

# 'Global gay conspiracy' and misogyny in Turkish anti-gender narratives

Tuesday 3 September 2019, by [ÖZKAZANÇ Alev](#) (Date first published: 5 August 2019).

**Having been inspired by the great victory of the opposition against Islamist AKP in [Istanbul municipal elections](#) in 23 June 2019, several municipalities dared to show [solidarity with Gay Pride](#) in the following week. That a public office declared an open support for the Pride was something totally unprecedented and it immediately provoked a reaction on the part of government circles. By looking at the social media reactions and beyond one can reveal the novel ways in which homophobia and misogyny are articulated in the emerging anti-gender narratives in Turkey. We can also see how the nationalist and hetero-patriarchal anxieties are reflected in anti-gender politics.**

As a reaction to pro-Pride declarations, the Minister of Family, Zehra Z. Selcuk and [KADEM](#), (Women and Democracy Association, a government's NGO) posted tweets which immediately triggered an anti-Pride [campaign on social media](#) under the hashtag "don't mess with my *ancestry* and "family is our everything". The tweets declared that the 'gay perversity' is an assault on the survival of the ancestry [nesil in Turkish] as well as on its religious and moral values. Yet surprisingly, most of the posts by pro-government people were condemning the female Minister and KADEM for their alleged collaboration and support for gender equality policies. By way of over-trumping the Minister, the tweeters forwarded the usual demands of the [rising men's rights movement](#) such as alimony payments, child custody, Istanbul Treaty and n. 6284 Law to protect women against violence. They claimed that the tolerance of what they call 'gay perversity' was the natural outcome of a government policy which has been unjustly favoring women at the expense of men. Moreover, they were eager to underline their firm conviction that that the promotion of homosexuality was part of a 'global conspiracy'.

As can be observed in other countries where anti-gender mobilizations have been on the rise in tandem with the nationalist populisms, misogynist tropes are strongly articulated with homophobic ones. It should come as no surprise at all that this occurs in Turkey too. Yet, the all too familiar liaison of the two should not blind us to the specificities of a new discursive formation which combines both in rather novel ways. It is only in our post-human age that homophobia and misogyny are articulated to each other in a narrative of 'global conspiracy' which reflects nationalist and hetero-patriarchal anxieties over human reproduction and human civilization. These in turn, are further reflected in the deeper concerns about the seductive powers of global capitalism over LGBT people and women. Let me show you how this narrative works in the Turkish case.

Most ordinary anti-gender activists believe that 'tolerance to perversity' is only a part of the more general project of so called 'gender ideology' which is imposed by West. Some emerging intellectuals of the anti-gender politics have recently started to provide the complex details of the so called 'global conspiracy'. For example, [M. Gültekin argues](#) that the global powers are conspiring to create a new post-human world in which the robots, women and LGBT people will dominate. The new world order is being imposed by global powers such as UN, EU, the international NGO's, foreign embassies, and mostly by global corporations such as Google, Microsoft, and above all Soros.

For him, the conspiracy works mainly through the employment of genetic and bio technologies as well as surveillance. He mentions the work of Yuval Harrari as the harbinger of new technologies. [In a recent piece](#), Harrari rightly warns against the new surveillance technologies and bio technologies being abused by authoritarian regimes to violate LGBT rights soon. Gültekin believes the opposite, and [alleges that Harrari](#), being a Jew and a gay, is a tailor-made prophet of post-human age heralding the dominance of biological algorithms and surveillance technologies. For Gültekin, the post-human future will be characterized by the genetic and bio-algorithms which would define one's gender identity and sex through genetic manipulations and interventions. This, according to him, does not only defy the laws of God but also proves his belief that the so called 'gender ideology' seeks to artificially alter the God-given sex differences. Moreover, the ultimate threat is this: Designing sex, sexuality and reproduction would mean to create a "perverse plurality of reproduction and sexual pleasures". Thus, he argues, 'seemingly innocent' concepts such as gender equality, human's rights, women's rights, children's rights and even animal rights are, in fact, the primary means by which 'Turkish society is being formatted'. He further argues that if nothing is done to prevent it, "the year 2053 (the anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul by the Ottomans) could be the date the Turkey would be hacked by the West".

Considering this narrative, how does the misogyny fit into this picture? What is the position of women among robots and gays, the trio who is alleged to rule the world? What is at stake when women mobilize for women's rights? I think that a crucial link between women and LGBT people is imagined in that they all seem to be the embodiments of 'perverse plurality of sexual pleasures' and worldly aspirations promoted by global capitalism. They are seen as most prone to the seductions of alien powers in their hedonistic desires. As hedonistic and bodily creatures, women and LGBT people are seen as much alien and threat to the 'humanity' as the robots are.

To illustrate this point, consider the writings of a bestselling female Islamic writer whose blog has been very influential and whose ideas are often cited by Gültekin. [Sema Maraşlı](#) is notorious for her openly misogynist writings mostly dealing with and promoting the typical claims of male resentment. [In an open letter to Erdogan](#) she asked for the repeal of laws (regarding alimony, child custody and domestic violence) which are "doing cruelty to men". In her writings, she rarely mentions global threats but mainly draws on the problems of domestic and married life giving advises on how to lead an Islamic life. She mainly complains about the blurring of the natural sex differences between women and men which results in "manly women" and "feminine men". She objects to gender equality for erasing the sex differences. Reading her myriad comments on the most detailed aspects of married life, one can see how women (particularly the conservative women as they are her readers) are specifically targeted for their responsibility in the social breakdown which is driven by the dissolution of the family. Without naming it as such, she depicts a universe where women are the main bearers of global capitalism which is promoting a biopolitics of consumption and pleasure. Women are mainly seen as the embodiment of seductive powers of capitalism. As such, [she argues that](#) the contemporary world is "worshiping women" and oppressing men. Women are worshiped in political realm as well as within the family. She accuses the government, some pious women and [especially KADEM](#) for being either directly feminist or under the yoke and fearful of a vocal feminist minority promoted by EU. Yet, her most fierce attacks are directed towards the women in their daily interaction with men in domestic life. She often laments that thousands of men fall victim to slander on the allegation of domestic violence and thus are kept from home for no reason. She writes that women are playing the victim all the time and resorting to denigration of innocent man on the allegation of harassment and rape to blackmail them or to take revenge. Or women unjustly take advantage of their ex-husbands in terms of alimony payments. Or they are preventing ex-husbands to see the children for no reason other than revenge. They are demanding too much emotionally and materially from their husbands etc. In short, [she depicts a picture of women](#) as abusive, heartless, money grubber, greedy, insatiable, demanding, shameless, impudent, unscrupulous and as liar. In

short, women as seen as all-powerful and oppressive of men. Faced with the greedy powers of women and a complicit government, men are frightened, manipulated, abused, dominated and punished as well as their money and sources are sponged off.

She alleges that men are depicted as “less than animals, who are oppressing women and children” and [warns that the end of AKP](#) government would come owing to women because men will withdraw their support from a government which unjustly favors women.

In sum, we can see that the so called ‘global gay conspiracy’ and misogyny are articulated to each other as two sides of the same coin. LGBT people and desirous women are related not only in their capacity to blur the natural sex differences but on a deeper level of the narrative which depicts them as the embodiment of worldly pleasures and bodily desires enticed by global capitalism as against the Law of the God and the Father. Both represent the same menace just that they are attacking the society through different demands. They are seen as the usurpers or claimers of a *jouissance* which once belonged to family father, *pater familias*. In its hopeless attempt to defend the patriarchy, this narrative unintentionally attests to the ever-deepening forces of secularization and growing aspirations of LGBT people and women. And also, hopefully, heralds the end of AKP authoritarianism.

*This blog post is part of a series of [posts on transnational anti-gender politics jointly called](#) by the LSE Department of Gender Studies and Engenderings with the aim of discussing how we can make sense of and resist the current attacks on gender studies, ‘gender ideology’ and individuals working within the field.*

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