



Civil society statement on women's rights in advance of Turkey's UPR examination

About the organizations

Hun Consulting is the first human rights consulting firm providing legal and strategic support and services for national and international NGOs and human rights victims in Turkey.

Founded in 1996 [Flying Broom](#) aims to contribute to the process of democratization and the development of a civil society in Turkey through women's empowerment.

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About the statement

The statement examines three areas including: (1) Legal, practical and social restrictions on bodily rights and the right to privacy of women. (2) Concerns regarding implementation of positive duties in relation to women's rights in public life and; (3) Hostile public statements by government representatives undermining women's rights.

1) Legal, practical and social restrictions over bodily rights and right to privacy of women

Articles 17 and 20 of the Turkish Constitution guarantee the physical and moral integrity of every citizen and codify Turkey's obligations to ensure the privacy of all people. Since 2011 the government of Turkey has also acceded to several international instruments safeguarding women's rights including the optional protocol of CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention and further enhanced national legal protections against domestic violence under law no. 6284 Protecting Woman and Family against Violence.

However, despite these and other positive measures taken by the government to address systematic discrimination against women, targeted violence against women remains prevalent in Turkey. Public statistics and civil society reports show that there has been an

upward trend in violence against women in Turkey in recent years. According to a nationwide survey conducted by the Statistic Intuition of Turkey, between 2008 and 2010 42% of women were subjected to domestic violence.¹ Bianet, an independent media monitoring NGO, identified 214 women who were murdered by a male relative in 2013.² Bianet also reported that from 2010 to 2013, men murdered 853 women.³

Hate crimes against trans women, many of whom are engaged as sex workers, also remains common. According to reports from national LGBTI groups, between 2008-2013, 34 trans women were murdered due to their gender identity making Turkey fifth in the world in hate crimes committed against trans women.⁴

Since Turkey's previous UPR examination, the government has also placed broad and undue restrictions on reproductive rights. Under Population Planning Law no.2827, married woman are now forced to secure the approval of their spouse to terminate their pregnancy.

2) Concerns regarding implementation of positive duties in relation to women's rights in public life

The state's failure to ensure the effective realizations of women's right to participate in public life remains deeply concerning. Although ILO data shows a slight improvement in access to employment since 2005, the employment rate of women remains at only approximately 30%.⁵

In addition, it is estimated that there are approximately 1.5 million female sex workers in Turkey. However, the state refuses to officially regulate this sector and has rather focused on dissolving and disbanding potentially safe places for individual sex workers to operate.⁶

Underrepresentation of women in elected office also remains deeply concerning. KADER, a Turkish NGO conducting surveys on female representation in political life reported that the rate of women in the parliament increased from 4.4% to 14.3% from 2002-2014. However, despite this marked improvement, women still only constitute roughly 1% of all elected officials at the sub-national level.⁷

Access to education still remains problematic for girls over 15 years of age. Statistics from 2011 show that the number of girls pursuing high school education decreased by nearly

¹ www.yenikadininstatusu.aile.gov.tr/data/.../ana_rapor_mizan_1.pdf

² <http://t24.com.tr/haber/turkiyenin-2013-kadina-siddet-karnesi-214-cinayet-163-tecavuz.249587>

³ <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/kadin/152816-2010-2013-erkek-siddeti-ceteleleri-ve-dusundurduklari>

⁴ <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/lgbti/151296-2013-te-238-trans-olduruldu>

⁵ www.dosya.marmara.edu.tr/ikf/lib-dergi/2012-1/12-karabiyik.pdf

⁶ <http://www.sendika.org/2014/03/kirmizi-semsiye-seks-isciligi-meslek-olarak-taninsin-ergur-altan/>

⁷ www.ucansupurge.org/veri/.../2012-2013%20ISTATISTIKLER.doc

50% following elementary education.⁸ Deficits in addressing this issue directly correlate to an increase in child marriage and engender decreases in access to employment.⁹

3) Hostile public statements by government representatives undermining women's rights.

While public leaders and figures are expected to act in accordance with the rule of law and constitutional responsibility, elected officials continue to make inflammatory and patently discriminatory public statements which severely undermine women's rights.

- In 2010, President Erdoğan declared that he did not believe in “the equality of men and women” and further stated women and men are not equal by nature and creation¹⁰.
- On a number of occasions since 2010 President Erdoğan has declared that women who loved their country should give birth to at least three children.
- In 2014, Bülent Arınç, Vice-President and Spokesperson of the ruling AKP party stated that he found the visibility of pregnant women in the street and women who laugh loudly in public indecent.¹¹
- On 25 November 2014, which marks International Day for the Elimination against Violence, President Erdoğan stated that he believed that women and men are not equal because of their distinct biological makeup further adding that he was against any attempt to employ women in professions requiring physical exertion because women were fragile by nature.¹²

Recommendations

Hun Consultancy and Flying Broom encourage states to consider the following recommendations during Turkey's UPR.

- Ensure the effective realization of protections against violence against women and all forms of sexual harassment as guaranteed under CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention and Code no. 6284 Protecting Woman and Family against Violence.
- Security forces, prosecutors, and judges should be provided training to ensure the effective mainstreaming of women's rights across all government institutions.
- Hate crimes towards LGBTI women and sex workers should be thoroughly investigated.

⁸ <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=13458>

⁹ According to data of Statistics Institution of Turkey, the fertility rate under 18 years old slightly decreases as from 2008 but still 3,1%: www.kasaum.ankara.edu.tr/files/2013/02/istatistiklerle-kadin-2012.pdf

¹⁰ <http://www.gazetevatan.com/-kadinla-erkek-esit-olamaz---318006-siyaset/>

¹¹ <http://haberler.rotahaber.com/bulent-arinc-kadin-kahkaha-atmayacak-477529.html>

¹² http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkce/haberler/2014/11/141124_kadininfitrati_erdogan

- The right to education, employment and political representation for women should be mainstreamed throughout all levels of government policy.
- Political leaders and figures should refrain from making hostile and discriminatory public statements against women's rights.

Background Information on Gender Studies Collective (GEN-DER) / formerly known “Flying Broom Women’s Communication and Research Association”

Who are we? : Gender Studies Collective – GEN-DER (formerly known Flying Broom (Turkish: *Uçan Süpürge*) is a feminist organization in Turkey. Founded 1996 in Ankara, we aim to raise consciousness for gender equality while providing information and training to empower women.

GEN-DER has launched several projects in different areas within Turkish civil society. It was particularly influential in the 2005 amendment of the Turkish penal code, turning violent crimes against women into crimes against the victim itself rather than against crimes against property of the family or society.

What do we do – Projects and outcomes? : We have an expertise, extensive experience and a unique documentation on “Gender Oriented Critical Media Literacy”. We had created a network in 2003 to improve women’s media literacy and representation of females in news. That “Local Women Reporters’ Network”’s goal was mainstreaming gender equality in media by not only the news stories but also adds, movies, serials, talk shows etc., by empowering women and make their demands and priorities are visible. Women from all over Turkey (from different ages, political backgrounds, occupations and expectations) joined the network to make their own news and effect local agenda with a gender lens. When it comes to 2010, the number of volunteer local women (who want to become reporters) raised up to 600. Since then, we developed plans and projects;

- to strength women’s media,
- to circulate gender oriented news making,
- to develop a unique media monitoring approach with a gender perspective,
- to train women to become journalists,
- to support alternative media in our country,
- to raise awareness women’s human rights violations in/by the news media,
- to strength female citizens to improve advocacy skills in order to watch mainstream media.

In addition, our organization has an extensive experience on networking. One of the three main objectives at the establishment in 1996, was developing communication between women individuals and women organizations. We have a large network including hundreds of NGOs in Turkey. We carried our projects and events to every single city in our country (81 cities in total); thus we have contacts from both public bodies and civil society in all over Turkey. During 20 years we visited tens of countries to meet women activists, to pay study visits, to attend workshops, to organize project events and to give lectures. We have a remarkable international network.

We prepared and published a book which brings all our efforts, projects, publications, campaigns and etc. about child marriage. The purpose of this book is to celebrate the 10th year of Flying Broom team passed by combating early child marriages. This book is the first and only publication in Turkey which summarizes our work, besides delivering many interviews, comments and action plans.

We implemented “Shadow Council Project” aiming to raise women participation to local governments. The kick-off event was held at Ankara University with many academics, NGO representatives, mayors, and international participators from Bulgaria, Sweden, France, Germany, local women activists from various cities in Turkey. The Project was run in three cities. We reached our goals; women activists in three cities set up three Shadow Councils parallel to the City Councils of the Municipalities. They organized council meetings to discuss their gender agenda and declared it to the mayor. Shadow Council model was implemented for the first time in Turkey by a woman organization.

We established “Red Pencil Women Media Monitoring Team”. We monitored Turkish mainstream media using the methods of Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). Red Pencil monitored 11 daily newspapers and 6 national TV channels with a gender perspective. Within the Project we trained 25 volunteer women to take part in monitoring activities. We organized a conference to share the results, with the participation of data analysts, citizen technologists, the Turkey representative of GMMP, public media officers, women NGOs who use media as an advocacy tool, journalism students, the representatives from the Embassies of USA, Norway and Finland.



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Hun Consultancy is the first human rights-based legal and strategic consultancy in a form of network of human rights lawyers and activists from 10 cities of Turkey and a social enterprise working on ad-hoc human rights related projects. We are specialised in anti-discrimination and equality law in relation with the right to vote, education, health, work and family of disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable groups (DMVGs). **Hun Consultancy** systematically provides legal counselling to DMVGs, arranges legal advocacy meetings and prepares and publishes legal reports. Some of the targeted DMVGs are LGBTI people, trans sex workers, trans people in the transition process, Roma people and women.

Being one of the pioneer entities in legal advocacy and legal analysis fields, **Hun Consultancy** pro-actively collaborates with national and international civil society in the matter of protection of DMVGs. For the last two years, we have been also dealing with digital rights and internet regulation policies in Turkey and actively contributing to GisWatch of the APC (Association for Progressive Communication). Some of our funders, co-funders and indirect funders are UNFPA (UN Population Fund), the UK Embassy in Turkey, CIVICUS World Alliance, European Roma Rights Center (Hungary), ILGA-Europe (Belgium) and partner NGOs are Privacy International (UK), Transgender Europe (Germany), Association for Roma Rights (Turkey), Flying Broom Woman Communication and Research Association (Turkey) and Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Organisation (Turkey).

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