



PEACE ISLANDS
INSTITUTE

REPORT

ISSUE: 4 FEBRUARY 2014

SUSTAINABLE WOMEN'S RIGHTS

*Present and Future of the
Women's Rights in Turkey*

*Replicability of Turkish Coordination
Model in Other Nations*



The views expressed in the report do not necessarily represent the views of the Journalists and Writers Foundation and Peace Islands Institute. This issue of the publication contains edited papers of the speakers at the panel on women's rights organized during the United Nations Commission on the Status Women's 57th Session on March 5, 2013 in New York, U.S.A. The panel was co-organized by Peace Islands Institute, Women's Platform of the Journalists and Writers Foundation, and Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations.

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ISBN number: 978-1-939592-04-0

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SUSTAINABLE WOMEN'S RIGHTS

*Present and Future of the Women's Rights in Turkey
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Gender Policy in Turkey and the Changing Lives of Women

Fatma Sahin

Former Minister of Family and Social Policies, Republic of Turkey. Fatma Sahin was appointed Minister of Family and Social Policies in July of 2011. With a background in chemical engineering, she began her career in politics only in 2001 after the creation of the Justice and Development Party. Prior to her current role, she was very active in regional politics and was the first female member of the parliament elected from Gaziantep and Southeastern Anatolia Region. Following the 2011 general elections, she became the only female minister in the third cabinet of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and ended her post in December 2013 due to her candidacy for the mayoral elections in Gaziantep. She earned her degree in chemical engineering from Istanbul Technical University.

Turkey has a strong potential to derive from its history, culture, and faith, in terms of achieving gender equality. With this, our fundamental aim is to increase the life quality of each and every citizen in social, cultural, economic, and political aspects, with an understanding based on rights, irrespective of differences in language, religion, race, sect or gender.

Turkey has taken necessary steps in international law for women's rights and the elimination of discrimination against women. With the advances it has made in all areas within the last decade, Turkey has become a role model in achieving gender equality today.

Turkey has been making necessary legal regulations to enable women's individual and social empowerment in education, health, employment and participation in decision-making mechanisms, and putting effort for the implementation of the decisions taken through various projects, incentives, and protocols.

In enabling women's active participation in all fields of social life, education is a changemaker. Goals determined for short

term, middle term and long term are significant for the dynamics of social life and education is the key term for the realization of these goals. Therefore, improving the quality and impact of education given to the members of a society and making sure it embraces the whole segments of the society are vitally important.

In the field of education, particularly under the Conditional Education Aid campaign, we have been able to reach over 2.5 million students via their mothers. 14 million students receive their coursebooks for free. Through the transportation-based education system, 598,000 students eat free lunch at school. Such forms of individual and family-focused social aid have particularly helped increase the rate of schooling among girls. Within the last decade an important increase rate has been achieved in primary education schooling. In the school year 2011-2012, the schooling rate has been 98.67%, with a schooling rate for boys at 98.77% and for girls at 98.56%.

The sex ratio in primary education has had a 10% increase within the last decade and has reached 100.4%. Our aim is to increase this ratio in all levels of education.

The schooling rate at secondary school is 67.37% as of the 2011-2012 school year. In secondary school, the schooling rate for boys is 68.53% while it is 66.14% for girls. It is seen that the sex rate which is 100% in primary education drops to 93.3% in secondary school.

We started the "Mother-Daughter at School" campaign in 2008, with the aim of teaching how to read and write to 3 million women above the age of fifteen. Up to now, over one million illiterate people have been able to join the ranks of the literate people through this campaign, which has been chosen as the best practice in education and gender equality by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2010 within the context of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Turkey has undertaken that it will raise the quantity and quality of health services provided to women and girls in our society to the level of widely accepted international standards, according to the international conventions that it signed, and international documents that it has accepted without any reservation.

Among the policies implemented to reduce mother and infant deaths, an important one is the Conditional Health Aid. Within the framework of the protocol signed with the Ministry of Health, pregnant women, who belong to the neediest segment of the population, are given Pregnancy Aid just for once. Besides that, poor families are given the monthly health aid on the condition that they take their kids for regular health control. Both forms of financial aid are given directly to mothers with the purpose of empowering women's position in family and society.

Women's active participation in economics is one of the most important parameters of sustainable development at the same time. Women's participation in the workforce was 23.3% in 2004; whereas, this rate has increased up to 28.8% in 2011, and 30.3% in July 2012.

Women's participation in employment has increased their role both in public and private sectors. The new generation is postponing family life and motherhood, but at the same time they want to retire as soon as possible. It is important that policies covering every period of women's lives (childhood, youth, participation in the workforce, motherhood, retirement, etc.) should be supportive and complementary of each other. While joining the work life, women have to put two times more effort than men by retaining their roles in motherhood, childcare, and housework at the same time. In such processes, it is necessary to come up with policies that will enable men's and women's equal participation in housework and childcare issues and that will particularly convince men on this matter. The determination and implementation of these policies should not mean the preference of family life over work life, or vice versa. For this purpose, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the Ministry of Science Industry and Technology, and our Ministry of Family and Social Policies have been conducting projects in cooperation. With the protocols that have been signed among these ministries, we aim to increase women's participation in employment by opening daycare centers at the organized industrial zones.

In the Global Gender Gap Report prepared by the World Economic Forum, four main

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issues are handled: access to education, health and life, economic participation and opportunities and political empowerment. These four dynamics support and empower each other.

The idea that women are the subjects of "social and human capital" is important for the economic development to be sustainable and durable. With this understanding, the World Economic Forum Turkey Task Force for Gender Equality (the Equality at Work Platform) has been established in June 2012. The aim of the Equality at Work Platform is to reduce the gap in economic participation and opportunities down to 10% within the next three years, and thus to coordinate the works done for this purpose. The significance of this Platform is doubled by its multi-shareholder structure established by the cooperation between public and private sectors, NGOs, academics, media and World Economic Forum.

The realization of gender equality can only be possible through the cooperation and union of forces between the state, the private sector, civil society and the universities. The Equality at Work Platform has been initiated within the context of enabling gender equality in the process of women's participation in economics. Thus, "for women" competition for the first time has been turned into cooperation and union of forces, which have in turn been solidified as promise and guarantee for gender equality.

Today, the required legal regulations have been made in our country, which would create the legal ground for our struggle to stop violence against women. All the legislations have been given a structure that pursues

the principle of gender equality and gives zero tolerance to violence against women.

The United Nations 57th Commission on the Status of Women has taken place in New York between 4-15 March 2013. During these meetings, Turkey's commitment and progress in combating violence have been shared with the whole world at the General Commission meeting, as well as meetings with representatives from 14 countries, and 10 side events organized during the CSW57.

The European Council Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) is a milestone in combating violence against women. It will not be wrong to claim that this document, which looks at combating violence from a very wide and gender-based perspective and comprises of 81 articles, is the outcome and fruit of the last three decade's effort, work, and experience, and thus is the highest point reached at in this area. In that sense, there is no doubt that this Convention will take us to a further step in combating violence against women.

It is a source of pride for our people and our state that Turkey was the first country to ratify this Convention at its parliament. The ratification of the Convention is also an indicator of Turkey's commitment in combating violence against women. The confidence given by the fact that we have been able to realize the suggestions expressed by UN Women Former Executive Director Michele Bachelet at the UN General Assembly, has made us also hopeful for the future steps.

Our belief in the sacredness of the right to life, and the commitment of our Prime Minister in this matter has enabled us to increase our budget allocated for combating violence. The amount allocated from our Ministry to the General Directorate for Women's Status has been increased at a rate of 69% in the year 2013.

The definitions of violence and victims of violence have been comprehensively regulated in the law, parallel to the Istanbul Convention; and with the new laws of procedure it has been made possible to decree for preliminary injunction outside of working hours, at the weekends and all situations where any delay poses a threat. By opening the way for a technical follow-up to the given decisions, security buttons have been given to the women under threat. The regulations have been based on non-stop service, so the Centers for the Prevention and Monitoring of Violence have been introduced to provide non-stop, multidimensional, one-door service to the victims of violence. Besides that, the number of women's shelters, which is the primary mechanism for the protection and empowerment of women victims of violence, has been increased all over the country, reaching up to 114 shelters. Our aim is to continue to increase the number and the quality of women's shelters all over the country, depending on the population and the need for them.

In order to make progress in combating violence against women, increasing the consciousness and sensitivity to the issue, and enabling social awareness are as important as legal regulations and institutional mechanisms. In that context, the staffs that work at the institutions serving victims of vio-

lence are given special trainings, including 71,000 police officers, 65,000 medical personnel, 336 family court judges and prosecutors, 17,000 religious officials, 2,500 gendarme personnel, 531 local media members and communications undergraduates, and 2,700 public sector members.

In preventing violence against women, lots of activities have been organized with the purpose of increasing awareness for gender equality and enabling a mental transformation. Efforts for raising awareness among men are given special importance among these activities. The social dimension of violence makes it necessary to look for a total solution of the problem. Thus, another dimension of this struggle is to reestablish our values such as love, compassion, justice and tolerance, which exist in the historical, cultural, and religious roots of this nation.

Turkey will continue to take all necessary steps to enable gender equality, as it has been successfully carrying out a process of social change and development in all aspects. This success has been internationally recognized, too. With the efforts of our Ministry and the contributions of our Foreign Ministry, the decision to open the UN Women Regional Office in Istanbul has been declared by UN WOMEN Former Executive Director Michele Bachelet on September 27, 2012. The UN WOMEN Istanbul Office will be ready to be opened within the year 2013.

Since 2002, Turkey has been handling this issue of achieving gender equality with a holistic approach, and making necessary regulations by taking women, family, society, the economic order, and the social structure into consideration. It has been

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acting with the awareness that the economic, political and legal progress will not be lasting unless supported by social policies. With this purpose, each step taken towards women's individual and social empowerment should have this holistic approach. The steps taken in economic, social, cultural and political realms are supported with the idea of democratization. Only with a mental transformation in society can these steps for progress be lasting and deep-rooted.

Turkey is much more confident and committed than before in terms of its decision-making mechanisms, its practitioners, and its people. The steps that have been taken towards democracy will enable Turkey to get stronger, particularly with its young and dynamic population.

The women's movement in Turkey poses a difference with its role as a bridge between East and West, and with its understanding of protecting national and moral values peculiar to this nation. With this understanding, Turkey aims to have achieved all levels in gender equality in parallel to the European and global standards by the year 2023, the centennial of the founding of the Republic of Turkey. Our commitment and will to create and implement policies toward the active participation of each of our citizens, regardless of any discrimination based on gender, age, bodily ability, or any other, in the social life will continue. We will keep serving our people with the understanding that "Sustain the lives of people so that the state can live, too."

Issues of Sustainability and Replicability of Progress in Women's Rights

Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat

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I will address both the sustainability and replicability questions as a Political Scientist. Thus, I will draw attention to power issues and political actors. First question: Are there some identified mechanisms that would sustain the progress made in women's rights? My short answer to this question is "No." The answer is same to the question whether Turkey constitutes a model that can be emulated by other nations, especially in other Muslim-majority countries. Although I reject the notion that there are some mechanisms that would sustain progress in women's rights or that there are some exportable models, I think we can draw some lessons from the history of women's rights in Turkey.

Sustainability

Although there may be some political conditions and institutional mechanisms that would help protect women's rights, there are no magic bullets that would make them sustainable over time. The tentativeness of progress lies in the nature of political struggle. The struggle for women's rights, actually human rights struggle in general, is a power struggle. As the study of politics show – unless one subscribes to Marx-

ian argument about "the end of history" – power struggles are continuous. In human rights struggles, rights gained by the marginalized would trigger resentment and backlash among the privileged and powerful segments of society. Thus, human rights advocates have to be vigilant and on guard at all times to preserve the gained rights.

Before I move on to discussing women's rights in Turkey, to illustrate the tentativeness of progress and the possibility of "reversals," I would like to point to a phenomenon with which we are all very familiar: the global pattern of declining labor rights. Even before the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, working class activism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and numerous conventions issued by the International Labor Organization resulted in some significant progress by the mid-twentieth century: Unionization increased, work hours and conditions improved, child labor and industrial accidents of the nineteenth-century laissez-faire capitalism became rare occurrences in advanced industrial countries. However, labor rights that allowed such improvements started to deteriorate in the new phase of globalization of the last

few decades that is driven by neoliberal economic policies. Concerns over "job security and safety" were replaced by the language of "competitive markets" and "labor flexibility." Unionization rates have been declining all around the world during the last three decades.¹ Parallel to unionization, collective bargaining rights have been on the decline and under attack. Where it is practiced, collective bargaining has become a device through which the workers would negotiate which of their "gained rights" should be compromised. Real wages declined, despite the increased labor productivity and profit margins in many industries. Informal economies, which remain outside the labor law, started to grow. Along with them came sweat shops, human trafficking and what some observers call "new/modern day slavery."

Another glaring example of the reversal of progress is the status of women in the former Soviet Republics and Eastern European states. Once ranked at the top on all commonly used indicators of gender equality and advancement in the status of women (e.g., women's economic participation rate, representation in politics, educational attainment, penetration into non-traditional fields of education and employment), these countries demonstrated a marked decline after the collapse of their state-socialist regimes and transition to market economies.

1. The average change in the OECD countries between 2002 and 2010/2011 is noted as -11 %. Turkey was at the top with a 38% decline (9.5% of unionization rate in 2002 fell to 5.9 % by 2011). See, <http://t24.com.tr/yazi/akpnin-10-yilinda-sendikalasma-yuzde-38-geriledi/5835>.

Women's Rights in Turkey²

Women's rights in Turkey have been neither safe nor replicable. We can talk about the advancement of women's rights in Turkey at two historical junctures. Each "era of progress" included a women's movement and a combination of certain political factors that supported women's demands and progress. However, each era of progress was followed by a period of stagnation or erosion of rights.

The first pro-women's rights era appeared in the early twentieth century. A small but viable women's movement in the late Ottoman era articulated women's needs and demands. The movement was supported by the "modernizing" male elite of both the Empire and the subsequently established Republic of Turkey. The famous "Kemalist Reforms" of the 1920s and 1930s (in the early years of the Republic) were actually informed by the agenda set by Ottoman Feminists, some of whom continued with their demands in the 1920s. Women's demands coincided with the "Westernization project" of the male leadership, and thus they were supported. However, the progress came to a halt after the recognition of women's political rights in the 1930s. The leading women's organization called the mission accomplished and abolished itself. Those women who resisted cooptation by the regime were marginalized and discredited.

2. For more information, see Zehra F. K. Arat, "Kemalism and Turkish Women," *Women and Politics* 14:4 (Fall 1994): 57-80; Zehra F. K. Arat, ed. *Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman."* New York: St. Martin's/Palgrave Press, 1998; Yıldız Ecevit, "Changes in the Policies and Discourses on Women's Rights Since the Establishment of the Republic of Turkey," in *Human Rights in Turkey*. Edited by Zehra F. K. Arat. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

The educational opportunities created in the early days of the Republic were significant, and the new civil code and the policy of desegregation helped women in general. However, the modernization project of the regime was not carried out with the goal of achieving gender equality, and there were no autonomous and effective women's organizations to pressure the regime after the 1930s. In the absence of effective activism on behalf of women's rights, even the competitive multi-party politics and freedoms granted by the 1961 constitution could not propel the system to carry out reforms in favor of women.

The second era of progress was ushered in during the 1990s, following the emergence of a women's movement in the 1980s, which was much more diverse and forceful than the earlier one. The movement enjoyed some favorable conditions but also was constrained by some counter forces. Among the favorable conditions we can list are the rise of human rights activism, the Özal government's interest in integrating Turkey with the European and global markets and desire to participate in the European and UN human rights regimes (the ratification of the CEDAW and recognizing the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights are most important), and the decision to pursue Turkey's membership to the European Union (EU).

The EU played a significant role in pushing the country to undertake reforms, which included women's rights. Various constitutional amendments, constitutional court decisions, and the new civil and penal codes largely adhered to the principles of anti-discrimination and equali-

ty before the law. Women's groups acted together, despite their differences, and tried to use all national and international mechanisms, including the EU, to pressure governments. As violence against women was highlighted, the parliament established an investigative committee to look into domestic violence against children and women, as well as honor killings. Its report, based on the testimonies and suggestions by experts, presented the issue as a multi-dimensional problem. The report also led the Prime Minister to issue a circular in 2006 that demanded practically all state agencies and offices to take measures. The establishment of a parliamentary committee, the Committee Monitoring the Equal Opportunity for Women and Men, in 2009, was another important development.

Although not perfect, the changes introduced in various reform packages carried out in the 1990s and 2000s could have improved women's lives and rights significantly – if they were fully implemented.

Among the trends that went against improving women's rights is the rise of neoliberalism. Neoliberal economic policies that undermine, if not violate, social and economic rights, have been imposed on Turkey first by the IMF, starting in the 1980s, and then by the EU, as a part of the economic criteria set for membership. While all post-1980 governments in Turkey pursued these policies usually grudgingly, the Justice and Development Party governments fully embraced them. We can say that Prime Minister Erdogan kept his promise of internalizing the Copenhagen Criteria – the EU membership conditions –

and making them “Ankara criteria,” as far as the *economic* part is concerned.³

On the political criteria (which includes human rights, democratization and the rule of law), however, the reform process started to dwindle, since the 2007 elections and as the country's hopes for the EU membership started to wane. Although the European Commission progress reports criticize a range of practices that compromise democracy and human rights and call for change, those criticisms have not been effective. In other words, the EU and other European institutions have not been serving as a stimulus of change or leverage anymore.

As for women's rights, there was no follow up report on the implementation and impact of the executive circular on domestic violence. Shelters for battered women remain grossly inadequate – both in number and capacity. The police fail to protect women and often return them to their tormentors at home. The new law on the Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence against Women, adopted and entered into force last March (2012), addresses many shortcomings of the 1998 law on the subject, but its effectiveness in implementation is yet to be seen. Some members of the security personnel who faced charges of torture and rape have been promoted to top security positions,

3. The Law on Social Security and Public Health Insurance (no. 5510, 2007) was adopted by the blessing of the EU, despite wide protest by women's groups and the health service personnel. It increases the retirement age, effectively removes or reduces some of the benefits enjoyed by women under the previous legislation (e.g., it reduces the survivor pension to widowed women from 75% to 50% of the husband's salary and terminates daughters' coverage by their parents' health insurance policy at age 18 or 25), and increases the number of days to pay insurance premiums.

even after such charges were validated by the European Court of Human Rights.⁴ The pro-nationalist discourse employed by the Prime Minister has become increasingly profound, urging young women to have three to five children – while the access to affordable day care services has been an ongoing problem. Similarly, women's reproductive health rights and access to abortion are threatened.

According to the UN Human Development Report, Turkey's global ranking on the Gender-Related Development Index (GDI, which was later replaced by Gender Inequality Index, GII) fell from 71 in year 2000 to 77 in 2011 (higher number stands for worse situation of inequality). The change in the ranking according to the Gender Empowerment Index (GEM, which looks into women's representation in decision-making positions) has been more drastic, as Turkey moved down from the rank of 66 to 101 between 2000 and 2009.⁵

INDEX	'00	'02	'04	'05	'07	'09	'10	'11
GDI/GII	71	70	71	79	70	--	77	77
GEM	66	63	73	76	93	101	--	--

Source: *Human Development Report*, various years.

4. Sedat Selim Ay was charged by multiple cases of rape and torture in the 1990s. The charges were dismissed by the Turkish courts and taken to the European Court of Human Rights, which validated the charges and decided against Turkey twice. In July 2012, he was promoted to the position of Deputy Commissioner of Istanbul and put in charge of anti-terrorism activities. The public outrage over this appointment was snubbed by Prime Minister Erdoğan, who defended his decision and Ay against the critical media by declaring “we cannot let them bite our friend who fought against terrorism.” See, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1096334&CategoryID=78>.

5. Although women's political representation has been very low, the Justice and Development Party that has been in control of the parliament and government since 2002 has been rejecting all proposals related to adopting quotas from women.

The illiteracy rate among women has declined to 19%, but it is still high by international standards. More important, the male-female gap in literacy rates has been increasing. Women's economic activity rate has been declining, and female labor has been largely pushed to work in the informal sector. The unemployment rate for women continues to be significantly higher than the male unemployment rate.

Conclusion

By highlighting some trends in relation to two periods of reform in women's rights, I intended to show that progress requires organized effort by women's groups and that effort needs to be supported by some other national or external actors. Moreover, the progress is never linear or immune to reversals. The full implementation of legal rights, as well as the stability of progress, requires both political will and continuous vigilance by women's groups and their supporters.

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The Role of NGOs to Obtain and Sustain Women's Rights

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In this paper it will be stated that women's rights movement, in its first phase, had a parallel history with the development of human rights. In the second and third phases, this parallel history changed into different stories as a result of long wars taking place all over the world, and the various changes in technology after the wars or economic crises that caused different changes in societies and cultures. This difference of changes affected social movements as well. In societies where people accomplished in solving their economic problems, women gained lots of rights. Thus, in the third phase of women's right movement, different groups who think they have overcome their problems offer their own solutions as global to all the women in the world.

The negligence of cultural differences is a risk for suffering women groups, especially the ones who want to solve their problems in their own cultural way. On the other side, to prefer protecting the basics of one's own culture can have a risk of enduring culture-based suffering. In Turkey a group of conservative women who want to keep basics of their culture tried to overcome women's suffering by adapting their own cultural values to universal values through the NGOs they founded. The new way is neither global nor local. It is not global in the sense that "global" mirrors the assumptions of dominant cultures. It is not totally

local since they want to release from culture-based sufferings. The movement is "glocal" since they reshape their society by keeping its own ethical and cultural values and minimizing sufferings. Thus, in this work the new approach is named as a "glocal" way to solve women's problems.

The women's rights which had been gained in Turkey had a parallel history with the development of world's women rights movement. Serpil Çakır underlines this reality as "In the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century the emergence of woman rights movements had a simultaneous character around all over the world."⁶ There are examples to this simultaneous character: The first university for women was established in the United States in 1821 whereas the first education of women as midwives in medical schools started in 1843 in the Ottoman eras. In Sweden equal shares in heritage was accepted in 1845. After thirteen years in 1858 the Ottoman State organized its land code of law with equal shares in heritage. Compulsory education for both girls and boys was started in Belgium in 1847. The Ottoman State started the compulsory education for girls in 1869 legally.⁷ It is possible to find out some

6. Serpil Çakır. *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, (1996). Metis Yayınları: İstanbul, 8.

7. Ömer Çaha. (1996). *Sivil Kadın*. Vadi Yayınları: İstanbul, 43.

further examples in feminist literature but for the time being it is enough to point out the parallel character of the first phase.

An important character in the first phase of the movement is that the rights that were gained were indeed not women's rights but human rights. Even though the name women's liberation movement implies an awakening of women to enter public area and get their rights, it is a historical fact that the movement was undergirded by men since they also believed that the right to property and right to vote were basic human rights. In this first phase, as Çaha claims, the movement had not been shaped by a clear cut definition of gender.⁸ It can be thought that the "real" women's rights movement which is led by women was started after many women entered the public area. That is why the history of women's rights generally starts from the Industrial Revolution despite the fact that it has a long history before that revolution. The basic role of the Industrial Revolution is to draw a distinct line between home and work which was closely related in agricultural life. This division gave the work to men as the public area and the home to women as the personal life.

Another important turning point in women's rights is the support of the male dominated governments. Historically the necessity for women's power occurred in different times like disasters and especially in war times. During the First World War there was a great decrease in the population of males. This sharp decrease in male population was one of the main reasons that most of the governments needed women's power to fill

the gap in public areas. It was a common application that in times of disaster and wars some very basic rights were given to females by the governments in different parts of the world. So not only the historical phases but also the basic circumstances to make women's rights flourish were similar in most parts of the world. In those gruelling times some regulations were directly done by the governments. The fight for women's rights was supported by the governments whenever there was a necessity for women as an auxiliary power. For example, in 1915 the Ottoman Trade Ministry regulated the laws to ease working for women,⁹ when a great decrease of male population occurred because of the First World War.

Since the World War had both winners and losers, the historical progress of women's rights lost its parallel character mostly in the second phase. The economic standards and ideological differences which occurred after the Second World War, differently defined the demand-supply balance of women's rights. Some economically and technologically developed countries adapted their systems with a special focus on women's rights. The modern movements of ideologies and the women's rights went hand in hand for a long time. However the women's rights movement was under the oppression of ideologies. From the ideological perspective even some basic women's rights became disputable; some became dictated because of the trend of social engineering all around the world in those years. Each ideological group has its own meanings of concepts to shape their ideal society. Accordingly as a concept when we examine

8. Ibid, 88- 89.

9. Ibid. 103

"woman" we can reach at various points of emphasis in Turkey. Conservatives understand the woman as the "headstone of the family", secularists see the woman as "modern", for liberals woman is "free" and for leftists, the woman is "equal to man".

The power to govern with an implication of social engineering gave shape to women's rights movement for a long time. Since it is the easiest way to lay down a law if you have the power and authority, the most powerful apparatus of social engineering is legislation. However the most difficult thing is to change the mental structure of people. That is why there is usually a gap between the rights and the application of the rights. Through the government policy and ideologies it is not difficult to give rights by laying down the appropriate laws. However if the mental structure of people is not ready to change their habituation on an issue the application of law is suspended in a way. There seems to be no problem with the laws at least about the right of education or working for woman. However, when we look at what we have in our hand, it seems there is still a problem about having university education. The number of females graduated from university between 1975- 2000 has reached to 910,000 from 56,000. Yet there is a strange decrease in the rates of working women between 1990 and 2009. It was %34.1 in 1990, %26.9 in 2002, %25.4 in 2004 and %26 in 2009. The rate of property is %30 even though the equal share of heritage has been in effect since 1845. And although Turkish women had their right to suffrage gradually in between 1930-34, the rate of women representation in parliament is still under %15.

Considering the belief that patriarchy is still

in charge and that there are different needs to be reinforced, the primary aim in the third phase is to solve the problems of any individual woman. In our country the concept of woman from a multi-dimensional (biological, sociological, cultural) perspective is not defined yet. It can be asserted that the multi-dimensional definition of man is not defined either. The point is that the terms "human" and "man" can be used interchangeably but the terms "woman" and "human" usually cannot. Thus what is usually fought for is to "upgrade" the status of women according to the status of men as the only type of ideal woman. The definition of a common concept of woman has also a problem emerging from the hegemony of ideologies. An understanding that encompasses all these emphases is a necessary characteristic. This kind of an objective understanding can lead to a consensus between different women's rights advocates.

The asymmetry of economic growth between the countries is extended to the social and political arena and the historical proximity and similarity in basic needs were lost in women's issues. Actually the third phase is a chance for each discriminated group of women to fight for their rights. However, the threat is that some groups can dominate the basic understanding of women's rights from their cultural background which they claim as universal values.

Aristotle, who systematized scientific knowledge and turned it into philosophy, thought that every kind of examination aims at some good and the ultimate end of every good is happiness¹⁰. However happiness as a term is

10. Crisp, Roger. (Ed). *Aristotle Nichomachean Ethics*, Cambridge Text in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004, Book 1.

problematic since each person understands it differently. Inspired by Aristotle's conception of happiness, it can be said that even though feminism or the liberation movement of women is a global issue there is no "one type" or one definition of feminism. The contemporary political philosopher Will Kymlicka says that each of the political theories "is represented within feminism. Thus we have liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, even libertarian feminism."¹¹ Also we can add socialist feminism, Islamic feminism, maternal feminism, radical feminism as other feminist schools. Each of these groups has their own understanding and their own values. However it is asserted that the diversities are in danger. It is claimed "Across Europe, the discourse and practices of multiculturalism are in crisis. Politicians compete to stress the importance of a strong sense of national identity and belonging, and have come to regard diversity as a problem rather than a resource."¹² Women's rights started from a universal view that supports the assumption of unique human nature. But the rights were mostly for the limited and the privileged groups. Moreover, even multiculturalism which is supposed to help minorities can sometimes cause inequalities for women.

There is now a substantial body of literature exploring the damage that can be done to women in minority groups when the societies they live in adopt multiculturalism, the main argument being that multicultural policies shore up the power base of the older men within the community and encour-

age public authorities to tolerate practices that undermine women's equality.¹³

So, there are feminist groups who believe that they are still suffering, even though, the third phase aimed to fight for different suffering groups with various alternative solutions. Around the world the minor woman groups are now coming together to fight for their under-represented groups.

The new trend on women's rights is trying to broaden the meanings of "global" and "universal" by keeping the divergences as enrichment. Multiculturalism helps to flourish this perspective focusing not only on cultural differences of people but also on differences between women by claiming that "The differences between women are potential sources of wisdom and enrichment as well as conflict."¹⁴ To keep the cultural diversities as richness of the world and the differences between man and woman as richness of our nature will help us to relieve the suffering without dictating of a one type culture, one type of human, and an idealized type of woman.

The "jet speed of communication" makes globalization inevitable. Most of the women in the world seem to be still deprived from the public space, however by the developing technologies in communication and mass media it is hard to assume that they are confined within their own private land. Women share their way of eating, cooking, dressing, titivating, and child rearing through communication. Even suffering

11. Will Kymlicka. *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002, 377.

12. Anne Phillips and Sawitri Saharso. "Guest editorial: The rights of women and the crisis of multiculturalism" *Ethnicities*, 2008: 8, 291- 300, 291.

13. *Ibid*, 294

14. Iris Marion Young, "Social Movements and the Politics of Difference," *Multiculturalism from the Margins: Non-Dominant Voices on Difference and Diversity*, ed. Dean A. Harris, Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1995, 16.

is shared more easily than ever. This kind of communication is open to interchange which will bring a natural globalization. In the third phase of women's rights even though the necessity of legal regulations keeps its importance civilian women become important for their own fights. The local perspectives are usually recognized by women civilians. Most women want to be released from suffering with keeping their values, on the grounds that they are a part of their culture as having shared meanings. Alienation from one's culture brings another kind of suffering. A suffering cannot be eliminated by another kind of suffering. There should not be two alternatives that are global liberation or cultural oppression. Both of them will propagate the suffering of women. That is why a third way is presented in this paper. Turkey is a secular state with nearly 90 percent of Muslim population from different ethnicities. The women's rights movement in its third phase brought Turkey a new understanding far from the way it had been dictated in the past. Different types of womanhood under different ideologies intersect on a kind of modern liberation with equal rights.

The Glocal Model in Turkey

In this context the third phase of women's liberation movement in Turkey has different path ways from both western and eastern countries. Turkey is a country where the reformation movement's basic criteria concentrated on women.

Illiteracy is one of the important key subjects of women's rights. The main problem of the suffering of women globally depends

on this lack of education. The problem of illiteracy in Turkey was mainly because of the fear of losing cultural norms by education. This thought gave an inspiration to NGOs that are founded on traditional social grounds to open private schools that give priority to local values all around Turkey. In these NGOs schools both the global modern and local cultural values are taught in a new style by the synthesis of both understandings. This leads to an increase of educated modern women who are also keeping their cultural values.

The new group of educated women are not like their cultural-minded mothers who are the advocates of a patriarchal perspective; but they are also different from the secular modern groups in rejecting cultural values. They are neither global nor local. They are "glocal". The main characteristics of women educated in these schools are the sample of a synthesis between the global and the local. They started a globalization movement. After finishing their education they helped the emancipation of women who did not have that same opportunity. They share their experiences and knowledge in the places where they get together.

Another important change has happened in the majority female group who are traditional housewives with no payment. They cause a revolutionary change through their NGOs. The women's rights advocates in the global arena focus on political participation for the women's entrance to public sphere. In addition to this global value the local solution in Turkey offers a different type. The great success of the global housewives is the revolutionary transformation of the 'ordinary, invaluable, unpaid housework'

into a way of contribution to the welfare of society. The local women keep doing the so-called ordinary invaluable works like cooking in order to establish new schools, help poor people, and to give scholarships all over the world. These women who are usually unpaid housewives but full of enthusiasm devote themselves to cooking for donation and teaching uneducated women one by one by visiting their homes and sharing their experiences in home visits.

Of course, not all the educated women helped the emancipation of their uneducated sisters without jobs. Some of the educated glocal women prefer to do the jobs they are educated for and they founded some other NGOs along their occupations. The experienced working women became the role model to their sisters by sharing their experiences in these NGOs. The rate of working women increased not only in modern cities like Istanbul but in all the cities of Turkey.

In Turkey it was very unusual to go abroad for women to work. There was a concept of immigration of men to work. The glocal women changed this concept also. The local women who become global by getting ahead of locality can go anywhere in the world to work like male partners. Although the statistics of working women in Turkey is still not in a sufficient state it will grow gradually by the new laws that are laid down in favour of working women. The traditional women civilians learned to travel in order to broaden the limits of charity to any people in need. This kind of charity tourism over the world caused the increase of women's mobility. By this new kind of global understanding Turkish women changed the standard perception of Muslim women who

are usually out of the public sphere. They showed that Islam is a way of life which can help women's emancipation and they showed the irrelevance of the way of different styles of clothing in women's emancipation. They are local in their way of lives but global in searching for their rights to be released from suffering.

The "local" covers historical and geographical proximity. The special global way of the emancipation of Muslim women in Turkey points out that women can find a way to resist the oppression coming from both global and cultural imposing. Their solution is neither global nor totally local. That is why it is preferred to use the word "glocal." In this sense "glocal" refers to a globalization with keeping local values as richness. It can be a way of enlarging women's rights from the privileged to every different suffering group without causing new sufferings. In this way the NGOs that are the main builders of this "glocal" movement also cause a transformation of the concept of social engineering. Social engineering that has a negative connotation because of cold war ideologies changed into a **voluntary altruism movement** by these NGOs.

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Sustainability of Women's Rights in Turkey: Can It be a Model?

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The Concept of Sustainability

I would like to start my comments on concept of "sustainability" in relation to women's rights. This concept is widely used by the United Nations since late 1980s in relation to environmental protection. The sustainability idea has two folds: (i) Mainstreaming environmental policies to other policy issues, especially to developmental policies such as trade and economics, and (ii) to protect rights of future generation. Since then the concept of sustainability has been used in other social policies such as women's rights. Mainstreaming of women's rights in the area of employment, labor force and economy is vitally important to enhance women's right and to ensure participation into public life in any society.

Implementation of the concept of sustainability on women's rights needs some policy considerations. First of all, it is vitally important that all human rights should be considered equally important and should be indivisible. However, traditionally, civil and political rights are always more important than economic, social and cultural rights. Especially in Western societies, it is not easy to make such an equal protection argument despite that UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (1993) made clear that two sets of rights are equally important. The indivisibility of the rights also repeated in many of the declarations

and resolutions of United Nation's relevant bodies. The Vienna Conference was also a turning point to advance women's human rights worldwide, and to support the active and broad participation of women as free individuals and equal citizens in the establishment and maintenance of a democratic and peaceful order.

"Formal Equality" is Not Enough to Maintain Sustainability of any Rights

The Declaration of Universal Human Rights (1948), its two Covenants (1966), namely Civil & Political Rights and Economic, Social & Cultural Rights are the most widely accepted international law documents by almost all states. Women's rights also was ensured further by the UN Convention on the Elimination of the All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Despite legally binding agreements, there are significant discrepancies implementing women's rights in domestic level. Some countries are much more advanced than others giving formal equality and promoting women's rights. Some others however, signed and ratified all human rights agreements, but ignore implementing it. Despite many of these principles are already included into domestic constitutional order of many countries, institutional inadequacies, lack of financial resources, or simply lack of genuine will are obstacles for

proper implementations. Therefore “substantive equality” or “structural equality” is the most problematic part of the 21st century women’s rights discourse. Sustainability requires such deliberation. Women should be a player in social, political and economic sectors of her own society.

Human Rights are Designed to Make States Feel Uncomfortable

One of the informal enforcement mechanisms of human rights is “naming and shaming” if a country does not follow its international commitments. No country would not like to be named as human rights violator. In this process, besides formal enforcement mechanisms of the two human rights Covenants and Women’s Rights Convention (CEDAW), the role of domestic and international NGOs are vital. In recent few decades, besides formal participation of States, informal participation of the NGOs and civil society organizations created effective venues and enhanced the enforcement mechanisms in relation to human rights, and specifically women’s rights.

Turkey’s Advanced Status on Women’s Rights

Turkey has an advanced position in relation to signing and ratifying women’s rights agreements compare to other Muslim countries, and even some of the Western countries, due to the various reforms that had been initiated by the Turkish Republic in early 20th century. This process continued in 21st Century, partly due to the accession process of the European Union member-

ship, partly active engagements of women organizations. Through a decade of activism, advocacy and lobbying civil society organizations have contributed significantly to legal reforms including the Campaign for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code (2002–2004), the reform of the Turkish Civil Code (2000-2001), and the Law Against Domestic Violence (1998 and 2012). These reforms were important positive step toward substantive equality between men and women, especially in family matters, and removed outdated and discriminatory rules from Penal Code.

The women’s movement in Turkey has concentrated on four major areas in recent years:¹⁵ 1. Women’s participation to labor forces: It is the lowest among OECD countries; 2. Political representation: It is also very low, compare to many other countries. Several NGO pushed for quota of 30 % parliamentary membership during the 2007 and 2011 elections but the increase was minimal. 3. Protection of women against domestic violence: Turkey has almost the most advanced legal structure to protect women against domestic violence compare to European counterparts in domestic law and international law. 4. The reform of the Turkish Constitution to ensure gender equality: The effort is to change the Article 10 of the Constitution to include positive discrimination or affirmative action for women.

Headscarf Ban Blocked Many Turkish Women Professional Life

In many fronts we witnessed a considerable advancement on women’s human rights in

15. Pinar Ilkkaracan, Open Democracy

Turkey. However, still there are important issues that were not solved entirely especially women's participation into judicial, political and academic sectors because of many years of unjustly implemented headscarf ban. According to statistics approximately more than % 60 of Turkish women wear headscarf. Unfortunately, for a long time, many of the women's right organization in Turkey did not consider that headscarf ban is a part of a women's right issue, and excluded headscarf problem from their agenda. Since the 1980 military coup and subsequent civilian governments implemented the most unforgivable policy against headscarf use in universities, excluding thousands of young women from higher education. Strictly secular Turkish governments in 1980s and 1990s waged "war against headscarf." The result was horrifying for young women and girls. Thousands of civil servants lost their jobs, and students expelled from Universities. Some of them fought against the administrative decisions in courts, yet courts were not sympathetic to individual freedoms (such as right to education and freedom of religion), against the principle of *laicite* of the Turkish Republic.

Since 2002, the political atmosphere has changed dramatically in favor of headscarf users. Although it was an uphill battle. There was a political turmoil in 2008, when the governing party AKP (Justice and Development) attempted to change some articles in the constitution to end headscarf ban. Because of this the government came to the edge of the dismantlement by the Constitutional Court raising alleged argument that lifting headscarf ban is violation of the laicite principle of Turkish Constitution.

Since then, while constitutional remedies were abandoned, gradually administrative decisions, and flexible implementations of the administration of higher education gave significant comfort in universities and other private institutions.

While, the headscarf debate is still going on, especially in negotiations of a new constitution making process, to replace more than 30 years old military made constitution. Meanwhile, recently significant developments are happening in relation to attitudes of courts about headscarf ban. For instance, after 11 years, the high administrative court (Danistay) corrected an expulsion decision of a primary school religion and culture teacher because she wore headscarf.¹⁶ After this decision, some local governmental bodies announced that "public space" policy is no longer applicable. For instance, the city of Sanli Urfa made a comprehensive legal argument stating that the decision of the high court is a turning point in relation to headscarf ban, as there is no clear constitutional rule against headscarf use for public civil servants.¹⁷ This decision has become a hot item among the general public as it is against established jurisprudence of the Turkish courts. Apparently, the Ministry of Education filed a motion of appeal against a pro-headscarf court decision that would have cleared the way for women who wear headscarf to work in the public sector.

Most recently, in 2013 September reform package, the Government changed the long overdue Regulation of Clothing for Civil Servants, the legacy of the military coup of

16. High Administrative Court, No.12, 21.11.2012, 2013/3480 E., 2012/9158 K.

17. Sanli Urfa Department of Education.

1980s, to eliminate the headscarf ban for civil servants, excluding judicial, police, and military. Soon after four women members of the Parliament entered into the Parliament with headscarf making historical step for the future. These are positive developments toward equal opportunity for all women, a strong signal and encouragement for full participation into public life. Yet, the result should be seen as unofficial prejudicial sentiment against headscarf is still alive and strong among the secular establishment of the Turkish society.

Islamophobia and Muslim Women

After the 9/11 the Western countries diverted their attention to Muslim countries, and the first area that was subject to this attention was women's rights. Women's status in Muslim countries became a significant preoccupation especially for the Western oriented feminists. Women's rights in Islamic societies became even a reason for humanitarian intervention, when the United States decided to invade Afghanistan after the 9/11 terrorist attack. Soon after, strong Islamophobic sentiment was disseminated in Europe and the United States, and Muslim women's dress code, incompatibility of the Islamic principles with universal human rights, cultural practices such as female circumcision, marriages, male domination in Islamic societies occupied the western agenda. Although, some of the issues, such as violence against women are very important, and should be dealt with great concern, statistics and researches show that violence against women a world wide epidemic, and it is wrong to look at this problem from the perspec-

tive of culture and religion, instead of male dominated universal patriarchal order.

According to mainstream, Western, secular discourse, Islam is inherently oppressive to women. This attitude is reflected in rhetoric of those like former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who says that veils oppress women, and the former U.S. First Lady Laura Bush, who calls to free Muslim women from the confines of Islam. Through their secularly oriented, Western-centric speeches, Sarkozy and Mrs. Bush identified the status of women "[...] as intimately linked to what is often portrayed as the violent nature of [the Islamic] religion and affirmed that the cause of liberating Muslim women from their bondage is part of the American mission to the Islamic world."¹⁸ This rhetoric makes a clear assumption that the status of women in Muslim societies is directly related to Islam as a religion. This view represents a monolithic view of Islam, reinscribes patriarchal hierarchies and colonial relationships with subaltern groups, and represents a false simplicity in our attempts to understand both the status of Muslim women and the dynamics of Muslim societies. Despite the popular discourse in Western media, politicians and even some academics, the status of women in Muslim societies is far from being reducible to a simple religious issue. To fully understand the status of women in Muslim societies, it is necessary to unpack both the religion and the surrounding cultures.

18. Desire Bryan, *Women in Arab World: A Case of Religion or Culture?*, 2001

Can Turkey be a model for other countries considering cultural and religious affinity?

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring the "Turkish model" is being held out as an optimistic scenario for democratization with Islamic framework. This idea especially was discussed widely among Westerners. Regardless from democratization process, shifting from militaristic democracy to civilian democracy with strong secular commitment seems to be that Turkish model is successful compare the rest of the Muslim countries. What about being model for women's rights? Without any doubt Turkey is the first Muslim country and almost the only one that terminated entire Sharia law that include family relations.

In last few decades, many international organizations in human rights area understood the importance of cultural similarity and affinity. Universal human rights principles do not fly easily if they brought by the West to the East. Therefore east to east cooperation/coalition became a desirable tool among human rights organizations.

One of the examples of such coalition was "The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies" (CSBR) that was founded in 2001.¹⁹ It was only a few weeks after September 11, 2001, when 19 NGO representatives and experts from Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen came together for the landmark meeting Women, Sexuality and Social Change in the Middle East and Mediterranean held in Istanbul in

September 2001. The meeting, a first of its kind, aimed at breaking the taboos around sexuality and the very significant role it plays in the disempowerment of women in the Middle East and North Africa.

NGOs from Muslim countries, first they were very enthusiastic about the coordination. However, they were increasingly concerned and depressed, in the aftermath of Arab Spring women's rights were not going more progressive direction. Also, it is not easy to make cooperation on sexuality considering that in many Arab countries conservative groups are more popular than dictatorial regimes. This cooperation would have been more successful if they focus on general education of women and participation into economy.

Although, cultural and religious similarities are very important in a variety of Muslim countries, it is not enough to implement similar conditions for women. Many analysts miss what is going on in Islamic societies because they fail to recognize the logic of the kin-based model of social and political life in Islamic legal codes and kin-based political power that affects position of women.²⁰ For instance, differences between Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco in relation to development of women's rights are example of nuanced differences.

It is hard to judge what will happen in the Middle East in the near future, considering chaos, human misery, variety of interference from inside and outside forces. Each forces have own historical, political and economic interests in the region. It is a sad

19. <http://wwwhr.org/category/sexuality-and-human-rights-in-muslim-societies>

20. Mounira Charad, States and Women's Rights: The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, 2001

story that currently the region is in a bad shape and there is little to do from outside without hurting civilians. It is important to initiate regional cooperation and solidarity by way of NGOs, but it must be carefully design without interfering citizens' desire for their own society.

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Peace Islands Institute

Mission

Peace Islands Institute (PII) aspires to facilitate a forum of mutual respect and collaboration, both welcoming and accepting varied viewpoints and voices with the intent to develop original and alternative perspectives on vital issues that our society is facing, generate solutions to these issues, support successful practices, thus promoting education, friendship and harmony and acting as an island of peace for all peoples in a society of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

Vision

In a diverse world, where even the farthest point is a click away, every culture, race, religion, tradition and nation become neighbors. We have to live and interact together in this “global island” we call Earth. Peace Islands Institute (PII) serves to act as the soil for fruitful dialogue, peace, and civil service just as the soil on this “global island” gives forth flowers of different colors, scents and shapes. PII envisions a world becoming an island of peace in the ocean of our universe; a community in which people from all walks of life interact with each other and cooperate to serve their communities, thereby strengthening civil society and promoting the development of human values.

Goals

- Facilitate unity for building peace, education to eradicate ignorance, welfare to fight against poverty and hunger, progress to promote development
- To develop original and alternative perspectives on global and social issues as they relate to our lives, as well as present explanations and solutions.
- Support successful practices in peace building.
- Build relationships among diverse cultures and traditions.
- Unite different point of views on common global issues
- Provide educational platforms for global and social challenges.
- Encourage people to actively engage in solving social and global problems of humanity.
- Encourage business owners to be part of a philanthropic economy to end problems like poverty and hunger.
- Provide an atmosphere of peace and understanding for all people, regardless of race and cultural tradition.
- Prepare annual reports for both non-governmental agencies (NGOs) and governmental agencies on social issues.

SUSTAINABLE WOMEN'S RIGHTS

*Present and Future of the Women's Rights in Turkey
Replicability of Turkish Coordination Model in Other Nations*

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