

Turkey's Failure to Protect Women

News:

Dozens of women protested in Istanbul on Saturday to denounce rising violence against women and the government's failure to stop brutal attacks across the country.

They gathered in the Kadikoy neighborhood on the Asian side of Istanbul, recounting harrowing stories of women recently murdered across the country, including Emine Bulut, whose killing by her ex-husband in August sparked outrage.

"Stop the murder of women!", "Stop male violence!" and "Do not watch violence, do something," they shouted. (Source: AFP, Istanbul Sunday, 29 September 2019)

Comment:

Despite the Law to Protect Family and Prevent Violence Against Women which was passed in 2012 and Turkey's ratification of the Council of Europe's 2011 Istanbul Convention on preventing domestic violence there has been a year by year increase of violence and murder of women in Turkey.

The Hurriyat Daily News reported in May 2019, *"Turkish courts have granted 856,020 injunctions protecting domestic violence victims in the past 27 months, according to the head of the first civil chamber of the Ankara regional courts of justice."*

"Some 38-39 percent of women are exposed to violence [in Turkey] at some time during their lives," said Zeynep Öksüzoğlu during a presentation to the Turkish Parliament Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men.

Women constitute 82 percent of all domestic violence victims."

Statistics are mainly available from NGO's rather than government sources and most women's groups point the finger at the government's own negative views about the role of women in the household and society as a contributory factor for the rise of violence.

Turkey is a predominately Muslim society and it is struggling with cultural practices that are mixed with Islamic ideas and Western influence. This is a challenge that can lead to alienation from Islam as well as destroying the home and family life of those affected by violence. The reaction to violence against women had led to a rise in women's groups speaking up and directing protests. Although these crimes do need to be called out and the government's failure to protect women must be strongly condemned, it is dangerous to miss the flaws of the current system.

When we see crimes against women rising, we have opportunity to examine the foundations of the current system and examine what alternatives are better suited for this and all problems in society.

Since Turkey is a Muslim country and since these crimes are being carried out by Muslim men we should look at how Islam can provide solutions to this and also be clear that Islam is not the cause of the problem.

Harmony between laws and individual come firstly when individuals are clear on their purpose in life, namely to worship Allah (swt). This relationship, where taqwa is a regulator of individuals' actions comes about more strongly when the whole society has the same basis. This would define roles and responsibilities for both male and female in a clear manner, not tainted by Western or cultural ideas. An individual with Taqwa can maintain his or her actions without being threatened to act a certain way.

Education or tarbiyah (encompassing our outlook on all matters) and culture too have to be based on producing individuals who relate their actions to accountability. Where an individual transgresses, laws are used but they too have to be based on the belief of the masses derived from the Shariah, as this alone provides justice as it is not based on man's prejudices and whims. These laws also must be enacted upon as commands from Allah (swt) and not a choice. In this way, laws serve to deter transgression and not just pay lip service.

Prior to Islam, women suffered in many ways due to practices that were deeply rooted but after the implementation of Islam as a system, not a set of rituals as is the norm in all Muslim lands today, the status of women was elevated.

The status of women in Islam, when it was implemented as a system is well known. This was not to produce equality for women or to emasculate men, but to produce harmony between the genders. Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: «خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِهِ، وَأَنَا خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِي» **“The best among you is the best towards his wife, and I am the best of you to my wives.”** (Ibn Majah)

There is most definitely failure on the part of the government in protecting women in Turkey, but that failure is not that the current laws are ignored, but rather that they fail to implement Islam comprehensively, under the Khilafah (Caliphate) upon the method of the Prophethood. When we seek solutions, let us ask; did Islam ever lead to such high levels of crime against women? And, do crimes against women still exist in societies following the Western standards?

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