

COMPARING FEMICIDES : TURKEY AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to compare femicides between the European Union and Turkey along four main lines. Because it would be impossible to mention all the countries of the European Union, France, Germany and Spain will serve as benchmarks for the Union. Firstly, it will be important to focus on the current situation and figures in each of the territories studied. Then, we will compare Turkey and the European Union with regard to the legal recognition of femicide. Afterwards, it will be a question of evaluating the different institutional means put in place to prevent femicide. Finally, the focus will be on the civil organisations involved in the fight against femicide. In this paper, we will try to look at femicides described as “intimate femicides”, femicide committed by a current or former husband or boyfriend.

Key words : femicide, gender-based violence, legal recognition, Istanbul Convention, civil society, NGOs

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, 113 women died, killed by their spouse or ex-spouse in France¹. In the same year, the Spanish feminist association *Femicidio.net* recorded 78 “femicides and other murders of women” in Spain². As for Turkey, 280 women were killed by men in 2021 and 217 were found dead in a suspicious way according to the association *Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu* (KCDP)³. Regarding Germany, for the year 2020, 178 women died of femicide⁴ (no official count found for the year 2021). Thus, the scourge of femicide is far from being limited to a single country or continent. Indeed, in recent years, more and more associations and civil societies organisations have taken up the issue and are working to count the number of women killed because of their gender.

In this sense, it is important to highlight at the outset of this article that there are, at present, several definitions of the term “femicide”. Most of these definitions have as a common factor the fact that femicides refer to murders or killings of women because of their gender. In fact, the word “femicide” is a contraction of the words “feminine” and “homicide” and became popular at the end of the 20th century with the publication, in 1992, of a book written by two sociologists, Jill Radford and Diana E.H. Russell⁵. At that time, Diana Russell defined a femicide as followed : “Women are killed by men because they are women”. From a semantic point of view, the words “femicide” and “femicides” refer to the same concept. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines femicides as followed : “Femicide comprises the killing of women and girls because of their gender. It can take the form of, *inter alia* the 1) murder of women as a result of intimate partner violence; 2) torture and misogynist slaying of women 3) killing of women and girls in the name of "honour"; 5) targeted killing of women and girls in the context of armed conflict; 5) dowry-related killings of women; 6) killing of women and girls because of their sexual orientation and gender identity; 7) killing of aboriginal and indigenous women and girls because of their gender; 8) female infanticide and gender-based sex selection foeticide; 9) genital mutilation related deaths; 10) accusations of witchcraft and 11) other gender-based murders connected with gangs, organized crime, drug dealers, human trafficking, and the proliferation of small arms.”⁶ In parallel to this broad definition, the World Health Organization (WHO) establishes an archetype of femicides⁷. The WHO points out four types of femicides : intimate femicides, crimes committed in the name of honour, dowry-related femicides and non-intimate femicides. On the other hand, the European Institute on Genre Equality (EIGE) describes femicide as “(t)he killing of a woman by an intimate partner and the death of a woman as a result of a practice that is harmful to women. Intimate partner is understood as a former or current spouse or partner, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.”⁸

It is exceedingly difficult to collect data on femicides across the world since NGOs and official institutions do not count murders against women according to criteria that are commonly accepted across countries. Thus, this paper will try to be as accurate as possible and will focus to some extent on femicides of the “intimate” type. According to the WHO, an intimate femicide is a “femicide committed by a current or former husband or boyfriend.”⁹

This paper will aim to compare femicides in the European Union and Turkey along four main lines. Because it would be impossible to mention all the countries of the European Union, France, Germany and Spain will serve as benchmarks for the Union. Firstly, it will be important to focus on

¹ “Comprendre les chiffres pour mieux défendre les femmes et les enfants victimes de violences sexistes et sexuelles.” *NousToutes.org*.

² “Listado de feminicidios y otros asesinatos de mujeres cometidos por hombres en España en 2021.” *Femicidio.net*.

³ “2021 Annual Report of We Will Stop Femicides Platform.” *Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu*.

⁴ Wolff, Kristina Felicitas. “Evidence-Based Data on German Femicides.” International Day of Human Rights Conference, 10 December 2020, Femicide Observation Center Germany.

⁵ Radford, Jill and Russell, Diana E. H. *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*. Open University Press, 1992.

⁶ “Symposium on Femicide: A Global Issue that Demands Action!” *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*

⁷ “Symposium on Femicide: A Global Issue that Demands Action!” *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*

⁸ EIGE. *Measuring femicide in the EU and internationally: an assessment*. European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021.

⁹ WHO. *Understanding and addressing violence against women*. World Health Organization, 2012.

the current situation and figures in each of the territories studied. Then, we will compare Turkey and the European Union with regard to the legal recognition of femicide. Afterwards, it will be a question of evaluating the different institutional means put in place to prevent femicide. Finally, the focus will be on the civil organisations involved in the fight against femicide.

I. CURRENT SITUATION OF FEMICIDE IN TURKEY AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

a) Some basic data

Numbers :

In Turkey

The organization KCDP¹⁰ recorded between 210 and 474 femicides per year between the years 2012 and 2020. The year 2019 was marked by the highest number. Turkey also has the highest rate of femicide in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)¹¹.

In the EU

In France, the association Nous Toutes¹² has been providing numbers on intimate femicides since 2016. Thus, between 2016 and 2021, 102 to 153 women died each year killed by their spouse or ex-spouse. In addition, since 2006, the Ministry of the Interior has published an annual national study on violent deaths within couples¹³. Although this study counts homicides against women as well as those against men, it is of great help to us because it takes as its criterion murders committed by partners or ex-partners. Thus, between 2012 and 2016, 109 to 148 women were killed by their partners or ex-partners each year. It is important to note here that the figures reported by the Ministry of the Interior for the years 2017, 2018 and 2019 differ slightly from those reported by the NGO Nous Toutes for the same years. Let us keep in mind that both organisations count the same type of femicides : that committed in the intimate sphere. So there may be a problem here with the reliability of the data. Another important source we can mention with regard to the European Union member states is the EIGE. In that concern, the EIGE fact sheet on France shows that among female victims of homicide, 49% were victims of intimate partner femicide in 2017¹⁴.

Regarding Spain, the EIGE establishes in its fact sheet on the country that among female victims of homicide, 47% were victims of intimate partner femicide in 2017¹⁵. Furthermore, the *Femicidio.net* collective has been recording the number of femicides committed per year since 2019. The collective differentiates between several types of femicides : official intimate femicides, unofficial intimate femicides, non-intimate femicides, family femicides, child femicides, femicide for prostitution, murders of women due to community/economic violence and femicide/murder without sufficient data. We will focus here on the data regarding official and unofficial intimate femicides. Thus, in 2019, 62 women died of intimate femicides (55 officially and 7 unofficially). In 2020, 46 women died in the same way (42 officially and 4 unofficially). In 2021, it was a total of 50 victims of intimate femicides (44 officially and 6 unofficially).

¹⁰ Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu website

¹¹ Standish, Katerina and Weil, Shalva. “Gendered pandemics: suicide, femicide and COVID-19.” *Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 30, no. 7, 2021.

¹² NousToutes.org website

¹³ Ministère de l’Intérieur (France). *Étude nationale sur les morts violentes au sein du couple - 2019*.

¹⁴ EIGE. *Measuring femicide in France*. European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021.

¹⁵ EIGE. *Measuring femicide in Spain*. European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021.

Concerning Germany, the EIGE study indicates that 40% of femicides committed were of the intimate partner femicide type in 2017¹⁶. Furthermore, according to a comparative report on femicide research and data in five countries of the EU¹⁷, it was found that “in Germany, in relation to intimate partner killings, the federal crime office reported 117 cases of IPV (Intimate Partner Violence) against women which resulted in death in 2019, and 139 women killed by their partner in 2020.” In this study which compares Spain, Germany, Malta, Portugal and Cyprus, it was shown that, in all participating countries, excepting Malta, the majority of women have been killed by a partner or ex-partner. Thus, the majority of femicides committed in the years 2019-2020 in those countries are intimate femicides.

Perpetrators :

It is important to remember in this section that not all femicide perpetrators are male. Indeed, while the term femicide does refer to the killing of a woman because of her gender, it does not specify the gender of the perpetrator. However, in the majority of cases, whether in Turkey or in Europe, the murderer is a man.

In Turkey

In their research article published in 2018, Kenan Karbeyaz, Yeşim Yetiş, Ayhan Güneş, and Ümit Şimşek¹⁸ analyse intimate partner femicides in Eskisehir over a 25-year period. In 48.8% of intimate partners femicides, the perpetrator was the husband. In 16.9% of the cases, the perpetrator was the ex-husband.

Similarly, in an article published in 2017 by Sadik Toprak and Gokhan Ersoy¹⁹ some characteristics of perpetrators are highlighted. Thus, according to the authors, “half of the homicides with female victims fell into in the IPF category, and the women were killed by their partners at the time of their deaths. Spouses were the leading perpetrators of femicide.”²⁰ What Toprak and Ersoy mean by “IPF” is Intimate Partner Femicide, the type of femicide we evoked earlier in the introduction. Furthermore, the writers depict the typical profile of the perpetrator in terms of educational background. Thus, it appears to be someone with a low level of education, but who is generally employed. However, in the femicides that the survey classifies as non-intimate, the unemployment rate is higher among the perpetrators. As shown in an American study on the risk factors for femicide²¹, one of the most important socio-demographic risk factors for intimate femicides is the perpetrator's lack of employment. The research led by Toprak and Ersoy also points out that the prevalence of mental disorders was apparently low in both intimate and non-intimate femicides. Similarly, the authors conclude that drugs did not play a significant role in the femicide cases in their sample. Nevertheless, criminals records are risk factors for femicides. In short, as the writers explain, “the typical IPF perpetrator is close to his victim’s age, has a paid job, has no mental disability, owns a gun, and has threatened his partner or ex-partner previously because of jealousy/infidelity/honour or separation.”

In the EU

¹⁶ EIGE. *Measuring femicide in Germany*. European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021.

¹⁷ Schröttle, M., Arnis, M., Naudi, M., Dimitrijevic, L., Farrugia, M., Galea, E., Shakou, A., Kouta, C., Rousou, E., Kofou, E., Pavlou, S., Iglesias, C., Magalhães Dias, C., Pontedeira, C., Magalhães, M.J., Coimbra, S., Paust, I., Pölzer, L., Marcuello Servós, C., Boira Sarto, S., Almaguer, P., Eito, A., Olaciregui Rodríguez, P. (2021). *Comparative report on femicide research and data in five countries (Cyprus, Germany, Malta, Portugal, Spain)*. FEM-UnitED Project.

¹⁸ Karbeyaz, Kenan, Yetiş, Yeşim, Güneş, Ayhan and Şimşek, Ümit. “Intimate partner femicide in Eskisehir, Turkey 25 years analysis.” *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, vol. 60, 2018.

¹⁹ Toprak, Sadik and Ersoy, Gokhan. “Femicide in Turkey between 2000 and 2010.” *PLoS ONE*, vol. 12, no. 8, 2017.

²⁰ Toprak, Sadik and Ersoy, Gokhan. “Femicide in Turkey between 2000 and 2010.” *PLoS ONE*, vol. 12, no. 8, 2017.

²¹ Campbell, Jacquelyn C et al. “Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: results from a multisite case control study.” *American journal of public health*, vol. 93, no. 7, 2003.

In France, among perpetrators, the 70+ age group is the most represented in 2019, followed by the 40/49 and 30/39 age groups²². Most perpetrators of intimate femicides are unemployed (retired or unemployed). The second socio-professional category to be involved a lot in femicides is employees and workers. As in Turkey, the French survey does not show alcohol or drug use as a risk factor.

Concerning Spain and Germany, a comparative European study depicts that in those countries “the average age of the perpetrators of IPF (intimate partner femicide) is older than the average age of the perpetrators of killings by family members (49 against 41 in Spain and even younger in Germany with most perpetrators of family violence being aged between 18 and 35 years old).” Also in Spain, the majority of the perpetrators were employed and working in various professions. In Germany, the study reports that “the list of occupations of the perpetrators shows a high number of men working in qualified jobs and also in management positions. Low social status is also not identified as a relevant risk factor.”

²² Ministère de l’Intérieur (France). *Étude nationale sur les morts violentes au sein du couple - 2019*.

Motives :

In Turkey

In order to understand the main motives found behind femicides in Turkey, the thesis written by Gül Akbal on femicides in Turkey²³ is of a great help. The author uses data and numbers provided by the Turkish association KCDP. Thus, it is found that “between 2008 and 2012, some of the presented reasons are the following : divorce, jealousy, failure to fulfill the man’s wishes, honor killing, personal crises/unemployment, rejection, theft/money/addiction, woman’s own decision-making will (financial and social), bodily autonomy, hate crime, sexual assault, enforced suicide.” In the following reports, between 2014 and 2021, Gül Akbal notices additional factors in the reasons explaining femicides : homophobia, transphobia, biphobia and the fact of protecting another woman from femicide. The author puts emphasis on explaining that the shift in gender roles and women’s wish to make decisions for their own lives are to be seen as “most proclaimed reasons” for committing a femicide.

In the EU

According to the 2019 French study on violent deaths within the couple²⁴, it was found that in the case of men, a dispute was the main cause of intimate femicide. Next came the refusal of a separation (current or past), jealousy, illness or old age of the victim and/or perpetrator and then depression.

Looking at the reasons for femicide in Germany and Spain, we were unable to find any useful and relevant articles and data on the subject.

Victims :

In Turkey

According to writers Toprak and Ersoy²⁵, “the typical IPF victim is of child-bearing age, does not have a paid job, is married or divorced, is killed in a domestic setting due to injuries to the thorax or abdomen produced by an edged/pointed weapon or firearm, and is possibly a victim of overkill.”

In the EU

The 2019 French study on violent deaths within the couple²⁶ shows that the majority of women killed by their spouse or partner are between 30 and 39 years of age, then the over-70s are the second most affected category. Their median age in France is 46. Furthermore, the survey clearly shows that most of the victims are not in employment (either unemployed or retired). Next, female employees or workers are the second most affected by women. Like femicides taking place in Turkey, the French figures show that the presence of violence (physical, psychological or sexual) before a femicide is a risk factor. Thus, most women victims of femicides in 2019 had already been subjected to violence by their partner.

Regarding both Spain and Germany, a comparative report on femicides highlights that intimate femicides particularly affect young women. In Spain, in 2019-2020, the average age of

²³ Akbal, Gül. “Femicides in Turkey. Understanding Femicides through the Social, Political, and Gendered Context.” Master’s thesis. Gender Studies – Intersectionality and Change : Linköping : Linköping University. 2021.

²⁴ Ministère de l’Intérieur (France). *Étude nationale sur les morts violentes au sein du couple - 2019*.

²⁵ Toprak, Sadik and Ersoy, Gokhan. “Femicide in Turkey between 2000 and 2010.” *PLoS ONE*, vol. 12, no. 8, 2017.

²⁶ Ministère de l’Intérieur (France). *Étude nationale sur les morts violentes au sein du couple - 2019*.

women in intimate partner femicides cases was 45.8 years. The same study also suggest that “a significant finding from the data collected is that minority ethnic women in [...] Spain were found to be at greater risk of femicide, however no such indications of greater risk were found in Germany [...]. No indication of greater risk of femicide was found with respect to unemployed and/or disabled women in all the partner countries.” Furthermore, it was found that in Germany that “elderly, ill or suicidal victims, as a category used in the data collection tool, appear to be at higher risk of femicide.” Nevertheless, it is important to recall here that the lack of exact data makes comparison between different countries very difficult. Sometimes we have some interesting data for a country study, but the equivalent is not available elsewhere.

Crime scene / killing methods :

In Turkey

Studies regarding femicide in Turkey appeared to show similar trends in regards to methods of killing. Indeed, the article written by Toprak and Ersoy²⁷ points out that “all types of firearms [...] and edged and pointed weapons was the dominant method of killing in femicides.” For instance, the perpetrator's legal possession of a firearm is to be seen as a risk factor for femicide.

In the EU

According to the 2019 French study on violent deaths within the couple²⁸, 66% of women killed by their partners were killed with a weapon, 17% were killed by asphyxiation and 10% by blows to the body.

Both in Spain and Germany, the comparative study conveys the idea that the most prevalent methods of killing were killings by a sharp instrument or knife (52% in Spain and 42% in Germany), strangulation (16% in Germany and 14% in Spain) and killings by firearms (15% in Spain and 8-10% in Germany). Furthermore, hitting, kicking and blows were used as a killing method in 19% of the cases in Spain. However, here the study does not differentiate between intimate femicide type and all others.

b) Update on femicide since the Covid-19 pandemic

During the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, a lot of NGOs and international organisations warned of the risk of an increase in gender-based violence and violence taking place in the home or family sphere. The researcher of the Hebrew university of Jerusalem, Shalva Weil, particularly wrote a poignant article in which she established the following : “femicide, like coronavirus, is a pandemic, but it has not been recognised as such. The COVID-19 virus has impacted negatively on domestic violence, and it appears that globally there is a surge in the rate of femicide.”²⁹ Indeed, she reports that “in Turkey, the hotlines [were] inundated with complaints by women, who [were] suffering both mental and physical violence at the hands of abusive partners. [...] In France, the Interior Minister, Christophe Castaner, publicly admitted that domestic violence had increased by 30% since the lockdown.”

Furthermore, a UN WOMEN work entitled *The Shadow Pandemic: Violence Against Women During COVID-19* observes that, “[s]ince the outbreak of COVID-19, emerging data and reports from those on the front lines, have shown that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly

²⁷ Toprak, Sadik and Ersoy, Gokhan. “Femicide in Turkey between 2000 and 2010.” *PLoS ONE*, vol. 12, no. 8, 2017.

²⁸ Ministère de l'Intérieur (France). *Étude nationale sur les morts violentes au sein du couple - 2019*.

²⁹ Weil, Shalva. “Two Global Pandemics: Femicide and COVID-19.” *Trauma and Memory*, vol. 8, 2021.

domestic violence, has intensified.”³⁰ Also, in a research article³¹, Pavithra Siriwardhane and Tehmina Khan establish that during the pandemic “countries such as Brazil, China, France, Italy, and the USA reported unprecedented increases in domestic violence reports. The emergency calls received from women who were victims of domestic violence in Europe increased by around 60%.”

Interestingly enough to mention, Marcelo F. Aebi, Lorena Molnar, and Francisca Baquerizas³² worked on the subject of femicides during the pandemic in six Spanish-Speaking Countries. Indeed, they wrote an article concluding that “the main finding of [their] analyses is that, in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and Spain, femicide neither increased during the first year of the coronavirus pandemic nor, in particular, during the months when the lockdowns were tighter.” They also find out that “the total number of femicides in 2020 was similar to that recorded during each of the three previous years.” Nevertheless, the authors explain that domestic violence offenses and intimate partner violence increased during the first year of the pandemic, and particularly during the lockdowns.

In the end, while the figures are not very clear on the impact of the pandemic on the specific case of femicide, it is clear that the impact of Covid-19 on gender-based violence has been more than negative worldwide.

c) The situation of refugee women

In 2015, a governmental report made by the Instituto de la Mujer in Spain found out that 36,7% of murdered women were foreigners. Even if this number doesn't tell much about femicide in itself, domestic violence is, unfortunately, a significant form of victimization of female immigrants. In a survey done by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in 2014, a higher prevalence rate of physical and/or sexual violence was reported among women who are not citizens of their country of residence. In a study on femicides and gender based violences among migrants minorities, Nudelman, Boira, Tsomaia, Balica and Tabagua³³ explain that women migrants sometimes face an additional barrier when seeking for help as they do feel discriminated against. Some immigrants also reported having had bad experiences with doctors, policemen or other professionals which led them not to have faith in the people and in the systems of the host country. Research also show that country of origin is also a relevant variable in terms of domestic violence and homicide. Indeed, Rossiter and al.³⁴ show in their study that “immigrant women from non-western and developing countries are at an increased risk of violence compared to immigrant women from western and developed countries. Women without status, or undocumented migrants, also face greater risk of domestic violence and barriers to support services and protection.” The authors also insist on the fact that there is little documentation on the subject of femicide and gender based violences among migrants or refugee communities. Nevertheless, research suggest that cultural differences and migration history might be factors increasing the risk of domestic violence. Although there is no specific research on intimate femicide in refugee camps or among immigrant populations, we can nevertheless affirm that the immigration process can trigger or increase the domestic violence experienced by immigrant women. Moreover, immigrant women face many structural barriers, including access to services adapted to their reality, which can make them more vulnerable to experiencing or being maintained in a situation

³⁰ ONU Femmes. *Mesurer la pandémie de l'ombre : violence à l'égard des femmes pendant la pandémie de Covid-19*. ONU Femmes, Les femmes comptent.

³¹ Siriwardhane, Pavithra and Khan, Tehmina. “The Gendered Nature of the Risk Factors of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Gender Equality: A Literature Review from a Vulnerability Perspective.” *Sustainability*, vol. 13, 2021.

³² Aebi, Marcelo F., Molnar, Lorena, and Baquerizas, Francisca. “Against All Odds, Femicide Did Not Increase During the First Year of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Evidence From Six Spanish-Speaking Countries.” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2021.

³³ Nudelman, Anita, Boira, Santiago, Tsomaia, Tina, Balica, Ecaterina and Tabagua, Sopia. “Hearing Their Voices”: Exploring Femicide among Migrants and Culture Minorities.” *Qualitative Sociology Review*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2017.

³⁴ Rossiter, KR., Yercich, S., Baobaid, M., Al Jamal, A., David, R., Fairbairn, J., Dawson, M., & Jaffe, P. “Domestic Homicide in Immigrant and Refugee, Populations: Culturally-Informed Risk and Safety Strategies.” *Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative, Domestic Homicide Brief 4*, 2018.

of domestic violence. Finally, the migratory journey and the challenges of integration into the host society are two essential dimensions to be considered in the prevention of domestic violence among the immigrant population.

Another point we should address in this part is the principle of *non-refoulement* : “under international human rights law, the principle of non-refoulement guarantees that no one should be returned to a country where they would face torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and other irreparable harm. This principle applies to all migrants at all times, irrespective of migration status.”³⁵ Furthermore, the Istanbul Convention on violence against women and domestic violence (from which Turkey pulled out in 2021) reaffirms this principle of *non-refoulement* for migrant women. Article 61 (2) of the convention establishes the following : “parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims of violence against women who are in need of protection, regardless of their status or residence, shall not be returned under any circumstances to any country where their life would be at risk or where they might be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” As explained in a report prepared by the Council of Europe, “unlike the Geneva Refugee Convention, non-refoulement under the ECHR and the Istanbul Convention applies to all expulsions regardless of considerations of national security (e.g. *Chahal v. UK* (1996)) or other strong public interests.” In this sense, the principle of non-refoulement can protect refugee women who may be vulnerable to gender-based violence once they return to their country of origin.

d) Femicide cases brought to the ECtHR for failure of the State to protect victims

In Turkey

• *Opuz v. Turkey*

Murdered by her husband in 2002, Nahide Opuz was the victim of what is known as an intimate femicide. Beyond the tragic aspect of the case, it is a very important example because of the judgment the European Court of Human Rights delivered (ECtHR). Indeed, for the first time in history, the ECtHR “recognized that the failure of states to address gender-based domestic violence can amount to a form of discrimination under the Convention”³⁶. The applicant to the ECtHR is the daughter of the dead wife. Her mother, herself and her sisters were victims of their father, named H.O. Several complaints had been made by the mother and the applicant, only, for fear of reprisals, they never really dared to go through with the proceedings. In 2002, Opuz’s daughter filed an application with the ECtHR, asserting that the State of Turkey violated three articles of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Eventually, as Tarik Abdel-Monem explains “the judgment went further than many expected by clearly making prevention of violence against women in the domestic sphere a positive obligation of the state.”³⁷

• *Halime Kılıç v. Turkey*

Another interesting case with regards to intimate femicide in Turkey is the one of *Halime Kılıç v. Turkey*. The applicant, Halime Kılıç, is the mother of Fatma Babatlı, a woman who suffered domestic violence and was ultimately killed by her husband. Indeed, the victim had lodged in total 4 complaints against her husband. In July 2008, the Family Court issued an initial protection measure ordering the husband to remove from the matrimonial home and an injunction against any violent

³⁵ UNHR. *The principle of non-refoulement under international human rights law*. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner.

³⁶ Abdel-Monem, Tarik. “*Opuz v. Turkey* : Europe's Landmark Judgment on Violence against Women.” *University of Nebraska*, 2009.

³⁷ Abdel-Monem, Tarik. “*Opuz v. Turkey* : Europe's Landmark Judgment on Violence against Women.” *University of Nebraska*, 2009.

behaviour towards his wife. Nevertheless, the situation worsened afterwards and violence against his wife and children did not end. In November 2008, the husband killed his wife, Fatma Babatlı, before committing suicide. In January 2009, Mrs Kılıç initiated proceedings before the ECtHR. She filed a complaint alleging a breach of duty and “requesting the identification and prosecution of the officials who, despite her daughter's complaints, failed to carry out an effective investigation, and whose failures resulted in her daughter's death.” The outcome of the judgment is that the ECtHR found a violation of Articles 2 (right to life) and 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the ECHR in combination with Article 2. In addition, the Court found that Turkey should pay the applicant. 65,000 euros for non-pecuniary damage.

In the EU

For the three EU countries we have chosen to focus on in this analysis, France, Spain and Germany have so far not been sued for violation of Article 2 (right to life) of the ECHR regarding domestic violence. In this sense, the families of victims of femicide in these countries have never yet blamed their state for failing to fulfill its obligations under Article 2 of the Convention.

Looking at other EU member states, the ECtHR has found some states in breach of their duties and in violation of Article 2 of the Convention. For instance, *Branko Tomašić and Others v. Croatia* and *Y and Others v. Bulgaria* touch upon cases where the victims of their husbands had contacted the authorities. In the first case, the perpetrator killed himself after killing his wife and his child a month after being released from prison, where he had been held for making death threats. In the second case mentioned, the “woman [...] was shot dead in a café in Sofia by her husband just after leaving the district prosecutor’s office to complain that he owned a handgun and she feared for her life. She had made several similar complaints in the years and months leading up to the killing concerning her husband’s angry, violent and obsessive attitude towards her.”³⁸ In both cases, the Court found the States in violation with Article 2 of the Convention.

e) Difficulty of obtaining accurate data on femicide

As shown in a report written under the aegis of United Nations Studies Association (UNSA)³⁹, data on femicide are very heterogeneous and confusing from one country to another. While comparing data on femicide between India and Canada, the researchers found out that “neither country has a standardized data collection system for recording incidents of femicide” although both countries rely on police and official crime statistics as the primary sources of femicide data. The authors also point out the difficulty of finding a common definition of femicide : what to take into account ? What criteria and what types of femicides ? This poses an obstacle to research from the outset and could make comparison between countries inaccurate. Thus, the researchers suggest ways that would allow for cross-country comparisons and facilitate international cooperation on this issue. First, they invoke “international cooperation” : “as a global crime, the international community should collaborate in a coalition to avoid doubling activities”. Secondly, the “methodological consideration” : “there is an ongoing (urgent) need to collect data on femicide”. Furthermore, they also suggest improving the definition to facilitate data collection, but also to be able to engage in national and international comparisons. Finally, the authors believe the international community should improve its “data sources”, i.e, “explore the use of qualitative and quantitative data sources in femicide. Such data can/should be collected on all regional national and international levels and across a range of primary and secondary sources.”

II. LEGAL RECOGNITION OF FEMICIDE

³⁸ UNSA. *Femicide, Volume XIII. Collecting Data on Femicide*. United Nations Studies Association, 2020.

³⁹ UNSA. *Femicide, Volume XIII. Collecting Data on Femicide*. United Nations Studies Association, 2020.

a) In Turkey

Like a number of countries, Turkey does not recognize femicide as such in its criminal code. Although we will come back to this in more detail in the following section, we can already mention Law No. 6284 implemented in 2012. Thus, Law No. 6284 on Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence against Women was established on the basis of the Istanbul Convention. Before this law, Law No. 4320 on the Protection of the Family, implemented in 1998, was the very first legal text on domestic violence in the country and proved to be insufficient in preventing violence against women. However, on 20 March 2021, the president of the Republic of Turkey announced Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention with a Presidential Decree. In doing so, Law No. 6284 no longer seems to carry as much weight.

b) In the European Union

As explained in a report addressing femicide (dated from 2020) in the EU and worldwide⁴⁰, “the EU-27 and the United Kingdom have no definitions of femicide in the legal context, but killings of women are classified in several ways, including intentional homicide, non-intentional homicide and manslaughter.”

For instance, in France, there is no definition of femicide in the French Penal Code but this type of offense can still fall under other provisions of French law such as “voluntary murder” or “manslaughter.” On another note, experts, NGOs and victims-rights associations have often advocated for the inclusion of femicide in the Penal Code. It was discussed in parliament in 2020, but not approved.

As far as Germany is concerned, the situation is very similar to France. There is no such thing as “femicide” in the German Criminal Code. However, this type of offence may fall under other provisions such as “murder under specific aggravating circumstances”, “murder” or “bodily harm resulting in death.”

Regarding Spain’s legislation, there is no definition of femicide in the Spanish Penal Code either, but this type of infraction falls under other provisions of the national criminal law. Furthermore, in December 2021, Spain’s government announced that it will be the first country of the UE to count femicides. Indeed, the ministry of equality declared that from 2022 onwards, five types of feminicides will be counted : feminicide taking place in the marital sphere, feminicide committed by a member of the victim's family, so-called “social” feminicide, i.e. carried out by a stranger, a colleague or a friend, and sexual feminicide, i.e. linked to sexual violence or exploitation as well as to sex work, forced marriage and genital mutilation. Finally, so-called “proxy” feminicide, i.e. the murder of a person (relatives, children) to harm a woman, will also be taken into account. Although this does not include a written change in the standards and legal recognition of femicide, these are measures that will help to monitor the numbers more closely.

With regard to France and Spain, they are among a small group of EU Member States that recognize “hatred, contempt or hostility towards a person because of their gender; connotation of gender violence; or sexism as aggravating circumstances.”⁴¹ Both States also report the homicide of an intimate partner (wether cohabiting or not) as an aggravating circumstance. For example, in Spain, the 2004 Organic Law for Integral Protection against Genderbased Violence (GBV) applies only to “violence that men exert against women who are or have been their intimate partners, or who are or

⁴⁰ EIGE. *Measuring femicide in the EU and internationally: an assessment*. European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021.

⁴¹ EIGE. *Measuring femicide in the EU and internationally: an assessment*. European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021.

have been in an intimate relationship with them, with or without cohabitation.”⁴² On another note, a study⁴³ showed that Sweden and Spain are the only EU members to recognize intimate partner violence against women as a specific offence, differentiated from domestic violence.

Ultimately, in most EU member states, there is still no legal recognition of femicides. Although some countries (notably Spain) seem to be putting more governmental means into documenting and analyzing this crime, the fact remains that a femicide is classified in a broader category such as homicide. Conversely, between 2007 and 2017, 18 countries of South America decided to introduce femicide as a criminal offence, thus introducing a legal definition of femicide (e.g. the killing of women because of their gender).

III. LEGAL MEANS TO PREVENT FEMICIDE

a) In Turkey

Law No. 6284 and some other governmental measures

As explained briefly before, Law No. 6284 on Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence against Women was set up to protect women and, in some ways, prevent gender based violence. The implementation of this law became possible after Turkey signed the Istanbul Convention. Law No. 6284 was thus designed to protect women from violence coming from men in their immediate circle or a perfect stranger.

On the website of the Turkish NGO Mor Çati⁴⁴, it is possible to find information on the use of this law for victims. First, the law defines violence as all kind of acts that result in or are likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm or suffering. Then, several rights are being set by this law. For instance, women can request shelter or temporary close protection in case they fear being harmed by a perpetrator or possible perpetrator. Moreover, women can request the offender to be barred from entering the shared home and prevented from approaching them. Also, women can request the perpetrator to be stopped from contacting them via phone, mail or social media. Some other measure are such as : have its address hidden in official documents, undergo a change of identity, have the firearms removed from one’s perpetrator, obtain temporary custody and alimony, obtain temporary financial aid, request a family residence annotation to be put on the title deed of your home and finally, if a protection order is issued under Law No. 6284, the victim is entitled to free general health insurance under this law.

Among other things, article 14 of the law states that the Ministry of Family and Social Policies “shall establish the Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers, where necessary qualified personnel especially the women are employed and perform a duty, and where the support and monitoring services are provided to the persons to prevent the violence and efficiently implement the protective and preventive measures.”⁴⁵ These centers should, in particular, build a data bank in order to monitor the implementations of judge acts and cautionary decisions. Also, these centers should popularize the call centers.

On another note, a European study on femicide⁴⁶ mentions working Group Committee on Femicide as a governmental mean to address the issue. Indeed, the reports states that “since 2009, the Ministry of Internal Affairs General Directorate of Security and the General Commandership of

⁴² Weil, Shalva, Corradi, Consuelo and Naudi, Marceline. “Femicide across Europe. Theory, research and prevention.” *Policy Press*, University of Bristol, 2018.

⁴³ Fabre Rosell, Cristina and Eder, Teresa. “During the lockdown we saw a spike of violence but a drop of femicides.” *Wilson Center*, 2021.

⁴⁴ Mor Çati website

⁴⁵ Law No. 6284 (Turkey). *Law to protect family and prevent violence against women*. Adopted in 2012.

⁴⁶ Weil, Shalva, Corradi, Consuelo and Naudi, Marceline. “Femicide across Europe. Theory, research and prevention.” *Policy Press*, University of Bristol, 2018.

the Gendarmerie (Rural Police) have been using a 'Registration Form for Domestic Violence' and have therefore been recording data on femicide as a result of domestic violence committed against women expressly because they are women.' Then, in 2017, a working group committee on femicide was established by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. Finally, a last initiative we could mention that was put in practice by the Turkish government to address the problematic of femicide is the National Action Plan on Combating Violence Against Women (2016–20).

Failures and ineffectiveness of Law No. 6284

Though Law No. 6284 looks promising on paper, Turkish feminist organizations claim that the law is deficient in its implementation. Indeed, one can read on KCDP's website that there is a failure in protecting women from their perpetrator. In 2021, among the 251 cases of femicide, 24 women had a restraining or protection order, 9 of them had given complaints to the police or the prosecutor's office and 30 of the deceased women were in the process of divorce. In that regards, the Turkish NGO underpins that "all these examples show how vital the full and effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention and 6824 is for women. For the effective protection of women, injunctions should be implemented, the process should be followed, all units of the state should protect women's rights, and public officials who do not fulfil their duties should not go unpunished."

Withdrawal from the Istanbul convention

In March 2021, the Turkish President withdrew his country through a presidential decree from the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The pretext given by the President was that the convention would threaten the integrity of the family (as it was designed in Europe and for European states which, according to Erdogan, put the individual before the family) and would risk normalizing homosexuality. In Turkey, homosexuality is not illegal, but it remains a taboo subject.

But what are the implications of Ankara's exit from this international treaty? Well, as Penny Kapusuzoğlu⁴⁷ explains, "without the Istanbul Convention, Law No. 6284 is the only protection left, however ineffectual it may be." Indeed, Law No. 6284 and the Istanbul Convention were the primary sources in Turkey for protecting women against all forms of violence. Now, Turkey is facing a legal gap in the protection of women. As Penny Kapusuzoğlu puts forward in her article "the occurrence of femicide in Turkey continues to escalate, yet the reluctance to act has left a wider gap in the prospect of gender equality being realized. The government's decades-long refusal to gather or disseminate data on femicide reflects the mentality with which equal rights and gender-based violence are approached." In this sense, Ankara's withdrawal from the Convention was a step backwards for the country that had once been the first to adopt the Convention. Feminist associations are worried, the consequences of this withdrawal will probably be more than negative.

b) In the EU

The Istanbul convention, first legally binding instrument at the European level

At the European level, the Istanbul Convention is to be seen as the first legally binding instrument regarding violence against women and domestic violence. Indeed, on 13 June 2017, Věra Jourová, European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, signed the Istanbul Convention on behalf of the European Union. Although France and Spain had already ratified it since 2014, Germany finally became subject to this convention in 2018.

⁴⁷ Kapusuzoğlu, Penny. "A Year in Review: The Consequences of Turkey's Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention." *The International Affairs Review*, 2022.

In brief, the convention addresses four main pillars : prevention, protection, prosecution and integrated policies. Prevention : this means that states commit to training professionals who are in close contact with victims, who raise awareness and work with the NGO network. Protection : States must undertake to take adequate measures to protect victims (give the police the power to remove a perpetrator of domestic violence from his or her home, ensure that the victim has access to relevant information, set up a number of easily accessible shelters throughout the country, create crisis units for rape and sexual violence, set up 24 hours a day telephone lines). Prosecution : as the Convention defines and criminalises various forms of violence against women as well as domestic violence, in order to give it legal force, it may be necessary for States parties to introduce new offences into their criminal systems. For example, forced marriages, psychological violence, female genital mutilation, abortion and forced sterilisation should be able to be criminalised and punished. Integrated policies : the Convention requires parties to implement comprehensive and coordinated policies involving government agencies, NGOs, and national, regional and local parliaments and authorities. The aim is that prevention and control policies are implemented at all levels of government and by all relevant bodies and institutions. This can be done, for example, by developing a national action plan with a specific mission or role for each agency.

The monitoring mechanism set up by the convention

In order to follow and assess the implementation of the Convention at national levels, the convention established a monitoring mechanism. Thus, the monitoring mechanism consists of two distinct, but interacting pillars : the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), an independent expert body, and the Committee of the Parties, a political body composed of official representatives of the states that are party to the convention. Their findings and recommendations of these two entities help ensure states 'compliance with the convention and guarantee its long-term effectiveness.

National mechanisms and laws

France

In France, the “Grenelle des violences conjugales” (Grenelle on domestic violence), set up between 3 September and 25 November 2019, is a series of round tables that highlighted the problems of domestic violence in order to find solutions. France also has put into practice an interdepartmental unit for protecting women against violence and for combating trafficking in human beings (MIPROF). The role of this unit is to enhance global knowledge on violence against women, develop training programmes for professionals who take charge of women who are victims of violence and coordinate the actions against trafficking in human beings at a national level. On another note, this unit bases its tasks on recommendations of the Istanbul Convention.

In addition, since 1992, France has passed various specific laws aimed at combating violence against women. With regard more specifically to domestic violence, since 1994 the Criminal Code has recognized the particular seriousness of this type of violence and provides for a series of offences of violence, punishable by aggravated penalties when committed by a spouse or cohabitant.

Germany

In Germany, several legislations condemn domestic and gender based violence. Articles 1 and 2 of the German Constitution protect human dignity and guarantee the right to life. Implemented in 2001, the Act on Protection against Violence established the principle of “stay-away order” and enables to protect victims or potential victims of domestic violence to be away from the perpetrator. Some police laws of the federal states such as Berlin, Bavaria or North Rhine-Westphalia also contain regulations that enable the police to issue a prohibition of contact against the offender for a few days

or until the court decided on a “stay-away order” under the Act on Civil Law Protection Against Violence. The German Criminal Code in itself criminalises a number of forms of domestic violence such as physical or sexual violence. Finally, to some extent, the German Civil Code also addresses domestic violence claims.

On another note, the German Police Criminological Statistics (PKS) which is collecting all cases of killings includes additional data on the gender of the victims and victim–perpetrator relationship. Also, the Network of Autonomous Shelters gathers data regarding femicide cases via internet.

Spain

In terms of legislation, Spain is probably one of the most advanced countries in regards to gender violence. Indeed, some specialized courts for violence against women address domestic violence and gender-based violence. Spain’s legislation has some statutes and codes specifically intended to protect women from violence : Comprehensive Protection Against Gender-Based Violence Law, Effective Equality of Men and Women Law, State Pact Against Gender Violence, Aid and Assistance to Victims of Violent Crimes and Against Sexual Freedom. The Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality also provides a governmental delegation for gender based violence. The reason Spain is often depicted as the good student of the European Union is probably because the country it adopted in 2004 one of its first specific law against gender violence and set up special courts. Compared to other European countries, this step was done earlier on the Spanish territory. Moreover, in 2007, the country set up a free telephone platform to guide women victims of violence, which does not leave a trace on the telephone bill. Two years later, the Spanish government introduced the electronic bracelet for violent spouses or ex-spouses, which allows the woman victim of violence and the police to be informed of the man's arrival within a defined area.

At the level of the European Union, a research institute that is providing some data on gender based violence and femicide is the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). Created in 2010, this institute provides some fact sheets on all EU member states.

c) Suggestions and recommendations for action at institutional level

Inspired by a briefing written by the European Parliament⁴⁸, we suggest several avenues to be explored at institutional level in order to fight and prevent femicide.

Firstly, the countries of the European Union, Turkey, but more broadly the international community should make femicide a priority on their political agenda and in their public discourse, including, but not limited to, policies to prevent violence against women. Countries should make prevention of femicide one of their pillars for the coming years (prevention in schools, on TV through advertisements, through government announcements and massive campaigns). Another step could be to establish a dialogue between NGOs, civil society and actors involved in the fight against femicide and government figures. Men and men's associations must also be included as stakeholders in the fight against femicide. Governments must be able to count femicides without being the sole actors in the official count. A final suggestion would be to establish international cooperation on data on femicide.

IV. CIVIL SOCIETY AND ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH FEMICIDE

Paying attention to civil society and NGOs working in the field of gender based violence, domestic violence or femicide helps to understand how these problematics are being addressed in each country. Indeed, in this research, most of the data, numbers and statistics we used come from

⁴⁸ Directorate General for external policies. *Briefing - Femicide, its causes and recent trends: What do we know ?* DROI Subcommittee, European Parliament, 2021.

websites run by NGOs. Nowadays, the leading actors in the fight against femicides are on the side of civil society.

a) In Turkey

With 209.000 followers on its instagram page, Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu (KCDP) is probably the most well-known and impactful organisation which works to protect women from femicide. Created in 2010 by Gülsüm Kav, the purpose of KCDP is to raise awareness about sexism and gender based violences as well as femicides. Among other things, the organisation provides information via its website on women's rights and the recourse women can take if their rights are threatened or violated. The association's activists also mobilise at major events to fight for more rights. On the Instagram page as well as on the website, KCDP updates the count of femicides in Turkey and makes annual and monthly reports.

Another Turkish database recording the number of femicides is Anıt Savaş. The webpage lists all femicides that have occurred since 2008 in Turkey. The women are listed by year and for each case of femicide, it is possible to access a press article about it.

Moreover, Ceyda Ulukaya, a *Daily Milliyet* reporter created in 2021 a detailed database of femicide committed in Turkey⁴⁹. The database covers a period of 10 years. The map of femicide answers different questions : “at what age and where were women murdered and on what pretexts? Did they demand protection before the murder? Was she systematically being exposed to violence? Could the murders have been prevented?”

b) In the EU

France

In France, one of the most famous organization working to preserve women’s rights and fight against gender-based and sexual violence is NousToutes.org. Created in 2018, the collective is action-oriented with two main objectives : (1) to demand effective public policies against gender-based and sexual violence in terms of budget and methods, and (2) to raise public awareness of the facts and mechanisms of gender-based and sexual violence through actions, communications and training. In addition to being very active (463.000 followers on Instagram), the collective records the number of women victims of femicide each year.

Another organisation we could mention in Féminicides par compagnons ou ex. Created in 2016, this voluntary feminist collective is made up of whistleblowers who, since January 2016, have been keeping track of women presumed to be victims of conjugal crimes in France perpetrated by their partner or ex-partner.

Another phenomenon that has grown since the lockdowns is the pasting (on the walls of Paris in particular) of slogans against sexist, sexual, economic, psychological, verbal and physical violence against women. For instance, the Instagram Page Collages_feminicides_paris counts 84.700 followers and aims to raise awareness against this type of problematics.

Spain

Looking at Spain, Feminicidio.net is an organisation that provides very detailed data on femicides taking place in Spain. Indeed, most of the number we used at the beginning of this article regarding Spain were coming from this website. The collective describes itself as a portal to make gender-based violence in Spain and Latin America visible with news, interviews, articles, special investigations and online training.

⁴⁹ Ulukaya, Ceyda. “Who, Where, How: Femicide Map of Five Years.” *Bianet*, 25 Nov. 2015.

Another collective we can mention is the *Comite de vague pel 8M*, which means Strike Committee for 8 March. This association is particularly active around 8 March and International Women's Rights Day.

Fundacion Mujeres is also active in contributing to the social and political change needed to ensure that equality between women and men is real and effective in all areas of life and, in this way, improve the social situation, quality of life and full rights of women.

Germany

In Germany, One Billion Rising is an active organisation in terms of fight against femicides, sexism, misogyny and several other issues. More broadly, One Billion Rising is a global campaign to end violence against women and promote equality. Initiated in September 2012 by New York artist and feminist Eve Ensler, the 'billion' refers to a UN statistic that one in three women will either be raped or suffer a serious physical injury in their lifetime. The campaign was launched as part of the V-Day movement. This is one of the world's largest campaigns to end violence against women with thousands of events in up to 190 countries around the world.

Created in 1865, the General Association of German Women was the first feminist German association. Today, this organisation affiliates itself with the International Alliance of Women. This international alliance aims at “working to promote women’s human rights around the world, focusing particularly on empowerment of women and development issues and more broadly on gender equality.”⁵⁰

We have to admit here that without any knowledge of German it is difficult to get many results in English on the internet. For instance, the information provided on Germany is not always comprehensive. Especially in the case of feminist associations, it is difficult to identify them.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this article, let us remember the idea expressed by Shalva Weil : femicide is as global a pandemic as Covid-19. Indeed, whether it is Turkey, France, Germany, Spain or any other EU country, femicide is a crime that is perpetuated. Data regarding femicide vary from country to country, although some similarities exist (e.g. at the crime scene level).

Concerning the legal recognition of femicide, this is not yet the case, neither in Europe nor in Turkey. Unlike some South American states that recognize the crime of femicide in their penal code, in Europe the same crime is sanctioned by other offences. In Turkey, the legal recognition and punishment of the crime of femicide is far from being completed.

In terms of the means put in place by States to combat femicide, and more broadly to combat violence against women, Spain is considered to be the “model pupil”. Policies are also in place in France and Germany. In Turkey, the law protecting against domestic violence appears to be weak. The task of all governments is therefore important and there is still a long way to go before real safety for women is achieved.

Finally, we ended up mentioning some of the major civil society actors who are active in the protection of women's rights. In each of the countries, there is a real network of associations that count femicides, carry out prevention and raise awareness of these issues.

⁵⁰ Bestmann, Rosa. “General German Women’s Association (Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein, ADF) (1865-2018).” *Towards Emancipation ? Women in European history, a digital exhibition & encyclopedia*, 2018.

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