

# Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres in Combatting Male Violence in Turkey

Assembly of Women's Shelters and  
Solidarity/Counselling Centres

*sığınaksızbirdünya*



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# Introduction

The Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres is the largest convention of women's organizations working in the field of violence against women in Turkey, meeting since 1998 in order to share experiences in combatting violence against women, develop a common set of politics, and establish a lasting communication network among organizations and institutions. Growing in number over the years, member organizations of the Assembly are feminist and independent women's organizations that either run shelters and/or solidarity centres or aim to do so in the near future. As of 2021, the Assembly operates with a membership of 30 women's organizations active in 16 provinces across Turkey<sup>1</sup>.

Ever since it was first convened, the Assembly has been one of the broadest-based platforms in the struggle against male violence waged by the women's movement in Turkey, basing itself on the awareness that violence against women may only be prevented through persistent and organized action. As such, it considers feminist principles and methods essential to this struggle. Held since 1998, the Assemblies have not only provided an opportunity for experience sharing between women working in the field of violence against women, but they have also served as the platform for developing a joint political program and demands in order to shift existing policies in women's interests.

Looking at previous years' Assembly Concluding Declarations, it may be seen that many of the laws and regulations passed to combat violence against women in Turkey were initially voiced as demands in a past Assembly meeting. The conditions for formulating these demands in Assemblies were created through the sharing of current experiences regarding male violence against women and the bringing of suggestions from the field as to what practices are in women's best interests. In this monitoring report we have prepared as Assembly member organizations, we sought to provide an overall picture of how policies in combatting male violence find expression in practice by charting out the present situation of women's counselling centres and shelters in Turkey.

Women's counselling centres and shelters are institutions where women may

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1 The list of member organizations is provided in the Concluding Declaration of the 24th Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres included as an appendix to this report.

seek support with their children in order to escape violence. To understand the legal framework for these institutions, we must first look to the Istanbul Convention, which Turkey withdrew from in March 2021 in a midnight presidential decree – for it is the Istanbul Convention that constitutes the basis of the Law no 6284, Turkey’s fundamental legislative instrument formulated with the express purpose of combatting violence against women. As the most comprehensive convention published to date in the struggle against violence against women, the Istanbul Convention stipulates that shelters must be operated with general and specialist support services in line with the purposes of protecting women against all forms of violence and preventing violence against women and domestic violence. These institutions are obligated to provide the support mechanisms necessary for women and their children to be able to escape violence and find protection from it.

Even though Turkey has left the Istanbul Convention in utter disregard for women’s choices and demands, we are still determined to have the Convention’s perspective adopted and its articles that provide a concrete roadmap implemented. The Law no 6284 came into effect in March 2012 pursuant to Turkey becoming the first signatory to the Istanbul Convention in 2011. Much as many of its articles and even its name fell far from meeting feminists’ demands, this law provided a comprehensive framework in combatting violence against women simply by taking the Istanbul Convention as its basis. Limitations regarding the definition of violence and its perpetrator in the Law no 4320 were addressed to a certain degree in this new law, which took a more comprehensive approach. Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centres (Şiddeti Önleme ve İzleme Merkezleri – ŞÖNİM) were established as per the Law no 6284. Rules for the operating procedures of ŞÖNİMs and shelters were specified in respective guidelines.

Come 2021, we find ourselves in a situation where Turkey has left the Istanbul Convention, and there are significant shortcomings in the implementation of the Law no 6284 despite the near decade that has gone by since its enactment. Although Turkey claims to remain committed to combatting violence against women, increasing drawbacks in implementation over recent years in particular and pervasive narratives promoting the family and therefore reinforcing traditional gender roles indicate the exact opposite. As women’s organizations working to combat violence against women, we witness first-hand what women fighting to escape violence experience. These experiences reveal that women face serious obstacles in accessing mechanisms in place to combat violence

in Turkey. In this report, we aim to document these challenges and obstacles, analysing them in light of the experiences of frontline women's organizations working directly with survivors and information we have garnered through information requests<sup>2</sup> from responsible public authorities.

As source material for this monitoring report, we held focus group meetings with Kadın Zamanı (Time for Women) Women's Association, the Adana Women's Solidarity Centre and Shelter Association, Antalya Women's Counselling Centre and Solidarity Association, Bodrum Women's Solidarity Association, Women's Solidarity Foundation, Foundation for Women's Solidarity, Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation and İzmir Women's Solidarity Association on September 7 and with the Katre Women's Counselling and Solidarity Association, Mor Salkım Women's Solidarity Association, Mimoza Women's Association, Rosa Women's Association, Fethiye Women's Counselling and Solidarity Association, Star Women's Association, Yaşamevi (Life House) Women's Solidarity Association, Günebakan Women's Association and Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation on September 20. All working directly with survivors as frontline organizations in their own localities, these organizations shared with us their experiences and observations of women's efforts in escaping violence in these focus group meetings. Our other source of information consisted of information requests we submitted under the Right to Information Act. We submitted information requests to the Ministry of Family and Social Services, ŞÖNİMs in the 81 provinces and 73 municipalities. The Ministry left many of our questions unanswered and only 38 out of 81 ŞÖNİMs responded to us. 35<sup>3</sup> of these 38 responses said, "The response to your information request shall be provided to your Foundation by our Ministry's General Directorate on the Status of Women." Of the remaining three, the Bayburt ŞÖNİM responded saying, "Having conferred with our Ministry concerning the Information Request in question, we have been informed that it would not be appropriate to share information on women's guesthouses and such information should be requested from our Ministry's General Directorate on the Status of Women," while the Çorum ŞÖNİM stated that "...[it is] not within our purview to disclose the information and documents

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2 Information request letters we have submitted under the Right to Information Act are included in the "Appendices" section.

3 ŞÖNİMs in Adana, Ağrı, Ankara, Balıkesir, Bartın, Bilecik, Bitlis, Burdur, Denizli, Diyarbakır, Edirne, Erzincan, Erzurum, Gaziantep, Giresun, Hatay, Iğdır, Isparta, Karabük, Karaman, Mersin, İstanbul, Kars, Kırklareli, Kütahya, Manisa, Muğla, Muş, Nevşehir, Osmaniye, Sinop, Şanlıurfa, Uşak, Van and Yalova responded in this manner.

requested pursuant to Article 4/1 h of the Regulation on Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers which states that ‘The personal information of victims of violence, their accompanying children, and perpetrators of violence is kept confidential unless otherwise provided by law’...” The Kayseri ŞÖNİM, on the other hand, returned detailed responses to our questions.<sup>4</sup>

We received responses from 39 of the 73 municipalities to whom we submitted Information Requests. Of these, the Bursa and Samsun Municipalities responded to all or part of our questions saying that the shelter was being run by the ministry, which subsequently did not share information with the municipality.

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4 The Information Requests to the Ministry of Family and Social Services and Kayseri ŞÖNİM are included as appendices to this report.

## Campaign for Shelters

While collecting data for this monitoring report as Assembly member organizations, we also organized a campaign targeting public institutions and municipalities in particular where we reiterated our demand for shelters. The social media campaign “We Want Shelters” lasted through May, June and July. The slogan of our first hashtag action was #WeWantShelters (#SığınakIstiyoruz), where we reminded the state and municipalities of their obligations to open shelters. In the second action in June, we used the hashtag #AShelterMust (#SığınaklarNasilOlmali) in order to highlight baseline standards for the physical conditions and operating principles of shelters. Our third and final campaign action was titled #WomenAsk (#KadınlarSoruyor), where we publicly shared the questions we asked the Ministry of Family and Social Services as well as municipalities in our information requests, hence underscoring the state’s obligation to collect data in order to combat violence against women. This campaign had an audience reach of 129,300 users on Twitter. It was promoted through interviews with Assembly member organizations that took place on news channels Artı TV and Dokuz8 news, and featured in print and internet media outlets such as Bianet, Cumhuriyet, Birgün, Jinnews, Ekmek ve Gül and Sendika.org.

## Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centres

Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centres (Şiddeti Önleme ve İzleme Merkezleri – ŞÖNİM) were designated in the Law no 6284, dated 2012, as the principle public institution in combatting violence against women and vested with broad powers in line with the ambitious goal of turning them into centralized “one-stop” stations for women and children subjected to violence. In the Regulation on Women’s Guesthouses, ŞÖNİMs have been described as centres where empowering and supportive counselling, guidance, referral and monitoring services are offered by adequate and appropriate – preferably female – staff employed, with the aim of preventing violence and effectively implementing protective and preventive measures, operating on a round-the-clock (24/7) basis.” According to the Regulation on Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centres, one of the key functions of these offices is supposed to be coordination. This task involves enabling cross-agency collaboration in responding to incoming cases and issuing protection orders, entering all the data collected in the various areas of operation into a single system, and

evaluating and monitoring the process. Along with coordination, ŞÖNİMs are also tasked with providing psycho-social support, legal support, educational and occupational support, healthcare support, financial support and intervention and referral services to women subjected to violence and their accompanying children.

As the main state mechanism from which women are expected to seek support in escaping violence, ŞÖNİMs are notorious for their many operational problems ever since the day they were established. They fall short of providing the most fundamental kinds of support expected from an institution responsible for coordinating the state's response to violence including identifying the hitches in the implementation of orders issued under the Law no 6284, notifying the public agency responsible for enforcing the order in question, and informing women exercising their rights under the Law of all the services available to them and of potential risks.

Women's organizations repeatedly bring up the host of problems created by the fact that ŞÖNİMs are not fulfilling their coordinating role. Although they are charged with coordinating the enforcement of protection orders issued under the Law no 6284, they are often found lacking in this capacity, which results in serious security breaches for women. Problems in the enforcement of confidentiality orders in particular are not only potentially life-threatening, but also complicate women's access to their basic rights to such a degree that women sometimes come to the point of choosing to have them removed. This lack of coordination also appears to be the main reason why women in need of financial support have difficulty in accessing existing services. When they apply for financial support they find themselves unable to provide a residential address due to the fact that their addresses are marked as confidential, and a woman in this situation may find herself having to obtain and bring to the relevant state agency an official document stating that there is a confidentiality order in her name, which is why her address does not show up, and for this reason she is unable to file an application in her own district – all because of a ŞÖNİM's failure to fulfil its coordinating role.

***A social worker participating in the focus group:*** *Most women experience problems with address, place of residence, etc. especially when they apply for financial support. In an application filed by a woman staying in the ŞÖNİM shelter under such a confidentiality order, for instance, we saw that although these public offices are all interconnected they have absolutely no clue about each other's operations. So unfortunately this woman had to go to great lengths to prove that there was a confidentiality order in her name, that this was why her address didn't show up, which prevented her from filing an application in her own district. She had to obtain a document*

*from one office and take it to the other one in person, etc. This lack of coordination is not only problematic in terms of the service provided, but also causes women seeking these services to feel quite trapped.*

Along with the problems in the provision of services ŞÖNİMs are obligated to provide, their physical conditions also obstruct women's access. The fact that they limit themselves to a 9-to-5 work schedule even though they are required by regulation to be open round-the-clock, that some of these offices in the 81 provinces consist of nothing but a single room, are located in outlying parts of the city or are on the upper stories of buildings without lifts are some of the physical problems commonly observed.

Accounts of ŞÖNİMs that have good practices in place reveal that these are a result of the individual initiatives of employees. Lack of standardization allows individuals such leeway, which generally results in the proliferation of bad practices. Some of the most common examples of bad practices are officers giving women incomplete/erroneous/misleading information or failing to inform them of their rights and the services ŞÖNİMs are supposed to provide.

Although ŞÖNİMs are responsible for shelters, women still have to go to law enforcement to apply for shelter services. The fact that they do not fulfil their coordinating role and fail to provide various services including social support lead women's organizations to refrain from referring victims to ŞÖNİMs unless under very specific circumstances.

***A social worker participating in the focus group:*** *We don't apply to ŞÖNİMs or contact them unless a woman is facing a threat to her life. (...) ŞÖNİMs are our last resort, both because they are very bureaucratic and because – maybe this is common practice in other provinces as well – women face violence and then they have to cope with cops coming to pick them up. (...) I don't remember where it was, there was this one case. They didn't think to go pick the woman up themselves, there's always a police escort. The woman was terrified, thinking 'why am I sitting in the backseat of a police car as if I'm a criminal'. As I've mentioned, there are serious problems related to the lack of a gender-based perspective in practice. It's a fundamental problem with mentality and perception. Since these ŞÖNİMs were rolled out in a rush, their presence is more about rendering women's organizations ineffectual than truly combatting violence against women.*

# SHELTERS

Shelters are places where women facing male violence may stay with their accompanying children in order to receive the social, psychological, legal, etc. support they need so as to build an independent life free of violence. In Turkey, there are 112 shelters operated by the Ministry of Family and Social Services, 33 shelters operated by municipalities, 3 by the Directorate General of Migration Management, and 1 by Mor Çatı (Purple Roof). The Ministry of Family and Social Services uses the term “guesthouse” rather than “shelter” in its operations. The Regulation on the Opening and Operation of Women’s Guesthouses, defines “guesthouse” as follows:

*Boarding social service establishments, interchangeably called “women’s guesthouse”, “shelter”, “women’s shelter”, “women’s house”, “compassion house”, etc., where women who have been physically, emotionally, sexually and verbally abused or subjected to violence are protected from violence, find solutions to their psycho-social and economic issues, are empowered, and can stay temporarily with their accompanying children during this period where their needs are met.*

In response to our information request, the Ministry provided us with the number of shelters but left our questions regarding the attributes of these shelters unanswered and did not disclose the number of women that received shelter services from the Ministry in 2020. This section features an overview of the experiences of women’s organizations with shelters operated by the Ministry of Family and Social Services.

Women’s organizations all speak of experiencing serious reservations in referring women to state-run shelters. The first of these drawbacks is that women who face violence are reluctant to go to state-run shelters. This reluctance comes from previous shelter experiences – be it their own or relayed by others. Here is how a social worker conveys the words of a woman who previously stayed in a shelter:

*Sometimes we have cases where women facing violence call us, but say they don’t want to stay in a shelter – especially if they have previous shelter experiences.*

Another social worker mentions the answer they received when they attempted to refer a woman who had previous shelter experience back to a shelter:

*Somebody called us, she had gone to a couple of different shelters, she tried so many that at this point she said “I’d rather die than go back to one of those...”*

At the top of the list of women's adverse experiences with shelters is the way they are treated in these institutions. The widespread approach that denies their personhood, treating them as if they lack the capacity to make their own decisions and confiscating their communication devices in a manner that leads to isolation from their social networks results in a negative shelter experience. People working in the field are generally only able to garner information regarding the physical and working conditions of state and municipality-run shelters from women's accounts. The following observations of a social worker regarding a shelter staff member accompanying a woman staying in a shelter therefore constitute an example of just how far from empowering the work carried out in these institutions appears to be.

*A woman staying in one of the ŞÖNİM shelters applied to us for legal support (...) and as she came to meet with our lawyer colleague, she was escorted by an officer from ŞÖNİM. At first we thought she was a social worker, this woman. Later I guessed that she might be a healthcare worker there, from what I can tell everybody does a bit of everything in these places. When they came, what struck me as oddest was that she kept treating the woman – who was young, somewhere in her 20s – as if she was a child, saying things like “Tie your shoelaces, sit down, watch out don’t trip, wait over here, don’t cry” or “Once you start crying you aren’t able to get a hold of yourself, you know”. We tried to separate them for a bit just so the woman could breathe. When they came for a second time, the woman who was consulting us said that she didn’t want to speak in the presence of this officer. She pulled me over to a corner and said there were things she wanted to tell us. The officer knew she was meant to see a lawyer, so in that one hour of allotted time she kept monitoring who this woman was speaking with and even down to how many minutes it lasted. So we came together covertly under the pretence of having a scholarship meeting with her, and then she told us that things were very rough and she wanted to leave the shelter. We had suggested to her that she prepare a written account of what she had gone through so she didn’t have to recount it over and over again at every step of the way. She told us that she wasn’t allowed a pen or pencil in the shelter. They weren’t allowed books. I asked her on what grounds. She said ‘in case they tore out pages to send notes to each other’. They were allowed no form of communication with each other whatsoever. Apparently this could lead them to be triggered by one another’s traumas, they were told. And also she added that all their communications were strictly monitored, that when she wanted to make a phone call she had to go to the administrator’s office and put the phone on loudspeaker so that everybody could listen to the call.*

The fact that women are reluctant to even apply for shelter support and try to avoid going to shelters due to their own experiences or those they have heard

from others constitutes one of the most important problem areas hampering women's organizations working in the field. They mention attempting to establish contact with ŞÖNİMs in order to overcome this issue, and express that even though they sometimes manage to make a certain amount of headway through personal relationships it is overall extremely difficult to effect any meaningful change. In cases where women consider going to a shelter, on the other hand, we have received reports of them facing serious difficulties – particularly during the pandemic – in being accepted into a shelter if they weren't able to produce evidence of physical violence, i.e. a medical report, and heard accounts of women being denied shelter access.

Positive experiences regarding shelters are generally linked to certain municipalities – and even in cases where municipalities exhibit good practices overall, the fact that they refer women in life-threatening circumstances to ŞÖNİM shelters is pointed out as a serious drawback. Municipalities may prefer to offload onto ŞÖNİMs rather than take responsibility in a threat-to-life situation. It is clear that similar to the dynamic with ŞÖNİMs, most positive examples in municipality shelters are driven by good relations with either municipality workers or the mayor. Although this appears favourable for the time being, there are concerns regarding the sustainability of mechanisms and methods applied independent of the presence of individuals.

# MUNICIPALITIES

Municipalities are among the public authorities obligated to combat violence against women by way of establishing counselling centres and shelters. According to article 14 of the Law on Municipalities, metropolitan municipalities and all municipalities with a population over 100 thousand are required to establish shelters for women and children. However, encouraged by the lack of consequences in case of non-compliance, many municipalities disregard this obligation.

Exercising our rights under the Right to Information Act, we submitted information requests to 73 metropolitan and provincial municipalities regarding their work on women's counselling centres and shelters, as well as the scope, nature and budgets of the supports they provided women. Only 39 municipalities responded, and out of these 39 the Bursa and Samsun Municipalities answered all or part of our questions saying, "As the operation of women's guesthouses is in the jurisdiction of the Provincial Directorate of Family, Labour and Social Services, this information is not shared with our Municipality for reasons of confidentiality."

Of the municipalities that responded, we saw that 6 (Aydın, Antalya, Bursa, Gaziantep, İstanbul and Mersin) operated one or more shelter, 7 (Antalya, İstanbul, Mersin, Muğla, Eskişehir, Giresun, Tunceli) had women's counselling centres, and only 3 (Antalya, İstanbul and Mersin) operated both a shelter and a women's counselling centre. In 9 provinces municipalities explained that they had offices with names such as family counselling/family support/or family training & consultation centres working with both men and women instead of women's counselling centres that served only women. One province (Kocaeli), on the other hand, shared with us that it had a social assistance centre operated by the municipality, where it also provided first admission (or first-step) station services with a capacity of 20 beds.

Responses to questions regarding the services provided in these centres in municipalities which had **family counselling/support centres/family training & consultation centres** rather than women's counselling centres supporting women only defined their area of activity as "strengthening, protecting, supporting families in order to equip them to overcome social, cultural and psychological difficulties," (Konya) and "activities affirmatively supporting the family unit" (Kocaeli). These centres described the main problems they focused on as "divorces caused by disintegration in the family unit and disruptions in family roles" (Konya). In response to our questions regarding the nature of staff training in these centres, we were informed that they received "family and marriage counselling training" (Erzincan). 2 of the municipalities

whom we asked about staff training policies (Tunceli and Mersin) said that their counselling centre workers received trainings on gender equality from independent women's and LGBTI+ organizations. 1 municipality (Eskişehir) responded saying that experts providing support to women were given anger and stress management courses alongside trainings on gender equality, women's health and the Law no 6284.

The responses provided to questions regarding the areas of expertise of staff members revealed that municipality shelters and counselling centres hired persons specializing in psychology, sociology, social work, diet and nutrition. We were informed that at least 1 psychologist was employed in all of the different kinds of support structures run by municipalities such as shelters, women's counselling centres, family counselling/support centres and first admission stations. 13 municipalities mentioned employing a sociologist and social worker along with psychologists in their shelters and counselling centres. 4 out of all of the municipalities that responded to our questions stated that they had lawyers on staff and provided legal support to women who contacted them, while 4 municipalities said they employed child development specialists. According to the responses given, 5 municipalities have a dietician and nutritionist on staff to work with and support women. In the example of the Çorum Municipality, for instance, we were informed that while there is 1 psychologist on staff in their family training & consultation centre, 4 dieticians work in the same institution. Similarly, we saw that some institutions employ 1 psychologist, but up to 4 security specialists. These kinds of examples demonstrate that these institutions approach the struggle women wage to escape violence as a matter of security rather than women's empowerment.

Inquiring into the kinds of support provided, we noticed that psychological support is the most common form of support offered in shelters and counselling centres. Municipalities that run family support/counselling centres wished to underline that psychologists in their offices provided couples therapy. As much as psychological support is crucial for women trying to escape violence, when psychological support is provided on its own, without a holistic framework complementing it with other forms of support women need, it risks creating the impression that male violence is a psychological condition that can be treated and cured as such, rendering invisible the social causes and impacts of violence rooted in the patriarchy, by way of considering its effects on women as purely psychological. We are aware, however, that male violence is not a psychological issue, and that its source lies in power inequalities resulting from gender roles.

Along with psychological and legal support, municipalities also informed us that they provided women with shelter, security, counselling, referrals, socio-

economic and healthcare support, employment support, and – in certain shelters – day care services. Relatively good examples such as the Mersin Municipality mentioned offering day care services guided by a child development specialist and various other specialized services for women with children provided by psychologists and social workers. We observed that there are no special kinds of support provided by any municipality for cases of sexual violence. All the answers we received stated that the supports offered for other forms of violence were applicable in cases of sexual violence as well. 4 municipalities also expressed that they provided employment support, referring women to various vocational courses for this purpose. Responses given by municipalities that offered more detailed information regarding the nature of these vocational courses revealed that these were mostly hairdressing, sewing courses and the like, heavily conforming to traditional gender roles.

In its short response to our information request, the Isparta Municipality simply said there were no shelters established or operated by the municipality and that they provided in-cash and in-kind support to women who applied. This response itself gives clues as to the dominant charity-oriented approach in combatting violence, according to which women's needs are limited to safety and cash assistance, and the solutions offered in response to economic inequalities suffered by women facing violence are once again firmly within the framework of traditional gender roles.

Only 8 municipalities shared their data with us when we asked them for the number of women they supported in 2020. We realized that what often lay behind this unwillingness to share information was, in fact, poor and inadequate data collection practices. The fact that sufficient data is not available also indicates that the work being carried out is not undergoing any monitoring or evaluation, and that planning for the new period is not based on any impact assessment.

When asked about alternatives to shelter support, none of the municipalities provided any concrete answers as to the services they offered. One municipality (Samsun) mentioned that it offered in-cash and in-kind assistance when it placed a woman in housing outside of a shelter. Another municipality (Aydın) spoke of referring women to specialized shelters if they were to require different support models, but the very same municipality also stated that there were no specialized shelters in their province.

Only 3 municipalities responded to questions regarding the rules by which their shelters operated, expressing that they did not admit women over the age of 60 and boys over the age of 12 – as is common practice across the board. 2 municipalities said that women were only allowed to stay in their shelters for a maximum period of 6 months, while 1 municipality (Mersin) explained that

although the maximum period of stay was prescribed as 6 months, this could be extended a couple of times based on women's individual circumstances.

Inquiring into the impact of the pandemic on municipality shelters and counselling centres, we found out that 1 municipality (Muğla) had not been able to provide any form of support whatsoever to women due to the pandemic and that 1 municipality (Karaman) served a reduced number.

Hence, the fact that many municipalities we requested information from did not share their data with us or were not in possession of the data we requested clearly demonstrates how municipalities fall short of fulfilling their responsibilities in combatting violence against women.

# CONCLUSION

Providing women and children facing violence with the necessary forms of support and establishing mechanisms to prevent violence against women are among the responsibilities and obligations of both central and local governments. We understand that at the heart of the problems with practice delineated in this report are policies that disregard and therefore deepen gender inequalities, which in turn exacerbates violence. Considering the sheer prevalence of violence against women, we urgently call upon the authorities to carry out their duties and develop a new methodology that includes women's organizations and their experiences.

We have been publicly sharing a comprehensive account of the problems we encounter in the field and our recommendations for solutions in the concluding declarations of the past 24 years of Assemblies of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres. We deem this monitoring report an occasion to repeat our demands by once again sharing the concluding declaration of the 24<sup>th</sup> Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres.

# CONCLUDING DECLARATION OF THE 24<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY OF WOMEN'S SHELTERS AND SOLIDARITY/ COUNSELLING CENTRES

Recent times have seen a rise in the backlash against our rights globally as well as in Turkey, particularly over the Istanbul Convention and the concept of gender equality. This wave of attacks that has consistently been on the agenda of the Assembly in these last years, came to a head in Turkey with the country's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention by way of a midnight decision published in the Official Gazette on March 20, 2021. As Assembly member organizations, we have been highlighting the importance of the Istanbul Convention in combatting male violence for years, as well as pointing out the various problems encountered in its implementation. This adverse move by the State of Turkey, which instead would have needed to show political resolve for the full implementation of the convention, once again demonstrated to us that there is no real intention or determination to combat violence against women.

As the debate regarding what to replace the Istanbul Convention with continues, an approach moving further and further away from gender equality to espouse family-centric policies is becoming ever more evident in action plans and strategy documents. Every new action plan and strategy document is not only proof of regression, but also a manifestation of the distinct lack of policy. The fact that the state's actions are not subject to monitoring and evaluation suggests that there is no interest in measuring the effectiveness of plans carried out and no mechanism for holding the state accountable in combatting violence against women.

We expect local governments in particular to turn their professed support for the Istanbul Convention into concrete action. In addition to fulfilling their legal obligations, we urge them to collaborate with women's organizations and espouse a feminist perspective in preparing their strategic plans. We call on municipalities to reject the decision to pull out of the Istanbul Convention and uphold their commitment to the principles of the Convention in practice.

As women's organizations combatting violence against women, we witness women's experiences in their effort to escape violence. These experiences evidence that women face serious obstacles in accessing existing mechanisms against violence in Turkey. Our monitoring reports we prepare based on these experiences of women fighting to escape violence also demonstrate that the

Law no 6284 is not implemented as necessary, ŞÖNİMs fail to carry out their role in ensuring a coordinated response, and problems in the execution of confidentiality orders not only create potentially life-threatening situations but also hamper women's access to their rights to such a degree that they even prefer to lift these orders. This lack of coordination also emerges as the main reason for the difficulties in access faced by women in need of economic support. Reports and experiences shared by women's organizations in Kurdish provinces indicate that state mechanisms instead work to prevent women's struggle and render existing women's centres and institutions dysfunctional. This has become institutionalized practice on a new level with the regime of appointed administrators.

Although the Istanbul Convention appears to be lost for now, we know the power of women's struggles in Turkey and across the globe, and we find the strength we need for our work in this struggle. We base our fight against anti-gender and misogynist movements in our international feminist resistance and solidarity.

As the 24<sup>th</sup> Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres, we share our points of agreement/demands that we deem necessary to effectively ensure the continuity of our struggle to end male violence against women:

- 1.** The Council of State must annul the unlawful decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention.
- 2.** Shelter admissions that have increasingly been taking place through law enforcement on account of the pandemic must instead be processed through ŞÖNİMs.
- 3.** Restraining and protection orders must be issued for a period of 6 months or indefinitely, taking women's needs into consideration. Pathways must be developed to provide easy access for women experiencing various systemic difficulties and finding themselves unable to book appointments in public hospitals, access their information on systems such as e-devlet (e-government), e-nabız (e-pulse), and MHRS (central doctor appointment system), start a bank account or have an ID issued due to not being able to provide a residential address. All relevant institutions and offices must understand what confidentiality orders are and how these should be implemented, with ŞÖNİMs in particular undertaking a coordinating role in this regard.
- 4.** Socio-economic support (sosyo-ekonomik destek – SED) often provided to children who are with women must also be extended to women staying in shelters. New social service models must be developed to incorporate single or childless women unable to receive regular economic support such as SED

into a support scheme. ŞÖNİMs must ensure institutional coordination to enable women's access to the social support they need.

**5.** A round-the-clock support line must be made available serving only women facing violence. This support line must operate in a multi-lingual manner. Personnel must not simply refer callers to the police or another institution, but must rather include women equipped in the field of violence against women to actively listen to women seeking support and provide psychological first-aid in event of crisis. The KADES application must also be multi-lingual, including Kurdish, and must have a user-friendly interface for women to access the application easily.

**6.** Shelters must be a priority for local governments. Municipalities that need to open shelters must do so and hire personnel accordingly. Similar to the obligation of municipalities with a population of over 100,000 to establish shelters, every municipality must be required to open a women's counselling centre. Every municipality must also do visibility work to spread the word on mechanisms available to women facing violence.

**7.** Municipalities must pay attention to the needs and priorities of shelter operations and be able to tweak their correspondence procedures to prevent long bureaucratic processes from jeopardizing women's safety.

**8.** Municipalities must join forces to replace the rules and oppressive attitudes in the Ministry directive with a new set of regulations governing shelter operations based on women's needs and a perspective that foregrounds women.

**9.** Specialized personnel must be employed to work in shelters, and trainings, supervision and psychotherapy sessions must be provided to support employees. There must be a fair distribution of personnel roles, determined according to women's needs, with clear distinctions between roles such as 'psychologist', 'social worker' and 'administrator'. Regular workshops must be given both to psychologists and social workers working in the field and to all administrative positions in relevant offices as to what a shelter is and how it should be operated.

**10.** ŞÖNİMs must facilitate women's access to hospitals for testing that has been made mandatory during shelter admissions due to the pandemic and accompany women during these procedures if necessary. All kinds of attempts to deter women from going to a shelter by mentioning long quarantine periods, etc. must be abandoned and replaced with an approach that foregrounds women's needs.

**11.** Day care and nursery services must be provided taking into account the

needs of women and children staying in shelters. The guidelines preventing boys over the age of 12 from being admitted into shelters must be reconsidered and the rental apartment support specified as an alternative must be put into action.

**12.** Due to increasing and shifting needs after the pandemic, women's requests for psychological and economic support are also on the upswing. The central administration and local governments must prepare gender-responsive budgets that factor in these increasing needs and create the social support mechanisms necessary for women to be able to build lives free of violence.

**13.** Municipalities must identify the specialized needs of LGBTI+ communities through a participatory process and meet these needs without delay.

**14.** The general health insurance provided in state-run shelters must also be extended to municipality and private shelters.

**15.** A special budget must be allocated from the state's central administration including the Ministry and the Office of the President for the establishment and upkeep of municipality shelters and solidarity centres.

**16.** State institutions and local governments must take on an active role in providing free, quality psychological support to women.

**17.** State institutions and local governments must include women's organizations in provincial coordination committees. The information shared in these committee meetings and data – including the numbers – as to how women benefit from existing services must be made public regularly.

**18.** In applications to women's organizations we see that women increasingly contact us through Whatsapp, e-mail, and social media. State institutions and local governments must take this need into account and make themselves more accessible.

**19.** Local governments must develop effective collaborations with independent women's organizations working in the field in order to take concrete steps in combatting violence against women. These collaborations must be based on transparency, thus allowing for monitoring by civil society and women's organizations.

**20.** Local governments must also allocate budgets for social policy and provide lasting solutions, particularly to alleviate women's poverty that has been deepening in the wake of the pandemic – with a concrete response to the need for housing as a major priority.

**21.** All municipalities must rapidly develop local equality action plans. Preparation and implementation processes must be inclusive of civil society

organizations and municipality equality offices.

**22.** Support systems must be formulated to relieve women of the burden of care and allow them to participate in the labour force with full job security. A social security scheme must be created for all women to be brought under social security. Protective measures must be put in place for women pushed into informal or part-time and flexible working conditions due to ongoing crises.

**23.** Urgent action plans prepared to respond to crises must include specific provisions for women, signalling a shift away from strategies that leave the burden of such crises on the shoulders of women.

**24.** It must be understood that women's poverty cannot be eradicated through inadequate social aid policies that see it as nothing but means for election propaganda. The budget for social support must be increased, and these supports must be rendered regular and consistent within a rights-based framework rather than meted out sporadically as charity.

**25.** Women facing violence and seeking support from legal aid offices of bar associations must be provided with a lawyer immediately, without needing to meet economic or any other criteria. Pro bono and state-appointed (under the Criminal Procedure Code – CMK) lawyers must receive regular trainings on gender inequality, violence against women, and the principles of consultation.

**26.** Withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention has not rendered the Law no 6284 null and void. Law enforcement agencies and judicial offices must carry out their duties in enforcing the protective and preventive measures stipulated in the Law no 6284. Protective and preventive measures issued within this framework must be tracked by law enforcement agencies and ŞÖNİMs in accordance with existing legislation.

**27.** Law enforcement officers must inform women that they are able to benefit from protective and preventive measures under Law no 6284 even if they do not want to file an official complaint.

**28.** Temporary alimony orders must not be unnecessarily delayed and the amount awarded should not be too low. Effective solutions must be found for the collection of alimony payments.

**29.** Persons officiating and attending religious marriages that encourage and enable early and/or forced marriages must be penalized, recognizing that early marriages are sexual exploitation regardless of the circumstances, thus putting an end to acquittals based on various excuses.

**30.** Bar associations must engage in regular monitoring and reporting in the field of violence against women.

- 31.** As we have noted in the cases of Şerife Demir, Çilem Doğan, Melek İpek, Nevin Yıldırım, and Yasemin Çakal, when evaluating for 'legal self-defence' in the cases of women who have been forced to commit murder in order to preserve their lives, it is imported to take into consideration the systematic nature of their past experiences of violence.
- 32.** ŞÖNİMs that are established in every province and tasked with cross-agency coordination must hold meetings with Provincial Directorates of Migration Management. In these meetings, they must share the problems encountered by migrant and refugee women in attempting to escape violence, and develop solutions to make effective use of local resources.
- 33.** Statements of women who are refugees or foreign nationals are only considered valid in official proceedings if they are accompanied by a certified translator. There is no support structure to meet this need for certified translators, and applications received by women's organizations through their own (non-certified) translators are rendered invalid and invisible. This problem in implementation must be resolved, and state institutions and local governments must employ translators taking this need into account.
- 34.** As emphasized in the Istanbul Convention, rapid action must be taken to establish rape crisis/sexual violence crisis centres, consolidating comprehensive and specialized assistance mechanisms into a single point of access with regards to sexual violence along with engaging in preventive work, providing long-term social support in addition to emergency and short-term interventions, and employing specialized personnel able to provide emergency medical care and legal support.
- 35.** Trainings and other activities must be carried out to raise sexual violence awareness.
- 36.** Professionals providing support to women against sexual violence must inform them about what the procedures are and what they may encounter throughout the process, but leave the decision as to the course of action they wish to take to the women themselves.
- 37.** Investigations on sexual violence must be started based on women's complaints alone without requiring concrete proof, and efficient investigations must be carried out. Survivors of sexual violence must have to testify once only, instead of being made to repeat their story of abuse over and over again.
- 38.** The involvement of women's organizations and bar associations in cases of sexual violence in court as "intervening parties" must not be inhibited. Lawyers appointed by the Ministry must be made to follow the entire legal process, and if not they must not be involved in the first place.

**39.** A set of guidelines must be prepared as to how to respond to sexual violence and specialist training must first and foremost be given to parties providing frontline support. All relevant personnel in institutions women receive support on sexual violence from including bar associations, hospitals, schools, social service centres and courthouses must be informed regarding the effects and dynamics of violence and sexual violence, incorporating a gender perspective into their work. Position and policy papers must be developed to delineate the approach all relevant state institutions will take to sexual violence and the principles that shall guide their support work.

**40.** Forensics departments must be accessible, and physicians seeing patients in emergency rooms of hospitals must be experienced in terms of the effects and dynamics of violence and have the competency to gather evidence.

**41.** Healthcare provided in the aftermath of sexual violence must include examinations to check for sexually transmitted diseases and possible pregnancies, informing patients in this regard and providing means and options for preventing and terminating pregnancies. Psychological support after sexual violence should not be limited to psychotherapy, and must be provided by women working with a feminist perspective, cognizant of the dynamics of violence.

**42.** Healthy Life Centres (Sağlıklı Hayat Merkezleri – SHM) must be competent in providing psychological and psychosocial support to women and children. When children are in question, families must be informed of these supports without having to request information, and a system must be developed to support families as well.

**43.** Support mechanisms for sexual violence survivors must be accessible to refugee and migrant women, translation services must be provided, and translators must be selected based on having a good command of language.

**Long live women’s solidarity for a world without violence and shelters!**

# Member Organizations of the Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres\*

- 1- Adana Women's Solidarity Center and Shelter Association (AKDAM)
- 2- Antalya Women's Counselling Center and Solidarity Association
- 3- Association for Women with Disabilities (ENG-KAD)
- 4- Aydın Söke Women's Shelter, Counselling and Solidarity Association
- 5- Bodrum Women's Solidarity Association (BKD)
- 6- Buca EVKA-1 Women, Culture and Solidarity Association
- 7- Çanakkale Association for the Utilization of Women's Handicrafts (ELDER)
- 8- Deniz Yıldızı Women's Solidarity Association
- 9- Edirne Women's Center Counselling Association
- 10- Fethiye Women's Counselling and Solidarity Association
- 11- Foundation for Women Solidarity
- 12- Günebakan Women's Association
- 13- International Refugee Women Solidarity Association
- 14- İzmir Çiğli Evka-2 Women's Cultural Association (ÇEKEV)
- 15- İzmir Women's Solidarity Association
- 16- Kadın Zamanı Association
- 17- Katre Women's Counselling and Solidarity Association
- 18- Koza Women's Association
- 19- Life Cooperative for Women, Environment, Culture And Enterprise (YAKA-KOOP)
- 20- Lotus Women's Counselling and Life Association

- 21- Mersin Independent Women's Association
- 22- Mimoza Women's Association
- 23- Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation
- 24- Mor Salkım Women's Solidarity Association
- 25- Muğla Labour is Mine Women's Association
- 26- Rosa Women's Association
- 27- Star Women's Association
- 28- Urla Women's Solidarity Association
- 29- Women's Solidarity Foundation (KADAV)
- 30- Yaşamevi Women's Solidarity Association

\*The activities of Adıyaman Women's Life Association, Ceren Women's Association, Gökkuşığı Women's Association, Muş Women's Roof Association, Muş Women's Association, Selis Women's Association and Van Women's Association, which are the member organizations of the Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres, were terminated within the scope of the Decree Law on Measures to Be Taken Under the State of Emergency (KHK/677) dated 22 November 2016.

# Statement and visual materials of the Campaign for Shelters by the Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres

*sığınaksızbirdünya*



Şiddetten uzakta hayatlar kurabilmemiz için kadın sığınaklarına ve dayanışma merkezlerine ihtiyacımız var.

**#Sığınakİstiyoruz**

*sığınaksızbirdünya*



Kadın sığınakları ve dayanışma merkezlerinde, kadınlardan yana ve kadınları güçlendirmeyi merkeze alan sosyal çalışma yapılmasını talep ediyoruz.

**#Sığınakİstiyoruz**

*sığınaksızbirdünya*

**Sığınaklarda kadınlar bağımsız bir hayat kurabilmek için ihtiyaç duydukları kadar kalabilmelidir.**

**#SığınaklarNasılOlmalı**

*sığınaksızbirdünya*

**Kayyum atamaları en çok kadın kurumlarını/birimlerini değiştirip dönüştürerek işlevsiz hale getirmektedir. Sığınaklar, da(ya)nışma merkezleri özerk yapılar olarak oluşturulmalı, işleyişleri feminist ilkeler çerçevesinde süreklileştirilmelidir.**

**#SığınaklarNasılOlmalı**

*sıřınaksızbirdünya*

Kadına yönelik řiddetle mücadelede veri toplama ve verilerle ilgili kamuoyunu bilgilendirme devletin yükümlülüęüdür.

**#KadınlarSoruyor**

*sıřınaksızbirdünya*

Devlet, řiddetle mücadelenin bir aracı olarak veri toplamaya dair bütüncül bir yaklaşım oluřturmalı, belirli aralıklarla arařtırmalar yürütmeli ve toplanan veriler toplumsal cinsiyet, cinsel yönelim ve cinsiyet kimlięine duyarlı bir yaklaşım ile işlenerek paylaşılmalıdır.

**#KadınlarSoruyor**

**Every woman and child has a right to shelter**

**WE WANT SHELTERS!**

**As the Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres we have been gathering around the motto 'A World Without Shelters' for the past 23 years, fighting for women to build a world that is free and without violence, and demanding our right to shelter!**

As the Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres we have been gathering around the motto 'A World Without Shelters' for the past 23 years, fighting for women to build a world that is free and without violence, and demanding our right to shelter!

The presence of support mechanisms empowering women is crucial for them to be able to build lives free of violence often perpetrated by the men closest to them. Solidarity centres and shelters from which women receive support to escape violence are important gains of the struggle to end violence against women. Shelters are places where women facing male violence may stay with their accompanying children, receive the social, psychological, legal, etc. support they need so as to build an independent life free of violence, and engage in solidarity with other women facing violence. Solidarity/counselling centres are places where women may find the psychological, social, legal, etc. support and solidarity they need in order to be empowered to escape or withstand violence.

Central and local governments have the responsibility and obligation to provide women and children subjected to violence the support they need and to establish mechanisms to prevent violence against women. In view of the sheer prevalence of violence against women, we urgently call the authorities to duty!

**The Ministry of Family and Social Services must fulfil its responsibilities and increase the number and capacity of shelters!**

The fact that the capacity of the existing 148 shelters is limited to 3 thousand 576 while women constitute half of Turkey's population of 83 million is a violation of our right to shelter. The government's claim to be combatting violence against women will remain far from convincing as long as shelter numbers and the quality of services provided are so deeply inadequate.

## **Municipalities must do their duty and open new shelters!**

Furthermore, a large majority of municipalities with a population of over 100 thousand have not met their obligation to establish a shelter. Municipalities' sensitivity to this issue must extend beyond slogans and poster boards, and for this to be the case they must take immediate action to establish solidarity/counselling centres and shelters to prevent male violence. Meanwhile appointed administrations that have been taking over municipalities in the last years are not only rendering existing shelters inoperative, but also preventing institutions and offices meant to empower women from working effectively either by shutting them down or hollowing them out.

## **The Ministry and municipalities must open solidarity/counselling centres!**

Solidarity/counselling centres are places where women can speak about the violence they have endured and identify what they need to escape this violence. As institutions that assist women in escaping male violence without having to go to a shelter, provide them all the necessary kinds of support they need in their struggle with violence in an unprejudiced manner, identify if there is a need for shelter, and support women after exiting the shelter, solidarity/counselling centres are key mechanisms in the fight against violence. Solidarity/counselling centres must be opened without delay for women to be able to build lives free of violence.

## **Shelters and solidarity/counselling centres to be opened must work with feminist methods!**

It is unacceptable for shelters to limit their services to meeting basic needs such as food and lodging. What we want is not simply four walls and a roof. Policies espoused in providing support to combat violence against women must seek to redress the destruction wrought by systematic violence through solidarity and achieve women's collective empowerment, because as we know from our many years of experience in the struggle, feminist methods that are based on listening to women, making space for their opinions and assisting them in identifying their own needs give them the necessary support in building lives free of violence. We are also aware that overbearing rules in existing shelters, discriminatory criteria in shelter admissions, and social work without an agenda of women's emancipation fall far from being empowering for women to escape violence. We demand that shelters and solidarity/counselling

centres not only be increased in number; but that they be administered with a feminist perspective enabling women to free themselves of violence.

## **We will not give up the Istanbul Convention!**

The Istanbul Convention is focused on women's empowerment and indicates that violence is preventable. It identifies various obligations on States and local governments to prevent violence and protect women from domestic violence. Much as Turkey might have withdrawn from this convention despite women's objections, we refuse to acknowledge this decision and insist on grounding ourselves on the Istanbul Convention. Central and local governments have the responsibility and obligation to provide women and children subjected to violence the support they need and to establish mechanisms to prevent violence against women. We urgently call upon the authorities to fulfil their obligations and responsibilities delineated in the Istanbul Convention!

## **We want shelters and solidarity/counselling centres for free and independent lives!**

Shelter support must be provided in cases where the various forms of assistance women are offered in solidarity centres are not enough for them to escape violence, where there is a threat to life, and they need to rebuild their lives in a safe place away from violence. Through social work espousing an approach that empowers women and encourages them to build independent lives, women may indeed free themselves of violence. It is therefore crucial for the state to establish and sustain shelters and solidarity/counselling centres that adopt feminist methods and a perspective foregrounding women. As feminists who have been fighting against violence against women for decades, and in doing so have witnessed and learned from women's experiences, observed the various different manifestations of violence in women's lives and the obstacles they face in trying to escape violence, we demand that the number of women's solidarity/counselling centres and shelters be increased, and remind these institutions of their obligation to provide women empowering and quality support services, in accordance with both domestic and international legislation, as well as taking into account women's needs. We call for women's solidarity centres and shelters shut down by changing administrations in local governments with the regime of appointed trustees to be reopened, and for existing solidarity/counselling centres and shelters to be preserved and reinforced.

Up until today, all shelters and solidarity/counselling centres that have been opened in Turkey are a result of the resolute stance and determined struggle of the feminist movement. From now on too we shall continue our

fight relentlessly until solidarity/counselling centres and shelters that have the qualifications to enable women to build lives free of violence reach an adequate number and capacity, and until these institutions come to work with feminist methods that empower women!

**Member Organizations of the Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/  
Counselling Centres**

# May 5, 2021, Hashtag Action

## **As the Member Organizations of the Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres, we launch our Campaign for Shelters!**

As the Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres we have been gathering around the motto 'A World Without Shelters' for the past 23 years, fighting for women to build a world that is free and without violence, and demanding our right to shelter!

Central and local governments have the responsibility and obligation to provide women and children subjected to violence the support they need and to establish mechanisms to prevent violence against women. In view of the sheer prevalence of violence against women, we urgently call the authorities to duty!

**The Ministry of Family and Social Services must fulfil its responsibilities and increase the number and capacity of shelters!**

**Municipalities must do their duty and open new shelters!**

**The Ministry and municipalities must open solidarity/counselling centres!**

**Shelters and solidarity/counselling centres to be opened must work with feminist methods!**

**We will not step back from the standards for shelters and solidarity centres set by the Istanbul Convention!**

We need women's shelters and solidarity centres to build lives free of violence.

#WeWantShelters

We demand social work that foregrounds women and prioritizes empowering women in women's shelters and solidarity centres.

#WeWantShelters

Solidarity centres and shelters are the most important instruments in combatting male violence. Supporting women against violence should be top priority!

#WeWantShelters

Women's shelters are among the forms of support women may need in order to escape violence with their accompanying children (if any).

#WeWantShelters

Quality psychological, social and legal support and social work empowering women must be provided in women's shelters!

#WeWantShelters

The capacity of women's shelters must be enhanced, and no woman turned away from a shelter.

#WeWantShelters

Every municipality with a population of over 100 thousand must fulfil their obligation to open a shelter!

#WeWantShelters

We will not give up the Istanbul Convention! We demand the implementation of support mechanisms proposed in the Convention!

#WeWantShelters

## June 9, 2021, Hashtag Action

**We announce our new hashtag, #AShelterMust, in which we will express what kind of a shelter we want in continuation of our Campaign for Shelters that we started with #WeWantShelters as Member Organizations of the Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres.**

#AShelterMust be a place where women receive the support they need so as to build an independent life free of violence.

We call them shelters, not guesthouses because the term 'shelter' exposes the systematic nature of male violence in society. #AShelterMust

We call them shelters, not guesthouses because we know that women come here leaving their homes to take shelter in a safe space seeking to escape their violent home environments. #AShelterMust

#AShelterMust be based on confidentiality and non-violence.

#AShelterMust support women in the safest and most appropriate manner without prejudice as to race, religion, age and gender.

#AShelterMust must provide women and their children (if any) with every kind of social, legal and psychological, etc. support.

#AShelterMust allow women to stay as long as they need in order to build independent lives.

#AShelterMust be a place of empowerment and facilitate collective living through weekly meetings, group activities, events and workshops along with individual meetings.

Appointed administrations in local governments have taken the greatest toll on women's institutions/offices, transforming them and rendering them ineffectual. Shelters and solidarity/counselling centres must be established as autonomous structures, achieving sustainability in their operations within the framework of feminist principles. #AShelterMust

#AShelterMust be structured architecturally so as to accommodate the disabled, elderly, children, infants and teenagers, and allow for their easy access.

#AShelterMust have separate play rooms for children, which are equipped with toys and books for different age groups.

#AShelterMust must have a room with desks where children and teenagers can study in a quiet environment.

#AShelterMust provide private rooms and bathrooms for women and children.

#AShelterMust be in a safe and relatively central location.

#AShelterMust have shared spaces that can be used for group activities to encourage women's solidarity and collective living.

Once they leave the shelter, women will have to keep themselves and their children (if any) safe without any security at the door and/or other personnel.  
#AShelterMust equip women with the skills and experience for ensuring their own safety.

The way to preserve women's safety in shelters is not by locking them up, but by eliminating the conditions that put them at risk. #AShelterMust

#AShelterMust meet women's basic needs such as safety, education, healthcare and nutrition as necessary.

Women with boys over the age of 12 must be able to go to shelters!  
#AShelterMust

#AShelterMust be accessible for women with disabilities!

## July 13, 2021, Hashtag Action

**We announce our new hashtag, #WomenAsk, in which we underscore the state's obligation to collect data in combatting violence against women in continuation of our Campaign for Shelters as Member Organizations of the Assembly of Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres.**

The state is under the obligation to collect and publicly share data on violence against women.

The state must formulate a comprehensive approach to data collection as a means for combatting violence and carry out periodic research. The data collected must be processed and shared with a perspective sensitive to gender, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Data collected in combatting violence against women must bring visibility to the struggle against violence without fixing women in the role of the "victim", and used in a manner that emphasizes the services available and women's stories of empowerment resulting from enlisting these services.

We remind the state and municipalities of their requirement stemming from the Istanbul Convention, among others, to collect data on violence against women, and keep asking our questions to reveal the current conditions of shelters and solidarity/counselling centres in Turkey through Information Requests to the state, ŞÖNİMs and municipalities!

The state is under the obligation to collect and publicly share data on violence against women. #WomenAsk

The state must formulate a comprehensive approach to data collection as a means for combatting violence and carry out periodic research. The data collected must be processed and shared with a perspective sensitive to gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. #WomenAsk

Data collected in combatting violence against women must bring visibility to the struggle against violence without fixing women in the role of the "victim", and used in a manner that emphasizes the services available and women's stories of empowerment resulting from enlisting these services. #WomenAsk

We remind the state and municipalities of their requirement stemming from the Istanbul Convention, among others, to collect data on violence against women. #WomenAsk

We keep asking our questions to reveal the current conditions of shelters and solidarity/counselling centres in Turkey through Information Requests to the state, ŞÖNİMs and municipalities! #WomenAsk

Collecting data allows for an assessment of whether existing support mechanisms are functioning well, whether there is differential access to available supports or any change in the nature of these based on socioeconomic, cultural or geographical distinctions, and what preventive, protective and empowering measures and supports need to be changed or improved based on women's needs. #WomenAsk

Collecting data allows for a monitoring of institutions and mechanisms in combatting violence, therefore leading to the development of institutional standards, enabling transparency and accountability. #WomenAsk

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: How many women requested support from your Ministry in 2020?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: How many women's shelters are operated by your Ministry?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: How many women have requested shelter from your Ministry since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020? How many of these were admitted into a shelter?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: Are women over the age of 60 admitted into shelters run by your Ministry?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: How do you meet the shelter needs of women over the age of 60, who are subjected to violence but aren't accepted into shelters as per the relevant Regulation?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: What are your justifications for cases in which women applying to your Ministry for shelter support or needing to stay in a shelter are not accepted into shelters or are referred to non-shelter alternatives?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: Which services are provided to women and children staying in shelters run by your Ministry?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: What are the supports available to migrant women staying in shelters run by your Ministry?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: What measures are you taking to prevent discrimination against LGBTI+ individuals staying in shelters run by your Ministry?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: Is there an age limit for children to be allowed into shelters run by your Ministry? Are boys over the age of 12 able to stay in your shelters?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: How many women have been able to take advantage of the rental home accommodations required to be offered to women turned away from shelters with their boys over the age of 12? How many women were forced to return to a life of violence due to not being able to find shelter with their children?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: Is alternative safe housing provided to women unable to stay in shelters operated by your Ministry?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: What are the kinds of support provided by ŞÖNİMs and Municipalities to women who are not admitted into shelters run by your Ministry?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: How many women's counselling centres are operated by your Ministry, and how many of these serve women only?

@tcailesosyal WE ASK: What percentage of the total budget of your Ministry is allocated to shelters and women's counselling centres?

Municipalities with a population of over 100 thousand are legally obligated to open shelters. @istanbulbld WE ASK: Are there any shelters run by your Municipality?

@istanbulbld WE ASK: Are there any women's counselling centres run by your Municipality?

@istanbulbld WE ASK: Are women over the age of 60 admitted into your Municipality shelter?

@istanbulbld WE ASK: What kinds of services are offered to women and children in your Municipality shelter?

@istanbulbld WE ASK: Is there an age limit for children to be allowed into your Municipality shelter? If so, what is this limit?

@istanbulbld WE ASK: What are the kinds of support provided by your Municipality to women who are not admitted into shelters?

@istanbulbld WE ASK: How many women's counselling centres are operated by your Municipality, and how many of these serve women only?

@istanbulbld WE ASK: What percentage of the total budget of your Municipality is allocated to shelters and women's counselling centres?

## **APPENDIX 3 – INFORMATION REQUEST LETTERS**

### **TO THE MINISTRY OF FAMILY AND SOCIAL SERVICES OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY**

**29.04.2021**

**No:** 2021/ 335

**Subject:** Requesting written responses and documents pertaining to our questions detailed below regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the Law no 6284 on the Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women, pursuant to the Right to Information Act no 4982, to be provided without delay within the time frame specified in Article 11 of this Law.

#### **Explanations:**

As the Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation, we have been active in the field of violence against women since 1990. Although our organization is based in Istanbul, we receive applications from women subjected to violence all over Turkey and provide them the social, legal and psychological support necessary in escaping the violence they live under.

For this reason, we request written responses to the questions detailed below in order to be able to monitor the implementation of the Law no 6284 on the Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women, refer women to relevant support services more effectively, and enhance the efficiency of our Foundation's work:

- 1. In terms of measures to prevent violence regulated in the Law no 6284, from 01.01.2020 to 31.12.2020;**
  - a. How many people have called the ALO 183 Social Support Line to report experiencing violence?
  - b. What are the 3 most common forms of violence mentioned by those calling the ALO 183 Social Support Line to report experiencing violence?
- 2. As of May 1, 2021;**
  - a. How many shelters are there run by your institution, by municipalities, and civil society organizations?
  - b. What is the provincial distribution of shelters run by your institution, by municipalities, and civil society organizations?
  - c. How many of these shelters are first admission centres/stations? How many first admission centres/shelters are in operation across Turkey and in which provinces are these located?
  - d. Are any among these specialized shelters (for migrant / undocumented women, women with disabilities, transsexual women, lesbian women,

women victims of human trafficking, elderly women, etc.)? If so, what is their area of specialization?

- e. What is the total number of women who have sought shelter support from 01.01.2020 to 31.12.2020?
  - f. What is the total bed capacity available in all of these shelters?
  - g. Are all of these shelters accessible 24/7?
  - h. Is there a time limit for staying in these shelters? If so what is the maximum time period women are allowed to stay?
  - i. What are the justifications for cases in which women applying for shelter support or needing to stay in a shelter are not accepted into shelters or are referred to non-shelter alternatives?
  - j. What are the three most common forms of violence mentioned by women seeking shelter support?
  - k. What are the services provided to women and children staying in your shelters?
- 3. As of May 1, 2021;**
- a. How many women's counselling centres are operated by your institution, by municipalities, and civil society organizations, and how many of these serve women only?
  - b. Which provinces are the women's counselling centres operated by your institution, by municipalities, and civil society organizations located in?
  - c. What is the total number of women who have been supported by women's counselling centres from 01.01.2021 to 31.12.2020?
  - d. What kinds of services are women offered in women's counselling centres including but not limited to counselling, psychological assistance, support regarding forced marriages, human trafficking, migrant/refugee women, etc., legal counselling, financial support and counselling for access to social aid, housing and employment, as well as representation in courts/police stations/social service offices? How many of the available women's counselling centres provide these services?
  - e. Do women's counselling centres offer women support regarding sexual violence? What kinds of supports and services are available in women's counselling centres to women and children subjected to sexual violence? Are the women's counselling centres offering these supports equipped with the specialized skills necessary? What kinds of specialized services are provided in these centres against sexual violence?
  - f. Do women's counselling centres also offer emergency shelter in cases of urgency?

Respectfully,

**MOR ÇATI WOMEN'S SHELTER FOUNDATION**

**Addendum:** Deed of Foundation

## TO THE ADANA VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND MONITORING CENTRE

09.07.2021

**No:** 2021/ 383

**Subject:** Requesting written responses and documents pertaining to our questions detailed below, pursuant to the Right to Information Act no 4982, to be provided without delay within the time frame specified in Article 11 of this Law.

### **Explanations:**

As the Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation, we have been working to combat violence against women. We receive applications from women subjected to violence all over Turkey within our area of operation, and provide them the social, legal and psychological support necessary in escaping the violence they live under.

For this reason, we request written responses to the questions detailed below in order to be able to refer women to relevant support services more effectively and enhance the efficiency of our Foundation's work:

1. In our Province in question, as of June 1, 2021;
  - a. How many shelters are there run by your Ministry, by municipalities, and civil society organizations?
  - b. How many of these shelters are first admission centres/stations?
  - c. Are any among these specialized shelters (for migrant / undocumented women, women with disabilities, LBTI+ women, women victims of human trafficking, elderly women, etc.)? If so, what is their area of specialization?
  - d. What is the total number of women who have sought shelter support from 01.01.2020 to 31.12.2020? How many of these have been admitted into a shelter following their application?
  - e. What is the total bed capacity available in all of these shelters?
  - f. Are all of these shelters accessible 24/7?
  - g. Is there a time limit for staying in these shelters? If so what is the maximum time period women are allowed to stay?
  - h. Are women over the age of 60 admitted into these shelters?
  - i. What are the justifications for cases in which women applying for shelter support or needing to stay in a shelter are not accepted into shelters or are referred to non-shelter alternatives?
  - j. What are the three most common forms of violence mentioned by women seeking shelter support?
  - k. What are the services provided to women and children staying in your

shelters?

- l. What are the numbers of personnel working in existing shelters? What are their professional backgrounds?
  - m. How many of the shelter staff are social service workers, how many are psychologists, how many lawyers, pedagogues and child psychologists?
  - n. In addition to their professional backgrounds, what kinds of trainings have staff received in terms of combatting violence against women and supporting women and children subjected to violence?
  - o. What are the rules in shelters run by your Ministry? Are these rules applicable in first admission centres/stations as well?
  - p. Is there an age limit for children to be allowed into your Ministry shelters? If so, what is this limit?
  - q. Is alternative safe housing provided to women unable to stay in shelters operated by your Ministry? If so how many women were provided with alternative housing support in the past year?
  - r. Are risk/needs assessments carried out for those applying to your institution for shelter support? If so, by whom?
  - s. What are the kinds of support provided by the ŞÖNİM and Municipality to women who are not admitted into shelters?
2. In our Province in question, as of June 1, 2021;
- a. How many women's counselling centres are operated by your institution, by municipalities, and civil society organizations, and how many of these serve women only?
  - b. Which provinces are the women's counselling centres operated by your institution, by municipalities, and civil society organizations located in?
  - c. What is the total number of women who have been supported by women's counselling centres from 01.01.2021 to 31.12.2020?
  - d. What kinds of services are women offered in women's counselling centres including but not limited to counselling, psychological assistance, support regarding forced marriages, human trafficking, migrant/refugee women, etc., legal counselling, financial support and counselling for access to social aid, housing and employment, as well as representation in courts/police stations/social service offices? How many of the available women's counselling centres provide these services?
  - e. Do women's counselling centres offer women support regarding sexual violence? What kinds of supports and services are available in women's counselling centres to women and children subjected to sexual violence? Are the women's counselling centres offering these supports equipped with the specialized skills necessary? What kinds of specialized services are provided in these centres against sexual violence?
  - f. Do women's counselling centres also offer emergency shelter in cases of urgency?

- g. What are the numbers of personnel working in women's counselling centres? What are their professional backgrounds?
  - h. How many of the women counselling centre staff are social service workers, how many are psychologists, how many lawyers, pedagogues and child psychologists?
  - i. In addition to their professional backgrounds, what kinds of trainings have staff received in terms of combatting violence against women and supporting women and children subjected to violence?
3. What percentage of the total budget of your institution is allocated to shelters and women's counselling centres?
4. What are the items on your budget allocated to shelters?

Respectfully,

**MOR ÇATI WOMEN'S SHELTER FOUNDATION**

**Addendum:** Deed of Foundation

## TO THE ADANA METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

09.07.2021

**No:** 2021/ 465

**Subject:** Requesting written responses and documents pertaining to our questions detailed below, pursuant to the Right to Information Act no 4982, to be provided without delay within the time frame specified in Article 11 of this Law.

### **Explanations:**

As the Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation, we have been working to combat violence against women. We receive applications from women subjected to violence all over Turkey within our area of operation, and provide them the social, legal and psychological support necessary in escaping the violence they live under.

For this reason, we request written responses to the questions detailed below in order to be able to refer women to relevant support services more effectively and enhance the efficiency of our Foundation's work:

1. In our Province in question, as of June 1, 2021;
  - a. How many shelters are there run by Municipalities, and civil society organizations?
  - b. How many of these shelters are first admission centres/stations?
  - c. Are any among these specialized shelters (for migrant / undocumented women, women with disabilities, LGBTI+ women, women victims of human trafficking, elderly women, etc.)? If so, what is their area of specialization?
  - d. What is the total number of women who have sought shelter support from 01.01.2020 to 31.12.2020? How many of these have been admitted into a shelter following their application?
  - e. What is the total bed capacity available in all of these shelters?
  - f. Are all of these shelters accessible 24/7?
  - g. Is there a time limit for staying in these shelters? If so what is the maximum time period women are allowed to stay?
  - h. Are women over the age of 60 admitted into these shelters?
  - i. What are the justifications for cases in which women applying for shelter support or needing to stay in a shelter are not accepted into shelters or are referred to non-shelter alternatives?
  - j. What are the three most common forms of violence mentioned by women seeking shelter support?
  - k. What are the services provided to women and children staying in your shelters?

- l. What are the numbers of personnel working in existing shelters? What are their professional backgrounds?
  - m. How many of the shelter staff are social service workers, how many are psychologists, how many lawyers, pedagogues and child psychologists?
  - n. In addition to their professional backgrounds, what kinds of trainings have staff received in terms of combatting violence against women and supporting women and children subjected to violence?
  - o. What are the rules in shelters run by your Municipality? Are these rules applicable in first admission centres/stations as well?
  - p. Is there an age limit for children to be allowed into your Municipality shelters? If so, what is this limit?
  - q. Is alternative safe housing provided to women unable to stay in shelters operated by your Municipality? If so how many women were provided with alternative housing support in the past year?
  - r. Are risk/needs assessments carried out for those applying to your institution for shelter support? If so, by whom?
  - s. What are the kinds of support provided by the Municipality to women who are not admitted into shelters?
2. In our Province in question, as of June 1, 2021;
- a. How many women's counselling centres are operated by municipalities, and civil society organizations, and how many of these serve women only?
  - b. Which provinces are the women's counselling centres operated by your institution, by municipalities, and civil society organizations located in?
  - c. What is the total number of women who have been supported by women's counselling centres from 01.01.2021 to 31.12.2020?
  - d. What kinds of services are women offered in women's counselling centres including but not limited to counselling, psychological assistance, support regarding forced marriages, human trafficking, migrant/refugee women, etc., legal counselling, financial support and counselling for access to social aid, housing and employment, as well as representation in courts/police stations/social service offices? How many of the available women's counselling centres provide these services?
  - e. Do women's counselling centres offer women support regarding sexual violence? What kinds of supports and services are available in women's counselling centres to women and children subjected to sexual violence? Are the women's counselling centres offering these supports equipped with the specialized skills necessary? What kinds of specialized services are provided in these centres against sexual violence?
  - f. Do women's counselling centres also offer emergency shelter in cases of urgency?
  - g. What are the numbers of personnel working in women's counselling

- centres? What are their professional backgrounds?
- h. How many of the women counselling centre staff are social service workers, how many are psychologists, how many lawyers, pedagogues and child psychologists?
  - i. In addition to their professional backgrounds, what kinds of trainings have staff received in terms of combatting violence against women and supporting women and children subjected to violence?
3. What percentage of the total budget of your institution is allocated to shelters and women's counselling centres?
  4. What are the items on your budget allocated to shelters?

Respectfully,

**MOR ÇATI WOMEN'S SHELTER FOUNDATION**

**Addendum:** Deed of Foundation

**APPENDIX 4 – RESPONSE BY THE MINISTRY OF FAMILY AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
TO OUR INFORMATION REQUEST**

MINISTRY OF FAMILY AND SOCIAL SERVICES OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

Directorate General on the Status of Women

No: E-96559647-400-643821

16.07.2021

Subject: Information Request by the Women's Solidarity Foundation

TO THE WOMEN'S SOLIDARITY FOUNDATION

Küçükçekmece Danışma ve Dayanışma Merkezi, Fevzi Çakmak Mah. Halkalı  
Cad. No:195 D:11/12 Sefaköy Küçükçekmece/ISTANBUL

Concerning: a) Your information request no 2021/014 dated 06.07.2021.

b) Your information request no 2021/019 dated 06.07.2021.

It has been brought to our attention that you have asked to be provided written responses and documents pertaining to your questions detailed in your information requests registered in items (a) and (b).

The responses prepared for identical information requests submitted previously are provided as attachments herewith.

For your kind information and necessary action.

Gülser USTAÖĞLU

B/O Minister

Director General of the Directorate General on the Status of Women

Addendum: Response Letter (4 Pages)

Distribution:

Addressed to:

WOMEN'S SOLIDARITY FOUNDATION

Küçükçekmece Danışma ve Dayanışma Vakfı, Fevzi Çakmak Mah. Halkalı Cad.  
No:195 D:11/12 Sefaköy Küçükçekmece/ISTANBUL

To the Information of:

THE GOVERNORSHIP OF ISTANBUL (Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Services)

This document has been certified via a valid and trusted digital signature.

Verification code: 7D4F2E62-01D4-4B76-B1BB-D106E1B663C7

Verification address: <https://www.turkiye.gov.tr>

## **Response to the Information Request no 2021/019 by the Women's Solidarity Foundation**

### **QUESTION 1: As of June 1, 2021;**

- a. How many shelters are there run by your Ministry, by municipalities, and civil society organizations?
- b. How many of these shelters are first admission centres/stations?
- c. Are any among these specialized shelters (for migrant / undocumented women, women with disabilities, LGBTI+ women, women victims of human trafficking, elderly women, etc.)? If so, what is their area of specialization?
- d. What is the total number of women who have sought shelter support from 01.01.2020 to 31.12.2020? How many of these have been admitted into a shelter following their application?
- e. What is the total bed capacity available in all of these shelters?
- f. Are all of these shelters accessible 24/7?
- g. Is there a time limit for staying in these shelters? If so what is the maximum time period women are allowed to stay?
- h. Are women over the age of 60 admitted into these shelters?
- i. What are the justifications for cases in which women applying for shelter support or needing to stay in a shelter are not accepted into shelters or are referred to non-shelter alternatives?
- j. What are the three most common forms of violence mentioned by women seeking shelter support?
- k. What are the services provided to women and children staying in your shelters?
- l. What are the numbers of personnel working in existing shelters? What are their professional backgrounds?
- m. How many of the shelter staff are social service workers, how many are psychologists, how many lawyers, pedagogues and child psychologists?
- n. In addition to their professional backgrounds, what kinds of trainings have staff received in terms of combatting violence against women and supporting women and children subjected to violence?
- o. What are the rules in shelters run by your Ministry? Are these rules applicable in first admission centres/stations as well?
- p. Is there an age limit for children to be allowed into your Ministry shelters? If so, what is this limit?
- q. Is alternative safe housing provided to women unable to stay in shelters operated by your Ministry? If so how many women were provided with alternative housing support in the past year?
- r. Are risk/needs assessments carried out for those applying to your institution for shelter support? If so, by whom?
- s. What are the kinds of support provided by the ŞÖNİM and Municipality to women who are not admitted into shelters?

## ANSWER 1:

| Distribution of Women's Guesthouses         |              |                |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| Institution                                 | Total Number | Total Capacity |
| Ministry of Family and Social Services      | 112          | 2779           |
| Municipality                                | 33           | 735            |
| Directorate General of Migration Management | 3            | 90             |
| CSO   | 1            | 20             |
| <i>TOTAL</i>                                | 149          | 3624           |

In 2020, 33,467 women have received support from women's guesthouses run by our Ministry.

A total number of **1994** persons are employed in the women's guesthouses operated by our Ministry, 600 of which are from professional backgrounds related to the field (social workers, psychologists, sociologists, teachers, nurses, child development specialists, and pedagogues).

Women's guesthouses are boarding institutions that work in various professional areas, providing a non-violent environment without any form of discrimination to support women and their accompanying children to deal with the trauma they have experienced, feel empowered and rebuild healthy relationships.

As per the Law no 6284, women subjected to violence and their accompanying children, including women who are foreign nationals notwithstanding their national origin and their accompanying children are able to take advantage of women's guesthouses in case of need.

In women's guesthouses, work is carried out in various professional areas, providing a non-violent environment to support women and their accompanying children to deal with the trauma they have experienced, feel empowered and rebuild healthy relationships. In addition to professional work and evaluation processes, guesthouses offer services to women and children both directly and indirectly through referrals to relevant institutions, guided by our 3 main principles of confidentiality, empowerment and safety in areas of shelter/housing, psychosocial support, legal support, economic support, vocational support, educational support, as well as day-care, counselling and referrals for their children. Supports provided include:

- Job Clubs offered online in collaboration with the Turkish Employment Agency (IŞKUR) in order to support women subjected to violence staying in women's guesthouses in terms of empowerment, transitioning to an independent life, and finding quality employment.
- Trainings in Financial Literacy and Information Technologies in order to advance the social and economic status of women by equipping them

- with the necessary information and skills to participate in economic life and support them in taking on an active role in economic development.
- Basic and Advanced Psychosocial Support for personnel working with women in order to enhance the existing institutional and human resource capacity of women's guesthouses and ŞÖNİMs, and provide better quality and timely services on-site to women subjected to violence and their accompanying children in transitioning to a safer life.
  - A psychosocial support guide for staff working with children in women's guesthouses, prepared within the scope of the "*Program for the Standardization of Services Targeting Children Staying with their Mothers in Women's Guesthouses Having Witnessed/Experienced Violence*" launched in October 2019 as a collaborative venture of our Directorate General and UNICEF.

Women who request to be placed in a women's guesthouse may access these services 24/7 by applying to law enforcement or ŞÖNİMs. Upon application to said institutions, risk/needs assessments are carried out by professional staff members working in ŞÖNİMs. Every woman seeking placement in a women's guesthouse is admitted into these institutions.

The maximum period for staying in women's guesthouses is designated in the Regulation on the Opening and Operation of Women's Guesthouses as six months following the date of admission. This period is extended as necessary based on women's needs in terms of achieving empowerment. The length of this extension is determined by an evaluation commission based on the observations and opinions of a social worker and child development specialist (if there are accompanying children).

While Article 13/c of the Regulation on the Opening and Operation of Women's Guesthouses is not implemented on account of potentially creating a threat to life for women receiving these services and their accompanying children, the alternatives provided in practice are as stipulated in Article 3/1-(a) of the Law no 6284, ("*To provide an appropriate shelter to the person and if necessary to the person's children in the vicinity or in some other location outside the women's guesthouse,*") and in Article 10/6 of the same Law ("*Persons for whom a decision to provide shelter has been taken shall be settled in places belonging to the Ministry or under the supervision of the Ministry. On the occasions when shelters are not adequate, the protected persons will be sheltered in the social facilities, dormitories or similar lodgings of state institutions and organizations upon request of the district authority and, when urgent, upon request of law enforcement officials or the Ministry,*"). As per precautions taken during the Covid-19 pandemic, **71 facilities** (hotels, guesthouses, public institutions and dormitories) **in 49 Provinces** have been repurposed to provide shelter within this framework.

## **QUESTION 2: As of June 1, 2021;**

- a. How many women's counselling centres are operated by your institution, by municipalities, and civil society organizations, and how many of these serve women only?
- b. Which provinces are the women's counselling centres operated by your institution, by municipalities, and civil society organizations located in?
- c. What is the total number of women who have been supported by women's counselling centres from 01.01.2021 to 31.12.2020?
- d. What kinds of services are women offered in women's counselling centres including but not limited to counselling, psychological assistance, support regarding forced marriages, human trafficking, migrant/refugee women, etc., legal counselling, financial support and counselling for access to social aid, housing and employment, as well as representation in courts/police stations/social service offices? How many of the available women's counselling centres provide these services?
- e. Do women's counselling centres offer women support regarding sexual violence? What kinds of supports and services are available in women's counselling centres to women and children subjected to sexual violence? Are the women's counselling centres offering these supports equipped with the specialized skills necessary? What kinds of specialized services are provided in these centres against sexual violence?
- f. Do women's counselling centres also offer emergency shelter in cases of urgency?
- g. What are the numbers of personnel working in women's counselling centres? What are their professional backgrounds?
- h. How many of the women counselling centre staff are social service workers, how many are psychologists, how many lawyers, pedagogues and child psychologists?
- i. In addition to their professional backgrounds, what kinds of trainings have staff received in terms of combatting violence against women and supporting women and children subjected to violence?

**ANSWER 2:** While Women's Counselling Centres are under the purview of Municipalities, the necessary cooperation is being carried out between our Ministry and local governments.

**QUESTION 3: What percentage of the total budget of your institution is allocated to shelters and women's counselling centres?**

**QUESTION 4: What are the items on your budget allocated to shelters?**

**ANSWER 3-4:** The budget allocated to women’s guesthouses are used for administrative expenses, the board and lodging of those receiving our services and for allowances. The increasing amounts allocated to women’s guesthouses over the years is provided in the table below.

| <b>YEAR</b> | <b>BUDGET</b>  |
|-------------|----------------|
| 2012        | 13,721,000.00  |
| 2013        | 26,237,500.00  |
| 2014        | 42,119,500.00  |
| 2015        | 59,052,000.00  |
| 2016        | 72,826,000.00  |
| 2017        | 94,284,000.00  |
| 2018        | 102,601,000.00 |
| 2019        | 209,125,000.00 |
| 2020        | 234,717,000.00 |
| 2021        | 276,653,000.00 |

**APPENDIX 5 – RESPONSE BY THE KAYSERİ ŞÖNİM TO OUR INFORMATION  
REQUEST**  
GOVERNORSHIP OF KAYSERİ OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY  
Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Services

No: E-26855516-400-758900  
09.08.2021

Subject: Information Request by the Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation

TO THE MOR ÇATI WOMEN'S SHELTER FOUNDATION

Kocatepe Mah. Cumhuriyet Caddesi, Cumhuriyet Apt. NO: 17/kAT/5-D:11  
Beyoğlu / ISTANBUL

Concerning: Your correspondence dated 09.07.2021.

Our Provincial Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centre Office provides information on its relevant services in response to your letter registered above in a document attached herewith.

For your kind information.

Cüneyd ÖZDEMİR

B/O Governor

Actg. Provincial Director

Addendum: Information (2 Pages) (2 Pages)

Digitally signed, certified copy:

This document has been certified via a valid and trusted digital signature.

Verification code: F0645B64-91CF-4E3A-A268-570623325DD9

Verification address: <https://www.turkiye.gov.tr>

For further information: Hatice ÖZDEMİR

Sociologist

1. **As of June 1, 2021;**

- a. There are 2 women's guesthouses run by our Ministry in our Province of Kayseri.
- b. There are no first admission centres run by our Ministry in our Province of Kayseri.
- c. As per Article 13 of the Regulation on Guesthouses, women subjected to violence who are foreign nationals are admitted into our institutions if they are under the age of 60. Women with disabilities are referred to specialized care centres based on social assessment reports detailing their level of disability, and women over the age of 60 are referred to retirement homes run by Municipalities in our area.
- d. There are 2 women's guesthouses with a total capacity of 50 run by our Ministry in our Province.
- e. There is 24/7 access to women's guesthouses in our Province.
- f. According to Article 14 of the Regulation on the Opening and Operation of Women's Guesthouses, the period for staying in women's guesthouses is limited to 6 months following admission into the first admission centre.
- g. As stipulated in Article 13 of the Regulation on the Opening and Operation of Women's Guesthouses, women over the age of 60 and women who exhibit mental disorders or are mentally disabled are placed in appropriate social service institutions, informing the Directorate General of Disabled and Elderly Services.
- h. Children staying in women's guesthouses are provided with shelter, psychosocial support, allowances, legal support, counselling, free day-care and employment support.
- i. The same rules apply in all shelters run by our Ministry.
- j. According to the Regulation on the Opening and Operation of Women's Guesthouses, while the age limit for boys staying in guesthouses is 12, there is no age limit for girls.
- k. The response to the question in concern is provided in Article 13-(c) of the Regulation on Guesthouses.
- l. All procedures and operations for women seeking to be placed in women's guesthouses are carried out by professional staff members.
- m. Women who do not wish to be placed in women's guesthouses may be provided with temporary financial support by Municipalities to cover their travel expenses to go to another province of their choice. Support from Social Assistance Foundations may be enlisted in special cases.
- n. All procedures and operations for women seeking to be placed in women's guesthouses are carried out by professional staff members.
- o. Women who do not wish to be placed in women's guesthouses may be provided with temporary financial support by Municipalities to cover their travel expenses to go to another province of their choice. Support from Social Assistance Foundations may be enlisted in special cases.

**2. As of June 1, 2021;**

- a. There are 4 social service points serving women established under our Directorate.
- b. ŞÖNİMs make referrals to women's guesthouses, provide legal, economic, psychosocial, educational and vocational support, preventive services, and immediate intervention and referrals.
- c. All of our staff members employed by our Directorate have been given on-the-job training by Ministry personnel. Personnel working with victims of forced/early marriages, violence against women, communicating with victims, instructing them on financial literacy, etc. have undergone advanced psychosocial support training.

Hicran PEKÇETİN

Nurse

Mete KURT

Institution Director







# Women's Shelters and Solidarity/Counselling Centres in Combatting Male Violence in Turkey

Assembly of Women's Shelters and  
Solidarity/Counselling Centres

*siğimsızbirdünya*