

ORAL STATEMENT
UN Human Rights Council, 30th Session (14th September – 2nd October 2015)
Item 3 – General Debate, 17th October 2015
Josephine Macintosh, Representative for Center for Inquiry

Mr President,

The United Nations, for better and for worse, is a sum of its nation parts. To improve gender parity within the UN and international bodies, constituent nations must address their own gender imbalances and be as committed at home as they present themselves to be here.

We welcome the report on the Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women¹, and in particular the link between violence against women and discrimination against women. The European Court of Human Rights indeed established this in a landmark case in 2009².

Most countries present here experience the horror of femicides³. Its cause usually lies in a discriminatory misconception of women's honour and dignity. In Turkey, 198 women⁴ have this year been murdered because of their gender, usually by a male partner or relative, fourteen of which were further murdered since I drafted this statement on Tuesday. It is a relevant example because women's rights in Turkey are rather progressive on paper, whilst in practice they are ignored.³ Police are reluctant to investigate domestic violence cases, saying it is a "family matter with which they cannot interfere."⁵

The judiciary is also failing these women. Judges hand out reduced sentences for a boyfriend or husband's murderous act, citing good conduct or unjust provocation.⁶ Even President Erdogan claimed that Turkish women's rights groups should not meddle because "God entrusted men with women."⁷

Three lessons can be drawn from the Turkish example: first, conceptions of the woman as subsumed by her role within the family must be combated, and this must start with education of men and in schools; second, the expertise of civil society organisations must be drawn upon, even if their position differs from the government's official line; and finally, proper administration of justice is urgently required.

Thank-you, Mr President.

¹ A_HRC_30_70

² Opuz v. Turkey, Application no. 33401/02, Council of Europe: European Court of Human Rights, 9 June 2009.

³ Including the United States, and countries across Latin America, Asia and Africa, see

<http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/299-fast-facts-statistics-on-violence-against-women-and-girls.html>

⁴ <http://www.anitsayac.com>

⁵ Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Opuz v. Turkey Judgment, Human Rights Joint Platform and Nisan Kuyucu, 2015: <http://aihmiz.org.tr/?q=en/node/294>.

⁶ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/open-letter-to-judges.aspx?pageID=449&nID=78635&NewsCatID=507>

⁷ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-official-policies-fail-to-stop-murders-of-women.aspx?pageID=517&nID=78689&NewsCatID=341> and http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/20/turkey-womens-rights_n_7099184.html

Further information on Turkey: We Will Stop Femicide / Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platform <http://kadincinayetleriniurduracagiz.net/for-english> and Human Rights Joint Platform, University of Ankara.