

# **Erdogan's Turkey: AKP Government's Permanent War Against Women**

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AKP government wages a bloody war against women in Turkey. All forms of violence against women increased by a rate of 1400% since they came in the power in 2002. At least three women are killed in a day (5406 women were killed between 2002 and 2015) mostly by their husbands or ex-husbands for seeking divorce. What the AKP government have done against femicide or violence was promulgating laws that strengthens the family, obstructs divorce and weakens the women. The judiciary, which is totally under the control of the AKP government, supports killing of women through impunity.

In 2011, they transformed the Ministry for Women and Family to the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, shifted the focus on women's rights to protection of family and women as a vulnerable group like orphans or people having disabilities.

Although they have attempted to delegatize the abortion they could not ban it due to the public reaction. After Erdoğan declared that "abortion is genocide" and "birth control cannot be compatible with the muslim family structure" in 2002 the abortion and contraceptives became inaccessible for many women. Researches conducted by feminists and health organizations show that it is almost impossible for women in many state hospitals as physicians avoid supplying abortion or contraceptives due to governmental pressure. These policies against birth control and sexual rights are in line with their neoliberal and Islamist social project that lays the burden of care work and household responsibilities wholly on women who are supposed to be valuable human beings only if they give birth children. Recently, Erdoğan, who often warns people to have at least three children, claimed that women who prefer not to have children or manage their households are "deficient," regardless of their successes in the area of business.

In May 2016, the parliamentary commission formed to research the causes of divorces and the factors influencing negatively the unity of the family suggested several policy proposals that would destroy many gains of women in Turkey in name of preventing divorces. The commission, reflecting the aims and the mentality of the AKP, suggests to bring several obstacles for women to end the marriages even if they are exposed to violence. The report, having almost no reference gender equality, recommends compulsory sessions with a professional intermediary in cases of domestic violence or divorce, demands closed hearings in all cases relating to family law "to protect the privacy of the family" and proposes the introduction of a time limit to alimony payments. The report advocates that the religious councillors intervene the cases of divorce to reconcile the couples, which will also increase the influence of sexist Islamic laws on society. Another problem with the report is that divorce cases should be held in secrecy to protect the privacy of the family, which will keep women activists away from observing the courts.

Sexual violence against minors has been a profound problem in Turkey as many cases have shown in the recent years. Both the government's and media's attitude towards the abuses of children is to cover or hide the incidents and to individualize the widespread problems by bringing charges only against individual "perverts". After a recent case revealed that many children have been raped for years in a school of pro-government Islamist foundation named Ensar. The government denied the

state's responsibility to inspect officially all the schools and claimed there was no negligence of the foundation. "A single incident should not become an excuse to defame an institution that has come into prominence with its services," said the Minister of Family Affairs.

According to the report of the abovementioned "divorce commission" the legal age of marriage should be 15 which is 18 at the moment and if the minors who are younger than 15 are engaged in sex with adults and if they decide to get married then there will be no charge of pedophilia.

AKP government led by Erdogan has taken many steps to change both the state and society in more authoritarian and patriarchal way, and they will continue if we cannot resist. They see that the oppression of women and imprisoning them to the traditional gender roles, besides their exploitation in paid works, is a requisite for naturalizing and establishing other forms of inequalities. If the suggestions of the "divorce commission" are passed women and children will lose many concrete rights. If the women and children will lose all the oppressed people will lose and the danger is great!

**YeniYol Women's Branch**

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