



# ENC ANALYSIS

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'You Will Never Walk Alone': The resilience of  
women in Türkiye amidst femicides

**NOVEMBER 2024**

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## About the author



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## Introduction

*“On the 21st of March, 2021, I arrived at the airport in Istanbul, intending to study abroad for a semester and then return to my home country, Türkiye. While waiting to board, I opened a news outlet and saw the announcement that Türkiye planned to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention. The very convention signed in the city I was flying out of—a treaty that had symbolized protection for women. As I read, I got wet eyes and thought, how can I come back to a place where my safety seems less and less assured? Yet, I came back as I’m rooted in here.”*

– Anonymous

The above quote offers a glimpse into how Turkish women feel in recent years: unprotected, anxious, yet unwavering. Their rights are being systematically stripped away, resulting in a disturbing rise in women's rights violations—from workplace discrimination to femicides in broad daylight. The nation's metropolis, Istanbul—the city that lent its name to the Istanbul Convention, an international treaty signed there to safeguard women's rights—now feels like a place where these protections have eroded to their fullest extent. This sense of vulnerability has only intensified after the recent, horrendous murders of İkbal Uzuner and Ayşenur Halil, both 19 years old, killed by Semih Çelik, with one being decapitated. Yet, as femicides continue to rise, Türkiye's women's movement has responded with remarkable resilience, mounting a relentless fight for safety, justice, and the fundamental right to live free from violence.

The femicide crisis in Türkiye goes beyond statistics; it is a pervasive reality rooted in systemic failures that demand closer scrutiny. Conversations around femicides often center on numbers, but these figures cannot fully capture the underlying societal issues. In Türkiye, this crisis is fueled by a complex intersection of cultural norms, inadequate legal protections, disinformation, and other well-known factors, which together create an environment where violence against women persists.

This article moves beyond mere statistics, delving into the lived reality for women in Türkiye, where fear, anxiety, and resilience coexist in the face of systemic failures. By exploring specific cases, the societal drivers behind

femicides, and the collective response from the public, it seeks to provide a comprehensive picture of this crisis and the urgent need for change.

## Femicides in “Numbers”<sup>1</sup>

Femicides in Türkiye, and elsewhere, are often reduced to mere 'numbers,' with discussions focused on how many women were murdered by their family members, partners, or even strangers<sup>2</sup>. At times, these numbers are analyzed statistically by those removed from the reality of such violence, who debate the "likelihood of being killed" as though a single murder isn't enough to instill fear and demand action to end these atrocities. In addition to this, as in other parts of the world, the number of reported killings is likely lower than the actual figure, making it difficult to fully grasp the scale by relying solely on reported cases—though even these numbers, already high, provide a sobering indication of the crisis. Furthermore, some problems of femicides are deeply context-bound, making comparisons between countries' "numbers" an oversimplification that adds little to meaningful solutions. For example, the normalization of femicides can differ drastically based on levels of democracy, rule of law, and legislation—not just laws specific to women's protection, but also those that promote hierarchical relationships between men and women or allow violence to go unpunished.

Figure 1. Names of the women killed in Türkiye in 2024 (highlighted in orange)<sup>3</sup>

2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	
Daniş Nur Kavraz   Mina Özcan   Sevgi Gezer   Yasemin Uludağ Çetin   A.C.   Ebru Küçüktaçdemir   Hasibe Tosun   Cansun Çarıt   Fatma Biricik   E.D.   Şenay Gerçek   Güldane Gerçek   Gaye Gerçek   Aysel Koçak   Semanur Arslan   Rojin Kabacı   Burçin Sevgi   İrmak Yaşar   Sevgi Gülden Yalçın   Gülçin Kaya   Sevim Kaya   Aysel Sefer   Hürriye Özkan   Nuran Sevinç   Cavidan Aydın   N.Ç.   Güler Müslü   Emine Demir   Edanur Demir   Medine Demir   Azra Demir   Gülcan U.   Berivan Önala   Sila Y.   Bedriye Işık   Sonay Öztürk Aslan   Fatma Özdemir   Ayşenur Halli   İkbâl Üzuner   Zehra Gün   Gülfer Öter   Sibel Aygün   Sati Aktan   Sila M.   Hazal Gencer   Özge Hançer Girciç   Esin Karabiyik   Devrim Emir   Ebru Ocal   Selda Eller   Ruhan Akkaya   Fadimana Ok   Pelin Karaca   İsmi Bilinmiyor	Aysel Yıldız   Zehiniso Dayıyavora   Döne Bozdemir   Çiğdem Eskidemirci   Fadim Temirhanogulları   Maia A.   Elif Ceren Arslan   Hamiyet Çetin Görmezer   Narin Güran   Feriye Gözülal   Selhe Gündüz   Hatice Gül   Gülizar Çolak   Tuğba Koç   Ayşe Dürüst   Ebru Duvar   Emine Sezer   Cemre Şimşek   Nira Şimşek   Çeyin Şimşek   Senem Kıvrık   Derya Demir   Eylem Sevilien   Elif Dim   Gülizar Çolak   Gülizar Altıntaş   Elif Durmaz   A.C.   Nuhbe Yılmaz   Sezen Sarısaray   Duru Pakarda   Öznur Akkaya   Zülbiye Bahadır   Sinem Çiğliçoğlu   Kıymet Çetinkaya   Sedat Çınar   Serpil Gül   Hilmiye Tuğba Eşgin   Vesile Akçın   Arife Öz   Fatma Demir   Sultan Tosun   S.K.   Layla Çetiner   Müge Elbeli   Aynur Çilli   Hanife Y.   Nuray Dabaz   Gülhan Baytok   Sözen Tutcu   Cansu Tarak   Nürten Yaptıoğlu   Fatma O.   Elif Avcı   Saliha K.   Esma Biçer   Erva Raziye Asar   Merve K.   Seher İşler   Songül Budak   Cansu Aslan   Rukiye Yıldırım   Safiye Bıçak   Doğa Keklik   İklim Altınsoy   Pera Balabıyık   Sevgi Koçer   Yusra Binnaz Çimtay   Hatice Usatın   Hatice Çelik   Selen Akpolat   Nurcan Tekdemir   Ümmü Doğan   Semiha Türk   Gizem Nazife Türk   Fatma Kahraman   Hilal Kar   Şükran Eba   Laysa Erat   Gülşüm Mertöglü   Fatma Nur Bezen   Seher Aktekin   Aylin Ekiş   Merve Şahin   Hacer Çağla Çetinay   Victoria Vera Blyth   Merve Karabaz   Semiha Koca   Hilal Nur Koca   Lale Polat   Gülşen Çalıngan   Sedat Güter   Saniye Arslan   Hediye Kocaturk   Nur El Süleyman   Esma Şimşek   Şule Özlem Ural   Serap Doğan   Zeynep Kılıç   Aşlı Kılıç   Sevilay Yılmaz   İsmi Bilinmiyor   Başak Tekin   Coşyan Demir   Zahra Nojova   Naçihan Can   Fatma Can   Kader Yıldırım   Cennet Akdağı   Zinnetur Ayar   Hangül Çiğerci   Sadiye Özerli   Rümeyza Meriç Özcan   Nazlı Akdoğan   İrem Er   Hanife Yılmaz   Nazegül Orhan   Meryem Karakoçak   Selen Bilgin   Bahar Kaban   Aylin Pekin   Sevim Duman   Nisanur Öztürk   Zeynep Özdemir   Hasret Öztürk   Zermem Özdemir   İptihal Baba   İnyayeli Heliak   Hatice E.   Saadet Çay   Duygu Şirin   Merve Kuvara   Emine Kuvara   B.S.   Buse Erkin   Dilara Günana   B.S.   Gülay Akça   Edanur K.   Hayriye Demir   Saadet Yünekçü   Şehlaç Ahmad Qureshi   Hivda Temel   Minenur Ala   Gülcan Güneş   Gözde Yılmaz   Esra Y.   Emine Derviş   Tülay Totu   Buse Demirkan   Nazlı Tapadır   A.K.   Leyla Akçol   Aysel Aslan   N.A.   İknur Çetin   Fatma D.   Betül Kurt   F.C.   Sultan Akgül   Selin Yalın   Sahure Dudu Bahçec   Meltem Zengin   Yonca Kazan Çoşkun   Asya Can   Emine Boynueğri   Asya C.   Buse Ateş Suna   Nursel Yılmaz   Türkân Abay   Kübra Kanat   Sevgi Eren Koç   Ayşe Tek   Esma Işık   Petek Aktaş   Semanur Çakır   Gaye Kayan   Yıldız Yılmaz   Selda D.   Besra Kırmızı   Selma Çiftçi   Sevdâ Meşe   Gülseren Yıldırım   Tuğçe A.   Naciye Cengiz   Neşe G.   Emine Öztürk   Serap Yıldız   Esra Uşak   Hüsnâ Falay   İrem Falay   Seyide Cirit   Gülhan Esen   Esra Yılmaz   Kadriye Boçkun   Asude Helen Boçkun   Ömür Arslan   Hamide Urkap   Songül Kurt   Duygu Can   Zahide Yurtkal   Salima Omarova   Zeynep Bedir   Feray Balkan   İlayda Alkan   Ayşe İncöyü   Rukiye Ang   Mervegül Bayez   Ayşe Diak   Hande Çiğeroğlu   Sabiha Çimen   Leyla Demir   Elif Saydam   Özlem Çankaya   Halim Ekrem Aslan   Tuha Ateş   Sevilay Karlı   Emine Ulku Araz   Nasim Gül Karim   Olan Özdemir   Yasemin Unlu   Zehra Güneş   Miney Güney   Pınar Bulunmaz   Banu Uzun   Suna Gül   Salma Güzem   İpek Akçöl   Arzu G.   Gülhan Korkmaz   Beste Aysel Yığılyurt   Rojvalat Kızmaç   Sebahat G.   Selma Abacı   Özlem Şimark   Zozan Yayaşıl   Burcu Demir   Hatice Alay   Muradiye Terzi   N.T.   Zeynep Bilici Pehlivanlıoğlu   Sevdâ Timur   Katie Erorbay   Semra Kocaman   Adile Oymak   Bahar Kanyılmaz   Zeynep Ece Aksay   Seher Kındaç   Yüksel Çağlar   İsmi Bilinmiyor   Aysel Çınar   Şafiye Buraklar   Muradiye A.   Shakhnoza Kurbonova   Safinaz A.   Linda Yılmaz   Dilek Uzelli   Behiye Ediz   Vahfa Ecavıt   Nazlı Elmas   Fahriye Kaya   Melike Akpınar   Nesrin Unal   Aysel Özüç   Hicret Can   Burcu Gezersoy   Kader İrgören   Sengül Yeşilkaya   Petek Akçağır   Melek Nur Özgener   Özge Gülenyüz   Süle Karamerçan   Ulviye Eskiçi   Pervin Bal   Serap Biçer   Gülseven D.   Meliknur Özgençer   Tülay Dağışan   Arzu Çınar   Gülşen Aytekin   Ayşe Gezer   Gözde Nur Doğan   Hediye Koyuncu																

<sup>1</sup> All data referenced in this section is derived from the 2023 annual report by the We Will Stop Femicide Platform. <https://kadincinayetleriniindurduracagiz.net/veriler/3088/2023-yillik-veri-raporu>

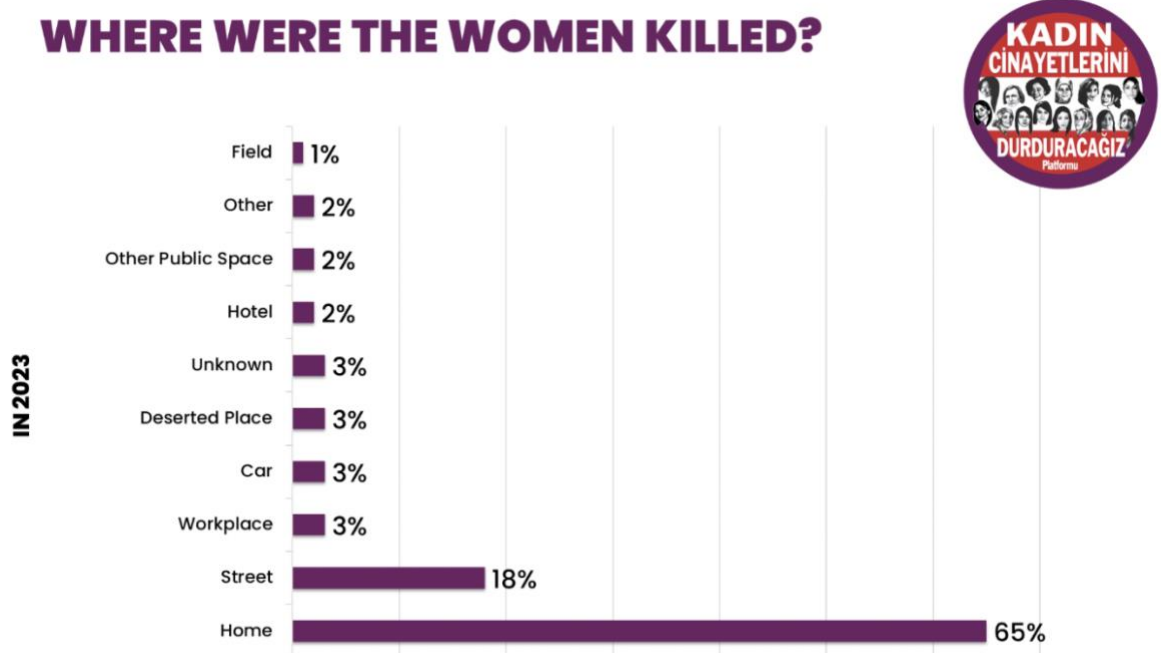
<sup>2</sup>BBC Türkçe. (2021). *Başak Cengiz'i samuray kılıcıyla öldüren Can Göktuğ Boz'a ağırlaştırılmış müebbet hapis cezası*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-59819091>.

<sup>3</sup> Anıt Sayac (The Monument Counter). (2024). *An online monument commemorating women who lost their lives*. Retrieved from <https://anitsayac.com/?year=2024>.

For the above-mentioned reasons, this article will not dwell on how “many” women have been killed in Türkiye in recent years. While reducing these numbers is crucial, as each life matters, whether it’s one life lost or five hundred, the ultimate goal remains the same: to put an end to these murders so that women in Türkiye can live freely and safely, without fear, in lives of their own choosing. Instead, it focuses on where these women were killed, who committed these acts, and whether they received protection under existing legislation and then further examines some of the problems that surfaced in recent cases.

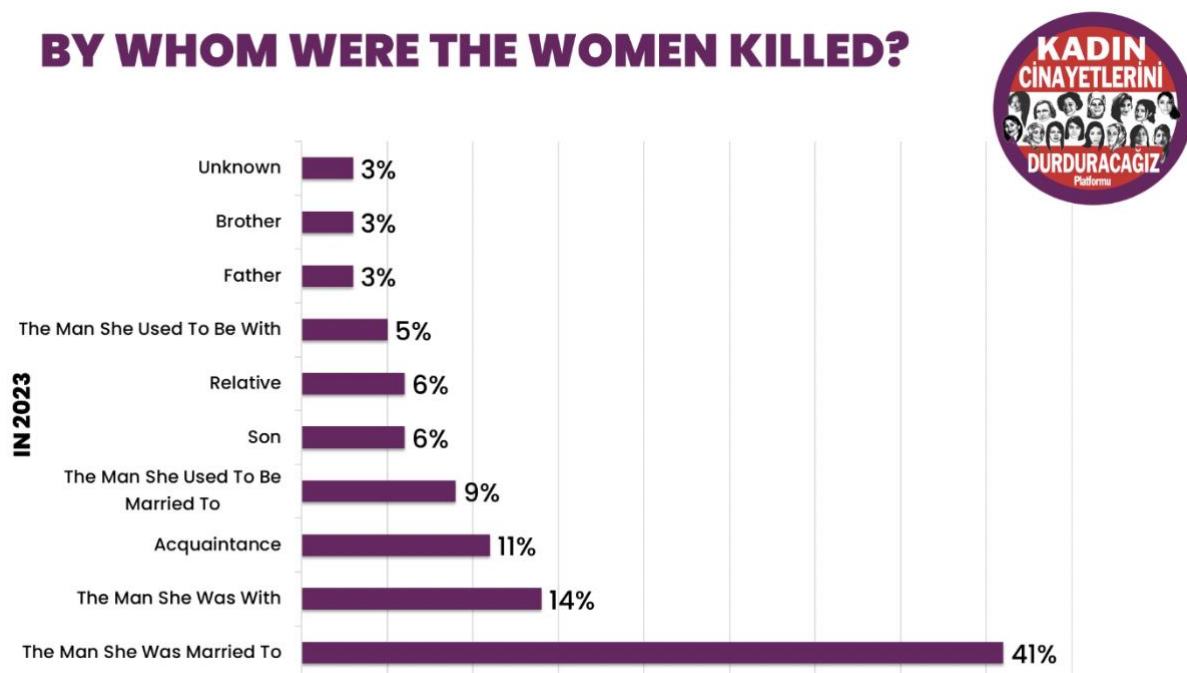
In 2023, 65% of femicides in Türkiye occurred within the home—a grim reminder that, for many women, the very place where they should feel safest has become the site of the greatest risk. This alarming concentration of femicides in domestic settings underscores the urgent need for stronger protective measures within households, where many of these tragedies unfold. Additionally, 18% of femicides took place on the streets, revealing the broader issue of public safety for women in Türkiye. Smaller percentages occurred in workplaces, cars, isolated areas, and public spaces, showing that no environment is entirely secure for women facing violence. The pattern that emerges from this data suggests a deep-seated societal issue where violence against women transcends location.

Figure 2.



The data on perpetrators underscores the persistent threat posed by close male figures in women’s lives. In 2023, 41% of women were killed by their husbands, while boyfriends were responsible for another 14%, and ex-partners for 9%. Fathers, brothers, and other male relatives were also implicated, illustrating how intimate and familial relationships can become dangerous for women. This pattern emphasizes the need for protective measures that specifically target violence within close relationships, where the risks are often most severe.

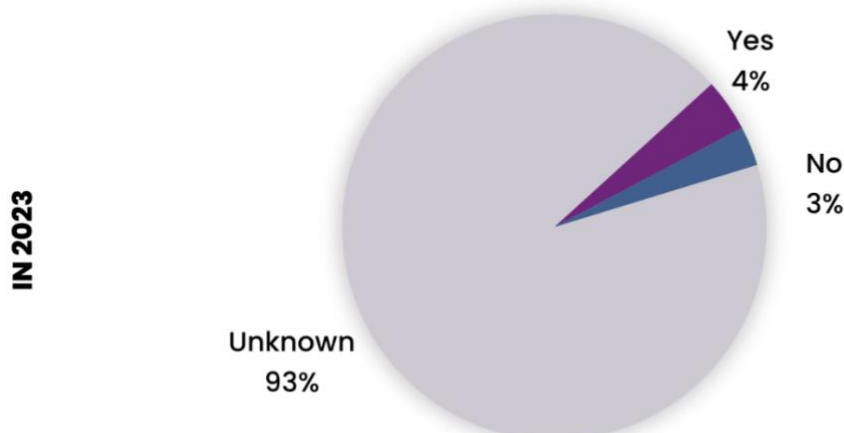
Figure 3.



In terms of legal protections, only 4% of women murdered in 2023 had active protection orders under Türkiye’s Law 6284, which is designed to prevent violence against women. However, in 93% of cases, there was no clear information about whether any protective measure was in place, pointing to systemic issues in tracking and enforcing these orders. This suggests that even when protection mechanisms exist, they may not be effectively implemented.

Figure 4.

## DID THE WOMEN HAVE 6284 PROTECTION ORDER?



As shown by these statistics and others not detailed here, further examining femicides to determine whether victims had access to protection, had children, or the specific reasons behind their killings is a significant challenge. Charts focused on these factors often reveal a large percentage labeled as "undetected" or "unknown," reflecting pervasive gaps in data collection and reporting. These gaps not only obscure the true scale and nature of the crisis but also hinder efforts to create targeted solutions that address the root causes of femicides.

The painful reality is that femicides in Türkiye are happening at a pace that even other women and those who care about this issue struggle to keep up with each new case. Many of them never make the headlines, treated as though they were just another tragic statistic, while others are quickly overshadowed by the constant influx of major news events in Türkiye. This normalization and lack of visibility only deepen the urgency for meaningful change, as each overlooked case represents a life lost in silence and a societal failure to protect its own.

To understand the roots of this crisis, we must look beyond the statistics and delve into some of the recent underlying problems that perpetuate femicides in Türkiye. These factors, embedded within social, legal, and



cultural frameworks, create an environment where violence against women persists with troubling regularity.

## Problems and Cases

While longstanding cultural factors such as patriarchal norms and so called honor-based violence have long contributed to Türkiye's femicide crisis, some problems have surfaced in prominent cases. Legislative regressions, weak law enforcement, impact of social media, and a lack of transparency in investigating femicide cases have all played significant roles in recent killings. These problems not only compromise existing protections but also embolden harmful behaviors by weakening public accountability and trust.

### 1. Legislative regressions, weak law enforcement and their impact on mindsets

- **Problem:** Türkiye's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention has had far-reaching implications on both public attitudes and the enforcement of women's rights. This shift has emboldened some perpetrators, who perceive the withdrawal as a signal that legal protections against violence may be weakening. Inconsistent enforcement practices further reinforce this perception, undermining women's ability to seek safety and justice effectively. For instance, when a woman files a complaint or lawsuit against an aggressor, her address is shared with the accused for legal notification purposes—a procedure that severely compromises her safety. This flawed practice often deters women from filing complaints, fearing that their address will end up in the hands of their aggressor.
- **Case:** In Beyoğlu (2024), a woman was harassed openly on the street by two men.<sup>4</sup> The suspects were initially detained but released when the victim chose not to file an official complaint. However, following public outcry and increased backlash, they were rearrested. This incident underscores the inconsistent application of protective measures, where even clear instances of harassment do not result in immediate accountability unless public pressure intervenes. Such cases highlight how the absence of strong legal protections and enforcement emboldens perpetrators, reinforcing a climate of impunity that leaves women vulnerable and erodes public trust in the

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<sup>4</sup> Euronews Türkçe. (2024). *Beyoğlu'nda bir kadına sokak ortasında taciz: Şüpheliler tepki üzerine tekrar gözaltına alındı*. Retrieved from <https://tr.euronews.com/2024/10/04/beyoglundu-bir-kadina-sokak-ortasinda-taciz-supheliler-tepki-uzerine-tekrar-gozaltina-alin>.

justice

system.

## 2. Impact of social media

- **Problem:** Unlike regions with robust social media policies, such as the EU with its Digital Services Act and Disinformation Code, Türkiye lacks sufficient regulation over social media platforms. This regulatory gap allows online spaces, like Discord and Telegram, to become hosts for groups where harmful, misogynistic conversations take place. These spaces can normalize violence and foster a culture where acts against women are trivialized or even encouraged, particularly within groups that promote incel ideologies or explicitly discuss violence against women. While some may call for banning such platforms, this approach is limited in effectiveness in the digital age, where new platforms and alternative spaces constantly emerge. Instead, what's needed is a balanced approach—one that involves monitoring, moderation, and accountability measures to curtail harmful content without overly restricting digital freedoms.
- **Case:** İkbal Uzuner and Ayşenur Halil (2024) – In this recent case, discussions within Discord groups explicitly promoted violent ideologies, with some users encouraging harm against women and discussing incel-related narratives.<sup>5</sup> Following the murder of İkbal and Ayşenur, revelations emerged about certain groups in online spaces where users openly discussed and glorified violence against women.

<sup>6</sup>

## 3. Lack of transparency in investigations

- **Problem:** A lack of transparency in femicide investigations often fuels conspiracy theories and public speculation, undermining the seriousness of these cases and damaging public trust in the justice system. When investigations are not handled openly, it distracts from the systemic problem, often making femicides seem like isolated incidents rather than part of a broader crisis.
- **Case: Şule Çet (2018)** – Initially reported as a suicide, Şule's death quickly raised doubts as evidence suggested she had been assaulted.<sup>7</sup> The inconsistent information released to the public led to a wave of

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<sup>5</sup>Milliyet. (2024). *İncel alarmı: İkbal Uzuner ve Ayşenur Halil'in katili Semih Çelik ile ilgili yeni gelişmeler*. Retrieved from <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/inceal-alarml-ikbal-uzuner-ve-aysenur-halil-in-katili-semih-celik-ile-igili-yeni-gelismeler-7204535>.

<sup>6</sup>BBC Türkçe. (2024). *Discord'a neden erişim engeli getirildi, uygulama neden eleştiriliyor?* Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cz6we6z232wo>.

<sup>7</sup>Euronews Türkçe. (2024). *Beyoğlu'nda bir kadına sokak ortasında taciz: Şüpheliler tepki üzerine tekrar gözaltına alındı*. Retrieved from <https://tr.euronews.com/2024/10/04/beyoglundu-bir-kadina-sokak-ortasinda-taciz-supheliler-tepki-uzerine-tekrar-gozaltina-alin>.

conspiracy theories and public debate, diverting focus from the real issues of violence and justice. This case highlights the need for transparency to maintain public trust and ensure that systemic issues are not overshadowed by sensationalism.

Addressing these problems in the digital age we are living in is crucial for curbing the femicide crisis in Türkiye. Without confronting these emergent factors that amplify longstanding issues, efforts to protect women and bring lasting change will fall short since a true path forward requires tackling both historical and recent problems.

## How do people in Türkiye respond back?



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Women in Türkiye are well-organized, fast, and courageous. Following the tragic killings of İkbal Uzuner and Ayşenur Halil, the *We'll Stop Femicides Platform* mobilized protests from Adana to Berlin, demonstrating the reach and determination of Turkish women in demanding justice. This swift response reflects a strong, interconnected network of activists and supporters who refuse to let these crimes go unnoticed.

In 2024, among many others, the *We'll Stop Femicides Platform* has continued to be one of Türkiye's most visible women's rights organizations,

<sup>8</sup> BBC Türkçe. (2024). *İkbal Uzuner ve Ayşenur Halil'i vahşice öldüren Semih Çelik hakkında neler biliniyor, olay günü neler yaşandı?* Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cm24ymlz277o>. Protest took place in İzmir after the killings of İkbal Uzuner and Ayşenur Halil.

rallying women and allies to advocate for systemic change. Through grassroots organizing, legal support, and public demonstrations, the platform brings national attention to cases that might otherwise be overlooked. They leverage social media to amplify their message, using hashtags to raise awareness and build solidarity. These digital campaigns have become crucial, allowing women across Türkiye and internationally to share personal stories, create public dialogue, and emphasize the urgent need for change.

Additionally, Turkish women's groups are using legal channels to push for accountability and challenge lenient sentencing for femicide perpetrators. By providing legal support to families of victims, they strive to set precedents for harsher punishments, fighting for justice case by case. This legal advocacy is crucial in countering systemic failures, where inadequate law enforcement and weak judicial responses often embolden perpetrators.

Alongside the response from the women's movement, a significant public outcry emerged following the recent tragic murders of İkbâl Uzuner and Ayşenur Halil. Another reaction was young women utilizing platforms such as TikTok to make their voices heard internationally. Many of their videos reached out to global influencers, resulting in them making videos on these specific topics and raising awareness. Influential figures and independent journalists took the social media platforms, including YouTube, to address the issue. One widely viewed program, "Mevzular Açık Mikrofon | 6284 Özel"<sup>9</sup> organized by influencer and media figure Oğuzhan Uğur, garnered over five million views. The program featured prominent voices from Mor Çatı, the We'll Stop Femicide Platform, women's rights lawyers, and celebrities. Uğur, who moderated the event, began by saying he was "honored" to host the program, acknowledging his journey from once using sexist language to now supporting gender equality. While support from individuals with mass influence is appreciated, and openly acknowledging a personal shift from using sexist language to advocating for change is meaningful, some questions remain: Are there women with the power to organize large-scale YouTube programs like Oğuzhan Uğur's? Does the system itself reinforce a structure that places a male moderator at the forefront of a dialogue deeply rooted in historical inequalities and patriarchy, or is this merely a coincidence? While a full exploration of these questions warrants a separate article, below I explore some potential actions to address systemic inequalities.

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<sup>9</sup>Gain. (2024). *Mevzular Açık Mikrofon | 6284 Özel* [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvHmMfVL0M>.

## What can be done?

Alongside legislative setbacks like Türkiye's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, harmful narratives and widespread disinformation further perpetuate the problem. To combat femicides effectively, it is essential to shift narratives around gender-based violence and femicide. Too often, these issues are framed in narrow, relational terms, with appeals like, "What if it happened to your mother, sister, or girlfriend?" Such framing reduces the problem to personal relationships and implies that a woman's worth is contingent on her connection to someone else, rather than her intrinsic value as an individual. This perspective unintentionally reinforces inequality by positioning women as "someone's something" rather than autonomous individuals with inherent rights. Additionally, the excessive glorification of family unity is a problematic narrative that can create harmful dynamics, leading some men to believe they have the right to use control, or even violence, to keep women within a marriage. Promoting family unity should never come at the expense of individual safety and autonomy. Narratives around marriage and family must instead emphasize mutual respect, equality, and the freedom of each partner to make independent choices. Shifting these narratives is essential for fostering a society where women's lives and choices are valued for their own sake.

Misleading information has also been weaponized against initiatives to protect women, particularly through disinformation about the Istanbul Convention. Contrary to claims, the Convention does not require countries to adopt specific policies on gender identity. For example, Article 3 of the Convention defines gender as "the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men", offering flexibility rather than imposing a rigid mandate. Countering such disinformation is critical to protecting the Convention's integrity and maintaining its role as a tool for women's safety.

A meaningful response to femicides in Türkiye must also include legislative reforms and the enforcement of protective laws. Rejoining the Istanbul Convention would be a significant step in restoring Türkiye's commitment to women's rights, but it must be accompanied by rigorous enforcement of existing laws and vigilance against any legislation that normalizes or trivializes violence. For instance, recent laws targeting stray dogs inadvertently led to a spike in animal cruelty cases, which can desensitize the public to violence and contribute to a broader culture where aggression

and harm are more readily tolerated. This underscores the need for legislation that consistently upholds respect for life and individual rights across all areas.

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