaws in policies and practices to prevent violence, and the lack of political will to eliminate gender inequality and GBV in Turkey. The GREVIO Committee referenced the shadow report in 25 different points of its report. They emphasized that ensuring gender equality and combating traditional roles that confine women to the family should be the main strategy to prevent violence, and armed conflict and the state of emergency hindered the fight against violence, restricted freedom of association and that migrant women should have equal access to services.

CSBR published a comparative research on *Sexual Politics in Muslim Societies*, with case studies from Indonesia, Malaysia, Palestine, and Turkey.

The government's systematic attempts against women's legal rights continued with the draft law that foresaw limiting poverty alimony in cases of divorce. We co-founded the **Working Group for the Right to Alimony against this threat, and issued a declaration titled "Don't Touch Women's Right to Alimony!"** The group held various meetings at the parliament, met with party leaders, organized workshops with bar associations, and published press statements. We also produced short videos and opened a social media account called "Alimony Stories," focusing on women's real-life experiences. Finally, the bill was shelved until 2019.

2019

The government's and right-wing conservative groups' persistent discourse against gender equality rekindled attacks against alimony rights. Conservative media and jurists gave speeches suggesting that alimony violated men's rights.

The Platform to End Violence mobilized, while the Working Group for the Right to Alimony established the Women's Platform for the Right to Alimony with over 160 members. As the secretariat, WWHR coordinated a social media campaign and drafted a brief targeting

all stakeholders. The Platform organized a petition campaign signed by 100 women leaders from different fields. Supported by these celebrities, 10,000 signatures were collected in 10 days. This persistent advocacy and awareness raising led to the tabling of the attempts.

The *Independent Impact Evaluation Research* for HREP, WHRT and the GES conducted between 2012 and 2018 was published. The research showed that HREP and WHRT had a positive impact of over 90% on women's ability to exercise their rights. 85% of HREP participants facing physical violence were able to stop or reduce the violence, 96% became resource persons in their communities, and 67% joined a women's organization.

As a result of the efforts of the Çiğli Women's Platform established a year ago, the Çiğli City Council Women's Assembly was established. The majority of the executive board is made up of HREP women. The Urla Women's Solidarity Association was founded in İzmir by HREP participants.

Twelve Gender Equality Seminars (GES) were held with over 600 participants in collaboration with local partners, including universities, youth associations, women's NGOs, and professional chambers in seven provinces. The independent evaluation of GES revealed that over 60% of the participants gained a better understanding of gender and violence through the seminars, and over 80% became more aware of gender issues.

The HREP Trainers Summit brought together 65 HREP trainers from across Turkey to discuss emerging issues, field implementations, and strategies for strengthening cooperation. On the last day, the first HREP Festival was organized in collaboration with the İzmir Women's Solidarity Association, bringing together 450 HREP participants and women's NGOs in İzmir.

The government's anti-rights groups' attacks on our rights through systematic disinformation campaigns led us to focus on our research-based and data-driven advocacy efforts. As mainstream media was manipulated by the government and allies, we chose to pursue social media tools to disseminate information and organize actions. We complemented our feminist awareness raising and advocacy content with visuals and videos using new media tools, such as online action alerts and hashtag actions. We continued our efforts to bridge local, national and international struggles by working multilingually. We initiated three online campaigns as the secretariat of the Women's Platform for the Right to Alimony and the Platform to End Violence Women, while also supporting other rights-based campaigns. Our two twitter campaigns for the Istanbul Convention became trending topics in Turkey.

The Beijing+25 Women's Platform-Turkey was established by 60 women's rights NGOs, with WWHR and the Women's Coalition serving as the Core Group. The group put forth a proposal for the establishment of a Global Independent Women's Body, supported by



The Right to Alimony Working Group Meeting, 2019

many international women's groups. Based on the analysis that international monitoring bodies for gender equality and women's human rights are becoming more politicized and thus losing power against states and that rising authoritarianism and growing anti-rights movements present imminent threats to gender equality, the platform proposed efforts to develop a theoretical framework for the establishment of an independent global women's body that can monitor state compliance with international norms on women's human rights, receive complaints, and demand states to comply with international norms.

Advocacy in scope of the SDG High Level Political Forum and Turkey's Voluntary National Review and Reporting (VNR) process was among the major international activities of WWHR. In collaboration with seven women's NGOs, WWHR drafted and lobbied for the shadow report, calling for the establishment of a national SDG mechanism, and the implementation and localization of Goal 5 for gender equality. One of the major criticisms of the women's movement was the government's last-minute removal of gender equality from the 11th National Development Plan.

Our SDG website hedef5.org was launched in Turkish, featuring information on the SDGs, regional and global review processes, localization, and the meaningful participation of NGOs.



The Right to Alimony Platform Parliamentary Meetings, 2019

We started to organize a series of panels called **Feminist Gatherings**. The themes of the conferences, which aimed to initiate new spaces for feminist dialogue and involve young people, were "Equality," "Our Diversities," "Post-Truth and Evil," "Organizing Solidarity," and "Sisterhood."

In scope of CSBR's ODOS campaign, WWHR organized a two-day workshop titled "Solidarity Keeps Us Alive" in partnership with Kaos-GL, which focused on countering the attacks of anti-gender movements through cross-movement solidarity and collaboration among feminists and LGBTQI+ activists.

2020

The Covid-19 pandemic took the whole world by storm, while in Turkey civil society experienced the social and political impact of the pandemic the most. The total ban on face-to-face activities was utilized as a tool of political pressure, and HREP fieldwork was disrupted. Nevertheless, by the end of 2020, the number of women participating in the program reached 16,000.

HREP participants in İzmir founded the Çeşme Women's Solidarity Association, while in Mersin, the online newspaper *Women's News* was launched, with women from HREP comprising most of the editorial team.

An ongoing threat since 2016, an amendment was proposed to Article 103 of the TCP regulating sexual abuse of children, which would pardon the men who married the child they abused if the age difference was less than 15. Women's platforms organized simultaneous protests in 48 provinces against this initiative, which would legitimize grave rights violations and crimes such as child abuse, forced and early marriage, and marital rape. The press conference organized by WWHR with platform representatives was attended by over 100 people, including representatives of political parties, journalists, and feminists. 198 women's and LGBTQI+ organizations signed a statement and launched a social media campaign. Although the issue remained on the government's agenda, the proposal was shelved thanks to the mobilization.

Together with the Women's Platform for the Right to Alimony, we shared four posts on women's alimony rights in a social media campaign that reached a total of 3,300,000 people.

The Law on Amendments to the Law on the Execution of Sentences was rushed to parliament on the instructions of the President, citing the pandemic as an excuse. Despite all our objections and widespread campaigns, the amendment shortening prison sentences of convicts, including those convicted of physical violence against women was accepted.

In July, AKP Deputy Chairman Numan Kurtulmuş stated that the Istanbul Convention contradicted "national values," citing gender and sexual orientation as pretext, and voiced the possibility of withdrawing from the convention. This statement was supported by the Presidency and news spread that the proposal to withdraw would be discussed at AKP's Executive Committee Meeting. WWHR played an active role in campaigns carried out through networks such as the Equality Watch and Implement the Istanbul Convention. We also launched a digital campaign to counter the distorted propaganda and disseminate accurate information on the Convention, with the aim of garnering public support. We produced social media posts in Turkish, English, Arabic, Kurdish and Farsi, desktop videos, and an animated film that reached hundreds of thousands. In order to mobilize mass resistance against the annulment attempt and make it visible on the streets, 20,000 brochures on the Istanbul Convention were printed and disseminated all over Turkey. Thirty-five institutions, including municipalities, city councils, women's and LGBTQI+ organizations, and trade unions distributed the brochure locally.

WWHR and Kaos-GL co-organized two online meetings in scope of CSBR's ODOS Campaign. The first was a media workshop on hate speech and the second was a transnational meeting titled **Solidarity Beyond Borders** with over 150 participants and speakers from Poland, Russia, Brazil, Sweden, Mexico, and Belgium on right-wing populisms and anti-gender attacks.



No to Amnesty for Child Sexual Abuse! Press Conference 2020

2021

The 12th HREP ToT was organized in cooperation with Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality following the local elections. Nine new municipalities in Istanbul became institutional HREP partners.

HREP participants founded the Kepez Independent Women's Solidarity in Çanakkale, and women from HREP started the Crafty Hands Bazaar Women's Group in Küçükçekmece Municipality, Istanbul.

Bring a Friend platform, which aims to introduce women to football and promote women's empowerment through sports, was founded in Istanbul by a HREP trainer.

The content of GES was revised to be conducted online with different groups. Sixty online seminars were held with the Turkish Association of University Women, the Aegean Women's Assembly, and the Şerife Bacı Women's Platform. **The outreach of GES expanded to 5,000.**



No Amnesty for Sexual Abuse of Children Demonstration, İstanbul, 2020



Implement the Istanbul Convention, Evrensel, 11 July, 2020

WWHR published *Being a Woman in the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Research Study*. The findings indicated that the pandemic had adversely affected women's mental health and economic situation, significantly increased the burden of care on women, while had no significant impact on the prevalence of VAW.

On 20 March 2021, at 2 am, it was announced that Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention with Presidential Decree no. 3718 published in the Official Gazette. Women's and LGBTQI+ groups mobilized immediately. Street protests were organized all over Turkey. UN, EU, and Council of Europe issued statements condemning the decision, and international feminist NGOs shared solidarity messages. WWHR published an online chronology of all the developments as of 20 March on istanbulsozlesmesi.org and launched a nationwide social media campaign titled "Istanbul Convention Belongs to All of Us." After sharing social media visuals, we continued the campaign through a hashtag action with the participation of 33 celebrities who created a chain inviting one another to support the Istanbul Convention. This hashtag had an outreach of 2.3 million. Our billboards with the slogan "We are not giving up on the Istanbul Convention!" were displayed for a week in June by 16 municipalities throughout Turkey.

The 57,000 Istanbul Convention masks we had made were distributed in 24 cities. Our masks were also used in various demonstrations, such as the "We are not giving up on the Istanbul Convention!" and the Istanbul Convention Rally in Maltepe. The masks also became an international visibility tool: Figures such as Wendy Sherman (US Deputy Secretary of State), Irene Montero (Minister of Equality of Spain), Marjanne de Kwaasteniet (Dutch ambassador to Turkey) shared their photos with these masks on their social media accounts.

Right after the decision of withdrawal, WWHR, Hafiza Merkezi Berlin, Women's Coalition International WG, Kaos-GL, Purple Roof, and independent feminist activists came together to launch the intersectional and **international United4IstanbulConvention** campaign, given the opposition to the Convention also echoed in other countries. The concept note emphasized that the attacks against the Istanbul Convention were not isolated incidents but the result of global attacks on gender equality, human rights, and democratic values. **The campaign was launched with a public statement and social media action on 11 May, the 10th anniversary of the Convention.** WWHR assumed the secretariat of the campaign, which organized an online international demonstration on 1 July when Turkey officially withdrew from the Convention. Social media messages were posted in Arabic, Croatian, English, German, Italian, Kurdish, Slovakian, Spanish, and Turkish. An online avatar map, on which users could pin themselves at their respective locations with their support messages, was created. Nearly 2,000 people from 63 countries pinned themselves on the map. A global forum was organized in December with 100 participants to strategize against anti-gender, anti-rights attacks through intersectional and transnational solidarity with a positive holistic discourse.



12th HREP Trainer Training, 2021

Like many women's NGOs, jurists, and individuals, WWHR had filed a lawsuit to annul the Presidential Decree on the withdrawal. The Council of State rejected the request for a stay of execution.

The research report on *Reproductive Healthcare Services for Women and Women's Experiences with Abortion* was published in Turkish and English. The video, featuring key findings of the report, received approximately 355,000 views. Outlining the current situation regarding abortion and reproductive health policies around the world and in Turkey and including recommendations for improving women's access to health services, the research indicated that most women, regardless of their views on abortion, agreed that it should be an option and a right in a patriarchal society and precarious life conditions. The limited access to sexual and reproductive health services, judgmental attitudes, and lack of state support were identified as major obstacles, and most agreed that the decision should be women's first and foremost.

On behalf of CSBR, WWHR and Kaos-GL were invited to the thematic priority consultation meeting on violence against lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women held by the UN Special Rapporteur (SR) on VAW. At this meeting with stakeholders from academia, civil society, the UN, and regional entities, the SR announced that during her tenure she will prioritize the following topics: violence against indigenous women; gender-based violence in the context of disaster risk mitigation and response related to climate change; psychological violence; and the intersection between gender-based violence against women and sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.



Önümüzden çekilin!

"İstanbul Sözleşmesi'nden vazgeçmiyoruz" diyen ve Türkiye'nin birçok noktasından gelen kadınlar, İstanbul Maltepe Miting Meydanı'nda buluştu. Kadınlar, "Sözleşmeden değil önümüzden çekilin!" diye seslendi.

Mitingde HDP İzmir İl Binası'nda saldırı sonucu öldürülen Deniz Poyraz'ın da pankartları taşındı. Kalben ve Pınar Aydınlar'ın sahne almasının ardından ortak basın açıklamasına geçildi. >>TUĞBA ÖZER 5'te

İspanya Eşitlik Bakanı, "İstanbul Sözleşmesi Bizim" maskesi taktı



"İstanbul Sözleşmesi Bizim"

Yayında, İstanbul Sözleşmesi ve yükselen hak karşıtı hareketler üzerine konuştu. Şehnaz Kıymaz Bahçeci ile beraber İstanbul Sözleşmesi'nin önemine dikkat çeken Gil, Türkiye'li kadınlara ve LGBTI+ bireylere destek vermek için "İstanbul Sözleşmesi Bizim" maskesi taktı.

İspanya Eşitlik Bakanlığı'nın Twitter hesabından yapılan paylaşımda ise, Şehnaz Kıymaz Bahçeci'nin, yayında "İstanbul Sözleşmesi Bizim" sloganının Türkiye'de ne anlam ifade ettiğine ilişkin yaptığı açıklamadan bir kesit paylaşıldı.

Ne olmuştu?

Türkiye, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Kararnamesi ile 20 Mart 2021 Cumartesi İstanbul Sözleşmesi'nin tek tarafı olarak feshedildiğini duyurdu. Fesih kararı 23 Mart 2021 Pazartesi günü Avrupa Konseyi'ne de bildirildi.

Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı'ndan yapılan açıklamada "Fesih kararının" nedeni olarak "Sözleşme'nin eşcinselliği meşrulaştırıyor olması" iddia edildi. Kadınlar ve LGBTI+ hareketi, 20 Mart'tan beri Türkiye'nin birçok ilinde İstanbul Sözleşmesi'ni savunmaya devam ediyor.

İstanbul Sözleşmesi hakkında

Tam adı "Kadınlara Yönelik Şiddet ve Aile İçi Şiddetin Önlenmesi ve Bunlarla Mücadeleye İlişkin Avrupa Konseyi Sözleşmesi" 11 Mayıs 2011'de İstanbul'da imzaya açıkta ve ilk imzalayan ülke Türkiye oldu. Sözleşme 1 Ağustos 2014'te yürürlüğe girdi.

Sözleşme, "kadına yönelik şiddet", "aile içi şiddet", "kadına yönelik toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı şiddet", "kadın" kavramlarını tanımlıyor.

Uluslararası alanda kadına yönelik ve aile içi şiddetle ilgili ilk bağlayıcı belge olma özelliğini taşıyan sözleşme şunları içeriyor:

İstanbul Sözleşmesi psikolojik şiddet, ısrarlı takip, fiziksel şiddet, tecavüz, zorla evlendirme, kadın sünneti, kürtaja zorlama, zorla kısırlaştırma, tecavüz ve taciz dahil cinsel şiddet olmak üzere kadına yönelik şiddetin tüm türlerini kapsıyor.

Sözleşme çerçevesinde ev içi şiddet, aynı evde yaşıyor olsun ya da olmasın mevcut ya da eski eş ya da partnerler arasında yaşanan her türlü şiddet edimini içerecek şekilde kadının korunmasını esas alıyor.

Kadınları konumlandırırken "aile" olmayı, evlilik birliği içinde bulunmayı ya da aynı evi paylaşıyor ya da paylaşmış bulunmayı gerektirmiyor.

Sözleşmenin getirdiği yükümlülükler öncelikle devlet görevlilerine yönelik. Devlet kendi adına hareket eden görevlilerinin İstanbul Sözleşmesi'nin gereklerini yerine getirmesini sağlamak zorunda.

Devletlerin sorumluluğu bununla sınırlı değil. Şiddeti gerçekleştiren ister kadının sevgilisi, ister kocası, ister babası, ister patronu olsun, yani kim olursa olsun şiddetin önlenmesi, soruşturulması, cezalandırılması, zararın tazmin edilmesi yükümlülüğü de devlete ait. (Bianet)

"Spain's Minister of Equality wears the Istanbul Convention Mask,"
Mersin Kadın, 11 June 2021

Yeni rapor: 'Kadınlar kürtaj hakkı konusunda hemfikir'

Kadınların Drenaj Sağlık Hizmetleri ve Kürtaj Deneyimleri Araştırması Raporu yayımlandı. "Herin bütüncül, ahlakik olgularıyla güzel hem de kürtaj olarkın hiç arılmadın" (MK9:40)

"Kürtaj bence serbest hürkalmalı. Kürtaj bence kötü bir şey sayılmıyor. Yani çok rahatsız ediyor o fikir. Onun konusundan sonra görüşme candan o tabii. Çok kötü hissettiğimise rağmen bütüncül serbest hürkalmam gerektiğini düşünüyorum. Çünkü her şeyden önce kadın bütüncül gibi düşünmek zorunda değil. Ben Allah'ın nasip ettiği bir can olduğunu düşünüyorum. (MK 22, 34)"

Kürtajın İnanç Hakkını - Yeni Çözümler Derneği için Drenaj Araştırması tarafından yürütülen Mör Çiğdem Sağlık Vakfı'ndan Vakıf'ın da katkı sağladığı Kadınların Drenaj Sağlık Hizmetleri ve Kürtaj Deneyimleri Araştırması sonuçlarının tartışıldığı toplantı yapıldı.

3 Aralık 2021 Cuma günü gerçekleştirilen toplantı Mör Çiğdem Sağlık Vakfı'ndan Selma Büyükgöçer'in konuşmasıyla başladı.

Selma Büyükgöçer şöyle dedi:

"Türkiye'de istisnae bağlı kürtaj 10 haftaya kadar hürkale yapılabilir. Ancak biz başka pek çok ülkede olduğu gibi, kürtaj hakkında da bu yasaklık ile yasaların uygulanması arasında devamsızlık fark olduğunu görüyoruz. Bunun pek çok hastanede de yasak değil yasak diyerek yanlış bilgi verildiğini de görülmüştür."

"Kürtaj konusunda konuşan kadınların bedenleri üzerindeki desteğini bu şekilde daha kapsamlı bir şekilde konuşmamız."

Kadınların konulı bedenleri ve cinselliği ile ilişkili illiklerin istenmeyen gebeliğe doğan çözümlerini ve daha sonra istenmeyen gebeliğin de sonlandırılmaması devlet eliyle zorlaştırılması olarak önemine değinmektedir."

"Bütüncül çerçeve çizdik"

Toplantı Drenaj Araştırması'ndan Nüket Simen ve Feyza Akın'dan yapıldı. "Yeni stratejiyi sunmaya çalıştık. Yürürlükte olan yasa ile ilgili kararları kendileri almak ve bu noktada destek ve emey görmek istiyorlar."

"Kürtaj yaklaşımını kendisiyle kürtaj yaklaşımını doğurganlıkla bağlantıyı kadın bedenleri ile olan ilişkiyi bakarak daha bütüncül bir çerçeve çizmeye çalıştık. Yani kürtajı doğurganlık, doğurganlığı da bedenini işlevine yerleştirmeyle çalıştık."

"Yeni stratejilere vesile olsun"

Araştırma komisyonuna başkan Feyza Akın'dan raporda öne çıkan bulguların tabiiyeti şöyle dedi:

"Kadınların keşifli yaşamlarına dair anlatımlarını bütüncül bir şekilde patriyalkarı tarif ettilerine değinik. Kadınlar bedenleri ile ilgili kararları kendileri almak ve bu noktada destek ve emey görmek istiyorlar."

Araştırma Komisyonu Başkanı - Yeni Çözümler Derneği'nden Aşlı Elif Savaşlı konuşarak "Bu araştırmayı yaptığımız, kürtajın 2012'den beri engellenmesinin ötesinde kriminalize edilmemesini korumaya kadınların kürtajı nasıl yaşadıklarını anlayabilmek için cinsellik, doğum"



konularında nasıl düşüncüklerini ve neler deneyimlediklerini görülebilmek istenik."

"Bu araştırmamız kadınların beden, cinsellik, doğum ve kürtaj ile ilişkili deneyim, algı ve duyguları ile ilgili bir planda çalıştık. Türkiye'de yasal ama erişilebilir olmayan kürtaj hakkını savunmak ve etkili feminist yöntemlerle mücadele ve savunuculuk stratejileri belirlemek için sunmamız istiyoruz. Ayrıca araştırmamız sonuçlarını kürtaj hakkı konusunda yürütülecek feminist mücadeleleri güçlendirmesi ve yeni stratejiler geliştirilmesi vesile olmasını istiyoruz."

Rapordan öne çıkanlar

Araştırmamız komisyonun kadınların çoğu

kürtaj konusunda farklı yargıları olsa da böyle bir seçeneğin var olması gerektiği hakkında hemfikir oldu. Katılmadıkları yönünde bir kürtajın tamamen yasaklanması gerektiğini savunmadı.

Araştırmaya katılan kadınların büyük bir çoğunluğunun kürtajın tamamen serbest olmasından yana değil. Hafızasını, eş, ebeveynleri ve sağlık görevlileri konusunda farklı bakış açıları olsa da çoğunluk için bir sınır var.

Araştırmaya katılan kadınlara bütüncül, doğum, kürtaj, ilaçla kürtaj, sağlık sistemi ve doğurganlık hakları konusunda neler bildiklerini soruldu. Yanıtlar değerlendirildiğinde kadınların bilgilerinin kaynağının ağırlıklı olarak kendilerinin ve çevrelerindeki deneyimleri olduğu görüldü. (Bilanet)

"On July 1, the day Turkey officially withdrew from the Convention, the movement organized an extraordinary demonstration despite all the backlash and attacks. It was an extraordinary day for all of us. Yes, Turkey had already withdrawn, but the Istanbul Convention gained public recognition and support. Despite numerous obstacles, we also strengthened our solidarity. We were united—LGBTQI+s, women, and the Kurdish movement. I believe it revitalized us and kept our hope alive."

Berfu (Şeker)

"New research: Women united on the right to abortion", Mersin Kadın, 10 December 2021

Pandemi kadınların ruh sağlığını bozdu!

"Sağlıkta Kadın Olmak" Araştırması'nın sonuçlarına göre; salgın sürecinde kadınlar sağlık hizmetlerine erişimde zorlandı, yoksulluştı, ev içi iş yükü arttı, salgın öncesinde de çok yaygın bir şekilde var olan ev içi şiddete maruz kaldı

ÇİĞDEM YILMAZ İstanbul

Kadınlar İnanç Hakkını - Yeni Çözümler Derneği (NİH-ÇÇ), Covid-19 salgınından Türkiye'de en etkili olduğu Mayıs ve Haziran aylarında kadınların ruh sağlığını etkilediğine ilişkin bir araştırmaya yaptı. Sağlık, ekonomik durum, bakım emeği ve şiddet başlıklar altında Türkiye'deki kadınların salgın öncesindeki ve salgın sürecindeki ruhsal durumlarını araştırmaya amaçlayan araştırmaya aynı zamanda kadınların bu süreçte yaşadıkları zorlukları da araştırmaya yer verildi. Araştırma Sonuçları Raporu'nda Türkiye'nin 81 ilinden toplam bin 201 kadından anketler yapıldı.

Araştırma bulgularına göre; Covid-19 salgınında kadınların genel sağlık durumlarının olumsuz etkilendiği ancak akıl yapıcı sonuçları kadınların ruh sağlığı üzerindeki etkisi olduğu görüldü.

Her evde az bir işsiz

Salgın öncesinde ekonomik durumuna "orta halli" olarak tanımlanan kadınların oranı yüzde 66 iken salgın sonrası bu oran yüzde 60'a düştü. Aynadaki yüzde 20'lik bütüm ise durumuna "yokmuş veya çok yoksul" olarak tanımlanmaya başladı. Araştırmamız sonuçlarına göre her üç kadından birinin salgın sebebiyle ekonomik olarak zorlandığı görüldü. Salgın nedeniyle kadınların yüzde 34'ünde en az bir kişinin işsiz kaldığı, ücretsiz leave çalıştığı ya da işinin dışında çalışmaları tarafından işsiz kaldığı görüldü.

Borçlandılar

Salgın başlatıldıktan sonra kadınların yüzde 77'si ekonomik sorun yaşadığını belirtti. Sorun yaşayan kadınların her üç kadından biri, sorular kapsamında çözümünü bulamadığını belirtti. Bu süreçte karşılaştıkları ekonomik sorunları en çok borçlanarak yaşadıklarını belirttik. 41'i aile, akraba, arkadaş ya da bankalara borçlandığını; 11'i biriktirmelerini hatırladığını

Ev içi şiddet arttı

Araştırmamızda salgın öncesindeki bir yıl içinde ev içi şiddet olan kadınların yüzde 97'si, salgın sonrasında ise yüzde 90'a en az bir kez ev içi şiddetine maruz kaldığını belirtti.

İş yükü arttı

Araştırmamız, salgın kadınlarda ev içi iş yükü bakım emeğinin artmasına neden olduğunu ortaya koydu. Araştırmamız sonuçlarına göre, salgın öncesi kadınların yüzde 16'si evdeki işleri dışarıya verirken salgın sonrasında ise bu oran yüzde 42'ye çıktı. Araştırmamız, her 100 kadından 72'si bakım ve ev işleriyle ilgili olarak yaşadığını belirtti. Bu zorlukların yanı sıra bazı emekleri zorlandığında, yüzde 28'i evden, partizandan, yüzde 24'ü evden, yüzde 18'i evden başka yerlerdeki diğer kişilerden destek talep ettiğini, yüzde 17'si ailesi tarafından ve iş yerlerinden, yüzde 12'si ise herhangi bir işsiz bulamadığını ya da bu konuda bir şey yapmadığını ifade etti.

"The pandemic affected women's mental health," Milliyet, 6 February 2021

WWHR continued to participate in the Observatory on the Universality of Rights (OURs) Working Group's advocacy activities under the secretariat of AWID, representing WWHR and CSBR. OURs met with UN Special Rapporteurs to share key findings on anti-rights activities and their impact on the international human rights system.

2022

After the 13th HREP ToT, the number of institutional HREP partners reached 20, including the Association for Social Workers (SHUDER), 17 municipalities, a women's NGO, and a trade union.

HREP trainers and participants founded Women of Hope (Umudun Kadınları), a monthly print and audio magazine that aims to raise awareness about the rights of women, including those with disabilities and disadvantaged groups.

We are Different but Equal Association (Fark-Et) was founded in Çanakkale by HREP participants and trainers, who are also mental health workers, to provide psychological support for children and women and work against violence, gender inequality, social exclusion, and discrimination.

WWHR, in cooperation with UN Women Headquarters and Turkey office, conducted a three-day workshop on **Gender and Macroeconomics** attended by representatives from eight political parties, trade unions, and women's NGOs with the aim of capacity building for the upcoming local elections. UN Women's *Gender and Economics Training Manual* was translated into Turkish. The workshop included sessions on macroeconomics and feminist economics, international and regional macroeconomic trends and their impact on national economies, and women's access to the labor market.

WWHR participated in advocacy and lobbying activities for Turkey's 8th Periodic CEDAW Review process as part of the NGO Forum on CEDAW – Turkey. Echoing the shadow report, the Committee was particularly concerned with the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. The Concluding Observations highlighted 12 other issues raised in the shadow report, including the effects of the COVID pandemic on GBV; obstacles in access to justice; inadequacies in support mechanisms for violence survivors; prohibition of early and forced marriages; recommendations on political participation, girls' education and women's employment; barriers to the right to safe abortion; attacks on women's alimony rights; women's increasing poverty; and oppression and legal procedures targeting women human rights defenders and civil society.

The women's movement continued proactive advocacy efforts to thwart any further potential attempts to curtail women's right to poverty alimony. WWHR initiated a campaign titled Feminists for the Right to Divorce and Alimony and prepared a brief for opposition parties. The government had to back down, but the Minister of Justice declared their intention to revisit the issue after the elections.

We produced the first episode of our documentary titled *Bu Kalabalığı Hatırla (Remember This Crowd)* to depict past successful campaigns and the longstanding struggle of the feminist movement. The episode opened with the Nahide Opuz case and the advocacy and activism for the adoption of the Istanbul Convention, followed by the mobilization after the withdrawal from the Convention. The documentary, directed by Burcu Melekoğlu and Vuslat Karan, was broadcast at Queerfest and on our Youtube channel.

We produced a video on the findings of the *Reproductive Healthcare Services for Women and Women's Experience with Abortion* report in Turkish and English, which was viewed nearly 233,000 times on WWHR's social media accounts.

What is Male Violence? Mini Glossary, which includes definitions of the forms of violence and strategies against VAW, was published online. The glossary was also printed as a brochure in cooperation with Çankaya Municipality (10,000 copies), thus reaching a more diverse target group.

Our website istanbulsozlesmesi.org was launched on 1 August, the anniversary of the Istanbul Convention coming into force in Turkey. The website includes key documents pertaining to the convention, an account of how Turkey became a signatory and the withdrawal process, articles, audiovisuals, and an updated chronology.

In collaboration with KADAV, the *We Have Rights!* booklet series were translated into Arabic and disseminated among migrant and refugee women.

In October, CHP proposed a bill that was claimed to guarantee women's right to choose their dress free of coercion referencing the past headscarf bans. After the bill was rejected by the majority coalition of AKP-MHP, President Erdoğan challenged CHP, proposing an amendment to the constitution to "safeguard the freedom to wear the headscarf" and "strengthen the family." On 9 December, a proposal was brought to the parliament to amend two articles of the constitution concerning the "freedom of religion and conscience" and the "protection of the family and the rights of the child." The explicitly discriminatory proposal came in a polarized and oppressive political environment where gender equality, women's and LGBTQI+ rights are under attack and democracy is undermined. Working with women's and LGBTQI+ movements, WWHR drafted and disseminated a protest letter, supported by 171 organizations, to all the opposition parties calling on them to oppose this amendment categorically, conducted a social media campaign, and drafted a public sign-on letter in consultation with constitutional law professors. The proposed amendment was tabled as a result of strong advocacy and public opposition.

2023

Devastating earthquakes struck 11 provinces in the south and southeast of Turkey on 6 February. WWHR went to Diyarbakır after the earthquake to meet with women's and LGBTQI+ organizations in the region, including Diyarbakır City Platform, Rosa Women's Association, DOĞÜNKAD, Young Approaches to Health, Diyarbakır Youth Center, Women's Culture, Arts and Literature Association (KASED), Mesopotamia Psychologists' Initiative that delivered aid to Adıyaman, Maraş and Malatya, and offered psychological support sessions for volunteers. We undertook an eight-month psychosocial support project based in Diyarbakır for women and LGBTQI+ in Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, and Malatya. Group workshops were organized in Akçatepe Village and Yaylakonak Town of Adıyaman and Akçadağ district of Malatya. Our findings, practice, and policy recommendations were compiled in the *Report on Psychosocial Support Carried Out in the Earthquake Region: Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, Malatya*. We also organized a panel on earthquake experiences together with women's and LGBTQI+ organizations.

HREP participants established the Şimel Women's Cooperative in Diyarbakır. The cooperative that works on food security also has a restaurant.



8th Periodic Review of Turkey by CEDAW, UN, 2022

After the 6 February earthquakes, women from the HREP network in Hatay's Samandağ district founded the Samandağ Mozaik Women's Solidarity Association.

The lawsuit we filed in 2021 against the decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention at the Council of State was finally heard at the court in November. Before the hearing, we held a joint press statement with Purple Roof, Ankara Women's Solidarity Foundation, and Antalya Women's Counseling Center and Solidarity Association in front of the Council of State with the support of women and LGBTQI+ organizations and bar associations. On 27 February 2024, we were notified that our lawsuit was rejected. We will appeal our case, and if rejected on appeal, we will take it to the Constitutional Court with the plan to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights if rejected at the Constitutional Court.

WWHR, in partnership with Fos Feminista and A-Project, a Lebanon based feminist NGO working on SRHR, co-convened the online two-day meeting SWANA (South West Asia and North Africa) Regional Dialogue with 30 activists from ten countries. Topics discussed included the current opposition to bodily autonomy movements in the region, how to raise the visibility of efforts countering the backlash, and means of collaboration. A meeting report was published sharing key tactics and recommendations for organizing against anti-SRHR groups.

Together with Purple Roof and Women on Web, WWHR became partner of an international project conducted by the Safe Abortion Action Fund (SAAF). We started working on a website on the right to safe abortion, kurtajhakkim.org, aimed at capacity building for healthcare providers and feminist groups and providing accurate information on abortion. Future activities will include workshops with healthcare providers and NGOs on medical abortion, the de facto ban on abortion, and prejudices against abortion.

We organized and moderated a special meeting with UN SRVAW, bringing together 10 feminist and LGBTQI+ organizations from Turkey to update the Rapporteur on police violence at the 25 November feminist march, the proposed discriminatory constitutional amendment, and threats to the freedom of association.

At the 53rd Session of the Human Rights Council held in Geneva, we delivered an oral statement on the alarming developments regarding gender equality and GBV in Turkey following the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and held a face-to-face meeting with the Special Rapporteur.

The negotiations and alliances between AKP and right-wing Islamist parties during the general election process entailed blatantly gender discriminatory discourses, in which threats to abolish the Law no. 6284 on VAW became a political bargaining chip. As part of our awareness raising efforts, **we produced the second episode of our *Remember This***

Crowd documentary series on Law no. 6284 and organized screenings in Ankara, Hatay, and Istanbul. Our videos titled *What is 6284?*, *Why is 6284 important?*, *Does 6284 punish men?*, *What measures does 6284 foresee?* produced in response to the counter-movement targeting the law were circulated on social media, reaching one million people. The persistent efforts of the women's movement once again succeeded in stopping this attempt.

WWHR renewed its institutional identity and logo, taking into account the changing demographics, new communication tools, and diverse target groups.

In recent years, social media has become one of the most important ways of strengthening our feminist struggle, as it has become increasingly impossible for us to get coverage in the mainstream media and press. We have campaigned using formats such as short videos, infographics, succinct and colorful social media content, documentaries, and report and data visuals, which are the most common forms of interaction today. We have also translated and published international content such as CEDAW principles, abortion regulations and practices in different countries, and feminist politics in the fight against the pandemic. With these methods, we aim to spread and adopt accurate information and an egalitarian perspective against the disinformation discourse of anti-rights groups. Meanwhile, we continue to print mass outreach materials such as brochures and booklets to be used on the local level and publish reports and articles.

Two Feminist Gatherings were organized on “Rebuilding Life: Solidarity of Feminist and LGBTQI+ Communities in Disaster” focusing on post-earthquake organizing and collective actions, and **“Sexual Abuse: Concepts, Preventive Actions, and Principles”** discussing child abuse in a broader perspective.

An online **GES Implementation Orientation Training** was conducted with 64 HREP trainers to expand the GES trainer pool. **The seminars have reached 6,750 women and men between 2017 and 2023.**

The HREP Trainers Meeting brought together 82 HREP trainers from 21 provinces. In addition to sessions on program assessment, planning, strategy development, local advocacy, and grassroots organizing, capacity-building workshops were held on topics such as visual design for social media and drafting press statements/policy papers. HREP trainers also delivered 17 poster presentations on local organizing stories.

We launched the “Constitution for All” campaign following a two-day meeting with women's and LGBTQI+ NGOs analyzing the situation of rights and gender equality in the aftermath of the general elections. With the participation of 22 groups, we established the Constitution for All Coordination Group to join forces against the constitutional amendment proposed at the end of 2022. A statement was drafted and circulated in our national and

international networks in Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, Farsi and English. The statement was shared with all the opposition parties and MPs, a website was created, and lobbying visits were organized. The campaign coordination is monitoring developments and preparing for a potential rekindling of attempts to amend the constitution.

With more than 1,000 groups implemented in 57 cities over 28 years, HREP's total outreach exceeded 17,000 women. HREP participants continue to fight for their rights in their personal lives, in the grassroots women's organizations they have joined or founded, in the local governments, and in the women's movement across every region of Turkey.

through our eyes

CAMPAIGN FOR THE LAW ON THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE NO. 6284

Ebru (Batık)

The beginning of the 6284 campaign was quite a blast for me. Everyone in the office was busy that day, and I was still a rookie, only a year in. They asked me, “Would you go to Ankara?” and I said, “Sure, I’ll go.” When I got there, I met Hülya (Gülbahar). She quickly found me and pulled me aside, sitting me down beside her. The Ministry had come to us with a draft law. Hülya was there, and I think Canan (Arın) was too. Out of nowhere, they said, “No, this isn’t how it’s done. Leave this to us.”

These women are truly legendary. Çiğdem (Hacısoftaoğlu) and Deniz (Bayram) from Purple Roof were there as well. They said to us, “So, we are the secretariat.” We had just met half an hour before, and yet they were telling me, “We already work well with Ebru. We work great with WWHR.” Just like that, we became the secretariat. Hülya confidently said, “We have our draft ready; we’ll present it to you,” to the Minister and the bureaucrats as if we’d been preparing for years. But there was no draft—nothing at all. Later, when we left, we asked Hülya, “What draft were you talking about?” She just laughed and said, “Oh, there’s no draft yet; we’ll write it.”

Then we returned to Istanbul, and I informed everyone that the secretariat had been established and that we were part of it. After that, the phone lines were buzzing... Zelal joined in, then Pınar, and later İpek, until the whole team was involved. Pınar, Hülya, and Zelal took on very active roles while I became the “chart person.” I spent my time making tables and comparing the new draft with the old one, placing the amended articles next to one another.

The funniest part was that I was getting married, with the wedding scheduled for Sunday morning at 10:30. On Saturday night, around 11:00 PM, I got a call from the bridal shop. At the time, we were all—Hülya, Pınar, Zelal, the entire team—sitting at that white table in the association, working on the draft. At 11:00 PM, I answered the phone and said, “Hello?” The bridal shop attendant was on the other end, saying, “Enough already, come pick up your dress; I’ve been waiting for you for hours.” So, I rushed to Kadıköy to get the wedding dress. As I left the meeting, I was saying, “Sorry, I have to go; I’m getting married tomorrow.” That was hilarious. I still remember Hülya’s look as if to say, “Are you crazy? Hurry up, hurry up!” The process of drafting 6284 was truly something else!

Zelal (Ayman)

In mid-September 2011, then-Minister of Family and Social Services Fatma Şahin invited women’s organizations to a meeting, marking the start of the process that would eventually lead to the adoption of the violence prevention law. Earlier that year, Ayşe Paşalı had been murdered, which deeply affected all of us—it was the final straw. On March 8th that year, we had loudly protested that the old protection order law was insufficient; it didn’t prevent femicides or protect women. And in June 2011, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and GDSS were suddenly dissolved, and the Ministry of Family and Social Policies was established.

At the September meeting, Fatma Şahin announced, “We’ve prepared a draft to replace the old law; come and provide your feedback.” So, we attended. That meeting was packed, and unsurprisingly, we didn’t like the draft. It was overly simplistic and had a narrow scope. They said, “Well, then you prepare one for us,” and we agreed, taking on the task. We got to work—Hülya, myself, and Çiğdem from Purple Roof—starting at Hülya’s office. We managed to meet the deadline the Minister had set. Hülya, with the support of Çiğdem, worked tirelessly through the nights to produce a 33-page proposal.

We decided to first draft a proposal with the key women’s organizations involved, move quickly, and submit it on behalf of five organizations, with plans to expand it later. In fact, we expanded it almost immediately. When Fatma Şahin reviewed the 33-page proposal we presented, she was very impressed—both by our timely completion and comprehensive scope. She said, “Okay, I’ll review it.” That meeting in Istanbul was brief, lasting less than fifteen minutes.

We began making regular trips to and from Ankara. The feedback we received was, “This is too lengthy; we can’t implement it all.” They indicated that they would revise and simplify it. Later, Fatma Şahin called and said, “We’re coming to Istanbul for a meeting; let’s meet again.” Ministry bureaucrats and the Istanbul Provincial Director accompanied the Minister. During that meeting, something critical occurred. We strongly insisted that the new law be based on the Istanbul Convention, which had been opened for signature in May 2011. We said, “This should be the Ministry’s strategy.” Turkey was, after all, the first country to sign the Convention. We explained to Fatma Şahin the importance of ratifying the Convention at the parliament and the necessity of drafting the law within this framework.

Then, disagreements and challenges began to emerge. I recall that the meetings we attended in December reached a deadlock. There were many frustrating discussions, and we couldn't make any headway. We were then asked to reconvene on January 15, 2012. In the meantime, what happened with our organizing efforts? After the five organizations submitted that comprehensive proposal and the Ministry began to respond positively, we realized it was time to mobilize the movement. We established the Platform to End Violence and created an email group. We began contacting all women's organizations, inviting them to join. An incredible process began. At that time, the technical secretariat was primarily managed by two colleagues from WWHR and Purple Roof, along with Hülya. As our campaign expanded and the workload increased in January 2012, friends from Ankara and İzmir also joined the secretariat and the negotiation teams. Ultimately, we brought together nearly 300 women's organizations to join the platform. This turning point transformed the entire process into a full-fledged campaign.

During the January 2012 meeting, we had a large turnout once again. The room was packed, with 50-60 women present; we could barely see each other. As the day progressed, the meeting came to a deadlock. We had already purchased our return tickets, so we decided, "Let's just leave; this isn't going anywhere." We took a decisive stance, saying, "Alright, Madame Minister, we're leaving; there's nothing more to discuss." I remember it as a very critical moment. We began gathering our belongings, and naturally, all eyes were on us as we prepared to walk out. Whispers had also been circulating, suggesting that we were collaborating with the government, which was frustrating to hear. We were regularly updating the press to counter this. So, we said, "We'll immediately make a press announcement outside, informing everyone that the negotiations have come to a standstill and that we're unable to continue."

As we were about to leave, Fatma Şahin suddenly said, "Wait a minute, don't go. I'm taking initiative here and inviting you to the Ministry. I'll call in all my bureaucrats, and we'll work on this tonight." We were stunned—how could this be? We hadn't even come close to reaching an agreement during the meeting, yet now Fatma Şahin was insisting, "We need to do this." The academics were present, the Ministry bureaucrats were waiting, and everyone was on standby. After a quick discussion among ourselves, we decided to proceed. Seven or eight of us went to the meeting. The Ministry's meeting room was small and cramped. Fatma Şahin urgently called in everyone involved, including representatives from the gendarmerie and the police force. Academics like Adem Sözüer and İzzet Gönenc, both experts in criminal law who had worked on the penal code, were also present. We started working around six or seven in the evening and continued for about two hours. Eventually, we mentioned that we needed to leave because we had a flight to catch. She responded, "Where are you going? You can't leave; I'll host you. Have the hotel book rooms and cancel your flights. We'll take care of you." They arranged accommodations for us, and Fatma Şahin even had pajamas brought in—it was quite incredible. The next morning, I called Pınar, explained what was happening, and suggested it would be great if she could join us. Pınar immediately came to Ankara. We continued working for another two or three days and made significant progress.

Fatma Şahin accepted many of the articles we proposed and worked to push them through. Whenever there was a debate, she would ask, "What do you think?" and we would provide our perspective. The meetings continued in this collaborative manner. Afterward, we continued our work in Istanbul as well. By the end of January 2012, the draft had been significantly refined and was submitted to the Cabinet with the Ministry's proposal.

But then, at the end of February, the Cabinet's version was announced, and we were shocked to find that the draft proposal, which had originally included over 40 articles, had been completely gutted! It had reverted to the Ministry's initial draft, with significant sections removed. The crisis we experienced was indescribable—a mix of despair, anger, and a profound sense of betrayal. The Cabinet's decision carried the signatures of both Erdoğan and Fatma Şahin, and all the Ministers had approved this drastically altered draft. Our proposal was nowhere to be found, as if it had never existed. Naturally, we were furious and deeply frustrated. As per procedure, this watered-down draft would first go to the Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (KEFEK), then to the Justice Commission, and finally be submitted to the Grand National Assembly. The plan was to have it passed by March 8th, as Erdoğan had instructed. Those of us in Istanbul decided to take a stand and not go to the parliament. However, we called the women in Ankara, asking, "Can you still go and see what happens?" Our hopes were minimal at that point. Later that afternoon, we spoke with Gülsen (Ülker Al) from the Women's Solidarity Foundation. She told us, "Something incredible is happening. Fatma Şahin came to the KEFEK meeting and is reinstating all the articles!" We were stunned. Our hopes, which had been all but lost, began to rise again. The entire draft was being restored to the version we had initially worked on. It passed through KEFEK in that form and was then sent to the Justice Commission. Given the situation, Deniz and I decided to go to Ankara. There, we joined Sema (Kendirici) from the Turkish Women's Union and Gülsen for the six-hour-long Justice Commission meeting. The room was so crowded that we had to work while standing, as there were no seats available. During that meeting, all the articles that had been removed from the proposal were reinstated. Fatma Şahin consistently advocated, saying, "It should be as the women proposed," effectively reverting to the previous draft. The only parts that couldn't be included were the terms and concept of gender equality. It was removed due to concerns related to the LGBTQI+ issue... The Chair of the Justice Commission claimed that it "evoked different connotations." Incidentally, one mention of gender was overlooked and remained in the draft, but it was later removed during the parliamentary discussions.

The 6284 campaign was a highly effective effort that united and mobilized women around creating a law against violence in the post-2005 period. The outcome was largely successful. While not everything we aimed for made it into the final law, we achieved the majority of our goals. Instead of a "mini-law" like the previous one, which consisted of just three articles, we passed a comprehensive law with over 40 articles crafted in alignment with the Istanbul Convention. I can confidently say it was a successful campaign process.

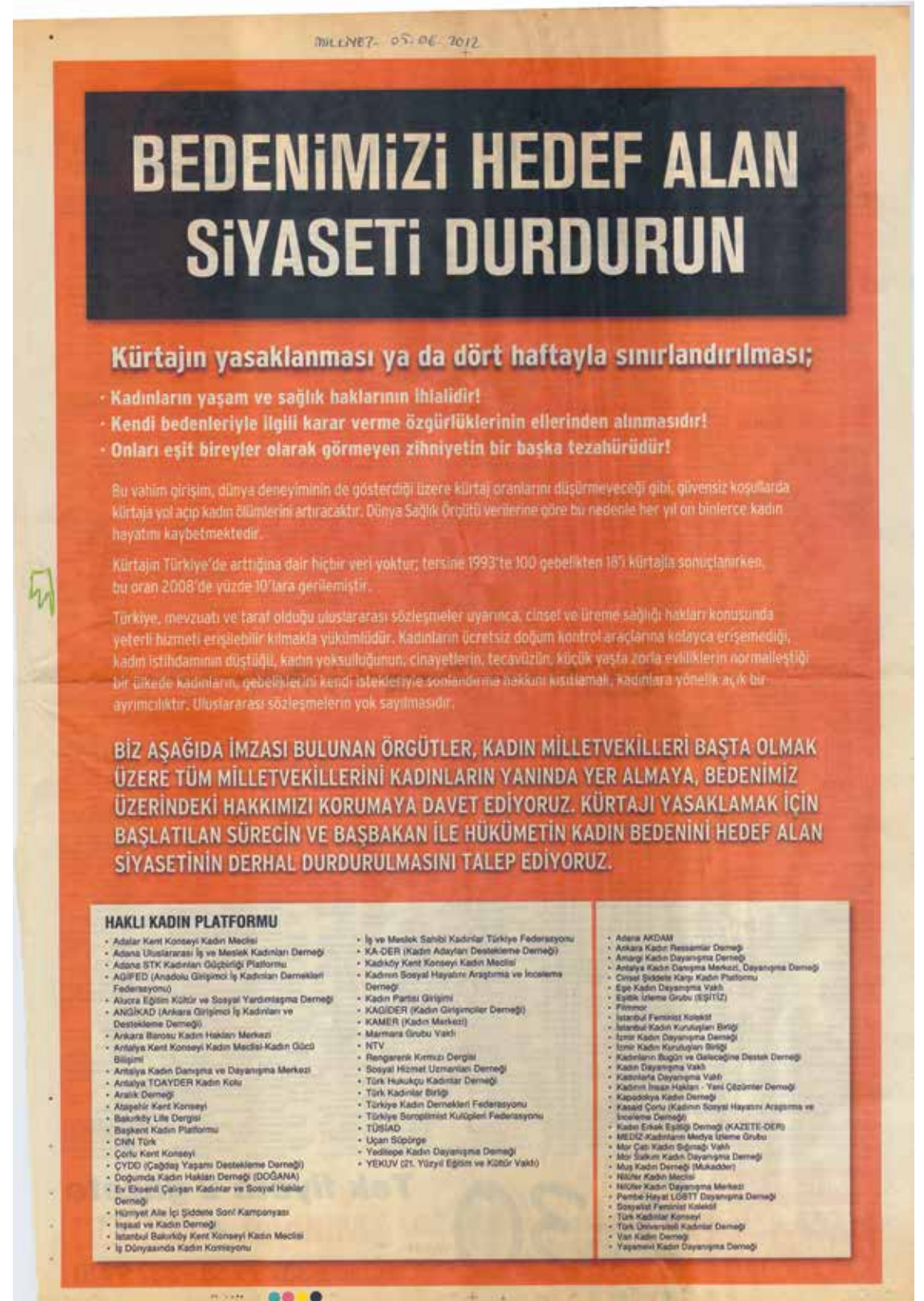
But shortly after, the anti-abortion process began. At the end of May 2012, Erdoğan stated, "Every abortion is an Uludere," in reference to the Turkish military's bombing

of Kurdish civilians, allegedly by mistake thinking they were PKK, which sparked a new controversy. At that time, the regulations for implementing Law No. 6284 were being discussed, and we were actively involved in the process. Three regulations needed to be prepared in connection with the law: the Shelter Regulation, the Violence Prevention and Monitoring Center Regulation, and the general implementation regulation for the Law. The Minister had previously told us, “Work with us again, and let’s address the gaps in the law through these regulations.” We were called back to Ankara for another meeting. The day before, Erdoğan had made the “Uludere” comment, which led to a heated debate and tension during the meeting. The Minister defended Erdoğan, causing the discussion to deviate from its original purpose, and we could not reach any conclusions. We couldn’t even discuss the regulations. A new meeting date was set, and we were asked to attend again. We returned, but by then, the abortion issue had escalated, and we were also actively involved in that struggle. The entire movement had mobilized. A debate emerged within the movement, with some suggesting, “Let’s not attend these meetings; let’s take a stand against the Ministry.” The argument was that “The Ministry supports this rhetoric; they’ve said it to our faces. We should stop all discussions with this Ministry.” I and a few other women disagreed with this approach, as we didn’t think it was the right course of action. However, the majority decided to withdraw. We wrote a letter to the Ministry announcing our withdrawal from the meetings. After that, all dialogue with the government ceased, and we could never meet again. Shortly afterward, the Gezi protests erupted. Then, in 2015, the conflicts resumed, and in 2016, the attempted coup occurred...

THE ABORTION CANNOT BE BANNED CAMPAIGN

Selen (Lermioğlu)

As WWHR and Equality Monitoring Group (EŞİT-İZ), we launched the “Abortion Cannot Be Banned” campaign together. Suddenly, Erdoğan came out and said, “Every abortion is an Uludere; abortion is murder.” At EŞİT-İZ, we decided, “This time, let’s not involve the organizations directly. But at the very least, let’s start discussing what we can do as organizations.” So, I immediately called Liz and Zelal from WWHR, and Hülya reached out to others, but in the end, it was the teams from EŞİT-İZ and WWHR that came together. We were the first group to meet and discuss what to do. We tried to determine whether we should create a platform or take a different approach. At the same time, we were also participating in meetings with the Socialist Feminist Collective and the Istanbul Feminist Collective. Ultimately, we decided not to establish a separate platform as EŞİT-İZ and WWHR, as doing so could potentially divide the women’s movement. Instead, we envisioned a process that mixed-gender organizations would support. We felt it was important to have a campaign that not only addressed abortion as a women’s issue but also included the voices of others—such as gynecologists, the Medical Chambers, organizations working on poverty, and those focused on child welfare. Therefore, we said, “Let’s not directly involve organizations in this



"Stop trying to control our bodies!", *Milliyet*, 5 June 2012

effort.” We decided that the names of WWHR and EŞİT-İZ wouldn’t be directly associated with the campaign, but we would still coordinate it. That’s how we launched the “Abortion Cannot Be Banned” campaign and organized a large online petition drive. Simultaneously, we quickly reached out to a wide range of stakeholders—we contacted the Medical Chambers, local community leaders, forensic experts, gynecologists, bar associations... there was hardly anyone we didn’t speak to during that time. We also encouraged them to gather signatures. WWHR focused primarily on mobilizing international support, especially from global organizations. On an international level, both individuals and organizations could sign the petition. We tapped into our networks, urging them to say, “This is happening in Turkey; please immediately send messages to the Turkish embassies in your countries.” WWHR led this initiative and was very successful. We worked quickly and efficiently. The European Commission, the European Union—there wasn’t a single letter left to write. We translated everything into English and Turkish.

TURKEY’S 6TH PERIODIC REVIEW BY CEDAW

Şehnaz (Kıymaz Bahçeci)

At the beginning of the preparation for Turkey’s 2010 CEDAW Review process, WWHR convened a meeting with relevant organizations. This was around the time I started coordinating logistics at WWHR. In 2005, the Turkish Penal Code Women’s Platform, operating under our secretariat, and the CEDAW Civil Society Executive Board – Turkey in Ankara submitted two separate shadow reports. However, when these reports were presented at the UN, it became clear that they conveyed similar messages. To present a more unified and stronger stance before the CEDAW Committee, the decision was made to combine advocacy efforts in 2010. So, they agreed to coordinate the process jointly for the next review. We organized a preparatory meeting, where Feride Acar, a member of the CEDAW Committee at the time, shared insights on the committee’s priorities. İpek also contributed by sharing her experiences, and we then divided the topics among us. Groups made up of members from three or four organizations took responsibility for writing sections of the shadow report related to their specific areas of expertise. Afterward, we focused on consolidating these sections—tracking their submission, editing, confirming the accuracy, and ensuring everything was in order with a control list and additional checks, etc.

In the 2010 session, we ensured equal participation from both platforms. With the funding available, Liz and I, along with Zelal (Yalçın) from Purple Roof, attended the session. Zelal and her team were also active in the process, particularly the section on violence. Our HREP trainer Şule Sepin, on behalf of Şule’s organization, which advocates for women with disabilities, contributed a one-page thematic report on this issue, which we included as an annex to our main report. This made Şule’s involvement important. We have always prioritized supporting the participation of trainers in international processes.

“Feminists initially had doubts about what AWID would bring to women in Turkey and local women’s organizations. But after the conference, they spoke about how enriching it was to hear the stories of women from vastly different countries and cultures and to realize that the challenges women face globally are often very similar. Experiencing solidarity and realizing that you are not alone in the struggle for women’s human rights is truly invaluable.”

Karin (Ronge)

Our goal was to reflect the needs and realities of the women who participated in HREP, as well as the local context, in international advocacy efforts. For example, in 2005, Zozan (Özgökçe), a HREP trainer from the Van Women’s Association (VAKAD), along with other women from VAKAD, wrote a one-page thematic report on the rights of Kurdish women and traveled to New York to advocate for it. After preparing the 2010 report, we opened it for signatures and garnered the support of 80 organizations before submitting it. The Committee’s recommendations ultimately included almost all the issues we had highlighted in our shadow report. At WWHR, we have always believed in the importance of linking our work with international efforts and collaborating with other organizations and platforms, both globally and within Turkey. I believe this approach is incredibly empowering. Through my experience at WWHR, I’ve learned that while it’s important to say, “We did this, and we own it,” it’s even more empowering to achieve it in collaboration with others.

2012 INTERNATIONAL AWID FORUM, ISTANBUL

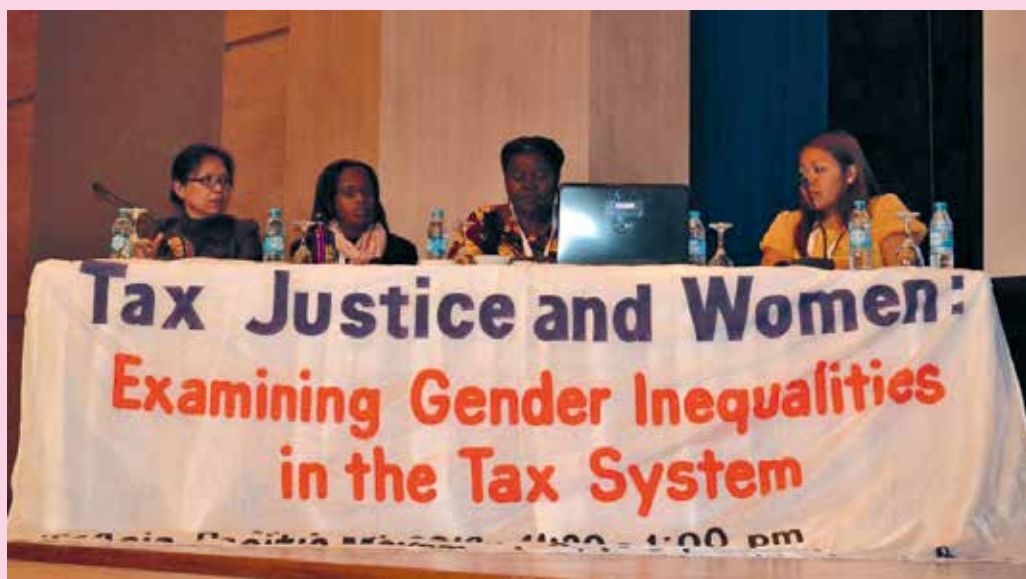
Ebru (Batık)

When the 2012 International AWID Forum was held in Istanbul, our connections with international women's movements grew significantly stronger. Thousands of women from around the world attended; it was an incredible experience. One of the most powerful moments, for example, was seeing a woman from Van participate in AWID. Hearing her share a personal challenge and how she overcame it in front of such a large audience was truly impactful. What makes this so special is the grounded nature of these exchanges—real-life experiences are being shared, which is quite different from academic discussions. After a presentation, for instance, a woman from AWID's General Assembly mentions, "This is being discussed in the context of sustainable development goals, and here's how it might affect you." Then, you share that with women from local organizations across Turkey. This kind of direct exchange is incredibly valuable. Women respond by saying, "It seems we'll be facing the same challenges."

Selen (Lermioğlu)

AWID was incredible. So, we were in contact with them. We needed to find a venue for this big conference. And the numbers did not lie; the smaller venues would not work. We visited the Haliç Congress Center... and it was settled. It's one of the largest venues. Perfect. We stayed in close contact with AWID to plan for the number of simultaneous workshops and parallel sessions, coordinating all the details with the Congress Center. Everything seemed to be falling into place. However, when we compared the number of sessions with the number of rooms AWID requested, we noticed they asked for several more rooms than we had anticipated. They wanted an additional four or five rooms. We're confused, "Are they requesting backup rooms? Did we miscalculate?" So, we reached out to clarify, and they replied, "No, those extra rooms aren't for parallel sessions. They are for the wellness section." At first, we couldn't help but laugh, joking, "Are we setting up a spa? A hammam?" But they were completely serious. They designated one room as a scream room, another as a meditation room, and one as a nap room. I was shocked. It was one of the most important lessons I took from AWID. They explained, "As feminist activists, we often push ourselves so hard without caring for our well-being that we risk burnout. We need to create spaces and moments to care for ourselves, and we need to learn how to do that. That's why we offer wellness activities for women attending our conferences and meetings."

At AWID, we also advocated for broader participation, emphasizing that "Turkey is a large country with many women's organizations that lack the financial resources to attend. We need to ensure more inclusion." Normally, AWID sponsors 50-60 participants for these large forums, while others must pay a participation fee. Although AWID secures most of the funding, it isn't enough to cover such a large event, so each attendant had to pay around



\$200. As the Turkish delegation, we pushed hard, arguing, “This is a challenge in Turkey. How will women from places like Kars, Van, or Trabzon afford to come to Istanbul?” If I remember correctly, we raised the number of sponsored participants to 200, allowing far more women to attend for free. The experience of being with women from all over the world was incredible and revitalizing for all of us. One of the most complex and “divisive” topics at AWID—and within women’s organizations in Turkey—was the issue of sex work. Many sex worker organizations from different countries attended, standing out with their pink umbrellas, and they were wonderful. Some represented trans women’s organizations, while others were cis women’s groups. It was remarkable. In the sessions they organized, sex work became a recurring topic for many women, including myself. We began to approach the subject from different perspectives, yet there was still no consensus on whether it should be viewed as sex work or slavery. It remains a deeply challenging issue for many.

Karin (Ronge)

One of my most significant contributions to the women’s movement in Turkey was convincing various women’s organizations to come together and host an international women’s conference. The AWID Forum, held in Istanbul in the spring of 2012, became the largest forum of its kind, with over 2,200 participants from around the world. It was the first (and, to my knowledge, the only) conference of this nature to be held in a predominantly Muslim country. Initially, there was significant resistance from Turkish women’s organizations, and even within my team, there were doubts. Many questioned how the conference would benefit Turkish women and local women’s organizations. Did the conference leave a lasting impact? I’m not certain, but I do recall some of the feedback shared by activists from the women’s organizations we worked with. They spoke about how enriching it was to hear the stories of women from vastly different countries and cultures and to realize that the challenges women face globally are often very similar. Many were grateful that the conference was held in Turkey, as they wouldn’t have had the opportunity to travel abroad and meet so many women’s rights activists otherwise. The exchange of knowledge and the sharing of successful strategies are critical for women activists, often leading to new ideas and approaches. Experiencing solidarity and realizing that you are not alone in the struggle for women’s human rights is truly invaluable.

FEMINIST PRINCIPLES AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Zelal (Ayman)

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) began supporting us during the 2008-2010 period, and in 2011, we proposed, “Let’s sign a five-year funding agreement.” This was one of the key initiatives I led while at the association. I was inspired by models used by women’s movements in India and Pakistan, where many feminist

organizations focus on long-term planning. After visiting those regions and receiving advice from feminist leaders, I became determined that WWHR should secure long-term core funding—actually not just WWHR, but all women’s organizations. Convincing the team wasn’t easy. Some colleagues said, “They won’t agree to that,” but I persisted, saying, “Let’s at least ask.” At the time, I didn’t know how to create a strategic plan—none of us did. I found some information on Google and drafted a two-page strategy, which is still in our archives. The girls and I brainstormed, but we were clueless. We were smart, knowledgeable women, but we had never done anything like this before. In the end, we succeeded. SIDA responded positively, saying, “We are already thinking about long-term strategies, so this is a great starting point.” We all worked hard on this together. At that time, Selen, Liz, Saba, and I were on the WWHR board, and of course, Karin was always there. Karin was incredibly insightful and experienced in these matters, and I learned a lot from her. SIDA held external audit processes for WWHR, sending an auditor to assess us on their behalf. We went through four audits in total, which was a challenging and exhausting process.

We also decided to finalize our institutional operation guidelines then. These were among the first of their kind in Turkey. We developed booklets covering various topics, including institutional and operational principles, human resources management, misconduct and corruption, conflict resolution and management, personnel management, financial affairs and reporting, monitoring and evaluation, and procurement regulations. The official statute did not fully meet our needs, so we wrote an internal bylaw. For us, it wasn’t just about securing funding; we invested significant effort into shaping our internal operations and defining how a feminist institutional structure should function.

Selen (Lermioğlu)

I had heard about WWHR’s principles, such as “employees should also be part of the management.” These were often discussed. However, our understanding from the outside was limited, as there weren’t many examples of this, even within the women’s movement. WWHR operated more as a professionally structured organization, while the women’s movement in Turkey generally followed a different approach with volunteer work. Once we began engaging in strategic planning at WWHR, I realized how deeply these principles were discussed and how essential they were in a feminist organization. I understood the importance of including professional staff in decision-making processes and that this was a core principle that had been thoroughly debated and carefully considered. I internalized this idea. Especially when the organization’s structure included professional employees, this was a necessary way to organize. I saw that WWHR wasn’t a place where one person was in charge, but rather, decisions were made collectively after long and thoughtful discussions. This approach resonated with me, as every decision was based on thorough debate and efforts to reach a consensus, even if it sometimes slowed things down. While some organizations might not appreciate this method, it’s essential for a feminist organization. I’m glad we followed through with it. SIDA then had us go through an audit, after which one of the criticisms was the absence of a single leader—specifically, the lack of a director. They viewed

this as a deficiency, and they also raised concerns about employee representation on the board. This frustrated us greatly. In response, Karin and I traveled to Stockholm to SIDA headquarters. We explained, “While the auditor may have raised these points, they are based on limited understanding. You need to hear our perspective. We have thoroughly discussed these matters. As a feminist organization, our structure is intentionally different. We have built it based on collective decision-making, not top-down leadership. Here are our justifications.” After listening to our reasoning, they acknowledged our approach and said, “You’re right; this is your organizational structure.”

WWHR operates primarily as a feminist organization with a professional workforce, which carries certain risks. I believe WWHR has experienced challenges because of this, and these challenges persist. However, many feminist organizations face difficulties in various areas. On the one hand, WWHR maintains a professional structure; on the other, it strives to make decisions without enforcing rigid hierarchies. While some hierarchy is inevitable, the goal is to avoid the misuse of power. A central consideration in WWHR’s organizational structure has always been, “How can we build this in alignment with feminist values?” This is crucial. For instance, even though the association law in Turkey legally requires a board of directors, decision-making processes are carried out collaboratively with the team, ensuring that the spirit of feminist principles is upheld.

A recurring challenge in the organizational structure, common in many places, is that new women often only stay for a short period of time. It poses a particular challenge, as younger members join but do not remain for extended periods, departing for various reasons—some amicably, others less so. However, there is also a positive aspect to this. Many women enter the field through WWHR, and this contribution should be recognized. Today, numerous women who began with WWHR are active in various women’s organizations, groups, and human rights initiatives worldwide. Therefore, this dynamic should not be viewed entirely negatively. While it can be challenging to continuously introduce new people to new ideas, in the context of a broader movement, this turnover can be beneficial. As organizations, we should reflect on how to address this challenge. People may not stay long-term, and they’re not obligated to do so. Instead, organizations could focus on improving knowledge transfer internally, ensuring that institutional memory is preserved. And we shouldn’t overlook our broader impact in advancing the movement.

Karin (Ronge)

It is WWHR’s holistic approach, versatile strategies, diverse programs, widespread publications, intensive, open-minded networking with most different actors on national and international levels, and our enormous and effective advocacy for women’s human rights that were influential and mostly successful, despite all obstacles and critiques. I learned so much through WWHR and got to know so many wonderful individuals, female and male, who believe like me that change in societies is possible. I am very grateful for all the inspiring encounters. Will all the efforts and the successes we had last? I don’t know, but the next

generations of women’s rights defenders will rise and maybe refer to WWHRs commitment and strategies. As Margaret Mead has said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

DISSOLUTION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Ebru (Batik)

In our final years working with Social Services (GDSS), we encountered instances where they requested the removal of certain topics from the training. For example, when addressing “marital rape,” a subject explicitly covered by the law, they instructed us to “remove it” and “avoid discussing such matters.” We responded, “This is part of the domestic violence module, and we are explaining the law.” A similar situation occurred with abortion, where I recall them strongly warning us, “Do not mention that at all.” Essentially, their stance was that, even if these issues were legally recognized, they shouldn’t be presented as rights. There were also specific points related to gender equality that, while addressed in our training, they preferred to exclude from the official content.

When the dissolution of GDSS was underway, we began exploring alternative strategies. One group within our team advocated for pushing the Ministry to continue utilizing our existing pool of trainers, most of whom were now affiliated with the Ministry under different branches, arguing that this was a solid foundation worth maintaining. Another group proposed a different approach, suggesting that it would become increasingly difficult to work with these new institutions. They suggested expanding the pool to include politically engaged women who would continue this work not as government employees but as activist individuals. Both perspectives had merit. Those in favor of maintaining the state-affiliated trainer pool were correct in noting that implementation would not be sustainable with younger women activists. While the initial passion was strong, enthusiasm eventually waned, leading to decreased participation. In contrast, social workers and colleagues in municipalities, who treated this as a professional endeavor, continued to run these programs for eight or nine years actively. Meanwhile, politically engaged and organized women—including myself—began to shift toward other areas after two or three years. This created challenges in the early stages, but over time, we gradually achieved greater continuity in implementing HREP with independent NGOs.

Zelal (Ayman)

The dissolution of GDSS in 2011 elicited profound anger, sadness, and a sense of panic among us all—reactions that would be understandable to anyone in our position. A sustainable model of collaboration with the state had been abruptly taken away. As feminists, as a feminist organization running a feminist program, we had been working in partnership

with the state, utilizing its resources and human capital to implement our program, and now we were losing that.

When faced with the question, “What are we going to do?” We began to develop new strategies. We shifted our focus towards partnerships with municipalities, women’s organizations, and international institutions such as ILO. We had already collaborated with ILO, so we decided to intensify our engagement. At the same time, we concentrated on building relationships with municipalities and women’s organizations, continuously seeking new strategies and pathways. While this transition was successful in certain aspects, it also posed significant challenges, many of which persist. The key difficulty lay in having to work with various municipalities and institutions in a fragmented manner. Unlike the cohesive and effective partnership we had with GDSS, the initial phase of this new approach was not as seamless. Moreover, HREP’s operational model requires considerable effort to implement programs effectively, especially without strong local partners. This shift proved challenging in terms of budgeting, program development, and execution. Ultimately, it required greater effort and the allocation of more resources to reach women compared to our previous experience.

HREP’S ENDURING IMPACT

Zelal (Ayman)

The association’s approach to engaging with trainers, participants, and partners within the HREP network is key. In the recent independent evaluation of the program, respondents consistently emphasized that “the association works exceptionally well, fostering egalitarian relationships. Their communication is excellent—constructive, supportive, and conducive to our growth.” Participants consistently praised our trainers, while the trainers themselves expressed appreciation for the association and felt well-supported. Our partners embraced the association, as well as its participants and trainers, with a strong sense of ownership. HREP is not merely a tool for reaching women in the field; it also seeks to benefit the institutions with which it collaborates. For instance, we strive to formalize our partnerships through protocols and develop mechanisms that not only enhance our partners’ capacity but also provide mutual benefits. By empowering trainers as women, we enable them to strengthen the institutions they work within. These trainers, in turn, reach out to women, facilitating their personal and professional growth. These women then disseminate their knowledge within their communities, creating a ripple effect throughout the broader society.

Ebru (Batik)

I participated in the trainer training in 2013. Although I had been involved in the program for three years, it was an entirely different experience being on the other side of the table. I realized that I felt more anxious in the role of a trainer. I thought, “What if



ICPD High Level Political Forum, 2017

this issue arises? How will I handle it? How will I manage this situation?” I also observed that participants in my group had a way of echoing unresolved issues back to the trainer. They tend to focus on anything that seems unresolved, almost like holding a magnifying glass to the trainer’s challenges and reflecting it back. I noticed this dynamic within my group, as though they had sensed my unresolved issues and examined them closely. I believe the program affects everyone—some within two weeks, others in five or 16—but it touches everyone somehow.

I found the dynamics among the women fascinating, particularly how the conversation flowed from one person to another and how turning to someone with, “What do you think?” created a good dynamic. One young woman, wearing a headscarf, listened attentively but remained quiet. Eventually, she opened up, expressing how deeply troubled she was by the pressure she faced, particularly from her brother. About three weeks before the group sessions concluded, she approached me after a meeting and confided, “I want to remove my headscarf, but I’m afraid of my family’s reaction. Do you think it’s the right decision? Or should I respect my family’s wishes?” I offered a neutral response, saying, “I can’t advise you on what to do, but you should do whatever makes you feel comfortable and happy.” At the next session, she arrived with her hair styled, confidently flipping it back. It was more than just the act of removing her headscarf—she said, “I feel so empowered. Since the beginning of the group, I’ve wanted this, but I never felt I had the strength to do it. If you had asked me three months ago, I would have said, ‘I could never do it,’ but now I feel really good about myself.” Her family had also been supportive, telling her, “Do whatever makes you happy.”

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG)

Pınar İlkkaracan

The Cairo Declaration and Program of Action, the outcome of the ICPD in 1994, was a landmark achievement for women’s sexual and reproductive rights (SRHR), marking the first time these rights were comprehensively defined. In preparation for the 20th anniversary review of the Cairo Declaration and Program of Action (ICPD+20), the UN established the ICPD High Level Task Force in 2012, composed of senior government officials and civil society experts. Between 2012 and 2014, the Task Force worked to strengthen governments’ political will and commitments to the Cairo Declaration and ensure progressive strategies were included in the ICPD+20 outcome document. Its goal was also to prioritize SRHR, along with gender equality, in the post-2015 development agenda.

I was elected for this expert group due to my long-standing contributions to UN discussions on SRHR, both as an official delegation member and an activist. The Task Force worked intensively over three years, holding near-monthly meetings. During this time, I delivered numerous speeches on panels and engaged in advocacy efforts with UN officials and state missions.

After my appointment to the Task Force, we established the Cairo+20 and Sustainable Development Goals Working Platform to enable the participation of Turkish civil society organizations in the process. The platform brought together women’s organizations, groups focused on SRHR, and youth organizations. In Turkey, following 2010, there had been an increase in attacks on SRHR, leading to significant regressions. The platform was created within the context of the ICPD process to bolster solidarity and present a unified stance against these mounting challenges.

Three significant UN world conference processes began in the 1990s: the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, ICPD in 1994), and the 1995 World Conference on Women (Beijing). The 20th review of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit took place in 2012, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were designed to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with a more inclusive and global approach, placing sustainable development at the center of the agenda.

Since 1994, I have been part of an international feminist coalition focused on ensuring gender equality and SRHR are addressed progressively in UN documents. Unfortunately, both as a coalition and within the broader international women’s movement, we were unable to fully engage in the formulation of the MDGs, which resulted in some missed opportunities. For example, while the MDGs included the goal to “Promote Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.” I have long found the concept of “women’s empowerment” problematic in my work at the UN. What does it truly mean to “empower” women? Too often, the term is applied superficially. In Turkey, for instance, there are numerous cases where offering baking or rug-weaving courses is cited as having “empowered” women without addressing

the deeper systemic issues of gender inequality. For years, I have advocated for the use of phrases like “realizing/achieving gender equality” instead, both internationally and in Turkey. Additionally, the MDGs lacked a focus on SRHR, which was another critical gap. The MDGs also concentrated mainly on developing countries without emphasizing practical implementation. In contrast, the SDGs take a global approach and are more focused on actionable implementation.

Driven by the goal of avoiding the oversights in the MDGs, I focused on ensuring that the targets we sought would be embedded in the SDGs set to replace the MDGs. My involvement in the Task Force was crucial to this effort. The Task Force’s secretariat provided critical information, enabling us to hold face-to-face meetings with key UN officials who were integral to the process.

I was in New York regularly, I organized and participated in direct advocacy meetings with state missions. I also had opportunities to engage with the heads of major UN agencies such as UN Women, UNDP, and UNFPA. The Task Force, functioning as an official civil partner of the UN, gave me an insider’s view, allowing me to monitor and influence developments closely. One key objective was ensuring that one of the SDGs would be to “*achieve gender equality*”—not merely to “promote” or “encourage” it. This became a focal point of my advocacy. My extensive experience as a member of Turkey’s official delegation to the UN CSW since 1994 and my familiarity with UN documents and language significantly strengthened my work in this area.

For me, the objective was clear: *achieving gender equality* needed to be a standalone SDG goal. I consistently raised this point in all high-level discussions. During this process, we encountered the Rio Group, which later evolved into the Women’s Major Group (WMG). The UN had authorized this group to represent women’s organizations at the Rio Conference, primarily focusing on issues like women and agriculture, women and the environment, and women and climate. In 2012, WMG had around 250 members.

Within the international feminist community, there was a divide—some argued for collaboration with WMG, while others preferred to act independently. Ultimately, I concluded that it would be better to join forces. Since the UN had designated WMG to work on women’s issues, I believed we should unite the global feminist movement and work together, strengthening solidarity and avoiding divisions among women. I put in a lot of effort to make this happen. Initially, WMG did not support the inclusion of gender equality as a standalone goal and even opposed the idea. However, after numerous meetings and discussions, we convinced them to support it.

As WWHR, we co-organized the civil forum for the European regional meeting on the SDGs in Istanbul in 2013 in partnership with the WMG. This meeting was pivotal in securing the support of women’s organizations working on environmental issues and fostering unity around a common feminist language and principles. Leveraging my long-standing relationships with international organizations focused on SRHR, I worked diligently to secure their backing in the SDG process, which proved successful. Ultimately, we joined forces

“Ultimately, we all joined forces and successfully advocated for gender equality to be included as a standalone Sustainable Development Goal—Goal 5, Achieve Gender Equality.”

Pinar (İlkkaracan)

and successfully advocated for gender equality to be included as a standalone Sustainable Development Goal—Goal 5, *Achieve Gender Equality*.

Şehnaz (Kıymaz Bahçeci)

In the SDGs process that started in 2013, with Pinar’s vision, together with the Women’s Major Group, we succeeded in making gender equality a stand-alone SDG and an intersectional principle in the whole Agenda 2030. After the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, as WWHR, we also took it upon ourselves to promote and raise awareness about the SDGs in Turkey.

Immediately afterward, in 2016, both the CSW had the priority theme of gender equality within Agenda 2030, and Turkey volunteered to present a report on the SDGs at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). We were the only women’s organization in Turkey that had worked on the SDGs at such an international level until that point. So, as we started working on the HLPF SDG Report. In 2013, we also worked on introducing the SDGs to other women’s organizations and civil society in Turkey and trying to get them to include the SDGs in their advocacy.

For CSW, along with other NGOs of the Women’s Coalition, we applied to be on the official delegation, but we actually also debated this at the same time, how ethical was it to be in the state delegation of a state with increasing anti-democratic practices? On the other

hand, this was the most important meeting that could combine the SDGs and the issue of gender equality, a vision of how much gender equality will be discussed and how effective it can be in the next 15 years. The Agreed Conclusion of this CSW was therefore important. We said, “If we can be on the delegation, let’s be on the delegation,” and we went to visit the Minister. The Minister said she could give us six or seven spots within the delegation. We discussed it among our group, I joined the delegation on behalf of WWHR. Elçin (Cavlan), Selma (Acuner), Ceren (Akkaya), and Özgül (Kaptan) were also on the delegation.

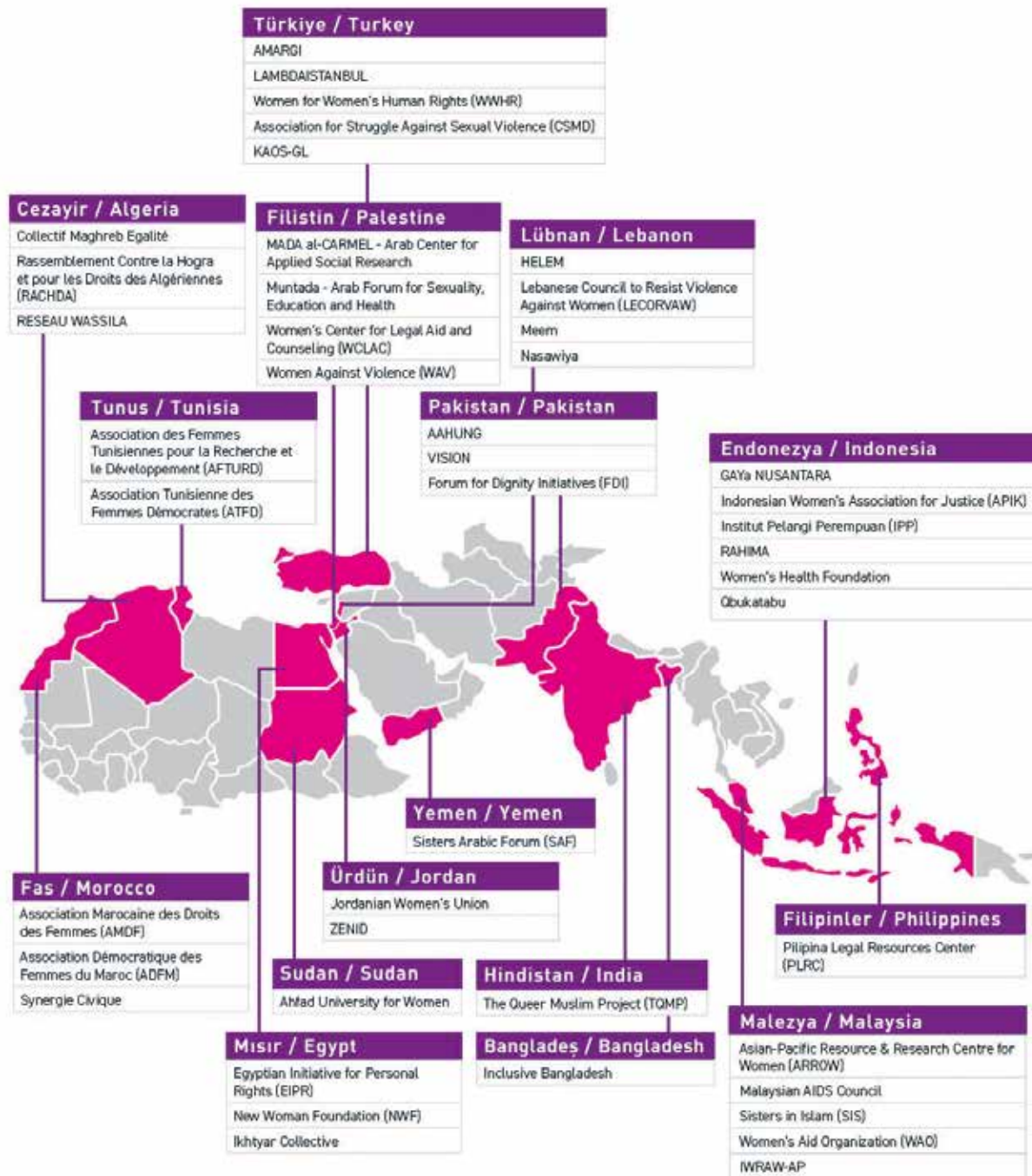
As WWHR, we are also a member of the Women’s Rights Caucus, which consists of organizations working on SRHR. This platform advocates for the Agreed Conclusions document both before and during CSWs, with an aim to include more progressive language on gender equality and women’s human rights.

There is a positive side to being on the delegation: Normally, civil society organizations cannot enter the room where the negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions are taking place. This is an intergovernmental process, and the member states want to keep it that way. Therefore, no information normally comes out of the room. Only countries that care about gender equality and include civil society organizations in their delegations or have their diplomats talk to NGOs to pass on information. However, at the same time, we are talking about very long negotiations that last at least six hours every day. It is very difficult to get one-to-one information flow from there, and things happen very fast. You can change one word in the Agreed Conclusions, and that can affect key policy actions that will follow; it is such a delicate process. But it is very difficult to influence the process when you are not in the room during the negotiations.

There is also a very serious anti-rights and anti-gender lobby in the CSW and increasingly in many other UN commissions. For example, the Vatican, Russia, some Central European countries like Hungary, Iran, Egypt, and the USA when more conservative right-wing governments are in power... To counter these anti-rights member states, you need at least a few member states asking for the inclusion of the same, progressive language. It is also necessary to advocate for this with those progressive delegations.

The General Directorate of Women’s Affairs from Turkey participates in CSW every year. There are two or three very good experts, who have a good command of the subject at the Directorate. I made proposals to them echoing demands of the global feminist movement, of course not by pushing Turkey’s limits, but in a way that they could say yes and raise the proposals during the negotiations. We worked very productively for two weeks, sometimes until 2 am. And it was very enjoyable. The results of the CSW were significant, with outcomes such as the need for increased and diversified financing; the need to include gender equality in sustainable development; the need to include and promote gender equality in addressing climate change in line with the Paris Agreement; the need to strengthen women’s participation in decision-making on sustainable development, and the need to adopt laws that protect women and girls from violence and guarantee their human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

**MÜSLÜMAN TOPLUMLARDA CİNSEL VE BEDENSEL HAKLAR KOALİSYONU
(CSBR) 2001'DEN BUGÜNE KURUMSAL ÜYELER
CSBR'S ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS SINCE 2001**



The HLPF was in the next few months, and Turkey was going to present an official Voluntary National Report. So we prepared a shadow report for the SDGs. It presented where Turkey stood in terms of gender equality from the perspective set out in the SDGs. Since the SDGs were not as widely known as they are now and we had to write the report in a very short period of time, we wrote the report on our own. Unlike UN treaty processes, you cannot officially present the SDG shadow report at the meeting but can advocate for the report through other means. You can attract the attention of your own state and try to influence the questions other countries ask your state after the state presents its report. Also, NGOs are given a two-minute slot to ask questions to the state. This process gave us a chance to develop a relationship with the Ministry of Development. They saw that we were the ones who were following Agenda 2030 at the international level, whereas our efforts to make contact before the meeting had gone unanswered. After the HLPF, we started to be invited to meetings related to the SDGs. The government conducted a research on “Where is Turkey in terms of the SDGs?”. They only published the draft report, we reviewed the documents and gave feedback. At that time, we were able to establish relatively more comfortable relations with the state.

On the other hand, we also made a lot of effort to introduce the SDGs to civil society organizations. We addressed this issue in different meetings, in almost every speech we made. We brought this issue to the agenda in the platforms we were involved in. We made the video series *Encounters* on the intersectionality of gender with all development issues and collected all related information on the SDGs in a Turkish website called “Hedef5.org.” Then, when Turkey reported again on the SDGs in 2019, we took the initiative and wrote the shadow report together with eight NGOs, engaging in stronger advocacy.

I think WWHR is an organization that feeds a lot from the international arena. I have always experienced that WWHR opens up space for collective work for gender equality. Also, WWHR looks at issues very holistically; the wide scope of HREP is an example of this. Moreover, when we are working on the SDGs, not just working on Goal 5, but being able to say “All SDGs need to be approached from a gender perspective” is very valuable, and better describes the vision and impact of WWHR. That’s what we did in our *Encounters* video series. And I think that this perspective adds significant value to WWHR both nationally and internationally.

CSBR'S JOURNEY THROUGH CHANGING CONTEXTS

Dédé (Oetemo)

The context since the establishment of CSBR has changed. Today we face threats and attacks. For example, at our 2004 Jakarta meeting, we were very public; the press conference we held garnered a lot of interest because we talked about sexual rights, LGBTQI+ issues, etc. But in 2010, when we did the Sexuality Institute, actually at the same hotel, we had to hide it; we told participants to be careful. Of course, we still persist, but we need to be more behind doors and take precautions; we worry about even our physical safety. The space for human rights and human rights defenders is shrinking. With the attacks that have been happening since 2016, intersectionality with journalists, other feminists, and human rights organizations has become crucial.

We still do online meetings, webinars, and publications. GAYa Nusantara published “Bringing Progressive Faith Voices toward Diverse Genders and Sexualities”, with CSBR as a co-sponsor. We co-organized a training with CSBR called “Using Faith and Tradition to support an inclusive understanding of Gender and Sexuality” in 2021 and an 8-week online course on Gender, Sexuality, Islam and Science in 2023. We also managed to have a small grant program for grassroots initiatives working on sexuality. Our advocacy is also mostly virtual. But when members go to international meetings, they still represent CSBR.

I think the CSBR Sexuality Institutes were one of our most important activities. We organized them annually from 2008 to 2017. We have trained many activists over the years. And we would do follow-up surveys, you know, what happened after you finished the Institute and people are still active as teachers, as activists, as journalists. Our publications like the *CSBR E-News*, our research *Sexual Politics in Muslim Societies* were valuable. We also had members from more isolated contexts in other regions of the Muslim world, such as Kyrgyzstan and Sudan. Our advocacy internationally and supporting each other nationally, was a big contribution. I would say our combination of feminism and queer activism is unique. If you look around the world, it is usually either one or the other. Also, I guess, because of the perspective in Southeast Asia, yes, we do work on rights, but we also include progressive textual interpretations of Islam, and I think that is unique.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

Şehnaz (Kıymaz Bahçeci)

In 2014, the government launched its attempts to amend Article 103 of the Turkish Penal Code (TPC), which pertains to sexual relations and sexual harassment involving minors. Within the parliamentary commission established to “protect family unity,” which had

also prepared the divorce report, debates regarding early and forced marriages resurfaced. Groups such as the “Victims’ Families Platform” voiced concerns like, “We got married young, we made a mistake, but now the father is in prison,” and began advocating for amnesty for rapists who married their victims. In response to these initiatives, we launched a campaign to oppose the proposed amendments and protect the Penal Code as originally enacted. We worked to revitalize the organizations within the Penal Code Women’s Platform, where we had also served as the secretariat. Canan (Arın) and Hülya (Gülbahar) were deeply involved in these efforts, alongside organizations such as Women’s Solidarity Foundation and Purple Roof. We traveled to Ankara. I remember holding meetings at the parliament in collaboration with local organizations and issuing press statements to garner public support. While we succeeded in securing some of our demands, others were unfortunately not achieved.

Berfu (Şeker)

When I joined WWHR in 2016, the Divorce Commission had already convened, and the Divorce Commission Report had emerged as a roadmap for systematically rolling back women’s rights. The first major issue that we encountered after the report was the attempt to amend Article 103 of the Turkish Penal Code (TPC) to pave the way for child marriages. This initiative had its roots in 2014. In July 2016, the Constitutional Court annulled two clauses of TPC 103, and the decision took effect in November. Consequently, new provisions had to be drafted to replace the annulled ones. During the parliamentary session where these new provisions were being voted on, three AKP members of parliament submitted a proposal to grant amnesty to men who had been convicted of sexually abusing minors through marriage. This mobilized the entire women’s movement in the middle of the night, and we worked until morning, drafting statements and responses. We were already working on the new provisions to replace the annulled clauses, and we had established the Penal Code 103 Women’s Working Group. When the amnesty proposal surfaced, the working group expanded to become the Penal Code 103 Platform. With the mobilization of the women’s movement, protests erupted, culminating in a march to the parliament. In Ankara, women from diverse political backgrounds engaged in dialogue with the government, successfully halting the initiative. However, the issue continued to resurface. The strategy employed by men’s groups claiming to be “victims” and advocating for changes to Article 103—groups that we later discovered were frequently lobbying Parliament—eventually evolved into a broader strategy used in ongoing attacks against women’s rights.

What is this strategy? It is in fact the same methods we use in the women’s movement to advocate for our rights. We write statements, collect signatures, engage with parliament, and meet with representatives, they do the same. These groups, which claim to be “victims,” adopt the same tactics. They are highly organized. For instance, in the case of child marriages, they present the situation as if these marriages were happy, arguing that the women and girls are the ones suffering because their husbands are imprisoned. They leverage this narrative in their lobbying efforts to influence public opinion and political groups.

KADININ İNSAN HAKLARI EĞİTİM PROGRAMI KOORDİNATÖRÜ ZELAL AYMAN:

Cinsiyetsiz insan hakları sorunlu ve yetersiz

KHİ ERKİN SALTIK

Buğün Dünya İnsan Hakları Günü. İnsan hakkı kadın-erkek bütün bireyleri kapsayan kavramdır. Her bireyin ve her grubun hakları eşitlikten oluşur. İnsan hakları, özgürlük ve eşitlik kavramlarıdır. İnsan hakları, insanın doğuştan sahip olduğu hakları ifade eder. İnsan hakları, insanın insan olarak varlığını sürdürmesi için gerekli olan haklardır. İnsan hakları, insanın insan olarak yaşaması için gerekli olan haklardır. İnsan hakları, insanın insan olarak yaşaması için gerekli olan haklardır.



İnsan hakları kavramı kadın ya da erkek diye ayrılır mı?
İnsan hakları kavramı, insanın insan olarak yaşaması için gerekli olan haklardır. İnsan hakları, insanın insan olarak yaşaması için gerekli olan haklardır. İnsan hakları, insanın insan olarak yaşaması için gerekli olan haklardır.



AKP Hükümetinin kadın hakları konusundaki yaklaşımı nedir?
AKP Hükümeti, kadın hakları konusunda, insan hakları kavramını, insanın insan olarak yaşaması için gerekli olan haklardır. İnsan hakları, insanın insan olarak yaşaması için gerekli olan haklardır.



2007'den itibaren kadın hakları konusunda ne tür değişiklikler gördünüz?
2007'den itibaren, kadın hakları konusunda, insan hakları kavramını, insanın insan olarak yaşaması için gerekli olan haklardır. İnsan hakları, insanın insan olarak yaşaması için gerekli olan haklardır.

"Without gender, human rights are inadequate," Evrensel, 10 December 2017

Following the declaration of the State of Emergency, one of the first measures was the closure of women's organizations. This marked a particularly traumatic period, especially in the Kurdish regions, where women's NGOs were closed down unlawfully one after another. Government-appointed trustees in municipalities dismantled women's counseling centers and halted all women-focused initiatives, replacing them with venues like wedding halls. Although initially set for three months, the State of Emergency was repeatedly extended, fostering an environment of pervasive unease where even walking in the streets felt disquieting. The situation severely restricted civil society's ability to mobilize. Our personal sense of security deteriorated, and the atmosphere of heightened control restricted everyone's freedom to participate in public life.

The atmosphere of oppression was also our biggest challenge in coming together as women's organizations and mobilizing during our penal code 103 advocacy. I believe WWHR's presence and role were invaluable in bringing the movement together, enabling women's organizations and activists—at least a few of us—to come together, generate ideas, create discourse, and take a stand against certain issues.

HREP AND MUNICIPALITIES: NEW COLLABORATIONS AMIDST CHALLENGES

Zelal (Ayman)

After the dissolution of GDSS, fieldwork became significantly more challenging. We empathized with the trainers, as many were fearful, reluctant to join groups, and hesitant to continue. The broader climate of insecurity, heightened by the State of Emergency and increasing repression, deeply affected civil society during this period. This also impeded HREP implementation and our work in general. Instead of focusing on strengthening, improving, and advancing legal protections, we found ourselves primarily engaged in efforts to safeguard existing rights, which necessitated a shift in our strategies. Collaboration with municipalities, while productive, remains an energy-intensive and challenging process. For instance, we may have three trainers in each municipality, expecting each to facilitate two group sessions annually. However, they often manage only one. This can be due to factors such as their position or workload within the institution, the stance of their superiors or the mayor, or a lack of motivation. Additionally, numerous external factors, including the appointment of trustees to Kurdish municipalities, arrests, the dismissal of trainers, legal injustices, and the pervasive climate of fear, contributed to this. Consequently, potential participants were fearful and reluctant to join or continue with the groups during those one or two years.

Ebru (Batık)

We began collaborating with municipalities, initially focusing on HDP-affiliated ones and working primarily with Kurdish women in 2013. This partnership infused the program with a younger, more dynamic energy, leading to new needs and adjustments. With community centers no longer operational and organized women taking the lead, younger and more politically engaged participants joined the program. This shift prompted HREP to continually adapt, evolving into a platform that resonates more with younger women by incorporating visuals, videos, and social media. Following GDSS's dissolution, trainers became burdened with heavier workloads. Previously, we operated more comfortably, speaking up in our own spaces and on our terms. Now, perhaps due to heightened pressures, we've begun taking smaller steps. I sense that we've become less bold in our actions.

Duygu (Dokuz)

The 2013 Trainer Training was the first of its kind after GDSS, bringing together different stakeholders to try something new. Women's organizations in the Black Sea, Western, and Mediterranean regions were included, while in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, the focus shifted from civil society to direct partnerships with municipalities. Muş



Istanbul Feminist Night March, "Beyond MeToo," *The New York Times*, 9 March 2018

was an exception, with efforts directed toward the Muş Women's Association. However, the closure of women's organizations in Kurdish regions and the appointment of trustees to HDP-affiliated municipalities caused significant challenges. Despite this, there were successes, such as strengthening the Izmir Women's Solidarity and the inclusion of the Antalya Women's Solidarity through HREP.

The lessons we learned from 2013 were very useful in designing the 2016 Trainer Training. Of course, individual efforts from trainers also had an impact. For instance, when our trainer Ayla (Erdoğan) moved to Izmir, she acted as a catalyst, knocking on every municipality's door and saying, "Let me implement HREP for you." She greatly facilitated the work of Izmir Women's Solidarity and became a driving force. She was the one who raised awareness about HREP in many Izmir municipalities, helping us gain recognition.

The 2013-2016 Trainer Trainings also showed us that we would no longer be able to find feminist social workers to implement the program. Therefore, the content of the trainer training needed to change, becoming more comprehensive with a more foundational approach.

The idea of signing institutional partnership protocols with municipalities emerged in 2016. It was meant to strengthen the hand of the trainers and make the collaboration more permanent. For example, if Hande was a trainer in a municipality and was being assigned other tasks, she could say, "Look, there's a protocol, and running HREP is part of my job." It

was also a time when we needed to focus on municipalities and gain media attention. Thus, signing protocols, holding certification ceremonies, and news about "protocol signing" events became essential for us. The protocol also served another purpose during a period of widespread NGO closures in 2016. Even if it was a CHP-led municipality, this didn't mean the program was secure, and collaborating with them officially offered a form of protection for us. After 2016, municipalities had to get approval from either the governor's office or the district governor's office to sign protocols, such a process further legitimizes the program in a way, providing a legal safeguard.

NEW ADVOCACY TOOLS FOR A CHANGING ERA

Tuğçe (Canbolat)

When I started working at WWHR in 2018, two years after the coup attempt, the state of emergency was finally about to be lifted. The Parliamentary Divorce Commission report was released in 2016. Things were not going well. We felt things had come to a halt after our achievements in the late 1990s and early 2000s... Our fundamental rights were not yet compromised, but our relations with Ministries were deteriorating, the parliament was losing power. Although the women's movement was not yet directly targeted, Pride Marches were banned since 2015. In subsequent years, the atmosphere grew increasingly violent. As for feminist movement's presence on the streets, the Feminist Night Demonstrations continued to be held in Taksim, the heart of the city. However, the location of other protests and demonstrations gradually shifted to other places. We turned to social media after Gezi, particularly Twitter. Our hope for coverage in and support from mainstream media had waned, and social media was still somewhat of an alternative platform. It was a transitional time for communication channels. As our presence on the streets became restricted, we were racking our brains, asking, "How can we be more creative to make sure that our voices are heard?"

We were using social media actively between 2018 and 2020, before the pandemic. We organized big social media protests almost every week, organized influential hashtag campaigns. We closely monitored our social media posts to track the status of our actions, to see if they were trending topics. However, once the state became aware of this strategy, social media was no longer as useful. Today, mostly bot accounts set the agenda on social media. We no longer aim to become a trending topic except for major events.

In 2018, we were primarily relying on conventional communication tools for advocacy and awareness raising. We used not only the press and television but also, and perhaps more extensively, international mechanisms, reports, and research. For instance, our *Encounters* video series on SDGs was an innovative project. In short, this was a period when we experimented with new ideas and methods. With a heavy workload, you often intend to make improvements, but some ideas remain just that—ideas, and you end up doing what

Nafaka hakkı tartışılmaz



KADINA yönelik erkek şiddeti her geçen gün artarken iktidarın ve gerici yazarların hedef aldığı yoksulluk nafaka-sı tartışmaları devam ediyor. Kadının İnsan Hakları-Yeni Çözümler Derneği, (KİH-YÇ), nafaka ile ilgili yapılan araştırmaları derledi. Buna göre, hükmedilen nafakaların sadece yüzde 20,7'si ödenirken, en

az yüzde 50,7'si hiç ödenmedi. Araştırmalarda nafakayla ilgili öne çıkan veriler şöyle sıralandı: ■ Nafaka tutarları, nafakayı ödeyecek tarafın mali gücü oranında belirleniyor. Yani kişiye mali durumunu derinden etkileyen ve ödemesinin mümkün olmadığı bir nafaka yükümlülüğü getirilmiyor.

■ Hükmedilen yoksulluk nafakalarının ortalaması ise sadece 370 lira. ■ Erkekler gelirlerini asgari ücretten göstermek ve mal varlıklarını başkasının üzerine geçirmek gibi yöntemlerle nafaka tutarlarını en aza indiriyor. Büyük bir çoğunluğu da hükmedilen nafakayı ödemi-yor. ■ Haber Merkezi

DOSYALARDA ŞİDDET VAR

Acıklamada, "Nafaka hakkıyla ilgili mevcut değişiklik talepleri, kadınların iyice yoksullaşarak boşanmayı talep edemez hale gelmelerini hedefliyor. Kadınların nafaka haklarına dokunmayın" denilerek diğer veriler şöyle sıralandı: • Her 4 kişiden 3'ü eşlerin anlaşamaması durumunda boşanmayı normal karşıyor ve maddi imkanı olmayan kadına, nafaka ödenmesini destekliyor. • Her 10 kişiden 7'si boşanma sonrasında hem ıstırak hem yoksulluk nafakası verilmesini destekliyor. • Hükmedilen nafakaların sadece yüzde 20,7'si ödenirken, en az yüzde 50,7'sinin hiç ödenmediği görülüyor. • Araştırmalar boşanma ve nafaka davaları ile şiddet arasında önemli bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koyuyor. Dosyaların yüzde 82,9'unda kadına yönelik şiddet iddiası var.

"The Right to Alimony is not Up for Debate," *BirGün*, 16 March 2021

you can. That was what we faced. However, we had already begun producing the Istanbul Convention videos before the topic became contentious, which became a big advantage.

We couldn't meet in person due to lockdowns during the pandemic, while the attacks against women's rights intensified. The Law on the Execution of Sentences and Security Measures was passed, and the Istanbul Convention and Article 103 of the TPC on sexual abuse of children became burning issues.

Post-pandemic, social media became the primary space for voicing opposition, which ended up weakening the drive for street protests. While thousands of people took to the streets for the Istanbul Convention demonstrations, protests on other issues have been largely confined to social media. Although it's beneficial for individuals to be able to express themselves on their personal accounts, this confines discussions to online platforms and limits face-to-face interactions. Social media is not a space for meaningful dialogue or for resolving differences. Furthermore, it has altered reading and consumption habits. This is why we turned to social media to circulate our reports. While reports might be read by only 100 or 1000 people, short videos summarizing our "Being a Woman in the COVID-19 Pandemic" report and abortion research reached 10,000 to 30,000 viewers. This broader outreach is advantageous, but the downside is that people often engage with content perfunctorily, and this makes it difficult to grasp what is at stake in depth. When producing content, one must consider whether the goal is: to leave a mark in history or to reach more people. This concern extends beyond social media to the education system and how knowledge is

"Members of these government-backed misogynist groups claim that even if they are married for just one day, they are forced to pay alimony for the rest of their lives. Research reveals such claims are unfounded—that there are specific conditions for alimony; in fact, many women forgo their right to alimony simply to get away from violence. So we publicized these facts to challenge the disinformation and succeeded in overcoming the misconceptions."

Berfu (Şeker)

conveyed in schools. People's habits are shaped by state policies and education. In an era where internet trolls are gaining more influence, finding effective alternatives is challenging because attacks are not simply led by a few powerful individuals but are also systematically supported by the state. Our capacity to counter these attacks is limited. For example, when selecting the target audience for our ads for contentious issues such as alimony, the Istanbul Convention, and abortion, we narrow the scope to avoid attracting the attention of trolls.

CAMPAIGN FOR THE RIGHT TO ALIMONY

Berfu (Şeker)

We were alerted to the attacks on alimony after a symposium held at Aydın University in 2018. There were previous signals, but the first coordinated public statement on alimony was made during this symposium. Feminist lawyers who attended the symposium were shocked by what they witnessed. At a university, which claims to be an academic institution, organizations and groups consisting of divorcees, families, and alleged male alimony victims were attempting to legitimize their misogynistic views. They purported that alimony victimizes men and negatively impacts their second marriages and wives.

Alimony is an issue that affects many women. For years, the media, featuring celebrity



"Women won't back Down!", *Yeni Yaşam*, 13 July 2021

divorce cases, has propagated the notion that women receive large sums of alimony, leading to complete disinformation. These high-profile cases involve uncontested divorces among the wealthy. In contrast, the alimony that is under attack is poverty alimony, which is in fact close to nothing, not enough to cover basic needs. We tried to offset the false discourses and disinformation through research. We started holding weekly meetings with women's organizations and feminist lawyers. Initially, we focused on honing our approach, getting the facts right, clarifying which types of alimony were being contested, and establishing a common language. I should admit we also discovered many of us were not very informed about the issue of alimony.

Members of these government-backed misogynist groups claim that even if they are married for just one day, they are forced to pay alimony for the rest of their lives. Research reveals such claims are unfounded—that there are specific conditions for alimony; in fact, many women forgo their right to alimony simply to get away from violence. We had to publicize these facts to challenge the disinformation.

Tuğçe (Canbolat)

When we served as the secretariat for the alimony campaign, we were active and visible on social media. The campaign began with 100 famous women, and through the combined efforts of campaign constituents, we collected 10,000 signatures. At the onset, our strategy was to keep the platform itself low-profile and share women's personal alimony stories on

the Alimony Story website. Simultaneously, as the Women's Platform for Alimony Rights, we shared informative content on what alimony is, the necessary conditions, etc. When the campaign first started, we frequently heard the question—and this had already been voiced by various men's groups—“Why alimony? Is there an injustice there?” from many people, even people we knew. For me, the biggest success of this campaign was its ability to quickly shatter misconceptions. We clarified what alimony is and highlighted the inequality and injustice by saying, “The problem is not that alimony rates are high or that those married for one day receive alimony for years; the problem pertains to alimony not being paid.” We said it's the lack of a social justice system in Turkey and the unpaid, invisible labor of women. We accentuated the fact that it extremely difficult for women who have been deprived of education and many of their rights for years—especially women beyond a certain age—to be economically independent after divorce. We created a *Medium* page to merge all the campaign content and first collected signatures from 100 famous women. Eşit-İz's contribution to this effort was immeasurable. Following the initial 100 signatures, we reached 10,000 signatures within a week; later this number reached 20,000s.

The alimony campaign was successful not only in changing perceptions but also in preventing changes to the law. It was a multifaceted advocacy effort. We lobbied the parliament and met with representatives from various political parties, wrote reports, and held weekly meetings around this table. WWHR created a space where information could be collected and disseminated. To further mainstream the issue, we decided to commission the research company KONDA to conduct a study to increase our credibility. They compiled a report based on the platform's content as well as their own findings.

THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION KEEPS US ALIVE!

Berfu (Şeker)

The propaganda against the Istanbul Convention and alimony was rampant on social media during COVID. We regularly follow the press for women's issues. One day, Tuğçe said, “News covering the Istanbul Convention in newspapers has increased hyperbolically. Something is going on.” We immediately contacted Feride Acar of the GREVIO Committee to arrange a meeting. She said, “These attacks against the Istanbul Convention and the propaganda for withdrawal has been ongoing for some time. I usually don't take them seriously, but recently, I am worried. Something is about to happen.”

In 2021, the decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention was taken overnight. It seems that even the women affiliated with the AKP were not informed about it. In 2020, the debate instigated by the government on Turkey's withdrawal from the Convention was quelled as a result of the strong reaction from women and society. In March 2021, the CSW held their meeting online due to the pandemic. During this session, the Ministry of Family and Social Services organized a side event with the participation of the director and

representatives of the European Council on Human Dignity, Equality, and Governance, publicly stating, “We continue to implement the Istanbul Convention, this is very important for us.” Just a few days after this event, Erdoğan issued the decision to withdraw from the Convention.

The women’s movement mobilized immediately. We utilized every available channel—including emails, social media, and research—as well as our connections with international feminist organizations and experts at the UN and EU to make our voices heard. Engaging celebrities in the process proved to be highly effective. We thought, “If we can’t make our voices heard and reach others, we can collaborate with those who have large social media base and disseminate our message through their support.” This strategy worked well, and within a short time, we were able to generate mass support.

When the government first announced its intention to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention in 2020, few people knew what the Convention was about. When asked, many responded with misconceptions like, “It is a commercial treaty about the Straits.” To tackle these kinds of mix-ups, we decided to educate the public. We deliberately adopted an affirmative approach, also targeting the youth with visuals and working with influencers. When other celebrities followed suit, our content was viewed millions of times.

Of course, we organized demonstrations and engaged in extensive advocacy—women worked tirelessly. We launched the United4Convention campaign. Supported by international feminist organizations, this campaign united feminists and LGBTQI+ activists from European countries, where the Istanbul Convention was also a contentious issue. We aimed to demonstrate that withdrawing from the Convention means not only abandonment of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law but also a reflection of a globally organized authoritarian project. We warned that this decision could have a domino effect on other countries where anti-gender discourses and policies are gaining traction.

On July 1, the day Turkey officially withdrew from the Convention, a remarkable protest took place in Istanbul despite all the backlash and attacks. It was an extraordinary day for all of us. Yes, Turkey had already withdrawn from the Convention, but the Istanbul Convention gained public recognition and support. Despite numerous obstacles, we also strengthened and unified different movements. We were united—LGBTQI+s, women, and the Kurdish movement. I believe it revitalized us and kept our hope alive.

Tuğçe (Canbolat)

In 2020, when discussions about the Istanbul Convention sparked and conservatives launched the “Istanbul Convention Kills” campaign, we printed a brochure about the convention. Later, our social media campaign “The Istanbul Convention Keeps Us Alive!” became a trending topic. We created visuals and short videos to convey what the Convention is about in a simple manner. Şehnaz, Ezel, and Berfu worked on the texts while we supported them in the writing process and prepared the visuals. We commissioned illustrations to

attract more attention. We first shared these on the anniversary of the Istanbul Convention’s signing in August, and they were widely reposted. Shortly after, we produced spot videos and animations and ran ads on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. These videos reached millions and were disseminated rapidly.

We worked so much for all these campaigns. However, at the same time, we noticed that the visibility of the organization was waning, so we discussed how to address this as well. While strengthening our joint struggle was crucial, we also aimed to increase our organizational visibility. Looking back, the period when the Istanbul Convention visuals and videos became popular was also the time when WWHR became more visible. The content became so prominent that municipalities used it for billboards without our involvement. We also arranged for our content to be shown like trailers in movie theaters and placed ads on digital platforms featuring series with strong female characters.

We distributed over 70,000 brochures across Turkey through the HREP network. We also distributed around 100,000 of our masks via women’s organizations in HREP, municipalities, and political parties. For example, a woman from Çorum contacted us on social media, asking, “I want one of these masks too, how can I get it?” Random people were asking about local protests, and many women we did not know reached out to us through these channels. Yes, we promoted WWHR’s name, but the materials we produced were also disseminated widely through various women’s organizations, trade unions, other NGOs, political parties, municipalities, and city councils.

During the withdrawal process from the Convention, we organized another campaign called “The Istanbul Convention is Ours!”. Through the HREP network, we partnered with 15-20 municipalities across Turkey to display our work on billboards. Additionally, 15-20 celebrity women created videos and formed a social media chain. Many celebrities with millions of followers, such as Can Bonomo, Serenay Sarıkaya, Hazal Kaya, and Kenan Doğulu, organically reposted the visuals we shared. The impact was so widespread that those Istanbul Convention videos even circulated back to me through my family WhatsApp group.

Our visuals were multilingual in Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, English, German... Especially the Kurdish version attracted significant attention and was widely shared, as there is not much Kurdish content on this subject. Someone saw our Istanbul Convention animation and said, “We want to show this movie in Germany, so we’ll add German subtitles.” So suddenly, the movie had German subtitles! The English videos were instrumental in demonstrating our international advocacy efforts, shedding light on what was happening in Turkey, and creating support. We also made an online day-by-day chronology after Turkey’s withdrawal from the Convention, which was widely used in both Turkish and English. Every day brought new developments; new lawsuits, messages of solidarity pouring in. We also launched the Istanbul Convention website, a resource containing all relevant information and documenting daily events. The site generated considerable international attention and became a valuable resource for those seeking to understand Turkey.



İSTANBUL SÖZLEŞMESİNDEN VAZGEÇMİYORUZ
BİZİM İÇİN BİTMEYİ

We Won't Give Up on the Istanbul Convention Protest, Taksim, July 1, 2021
Photo: Güliz Sağlam



National HREP Summit, İzmir, 2019

EXPANDING THE HREP NETWORK

Duygu (Dokuz)

In 2019, we held a nationwide HREP meeting in Izmir after many years. We aimed to assess how we could utilize our existing pool of trainers and hoped to re-engage trainers with whom we had lost touch before developing new strategies. We contacted those who previously worked for the Social Services as well as retirees. We invited everyone, and 64 trainers attended. Although not all of them are active, we managed to bring about 20 former trainers back into the HREP network to some extent. As of 2019, HREP has become very strong in Izmir. By organizing that meeting in Izmir, we had the chance to showcase the Izmir model. Prior to the meeting, we held a HREP festival with the participants. Around 400-450 women attended the festival. The mayor of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and various district mayors spoke at the festival. Meeting women from HREP also motivated the trainers.

After the Republican People's Party (CHP) won the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality elections in 2019, we made a joint call with the municipality in 2021 for our training training. Our aim was to reach areas in Istanbul where we previously had no presence. Fourteen people

from the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality attended the training, thus also strengthening the municipality's capacity. Individuals from various district municipalities participated as well, helping us establish stronger ties with communities on the city's periphery. For instance, we had trainers from Esenyurt and Büyükçekmece. It became evident that there was a significant demand and need for such training in these districts.

In 2022, we concentrated on addressing the requests and demands we had received over the years. We made an open call—but not using social media—and reviewed applications from individuals such as social work graduates who work in municipalities. We asked organizations like the Turkish Association of Social Workers (SHUDER), the Human Rights Association (IHD) to share our open call with their members, so we were able to include a diverse pool of experts.

HREP had become widely recognized by NGOs and among municipalities—especially among social workers in the municipalities—by 2022. Many wanted to participate in the program for various reasons: some to reach more women, others to strengthen their own work, and some for personal career benefits. Today, HREP is a program that Directorates of Women and Family Social Services at the local level want to include in the services they offer. Despite the dissolution of Social Services, HREP has successfully expanded its network through innovative programs. It is a sought-after program, even in this political climate. We have also strengthened our institutional relationships with municipalities.

I've come to realize that HREP has changed over time. When it was first implemented in 1994-1995, it primarily reached disadvantaged, impoverished, migrant women; and illiteracy and language barriers were challenging issues for these women. Today, HREP has become more urban; it now engages with women from various socio-economic backgrounds, including those from urban settings. The women in the program are mostly from lower-middle class background; but of a wider spectrum—not only married women with children but also divorced women and university-educated women. Municipalities now issue open calls, attracting women from diverse groups rather than just those from the same neighborhood. Additionally, earning certificates or receiving documentation upon completing a training has recently become particularly trendy. I think this aspect of HREP is a significant motivator, particularly for younger women.

Our past collaboration with the Social Services rendered it possible for us to form new partnerships. One of the most striking examples is Altındağ Municipality in Ankara. During our time working together with Social Services in the 2000s, we had worked extensively in this district. A woman who became familiar with HREP during those days is now leading an extraordinary project in Altındağ Municipality: Women's Education and Culture Centers. These centers, which have been established in all 23 neighborhoods of Altındağ, represent the most beautiful and impactful project focused on women that I have ever seen.

Altındağ is a district that has received migration in mass and consists of many shantytown neighborhoods. These centers operate on a membership basis, with women joining as if they were part of a neighborhood club. Every year, members are surveyed to determine the types

of activities and courses they would like to see offered, and the centers tailor their programs accordingly. Women are kept informed about current activities via SMS. In addition to courses, the centers also organize field trips. However, participation in these trips is reserved for members who have attended courses. Field trips are also organized for men, but only if their wife or daughter benefits from the centers. For example, I have repeatedly witnessed course directors scolding men who come to apply for these trips: “Look, Mr. Ahmet, you have three daughters at home, and you don’t let them go out on the streets. When those girls come here, receive services, attend courses, and go on field trips, only then can you join a trip.”

When we went to the Directorate of Culture and Social Affairs, with which these centers are affiliated, with little hope, the director said, “I don’t quite understand this, but let Ms. Emra take a look at it.” Emra, who previously knew of HREP in both Altındağ and Mamak, recognized the booklet on the table before even seeing us and exclaimed, “Oh, HREP has come to us? This is wonderful. We should definitely be involved.” As a result, we were able to organize 45 groups in a conservative district where AKP had significant power. I believe HREP has gained significant visibility, and if we can continue to provide resources, it will keep on growing. As a core program, I think it will become an even more deeply rooted practice in the field of women’s rights.

In a world where everything is increasingly digitalized, there are also calls for HREP to follow suit. However, I think it’s important to maintain the distinct character of the program. There’s something unique about sitting face-to-face in a room, engaging in a conversation, and disconnecting from the constant stream of social media for a few hours. HREP has a nostalgic quality that benefits everyone involved. My dream is for HREP to evolve into a program where women can be more creative and productive, engaging even in the content and multiplying its impact. I believe this could be our lasting contribution.

GENDER EQUALITY SEMINARS (GES)

Duygu (Dokuz)

Gender Equality Seminars (GES) have always been on our agenda, and we had conducted some in the past. Then we held these seminars as part of ILO women’s employment projects, specifically with the private sector, municipalities, and unions identified by the ILO. I think these institutions were encouraged by the obligations imposed on the private sector through the SDGs and corresponding Global Principles. Various international standards regarding the involvement of the business world in the development process within the framework of human rights have prompted these seminars. As a result, gender seminars have become almost mandatory for large companies. Soon after the GES we organized with ILO, both municipalities and the private sector began approaching us on their own. Despite this, there were ongoing discussions within our team. We were still questioning the impact of

these seminars: Do they benefit the organization? Do they benefit the individual? We could not decide for sure.

In the independent research we commissioned in 2019, we examined the impact of the seminars on both organizations and individuals. While it’s impossible to compare these seminars directly with HREP, we found out that they had a positive, albeit limited, impact on individuals. On the other hand, municipalities and private corporations often expressed that these seminars served as a starting point for discussions on gender equality issues. The seminars also garnered media coverage, which helped inform people that their municipality was taking action on women’s issues. This, in turn, motivated municipalities to sign HREP partnership protocols with us. We also conducted complementary activities. For example, the textile company Inditex printed and distributed five thousand copies of the *We Have Rights!* booklets to women working in their factories. We also trained 77 HREP trainers in 2022 - 2023 to implement the seminars themselves. We oversee their first sessions; often pair two trainers together initially, and then they report back to us. We are laying the groundwork to make sure that these seminars become sustainable, not only in municipalities but also, as I mentioned, in the private sector.

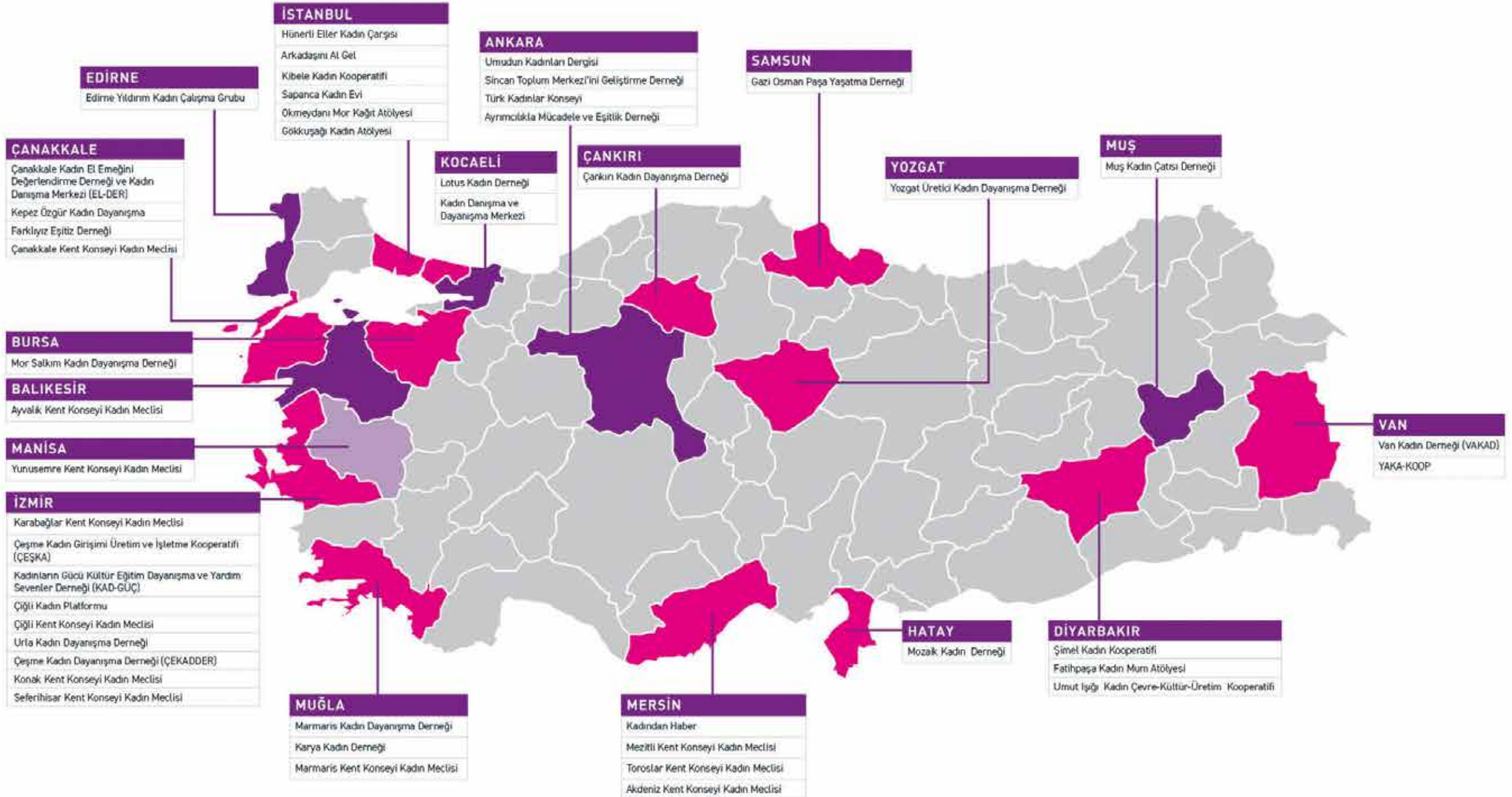
HREP, GRASSROOTS WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS, AND ADVOCACY

Duygu (Dokuz)

Given the oppressive atmosphere of recent years, it wouldn’t be fair to say our organizing efforts have been unfruitful. Establishing an organization is no easy feat when associations are being shut down one after another and people are constantly being accused of terrorism. In response to these challenges, we directed most of our participants toward joining city councils during this period. For instance, we organized HREP groups through the Istanbul City Council, enabling participants to later take an active role in local governance.

That said, district-based women’s organizations also began to emerge recently, the first women’s NGOs in Karabağlar and Çeşme, boroughs of Izmir, were established thanks to HREP. These are noteworthy achievements.

We have trainers in most of the women’s NGOs we collaborate with, and they often use this connection to strengthen their own organizations. One of the best examples of this is the Günebakan Women’s Association in Mersin. Although they started as a project-based organization, they participated in HREP’s trainer training, organized HREP groups, recruited women who completed the program and grew as a result. Being based in Mersin, they also played a crucial role during the earthquake, saying, “We can’t focus on HREP right now, but we still need to come together. With so many people coming in due to the earthquake, let’s not disperse; let’s work on earthquake coordination.” Most women’s organizations



“When we went to the Directorate of Culture and Social Affairs, where these women’s centers are affiliated, with little hope, the director said, “I don’t quite understand this, but let Ms. Emra take a look at it.” Emra, who previously knew of HREP, recognized the booklet on the table before even seeing us and exclaimed, “Oh, HREP has come to us? This is wonderful. We should definitely be involved.” As a result, we were able to conduct 45 groups in a conservative district where AKP had significant power.”

Duygu (Dokuz)

use HREP in two ways: one is to strengthen their organizing efforts, and the other is to collaborate with municipalities. HREP provides them with a ready-made tool to cooperate with local governments, allowing them to present their organization as a professional entity capable of such partnerships. We aim to support their growth by enabling them to benefit from our resources.

Berfu (Şeker)

HREP plays a crucial role in spreading advocacy campaigns. Thanks to our HREP network, I believe our campaigns have become widely embraced locally. For instance, when the attacks on alimony became a prominent issue, some of the technological tools we have today weren’t available yet. There was no pandemic, no Zoom. While Zoom has since made it much easier to come together, at that time, we relied on HREP’s WhatsApp group to share texts and visuals. This proved highly effective in engaging the local community. Additionally, during the HREP Festival, we discussed the backlash and the actions being taken by various platforms, ensuring the active participation of the HREP network.

YENİŞEHİR’DE KADIN HAKLARI EĞİTİMİ

Yenişehir Belediyesi, Kadının İnsan Hakları Yeni Çözümler Derneği tarafından geliştirilen ve Mersin Kadın Emeği Derneği tarafından Mersin’de uygulanan Kadının İnsan Hakları Eğitim Programı’na (KIHEP) ev sahipliği yapıyor.

MERSİN (TANIK HABER)-Türkiye ve Dünya’daki en yaygın, sürdürülebilir ve kapsamlı insan hakları eğitim programlarından biri olan ve 1995 yılından bu yana Türkiye genelinde ve Kıbrıs’ta 15 binden fazla kadına ulaşan Kadının İnsan Hakları Eğitim Programı, Yenişehir Belediyesinin de desteğiyle Mersin’de üçüncü kez hayata geçti. Eğitimler, KIHEP Eğitimcisi Özgü Göncü tarafından Yenişehir Belediyesi Akademide veriliyor. İnsan hakları ve kadının insan hakları konusunda uluslararası normlar ve mevcut ulusal yasalar hakkında farkındalık yaratmak amacıyla verilen eğitimler 16 hafta sürecek. Kadının İnsan Hakları Eğitim Programı kapsamında,



Kadının İnsan Hakları, Anayasal ve Medeni Haklar, Kadına Karşı Şiddet ve Aile İçi Şiddet, Şiddete Karşı Stratejiler, Kadının Ekono-

mik Hakları, İletişim, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerine Duyarlı Çocuk Eğitimi ve Çocuk Hakları, Kadın ve Cinsellik, Kadın ve Doğurganlık

Hakları, Kadın ve Siyaset, Feminizm ve Kadın Hareketi ve Kadın Örgütlenmesi başlıklarında eğitimler verilecek.

"Women's rights training in Yenişehir," Tanık Haber, 15 March 2022

Karabağlar’da kadınların yaşamı değişiyor

HABER MERKEZİ

Karabağlar Belediyesi, Kadının İnsan Hakları Yeni Çözümler Derneği ve Karabağlar Kent Konseyi işbirliğiyle düzenlenen Kadının İnsan Hakları Eğitim Programı (KIHEP), Kadın Sağlığı Eğitim Programı (KSEP) ve Engelli Anneleri Çalışma Grubu’nu başarıyla tamamlayanlara belgeleri törenle verdi. Bozyaka Sosyal Yardım İşleri Müdürlüğü’nde düzenlenen törene Karabağlar Belediye Başkanı Muhittin Selvitopu, Karabağlar Kent Konseyi Başkanı Senaiye Nazik Işık, Kadının İnsan Hakları Yeni Çözümler Derneği Koordinatörü Zelaya Ayman, meclis üyeleri ve çok sayıda kadın katıldı.

Törende belgelerini alan kadınlar yaptıkları konuşmalarında, yaşama daha farklı bakışlarını vurguladı. Özeti-



Bozyaka Sosyal Yardım İşleri Müdürlüğü’nde düzenlenen törene Karabağlar Belediye Başkanı Muhittin Selvitopu, Karabağlar Kent Konseyi Başkanı Senaiye Nazik Işık, Kadının İnsan Hakları Yeni Çözümler Derneği Koordinatörü Zelaya Ayman, meclis üyeleri ve çok sayıda kadın katıldı.

ediyoruz” dediler.

Program eğitmenleri de, 2013 yılından bu yana süren programlar kapsamında yüzlerce kadının haklarını öğrendiğine, toplumla bağ kurduklarına dikkat çekti.

Bilal auctür!

kadının toplumsal yaşamda yer almasına özel önem verdiğini vurgulayan Başkan Selvitopu, “Biz de bu çalışmalarla onu amaçlıyoruz. Belediyemizdeki kadın yönetici sayımız yavaş yavaş erkekleri geçiyor. Bundan memnuni-

Başkan Selvitopu, kadınların semt merkezlerindeki eğitimlere yoğun ilgi gösterdiğine dikkat çekerek, şunları söyledi:

“Karabağlar Belediyesi olarak en büyük amaçlarımızdan biri, çeşitli merkezlerde icinde

öğrenen, bilgilenen kadınlarımızın buradan sahiplendiğini görüyoruz. Derinliği, sıkıntılarını, sevinçlerini paylaşabilecek ortamlar yaratmış oluyoruz. Hedefimiz, şu anda 16 olan semt merkezi sayısını, dönem sonunda tüm mahallelerimize yayarak 58’e çıkarmak. Bunu başarmasak bile 30’u geçmek niyetindeyiz. Şu anda Limontepe, Tahsin Yazıcı ve Kibar semt merkezlerimiz hızla yapılıyor.”

Hurafenin panzehiri...

Başkan Selvitopu, Karabağlar’da önem verdikleri bir diğer konunun da kültür sanat çalışmalarını olduğunu belirterek, “Bir takım çevrelerin en çok korktuğu etkinlikler kültür sanat çalışmaları. Bu etkinlikleri tüm Karabağlar’da yaygınlaştırsak, kimse hurafelere inanmaz. İnançımı gerçek anlamıyla yaşamaya olanaklı

"Women's lives are changing in Karabağlar," Ticaret, 9 January 2020

THE FEBRUARY 6, 2023 EARTHQUAKE

Damla (Eroğlu)

When we heard about the earthquake, our first reaction was trying to understand what was going on, while we found ourselves drowning in our own shock and pain. Within a day or two, we began to hold emergency meetings. The only place to get news was social media. We were trying to reach our relatives and friends, women from the feminist movement who were in the earthquake region, to check if they were OK and if there was anything we could do. I think it took us a few weeks to really get the picture. In addition to our own team meetings, many of us were also active in other groups, such as the Feminist Solidarity for Disaster Relief and the Women's Coalition. It was a very difficult period emotionally. For almost any of us who did not experience the earthquake, it took some time to understand the magnitude of the destruction, and as the weight of the reality gradually sank in, we felt more helpless and anxious about what we could do. "We have to do something; we must do everything we can!" We had friends from the team who immediately went to the region. With time, as we had a better grasp on the extent of the destruction, we were overcome by the feeling of helplessness... This feeling affected us in such a way that we also grew somewhat intolerant towards each other in our meetings where we talked about what we should and could do. I think it's important to read these things together.

In March, we went to Diyarbakır. Why Diyarbakır? Because the scale of the destruction in Diyarbakır was relatively less, the city was rather safe, and many of our feminist friends were already there. Albeit affected by the earthquake, Diyarbakır became a center where all solidarity groups, feminists, LGBTQI+ organizations, and civil society organizations mobilized to create a hub from where aid was delivered to other provinces. We visited Diyarbakır to talk with our friends there about what we can do to support them and the region. During these meetings, we saw that our friends from the feminist, women's and LGBTQI+ movements, who were engaged in relief works in Diyarbakır, themselves needed psychosocial support. During our subsequent visits, we provided psychosocial support for these activists. Of course, in taking this decision we drew from our prior experience. We talked about the WWHR's previous experience providing psychosocial support in the aftermath of the 1999 earthquake. In 1999, there were two psychologists and a pedagogue in the team. The psychosocial support they offered back then was also very meaningful, given that the importance of such support was not widely known. In other words, the psychosocial support they offered for a year after the 1999 earthquake was a very progressive action.

After the February 6 earthquake, we thought that we could draw from this experience. There were already many institutions that provided in-kind and financial support, and we knew that the central coordination of such support was not well-organized. For the most part, these were one-off initiatives; and they were often available for only a certain period after the earthquake. But what was hard to find? It was not easy to find quality psychosocial

support, especially not for women. We also observed in Diyarbakır that the people engaging in solidarity efforts without taking care of their own well-being and mental health were reliving the trauma or suffering from secondary trauma. That's why we turned to psychosocial support. Gülşah and Nigar, our psychologist and social worker friends in the team, carried out the first phase of the psychosocial support work. After receiving positive feedback from our friends in Diyarbakır, we decided to continue psychosocial support in a more structured way.

Our budget allowed us to form a team of two people, who would be based in Diyarbakır, and also travel to Adıyaman and Malatya. We began to work with a social worker and a psychologist. During the process of structuring the psychosocial support we offered, we had a hard time making some decisions. "In which city will the field team work?, Where will they stay? In Adıyaman, Malatya, or Diyarbakır? Will they travel back and forth between cities?" "Will they stay in a house or a container city?" all these were tough questions. We thought that we should consider the well-being of the field team, thus we decided not to ask them to stay in a container. In the sixth month of the fieldwork, we saw that we made the right decision. By that time, fieldworkers who stayed in tent areas and containers for a long time had shared with us their feelings of isolation, the difficulties they experienced in recovering from secondary trauma and getting support from their institutions.

We had to coordinate the field team from Istanbul. It was a challenging process for us. Hilal (Gençay) worked very hard in labor-intensive processes such as the establishment of the team, supervision support, and field visits. In the second half of the project, I took over the basic coordination. We worked for eight months in the field. We limited the individual sessions to five, considering it as psychosocial emergency support. However, trauma-focused therapy is challenging because it might result in the resurfacing of other past traumas, and it is not possible to see the effect of the limited sessions immediately. In retrospect, I think it would have been better to start with two social workers. We changed course and continued with two social workers between September and December; and became more efficient.

Since we worked more in rural areas and the conditions were more suitable for social work, the lack of familiarity with psychosocial support posed another challenge. Offering financial support is much more tangible and understandable. People benefit directly from it. "I got diapers, and this meets my needs." But psychosocial support is something different. "What is the benefit? We will sit down and talk. What do you mean? What are you offering me? There is nothing tangible about this." That's why, for instance, 200 women would come when something would be distributed, while we could only reach 40-45 women on average through our meetings and group work. Also, we are not based in the region, and psychosocial support is not one of our core areas of work. We are not a service provider, we are not an organization that provides social support, and these factors were also challenging for us.

But on the flip side, we swiftly established relations with the region. We had already met with many organizations in Diyarbakır before we even started the project. Then we participated in the platforms and earthquake solidarity groups formed in the region. We joined the groups in Adıyaman and Malatya. When we initiated the fieldwork, we first visited

villages and towns and met with mukhtars. We visited schools. We interviewed people, women, to get information about where they used to live, their losses, and their well-being. Since we did a survey to assess the situation, we were informed about the situation a certain extent. Already two three months into our fieldwork, our opinion was often sought in the civil society solidarity groups in Adiyaman and Malatya. Our work was given as a reference, and people directed other organizations to us, saying, “WWHR is carrying out such work there, they would know.” Frankly, this surprised us. I am happy about the fact that we managed to have a more inclusive impact.

OUR APPROACH TO ORGANIZING: SUSTAINABILITY AND SOLIDARITY

Pınar (İlkkaracan)

Sustainability has always been our goal. Every organization needs a “heart”—someone who feels the organization and its members, understands their needs, and ensures continuity. Emotional connection and solidarity are essential, and I’ve always tried to nurture that sense of unity. I know that Karin, one of the people who worked the longest in the organization, and Gülşah also worked hard to foster this. It’s part of our ethics: we are together; we are united. I’m proud to have founded WWHR, leading reforms from domestic violence laws to the Penal Code, securing women’s rights. HREP has empowered tens of thousands of women in Turkey to recognize their rights and bring light to their families, communities, and the country. We’ve contributed to the democratization of Turkey and the advancement of women’s, human, and LGBTQI+ rights. Together with the feminist movement, we’ve fought—and won. I hope these successes inspire and give hope to younger generations.

Berfu (Şeker)

I think, as WWHR, our struggle has made a difference and also shown that the LGBTQI+ movement cannot be excluded from the women’s movement under any circumstances. These movements already have a long-lasting practice of doing politics, speaking out, and influencing lawmakers together. And I think that we have effectively continued our collaboration. We think that sexual orientation and gender identity are integral to gender equality, and being inclusive and intersectional is vital for our struggle. We see that we should collectively struggle against the dead-ends the government tries to corner us in.

Anti-gender movements and backlash target both the feminists and the LGBTQI+s. As activists, our every move is under attack. Not only are our rights targeted, but we have become targets as groups and organizations. And they try to buttress their attacks by isolating and dividing us. We look for ways to stand against this. For example, together with Kaos GL, we began organizing events in 2019 called “Solidarity Keeps Us Alive” in scope of CSBR’s

One Day One Struggle (ODOS) campaign. We aimed to rebuild the spaces where we once stood together.

The “Global Independent Feminist Body” initiative, which we have been co-coordinating with Women’s Coalition is yet another noteworthy platform that the WWHR has been a part of recently. This entity was something we conceptualized during the Beijing +25 process. We established a platform consisting of local organizations from Turkey. We tried to tackle this international idea with a perspective that expands from the grassroots to the international level. Based on the analysis that international monitoring bodies for gender equality and women’s human rights are becoming more politicized and losing power, the platform proposed to develop a theoretical framework for an independent global women’s body that can monitor state compliance with international norms. In all its endeavors, WWHR adopts an inclusive and intersectional perspective. It functions both as an advocacy organization and a think-tank, making policies and producing knowledge.

Zelal (Ayman)

Unlike many other women’s organizations, WWHR is an independent feminist organization that works professionally. When it comes to advocacy, I see WWHR as an organizing space for two main reasons: First, from the outset, WWHR has contributed to the independent and effective organization of the women’s movement by mobilizing its resources. This is one of the notable aspects that make WWHR what it is. Second, the association has contributed to the organization of women at the grassroots level through HREP, the advocacy networks that it established. Under current circumstances, prioritizing support for local women’s organizations and their efforts is immensely valuable. The women’s movement has diversified and expanded since the 1990s. That said, I think there is still a need for women’s organizations like WWHR, which have the capacity, resources, and organizational model to embrace and organize this diversity. Sharing resources with local and regional women’s organizations and local women, running effective campaigns together on different issues are still important practices for the movement...

It is also crucial to have full-time employees who embrace a professional perspective, come up with long-term strategies, and value institutionalization and expertise. For some women, these factors imply a hierarchy, but I disagree with them because structures like WWHR stand on three pillars or deal with the dilemmas created by three pillars: First, we are working in an environment where we are accountable to many parties and where we use professional methods in our activities. Second, we have to abide by certain laws, operate in line with the Directorate of Associations, and fulfill their bureaucratic requirements. Third, we are a feminist organization and we need to create a workplace environment in line with feminist principles and ethics. These three pillars can often conflict with one another, which can give way to difficulties in our work processes. This is something we have experienced at WWHR. But we have always acted courageously and made great efforts to establish and maintain a balance. We have taken, and continue to take, steps that can set an example.

I think WWHR's noteworthy contributions on the international level have been a trademark of the association. We have been taking part in the international processes and conveying the knowledge we have acquired there for decades now, and we can say we are one of the leading organizations in the women's movement in Turkey in this regard. This is important for HREP as well. For instance, women involved in HREP are very impressed when they learn about international laws and conventions. When they hear about the CEDAW or the Istanbul Convention, they say, "Do I also have rights at that level?" WWHR has played, and still plays, an important role in the history of the feminist movement in terms of conveying the knowledge and practices that have contributed to the empowerment and organization of women at the local, national, international, and regional levels.

Damla (Eroğlu)

When we talk about WWHR, we sometimes recourse to institutional memory. For many years, WWHR has acted as the secretariat for campaigns for various law reforms. It is one of the pioneers in the feminist movement in Turkey. That said, today, even if WWHR did not exist, there would still be the capacity to run effective advocacy campaigns. I think we have passed that stage. Today there are many women, many feminists, and various organizations with the knowledge and the expertise in advocacy and lobbying. The hallmark of WWHR used to be that it was the first women's organization in Turkey with women who had this knowledge and experience. But this set of knowledge and experience is conveyable, and I think we have endeavored to do so and succeeded. But without a doubt, it is still very valuable to hold onto this history and to develop and pass this experience on to the future.

Today, I think the most important and irreplaceable program that is run by WWHR is HREP. When I got involved with HREP for the first time and conducted my HREP group with a women's organization, Kadın Zamanı (Women's Time), I realized this: Organizing together, being part of the same institution or association or the same feminist organization, does not automatically bring about the solidarity and an intrinsic bond you. To create this bond, you have to make an effort to establish a separate relationship outside and beyond personal relationships. The unique beauty of HREP is that it strengthens the solidarity of the women within the groups. During HREP, the team at Women's Time found the opportunity to share experiences that they never had the chance to talk about. It was wonderful for me to see them bonding as they opened themselves wholeheartedly to each other. It was wonderful to become a part of that solidarity. I think HREP should be implemented in all feminist and women's organizations because it is also a semi-structured feminist consciousness-raising, solidarity-building group. I think the feminist consciousness-raising experience, which began in the 1980s, has not been fully conveyed as a practice within the movement. This broken link may be the source of many problems that feminist groups experience. HREP creates this link. It is not something that another institution or organization can easily take over. Developing a program from start to finish, ensuring its implementation, and making it last is not something that can be easily done. I think HREP remains our hallmark, alongside all the wonderful women I got to know through WWHR.



WWHR Team Retreat, 2024



from our partners and fellow activists



Prof. Feride Acar

Former President of CEDAW and GREVIO Committees

Act 1:

It was the year 1997. It was during the 16th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) at the United Nations building in New York. I was one of the recently elected members. I think it was the session where the Morocco Report was discussed. I had criticized the Moroccan delegation for its shortcomings in implementing the CEDAW Convention and posed a question. I was still sitting in the room during the lunch break. As a novice CEDAW Committee member who did not know many people, my mind was full of questions, and I was thinking about how far I had fulfilled my responsibility with the speech I had just delivered. At that moment, a beautiful young woman approached me and introduced herself in Turkish, saying, “I guess you are a member of the Committee from Turkey, right?” She was İpek İlkkaracan.

I learned about the important contributions of Women for Women’s Human Rights, which she represented, to the first Shadow Report written by civil society on the country report submitted by Turkey. I had already read the report and was very impressed; however, I did not know the writers. Meeting one of the contributors to that text made me very happy that day. It opened the door to a long-lasting friendship, comradeship, and collaboration with the WWHR team in different settings and for various purposes.

As I familiarized myself with WWHR, I saw an organization in my country that embraces international human rights values in its work and approaches the problems of women worldwide holistically through transnational cooperation on women’s rights. WWHR has always been a source of hope for me in our struggle for women’s rights in Turkey.

Act 2:

It was the early 2000s. I was at the UN building in New York for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) annual session. WWHR was again there, this time represented by Pınar İlkkaracan.

At the time, a women’s movement regarding “women’s rights in Muslim societies” was burgeoning in the international arena. This movement, which examined and discussed questions such as what women’s human rights are and how they are restricted by religion in these societies, was rather striking at first sight. For a woman like me, a product of Republican Turkey, it was a “different” discourse that was a bit unfamiliar and not easy to adopt. I remember WWHR as a group that worked with influential international women’s organizations in the 2000s. It is a well-known women’s organization in UN circles, which works hand in hand with women’s rights defenders in other countries on the international agenda.

Not to say that we were on the same page on every issue at the time. For example, I recall several instances where we disagreed with Pinar. Although we did not share the same approach on every issue, I find WWHR's and Pinar's work focus on "rights" indispensable. I also think that they never doubted the sincerity of my belief in the struggle for gender equality. Our relationship evolved into a collaboration and indispensable friendship where we complement each other and draw strength from each other's presence and work over the years.

Act 3:

WWHR has become a knowledgeable and capable organization that can uncompromisingly defend women's rights in different settings, work closely with state institutions, and endeavor to transform the ways in which these structures approach gender equality. In the 2000s, WWHR was an organization that regularly participated in the CSW sessions, was included in Turkey's official delegation, and collaborated with international women's networks. It had a vital function in the relationship between the state and civil society for many years—a function that was wanting and could not be replaced. In the 2010s, WWHR's efforts to highlight the importance of gender equality within the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework and bring it to the attention of civil society and state institutions in Turkey were truly remarkable.

Looking back, I see that WWHR played a highly active role in Turkey. It organized numerous national and local meetings, conferences, and seminars that I attended, all aimed at raising awareness about women's rights and gender equality. By integrating the international women's rights agenda into the Human Rights Education Program for Women (HREP), which it successfully runs across many regions of Turkey, they have played a significant role in raising awareness in our country.

WWHR has also been a platform where I, along with many other women's rights defenders of my generation, have connected with new movements, organizations, and young feminists, creating opportunities for collaboration and fostering intergenerational dialogue and transition. WWHR is vital in Turkey's women's movement, channeling knowledge and experience between academia and activism, both nationally and internationally. By providing many young women activists the chance to engage with the field and develop their personal skills, WWHR has become a training ground for countless women who cross paths with the organization.

In recent years, combatting violence against women has been the primary shared engagement of those who struggle for women's rights in Turkey. In this context, the recognition, adoption, and implementation of the Istanbul Convention have been a priority for the women's movement, and WWHR has played a key role in promoting its recognition and enforcement in Turkey. They also established strong and effective communication with GREVIO, the monitoring body of the Istanbul Convention. After Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention, WWHR became one of the leading civil society organizations defending it.

I would like to honor with respect and gratitude all the women who founded, developed, and continue to sustain WWHR today, and I extend my best wishes for its future.

Vildan Yirmibeşoğlu

Lawyer

I met WWHR in 1995 when I was the Head of the Legal Department at Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality. At the time, having pinpointed the need for legal support for women in the region, I founded and coordinated the Gaziantep Women's Platform. The meetings held in Istanbul following our participation in the UN's 4th World Conference on Women enabled us to form close collaborations with other women's organizations.

We began to get together with Pinar İkkaracan during this time. She was doing sociological research on women in the Southeast of Turkey and was looking for trainers who knew the region to implement HREP. I participated in some of the trainings and research they conducted in Gaziantep and other eastern provinces. Then, I witnessed the changes that women who took part in this training underwent. I also saw that they inspired and strengthened some of the women's organizations that had been established in the region.

In 1997, I moved to Istanbul and began working as a Human Rights Advisor for the Status of Women Unit. Together with WWHR, we organized numerous panels and workshops on gender equality in Turkey. WWHR's contribution to the successful national campaigns for the reform of the Civil Code and the Turkish Penal Code and its power to influence the public and decision-making mechanism cannot be overlooked. The press conference of the Turkish Penal Code Women's Working Group in Istanbul—of which I was the spokesperson—is one of the most memorable instances of this success and influence. In the Justice Commission, together with Selma Acuner and Yakın Ertürk, I delivered a speech, drawing attention to the elimination of sexist language from laws and the impunity regarding the so-called honor killings for the first time in Turkey. Representing around forty NGOs waiting at the door of the Commission, we were actually making history. It was very exciting.

I attribute WWHR's 30-year-long effective struggle for women's rights to its work and research promoting women's human rights and gender equality, its holistic approach, and its ability to strategize and collaborate with people from different sectors and fields.

In light of recent challenges and developments, such as the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, it has become even more vital to not only work to further our rights but also safeguard past achievements. I wholeheartedly congratulate the entire WWHR team for their strong communication, unwavering will, persistence, and enthusiasm in uniting women throughout this process.



Emine Döker

Gaziantep Women's Platform

“It all begins with knowing oneself...”

I was born on these lands, in Gaziantep, a city in Southeastern Turkey. I am the educated daughter of a mother who was never sent to school simply because she was a girl. As a daughter of that smart and strong women, I became a civil engineer, an occupation which is deemed a man's domain.

When I first met WWHR (Pınar İlkaracan and İpek İlkaracan) in 1995 to join the East and Southeastern women's research projects, I was one of the founding members of Gaziantep Woman's Platform. I was also involved in various other associations. As a mother in her late 20s, I now realize that I knew almost nothing—about myself, the world, or the lives of women and girls in this world.

As I went from house to house in the neighborhoods and villages in Gaziantep for the research project, I remember encountering a young woman who was forbidden to open the curtains and look outside. When I asked her name, she replied, “Around here, women don't have names, so never mind.” I knew nothing about the so-called honor killings or the bride exchanges then; I knew next to nothing about the lives of the women in my own city.

When HREP began in Diyarbakır, I remember İpek drawing pictures on large sheets of paper spread on a rug on the ground in the garden of a village house and talking about communication.

Among WWHR's projects, most notably HREP, which holds a very special place in my life, I first got the chance to know myself, and then the women in the Eastern, Southeastern, and other regions of Turkey. I got to learn about the lives of women from all around the world. Just as WWHR has touched my life, I touched the lives of hundreds of women in the lands where I was born.

Over the years, you put a lot of effort into what you do. And it all turned out to be beautiful. I thank you for all that you have given me, for what I share with other women whom I encounter on a daily basis, and for all the hard work. Pınar, İpek and Karin (I did not forget you:)

To many more years...

Bülent İlik

Former Director of the General Directorate of Social Services (GDSS)

The Human Rights Education Program for Women (HREP) was developed at a time when sensitivity to women's issues was still in its early stages and the public institutions were not yet committed to cooperating with civil society organizations.

Though I don't recall the exact details from 30 years ago, I remember that the cooperation between WWHR and Social Services took off after a visit from two young and enthusiastic women. Pinar İlkkaracan and İpek İlkkaracan expressed their desire to implement and expand their project by utilizing the facilities and resources of GDSS.

GDSS made the decision to cooperate with WWHR unusually swiftly; a protocol was signed, and the process began. Initially, trainer trainings were held for social workers, psychologists, and child development professionals working in the community centers. We trained numerous women, and through the efforts of these trainers, and institutional support, we reached thousands of women in a very short time.

This program benefited not only the women and trainers who participated but also the institution. I recall a news article about the work carried out at the Gazi Community Center in Istanbul. The headline read "Now We Know Our Bodies," highlighting the voices of the women—most of whom were married—who participated in the training, just one telling detail within the broader scope of the program.

HREP trainers continue their work at other institutions and NGOs. Professionals continue to implement the program voluntarily, and I am glad to witness their ongoing commitment. WWHR, those two women, and the cooperation of the GDSS management of the time have opened doors for other institutions, and most importantly, made a significant impact on the lives of the women who participated in HREP. I am grateful to those who have initiated, continued, and contributed to this process.

Today, GDSS no longer exists. The community centers have been closed. Women face many new challenges. It is now more crucial than ever that we continue to work diligently together with local governments, civil society organizations, and relevant university departments to help women become self-confident and knowledgeable about their rights.

Françoise Girard

Former President of the International Women's Health Coalition

I was deeply impressed by the fact that, from its very beginnings, WWHR explicitly chose to focus on so-called difficult issues such as sexuality, violence against women, and sexual rights, and to challenge cultural and religious justifications for harmful gender norms, specifically in the context of Muslim societies. The vision, courage and boldness

of WWHR have always stood out in the global feminist movement; so has their deeply grounded grassroots activism in Turkey, which persists despite the severe pressure exerted by the present regime.

I directly experienced two great moments of WWHR: the battle to name and denounce "honor crimes" at the UN, and the expansion to South/South-East Asia of the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR).

I first met Pinar İlkkaracan in Geneva in January 2000 when I was conducting UN advocacy for the International Women's Health Coalition. This was the European/North American preparatory meeting for the Beijing Plus Five negotiations. WWHR had come determined to ensure the Beijing + 5 agreement recognized forced marriages (rather than merely "early" marriages) and honor crimes as violence against women: these two issues had been left out of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. Pinar also wanted marital rape explicitly mentioned in the Beijing + 5 agreements; while marital rape was named in Beijing, it was critical that it be included again to support the advocacy WWHR was beginning to reform the Turkish penal code. Lawmakers in Turkey resisted recognizing marital rape as rape. A repeat mention in an international agreement was therefore crucial. At the negotiations, Pinar was an advisor to the delegation of the government of Turkey, and able to wield significant influence with European and G77 (Global South) governments. I'll always remember one late-night meeting in a small conference room in the UN basement, where the paragraphs on violence against women were being finalized. The Sudanese diplomat was very agitated at the Turkish demands and kept standing up to object: "What are these honor crimes you are speaking about?! We don't have honor crimes in Sudan!" After many more grueling hours, and with the support of countries from South and North, honor crimes made it in, as did forced marriages, and a repeat reference to marital rape. We were exhausted but elated!

As a visionary founding member of CSBR, WWHR recognized early on the need for a platform to discuss sexuality and gender equality in the context of Muslim societies. In November 2004, I participated in an important meeting of CSBR in Jakarta, when the network expanded to include South Asian and South-East Asian groups. Participants, who ranged from Jordan and Tunisia to Malaysia and Bangladesh, reviewed and critiqued the state of international agreements on sexual and reproductive health and rights, analyzed the impact of conservative political forces in their countries, and of Islamophobia around the world. I was riveted by these exciting and hard-hitting discussions, as a common, brave agenda for sexual rights and autonomy was forged across two continents.

There is, simply put, no organization like WWHR, and I wish it many more years of success.

Narınç Ataman

Women's Studies Expert

It was 1996, the coalition government of the Welfare Party (REHAF) and True Path Party (DYP) were in power. I had been sidelined from my role as an advisor to the Minister of Culture, and unexpectedly received an offer from the Minister of State, Işıl Saygın. I was then appointed as the Director General of the General Directorate on the Status of Women (KSSGM). Having been actively involved in the women's movement since the mid-1980s, co-founded the Foundation for Women's Solidarity, and worked with Turkey's first independent shelter, my greatest motivation for accepting this position was to advance gender equality and to combat violence against women.

Since the 1980s, we—members of the Beijing 4th World Conference on Women team, rights defenders, women's organizations like WWHR, journalists, and academics in women's studies—have stood side by side, drawing strength from one another in our shared pursuit of equality. WWHR is present in all these memories when the state, academia, and civil society worked hand in hand.

As soon as we took office, our first action was to ensure that the relevant article of the Turkish Commercial Code, which required married women in commerce to obtain their husband's signature on tax returns, was amended. We then prepared a draft bill to include a deterrent provision in the Turkish Penal Code to prevent violence against women. When the first draft was rejected, we resubmitted the same proposal. At the time, the commission had begun work to revise the law to better reflect the current era, yet only one woman was serving on the commission.

The first thing I did was visit the Ministry of Justice. My goal was to persuade the minister not to reject the proposed amendment and to introduce changes to the Turkish Penal Code that would create real deterrents for perpetrators of violence. During our meeting, he said to me, "Ms. General Director, leave this stuff alone! I was a prosecutor in Anatolia for years, you don't know! Women actually want to be subjected to violence. You should focus on the mothers who tie their children to pipes outside the front door on a winter day so they can sleep with their lovers, causing the children's hands to freeze." I couldn't help but wonder if he gave such unsolicited advice to all of his colleagues.

I was frequently on the phone with Pınar, Canan, Hülya, and other representatives of women's organizations. Also, I was persistently urging the minister to allow me to attend a meeting of the Penal Code Revision Commission, though they initially refused. I visited the then-Minister of Justice, Şevket Kazan, with Ms. Işıl, where we listened to religious hadiths.

The late Işıl Saygın would not let a matter go when she was convinced, and she obtained permission for us to attend the commission meeting. Immediately, together with the KSSGM team, we prepared briefs for the commission members. Pınar sent us the book *The Myth of a Warm Home* from Istanbul. What else was in the brief? The Beijing Action Plan,

the UN Declaration on Violence against Women, the CEDAW Convention, protection laws/orders in various countries, and newspaper clippings.

We presented our files to the commission. After waiting for some time, Professor Sulhi Dönmezer finally asked what had brought us there. We explained our request for stronger deterrent measures in the revision of the Turkish Penal Code, particularly to address domestic violence. Sulhi Dönmezer began by saying, "Madam, you want certain articles to be changed, but they cannot be changed, and I'll tell you why," and proceeded to read passages from the old French and British penal codes. Years had passed since those laws were written—World Women's Conferences had come and gone, realistic steps had been taken in those countries to combat violence against women, and new laws had been enacted.

When it was my turn to speak, I said, "Mr. Chairman, with all due respect to the experience and wisdom of the commission members, I'd like to share a feeling. Right now, in this meeting where decisions about women's lives are being made, I feel utterly alone. I look around, and all I see are men!" Mr. Sulhi quickly pointed out that there was, in fact, one woman on the commission, though she couldn't attend that day. One woman member! I continued, "How fair and just is it for only men to decide on matters that deeply affect women, who make up half of society? If you review the files we've submitted, you'll see news of women who have suffered violence or taken their own lives just in the past year." Silence ensued...

The Chair of the Commission broke the silence and said, "So, what do you want from us?" That's when I asked them to study *The Myth of a Warm Home* and the texts on protection orders in various countries. There is only one quick solution in the current situation: the protection order.

The Law on the Protection of the Family, then known as Law No. 4320, which entered into force in 1998, thus occupied the agenda of our criminal lawyers. We embarked on an extensive collaboration with officials from the Ministry of Justice—or perhaps it's more accurate to call it a prolonged negotiation. The law's first proposed name was the Law on the Protection of Women, but this was, of course, rejected. Over the years, Law No. 4320 faced significant criticism, which was beneficial in many ways. Any initiative like this always has room for improvement. We did everything we could to convince the authorities, given the circumstances of the time. The discussions regarding the law in the parliamentary Sub-Committee could fill an article of their own. Comments such as, "What do you mean, we can't go out for a drink and then come home?" or "We can't discipline our children how we want?" were typical. The law was eventually passed by parliament shortly after I stepped down as Director General, and professionals in the justice system were trained for its implementation.

Nearly twenty years later, I found myself sitting down for breakfast with the cleaning lady at the house where I was staying as a guest. She began talking. She shared with me that she had two children and had been stabbed in the leg by her husband out of unfounded jealousy while she was pregnant with their third child. She also mentioned that her husband



had been temporarily removed from their home with a protection order, and that he had since changed his behavior. “It turns out that there are other women who care about us. I used to think that people in Ankara got paid for doing nothing, but it turns out that there are women there who think about us too!” As tears started to fall from my eyes, the woman asked: “Sister, did your husband stab you too?”

During my tenure as the General Director of the Women's Affairs, I felt the strong support of women's organizations, activists, academic experts in women's studies, the press, and both women and men who believe that equality should be integrated into all plans and programs, both public and private. I extend my heartfelt thanks to WWHR for its tireless efforts in a time when all fields worked in such harmony and solidarity and wish them many more years of success.

Alexandra Garita

RESURJ (*Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice*)

Women for Women's Human Rights(WWHR) has been a reference for my understanding of feminist education, feminist organizing, feminist leadership, and feminist action. I have been consistently inspired over the last twenty years by the organization's resilience, outreach, humility, and the impact it has had on moving agendas forward for

women's human rights. They are savvy advocates at local, national, regional, and international levels; movement builders across constituencies, Muslim countries, and diverse identities; important references for learning methodologies, adapting curricula, and enabling access to public services like health and education; and trusted partners in the struggle for achieving gender equality and women's human rights. Congratulations to you all and thank you for all that you have done. A Lutta Continua!

Ayşegül Kaya

Lawyer

Efforts to address women's issues are labor-intensive and volunteer-based worldwide. It is almost a miracle for a women's group to keep up its work for 30 years on end, let alone remain a strong and thriving organization. I congratulate my friends at WWHR, who have come this far through great efforts.

I can't remember exactly when, but it was decades ago that I crossed paths with HREP and contributed to both the training program and the preparation of some of the legal materials. Like all the other team members, I enthusiastically participated in these efforts. Being a part of the interactive trainings was both fun and instructive for me. I was young, and those were beautiful days. For me, know-how, discipline, and hard work are the most

important qualities that characterize WWHR. I wish all the luck to my friends, whose efforts I believe are valuable not only for today but also for the future. Here's to many more 30 years!

Nuran Akıncı

General Directorate of Social Services (GDSS)

I am a social worker who first met WWHR in 1998. The programs they offered greatly enhanced my existing energy and potential. I am truly grateful to be part of this initiative. After our training sessions in Çanakkale, we established the ELDER Women's Association.

Despite numerous obstacles, we succeeded in founding the association, which proved to be a challenging yet educational experience for many women. Although our efforts may seem like a drop in the ocean, those drops are now growing into something much larger. We have accumulated wonderful memories and built strong friendships through training processes, seminars, association activities, ceremonies, anniversaries, and parties. At one certificate ceremony, a HREP participant gave an emotional speech upon receiving her certificate, saying, "My life has two chapters: one before HREP and one after HREP. I cherish the chapter of my life after HREP. Many thanks to the group facilitators for offering me this!"

The work done through HREP profoundly impacts women's lives, which then ripple out to touch others. As our methods of communication change, women gain access to accurate information and learn about their rights. We can't be prouder of the work we do with women. I hold deep affection for you all.

Charlotte Bunch

Founding Director and Senior Scholar, Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)

Congratulations on 30 amazing years as a leading advocacy organization for women's human rights. WWHR has been a beacon of ideas, activities, and hope for women in its region and globally. Its presence and vision have been critical in our struggles, especially in a time of backlash against feminism.

Among WWHR's many accomplishments was hosting the first "Feminism in the Muslim World Leadership Institute" coordinated by the Women Living Under Muslim Laws Solidarity Network (WLUML) and the Center for Women's Global Leadership in Istanbul in 1998. As one of the organizers of the event, I remember the resilience and hospitality of the WWHR staff. We faced many challenges in bringing together a diverse group of women from many different countries, but WWHR helped to keep us all focused on the agenda during the day, and enjoying good food, laughter, and entertainment at night. We remain grateful for your leadership and outreach to those beyond over the years.

S. Nazik IŞIK

Equal Life Association

I first learned about HREP during a meeting in Istanbul when the program was still in its early stages. I later had the chance to review the draft framework and texts. These materials aimed to inform women about gender-based discrimination and its consequences, encouraging collective growth and action. They were also geared toward resisting discrimination and addressing the inequality it fosters, and becoming stronger through solidarity—and even organizing. Thirty years of women's voices—rising from the fields, streets, and homes—have confirmed my initial impressions.

I remember the day Pınar mentioned the signing of a protocol with Social Services to implement HREP in community centers. We were attending a meeting right after the protocol was signed in Ankara, and I wonder how many of us at the table that day realized the significance of that signature and what it would bring to women's lives. Although the protocol has long since ended, I still meet social workers who became HREP trainers under that partnership, and I listen to their experiences with admiration. Many of them continue to run HREP groups even after leaving Social Services, drawn by the nourishment and strength they gain from these incredible stories.

My story with HREP took a different turn after I returned to Izmir in 2011. I had a first-hand experience of HREP's contribution to local politics and local women's organizing. First, we initiated a series of HREP programs with Ayla Erdoğan at the Karabağlar City Council. HREP continues to play a very special role in empowering women in Karabağlar, Izmir. For instance, with the participation of two women working in the municipality's neighborhood centers in our groups, we created another link between the municipality and the women of Karabağlar. The women active in the City Council developed a common language through HREP training. Today, they are leading their own working groups. For some time now, delegates elected from our HREP groups have held decision-making positions in the City Council's Women's Council General Assembly. In Karabağlar today, there are women who take to the streets to protest against violence, participate in demonstrations, and attend the funerals of murdered women. This all stems from a story that began with HREP.

I enjoy HREP and the women of HREP the most during the certificate ceremonies and HREP festivals, because it's in these moments that I feel the powerful embrace of women's solidarity more than ever! I congratulate every woman who has contributed to this effort—what incredible work you've done! This is just the beginning; the struggle will continue, and we will move forward together!

Gülay Aktaşçı

Çanakkale Women's Handicraft and Counselling Center Association (ELDER)

I was first introduced to HREP through Serpil, the mother of my daughter's schoolmate. She excitedly told me about HREP at the Çanakkale Provincial Directorate of Social Services Community Center, explaining its content: human rights, women's rights, laws. My initial reaction was, "I already know my rights."

I joined the program initially just to avoid disappointing Serpil, but it ended up changing my life. During the three-and-a-half-month training, I realized that I didn't know nearly as much as I thought. Being part of the 300-400 women who participated in the 1998 training at the Çanakkale Community Center made me see how much stronger we are together. It truly opened a new door in my life. Regardless of whether we were educated or uneducated, whether we lived in the East or the West, the problems we faced as women were the same, and we had to find solutions together. For this reason, together with a group of friends who participated in the program, we founded the Çanakkale ELDER. We began with the goal of empowering women to achieve economic independence, actively engage in social life, and participate in decision-making processes.

We inaugurated the Women's Counseling Center with the support of Çanakkale Municipality to raise awareness in the city about violence against women and to carry out counseling and training services for women. On this journey with HREP, while impacting the lives of many women, I also touched my own life and discovered what I am capable of. The process of organizing ELDER and the Women's Counseling Center, which emerged from HREP, along with the work done in solidarity with women, meeting new women in every group, and sharing diverse experiences and knowledge with them, showed me that we can change so much in our lives when we truly want to. I deeply appreciate your efforts and your commitment.

Şenal Sarıhan

29 Ekim Women's Association, Lawyer

As I wrote these lines, I reflected on this question: Do the organizations that have contributed to the struggle for women's human rights, and our friends who have fought individually for this cause, ever truly age? Isn't their contribution to the ever-growing river of the rights struggle—both in our country and worldwide—timeless and, therefore, immortal? As Gioconda Belli describes in her novel *The Inhabited Woman*, don't the activist women of the past become like trees, watching over us and guiding us? Yet, it is the written and visual documents that preserve this guidance and foster awareness. I believe that WWHR's 30th-anniversary publication will be a meaningful contribution to this legacy and its continued influence.

My path crossed with WWHR in the late 1990s. As women's organizations, which came

together to establish the legal basis for combating violence against women, we were hesitant to collaborate with state institutions. Would this compromise our independent and civil structure? However, our demands were going to be rendered official through the Parliament, thus, we also had to give weight to lobbying activities to influence state institutions. The fact that there were women who came from the women's movement in the Women's Status Directorate, which was established at that time, facilitated our work. We began to work on legal sanctions to solve various women's problems, especially violence. Our first target was the Law No. 4320 on the Protection of the Family. We gave our consent for the bill to be called "Family Protection Law" as a result of the warning of Işıl Saygın, then Minister of State in charge of women, who said, "We cannot pass a law titled Protection of Women in a parliament dominated by men. They will say, 'Are we subjecting women to violence?'" The content of the law, whose name protected the family, protected women, albeit with some shortcomings. One day, we would have a law "protecting women from violence". We were confident.

Law No. 4320 was followed by efforts to amend the Civil Code and then the Turkish Penal Code. WWHR played an important role organizing the efforts pertaining to the work carried on the draft Turkish Penal Code. Representing women's organizations in Ankara, I regularly attended the meetings held almost weekly in Istanbul. The Turkish Penal Code Working Group included Prof. Aysel Çelikel, Prof. Necla Arat, Nazan Moroğlu, Hülya Gülbahar, Canan Arın, Aydeniz Alisbah, and many other women (pardon me for not remembering their names). WWHR contributed immensely to the editing of our text, its publication, its revisions and reproduction, and its translation into other languages.

Once the preliminary work was completed, we began our lobbying activities in Ankara. We paid visits to embassies, party group leaders, members of the Justice Commission, and parliamentarians. We deployed tactics that made us laugh a lot. Especially in our meetings with the AKP groups, Canan Arın would give presentations and offer uncompromising explanations, speaking really fast, and then the others would list our demands. I think I was given the last word because I was the calmest of all and was expected to curb the rising tension. Our friends Pınar and Nazan were also with us, but it was hoped that repeating our demands in my voice, which was too soft for my big figure, would be effective. For instance, we would learn afterward that Köksal Toptan, the Justice Commission chairperson, whom we thought we had impressed, had said, "Some marginalized women came and spoke incessantly and left." Such things drove us to despair. However, later, the same Köksal Toptan would become a persistent defender of our demands. We were ready to enter through the chimney if we were kicked out of the door, so to speak. We were also aware that we were worn to the bone and that our tongues were swollen from talking. However, we did not neglect to smile and keep on hoping. As a result, on June 1, 2005, the Turkish Penal Code, which included our demands to a great extent, would enter into force.

With my gratitude to the WWHR team and all those who struggle for women's human rights.

Cânân Arın

Co-founder of Mor Çatı (Purple Roof), Lawyer

I believe it was in the early 1990s when a young woman named Pınar İlkaracan visited my office. She had worked in Germany on combating violence against women and was eager to do something similar in Turkey. I first met her during the early days of WWHR's establishment, and for decades, we have worked together for women's rights.

Here, I will talk about the Turkish Penal Code and the reform process. It is useful to clarify the legal system in Turkey at that time. Until Civil Code reform, married women were regarded as second-class citizens, even though the Constitution stipulated that people were equal before the law without discrimination. The Turkish Penal Code dated from 1926. It was inspired by the Italian Zanardelli Law of 1889, which considered a woman's body as the property of first her birth family and then her husband. As such, sexual offenses were considered crimes against family order and public decency, not against the woman's body.

There was no legal definition of sexual assault (formerly known as rape). Rape was defined as the insertion of a man's sexual organ into a woman's vagina or anus. As such, inserting a bottle into a woman's vagina and harming it or inserting an eggplant or other object into her vagina was not considered rape. There was no concept of marital rape because marriage was seen as an institution where men's sexual needs were fulfilled. The penalty was more severe if the sexual assault was committed against a married woman, while the penalty was reduced by 2/3 if it was committed against a sex worker.

When a woman was raped by one or more individuals, the solution was often to marry her to one of the perpetrators, allowing the rapist to avoid punishment. If the marriage lasted five years, any sentences imposed on the perpetrator or the perpetrators were postponed, and if legal action had been initiated, the case would be dismissed, all in the name of "preserving the woman's honor."

Equally horrifying were the murders committed in the name of "honor." When a girl was raped, the family's honor was deemed tarnished, and the male members of the family would task the youngest with killing the girl, leading to a young boy becoming a murderer, and a young woman losing her life. These were among the most egregious provisions in the old penal code that discriminated against women.

Women were very disturbed by all this, and the women's movement was very strong then as it is today. The difference is that in those days it was possible to further our rights. Today, we are trying to protect the rights we have.

With the momentum from the Civil Code campaign and in light of the reform agenda within the EU accession process, we established the Turkish Penal Code Women's Working Group, coordinated by WWHR. Our aim was to change sexual crimes in the Turkish Penal Code in a way that would safeguard women's rights. We analyzed the laws of other countries. We translated them into Turkish and conducted a comparative study. We came up with our

methodology, identified the main problems in the law and the new draft, and determined our priorities.

Our main demands included the following: crimes against sexual integrity and decency should be reclassified under "Crimes against Individuals"; the definitions of rape, sexual harassment, and child sexual abuse should be revised; marital rape (including in relationships resembling marriage) should be redefined; honor killings should be considered an aggravating factor in sentencing for murder; rape in custody should also be treated as an aggravating factor; prosecution of crimes against a cohabiting spouse (with or without a marriage contract) should not depend on a formal complaint; perpetrators who use violence, threats, or psychological pressure to force someone into sexual intercourse, or who for individuals unable to resist rape due to mental or physical incapacity should face imprisonment; rape, whether vaginal or anal, should be defined as the imposition of a sex organ or object onto another person, regardless of its nature; and verbal abuse and molestation within the scope of sexual harassment should be clearly defined.

Thanks to our campaign, we successfully removed sexual violence against women from being categorized under "Crimes against Good Manners, Public Order, and Family Order" and had it reclassified as a crime against the individual, now grouped under "Crimes against Sexual Integrity." This was revolutionary. For the first time, the state officially recognized an individual's right to sexual inviolability.

Marital rape became a crime. Rape of women was criminalized regardless of their marital status. Rape was defined in the law, and the insertion of any object into the human body against the person's consent. Crimes committed in the name of honor were considered aggravated homicides; however, despite women's objections, in defining the motive, the term "custom" was used instead of "honor".

Sexual abuse of children was regulated in detail, but unfortunately, this government has been engaging in practices that give a green light to sexual abuse of children. Although the practice of forcing girls or young women to marry their rapists in order to absolve the perpetrator of punishment was abolished, the current government has been attempting to reinstate this outdated tradition.

As we sought to criminalize early and forced marriages, the education system was restructured into three segments. This change led to girls being excluded from school after the first four years. Additionally, religious marriages without official registration were decriminalized, and girls were compelled to marry at an early age, which paved the way for sexual and other kinds of abuse. Article 103 of the Turkish Penal Code, which addresses the crime of sexual abuse of children, has been amended, and now, while sentences for sexual abuse of children under 12 are higher, abusers of older children get lighter sentences.

However, as the women's movement, we will continue our fight to protect our rights, just as we have successfully repelled all these attacks so far.

Sema Kendirci Uğurman

Chair of the Turkish Women's Union, Lawyer

As the Turkish Women's Union, we were one of the first organizations to provide HREP at community centers in the late 1990s. The volunteers of a young sister organization, WWHR, generously offered these trainings to us. Women from the neighborhoods of Mamak and Şafaktepe in Ankara, where we worked, were very fond of them. As women's organizations, we gathered in Ankara to draw up the Beijing+5 report. That young organization also joined us in this endeavor.

In the early 2000s, women's organizations were working together to amend the Civil Code, Turkish Penal Code, and the Constitution, taking the field by storm and making a significant impact. They were voicing their demands across all platforms and achieving remarkable success.

In the fall of 2001, women's organizations were invited to a meeting to discuss the amendments to the Civil Code and the Constitution, organized by Women's Affairs. We knew that this time there would be huge participation from outside Ankara. The meeting kicked off and a discussion on a variety of issues ensued; naturally, we were trying to gain ground on topics that pertain to our demands regarding legal provisions.

I can't recall precisely which article we were discussing, but a woman from Istanbul took the floor and began giving examples of practices regarding women and children in Germany. Everyone in the room went silent. Following her decisively effective speech, the article was written in accordance with our suggestions. In awe, I wanted to know who this woman was. She was Pinar İlkkaracan from Women for Women's Human Rights.

This meeting was not only an opportunity for collaboration and joint action for us, it also marked the beginning of a process of acquainting ourselves with the founders, volunteers, and staff of WWHR. From then on, we stood side by side in solidarity on every platform established for our struggle. With its achievements, publications, and commitment, this young organization has always been an integral part of the collaboration and joint effort necessary for changing and transforming the world.

We are 100 years old, and by our side stands a young and brilliant organization that is 30 years old today: This organization aspires to come up with new solutions, defends women's human rights, and, most importantly, consists of many smart women, who have believed for decades in the power and success of organized struggle for change.

Susie Jolly

Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Honorary Member

When did I first hear of WWHR? I can't remember not knowing about you, as you seemed such an important part of my world working on sexuality and gender. I remember the shocking slogan "sexual pleasure as a woman's human right" coming from the human rights training program you conducted for women in Turkey. That fabulous concept made me want to understand more and work with this organization.

In the noughties, together with Andrea Cornwall, I was lucky to be able to raise funds to launch the Institute of Development Studies Sexuality and Development programme, which expanded our possibilities to convene, communicate and publish with exciting organizations such as WWHR. In 2005, we convened a workshop on "Realising Sexual Rights", the first time IDS had directly taken on these issues. Karin Ronge represented WWHR presenting on your human rights trainings. In 2007, I had the pleasure of co-authoring the *BRIDGE Cutting-Edge Pack* on Gender and Sexuality with Pinar İlkkaracan. In 2008, Pinar came to our next big workshop on "Sexuality and the Development Industry".

In 2009, Pinar again came to an IDS workshop, this time on the topic of pleasure, contributing to nuancing our discussions, asking what happens if the development industry develops norms of "healthy sexuality" and how these norms may interact with people's desires. Out of this workshop emerged a book on *Women, Sexuality, and the Political Power of Pleasure* (2013), to which Gülşah Seral contributed a chapter. By then, I had moved on from my role as a convener, so now I follow WWHR from a different position as a fan and cheerleader! Your work is more relevant than ever.

Gurbet Kabadayı

Antalya Women's Counselling Center and Solidarity Association

It was an incredible journey to come together through HREP and extend its reach to other women. The concept of "making knowledge public" has never been enough for us since we know that the inequalities in the public sphere have always determined the degree to which women can access knowledge. What we need is an equal distribution of knowledge. Knowing our rights is the major tool we have for empowerment and our fight for our lives. Thanks to HREP, we found each other. For years, we came together with other women, each becoming a companion in our struggle. We loved chanting, "We have rights!". To the women who participated in HREP, thank you for increasing and disseminating the knowledge produced by women in every corner of Turkey. Thank you for never giving up! We are truly delighted to accompany you on this road. Here's to many more 30 years. May your resistance be purple!



Photo: Güliz Sağlam

Yıldız Tokman

Executive Committee for the NGO Forum on CEDAW – Turkey

When I think of WWHR, I remember our close collaboration since 2003 in the CEDAW Shadow Reporting Processes. WWHR stands out as one of the most active organizations in the women’s movement, excelling in international representation and ensuring the participation of Istanbul-based organizations in the process.

We were in New York in July 2010 for Turkey’s 6th CEDAW Review. During the session, we issued two press releases titled “Turkey’s women’s rights record is under scrutiny at the UN!” and “UN asks Turkey to comply with the CEDAW Convention.” The main issue we emphasized in the releases, which were widely covered in the foreign and Turkish press, was that “conservatism deepens discrimination against women and there is no holistic state policy aiming at gender equality.”

When the UN CEDAW Committee published its 6th Review Concluding Observations, it was evident that these intensive and dedicated lobbying efforts had achieved their goal. Many of the issues addressed, and recommendations proposed aligned with our shadow report.

I sincerely congratulate WWHR on your 30th anniversary. I am confident that our enduring partnership and solidarity will continue for many years to come.

Felisa Tibbitts

Chair in Human Rights Education, Utrecht University and former Executive Director, Human Rights Education Associates (HREA)

I first became aware of WWHR when I was running my NGO Human Rights Education Associates (HREA). I was in Istanbul in 2004 and had set up a meeting with the director of the WWHR’s Human Rights Education Program for Women (HREP). I was amazed to hear about the decade-long efforts of the WWHR in Turkey, lobbying to change the Civil and Penal Codes, and, at the same time, sowing women’s liberation through grassroots human rights education training groups. The staff members I spoke with in this initial meeting—and then later when I carried out an impact evaluation of WWHR’s HRE work between 2006-2011—were the icon of professionalism: politically savvy, pedagogically innovative, tireless advocates for women’s human rights.

WWHR exemplifies what a “smart” HRE strategy looks like. It is grounded in women’s real-life experiences and, through critical reflection and group solidarity, invites participants to embrace their power and change their lives. HREP is also one element of a broader strategy to protect and promote the human rights of women in Turkey. This means that human rights education does not stand alone in the liberation agenda, though it remains an essential element of the strategy.

I have been continuously inspired by WWHR and its efforts, so much so that HREP was highlighted in a film that I helped produce: *Path to Dignity: The Power of Human Rights Education*. The lessons from WWHR's experiences continue to ring true.

Güldal Akşit

Former Minister of Women and Family

Congratulations, WWHR, on your 25th anniversary! I wish you many more years of success. I am confident that in the future, you will continue the exemplary teamwork that has been your hallmark for so many years with even greater rigor and tenacity.

Throughout history, equality between women and men has never been fully realized; yet efforts to achieve it continue to grow stronger each day. In the 2000s, Turkey underwent a rapid transformation, particularly marked by “liberating” changes in the legal sphere for women. Significant amendments to the Constitution, the Turkish Penal Code, and the Civil Code stand out as milestones during this period. On an international level, the CEDAW Convention has asserted its primacy over laws and norms that it contests. By aligning the Constitution with CEDAW, a strong legal foundation for gender equality was established. The contributions of civil society organizations, including the efforts of WWHR, have played an important role in this transformation process.

When I was the State Minister of Women and Family, we organized trainings to increase the participation of women's NGOs in CEDAW reviews and legislative processes. We also held meetings to facilitate collaboration between the government and NGOs. The contributions of the Women's Platform on the Turkish Penal Code, for which WWHR served as the secretariat, were particularly significant and valuable in the reform of the Turkish Penal Code (TPC).

One of the most important amendments to the TPC was the introduction of articles that stipulate the most severe penalties for perpetrators of “honor killings”. This development is crucial as it demonstrates that the TPC reform process has begun to cultivate new sensitivities, particularly among judges. While efforts to prevent violence against women have been intensified in recent years, women's organizations have consistently highlighted the state's shortcomings in providing adequate services to women who have been exposed to violence. Recently, municipalities have been authorized under the new municipal law to provide services to women subjected to violence.

The contributions of the state, municipalities, and women's NGOs, particularly the efforts of WWHR, are very important and valuable. I hope that you continue your successful work.

Editor's Note: Ms. Akşit passed away in 2021. She had sent us this text shortly before her passing.

Emel Armutçu

The feminist movement, which flourished after the 1980s, initially took to the streets to protest violence and initiated discussions on topics that had previously been overlooked. Over time, it grew stronger, becoming institutionalized across various platforms from universities to professional chambers, state mechanisms to civil society, and by specializing in different areas of gender equality. Women's organizing and fight for rights strengthened each year through women's research/solidarity centers, independent organizations, monitoring committees, and units dedicated to advancing the status of women.

WWHR has been one of the most active women's organizations in this process, leaving a mark in history and contributing immensely to the movement. They played a pivotal role in the acceptance of the principle “women's rights are human rights” in Turkey, a motto that had also inspired its name. The organization has been a bridge between women in Turkey and those around the world through its work at local, national, regional, and international levels. WWHR has expanded the women's movement through research, publication, training, monitoring, reporting, and advocacy activities in collaboration with women's and LGBTQI+ organizations. I clearly recall that in the first half of the 2000s, when women were tearing to pieces the Turkish Penal Code and the Civil Code and removing the articles detrimental to women one by one, WWHR was there. It is still with us at a time when the rights gained then are being rolled back one by one.

I am confident that WWHR will continue to exist successfully until new solutions for gender equality are no longer needed.

Sultan Çamur Karataş

General Directorate of Social Services (GDSS)

I had the opportunity to work with WWHR from the very beginning. I was working at the Department for the Protection of the Integrity of the Family, which was responsible for GDSS community centers, family counseling centers, and women's shelters. I was also part of the team that coordinated the implementation of HREP. After I retired, I participated in the trainer training, which allowed me to connect with many women, share experiences, and gain new insights. Each group I have conducted has been an opportunity to refresh, learn, and foster solidarity with women. The diverse groups of women of all ages, educational backgrounds, and economic conditions have greatly enriched my life. I am grateful to each one of them.

For me, HREP is a tool in the struggle to win, protect, and exercise women's rights. I owe it to myself to use this very effective tool as widely as possible. Standing in solidarity with HREP participants, trainers, and WWHR in the defense of women's rights reinforces my belief that our struggle for women's rights will ultimately succeed.

It is remarkable that an organization has continued the struggle for women's rights for 30 years on end. However, it seems that we will have to engage in this effort for many more years to come. As long as we are organized and persevere in our solidarity, we will be able to continue the struggle with strength. I am proud to be a part of this organization in our struggle.

Şule Sepin İçli

Umudun Kadınları Association, Psychologist

I met WWHR in 2002 and our ties have always strengthened since then. Through HREP, I discovered myself and shared my knowledge and experience with women from across the country. Although WWHR does not have branches, it has reached thousands of women through its solidarity networks and advocacy efforts. HREP, developed through immense hard work, is open to all women, regardless of age or literacy level. There is no discrimination—only solidarity. While implementing HREP, I have accumulated valuable memories. Let me share one of them: A young woman in our group told me that one of her illiterate friends was hesitant to participate in the training. I said to her that literacy courses were also provided. This woman started the sessions, shared her experiences, and mingled with the group. When she learned about the right to disclaim inheritance, she explained that she had been forced to pay her violent husband's debts after his death. She expressed that she would not have done so if she had known about this provision. Afterward, she attended literacy courses and finished high school. This story shows what women achieve when given the opportunity.

Our association WWHR knows no obstacles. It signs protocols with institutions, and when one institution gives up, it knocks on the doors of other institutions. It seeks hope and solutions rather than exhaustion. Women find support at school, at work, at home, and on the street. They reach women from the villages to the cities. Besides trainings, it also produces publications, communicates with international solidarity networks, makes its voice heard around the world, and receives awards. I am glad we met. I feel very lucky. May we share many more wonderful years together with women.

Kaos GL (Kaos Gay and Lesbian Cultural Researches and Solidarity Association)

Kaos GL was invited by WWHR to join the Women's Platform on the Turkish Penal Code when the platform was first established. Kaos GL and Lambdaistanbul, through their involvement in the Women's Platform on the Turkish Penal Code, had the opportunity to directly encounter the lawmakers. The platform had already prepared a draft proposal covering the issues highlighted by the LGBTQI+ organizations. We stood side by side with them when we gave a presentation to the Justice Commission or engaged in advocacy activities in the parliament. For us, WWHR was the face and the heart of the platform. We do not know much about the process that took place before our involvement in the platform

or how consensus was reached among women with differing perspectives on LGBTQI+ issues. However, we did observe that the platform embraced the demands of the LGBTQI+ community and actively fought for these demands to be reflected in the law. Even though the provisions we demanded for LGBTQI+ people were not met in the law, we can comfortably say that it was a process that strengthened the LGBTQI+ movement.

WWHR also helped us to meet and join the *Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies* (CSDR). In collaboration with WWHR, we co-organized events for CSBR's annual One Day One Struggle (ODOS) campaign on November 9. In 2019, we embraced November 9 as yet another day of action to publicly affirm our struggle against the sexist and heterosexist oppression faced by the LGBTQI+ and feminist movements. We organized the ODOS workshop and kept on saying, "Solidarity Keeps Us Alive"!

We see WWHR as the feminist form of solidarity. Sometimes we advocate side by side on international platforms or within organizations; other times, we raise our voices together on the streets. In the last five years we experienced a surge in the issues that brought us both collective joy and sorrow. We are proud to be struggling side by side with WWHR! We want to continue our joint struggle as queers and feminists!

Dina M. Siddiqi

New York University, Clinical Professor

I was introduced to WWHR in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2004 at a gathering of the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR). I listened with rapt attention as Pinar, Liz, Karin, and others recounted successfully reforming a retrograde, colonial era Turkish penal code. I learned from activists from across the Muslim world, from Tunisia to Indonesia. I found myself in the company of Asgar Ali Engineer and Margot Badran, scholars I had not expected to encounter in person. I also made some lifelong friends. CSBR created space that did not exist elsewhere, a platform to escape national and international parochialisms in the service of a different transnational solidarity.

As an academic, CSBR's goal of producing theory from the South, of confronting squarely the sexual politics of imperialism and patriarchal nation-states, and taking Islam seriously in the post 9/11 world appealed greatly to me. I had long wanted to bring my feminist theory in line with praxis. Unexpectedly and inexplicably, I felt I was home.

Since then, CSBR, and by extension, WWHR, has been a steady presence in my life. For me, the two are inextricable, and not only because WWHR was the first secretariat for CSBR. The vision of the one is inscribed into and shaped by that of the other. In 2006, in the midst of sorrow and despair, WWHR compiled a CSBR dossier protesting the Israeli invasion of Lebanon to which I contributed. To the extent that writing signifies solidarity, my essay in the compilation remains a deeply meaningful political act for me.

For that and much more, I remain immensely grateful to WWHR.

Şengül Altan Arslan

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Deputy General Secretary

When we crossed paths with WWHR, we were young civil servants in a newly established public institution on women's affairs, KSSGM. We were not familiar with women's issues. There was a distance between women's NGOs and us because KSSGM was a public institution. Nevertheless, when commissions were instituted to fulfill the requirements of CEDAW, we benefited a lot from the NGOs and formed a culture of collaboration together.

I remember WWHR primarily for its media relations regarding the protection order law and its efforts to transform the prevention of violence against women into a public policy. Secondly, I remember its constructive efforts at the annual UN CSW meetings. When the official delegation was formed, NGOs were asked to choose a representative, and WWHR was nominated. With their strong understanding of the subject, they were included in the relevant meetings. They became one of the associations we collaborate with most frequently in our international work. I think the trust between the state and NGOs was established in this process.

NGOs played a major role in Turkey's active role in the UN processes. NGOs like WWHR, knew the system and how to lobby very well. In this sense, we learned a lot from them, and they learned that they could cooperate with the public sector. They questioned their assumption that "public institutions are distant and authoritarian towards NGOs because they control resources." I believe that the New York meetings played a significant role in bridging this gap. During the UN sessions, we discussed the fairness of the resolutions, and we decided which words and language would be appropriate. I will never forget that while preparing for a meeting, Pinar İlkaracan emphasized the importance of the term "women's reproductive health and rights". We suggested adding this phrase to the commission's documents. Pinar was surprised and said, "I can't believe it! Is that coming from a public institution?"

Between 2005 and 2010, we used to rent apartments for meetings in New York, where a few of us would stay. Away from home, we would support each other and work on the resolutions with the same excitement as students eager for graduation. I have witnessed what true dedication to a cause looks like in the women of civil society organizations. I have experienced the fulfillment of working with determination to bring a project, driven by solidarity, to completion. One of the organizations that has given me this feeling is WWHR.

We have now expanded our strengthened relationship to other areas. In 2019, when I became the Deputy General Secretary of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, WWHR was one of the first organizations we began collaborating with. We now advocate for women's rights together and implement HREP with our trainers. With the same determination and excitement, we continue our struggle and solidarity!

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

As Sweden we are very happy to support WWHR and to have this invaluable partnership since 2008. WWHR is a very important part of Sweden's development cooperation with Turkey from a women's empowerment perspective. Sweden very much values the work undertaken by WWHR as it contributes to improve gender equality and women's human rights, while also helping Sweden and our Embassy to be better informed on gender issues in Turkey.

Ayla Erdoğan

Social Worker

In 2009, I was invited to Karabağlar, İzmir as a HREP trainer. The City Council Women's Assembly had just been established. The Council's first activity was HREP. Since then, women participating in HREP first empowered themselves, and then they established the first women's organization in Karabağlar, KAD-GÜÇ. They entered active politics as members of political parties, became members of NGOs, and took part in the administration of the City Council. They ran as candidates for municipal councils. They their own income, entered the e-commerce sector, and became business owners. Those who had not completed their education re-enrolled in schools, some even went to university. We socialized; excursions, trips to the sea, picnics, visits to museums, and outings to movies and theaters—experiences that some of them had never had before.

Initially, I was the only HREP trainer, but soon I was joined by my fellow trainers, Badegül and Gülseren. Today, there are over 300 HREP graduate women in Karabağlar. We continue to establish new HREP groups, defend our rights, discuss gender equality in our neighborhoods, and organize events. Throughout this journey, WWHR has always supported us. Thanks to the strength provided by WWHR and HREP, I am now connected with more women than I can count. I am deeply grateful to all the wonderful women I have had the privilege to work with. And I have always felt WWHR's support and solidarity, who made me who I am.

Ebru Özberk-Anlı & Özge Berber-Agtaş

International Labor Organization (ILO)

In our efforts to improve women's employment, we observed that acquiring vocational skills alone is insufficient for women who wish to participate in the workforce and thrive in social and economic life. We recognized the need for rights-based support grounded in gender equality, which led us to collaborate with WWHR.

Our collaboration with WWHR started in 2009 and continued until 2018. During vocational trainings to facilitate women's entry into the labor market, we also introduced HREP to further empower women to engage in employment. Hundreds of women who

participated in vocational trainings in Ankara, Bursa, Istanbul, Gaziantep, and Konya became part of HREP.

The HREP trainings, which we began in 2009, were initially met with some apprehension. However, during the pilot phase, the program garnered significant interest from women and received very positive feedback. The strong espousal of the program by the women trainees, along with the dedicated efforts of HREP trainers and WWHR, served as an exemplary model. This success not only provided a solid foundation for our future work but also inspired us to replicate HREP in other projects.

In the “More and Better Jobs for Women: Empowering Women for Decent Work in Turkey” project, HREP trainings fostered strong collaborations and formed new teams within municipalities. We came together with hundreds of male and female municipal employees at the “I Support Equality” seminars, where we discussed how to improve the gender equality perspective in working life. Through these seminars with WWHR, we held discussions with many women and men workers not only in municipalities but also in trade unions and workplaces, exposing gender-based discrimination in working life and seeking solutions.

We have rights guaranteed by international conventions ratified by Turkey, including important ILO conventions, as well as by the Constitution and our national legislation. It is crucial that we actively demand and defend these rights. HREP, which has reached thousands of women to date, is a very important and valuable initiative providing the most basic guidance and information women need in this struggle.

In our new projects, we have integrated this rights-based empowerment approach to all our training activities with workers in trade unions, factories, and workshops. And we have seen that thousands of women and men who have listened to our voices have given us great support.

Nurcan Çetinbaş

Muş Kadın Çatısı Association

I believe it was in 2010 when we began our collaboration between WWHR and MUKADDER, with the delightful voice of Fulya (Ayata) guiding us. WWHR reached out to us to write about our work in the field for *The Purple Newsletter*, and we have never lost touch since. In 2009, as women trying to do feminist politics in a small and conservative place like Muş, we needed experienced and strong women’s organizations in this field. One of the organizations that responded to this need was WWHR. Years later, in 2014, we founded the Muş Women’s Roof Association, aiming high. We committed to advocating for the empowerment of women and girls, ensuring their participation as free individuals and equal citizens in creating and maintaining a democratic, egalitarian, and peaceful social order.

Since early and forced marriages are widespread in Muş and throughout the region, we made it our priority. With the support of the Sabancı Foundation, we ran campaigns,

organized seminars, and gender trainings for men and women in Muş, Van, and Bitlis to raise awareness on this issue. We even made a short film called *EL*, which won international awards. We reached out to over five thousand girls to raise awareness about children’s rights and early marriage, and authorities they can appeal to. We visited the homes of girls who had been taken away from school and endeavored to persuade their families—primarily men—to allow their daughters to return to their education. Within a year, 30 girls went back to school.

While engaging in these activities, we discovered that some guidance counselors lacked sufficient knowledge about the necessary precautions for girls and considered it normal for them to be withdrawn from school. As a result, we decided to raise awareness among guidance counselors about the concepts of rights and early marriages, ensure they are informed about violence against women, support girls in continuing their education, empower them, and encourage them to unite against the discrimination they face. Our association had two HREP trainers. In collaboration with WWHR, we delivered HREP to guidance counselors, who then conducted trainings on sexual abuse, early marriages, and children’s rights in their schools. Most of the HREP participants either became members of our organization or joined our efforts as volunteers.

We provided both legal and psychological counseling support to women who had been subjected to violence. When we established the association, we paid all the expenses ourselves as the founders. But when funding organizations witnessed our work, they started to approach us. We were actively working together with the women’s movement in Turkey. We were either members or constituents of many platforms. With the exceptional support of Zelal from WWHR, we had the chance to participate more in meetings held at the ministry level. This helped us to create a stronger network.

Before one project ended, we were already planning the next; before we knew it, we were involved in international work. We hosted a project that enabled representatives of civil society organizations in Turkey to attend training sessions on mediation and gender equality in the United States. With the cooperation of civil society organizations in the US and Europe, we implemented a training of trainers targeting men to change gender dynamics in Turkey by encouraging men to better understand gender roles and take responsibility for achieving gender equality. The representatives from universities, civil society organizations, and municipalities who participated in this training were expected to conduct training sessions within their own institutions. However, they were unable to do so because our association was closed down.

Let me go back a little further. Time and again, especially in our conversations with Ebru from WWHR, we realized that we had the capacity to run a program that we have dreamt of for many years—a long-term program to empower young women. When we were dealing with the problem of early marriage, we were always confronted with the need to support young women in a more comprehensive way. This training program, which is based on the rights of girls, aimed to inform and empower them on issues such as children’s



Photo: Güliz Sağlam

rights, gender, sexuality and body awareness, peer bullying, discrimination, sexual abuse and violence, domestic communication, early/forced marriage, and empower them with the knowledge and equipment to act as equal individuals who actively participate in social life, know and defend their rights. We decided to do this program with WWHR and Antalya Women's Counseling Center, and Solidarity Association, which has been implementing training programs for women for years. The content was prepared, trainers were selected, and hotels were booked, but our association was closed just two days before the training of trainers was scheduled to take place.

Yes, our association has been closed down. We are scattered. For instance, I am writing this article from the US. Of course, the women in Muş and the region were also negatively affected. But we have not given up; we visit each other on the other side of the world and embrace each other. Although the Muş Women's Roof Association was closed down, we continued to contribute through our individual efforts and collaborations with other organizations, driven by rebellion, hope, and solidarity. Happy 30th anniversary, WWHR!

Neşe Özen

Former Department Manager, the General Directorate of Social Services (GDSS)

The protocol signed in 1998 between GDSS and WWHR led to a long-term collaboration that lasted until GDSS was dissolved in 2012. I was a part of this process from 2001 to 2010 as

the department manager responsible for coordinating all HREP-related activities organized under the partnership protocol.

Through this program (HREP), the state and civil society organizations joined forces to reach thousands of women on issues that the state should address—such as violence against women, gender equality, legal literacy, women's human rights, etc.

I must add that at the time the protocol was signed, officials at all levels—from the ministries to the General Directorate and Departments— recognized HREP as a highly effective program for women and offered full support.

Social workers, child development specialists, psychologists, and teachers working in community centers, women's shelters, and family counseling centers have participated in HREP Trainer Trainings and successfully implemented the program, reaching thousands of women.

We held evaluation meetings with WWHR, where we set new goals together with the trainers and our colleagues from the General Directorate. These meetings not only increased our excitement and motivation for the program but also strengthened our communication and commitment to one another. I am sure that, like me, many of us have many great memories of being a part of HREP.

The amendments to the Turkish Penal Code, the Civil Code, the Law on the Prevention of Violence against Women are the achievements of all civil society organizations and women working in this field. I send my endless love to the entire HREP team, hoping that the rights we gained over the years will not be lost.

Şükriye Gürsoy

Marmaris Association for Solidarity with Women

I divide my life into two parts: before and after HREP. I started HREP as a participant, and now I continue as a trainer. Friendship, women's invisible domestic labor, personal development, real life stories, solidarity, sharing experiences, the idea that "I am not the only one..." A training that is all in one... What more can one want! Written laws and how they are implemented are evident. Oral laws, customs, traditions, neighborhood pressure, the idea of "what the world will say..." I think this chain was broken thanks to HREP, which lasted 16 weeks. The first and second groups of HREP were opened in Marmaris by Gülşah (Seral) from WWHR, and now I run them. In the meantime, we established the Marmaris Women's Solidarity Association. I am confident that, in the long run, HREP will continue to evolve and grow through the contributions of women.

Lourdes Beneria

Cornell University, Professor Emerita

It was obviously an accomplishment to organize a conference on *Work-Life Reconciliation Policies and Gender Equality in the Labor Market* back in 2008-2010 in Turkey. The opening session as well the afternoon session on Mechanisms for Work and Family Life Reconciliation in Turkey were very informative (and eye opening for me) to understand the problems faced by Turkish women. I also enjoyed the comparative sessions involving EU countries, South Korea, Spain, and Mexico. I hope that the conference was helpful to push ahead the issue of gender equality and work-life balance in Turkey, an issue that seemed to be very ready for discussion and action at that time. I know that much has happened in Turkey since then, but I assume that negative political events in the country have not curtailed women's courage to press ahead.

Selma Acuner

Women's Coalition

For me, WWHR represents the struggle we waged and the achievements we secured in the international arena, particularly during the late-night negotiations in the halls of the United Nations. These memories not only shed light on the long-lasting history of women's organizations from Turkey within the global feminist movement and networks but also document the efforts of the feminist movements from Turkey and around the world. Behind each achievement lies the diligent labor of countless women.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the backdrop of our shared memories with WWHR, was established in 1946, as one of ECOSOC's central commissions. It is the principal global intergovernmental organization that aims to develop policies to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. That said, ECOSOC is a highly political body defined by the hierarchy of international policy-making processes. While the CSW was established with the goal of achieving gender equality, it often turns into a venue for international disputes rather than a forum for discussing women's rights. This is because countries' differing priorities often conflict and dominate the discussions, predominantly conducted by government representatives. Over the years, ECOSOC has increasingly closed its doors to civil society organizations. One of the shared struggles of WWHR and the global women's movement has been to challenge and change these exclusionary practices. What did we do? We led and supported numerous actions, from preparing and submitting proposals for the establishment of a task force to writing declarations.

The efforts of the independent experts from Turkey who have participated in the CSW over the years are too numerous to capture in this text fully, but I would like to focus on the 57th Session and share some of our memories with WWHR.

During this all-night session, we played an active role in shaping almost every paragraph of the final text. We lobbied, negotiated, and advocated intensively with various countries on key issues, such as the definition of violence and the protection of women's human rights defenders. It took us days to persuade the governments to condemn all forms of violence against women and girls in the preamble.

Despite the resistance from the conservative bloc, the concept of gender sensitive policies was included in the final document. We discussed and negotiated until the early hours of the morning. I still remember our struggle to secure the passage of paragraph 34(z), which contains the most controversial content on "supporting and protecting those who struggle to prevent violence and who are themselves at risk of violence, including women human rights defenders." This historic passage remains recorded in the final text.

It is impossible to forget our one-on-one meetings with countries such as China and Iran, which showed great resistance to this article. Yet, we maintained friendly relations throughout the night. I recall rewriting the paragraph at 4 A.M. with our Iranian diplomat friend while talking about the TV series *Suleiman the Magnificent*. In those moments, I felt that I was not alone, that we were not alone. We drew strength from the company of Pınar İlkkaracan, with whom I traveled from Turkey to the CSW, and Şengül Altan Arslan, who welcomed us when she was the head of the Foreign Relations Department at the Directorate General on the Status of Women. Together, we stood side by side with women from all over the world.

Pelin Feymi

Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, Social Worker

To me, “Women’s Human Rights” embodies the right to a dignified life. Through HREP, I have played both an active and facilitative role in transforming this idea from an abstract goal and aspiration into a concrete, achievable, internalized, sustainable, and livable reality for women.

WWHR’s partnership with municipalities is of great importance in the context of women’s struggle. Since 2014, HREP has been implemented in municipal units and centers that provide services for women and in women’s civil society organizations that collaborate with municipalities. This approach has enhanced the effectiveness and sustainability of municipal services and increased participation by creating more platforms for women who participated in the training to voice their demands regarding the city.

This cooperation has contributed to the municipality by promoting inclusiveness in terms of social municipalism and empowering service recipients to have a voice in the services offered. In this sense, HREP serves as a program of change and transformation, which enables women to recognize their own power and grow in solidarity with other women.

İsabet Barutçuoğlu

Çeşme Women’s Entrepreneurs Cooperative (Çeşka)

I can say that our cooperative Çeşka embodies Sema Kaya’s phrase, “A woman is a woman’s home.” Çeşka is a community of women who provide material and moral support entirely on a voluntary basis. Our founding president Berna Güler has been instrumental in opening doors for women in health, education, and economy through HREP and leadership trainings. Thanks to these trainings, my awareness and courage increased. I learned how many rights violations we suffer in our lives and that we accept this. Now I know my rights better and use them. Thanks to these trainings, I learned that feminism is defending women’s rights, making efforts for this cause, and fighting for equality. Endless thanks to the women working selflessly around the world for the contributions they have made to our cause.

Asiye Ülkü Karaloğlu

Çankaya District Municipality

In our long-standing struggle against gender inequality in Çankaya, Ankara, we endeavored to draw on the experiences and knowledge of women’s organizations and to ensure their participation at every stage. This approach was reflected in the preparation and implementation of our local equality action plans in 2016 and 2019. The value, strength, and expertise of independent, rights-based women’s and LGBT organizations have been integral to nearly all our efforts. Following the establishment of the Women’s Directorate,

one of the first actions taken by Çankaya District Municipality was to sign a protocol with women’s organizations, including WWHR. The protocol, signed in 2017, has strengthened our cooperation with WWHR. Working side by side with a women’s organization that has over 30 years of experience continues to be an empowering experience for us. We have undertaken vital and sustainable initiatives at our municipality, such as providing trainings for our staff, enabling them to be HREP trainers to implement HREP in Çankaya’s neighborhoods. Additionally, we distributed the *We Have Rights!* booklet series to couples applying for marriage, and this action reinforced our fight against gender inequality. The impact of HREP on women and the positive feedback we have received from them are tokens of our solidarity and collaboration with WWHR. I feel empowered to know that women’s solidarity and struggles for equality, freedom, and rights will grow stronger each day. I look forward to continuing our cooperation and solidarity with WWHR in our fight to create a more equal world for women.

Songül Boyraz

Şişli District Municipality

We began implementing HREP in some of the community centers under the Directorate of Social Support Services of Şişli Municipality, which adopts a perspective of social municipality in its programming, in 2016. Later, in 2018, Şişli Municipality and WWHR formalized their collaboration by signing a protocol, thus initiating institutional cooperation and embarking on collaborative efforts.

The institutional cooperation with WWHR, an organization that advocates for women’s human rights and equality nationally and internationally and works to eliminate discrimination, has not only immensely contributed to transforming the local administration’s view of women’s struggle but also rendered the municipality a noteworthy actor in the fight for equality and women’s rights. This process has also been important in facilitating women’s organizations’ participation in Şişli.

Şişli Municipality acknowledges its obligation to achieve gender equality, combat violence against women at the local level, and implement national legislation and international conventions. Through its collaboration with WWHR, the municipality aims not only to empower its female employees and local women but also to ensure women’s equal presence in all areas of life.

Zeynep Ferda Demirbaş

Former Member of Güzelbahçe District Municipality Council

Local governments play a crucial role in the development of democracy, economy, and education, addressing women’s issues and ensuring women’s participation in decision-making mechanisms. However, despite their obligations and responsibilities, our local governments

do not always prioritize protective and preventive services. Cooperation between women's organizations and municipalities is essential for prioritizing women's issues and struggles.

Through their protocols signed with WWHR, Güzelbahçe and Narlıdere District Municipalities provided awareness-raising trainings to dozens of women, drawing them into the women's movement and contributing to their empowerment.

The protocol between Güzelbahçe Municipality and WWHR was the first of its kind in Izmir, and initiatives to establish a women's counseling center and a Directorate of Women and Family finally yielded positive results in the sixth year of my council membership. This cooperation allowed me to engage with women and convey their concerns to administrators effectively. Municipalities, as the most immediate service units to the public and especially to women, can only play a central role in women's movement and struggle by working jointly with women's organizations.

E. Duygu Adıgüzel

Director of Kadıköy District Municipality Social Support Services

Kadıköy District Municipality has been committed to using its own resources to sustain projects implemented in cooperation with civil society organizations. In this context, HREP, a program run by WWHR for nearly 30 years, has been one of our priority projects. We signed our first partnership protocol with WWHR on March 8, 2017, shortly after our staff completed the trainer training.

We initially implemented HREP with our female employees. The first group consisted of women working in cleaning and security services—sectors where rights violations and discrimination within our institution were most pronounced. Ensuring the participation of these women, who had never been included in any training program in the history of the institution, was not easy. Despite directors' attempts to prevent women's participation with the pretext that "work is being disputed, citizens are complaining," we persevered, and the first group completed the training. The impact of HREP quickly became evident through the feedback we received. As the awareness of the participants increased and they became empowered, they began voicing their objections to rights violations more assertively, which vexed the administrative directors. Employees, who had been threatened by their directors for years and prevented from communicating their concerns to senior management, became more vocal about their objections and demands for rights. They began changing not only their professional lives but also their personal lives.

During the second phase, we aimed to reach a broader range of women and worked with young women from universities. Our joyful certificate ceremonies following each training have now become a tradition.

Thank you for providing us with HREP, one of the most beautiful programs we offer as a part of our preventive, formative, and supportive services.

Laura Hurley

Safe Abortion Action Fund (SAAF)

We are pleased to fund WWHR's work to disseminate information on abortion and improve abortion access in Turkey. With their partners, they are advocating for reproductive rights across the country. We are delighted to make a new connection with WWHR through this project and are glad they have joined a global cohort of grantee partners dedicated to safe, legal, and accessible abortion.

E. Ayla Erdoğan, Gülseren Demir, Seher Gündoğan

Izmir Women's Solidarity Association (IKDD)

Izmir Women's Solidarity Association (IKDD) is an independent feminist women's organization founded in 2005 to defend and implement women's human rights in Izmir. IKDD works at local and national levels to ensure gender equality, realize women's human rights, and support women's participation in all areas of life as free individuals and equal citizens. IKDD provides psychological and legal counseling and guidance to women who have been subjected to violence in Izmir. We provide counseling and advice to women in need through our network of volunteer psychologists and lawyers. As active HREP trainers who are members of IKDD, we have been implementing HREP and Gender Equality Seminars in local governments, civil society organizations, women's assemblies of city councils, and professional organizations.

HREP is a program that transforms you as a trainer, teaching you to view life from a rights-based perspective, particularly from a woman's perspective. Each group work nourishes you even more, and you learn and grow together. This energy is reflected in the group participants, and by the end of 16 weeks, you realize that you have thought deeply, cried, rejoiced, learned, gained experience and awareness, and formed lasting friendships. Women who said 16 weeks was too long in the first session start to say, "No, it can't end, it shouldn't end!" HREP is such a collective experience.

We have witnessed many women who participated in HREP empower themselves and channel this power into transforming their surroundings, beginning with those closest to them. They have strived for healthier communication through various techniques, united around common goals, and either established or joined civil society organizations. We have seen them enter politics as members of political parties, run for municipal council positions, and, in some cases, get elected. Not only that, but we also witnessed them earning income by selling their products at markets, joining cooperatives, becoming self-employed entrepreneurs, gaining economic independence, returning to complete their education, or finding jobs. How many training programs are there that can make such radical changes in women's lives? For this reason, as trainers at IKDD, we are trying to raise awareness of HREP both within the association and across Izmir. As a result of our solidarity with WWHR, we

have recently begun organizing informational meetings to raise awareness and highlight threats to the civil code.

From the moment we completed the trainer training and began our first group work, WWHR has been there for us through every challenge, every moment of uncertainty, and every success and joy. We never felt alone. Here's to many more decades of collaboration!

Özlem Cankurtaran

Turkish Association of Social Workers (SHUDER)

WWHR has been a vital organization for social workers for many years. HREP is not only a crucial cornerstone of the women's movement but also an indispensable asset for social workers as a feminist social work tool. In 1998, Social Services signed a protocol with WWHR to ensure that social workers could become HREP trainers, and thanks to this process, social workers have become natural partners of the program.

The protocol was suspended due to conservative family policies, bringing the collaboration to a halt. However, in 2022, a new protocol was signed between SHUDER and WWHR, allowing social workers to become trainers once again. This initiative successfully revived the partnership with social workers that had been interrupted. As SHUDER, we hope our partnership with WWHR will continue for many years, both in HREP and our advocacy efforts.

Giselle Carino & Debora Diniz

Fòs Feminista, CEO & Former Deputy CEO

In June 2022, we traveled to Istanbul to visit WWHR. It was the first visit to a partner that we had done since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, and it could not have been more inspiring. At a time of so much craving for human connection, we had the honor to attend the certificate ceremony of an edition of HREP. We were deeply impressed by WWHR's longtime commitment to this community-based popular education initiative that brings women together to debate and exchange experiences about women's human rights, violence against women, sexuality, gender sensitive parenting, and feminist grassroots organizing. It truly felt like watching feminist change being made in real-time, collectively, by women learning together and sharing power for facing everyday struggles.

That is one of the many reasons why the Fòs Feminista Alliance is proud to have WWHR as a partner and to strive to support its vibrant team of feminist and LGBTQI+ activists, hopefully for many more anniversaries to come. WWHR's work, so full of solidarity, warmth, and joy, even in highly restrictive contexts of anti-gender authoritarian forces, is a beacon of hope for all of us engaged in building a world where all women, girls, and gender-diverse people have the power and the conditions to exercise their bodily autonomy and fulfill their life projects.

Carrie Shelver

Cinsel Haklar İnisiyatifi (*Sexual Right Initiatives - SRI*)

As WWHR celebrates its 30th anniversary, it is with joy and heartfelt congratulations that we, from the Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI), reflect on our collaboration. Our engagement with WWHR has always been energizing. A memorable instance was the SRI retreat in Istanbul in 2022, where we shared experiences and deepened our understanding of Turkey's organizing context. This gathering strengthened our bonds and highlighted the power of collective reflection and solidarity.

Another significant moment was when WWHR invited us to a session envisioning an alternative global human rights institution. This session highlighted shared experiences and systemic issues, fostering a space for imagining a feminist alternative. It underscored the importance of creative thinking and WWHR's invaluable contributions. Our meetings in Geneva, whether at HRC or CEDAW sessions, have also been crucial. These encounters kept us connected to Turkey's feminist movement and WWHR's groundbreaking work, reinforcing our mutual commitment to advancing sexual rights globally.

Watching WWHR's journey over the years has been a source of excitement and awe. How WWHR has fostered deep feminist movement building and connected local struggles to global advocacy is remarkable. Reaching three decades as an independent feminist organization is an extraordinary achievement, especially in a world dominated by patriarchal, capitalist, and racist structures. WWHR's resilience and success are not only a cause for celebration but also a source of courage and inspiration for feminist organizations worldwide. Congratulations on this milestone, WWHR. Your journey embodies the spirit of perseverance and solidarity. *Aluta Continua!*

Women's Solidarity Foundation (KADAV)

The first WWHR activity we participated in as women from KADAV was HREP. For a long time, we even referred to WWHR as HREP. Whenever we met with friends from women's organizations in other cities, it was heartening to know that there was someone who HREP had touched. HREP always comes to mind when we think of "multiplying and spreading feminist ideas." Of course, we have collaborated with our friends from WWHR in other projects and joint activities; however, WWHR and HREP remain inseparable in our minds. Our gratitude and love go out to all the women of WWHR who have worked so hard.

The Foundation for Women's Solidarity

As we reflect on the challenges and meaning of being a women's organization that has embraced a feminist perspective in building and fostering women's solidarity in Turkey for 30 years, we increasingly understand the unique place of each organization in this great solidarity and struggle.

WWHR has been a seminal organization that not only produces feminist knowledge in this geography, where we fight for women's human rights, often at the expense of our lives, but also bridges feminist politics and work we carry out at the national level with the international arena. HREP has inspired and empowered many women and women's organizations, encouraging them to take steps towards organizing and participating individually in economic life. HREP trainers have further spread this inspiration and courage, conveying feminist knowledge and expanding solidarity.

We hope to stand side by side for many more years in the feminist struggle you have been waging with great effort for 30 years.

Susana T. Fried

CREA Program Advisor

Dear friends at WWHR, it is a delight to offer my congratulations on your 30th anniversary. For 30 years, WWHR has been an important—and critical—partner in global feminist and sexual and reproductive justice advocacy. I've had the privilege of working with quite a few WWHR colleagues over the years, most recently working with WWHR's support to convene a feminist gathering in Istanbul, and many, many times as part of what is now called the Women's Rights Caucus at the UN Commission on the Status of women. WWHR has consistently been a thoughtful, bold, and respected partner. Good luck for the next 30!

Women Culture Arts and Literature Association (KASED)

“I was charged with the narcissus, the shoots and the children.
Being human is about responsibility, or did I get it wrong?”

Gülten Akın

The fact that our paths crossed in the struggle for women's rights, even though we are from different geographies, and that we are writing these lines to celebrate your 30th anniversary is a powerful testament to the boundless women's struggle. The strength women draw from each other in their struggle for equality and freedom has undoubtedly made our movement a unique example of solidarity. With the hope and belief that this solidarity will continue to grow and that together we will create an equal and free future, we once again chant, “Woman Life Freedom” (Jin Jiyan Azad î)!

We extend our endless gratitude for your contributions to our struggle in the fields of culture and arts in Amed, for making us feel your constant support, and for being an illuminating light in the women's liberation movement.

Mor Çatı Shelter Foundation (Purple Roof)

In the early 1990s, women expanded their struggle by establishing feminist organizations, collectives, and networks focusing on different issues. That said, we do not know whether they foresaw how these organizations would foster one another over the years. In time, we found ways to empower both ourselves and the feminist struggle through support, collaboration, and joint campaigns. As our struggle against violence against women grew, Mor Çatı became one of the organizations that bears the traces of the new lives built by thousands of women through solidarity. WWHR has not only developed an alternative solidarity model through its countrywide work on women's human rights but also paved the way for the inclusion of the feminist movement's perspective and contribution to domestic and international monitoring processes regarding women's rights. One of the most beautiful projects we undertook jointly with WWHR was the preparation process for the CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention shadow reports. As we brought in our different organizational experiences, we sought ways to create a feminist work ethic. We combined our experiences and knowledge without setting up hierarchies and endeavored to make different perspectives converse with each other without hiding contradictions and compromising participation. WWHR's reporting experience and national and international advocacy activities facilitated our work and motivated us. WWHR's doors have always been open not only to Mor Çatı but also to many independent women's organizations. Many thanks to the countless persistent and hard-working women who contributed to, changed, and transformed WWHR. We hope that the feminist companionship between Mor Çatı and WWHR will continue to expand our struggle and add to our achievements.

Priyanthi Fernando

Sri Lankan feminist

As a fellow women's human rights activist and a former Executive Director of the International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP AP) I congratulate WWHR for 30 years of working consistently and with courage towards ensuring that gender equality, non-discrimination, and women's human rights are recognized, realized and safeguarded in Turkey and beyond.

For decades, WWHR has been at the helm of the women's struggle for the recognition and fulfilment of their rights. Just as IWRAP AP recognized the power and value of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and from the 1990s brought women from the Global South to the CEDAW space to claim their rights, WWHR fought the same fight in Turkey, campaigning on the frontlines to end legal discrimination against women, documenting and publishing information on the status of women's human rights, and using the CEDAW principles to make their case for gender equality. They have played a leading role in every CEDAW review of Turkey.

WWHR has also persistently monitored the Istanbul Convention and was particularly steadfast in challenging the non-compliance of European norms on gender equality and gender based violence by governments, their own included. The decision of the Government of Turkey to withdraw from the Convention sparked their leadership in the United 4 Istanbul Convention campaign, a bold and courageous initiative that, with intersectional and transnational solidarity with allies from the global north and south, strategized to tackle the alarming escalation of anti-gender and anti-rights attacks on women's human rights.

The women at WWHR are all fearless women's human rights defenders, and in my time as Executive Director of IWRAW AP, I have had the privilege of working with several of them on several fronts. Whether it was by their participation at the annual Global South Women's Forums, or their analysis around issues of care or of macroeconomics, the women of WWHR, individually and collectively, contributed to the direction of IWRAW APs work. For me personally, the association with Berfu, Ipek, Sehnaz, and others has been enriching and inspirational and I am grateful for the sharing and the friendship.

The world is facing multiple crises that have exposed the foundations of power and privilege. This should be the moment for our struggles against oppression to come together to craft a new world order that is equal, non-discriminatory, and respectful of our planetary boundaries. I see WWHR entering this space with the determination and the courage that marks their three decades of advocacy for women's human rights. From my position here in Sri Lanka, where women are facing increasing misogyny, growing authoritarianism, and a systemic erosion of their rights, I will continue to draw inspiration from their work.

Yakın Ertürk

Former UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls

Women for Women's Human Rights, which grounds women's human rights in Turkey and internationally in a feminist approach, has a 30-year success story built on a solid vision, a dedicated staff, and a strong institutional identity. I wish them success for many more years.

I had the opportunity to witness WWHR's contributions to democratization and the women's movement in Turkey, particularly during the legal reform processes. Our paths crossed several times during my election as the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls in 2003 and during the reform process of the Turkish Penal Code. At the beginning of my term as Rapporteur, I organized a survey meeting in Istanbul to determine how to proceed. This meeting, which was attended by international experts, was meticulously organized by WWHR and contributed both to me and the UN women's rights process. I remain grateful to those who contributed to this meeting. Our second collaboration with WWHR was the meeting on International Human Rights Law and the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code, which we organized at Ankara Palas on December 10, 2003, with the participation of METU Women's Studies. The meeting, attended by representatives from the government, parliament, foreign missions, and NGOs, offered a platform for discussions that illuminated

the reform process. It also provided a dialogue environment where the Minister of Justice and other officials expressed their commitment to women's rights.

This was a dynamic period of high hopes for rights, law, and human rights in Turkey. WWHR and other women's organizations used this period effectively to shape public opinion and pioneered a paradigm shift in the penal code that could be considered revolutionary. Thus, crimes against women were defined in the law as crimes against women's bodily integrity, not against common decency and the family. The dynamic debate of the reform process also broke many taboos in society. In 2004, while reform efforts were underway, Judge Orhan Akartuna, Chief Judge of the Şanlıurfa First High Criminal Court, sentenced a perpetrator to life imprisonment in an "honor killing" case, when he could have given a reduced sentence as per custom. During my visit to Urfa in 2006 as a Rapporteur, when I asked him about the reasoning behind his decision, he told me the following: "In the discussion atmosphere of those days, a lightning bolt struck in my brain, and I started to look at the files that came before me in a different light." Here is the secret of change!

Yet, all these years later, this achievement is being undermined by an organized, transnationally networked attack, and unfortunately, states are complicit in this anti-gender agenda. The ground is shifting beneath the international human rights system, which has until now been the foundation of our struggle at the national level. As the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls marks its 30th anniversary, the global escalation of violence compels us to reconsider our vision and strategy to make the international human rights mechanisms, developed with great effort, more effective.

In the face of the new authoritarianism that has gripped all institutions, independent women's NGOs, which are today engaged in a much fiercer struggle, must forge broad-based and transnational strategic alliances with all progressive forces that take patriarchal neoliberal capitalism to task. What is promising is that a feminist organization like WWHR, which can take on this responsibility, has become a collective political force. May our path be clear!

Zozan Özgökçe

Van Women's Association (VAKAD)

We will not be weary of small steps; we will not be afraid of big steps. We were organized, we were strong, we were learning together, we were getting stronger together. Such a community is a great threat to all power structures. It cracks their ground, and as the solidarity built strengthens, it explodes the roots of all patriarchal structures. With HREP, we came to know and love our bodies and ourselves. We learned to transform the role of being a woman from being seen as a 'victim, sacrificial, self-sacrificing, honorable, and good mother' to being recognized as an individual. We questioned what was imposed on us daily. Our family, schoolmates, bosses, coworkers, lovers, husbands, fathers, brothers, and even women resisted our desire to step out of the roles imposed on us. We were subjected to violence,

mobbing, defamation, demonization, marginalization, and witchery. But we questioned, we changed, we tried to change. We were able to express ourselves with the communication methods we learned during HREP; we convinced the harshest mentalities by using non-confrontational language, and we explained women's human rights. Those who used to say, "What about women's rights?" are now saying to us, "Women have rights!"

We did not give up, even if we were exhausted. We did not want to forsake freedom from our lives. We chose to live for ourselves, not for others. For our self-respect and to be respected, we adopted our own principles instead of the moral principles imposed on us. The mentality that did not see us as valuable because we were girls, that took away our right to participate in education, social, political life, and labor, tried to weaken us. It was as if society colluded to keep us behind men. Knowing a lot did not make us unhappy, on the contrary, we found happiness thanks to this knowledge and awareness. The more we achieved, the more we wanted to accomplish.

This is how our experience at the Van Women's Association (VAKAD) evolved. HREP and the training programs of feminist organizations are pivotal moments where women learn that they are not alone. And every challenge we faced made us stronger. VAKAD was established following the organizing work we completed through HREP. Dreaming and thinking were enough to bring things to life. We were so much involved with VAKAD that even our dreams were full of it. When someone said, "I dreamed last night that we were doing this project," it motivated us to get started. Initially, we would meet in a single room of an office to decide on actions based on the needs of women. The women's solidarity center, solidarity store, women's shelter, handicraft workshop, independent women's and children's tents, women's and children's center, and campaigns all emerged from our needs. We have become an organization that voices its concerns, objects, and advocates at the city, regional, and national levels. We were just a handful of women, yet we were reaching hundreds. Our protests filled the streets and avenues. When we see discrimination based on gender, belief, lifestyle, language, or ethnicity, and we say, "We are experiencing this because we are women, Kurdish women, Kurdish trans women." VAKAD was a significant crossroads for us. It was a space where we were neither judged nor misunderstood. We experienced a lot, learned, shared, and grew as we shared. We made the realities of this city visible by forming an LGBTQI+ unit. We were attacked, but we never let go of our dream. This experience, spanning from April 2004 until November 2016, when we were shut down by a state of emergency decree, led to new experiences. We have spent each day since grappling with lawlessness and injustice, we have been threatened. These threats could not and cannot change our minds. Our struggle persists. Even if they try to stifle our free spirits, we will take to the streets and emerge into the light. Long live women's solidarity! Long live programs like HREP that empower women!



Photo: Güliz Sağlam

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

You can access a list of all our publications, and many of the publications themselves at wwhr.org.

BOOKS, BOOK CHAPTERS, BOOKLETS

- Accad, E., Ilkcaracan, P., Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N., Siddiqi, D. M., & Zaatari, Z. (2006). *Of war, siege, and Lebanon: Women's voices from the Middle East and South Asia*. Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways.
- Anıl, E., Arın, C., Berktaş Hacimirzaoğlu, A., Bingöllü, M., & İlkkaracan, P. (2002). *The new legal status of women in Turkey*. Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways.
- Anıl, E., Arın, C., Berktaş Hacimirzaoğlu, A., Bingöllü, M., İlkkaracan, P., & Amado, L. E. (2009). *Turkish civil and penal code reforms from a gender perspective: The success of two nationwide campaigns*. (3rd ed.). Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways.
- Anıl, A., İlkkaracan, P., Kılıç, Z., Ronge, K., Seral, G., & Ülgen, T. (2009). *Pekin+5: Birleşmiş milletlerde kadının insan hakları ve Türkiye'nin taahhütleri* [Beijing+5: Women's human rights at the united nations and Turkey's commitments. (3rd ed.). Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways.
- Arın, C. (1997). *The legal status of women in Turkey*. (2nd ed.). Women for Women's Human Rights.
- Amado, L. E. (2004). *Sexual and bodily rights as human rights in the Middle East and North Africa: A workshop report*. Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways.
- Amado, L. E. (2005). *The human rights education program for women (HREP): Utilizing state resources to promote women's human rights in Turkey*. The Center for Victims of Torture.
- Amado, L. E. (2007). Advocating sexual rights: The campaign for the reform of the Turkish Penal Code. In L. Alpizar Durán, N. D. Payne, & A. Russo (Eds.), *Building feminist movements and organizations: Global perspectives* (pp. 230-238). Zed Books.
- Amado, L., İlkkaracan, P., & Kıymaz Bahceci, S. (2022). Sexual rights in Muslim societies. In J. L. Esposito (Ed.), *Oxford encyclopedia of the Islamic world: Digital collection*. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780197669419.001.0001/acref-9780197669419>
- İlkkaracan, İ. (1998). Kentli kadınlar ve çalışma yaşamı [Urban women and work life]. In A. Berktaş Hacimirzaoğlu (Ed.), *Bilanço 98: 75 yılda kadınlar ve erkekler* (pp. 285-302). Tarih Vakfı.
- İlkkaracan, İ. (2008). *Birleşmiş milletler (BM) CEDAW sürecinde sivil toplum örgütleri ile savunuculuk ve lobicilik—Türkiye gölge raporları: 1997 ve 2005 deneyimleri* [Advocacy and lobbying with non-governmental organizations during the United Nations (UN) CEDAW process—shadow reports from Turkey: 1997 and 2005. Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways.
- İlkkaracan, İ. (Ed.). (2010). *Emek piyasasında toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğine doğru: İş ve aile yaşamını uzlaştırma politikaları* [Toward gender equality in the labor market: Work and family life reconciliation policies]. Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways; İTÜ Bilim, Mühendislik ve Teknolojide Kadın Araştırmaları ve Uygulamaları Merkezi.
- İlkkaracan, İ., & İlkkaracan, P. (1998). Kuldun yurttaş: Kadınlar neresinde? [From subject to citizen: Where are the women?] In A. Ünsal (Ed.), *Bilanço 98: 75 yılda tebaa'dan yurttaş'a doğru* (pp. 77-90). Tarih Vakfı.

- İlkkaracan, İ., & Seral, G. (2000). Sexual pleasure as a woman's human right: Experiences from a grassroots training program in Turkey. In P. İlkkaracan (Ed.), *Women and sexuality in Muslim societies* (pp. 187-196). Women for Women's Human Rights.
- İlkkaracan, P. (2001). Islam and women's sexuality: A research report from Turkey. In M. Hunt, P. B. Jung, & R. Balakrishnan (Eds.), *Good sex: Feminist perspectives from the world's religions*. (pp. 61-76). Rutgers University Press.
- İlkkaracan, P. (2007). How adultery almost derailed Turkey's aspirations to join the European Union. In R. Parker, R. Petchesky, & R. Sember (Eds.), *Sex politics: Reports from the front lines* (pp. 247-276). Sexual Policy Watch.
- İlkkaracan, P. (Ed.). (2008). *Deconstructing sexuality in the Middle East: Challenges and discourses*. Ashgate.
- İlkkaracan, P., & Amado, L. E. (2011). Legal reforms on violence against women in Turkey: Best practices. In M. Ennaji, & F. Sadiqi (Eds.), *Gender and violence in the Middle East* (pp. 189-199). Routledge.
- İlkkaracan, P., & Athar, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Sexual politics in Muslim societies: Studies from Palestine, Turkey, Malaysia, and Indonesia*. GAYa NUSANTARA; Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights.
- İlkkaracan, P., & Jolly, S. (Eds.). (2007). *Gender and sexuality*. BRIDGE.
- İlkkaracan, P. (1997). *Women's movement(s) in Turkey: A brief overview* (2nd ed.). Women for Women's Human Rights.
- İlkkaracan, P. (1998). Doğu Anadolu'da kadın ve aile [Women and the family in Eastern Anatolia]. In A. Berktaş Hacimirzaoğlu (Ed.), *Bilanço 98: 75 yılda kadınlar ve erkekler* (pp. 173-192). Tarih Vakfı.
- İlkkaracan, P. (Ed.). (2000). *Women and sexuality in Muslim societies*. Women for Women's Human Rights.
- İlkkaracan, P. (Ed.). (2005). *Almara'a waljinsania fi almujtama'at al'islamia* [Women and sexuality in Muslim societies]. Al-Mada.
- İlkkaracan, P. (Ed.). (2023). *Müslüman toplumlarda kadın ve cinsellik* [Women and sexuality in Muslim societies] (7th ed.). İletişim Yayınları.
- İlkkaracan, P., Gülçür, L., & Arın, C. (1996). *Sıcak yuva masalı: Aile içi şiddet ve cinsel taciz* [The myth of a warm home: Domestic violence and sexual abuse in the family]. Metis Yayınları.
- İlkkaracan, P., & İlkkaracan, İ. (1999). 1990'lar Türkiye'sinde kadın ve göç [Women and migration in 1990's Turkey]. In O. Baydar (Ed.), *Bilanço 98: 75 yılda köylerden şehirlere* (pp. 305-324). Tarih Vakfı.
- Seral-Aksakal, G. (2013). Sexual pleasure as a woman's human right: Experiences from a human rights training programme for women in Turkey. In S. Jolly, A. Cornwall, & K. Hawkins (Eds.), *Women, sexuality and the political power of pleasure* (pp. 58-75). Zed Books.
- Shaheed, F. (1998). *Müslüman toplumlarda feminist dayanışmaya bir örnek: Müslüman toplumlarda yaşayan kadınlar ağı-WLUML* [An example of feminist solidarity in Muslim societies: The women living under Muslim laws network-WLUML. Women for Women's Human Rights.

Zuhur, S. (2005). *Gender, sexuality and the criminal laws in the Middle East and North Africa: A comparative study*. Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways.

ARTICLES, REPORTS

Amado, L. E. (2006). Promoting sexual rights through human rights education: Experiences at grassroots in Turkey. *IDS Bulletin*, 37(5), 117-122.

Amado, L. E. (2009). Sexuality and sexual rights in Muslim societies. *Development*, 52(l), 59-63.

Eroğlu, D., & Gençay, H. (2020). *Salgında kadın olmak araştırma raporu: Covid-19 salgınının ve kamusal alan kısıtlamalarının kadınlar üzerindeki etkilerinin haklar bağlamında değerlendirilmesi* [Being a woman in the Covid-19 pandemic—a research report: Assessment of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions on public space in terms of their impacts on women in the context of rights]. Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways. <https://kadinininsanhaklari.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Salginda-Kadin-Olmak-Uzun-Rapor-Final.pdf>

Gülçür, L. (1999). *A study on domestic violence and sexual abuse in Ankara, Turkey*. Women for Women's Human Rights. <https://kadinininsanhaklari.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/sexual-abuse-ankara-99.pdf>

Gülçür, L., & İlkaracan, P. (2002). The "Natasha" experience: Migrant sex workers from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in Turkey. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 25(4), 411-421.

İlkkaracan, İ. (1998). Göç, kadının ekonomik konumu, hareket özgürlüğü ve aile içi güç dinamikleri [Migration, women's economic status, freedom of mobility, and power dynamics in the family]. *İktisat Dergisi*, (177), 62-67.

İlkkaracan, İ. (2009). İnsan hakları evrensel beyannamesi ve neo liberal ekonomi politikaları: Mutlu bir izdivaç mümkün mü? [The universal declaration of human rights and neoliberal economic policies: Is a happy marriage possible?] *Güncel Hukuk*, March, 20-21.

İlkkaracan, İ. (2016, March). *The purple economy complimenting the green: Towards sustainable economies and caring societies* [Working paper]. *Levy Economics Institute, Workshop on Gender and Macroeconomics*. <https://www.wwhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2016.PurpleEconomy.Ilkkaracan.Levy-Hewlett.pdf>

İlkkaracan, P. (1998). Exploring the context of women's sexuality in Eastern Turkey. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 6(12), 66-75.

İlkkaracan, P. (2002). Women, sexuality, and social change in the Middle East and the Maghreb. *Social Research*, 69(3), 753-779.

İlkkaracan, P. (2007). *Re/forming the penal code in Turkey from a gender perspective: The case of a successful campaign*. Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways. <https://kadinininsanhaklari.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/IDS-TCK-Pinar-makale.pdf>

İlkkaracan, P., & Amado, L. (2005). Human rights education as a tool of grassroots organizing and social transformation: A case study from Turkey. *Intercultural Education*, 6(2), 115-128. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980500133481>

İlkkaracan, P. (1996). *Domestic violence and family life as experienced by Turkish immigrant women in Germany*. Women for Women's Human Rights. https://kadinininsanhaklari.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/immigrant_women_96.pdf

Women for Women's Human Rights. (1997). *NGO country report (shadow report) on implementation of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) in Turkey*. <https://kadinininsanhaklari.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ENG1997golgerapor.pdf>

Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways. (2005). *Shadow NGO report on Turkey's fourth and fifth combined periodic report to the committee on the elimination of discrimination against women*. <https://wwhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/WWHRNewWaysShadowReportTurkey.pdf>

Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways. (2016). *Shadow CSO report on Turkey's "scope of 2016 HLPF presentation"*. <https://kadinininsanhaklari.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/hlpf-shadow-report-wwhr.pdf>

Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways. (2020). *İstanbul Sözleşmesi nedir? [What is the Istanbul Convention?]* https://kadinininsanhaklari.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/yasatir_brosur-tr-web.pdf

Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways. (2021). *Reproductive healthcare services for women and women's experiences with abortion: Research report*. https://wwhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/abortion_report.pdf

Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways. (2022). *Erkek şiddeti nedir? Mini sözlüğü [What is male violence? Mini glossary]*. https://kadinininsanhaklari.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/WEB_Erkek_Siddeti_Nedir_KIH-YC.pdf

Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways, FEIM, ActionAid France, International Women's Rights Action Watch, & International Women's Health Coalition. (2017). *Recommendations from the women's major group on engaging with the voluntary national review (VNR) process*. https://womensmajorgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/WMG_Info_Note_Final_2017.pdf

Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways, Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation, Women's Solidarity Foundation, Foundation for Women's Solidarity, Equality Monitoring Women's Group, Association for Women with Disabilities, Kaos Gay and Lesbian Cultural Research and Solidarity Association, & Association for Struggle Against Sexual Violence. (2017). *Shadow NGO report on Turkey's first report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*. <https://wwhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Istanbul-Sozlesmesi-Golge-Rapor-ENG.pdf>

Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways, Women's Solidarity Foundation, Association for Struggle Against Sexual Violence, Foundation for Women's Solidarity, Women's Coalition – International Working Group, Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation, EŞİTİZ – Equality Monitoring Women's Group, & YERELİZ – Local Monitoring, Research and Implementation Association. (2019). *Turkey's second VNR civil society alternative report: UN high level political forum sustainable development goals*. <https://wwhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/civil-society.pdf>

Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways, & The Executive Committee for NGO Forum on CEDAW-Turkey. (2010). *Shadow NGO report on Turkey's sixth periodic report to the committee on the elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW)*. <https://wwhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CedawING6.pdf>

The Executive Committee for NGO Forum on CEDAW-Turkey. (2016). *Shadow NGO report on Turkey's seventh periodic report to the committee on the elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW)*. <https://wwhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ShadowReport.pdf>

The Executive Committee for NGO Forum on CEDAW-Turkey. (2021). *Shadow report on the 8th periodic review of Turkey submitted by the executive committee on NGO forum for CEDAW to the United Nations committee on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women*. <https://wwhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/CSO-Shadow-Report-for-8th-Periotic-Review-of-Turkey.1.pdf>

PERIODICAL PUBLICATION

Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies. CSBR E-News

The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR) is a solidarity network that brings together organizations advocating for sexual and bodily rights in the Middle East, North Africa, and Southern and Southeastern Asia. WWHR spearheaded the foundation of the network, served as its international coordinator from 2001-2011, and published the *CSBR E-News* twice a year from 2007-2011, to boost the visibility of news, campaigns, and work on sexual rights by member organizations, and strengthen solidarity among them. You can access past issues of the *CSBR E-News* at wwhr.org.

PUBLICATIONS AND MATERIALS RELATED TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS

EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN (HREP)

The HREP Manual

İlkkaracan, P., İlkkaracan İ., Kerestecioğlu, F., Özenen, F., & Seral, G. (2022). *Kadının insan hakları eğitim program (KİHEP) grup yönlendiricisi el kitabı* [The human rights education program for women (HREP) group facilitator manual]. (8th ed.). Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways.

The We Have Rights! Series Used in HREP

The *We Have Rights!* series comprises of four booklets distributed not only to participants of HREP or Gender Equality Seminars, but anyone interested in learning about their rights. The first booklet of the series, *We Have Rights!* came out in 2001, followed by *We Have Sexuality!*, *We Have Reproductive Rights!*, and *We Have Economic Rights!* that were prepared in line with needs and demands from the field. The booklets were translated into Kurdish and later Arabic to reach greater audiences, and can be accessed at wwhr.org.

The Purple Newsletter

In publication since February 2006, *The Purple Newsletter* aims to foster communication and solidarity among the HREP group facilitators, participants, and WWHR, who make up the solidarity network formed as a result of past and present HREP groups held across Turkey. Printed until its 35th issue in 2020, *The Purple Newsletter* is presently only offered in digital form. All issues of the newsletter are available, in Turkish, at morbulten.kadinininsanhaklari.org.

The Purple Series, produced by WWHR and NTV

You can access both Turkish and Kurdish versions of the series at WWHR's YouTube channel.

Atalay, A. (Producer). (2006). *Kadınlarla... mor dizi* [The Purple Series] [TV Dizisi]. Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways; NTV.

HREP External Impact Assessment Studies (by year)

Kardam, N. (2003). *Women's human rights training program 1995-2003 evaluation report*. Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways. https://wwhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/eval_report.pdf

Tibbits, F., & Batık, E. (2012). *Impact assessment of the human rights education program for women (HREP) 2005-2011*. Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways. <https://wwhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/HREP-2005-2011-Final-Evaluation-Report.pdf>

İPSOS. (2019). *Impact assessment report of the human rights education program for women (HREP), women's human rights training (WHRT), and gender equality (GE) seminars in 2012-2018*. Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways. <https://wwhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/WWHR-2018-Impact-Assessment-Report.pdf>

SELECTED VIDEOS, DOCUMENTARIES

You can access all these films, documentaries, and more at WWHR's YouTube channel.

İlkkaracan, P., & Şanver, A. (Directors). (1995). *Artık dur demenin zamanı geldi* [It's time to say no] [Film]. Women for Women's Human Rights.

Women for Women's Human Rights. (n.d.). *Karşılaşmalar: Sürdürülebilir kalkınma hedefleri ve toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği* [Encounters: Sustainable development goals and gender equality] [YouTube channel]. YouTube. Accessed August 21, 2024. https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLejltY-xl4yc7NjY_XJlImnGjJM3WboD&si=PXjbVr-uAcfY8kbf

Women for Women's Human Rights. (n.d.). *KİHEP dayanışma sohbetleri* [HREP solidarity chats] [YouTube channel]. YouTube. Accessed August 21, 2024. https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLejltY-xl4wK_z4OuLIMvjiQB1T_S64r&si=h7CPm-XpH70-uowJ

Women for Women's Human Rights. (2022, April 4). *Bu kalabalığı hatırla 1. bölüm: İstanbul Sözleşmesi* [Remember this crowd part 1: The Istanbul Convention] [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/MNVYwdg-yl8?si=sT5Tf-QgGCwX9k0e>

Women for Women's Human Rights. (2023, May 22). *Bu kalabalığı hatırla 2. bölüm: 6284* [Remember this crowd part 2: 6284] [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/IJjjilmWkzM?si=chEiyRPd1ZFI4cwp>

WEBSITES

hedef5.org
istanbulsozlesmesi.org
kadinininsanhaklari.org
morbulten.kadinininsanhaklari.org
nafakahakki.kadinininsanhaklari.org
wwhr.org

SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

youtube.com/@kadinininsanhaklaridernegi
facebook.com/KadininInsanHaklariDernegi
x.com/kadinih
instagram.com/kadinih/
linkedin.com/company/wwhr/



Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) is an autonomous feminist organization founded in 1993 to promote women's human rights in Turkey and around the world. Since then, WWHR's work has consistently stemmed from the belief that true and permanent change is possible only by implementing lasting programs that link the local, national, and international domains with a holistic and intersectional view of rights.

WWHR puts this belief into practice by advocating for legal, social, and political transformation; running local programs such as the Human Rights Education Program for Women (HREP) that supports women in exercising their rights and organizing at the grassroots level; and producing and disseminating feminist knowledge. Working in a way where its program areas draw on and feed into one another and by building solidarity networks around common struggles, WWHR has coordinated campaigns for legal reform in Turkey, joined forces with the global women's movement while engaging in advocacy work at the United Nations, and worked with tens of thousands of women and dozens of women's organizations on the local level.

Autobiographical in nature, this volume is an account of WWHR's 30-year herstory, of the struggles and solidarity experienced as part of the national and global feminist movement. It aims to preserve and draw strength from the memory of our feminist struggle for a free and equal world, and also carries the hope of relaying our experiences to new generations and continuing to stand in solidarity with others in ever growing numbers.

Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR)

wwhr@wwhr.org

www.wwhr.org

Ağa Çırağı Sok. No:7 Daire: 7, 34437

Gümüşsuyu / İstanbul, Turkey | +90 212 251 00 29

 kadinih

 KadininInsanHaklariDernegi

 kadinih

 kadinininsanhaklaridernegi