

Women on statistics in Turkey

As a women's rights organization, AKDER follows up statistics and legal applications on women in every sphere of the life in Turkey. In such limited time period I will share some basic statistics on women's schooling, working and attending in politics and I will address to some critical solutions to recent problems on women in Turkey. At the beginning I should note that Turkey signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985 and implement measures necessary to the realization of the rights granted in the Convention.

When we look at the recent researches' results, in 2007 the rate of literacy and numeracy of women in Turkey was 88%, while the rate for men was 99%.¹ The rate of women with a university education is only 3% of the population.² Research shows that over than 5 million women are unable to read or write, and 640,000 girls cannot attend school.³

In terms of statistics on women in employment, the participation rate of females in the workforce was 25%⁴ while the employment rate of women in Europe is 49% in 2006.⁵ Of those women who do participate in the work force, half of the women population (49%) works in agricultural sector, 37% work in the service sector and only 14% work in the industrial sector. Strict work hours, limited opportunities for flexible working, lack of day-care provision for children and the abolition of existing day-care have impacts on the recent picture.

In terms of the rate of women's participation in the politics and decision-making mechanisms Turkey ranks 165th place out of 187 countries in the representation of women in the politics.⁶ The ratio of women in Parliament reached to 9.1% by the last parliamentary election in July, 2007. Out of 3207 mayors only 18 are women.⁷ NGOs are demanding a constitutional and legislative gender quota in political party and election laws enforcing a minimum of percentage of women within all political party decision making bodies. So far this proposition has not been taken seriously or taken up by political parties.

¹ Prime Ministry General Directorate on the Status of Women, January Report 2008, p.10.

² "Half of women face violence on the first day of marriage" Radikal, 08.03.2007. <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=215009>

³ The manager of EKAM, Prof. Dr. Nurselen Toygar explained that the school attendance rate is 29.94% for faculties and high schools.

⁴ This rate was% 34, 1 in 1990. Prime Ministry General Directorate on the Status of Women, January 2008.

⁵ Prime Ministry General Directorate on the Status of Women, January 2008.

⁶ "Half of Women are Exposed to Violence in Their First Married Day," Radikal, 08.03.2007.

⁷ "18 Women against 3207 Men," Radikal, 08.03.2007, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=215012>

Beside the obstacles on women in the legal framework or practices, a headscarf ban is applied strictly in educational life, working life and the politics in 1999. When we consider that 62% of women in Turkey are wearing headscarf today, the ban becomes a grave barrier to majority of women to attend in the social or political mechanisms. Although there is no law about headscarf ban in Turkey's constitution, criminal law, family law and any others, the application of ban is applied to women who demands to have education, work or represent their groups in politics.

To conclude, the state creates the legal framework but does not implement concrete measures to provide gender equality between women and men. As a women's rights organization we follow up statistics and legal applications on women in every sphere of the life. As in many examples of states, Turkey needs to adopt special care on women's position in education, work and politics beside the legal regulations and changes on laws.