



Press Statement 09 April 2010

For immediate release

Roj Women Association demands legal accountability by the Turkish government for the grave physical assaults on Yosma Altunbey in Kars.

On 06 April, 2010, Yosma Altunbey, a mother of six living in the village of Çığırın in Kars, Southeast Turkey, was subjected to a brutal physical assault by her husband and his brother. She managed to escape to her parents' house and filed an official complaint against the perpetrators at the gendarmerie station. According to reports, Gendarme Specialist Sergeant K.T. tried to make her withdraw her complaint, threatened her and eventually assaulted her himself when she refused. The Altunbey family is now preparing to leave the village following further threats to their safety.

Data released by the Human Rights Association in Turkey shows that from 2007 to 2010, nine women were killed by the Turkish gendarmerie, 91 women were murdered in the name of honour, 169 women were victims of domestic violence, 226 women committed suicide because of domestic abuse, 92 women were raped and killed (including by security forces). In Turkey, statistics show that 3 women are killed every day.

According to the Turkish government Directorate General on the Status of Women Combating Domestic Violence Against Women National Action Plan 2007 – 2010, which was funded by the European Union and the United Nations Development Fund, recently enacted laws and regulations in Turkey “have done much to ensure gender equality in all parts of the national legislation” in line with the international community’s consensus that violence against women is a human rights violation for which the State is liable.

The implementation of the Turkish government National Action Plan has three phases: short-term (2007-2008), medium-term (2007-2009), and long-term (2007-2010). One of the most important targets of this Action Plan is the establishment of a mechanism of cooperation amongst institutions and relevant sectors with regard to the service delivery to women victimized by domestic violence.

In 2006, “The Role of the Police Forces in the Prevention of Violence Against Women and the Applicable Procedures Project” was launched in cooperation with the Directorate General of Security affiliated to the Ministry of Interior, by means of a protocol (26.12.2006) signed between the State Ministry in Charge of Women and Family Affairs and the Ministry of Interior. The training programme comprised areas such as violence against women, gender equality, ways of approach to victims of violence, and the effective enforcement of Law No: 4320 on the Protection of the Family, and other relevant legislation. The law, which was originally prepared in 1998 for the prevention of domestic violence, was amended in 2007 for the purpose of correcting the defects associated with the enforcement, and it is an important legal arrangement with regard to the protection of individuals victimized by domestic violence. The project aims to

train approximately 40,000 staff of the Security Organization that work in the initial application posts for women victimized by violence the police centres and stations.

Goal 6 of the National Action Plan is the establishment of “a mechanism of cooperation amongst institutions and relevant sectors with regard to the service delivery to women victimized by domestic violence and their children (if any).” Activity 6.2 is “Establishment of local coordination committees with the participation of governorates, local security forces, gendarmerie, municipalities, universities, professional organizations and the mufti’s office, and NGO representatives in order to work on prevention of violence against women. The responsible partners are the: Ministry of Interior (Governorates, Provincial Directorates of Security Forces/ Gendarmerie Commanderships, Local Admin.).

Roj Women Association has a number of questions about this case that urgently need answers from the relevant Turkish authorities:

1. Where was the ‘local coordination committee’, which should have been established in accordance with the National Action Plan 2007-2010, when Gendarme Specialist Sergeant K.T. tried to make Yosma Altunbey withdraw her complaint and then assaulted her?
2. What kind of training did Gendarme Specialist Sergeant receive as required by “The Role of the Police Forces in the Prevention of Violence against Women and the Applicable Procedures Project”?
3. How will the complaint since filed against the gendarme by Ms. Altunbey be properly investigated by a body independent from the Security Organisation?
4. Can the Turkish authorities reassure the public that the perpetrators of the original attack on Ms. Altunbey will face criminal charges?
5. Given that Law No: 4320 for the prevention of domestic violence was amended in 2007 for the purpose of correcting the defects associated with its enforcement, how and when will its persistent defects be addressed?
6. What instruments have the Turkish government put in place to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the National Action Plan, given that there are a number of international mechanisms for assessing the efficacy of the measures taken by states to eradicate violence against women, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)?

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