

WE CAN STOP THIS

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	
Preface	156
Introduction: A Long and Arduous Journey	159
What Are “Honor Killings”?	180
• Honor Killings are Political	181
• What Murders Committed in the Name of “Honor” Are, and What They Are Not	185
• Results of Home Visit Survey	203
• Perceptions of Honor: A Survey Study	216
Application Stories	236
What We Have Learned	245
• The Feminism of KAMER	246
• Feminism in Our Eyes	252
• KAMER’s Awareness Groups	264
• KAMER’s Awareness Initiatives	271
• KAMER’s Policy on Cooperation between NGOs and the State	283
• My Kurdish Issue	287
Learning as We Go: Lessons From the Journey Thus Far	294

PREFACE

PREFACE

Aylin Asım

I was twenty years old when I first heard Güldünya Tören's story. Even if I was not yet an "activist," I had already gone through enough experiences, as you shall see in the next pages, to know that there was "no place, practice or system, neither here, nor in the rest of the country or in the world, where women lived freely as individuals with rights equal to the rest of the members of society", but I was yet to see worse: as I followed Güldünya's story, which was going to end so horribly, the intensity of the anger, horror, helplessness and shame welling up inside me gradually increased. I wanted to record Güldünya's story in consciences and memories, as the symbol of the countless number of women murdered in this country for decades, murdered because of honor, tradition or other similar reasons, and to prevent this event from becoming a "third page news item," destined to be forgotten and swept away after a short while. I wrote a song named after her. This song, which would later be banned from this state's TV and radio channels, was the beginning of my active involvement in the women's movement.

A short while after this, I got to know KAMER during the first stopover in Diyarbakır of the first grand tour of my life, during which I would tour the country city by city. I had come across their name while I was following Güldünya's news. Hearing that they were a women's organization specialized in "honor" killings had given me hope. I knew that their headquarters were in Diyarbakır and I absolutely wanted to meet them.

We arranged a meeting; I was going to visit them in their office at the city center. I was expecting the "headquarters" of these brave women, who protected and hid many women whose lives were endangered, to be a fortified secret location. My friend, who was guiding me, stopped in front of a building, the ground floor of which consisted of a glass pane. On the glass pane was the inscription "KA-MER Women's Center." Amidst all the violence and chaos

of this city, these women were as brave and straightforward as their name implied: KAdın MERkezi (Women's Centre). What was behind this transparent pane of glass was the headquarters of not just Kurdish women, Turkish women, revolutionary women, Kemalist women or women with headscarves, but of all women whom they could possibly reach. We greeted each other; they hugged me as if we had known each other for years, whereas we had actually just met. Compared to what they had been doing for the last 8-10 years, my contributions seemed miniscule, and theirs, enormous. This meeting convinced me that I had the strength to do more, and that I was not alone. This meant a lot to me.

KAMER, which embarked upon its journey with just a few women, who at some point in their lives had decided to rebel against all kinds of violence, sexism and discrimination, has become a foundation which, thanks to its activities, is known not just in Turkey, but also within international platforms.

In this book titled "We Can Stop This," which is the fourth in a series that recounts KAMER's activities, the words you will come across the most frequently will be "freedom," "feminism," and "questioning." If you have never come across KAMER up to now, you will, while reading this book, see through stories that at times will pain you and at times make you smile with hope, how important these concepts have been in defining the identity of KAMER since its foundation. You will be able to study surveys, reports, and statistics about the perception of honour, and the extent and variety of violence.

It is interesting that "We Can Stop This" is being presented to readers precisely at a time when murders of women are increasing at such a frightening, unprecedented rate, and sexism and discrimination against women in the mainstream media is "at its peak," but also at a time when awareness of this situation and reaction against it is rising within every layer of society. I believe that the publication of this book at this moment in time will serve to strengthen

our voice, which we raise in opposition to the domination of sexism and violence.

As Gülay, a KAMER member, states towards the end of the book, “I believe that the world will change, and that it is women who will achieve this change.”

It is with greatest warmth and sincerity that I greet Nebahat Akkoç and KAMER, for whom I feel utmost admiration, all other women’s organizations engaged in the struggle to end violence against women, and all the brave women of the world who have become aware of their strength, or who will one day.

INTRODUCTION

A LONG AND ARDUOUS JOURNEY

This section presents a short summary of the journey of KAMER, a women's organization actively engaged in the struggle to end so-called "honor killings," since its establishment in 1997. It explains how the organization came to focus upon "honor killings", awareness of which marked an important turning point in KAMER's history, and provides information on how the organization functions, its working principles and methods of action, the difficulties it has faced, and its findings regarding "honor killings" as well as its suggestions for furthering the struggle against them.

When and how did the struggle against honor killings begin?

KAMER was established in August 1997 and immediately began to provide support to women wanting to free themselves from the violence to which they were being subjected.

Even though the organization had planned to carry out its activities in the province of Diyarbakır, a large number of women from other parts of Southeastern and Eastern Anatolia, and even women from other regions of Turkey as well, also turned to us for support and guidance. They phoned us asking for help in their struggle to end the violence in their lives, wishing to join consciousness-raising groups, or requesting to meet us.

Because of the increasing number of applications, we had already begun to discuss from 2000 onwards the possibility of expanding activities beyond Diyarbakır, into other provinces of the region and elsewhere in Turkey too.

In late 2002, a woman from Diyarbakır started calling KAMER. Speaking in a fearful and despairing voice, she repeatedly told us

that she was being confined to her home, never allowed to go out, and that she was terribly frightened and certain she would be killed.

She told us only her name without giving any information about how to reach her.

Some time later we read in a local newspaper that she had been killed. We were terribly sorry.

The Şemse Allak incident took place at about the same time.

In November 2002, a journalist called and told us that a woman and her husband, condemned by their families, had been stoned. The journalist told us that the man had lost his life, while the woman, Şemse, who was five months pregnant, had been seriously wounded and taken to the Dicle University Hospital.

From the moment we heard about the incident, we provided Şemse with all the support we could.

These two events, which had taken place in a short space of time, shocked us to our very cores. We began to discuss the issue of honor and honor killings.

Every one of us remembered a large number of murders that we had heard about over the course of our lives: women had been murdered—our relatives, our neighbors; women from our street, our neighborhood, our village, our district.

The year was 2003; we found ourselves attempting to reach each and every woman who had ever applied to us for assistance, since our inception in 1997, to learn how they were.

Imagine violence as a pyramid; at the very top of that pyramid, the tip of the iceberg, are “honor killings.”

We had to begin the struggle against these killings as soon as possible. But how?

Defining the methods of our struggle

In order to identify the most effective approach to take in the struggle against honor killings, we had to come up with a preliminary plan of action. The only problem was, we had no idea where to begin. Therefore, we decided that our first step should be to gather the information that we lacked and thus build up the knowledge that would become the foundation of our struggle.

Our plan was as follows:

- We would reach three women who were likely to become victims of honor killings, their families or communities already having delivered a verdict of death penalty for them.
- While ensuring the safety of the women's lives, we would gather information on the issue based upon each woman's story.

But first of all, we had to learn what had been taking place.

We wrote up a project proposal detailing this process, and sent it to the Consulate General of Sweden in Istanbul. Annika Svahnström, head of the Consulate's Section for Turkish Swedish Cooperation, was quite sensitive to the issue. In her term of office in Turkey, she did her best to strengthen both KAMER and many other NGOs.

We then learned that the late Anna Lindh, the Swedish Foreign Minister at the time, had also decided to support our project. She visited Diyarbakır, announcing her support in a press conference held at KAMER.

Where as we had planned to reach just three women within that year, we ended up working with no less than 23. Thanks both to

Anna Lindh's support, which had received extensive coverage in the press, and to KAMER's efforts to publicize the project, the larger public soon became aware of it and thus 23 women who had been sentenced to death by their families, applied to us within a year.

We learned a great deal from the life stories of these 23 women; we learned who decided that they should be killed and why, and who the likely perpetrators were. We were then able to extrapolate from the information we had gathered, to better understand the process in general and thus endeavor to equip ourselves to stop such murders.

At the end of the year, we shared all this information with the public in a report, published in book form and entitled *Alışmayacağız* (We Shall Not Get Used to It).

In the following years, our project continued with support provided by the Consulate General of Sweden in Istanbul, the Open Society Institute, the Embassy of Switzerland, and the OAK Foundation.

We named the next project, "Project for the Development of Permanent Methods to be used in the Struggle against Killings Committed in the Name of 'Honor.'"

The problem was too important and too risky to be tackled by only a single state agency and single NGO. For this reason, none of the projects designed since 2004 have been carried out solely by KAMER. For, listening to women in danger tell us their stories, we have been inspired to further our struggle by developing new partnerships over the years.

We have worked with governorships, district-governorships, social work agencies, gendarmerie, the police, muftis, various NGOs, and a large number of volunteer women and men sensitive to this issue and desiring to help. After all, we were tackling a social problem,

the solution to which could be found only by means of a collective effort on the part of all social parties.

Women were powerful, very powerful, so powerful that they were capable of creating miracles out of even the smallest bit of support.

Most of them were not simply victims; rather, they were also active resisters. Fully aware of all the restrictions and limitations that they faced, they struggled against the barriers, struggled to make it possible for themselves, and thus all women, to live more freely.

Some women who had applied to KAMER while under danger of being killed went on to become independent women who earned their living by working or setting up their own businesses.

All women, it seemed, needed an opportunity to change their lives. And it was necessary to become organized on a large scale in order to create those opportunities for women.

Thus began the “An Opportunity for Every Woman Project”

Women experiencing violence in various provinces had asked us for support, others wishing to undertake activities similar to ours had come to us seeking advice, and countless women had created miracles out of limited opportunities and support, all of which made clear to us that we had to become organized on a large scale.

In fact, we had already conducted a pilot study in three provinces as part of the “Project for Regional Expansion,” with support from the Chrest Foundation. Our intention was to use this study in order to further develop the grassroots organization model that had been employed during KAMER’s establishment phase.

After long deliberations, we decided that the most appropriate legal structure for becoming organized on a large scale was a foundation.

In 2005, while continuing our efforts in the struggle to stop honor killings, now with EU support, we completed the necessary procedures for establishing the KAMER Foundation and designed the “An Opportunity for Every Woman Project.”

The expenses for setting up the KAMER Foundation were covered by the Chrest Foundation, and in September 2005, the KAMER Foundation was officially established.

The first activity undertaken by the foundation was the “An Opportunity for Every Woman Project,” whereby KAMER, with the support of the SIDA Foundation and the Open Society Institute, set up women’s centers in the 23 provinces of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia between 2005 and 2008.

Having successfully organized on a large scale, the time had now come to strengthen KAMER. The Open Society Foundation and the SIDA Foundation provided financial support during this period (2008-2010) of reinforcement and consolidation of the existing organization.

KAMER, which was launched in a small office in Diyarbakır in 1997, has become a very large women’s organization with branches in the 23 provinces of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia and with dozens of women working for it.

In each center there are women who want to reach out to other women, who provide support to those women seeking to free themselves from the violence they are subjected to, and who strive to prevent “honor” killings at every stage.

Our Methods

KAMER has planned all its activities and projects in accordance with women’s own demands and needs.

We have made all our plans in collaboration with women, employing all possible methods of participation.

We have taken great pains to create repeatable methods in all of our activities and to share our methods with all relevant parties.

The following is a summary account of the methods we use in our struggle against honor killings. For detailed information on this issue, see KAMER's book entitled "Growing in Awareness, Multiplying in Number."

Methods for Reaching Women

- All indicators show that the most effective way for publicizing our organization has been the promotion of KAMER by women who have applied to us for support against violence or who have taken part in our various activities.
- Upon observing that women living in the urban slum areas have difficulty accessing KAMER or any other support organization, we began to visit such neighborhoods and establish relationships with the women living there on an individual basis. This method has served to increase considerably the demand for support against violence, especially against honor killings.
- We have distributed promotional materials at a large number of meetings and during home visits.
- We have made 12 different TV programs broadcasted on TRT-6 (the state channel broadcasting in Kurdish) in order to reach out to women who do not know Turkish.
- We have made use of every opportunity to make ourselves heard via local or regional radio and TV, and thus invite women to apply to our organization for support.
- A documentary about KAMER has been broadcasted nearly 50 times on local TV channels.
- We continue our neighborhood meetings.
- We are searching for ways to become effective in local politics.

We have tried to take part in Provincial Boards for Human Rights and City Assemblies.

Our Methods of Struggle for the Prevention of a Possible Honor Killing

Methods of working with women who are asking for support in their struggle to free their lives of violence differ from those of working with women who require help to prevent a possible honor killing.

The main reason for this, of course, lies in the fact the lives of the latter group are in danger. This fact leads to the following differences:

- In the case of the first group, it is important that women take the first step, as their initiative is considered an indication of the fact that they want to effect a radical change in their lives. In the latter group, however, it is impossible to wait for women to take the first step simply because women are usually deprived of the freedom of movement before a likely killing. Thus, we sometimes have to take action on the basis of a piece of information regarding such a case. We inform the security forces (the police or gendarmerie) and go to the woman's home with them.
- Confidentiality is essential in the case of applications concerning violence. Unless the applicant woman approves, we never share her story with anybody else. In the case of a possible murder, since both the woman in question and women from KAMER who come to support her are in great danger, security forces must be informed of the situation immediately.
- The first task in helping the women who have applied to free themselves from violence is to tell them that they are not alone, that there are laws to protect them, that they can use their le-

gal rights, and that they should not be ashamed of what they have undergone. After eliminating confusion and insecurity, women themselves decide what they want to do. They become clear about the forms of support they need, and they ask for them. KAMER tries to support them in accordance with their demands.

On the other hand, those women who are in danger of being murdered tend to have quite different emotions and thoughts. Fear and despair seem to be much more dominant. They sometimes tend to overlook how great the danger is, since they do not want to believe that members of their family, i.e. people they love very much, might kill them. For this reason, we can make the decision to take the first and urgent steps such as providing security, a health check, and legal advice without the approval of the woman in danger.

- Based on the stories of the 750 women to whom we have provided first and urgent support, we have identified two distinct methods of action.

The method of action for women about whom the verdict calling for their death can by no means be revoked

After providing first and urgent support and finding a place where they can feel safe, secure, and relaxed, we ask the women if there is anybody in their family who can help them and if it is possible to revoke the verdict calling for them to be killed.

If their answer is negative, we provide support in the following order:

- First we inform the police to ensure their security.
- If they do not have an ID, we get in touch with the Civil Registry and try to obtain an ID for them.
- If they have any health problems, we provide the necessary support for their treatment.

- We ensure that they disguise themselves and give a lawyer power of attorney.
- If it is necessary to take legal action or file a criminal complaint, we submit a petition to the office of attorney general.
- If they want to go to a women's shelter, we apply on their behalf to the Social Service and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) or some other shelter organization.
- If they have to wait for some time to be taken to the women's shelter, we ensure that they stay as guests in safe, secure places.
- We cover their travel expenses and ensure that they travel securely and under the protection of the police.
- We do our best to eliminate bureaucratic and other obstacles throughout the process.

The method of action for women about whom the verdict calling for their death can possibly be revoked

- We first guarantee women's security.
- They stay as guests in a comfortable and secure place for a couple of days.
- We ensure that they receive psychological support.
- We collect the names and addresses of people who can contact the family, and gather information about them.
- Talks are initiated, with either a team from KAMER visiting the people who might provide support, or those people coming to KAMER.
- We make every effort to do away with the pressure upon the family and to revoke the death verdict.
- Once we are certain that the woman's life is no longer in danger, if the woman so demands, we help to make it possible for the woman to continue living with her family.
- No matter what, the decision whether it is safe for the woman to continue living with her family belongs unconditionally to her.
- We ensure that she grants a lawyer the power of attorney so

that the lawyer can take legal action if she experiences any problems.

Good News

- A survey study conducted in 1996 showed that 90% of women viewed violence as a natural part of “being a woman,” and that they felt helpless in the face of violence, even if they were opposed to it. New research conducted in 2008 and 2009 showed that 9 out of 10 women believed that no violence was justified.
- The Police Department of Diyarbakır set up a theater group and staged a play on gender roles and the discrimination and violence resulting from them. The play was performed both in various parts of Turkey and abroad. Composed of police officers, the group also organized a special performance for KAM-ER. The play, which was written in a meticulous language, was received favorably by women and considered to be a source of hope.
- As the statistics on murders committed in the name of “honor” also show, women who have applied for support to help them escape violence and/or a possible “honor killing,” are received more favorably by the community now than before.
- The Directorate General on the Status of Women has opened a help line, 183, which women facing violence and a possible “honor killing” can call for support 24 hours a day.
- A large number of university students have approached women’s organizations to learn about violence against women and possible solutions.
- Circulars from the Prime Ministry and the Interior Ministry for preventing violence against women and a Circular on Women’s Employment were issued.

- In some legal cases, instigators as well as murderers were sentenced to long imprisonment for their involvement in murders committed in the name of “honor.”

The following excerpts of “Good News” are taken from the book “We Can Stop This” published in 2006:

Good Things

I am thinking about what “good” happened last year – I think that I am someone who approaches life from a positive perspective, though at times this is difficult, even for me! Nevertheless, I can certainly name a few things: Meeting women from all corners of Turkey, within the context of the “Campaign for Tomorrow, Starting from Today,” for one. We had the opportunity to observe the enthusiasm, devotion, and intelligence with which women carried out their activities everywhere; it was truly magnificent... (A pessimist would immediately add: “There is one additional thing to prevent all this effort from being for naught, and that is uniting all of these women and turning their activities into one common voice, statement, and action—all of which requires a stronger organizing network...” However, a pessimist should be reminded of this: “Would you even have imagined all of this happening ten years ago? Isn’t it wonderful to find feminist groups, even if small, in the most unexpected of places?”)

I think that another one of the “good things” that happened last year was the creation of Amargi magazine. Because it provides women like us, who are always struggling, even though we may at times lose hope, get tired, lose our way, or feel isolated, with an important reference point. For me it is a kind of lighthouse—even if my desired destination is elsewhere, I can find my bearings by looking at it. Over the past few years many of us have come to realize how essential and vital feminist theory is; it is difficult to progress without it. Amargi magazine does include theory; however, it does so not with an academic approach, but rather by formulating a po-

litical attitude. I hope that we shall continue down this path, and that as we do so, we manage to grow and become enriched as individuals and as groups.

Aksu Bora (2006)

Who Can Make Our Hearts and Minds Stand at Attention?

If Sevgi Soysal had been alive, we probably would have organized an enormous 70th birthday party for her in 2006. Unfortunately, she died 30 years ago, when she was only 40 years old. But before departing from this mortal world, she left us with some beautiful presents: Tante Rosa, Yürümek, Şafak, Barış Adlı Çocuk, Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu... I was once more swaying between feelings of marvel and admiration when I read Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu (Women's Section of Yıldırım Bölge), with Oya Baydar's preface, in which Sevgi describes the 8 months in 1971 that she spent at the Yıldırım Area Women's Prison. Sevgi Soysal questions on the one hand the way military authorities attribute a "soldier-prisoner" status to them, and on the other the "soldier-militant" and "soldier-woman" status attributed to them by the left itself. In other words, as a woman against all kinds of "regimentation," Sevgi Soysal is the forerunner of the position that nowadays we call "feminist anti-militarist." Now, I'd like to let her speak for herself, as I quote from her here and enthusiastically advise everybody to read Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu and her other books.

"The idea of exercising collectively during our times outdoors was adopted by the 'Dawn' group. The prisoners form a big circle in the courtyard and exercise all together... As the members of the "Dawn" group are exercising, Gülay becomes annoyed. 'Girls, this is crass behavior, doing this in front of the soldiers – our people don't approve of such things...' Nina finds that this view of Gülay's bears the remnants of feudal morality. The group puts an end to the gymnastics. The male prisoners of Yıldırım Bölge also seem to disapprove of gymnastics. They have sent word, 'Tell the girls to drop this gymnastics non-sense.' This was that annoyed me most: 'Why

do you have to keep following what the men are saying, don't you have a mind of your own?' Clearly, these views of mine are considered 'feminist.'"

"The cruelty that cannot reach deeply enough to oppress our thoughts and our hearts, is constantly busying itself with the way we look. Having us stand at attention at every occasion is part of this. During roll calls, 'attention, fall into line,' during recreation time, 'attention, fall into line,' when we are going to get paid, 'attention, fall into line,' when we are going to the doctor, 'attention, fall into line,' when we are going to court, 'attention, fall into line,' when we are going to the showers, 'attention, fall into line'; however, as always happens when you exaggerate, these 'attention' commands lose their potency as times goes by. Who can make our hearts and thoughts fall into line? Who can have them stand at attention? And that's what really matters."

Sevgi Soysal, Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2003.

Ayşe Gül Altınay

It Doesn't Have to be "Official" to Count...

Two of the most striking examples of recent verdicts regarding partnerships out of wedlock:

"Since the parties are not bound by an official marriage, the matter should be taken up according to the provisions related to human rights of the Constitution of the Turkish Republic, the United Nations Convention on Discrimination Against Women, and the Universal Convention for Human Rights.

"When taken up within the framework of the rules set by law number 4320, it is clear that the value being protected by this law is not related to the safeguarding of family as indicated in article 41 of the Constitution of the Turkish Republic, but to the safeguarding of

human rights and of the rights of women and children. The value being safeguarded is not the family, but the individual's right to life and to be safe from all kinds of violence.

“The situation has been solved within the framework of articles 12 and 17 of The Constitution of the Turkish Republic, of article 8 of the European Human Rights Convention, and of article 1 of the United Nations Convention on Discrimination Against Women.

“The Turkish Constitution has established the fact that an individual has the right to life, to preserve and improve his/her material and spiritual existence, and the right to life and the preservation of that right should be a number one priority of the state. According to the way the European Court has interpreted article 8 of the European Convention, whenever a relation looks like a family relation, it should be considered a family, independent of its official status. As for article 1 of the United Nations Convention, all discrimination against women has been forbidden, since according to this convention, the term ‘discrimination against women’ includes all kinds of sex-based discrimination, exclusion, and limitation, preventing or aiming for the prevention of the recognition, use, and enjoyment of political, economic, social, cultural, civil, and other kinds of human rights and basic freedoms, based on the equality between genders and irrespective of the civil status of women.

“Since the plaintiff and the defendant have been living together without an official marriage, since this co-habitation has given birth to the children of the plaintiff named (...), (...), who at the moment are living with the defendant, and since it can be proved that the defendant has used violence against the plaintiff and their children, threatening the defendant with an infringement of her right to life, the conclusion has been reached that the plaintiff is subject to immediate threat and danger, making it necessary for the plaintiff and her children to be protected.”

And the second case:

“A study of Law 4320 has shown that it includes provisions aiming to prevent violence amongst spouses, and it has also been discovered that the parties are not officially married.

“The European Human Rights Court has reinterpreted the concept of family on the basis of article 8 of the European Convention signed on 4th December 1950 with the aim of safeguarding human rights and basic freedoms, and as a result of this reinterpretation, the fact that two people should be living under the same roof and that seen from the outside, this cohabitation and joint living should be interpreted as a marriage has been established as being sufficient for this to be recognized as a marriage and for it to enjoy certain protections; in addition to this, it has also been stated that similarly, cohabitation and joint living with uncles or aunts etc., also comprises a family. Even though the parties are not officially married, the fact that violence against women has been prohibited by international law, that Turkey has undertaken to safeguard women and children from violence by becoming party to international conventions , and that such violence is prohibited also by international law, and in consideration of the fact that the plaintiff and the defendant have been living as man and wife, and therefore must be considered as a family, the rule of prevention of violence should be applied, without considering this an official family, with the result that it is necessary to decree the prevention of all kinds of violence aimed against the defendant.

“By means of the acceptance of preventive measures, and on the basis of article 8 of the European Convention concerning the safeguarding of human rights and basic freedoms, article 1/a of law number 4320, and of the provisions of international conventions concerning the prevention of violence against women, it has been decreed to protect the plaintiff from all actions of the defendants involving violence, insults, threats, and death threats.”

Berçem Akkoç Alemdarzade (2006)

Our Assessments and Suggestions

- Even though new laws have been passed and new circulars issued, difficulties persist at the practical level since parallel changes have not yet occurred in the mentality of the people.

We know that there are still some public officials who regard “honor killings” solely as a reflection of culture and traditions, and who do not feel any responsibility for them. Yet it is a fact that traditional, cultural practices which are harmful to women have been maintained throughout history and are able to continue today, thanks to a great variety of mechanisms which serve to foster them.

- Legal changes and circulars do not mean much to thousands of women due to various communication problems, above all the problem of language. In order to adequately inform women of their rights, we believe that it is necessary:

To prepare video cassettes to explain the Civil Code and the Penal Code in Kurdish and Zazaki.

To distribute these cassettes to all the village muhtars (elected village heads) and ensure that they are watched everywhere
To air them on the TV channels broadcasting in the languages other than Turkish.

- The sole reason for murders committed in the name of “honor” is to keep women obedient. This is a way of ensuring the maintenance women’s subordination. Since we are said to be living in a democratic constitutional state, no one is supposed to have the right to deliver punishment to others.
- We believe that we should be very suspicious of all “suicide cases.” It is known that murderers and instigators force women to commit suicide in an effort to escape punishment by the law.
- This happens because, while Turkey has recently undergone progressive change calling for harsher penalties to be applied to

instigators and perpetrators of “honor” killings, such change is not yet reflected in the general mentality of the population.

- We think it necessary to plan special activities to empower women living in small towns and particularly in villages. We believe that campaigns in villages conducted as collaborative efforts on the part of muhtars, imams, teachers, and NGOs, will be especially effective.
- It is a well-known fact that “honor killings” are not committed due to a sudden burst of rage, but as a result of a long process of deliberation and planning, and hence within the knowledge of the community. Whenever anything is heard or a suspicion arises about a possible murder, it is necessary to ensure that muhtars, imams, or teachers intervene, or, should such intervention prove possible, that they file a criminal complaint with security forces, so that immediate steps can be taken to protect possible victims of an “honor killing.”
- All the relevant officials working in police stations, judicial bodies, and SHÇEK (Social Services and Child Protection Agency) must be trained to become more sensitive about “honor killings,” so that they never try to change women’s minds and force them to accept anything.
- In order to raise the literacy rate amongst women:
Literacy courses must be planned and conducted for women not just in urban areas but in villages too.
Methods must be developed for horizontal (women-to-women) and accelerated courses.
Should women decline to go to school, the courses must be provided in village houses.
- We believe in the importance of early childhood education. If we want to construct a non-violent culture, early childhood is the ideal time to start. Since Turkey became a candidate for membership in the EU, the early childhood education school-

ing rate has begun to increase. This increase must continue. New approaches in early childhood education need to be embraced so that education, rather than childcare, becomes primary, and the goals of early childhood education must include the elimination of gender discrimination and the fostering of children's development as healthy, well-balanced individuals.

- Legal regulations must be changed so as to make it easier to open childcare centers and children's clubs, and the establishment of such educational facilities must be encouraged.
- In all the provinces where there is a women's center, it has been possible for us to collaborate with governorships, Social Services and Child Protection Agencies, bar associations, some municipalities, police departments, and other relevant official bodies and NGOs. Sometimes, however, obstacles encountered in the implementation of new legal regulations are so great that the provincial administration cannot possibly overcome them. In such situations, the intervention of the central administration is essential in order to eliminate the obstructive mechanisms.
- The Directorate General on the Status of Women (KSGM) must assume a mediating role between the government and women's organizations—it must be a channel for communicating difficulties encountered at the practical level and suggested solutions. We suggest that a branch be established within the KGSM to carry out this function.
- Accusations leveled against women for any reason lead the community to put pressure on the family. Many people within the community pressure family members to commit murder, by severing all ties with the family, or by hinting at the family's "sullied honor." This pressure paves the way for murder. We have observed that "Emergency Intervention Teams" set up in Diyarbakır and Mardin have been effective in preventing such

murders. We suggest that similar teams be formed in all provinces, and that necessary measures be taken to render these teams permanent.

- There are cases in which the help line 183 has proven insufficient. Establishing help lines in the offices of provincial governors and district governors could help to overcome this insufficiency. Such lines, to be managed by women with the necessary training and qualifications, could be made available 24 hours and promoted on TV and radio channels
- Assuming that women can apply to all official agencies and NGOs for support in overcoming problems stemming from their status as women, then we can say that all the people working within such agencies and organizations must be trained in this regard. When know from practical experience working with public officials just how important it is that those responsible for implementing laws be knowledgeable and conscious about gender discrimination, communication techniques with applicant women, and relevant laws and legal changes. We have witnessed the positive effects of training programs designed to raise the awareness of public officials when it comes to such topics, and therefore call for more widespread implementation of such programs.
- Violence against women and murders committed in the name of “honor” are human rights issues. All NGOs active in the field of human rights must mainstream the issues of violence against women and “honor killings” and plan their activities accordingly.
- The Circular issued by the Office of the Prime Minister entitled “Actions to Be Taken to Prevent Violence against Women and Murders Deriving from Traditional Codes and Honor” instructs all official agencies and NGOs to embrace the principle of equality between genders. It also assigns public agencies new responsibilities to enable women to exercise their rights and to

receive the necessary support in case of violence. The goals set by the Circular are to be reached via the collaboration of public agencies and NGOs. Even though the Circular is an official document issued with the intent of preventing violence against women, it has not yet been adequately reflected in practices and regulations of official agencies. The Circular provides a “solution method,” but it does not have any sanction power, and, therefore, it does not bring about the expected result. Thus, complementary measures in this regard are urgently called for.

From here to where?

In the years to come:

- We will try to reach all the women in the 23 provinces where KAMER is organized, including women in rural districts and villages, and to increase awareness and sensitivity regarding gender roles.
- We will stand by women wishing to free themselves from the violence or to save themselves from a possible murder. In order to provide adequate support, we will strive to collaborate with all official agencies and NGOs.
- We will share our knowledge and experience with women in various parts of Turkey, so that we might become empowered all together.
- We will share with those desiring to do similar work all the results, knowledge, and experience that we obtain, and we will strive to influence existing policies.

By learning we will become empowered, and by sharing we will multiply.

It is our hope that the future will be brighter than the past.

WHAT ARE “HONOR KILLINGS”?

- Honor Killings are Political
- What Murders Committed in the Name of “Honor” Are, and What They Are Not
- Results of Home Visit Survey
- Perceptions of Honor: A Survey Study

“Honor Killings” are Political...

Domestic violence against women is not a “family matter.” Murders committed in the name of “honor” are not a problem stemming from “ignorance.” Both domestic violence and “honor killings” are political.

One of our initial goals while starting this project was to create “social sensitivity.” We soon came to realize that in all the interviews we conducted regarding killings committed in the name of “honor,” mention was made of a “social pressure” responsible for instigating murders. Killers, abettors, onlookers, those opposed to such murders, in short, just about everyone mentioned social pressure.

So just who is this “society” that we’re all speaking of? And how does the society become the instigator, the abettor of a murder? If it is “society” that instigates a murder, does the true murderer then become an anonymous person? That is to say, should we say that the person who pulls the trigger becomes “a victim of the society,” and that murders are only “a social problem”? Is what is called “honor” a cultural framework that victimizes women and men, the young and the elderly in the same way? Does that framework disappear as people become “modernized,” earn more money, and receive more education?

Victims of Honor Killings Are Not Only Poor and Undereducated Women!

Violence against women is a global problem. There is not a single system in the world that has yet solved this problem completely and brought about equality between men and women.

Furthermore, the problem varies greatly depending upon the types

of country and region, and even upon social, economic, and cultural characteristics of families.

As the level of education and economic welfare of women and/or families decreases, the frequency of domestic violence increases, and so does the number of “honor killings.” It is easier to solve the problems of educated women. But this does not mean that women with higher levels of education and economic welfare do not face these problems too.

Victims of “Honor Killings” are Not Only Kurdish Women!

Whenever the issue of “honor killings” in Turkey is raised, the Kurds living in Southeastern and Eastern Anatolia, as well as in the other parts of Turkey, are the first to come to mind. The reason for this has to do with uneven development in Turkey.

Violence against women is more prevalent and more extreme in Southeastern and Eastern Anatolia because of unemployment, poverty, and linguistic barriers.

Nevertheless, “honor killings” cannot be defined exclusively as a problem of Southeastern Anatolia or Kurds.

These killings take place in all parts of Turkey, and all parts of the world even. Each year thousands of women are killed by their husbands and families for various reasons: because of “love,” “passion,” “honor,” or “bride wealth.” Even though the United Nations’ estimates put the annual figure at 5,000, women’s organizations, especially those active in the Middle East and Southwestern Asia, argue that most cases go undetected, and that the real number is at least four times higher.

*“Honor Killings”: An Effective Instrument for Maintaining Women’s
Secondary Status*

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women makes clear that “violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women.” That is to say, a man’s murder of a woman for “honor,” “jealousy,” or whatever reason is a manifestation of men’s historical power over women. Therefore, men’s claims that they have committed such murders due to reasons such as “jealousy” or “honor” do not make these murders “psychological” or “cultural” incidents. These murders are political in the full sense of the term.

Based upon our experience, we define the term “honor” as follows: “Honor consists of standards of behavior that have been produced by the universally prevalent male-dominant system of thought in order to be able to maintain women’s secondary status and to be able to hinder equality between women and men. These standards vary depending upon characteristics of culture and tradition.”

Consequently, the main “problem” is women’s “failure” to abide by these standards, which are imposed upon her. Disobedience may take various forms. For example, a woman may fail to “serve” her husband or other men in the family, may resist or react to their violent behavior, may go to her neighbor even though she is not allowed to, may maintain her friendship with the neighboring woman who her father-in-law dislikes, may refuse to serve her the drinking buddies her husband brings home, may speak or laugh aloud, may wear make-up, may refuse to marry someone her family chooses, may attempt to divorce her husband who has beaten her, or may be seen to have talked to a man whose wife is dead... In all these cases, she may be deemed disobedient. All of these examples are taken from real life stories. The number of events that we know and have witnessed is, of course, far greater than these.

In order to show that the main reason underlying such murders is a deliberate effort to perpetuate women’s secondary status, we decided to write down the details about applicants’ experiences. We came

to understand this was the only way we could identify the true meaning and consequences of these murders. Moreover, in this way we could show that the women in question were not simply poor victims, living “over there,” somewhere in a faraway place, but that they were active agents employing all the possible means to preserve their lives and integrity under the most adverse of conditions.

The first woman to apply for support within the framework of the project was an especially difficult case for us: Şemse Allak. We were unable to save her life. While Şemse was fighting death in the hospital, a “peacemaking dinner” was organized between the families—a peacemaking dinner during which no mention was even made of Şemse’s name. Şemse’s family did not claim her dead body. Perhaps this was the price of the “peace.” We buried Şemse in the cemetery of the nameless.

We have never forgotten Şemse. She has always reminded us what peace really means for women. We have kept alive a dream in our actions and everyday dealings as well as in our hearts and minds—the dream of a peace that women will be able to make one day. We have seen everything in this light—every step we have taken, every sentence we have formed, and every place where we have worked... We are able to provide space in our book to only a small number of the 750 applications we received while running the project. We believe that these women’s power to protect their lives and dignity stems from a dream: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of sisterhood or brotherhood.

Hoping that this dream will one day come true...

What Murders Committed in the Name of “Honor” Are, and What They Are Not

In this section, we will assess information about 414 of the 750 women who, their lives being in danger, received assistance from KAMER between 2003 and 2010.

KAMER’s work in the struggle against “honor killings” began in 2003. In the first year, 23 women applied for assistance. The number of women applying increased with each passing year, reaching a total of 750 women between 2003 and 2010.

Since cases of possible “honor killings” require immediate, urgent intervention, it is impossible to gather sufficient information regarding each case. Some women came to us while armed men were out actively searching for them. In such situations, naturally enough, conditions have not allowed for us to sit down and have a long talk with the woman in question, because the top priority is always to ensure the woman’s survival.

We assessed the information on the 414 women with whom we did have the opportunity to spend a sufficient amount of time. Our findings are presented in the following pages.

How do women reach KAMER?

Form of Communication	Honor Killing	
	Number	Percent
Phone	65	15,7
Face to face	349	84,3
Total	414	100,0

While in cases of “ordinary” violence we demand that women reach us by phone or visit us, in cases of a possible “honor killing,” our method of action is different. When a woman’s life is in danger, we take action upon hearing about the case from any source, such as the woman’s mother, neighbor, or friend, or a teacher or police officer.

In the cases of possible “honor killings,” 15.7 percent of the women reached KAMER by phone, while 84.3 percent came to one of the women’s centers in the 23 provinces.

Most women who reached us by phone were not allowed to leave their homes and their lives were in dire danger. In some cases we had to turn to the police or gendarmerie for support so that we could get the women out of their homes.

How Did She Reach KAMER?	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
Came and applied herself	14	3,4
Via various NGOs	11	2,7
Via government agencies (police station, court house)	97	23,4
Via women who took part in awareness-raising groups	144	34,8
Via young people who met her on the street	0	0,0
Via media (TV, newspapers, brochures)	96	23,2
During neighborhood activities	45	10,9
Other	7	1,7
Total	414	100,0

34.8 percent of the women who applied for help in the face of a possible “honor killing” reached us through women who took part in awareness-raising activities carried out by KAMER in various provinces, and 10.9 percent of them, through women who got to know KAMER thanks to the neighborhood activities carried out for the last two years. The fact that 46 percent of the applications reached us through women who had received support from KAMER before or who had taken part in various activities shows that women who have become more aware and sensitive to gender issues influence other women in their surroundings.

Women who have taken part in KAMER’s awareness-raising groups are working as active volunteers where they live.

23.4 percent of the applicants were referred to KAMER by government agencies, which is a result of the collaboration between these agencies and women’s organizations which has developed in recent years.

Who perpetrated the violence and how?

Who Perpetrated Violence	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
Husband/Partner	258	62,3
Father/Brother	135	32,6
Father-in-law/Brother-in-law	2	0,5
Other women in the family	2	0,5
Son/children	0	0,0
Other	17	4,1
Total	414	100,0

The great majority (62.3%) of the women under the threat of “honor killing” were victims of violence committed by their husbands or partners, while almost one third of them were victims of violence committed by their fathers or brothers. A closer look into the category “other,” which accounts for 4.1 percent of cases, reveals that the perpetrators in question were for the most part women’s cousins.

Type of Violence	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
Physical	370	89,4
Psychological	411	99,3
Economic	376	90,8
Verbal	378	91,3
Sexual	264	63,0
The Total Number Assessed	414	

The results above show that all the women were subjected to various types of violence throughout their lives.

Physical Condition of The Applicant	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
No Visible Physical Injury	399	96,4
Cuts and contusions	6	1,4
Deep cuts and contusions	5	1,2
Wounds requiring surgery, head trauma etc.	4	1,0
Various aches and pains due to violence (in waist, arms, neck, nose, etc.)	80	19,3
Total	414	

When they applied, 96.4 percent of the women had no visible physical injury. 3.5 percent of the women were seriously wounded and we met them in the hospital. Three of those women lost their lives.

19.3 percent of the women stated that they had various aches and pains even though there were no visible physical marks on their bodies.

Type of Sexual Violence	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
Rape	212	80,3
Inflicting physical pain during sexual intercourse	4	1,5
Forced prostitution	16	6,1
Sexual violence with a physical object	1	0,4
Incest	24	9,1
Forcing to see pornographic films, photos, etc.	1	0,4
Spouse having relationship with another woman	4	1,5
Forcing to watch him having sex with another woman/forced group sex	2	0,8
Total	264	100,0

We see that 63 percent of the women under threat of “honor killing” were being subjected to sexual violence: 80.3 percent of these women were victims of rape, while 9.1 percent of them were being subjected to incest. The results render it more probable that some “honor killings” were committed in order to hide a case of sexual violence.

Miscarriage	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
Yes	16	5,8
No	258	94,2
Total	274	100,0

The results show that 16 women were being subjected to violence while they were pregnant and that they had a miscarriage.

Attempted Suicide	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
Attempted once	30	7,2
Attempted more than once	9	2,2
Wanted her to commit suicide, but she didn't try	49	11,8
No attempt or idea of suicide	326	78,7
Total	414	100,0

While important changes have been effected in the Penal Code, parallel changes have yet to occur in mentality. For this reason, some instigators and would-be murderers who did not want to face long terms of imprisonment first tried to convince women to commit suicide. The table above is striking in that it shows 88 women were encouraged, perhaps even forced, to attempt suicide.

Demographic data on applicants

Applicant's Age	Honor Killings
Average Age	25,9
The Youngest	13
The Oldest	54

As seen in the above table, of the women about whom a verdict of death penalty was delivered, the youngest was 13, and the oldest was 54, while their average age was 25.9. Since the period of menopause is considered to be the end of women's femininity in a sense, the danger of falling victim to a killing in the name of "honor" decreases as a woman becomes older.

Level of Education	Honor Killing	
	Number	Percent
Illiterate	125	30,2
Literate	72	17,4
Elementary School	96	23,2
Middle School	55	13,3
High School	51	12,3
Vocational High School	4	1,0
Higher Education	11	2,7
Vocational Course	0	0,0
Total	414	100,0

47.6 percent of the women were never sent to school. 30.2 percent are still illiterate, while 17.4 percent learned how to read and write thanks to their own efforts. At first glance, one might get the impression that the risk of “honor killing” decreases as the level of education increases. In fact, the rates of schooling and literacy amongst the women who were under the threat of honor killing are quite close to overall average regional rates found using the data collected during our neighborhood visits. Moreover, the percentage of illiterate women amongst the women who were under the threat of “honor killing” is 25 percent less than the regional average.

Mother Tongue	Honor Killing	
	Number	Percent
Turkish	78	18,8
Kurdish	284	68,6
Zazaki	32	7,7
Arabic	20	4,8
Other	0	0,0
Total	414	100,0

68.6% of the applicant women expressed that their mother tongue was Kurdish, while, 7.7% of them stated that it was Zazaki. The fact that the mother tongue of 18% of them was Turkish shows that the commonly-held belief that “honor killings” are a problem of Kurds is unwarranted.

Since the regions where KAMER is organized are those where (Kurdish- and Zazaki-speaking) Kurds comprise the majority, it is only to be expected that the mother tongue of the majority of the women who face the threat of “honor killing” is a language other than Turkish.

The data collected during our neighborhood visits shows that 85% of the women living in the region are below the poverty line and that 48% of them are near or below the starvation line. Therefore, we can say that the socio-economic conditions of women under threat of falling victim to an “honor killing” are not much different than the regional average.

Are There Any Sources of Income?	Honor Killing	
	Number	Percent
Yes	79	19,1
No	335	80,9
Total	414	100,0

80.9% of the applicant women did not have any social security rights. Furthermore, half of the remaining 19% had only a “green card” (a document issued for the poor which entitles them to free health services).

Did She Migrate to The Province Where She Lives?	Honor Killing	
	Number	Percent
Yes	198	47,8
No	216	52,2
Total	414	100,0

At the time of their application 47.8% of the women had immigrated to the province where they lived within the previous 10 years for reasons having to do with security, marriage, employment, or vendetta.

Marital Status	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
Married at a religious ceremony	67	16,2
Married at the registry office	63	15,2
Married at a religious ceremony and at the registry office	37	8,9
Lives together with her partner	8	1,9
Married, but separated	64	15,5
Single	140	33,8
Divorced	35	8,5
Total	414	100,0

33.8% of the applicant women were single, 8.5% were divorced, and the rest were married. 16.2% of them were married only at a religious ceremony (which is not legal without a marriage at the registry in Turkey), 15.2% were married only at the registry, and 10.9% were married both at a religious ceremony and at the registry. 1.9% of the applicant women lived with their partners without getting married, while 15.5% were married, but separated.

Marriage Age Range	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
13 or younger	2	0,7
13-15	77	28,1
16- 17	110	40,1
18 or older	85	31,0
Total	274	100,0

69% of the applicant women were married at the age of 17 or younger. The data KAMER collected during neighborhood visits show that this figure for the region overall is 46%. This difference indicates that women who were married during their childhood face a greater risk of “honor killing.”

How They Married	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
Arranged marriage	153	55,8
By mutual agreement of the two parties	54	19,7
Forced marriage	67	24,5
Total	274	100,0

Only 19.7% of the applicant women got married according to their own will. 55.8% of the applicants got married by arrangement, and some of these women began to love their husbands after they met or married them.

24.5% of the applicant women were forced to marry someone they did not want to marry.

Number of Children	Honor Killings
Average	3,2
Least	1
Most	13

Applicant women had 3 children on average, and their children were victims of violence to the same degree as they themselves were.

It is known that violence against women is a global problem stemming from sexism. Women can be subjected to violence regardless of their economic conditions or level of education. The data presented above demonstrate that women from diverse backgrounds, that is, in terms of such as socio-economic status, educational level, religion, and language, for example, face the risk of “honor killings.” Our experience of long years, however, shows that illiterate women with no sources of income have much greater difficulty accessing support mechanisms than those with higher levels of education and better economic opportunities. Problems of communication due to linguistic incapability, political violence that has been continuing in the region for long years, and the feudal system hinder women’s struggle against violence, and in some cases escalate the violence to the point of murder in the name of “honor.”

Which support mechanisms do women use?

Where Did Women Receive Support?	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
Police station	169	40,8
Friend	29	7,0
Courthouse/judicial authorities	79	19,1
Family member	84	20,3
Applied to no one	96	23,2
Other	10	2,4
Total	14	112,8

The table above shows where women under threat of death applied in cases of emergency: 169 women (40.8%) applied to the police station, 129 of them (7%) received support from a friend, 79 (19.1%) applied to judicial authorities, and 84 (20.3%) received supported from a family member. The fact that the rate of application to police stations and judicial authorities increased every year can be considered a positive development. Nonetheless, it is distressing to note that the women were able to reach no person or institution that could help them in 23.2% of the “honor killing” cases of which KAMER was informed in some way and involved.

Applications to Police Stations	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
The police supported the man who perpetrated violence	4	2,4
The police reconciled parties and sent them home	9	5,3
They didn't take the application seriously	3	1,8
They took a serious interest and referred the woman to the relevant institutions (hospital, attorney general, KAMER)	153	90,5
Total	196	100,0

The women who applied to the police station described how they were received there. The police officers backed the perpetrators of violence in 4 cases, tried to reconcile the perpetrator and the victim in 9 cases, and didn't take the application seriously in 3 cases. Despite the Circular of the Prime Minister (no. 2006/17) issued in 2006, at times women who have approached police officers and public prosecutors for help have been treated in ways that are contrary to those dictated in the circular. This can have dramatic

consequences for women. In some cases reported in the media recently, some women have lost their lives, while others have lost their courage and concluded that they have no choice but yield to violence.

KAMER witnessed in its first years (following its foundation in 1997) that most women who applied to police stations about a possible “honor killing” or the violence they were being subjected to were received with indifference, insults, violence, or, at best, attempts of reconciliation. The finding that 90.5% of the women were treated properly in the police stations to which they applied is therefore indicative of significant positive development in this regard.

Applications to Judicial Authorities	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
I had difficulty getting my petition processed	2	2,5
They insulted me and sent me away	0	0,0
They processed my petition	77	97,5
They sent me to the hospital	0	0,0
Total	79	100,0

The same positive development is seen in the attitudes of judicial authorities as well. 97.5% of the women who made their first application to judicial authorities told us that their petitions were duly processed.

These positive changes demonstrate that gender awareness and sensitivity amongst public officials has increased and that women who applied to public agencies knew their rights and behaved in a determined way.

Divorce Cases	Honor Killing	
	Number	Percent
Yes	145	52,9
No	129	47,1
Total	274	100,0

52.9% of the women about whom a death verdict was delivered filed for divorce. This percentage is proof of women's courage and ability to take action to finish violence-ridden relationships, even though divorce itself is considered reason for punishment.

What did women demand? What did KAMER do?

The Needs of Applicants	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
Protection	411	99,0
Medical Support	13	3,1
Legal Advice / Support	138	33,3
Psychological Counseling / Support	114	27,5
Employment	36	8,7
Accommodation	181	43,7
School / Daycare center for children	4	1,0
Economic support	60	14,5
Communication with the perpetrator of violence	12	2,9
Other	5	1,2
Number of respondents	414	

All the women who at risk of becoming victims of “honor killings” and who applied to KAMER were experiencing great fear at the time when they reached us. Their first, most urgent demand was, naturally, for protection. Of the 750 women, two were seriously injured and hospitalized at the time of application in 2003, as was one woman in 2004. They all lost their lives.

For all the other women who have applied to us since 2003, the first thing we did was to ensure that they were properly protected. All of them are still alive.

The applicant women listed their primary demands as follows: accommodation, legal advice, and psychological counseling.

What Did KAMER Do?	Honor Killings	
	Number	Percent
Provided protection	411	99,0
Got them medical support	12	2,9
Got them legal support	350	84,5
Got them psychological counseling	106	25,6
Helped them find employment	31	7,5
Helped their children receive psychological counseling	1	0,2
Enrolled their children in school/day-care	3	0,7
Helped them join awareness-raising groups	15	3,6
Accompanied (to the police, hospital, courtroom)	9	2,2
Provided material support	4	1,0
Helped them stay in a women's shelter	215	51,9
Helped them receive support from SYV (Foundation for Social Assistance and Solidarity)	18	4,3
Other	29	7,0
Number of respondents	414	

KAMER helped women in accordance with the women's own needs. We tried to make sure that all of them received legal advice. Even though only 138 of the 414 women wanted to receive legal support initially, 350 women did so thanks to KAMER's encouragement. More than half of the women were placed in women's shelters. Apart from the forms of support seen in the table above, nearly 7% of the women (in the category "other") were sent abroad.

Conclusions

- 750 women under threat of falling victim to an "honor killing" received support from KAMER between 2003 and 2010.
- We took a variety of precautions to protect the women and received support from security forces when necessary.
- We were able to gather and assess information on 414 of the 750 women.
- Three women lost their lives and 747 are still alive.
- 215 of the 414 women were placed in women's shelters. Although, when necessary, KAMER tried to maintain contact with the women for a while after they had been placed in shelters, this was a temporary situation as contact ceased after some time.
- 350 of the women made decisions about their lives with support from both KAMER and a lawyer.
- We maintained constant contact with and provided support to the other women, who, rather than being placed in a shelter, continued to live in various other places.
- Cooperation between KAMER and government agencies made it easier for us to support women who face the threat of "honor killing."
- Attitudes towards women applying to government agencies have changed in a positive way.

The women who, facing a possible "honor killing," were able access support mechanisms have survived and been supported insofar as possible; however, they have had to lead their lives in fear.

Result of Home Visit Survey

Why we conducted home visits

Assessing the first three years of “An Opportunity for Every Woman Project” in 2008, we found that women in certain neighborhoods in every province almost never benefited from KAMER or other units, governmental and non-governmental, in the cities that might support them.

The neighborhoods in question are generally ones that have come into being in just the last ten years; they are areas where immigration has been most dramatic and poverty at the highest level. Women there have difficulty in going out of their neighborhoods, even their homes, because of their lack of linguistic skills (i.e., they don’t speak Turkish, or speak it well) and family pressure.

Women in these neighborhoods could reach KAMER or other support units only when violence reached unbearable levels and the possibility of an “honor killing” arose.

Taking these facts into consideration, we decided that we would choose two disadvantaged neighborhoods for the following years of the project and visit women there at their homes. These visits would help us reach women living in the neighborhoods in order to create awareness amongst them, and to inform them about the organizations from which they could receive support. We also aimed to obtain significant data on these women and their needs.

The Results of Home Visits

In 2010, we visited 80,000 homes in 40 neighborhoods located within the 23 provinces where KAMER is active, and talked with one woman in each household. The following results are based on the data collected from 41,422 women.

The Language in Which The Interview Was Held	Number	Percent
Turkish	34604	83,5
Kurdish	6306	15,2
Zazaki	191	0,5
Arabic	337	0,8
Other	4	0,0
Number of respondents	41442	

The female interviewers who conducted the interviews during the home visits were capable in the languages spoken in the relevant provinces. Some women preferred to speak Turkish, even though their mother tongues were different. We found out that 17% of the women did not know any languages other than their mother tongue (which is not Turkish), which constituted a major obstacle to seeking benefits from support mechanisms.

Mother Tongue	Number	Percent
Turkish	10115	24,6
Kurdish	24735	60,1
Zazaki	5128	12,5
Arabic	1117	2,7
Other	31	0,1
Number of respondents	41126	

As can be seen in the table above, nearly one fourth of the respondents were native speakers of Turkish, 60.1% were those of Kurdish, 12.5% were those of Zazaki, and 2.7% were those of Arabic.

The data collected on education shows that more than half of the women (52%) did not attend even elementary school (which is the main venue for speakers of Kurdish and Zazaki to learn Turkish). This explains why many women whose mother tongue is not Turkish are unable to communicate in Turkish.

Level of Education	Number	Percent
Illiterate	16456	40,0
Literate	4766	11,6
Elementary school	11645	28,3
Middle school	3315	8,1
High school	3705	9,0
Vocational high school	336	0,8
Higher education	830	2,0
Vocational course	38	0,1
Number of respondents	41091	

All of our research conducted in the slum areas in urban centers in recent years indicates that one out of two women received no formal education. 40% of the women are illiterate, while 11.6% of them learned literacy thanks to their own efforts and help from other household members. Only a small minority attended literacy courses.

28.3% of the women graduated from elementary school, while 8.1% of them finished middle school, and 9% finished high school. Only 2% of the women received higher education.

Age	
Average age	37,2
Number of respondents	41,200

Average age of the respondents is 37.2

Marital Status	Number	Percent
Married at the registry office	10,334	25,2
Married at a religious ceremony	3193	7,8
Married at a religious ceremony and the registry office	19,850	48,3
Lives together with her partner	78	0,2
Married, but separated	118	0,3
Single	6944	16,9
Divorced	482	1,2
Widowed	61	0,1
Number of respondents	41,060	

One fourth of the women were only married at the registry, while nearly half of them got married both at a religious ceremony and at the registry. Those women who got married only at a religious ceremony, that is, 7.8% of the total, are unable to enjoy a large number of legal rights. Divorced women, who still have to resist various prejudices and difficulties, constitute 1.2% of total.

Marriage Age Range	Number	Percent
13 or younger	401	1,2
13-15	7081	20,7
16-17	8362	24,4
18 or higher	18,420	53,8
Number of respondents	34,264	

When we look at the marriage age range, we see an alarming picture: nearly one out of two women (46.3%) got married during childhood. Those who got married at the age of 15 or below constitute 21.9%, while 1.2% got married when they were younger than 13.

When taken together with the women's answers to the question how they got married, we see that many women had to get married during their childhood with someone they did not want to or did not know.

How They Married	Number	Percent
Arranged marriage	21,591	64,4
By mutual agreement of the two parties	10,109	30,2
Forced marriage	1808	5,4
Number of respondents	33,508	

Only one third of the women got married by mutual agreement of the two parties. In 64.4% of the cases, marriages were arranged by families. If a woman rejects the spouse that her family has chosen, this is considered to be a reason for violence. Therefore women are generally left with no other choice but to acquiesce to the decision their family has made for them.

“Rejection of the spouse chosen by the family” is amongst the reasons for murders committed in the name of “honor.” Moreover, as can be seen in the table above, 5.4% of the women were forced to marry a spouse completely against their will, despite the fact that they had expressed their wish not to marry the man in question. This data shows that forced marriages and arranged marriages during childhood are one of the most urgent problems that needs to be tackled as part of the struggle to prevent violence against women.

Type of Marriage	Number	Percent
Kin marriage	11,563	83,1
Marriage with in-laws	603	4,3
Co-wife (kuma)	821	5,9
Bride exchange (Berdel)	762	5,5
Marriage as payment for blood money	81	0,6
Betrothed in the cradle (beşikertmesi)	81	0,6
Number of respondents	13,916	

83% of the women who were made to marry had to marry their kin. They comprise 35% of the respondent women. The most common kin spouse is a woman’s father’s brother’s son. According to this tradition, which is still in practice in some places, a woman who is considered to have reached the age of marriage is first proposed to her father’s brother’s son. If her father’s brother’s son wants to marry her, it is very difficult for her to marry someone else. The other common kin spouses include the woman’s father’s sister’s son, the woman’s mother’s brother’s son, and the woman’s mother’s sister’s son. Acting contrary to this tradition might lead to “honor killings.”

Marriage with in-laws, which comprises 4.3%, is the practice in which when a woman's husband dies, she is made to marry one of his brothers. Even though would-be spouses object, family may force them to marry. If the woman has children, the possibility of the marriage with a brother-in-law rises due to considerations of division of property.

Marriage as a form of payment for blood money (0.6%) is a practice for settling a blood feud, in which women, as wells as goods, plots of land, and animals, are given as gifts. This is obviously an outrageous form of slavery.

Betrothals in the cradle (0.6%) pave the way for child marriages as a "normal" practice.

Number of Children	
Average	4,1
Minimum	1
Maximum	28
Number of respondents	31,970

The average number of children per married woman is 4.1. This figure was 7 in a similar survey study conducted nearly ten years ago. This decrease might be taken as an indicator of the success of family planning campaigns.

Did You Migrate?	Number	Percent
Yes	19,556	47,9
No	21,252	52,1
Number of respondents	40,808	

Nearly half of the respondent women immigrated to urban areas. Migration occurring usually for reasons of security, marriage, and economic conditions brought women from their rural to urban areas, with which they were not familiar, thus perhaps depriving them of their relatives or friends from whom they might seek support.

Reasons For Immigration	Number	Percent
Security	6854	35,4
Blood feud	171	0,9
Finding employment	4151	21,5
Marriage	6778	35,0
Other	1389	7,2
Number of respondents	19,343	

35% of the migrant women stated that they immigrated because of marriage. Taken together with the answers in the table entitled “How They Married,” it seems clear that many women were not only made to marry, but also torn away from their families, acquaintances, and familiar environments.

35.4% of the migrant women pointed to security as the reason for their immigration. Political violence in the region, especially in rural areas, in recent years has given rise to a serious problem of security. The fact that 35.4% of the migrant women immigrated in search of employment shows how important unemployment and poverty are in the region.

We found out that 171 families (0.9%) migrated from rural to urban areas due to blood feuds. When a blood feud occurs in rural areas, families belonging to the killing group move away from their village in order to protect themselves or obey the decision made by their elders.

To Whom Does The Home Belong to?	Number	Percent
Rented	14,779	36,2
Herself	2971	7,3
Her husband	12,857	31,5
Other	10,249	25,1
Number of respondents	40,856	

Only 7.3% of the respondent women own the home where they live, while 31.5% of them live in a home owned by their husbands. The women in the category “other” (25.1%) are mostly those who do not reside in a home owned by anyone from the nuclear family, since they live with their husband’s family.

Employment Status	Number	Percent
She doesn't have an income-generating job	37,186	90,3
She is a home worker	652	1,6
She wants to work, but her husband/ family doesn't let her	524	1,3
She wants to work, but she can't find employment	1424	3,5
She has a job outside	1388	3,4
Number of respondents	41,174	

Most women (90.3%) do not have an income-generating job. 1.6% of them are engaged in various activities which they conduct at home to generate income, while 3.4% have a job outside.

Monthly Income of The Household	Number	Percent
No income	3968	9,8
100-500 TL	15,560	38,3
500-1000 TL	14,913	36,7
1000-2000 TL	5105	12,6
Over 2000 TL	1058	2,6
Number of respondents	40,604	

9.8% of the respondent women live in households with no income. Seeing as the average household size is about six (5.7) in these areas, we are talking about approximately 23,800 people living on aids and subsidies alone.

According to the 2009 Poverty Study conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), the figures for people living below the poverty line and starvation line in Turkey are 18% and 0.84% respectively. As seen in the table above, 85% of the households visited in during this study by KAMER are below the poverty line, while 48% are below the starvation line. This means that nearly 117,168 persons live below the starvation line in these areas.

Problems of The Neighborhood	Number	Percent
Water	1415	3,5
Infrastructure	2963	7,3
Cleaning	9043	22,2
Security	2885	7,1
Transportation	1482	3,6
Unemployment & poverty	23,031	56,4
Number of respondents	40,819	

56.4% of the respondent women stated that the most significant problem they faced was unemployment and poverty. Even though the women who live under dire conditions of poverty, even starvation, were aware of the violence they were being subjected to, they did not view it as the primary problem. The number of those saying “First, we need to find bread, employment,” was very high.

We observed dramatic sanitation problems in the neighborhoods due to the insufficiency of infrastructure facilities. Women too pointed out that the second most important problem for their community was street cleaning and sanitation. It is also striking that although nearly half of the women had migrated due to security problems, 7.1% of them did not feel secure in the city either, to the extent that they considered security to be the primary problem in their lives.

Demands of The Women In The Neighborhood	Number	Percent
Employment	19,739	48,4
Support for struggling against violence	5237	12,9
Welfare and health services	2913	7,1
Literacy courses	3757	9,2
Children's parks	5673	13,9
Other	3423	8,4
Number of respondents	40,742	

The respondents usually stated that their primary demand was employment. Even though we heard many stories of intense violence during our visits, only 12.9% of the women pointed to support in their struggle against violence as their primary demand. 13.9% of them demanded children's parks in their neighborhood, while 9.2% wanted literacy courses. 7.1% of the women, explaining that they could not benefit from health services, identified welfare and health services as their primary need.

All these data makes clear why these women have been unable to reach support mechanisms and why they do not view violence as their primary problem, until it reaches the point that they were under threat of death. A large number of women were made to marry during childhood and were deprived of basic educational rights. Living under dire conditions of poverty and of isolation due to migration, many of them also have difficulty in communicating with those that can provide support for them since they cannot speak

Turkish. Discrimination and insecurity stemming from political violence in the region complicate their problems further. Under these conditions, even though women are aware of the violence they are being subjected to, they are not able to seek support in the struggle against it. This partly explains why murders committed in the name of “honor” are more common in the region.

Perceptions of Honor: a Survey Study

Prof. Dr. Aytekin Sır

(Dicle University Faculty of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry)

Goals:

- To determine how people view killings committed in the name of honor
- To provide a basis for future projects like posters and enlightening the public on this matter
- To determine preventive measures to be taken
- To determine means of struggling against killings committed in the name of honor
- To determine the views of men who live in rural areas where honor killings are more frequently committed
- The significance of gender identity in views regarding honor killings
- Is there a difference between how rural versus urban populations view honor killings?
- Are there differences in how different ethnic groups view honor killings?

Methodology

Talks were planned to take place in Kurdish, Zaza, Arabic, and Al-levi villages and those places where migration from rural areas into urban centers is most concentrated.

Interviewers who knew local languages were found and trained as to how they would conduct interviews.

Interviews were held with the individual alone, i.e., one-to-one.

Three separate case studies were given to reveal people's views regarding honor killings.

1. Nurdan is a woman who was forced into marriage by her family at a young age and is the mother of two children. Ahmet, the son of her next-door maternal aunt, lost his wife some time ago. Nurdan began taking an interest and spending time with her aunt's son. Nurdan's husband began to get upset at this closeness between the two. He warned Nurdan several times. Nurdan and Ahmet's close relationship continued nonetheless. One day her husband caught Nurdan and her neighbor having intercourse.

2. Berivan is a pretty, jovial, pleasant girl. She enjoys conversation and talking and laughing with everyone. She has good relations with everyone in the village. Whenever they see her, everyone talks and jokes with her. After a while, her older brothers begin to feel disturbed by this situation, because they begin to hear rumors that are being spread about Berivan. They warn Berivan not to go out, and not to talk and laugh with anyone. Berivan, however, continues to act just as before, believing that she is doing nothing wrong. Her elder brothers are very angry at her.

3. Aslı is a 14-year-old young woman. Her father wants to marry her off to the son of her paternal uncle. The entire family supports this marriage, because they do not want to give the girl in marriage to someone outside of the family. Aslı says that she is young, that she has sisterly feelings for her cousin, and that if they try to force her into the marriage, she will run away.

Should she be punished?

No – Why?

Yes

What should her punishment be?

Who would you consult about this?

Who would deliver her punishment?

If she were a relative of yours, what would your decision be?

Socio-demographic characteristics: sex, age, education, marital status, number of children...

Is the person economically dependent upon someone else?

What is honor?

What is "töre"? ("Töre" refers to accepted customs, practices, and moral principles).

What does dishonorableness mean?

Whose duty is it to protect honor?

What is a man's duty in this regard?

What is a woman's duty in this regard?

What is the society's duty in this regard?

WHERE THE SURVEYS WERE CONDUCTED				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Urban centers	196	46,3	46,3	46,3
Kurdish villages	69	16,3	16,3	62,6
Zaza Villages	93	22,0	22,0	84,6
Arab Villages	30	7,1	7,1	91,7
Alevi Villages	35	8,3	8,3	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

SEX				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	91	21,5	21,5	21,5
Male	332	78,5	78,5	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

LEVEL OF EDUCATION				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Illiterate	53	12,5	12,5	12,5
Literate	37	8,7	8,7	21,3
Elementary school	104	24,6	24,6	45,9
Middle school	67	15,8	15,8	61,7
High school	80	18,9	18,9	80,6
University	82	19,4	19,4	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

SEX				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Married	226	53,4	53,4	53,4
Widowed	8	1,9	1,9	55,3
Single	189	44,7	44,7	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

ECONOMICALLY DEPENDENT UPON ANOTHER				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	185	43,7	43,7	43,7
No	238	56,3	56,3	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

WHAT IS HONOR?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
My wife, sister, mother, family	139	32,9	32,9	32,9
Female chastity	43	10,2	10,2	43,0
Women's sexuality, virginity	24	5,7	5,7	48,7
Women's obedience of social rules	15	3,5	3,5	52,2
Men's repute and dignity	58	13,7	13,7	66,0
Women's obedience to men	6	1,4	1,4	67,4
What is religiously sanctioned	78	18,4	18,4	85,8
Other	60	14,2	14,2	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

WHAT DOES DISHONORABLENESS MEAN?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Woman's loss of virginity	45	10,6	10,6	10,6
Women's walking around in improper, revealing attire	5	1,2	1,2	11,8
A woman talking with men	3	0,7	0,7	12,5
A woman's falling in love	4	0,5	0,5	13,5
Woman wanting to marry someone of whom the family does not approve	2	0,5	0,5	13,9
Woman leaving the house without permission	2	0,5	0,5	14,4
Woman committing adultery	205	48,5	48,5	62,9
Woman acting in ways that makes her a subject of gossip	18	4,3	4,3	67,1
Insolent behavior	5	1,2	1,2	68,3
Other	82	19,4	19,4	87,7
Woman's loss of virginity, committing adultery	52	12,3	12,3	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

WHAT IS TÖRE? [See above for definition]				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
The Laws laid out by our forefathers	242	57,2	57,2	57,2
Religious doctrines	75	17,7	17,7	74,9
Our way of life	38	9,0	9,0	83,9
Respect for elders and men	16	3,8	3,8	87,7
Claiming your women and acting accordingly	9	2,1	2,1	89,8
Weddings, bride prices	5	1,2	1,2	91,0
Not giving females in marriage outside the family, continuing the blood line	8	1,9	1,9	92,9
Determining bride exchange during infancy	2	0,5	0,5	93,4
Other	25	5,9	5,9	99,3
Religious doctrines, the laws laid out by our forefathers	3	0,7	0,7	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

WHAT IS THE DUTY OF THE SOCIETY?				
	Fre- qu- ency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumu- lative Percent
No response	13	3,1	3,1	3,1
To keep a watch on the women living on one's street and in one's neighborhood	52	12,3	12,3	15,4
Not to forgive mistakes	43	10,2	10,2	25,5
To reveal mistakes	9	2,1	2,1	27,7
Not to look the other way	78	18,4	18,4	46,1
It has no duty	52	12,3	12,3	58,4
To maintain töres	53	12,5	12,5	70,9
To exclude	7	1,7	1,7	72,6
To be tolerant	18	4,3	4,3	76,8
Not to exclude	9	2,1	2,1	79,0
No one should bother or offend others	1	0,2	0,2	79,2
To treat the honor of others as if it were one's own	16	3,8	3,8	83,0
Has to do the duty that befalls it	12	2,8	2,8	85,8
To live with love and respect	9	2,1	2,1	87,9
To protect and inform individuals	22	5,2	5,2	93,1
To warn	6	1,4	1,4	94,6
To obey the rules	11	2,6	2,6	97,2
Society's self-renewal	12	2,8	2,8	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

WHAT IS A WOMAN'S DUTY?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	12	2,8	2,8	2,8
To submit	23	5,4	5,4	8,3
To be protected	211	49,9	49,9	58,2
To protect	28	6,6	6,6	64,8
To listen and obey	121	28,6	28,6	93,4
To obey punishment decrees	10	2,4	2,4	95,7
To conceal what goes on in private life	1	0,2	0,2	96,0
Respect	9	2,1	2,1	98,1
To educate	4	0,9	0,9	99,1
She should prove herself	4	0,9	0,9	100,0
Other	423	100,0	100,0	

WHAT IS A MAN'S DUTY IN THIS REGARD?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	7	1,7	1,7	1,7
To claim and attend to the women in his family	296	70,0	70,0	71,6
To keep under supervision	59	13,9	13,9	85,6
To warn	32	1,7	1,7	94,8
To punish	7	1,7	1,7	94,8
To kill	4	0,9	0,9	97,2
Other/ men have no duty	2	0,5	0,5	96,2
To educate	4	0,9	0,9	97,2
Men have no duty	1	0,2	0,2	97,4
To take care of women's needs (financial, moral, sexual)	8	1,9	1,9	99,3
To take care of his responsibilities	3	0,7	0,7	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

WHOSE DUTY IS IT TO DEFEND HONOR?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	12	2,8	2,8	2,8
Father's, elder brother's	101	23,9	23,9	26,7
All the men in the family	89	21,0	21,0	47,8
All the women in the family	8	1,9	1,9	49,6
The agha's	1	0,2	0,2	49,9
The grandfather's	1	0,2	0,2	50,1
Husband's	31	7,3	7,3	57,4
One's self	85	20,1	20,1	77,5
The men and women in the family	64	1,5	1,5	92,7
Everyone's	31	7,3	7,3	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

SHOULD SHE BE PUNISHED? (Nurdan)				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	354	83,7	83,7	83,7
No	69	16,3	16,3	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

IF SO, WHAT SHOULD HER PUNISHMENT BE?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	17	4,0	4,0	4,0
Confine her to the home	32	7,6	7,6	11,6
Starve her	5	1,2	1,2	12,8
Lock her up in the barn	2	0,5	0,5	13,2
Cut her nose off	2	0,5	0,5	13,,7
Shave her head	2	0,5	0,5	14,2
Poison her	8	1,9	1,9	16,1
Get her to commit suicide	14	3,3	3,3	19,4
Kill	158	37,4	37,4	56,7
Answer is not yes	69	16,3	16,3	73,0
I'd divorce her	109	25,8	25,8	98,8
I'd send her to her family	1	0,2	0,2	99,1
To be excluded	1	0,2	0,2	99,3
14,00	3	0,7	0,7	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

WHO WOULD YOU CONSULT?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	14	3,3	3,3	3,3
Sheikh	11	2,6	2,6	5,9
Agha	3	0,7	0,7	6,6
Muhtar (local admin. official)	3	0,7	0,7	7,3
Imam	44	10,4	10,4	17,7
Elder members of the family	176	41,6	41,6	59,3
Answer is not yes	69	16,3	16,3	75,7
Myself	81	19,1	19,1	94,8
The law	7	1,7	1,7	96,5
My religion	1	0,2	0,2	96,7
Lawyer	1	0,2	0,2	96,6
Nobody, the info is in the Koran	7	1,7	1,7	98,6
12,00	1	0,2	0,2	98,8
13,00	5	1,2	1,2	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

WHO SHOULD DELIVER THE PUNISHMENT?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	27	6,4	6,4	6,4
Her husband	272	64,3	64,3	70,7
Her brother	11	2,6	2,6	73,3
Answer is not yes	69	16,3	16,3	89,6
The law	23	5,4	5,4	95,0
The sharia	14	3,3	3,3	98,3
Her own conscience	3	0,7	0,7	99,1
Everybody	4	0,9	0,9	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

IF SHE WERE A MEMBER OF YOUR FAMILY, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	14	3,3	3,3	3,3
It would be different	16	3,8	3,8	7,1
It wouldn't be different	324	76,6	76,6	83,7
Answer is not yes	69	16,3	16,3	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

SHOULD SHE BE PUNISHED? (Berivan)				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	139	32,9	32,9	32,9
No	284	67,1	67,1	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

IF NOT, WHY NOT?				
	Fre- quency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumu- lative Percent
No response	76	18,0	18,0	18,0
My answer is yes	139	32,9	32,9	50,8
She has no ulterior motives	58	13,7	13,7	64,5
Because it's not true	39	9,2	9,2	73,8
It's natural	44	10,4	10,4	84,2
Just a warning	27	6,4	6,4	90,5
Women should benefit from the same rights that men do	3	0,7	0,7	91,3
She's not doing anything wrong	11	2,6	2,6	93,9
Everyone is free	3	0,7	0,7	94,6
It should be thoroughly investigated	2	0,5	0,5	95,0
It's the way of life she has adopted for herself	4	0,9	0,9	96,0
Punishment is not a solution, individuals should be educated	3	0,7	0,7	96,7
Everyone knows everyone else in the village, no harm will come of it	1	0,2	0,2	96,9
The situation is inherent to human nature	2	0,5	0,5	96,9
She should not be punished if she is protecting her honor	11	2,6	2,6	97,4
Total	423	100,0	100,0	100,0

WHAT SHOULD BE THE PUNISHMENT?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	5	1,2	1,2	1,2
Confine her to the home	111	26,2	26,2	27,4
Starve her	3	0,7	0,7	28,1
Lock her up in the barn	2	0,5	0,5	28,6
Cut her nose off	1	0,2	0,2	28,8
Get her to commit suicide	2	0,5	0,5	29,3
Kill	10	2,4	2,4	31,7
Answer was no	284	67,1	67,1	98,8
Warning	5	1,2	1,2	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

SHOULD SHE BE PUNISHED? (Ash)				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	35	8,3	8,3	8,3
No	388	91,7	91,7	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

WHAT PUNISHMENT SHOULD SHE RECEIVE?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	1	0,2	0,2	0,2
Confine her to the home	20	4,7	4,7	5,0
Starve her	2	0,5	0,5	5,4
Shave her head	1	0,2	0,2	5,7
Get her to commit suicide	1	0,2	0,2	5,9
Kill	6	1,4	1,4	7,3
Answer was no	388	91,7	91,7	99,1
She should be forced to conform	4	0,9	0,9	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

APPLICATION STORIES

We have collected the stories of the women who applied to KAMER into an archive. These stories—however small they are—helped us to concretize the findings of our research on honor killings, transforming the women from statistical figures into human beings. We saw what a great diversity exists under the rubric of “victims of violence.” Thus, we find it appropriate to present these stories here, each of which involves great expectations, dreams, pains, and struggles.

The stories presented below constitute only a small fragment of our archive. They are not the “most important,” the “most terrifying,” or the “most striking” ones. They are simply chosen from yearly “Reports on Honor Killings” to give an idea about the women KAMER has come into contact with.

1st Application:

The first case of an “honor killing” that we dealt with as part of the project was one of a death-by-stoning. We became aware of the incident via newspaper reports while the project was still at the planning stage. Upon reading the reports, we immediately became involved. The woman in question was seriously injured and had been hospitalized at the Dicle University Faculty of Medicine, in Diyarbakır. The KAMER project team took a keen interest in the woman, and kept close tabs on developments during the time she was alive.

- Date of application: November 27, 2002
- Education: Illiterate
- Age: 35
- Marital status: Married—religious marriage only
- Why she was “tried”

In Yalım, Mardin, the “family court” decided that the woman be stoned to death on the grounds that she had “dishonored” the family by becoming pregnant due to extramarital sex. That she got married at a religious ceremony after learning she was pregnant did not preclude the family to deliver the verdict of death penalty.

The woman and her husband were to be stoned to death by 8 people, comprised of the woman’s brothers and other male members of her family. Her husband died as a result of the stoning, while she was

taken to the hospital of the Dicle University Faculty of Medicine. She remained in a coma in the brain surgery section of the hospital for a long time, due to severe injuries to her head.

In order to prevent the outbreak of a blood feud between the two families due to the man's death in the incident, a reconciliation dinner was organized in Istanbul. The two parties came together in a dinner open to the press, declaring that the man was killed by accident and without even mentioning the woman in the coma and her five-month-old baby.

A political party was instrumental in organizing this reconciliation dinner, completely ignoring the woman who was fighting for her life in the hospital. This is telling in that it clearly demonstrates the importance accorded to women.

- What KAMER did:

KAMER did all in its power to help the woman recover her health. We ensured that she receive an ID from the civil registry. We got in touch with Mardin Governorship so that she was given a green card for free health services.

We provided two attendant women to take care of her needs, including cleanliness and exercises, 24 hours a day.

Thanks to support from various persons and agencies, we were able to ensure that she was provided the medicine she required.

We contacted the Diyarbakır Governorship and Health Directorate and got them to contribute to fulfilling her needs while she was in the hospital.

We ensured that she could benefit from well-equipped rehabilitation centers outside Diyarbakır. Her death, however, put an end to all these efforts.

- Result:

Şemse Allak, who struggled to stay alive for seven months, lost her life on June 7, 2003. Her body was preserved in the State Hospital for 15 days, but her family declined to claim the body. Finally, KAMER and other women's organizations claimed her body. Thus, the body of a woman who was murdered in the name of "honor" was taken for

the first time in Turkey by other women, who performed her funeral prayer and buried her at the cemetery of the nameless.

Şemse Allak, the victim of an “honor killing,” contributed to the struggle for women’s human rights by her very death, because:

Women claimed the body of a woman who was murdered in the name of “honor,” performed her funeral prayer and funeral ceremony.

Many reports and columns against “honor killings” appeared in newspapers and magazines for several days.

KAMER received dozens of letters and phone calls expressing condolences. Some NGOs visited us to express condolences.

The project began to draw interest and support from the larger public.

KAMER erected Şemse Allak’s gravestone and has commemorated her on the day of her death every year.

2nd Application:

- How she reached KAMER:

She came to KAMER and applied to the Emergency Line Assistance Service.

- Date of application: February 9, 2003
- Education: High school graduate
- Age: 24
- Marital status: Single
- Why she was “tried”:

When it was learned that she wanted to marry the man she loved, thus disobeying her family, a verdict of death penalty was delivered.

- What KAMER did:

We ensured that she give a lawyer the power of attorney.

She was sent to a women’s shelter.

She was given support so that she could go abroad.

- Outcome:

She married the man she loved in the country she moved to. She continues her education there. She will continue her life there.

3rd Application:

- How she reached KAMER:

She ran away from her home in a district of Diyarbakır, came to KAMER herself and applied to the Emergency Line Assistance Service.

- Date of application: April 5, 2003
- Education: Literate
- Age: 29
- Marital status: Married at a religious ceremony only; with three children
- Why she was “tried”:

She was harassed by some of her husband’s friends. Her husband accused her of “provoking” the harassment. A verdict of death penalty was delivered.

- What KAMER did:

We ensured that she received an ID from the civil registry.

We got in touch with members of her family (her mother, father, and brothers) in accordance with her wishes. However, the family refused to reconcile.

Her elder sister offered support and took the woman into her home.

- Outcome:

She separated from her husband. She continues to live in her sister’s home.

4th Application:

- How she reached KAMER:

She heard about KAMER on a TV program. She applied to the KAMER Emergency Line Assistance Service by phone from a village in Şanlıurfa.

- Date of application: September 20, 2003
- Education: Graduate of elementary school
- Age: 18
- Marital status: Single
- Why she was “tried”:

The applicant was accused of disobedience. The male members of her family claimed that she acted in a way that “dishonored” the fam-

ily and so threatened her with death. She was forced to attempt suicide. She wanted to leave her village, but she had no place to go. She applied to KAMER by phone and asked for support. Since she was not allowed to use the home phone, the project team got into contact by using another number that she provided.

- What KAMER did:

We held a large number of phone conversations.

We provided psychological support over the phone.

We helped her to get out of her village and take refuge in a police station in the district.

We reached the Governorship of Şanlıurfa via the Governorship of Diyarbakır and explained the women's situation to them.

We ensured her transport to and arrival in Şanlıurfa later.

We ensured that she had contacts with the Provincial Directorate of Social Services.

She was told that she would have to wait for two days before being placed in a women's shelter. However, influenced by negative propaganda on the part of the officials of the Provincial Directorate of Social Services, she changed her mind about going through with the process.

She returned to her village.

- Outcome:

Upon her demand, we made new attempts to place her into the women's shelter.

Phone talks continue.

5th Application

- How she reached KAMER:

We learned from a newspaper report that Kadriye Demirel, 16, had been admitted to the Brain Surgery Section of the Dicle University Faculty of Medicine Hospital, after her brother tried to murder her in the name of "honor."

- Date of application: November 14, 2003
- Education: Completed elementary school
- Age: 16

- Marital status: Single
- How she was “tried”:

Because she had become pregnant, as a result of rape, her elder brother attempted to kill her using a stone and a chopping knife. She was taken into the Intensive Care Unit of the Brain Surgery Section of the Dicle University Faculty of Medicine Hospital. Her brother turned himself in to the police, believing that he had saved the “honor” of the family.

- What KAMER did:

In order for Kadriye Demirel to recover her health, KAMER worked hard and cooperated with all the relevant public agencies and NGOs. Despite all efforts, Kadriye Demirel and her six-month-old baby could not be saved.

We received support from the Rectory of Dicle University to cover her hospital expenses.

We held a meeting with women’s organizations for the organization of her funeral ceremony.

A funeral ceremony was performed with the participation of a large number of women and men.

A press release was prepared together by all the women’s organizations.

6th Application

- Date of application: January 24, 2004
- Age: 17
- Marital status: Single
- Education: Completed elementary school
- How she reached KAMER:

She came together with a member of the family with whom she had taken shelter and applied to KAMER herself.

- Why she was “tried”:

She had been experienced violence since childhood. She was subjected to harsh physical violence on the part of her father in particular. One year before coming to KAMER, she had begun working as a babysitter looking after the child of a police officer. When the family

was transferred, she went with them to the province they were transferred to. She was planning to stay with the family and to continue looking after the child and live with them from then on. She did not inform her family of her departure before leaving. She ended up having to go back after seven months.

After she returned, she was subjected to physical violence that left her with serious injuries. Her relatives began exerting pressure upon the family to kill her. Once she realized that she was in danger, she ran away and sought shelter in a friend's house.

After she had been there for several days, her friend's family began to grow anxious about the situation. She came to KAMER accompanied by a member of the family she was staying with and requested support.

When she came, she was too exhausted and helpless to focus her attention. Moreover, she was afraid that she was going to be killed.

- What KAMER did:

Provided psychological counseling.

It was observed that she was not in good condition psychologically. KAMER therefore arranged for her to stay in a hospital and receive treatment. (She was admitted to the hospital where she received treatment for 15 days.)

Because she was underage and her life in danger, KAMER informed the police of the situation.

During her hospitalization, talks were held with her family in an attempt to decrease the amount of social pressure upon the family.

KAMER met all of her needs for the duration of her treatment.

She spent her time outside of the hospital at KAMER.

Her family agreed to allow her to continue living at a state institution.

- Outcome:

Once her treatment was completed, the Children's Unit of the Province's Police Department removed her from the hospital and placed her in a children's home outside Diyarbakır.

She got permission from the children's home to leave to visit KAMER. She looked happy.

We are still in contact. Her life is no longer in danger.
She began seeing her family.
She is continuing her education via the correspondence courses of
the Open High School.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED?

- **The Feminism of KAMER**
- **Feminism in Our Eyes**
- **KAMER's Awareness Groups**
- **KAMER's Awareness Initiatives**
- **KAMER's Policy on Cooperation between NGOs and the State**
- **My Kurdish Issue**
- **Learning as We Go: Lessons From the Journey Thus Far**

The Feminism of KAMER

Nebahat Akkoç

We have noticed that in order to explain more clearly the work conducted by KAMER for women's human rights, we need to use a different language from the usual. We believe that this is the only way for us to go beyond answering questions on "what we do, where we work, how many women are subject to violence, how many women we have supported, what we have done about honor killings," etc.

All of the said work is important, of course, but it should not be considered as stand-alone work. Every project is important in that it is part of the process which lets us learn from each other and helps us form our policy for working with women.

We believe that in order to explain what KAMER is about, it is important to answer questions about "how we got started, what we learned from each other, what we discovered, what we changed, where we are going," and to emphasize the process of reciprocal learning.

KAMER was officially founded in 1997. But work conducted before that date was also important. The idea of KAMER first developed in 1993-95, when regional violence was at its peak. In 1997, KAMER gained legal status. In the following years it developed new areas of work and new projects were realized.

KAMER operates in 23 provinces, but we are endeavoring to expand into the districts of these provinces as well.

"We" women now number in the thousands.

There are significant differences between how we were when we started and how we are. We were feminists then, and we are feminists now. But there is a difference between who we were then and who we are now, a difference due to experience—the experience of ten years of work.

Most importantly, we used to whisper that we were feminists, but now we can shout it. Hundreds of us are now able to say, “We are feminists.”

We believe that feminism is a process of discovery and of change. In this article, we would like to tell you about the journey we have taken with feminism.

Initially, our first awareness was that regarding “violence.” Each one of us was subject to violence, directly or indirectly. Violence under custody, on the streets, in offices, even at home...

What kind of violence was this?

Since it was so painful, why were people inflicting it upon each other in such a natural way?

We were continuously reminded that we were women. Were we the only ones who failed to notice, failed to remember this?

These questions helped us to become aware of the private sphere called home, and of our position within the home. The least talked about and the most common, the most habitual type of violence happened within homes. Talking about this aspect of violence was either frowned upon or considered unimportant. Other types of violence, such as the violence occurring under custody, or on the streets, were considered more important.

Our starting point was a difficult one. We were aware that we might be isolated, be marginalized and demeaned. Many of us had started to consider the question of violence by looking at instances of it under custody or on the streets. Later on we understood the link between the different types of violence and we realized that what happened at home was the starting point of all other types of violence. When we first began discussing the idea of working on women’s issues, people around us started advising us on what to do, how to do it, and who to work with.

Everybody acted innocent. No one even wanted to think that they themselves might have been influenced by the male-dominated society.

We thus realized to what degree sexism had become internalized, and how we needed to look at ourselves, at our acquaintances, at all organizations, and all people. And that is how we came to realize that we needed to organize ourselves independently.

Although we declared that we supported women's human rights, we knew that it would not be easy to understand the difference between independence and neutrality. Yet, we chose to organize ourselves independently.

Although the majority of the women whom we would work with, or whom we planned to support, defined themselves as Kurdish, we did not wish to be a Center for Kurdish Women. We did not want to limit ourselves to a single identity; we believed in each and every woman and we wanted for KAMER to become a center also for women who are not Kurdish or who do not define themselves as Kurdish.

In order to question sexism, and to develop an area independent of other concerns, we started reflecting on our own conditions and our own experiences. We questioned our role within this environment of violence and discrimination and how we oppressed others, and how we were oppressed ourselves.

While undergoing this difficult period of "discovering sexism and embarking on feminism," we suffered an intense feeling of homelessness.

We learned through experience that the only ones to offer support in this transition period were women and women's organizations. We realized that this individual awareness process was difficult and shocking for women and that support and solidarity were of critical importance.

We realized that violence was to be found everywhere and in different forms. We decided to concentrate on domestic violence, which we considered to be an issue of essential importance. There were non-governmental organizations dealing with violence occurring under custody and on the streets, but there were no organizations dealing with domestic violence. Even talking about it angered people, for everyone played a part in this large-scale, widespread form of violence.

While dealing with domestic violence, we encountered the most brutal as well as the most subtle forms of violence.

We discovered that all women, regardless of their language, religion, education, and social environment, suffer violence in various ways.

We realized that declaring support for human rights meant ignoring women's human rights and the inequality between sexes, and thus rendered service to sexism. We were distressed to discover that many people and organizations who declared that they opposed sexism, actually supported the system via their approach to women's work and to feminism, and that ultimately they defended rather than opposed sexism.

Although we underwent significant individual awareness processes, we realized that looking at the extent of the harm inflicted upon our personalities by the sexist system was not something we could deal with individually. We understood that behaviors such as hierarchy, competition, discrimination, and keeping "personal" problems private recurred over and over again and that no one was capable of suddenly becoming aware of such behavior and changing it.

We thus realized the importance of collective work, from the point of view of support and solidarity, as well as mutual learning.

We realized that unless we established equal relationships, overcame

our feelings of competition, perceived the more subtle forms of violence, behaved openly, delivered positive and negative criticism, and were ready to listen to what others had to say, there was always the risk of reproducing sexism.

We realized that traditional values were values aiming to objectify us, and that we needed to question and transform each value completely.

We became aware that a new world could only be created if we recreated ourselves. We started to make an effort not to judge, not to despise, not to order, and not to prescribe solutions, but to develop a language and behavior based on empathy.

We were not ashamed to expose the thought and behavior patterns that had taken us captive. We were able to understand that these patterns resulted from roles in which we were cast, that we had accepted them unquestioningly, and that questioning would now be possible via feminism.

We realized that most traditional values caused resignation and submission to violence, prevented participation, transparency, and individual development, and reproduced inequality.

Feminism helped us develop curiosity during this long journey. Thanks to this curiosity, we recognized our different identities. We were freed from the parochialism of a single identity and started enjoying our multi-identities.

Fascinated by the enchantment of awareness and transformation, we increased in number, we developed. We understood that the more we gained in strength, the more violence would weaken, that the more we changed, the more the world would change.

We started sharing our discoveries and our knowledge with men. We

told them of the different types of violence to which we were subjected. We talked about how they perceived and lived their masculinity.

The more we talk, the more we realize that sexism is a vast policy dominating the whole world. We are currently seeing how militarism and sexism are intricately involved and how they feed on each other.

Sometimes we are afraid of our discoveries. Sometimes we think that what we are doing is not enough and that we should be doing more. Every time this happens we stagger and hesitate. But every time we accept that this is our only chance, we pick ourselves up and we start all over again.

We know that feminism is indispensable for a world free of hierarchies, discrimination, and violence, a world based on sharing and solidarity, on transparency, participation, on support for what is right and what is just.

From a few women, we have now become thousands of women. Our journey with feminism is continuing. And our numbers are increasing.

We know that this is going to be a long and arduous journey.

We understand that all issues throughout Turkey and throughout the world are our issues, too. We know that resolving these issues is only possible with our participation. We are therefore doing our utmost to see more, think more, change more, and grow in number.

Feminism In Our Eyes...

We wrote this essay during a week-long group holiday we took at the end of an exhaustive year. Actually, what I refer to here as “holiday” was more a kind of camp where we planned both to relax and to talk to our hearts’ content. We were often so busy working at KAMER that we didn’t have the chance for a right proper chat. This camp would be a good opportunity for us to have some heart-to-heart conversation.

We identified a number of subjects to talk about. One of them was feminism. First though, we set up a framework to help guide discussion.

“What meaning does feminism have for us in our lives? What does it mean to us in terms of the problems of Turkey, of those of the women’s movement, of those of our lives, of what we have become aware of and observed?”

We decided to talk within this framework. We thought that if we discussed feminism by making it more tangible via our own experiences, it would be easier to understand and more appealing as well.

We pushed the record button on the morning of July 13, 2009, on Monday just after breakfast, and began to discuss feminism. We did not want to write our real names. What is the significance of names, anyway! What is important is what is said. Use your power of imagination to hear the sounds of roosters, chicks, crickets, and the Sandy Hill, interspersed with the conversation below.

Scorching Sun: I attended a conference lecture. A conference on investment in real estate. The lecturer, who is a very famous architect, said at one point: “We have to work with an eye to the segments

of society that need to be protected—women and children.” I went mad. A huge lecture room—a lot of architects, investors, owners of real estate companies, CEOs, bank managers, everybody there... I wanted to rebel, but I couldn’t intervene directly. After all, I hadn’t been invited; I was there accompanying somebody else.

Finally, all of us who attended the conference gathered around the same dinner table. The lecturer who had spoken this sentence was not at our table, but one of his students, a woman, was there.

I wanted to address the lecture and that sentence. I quoted the lecturer’s exact words. I felt that the others were not consciously aware of the discrimination that the sentence entails. But since they couldn’t just shrug it off with a “So what?” either, they preferred to claim that he couldn’t possibly have said such a thing.

I told them that they probably had the text, and that they should take it out so we could all look together. They answered that they weren’t allowed to use the text outside the conference.

They must have told the lecturer about what I’d said. He found me at the dinner. I repeated his words and told him: “These are your exact words.” The lecturer, who is considered to be a doyen in his field, was very surprised and said: “Write to me, I’ll send you the text, I didn’t say such a thing.” But he never got back to me.

My friend, a close acquaintance of the lecturer, asked me later if the professor had written to me or now. I told her that he hadn’t. I added that it wasn’t important whether he sent his text or not though, that what was important was that he became aware of it and, I think, he did.

Terra Firma: I think that we, those who call themselves feminist, have closed ourselves to criticism and to new forms of awareness. We tend to believe that we understand the heart of the matter, that we are on solid ground, and that we face absolutely no risk of making mistakes.

In my opinion, however, our lifetime is not enough for us to become aware of everything. Even the next generation will have to become aware of so many new things. Perhaps the generation after them will be in a better state. If we cease to strive for ever greater awareness and reject any and all criticism, we might fall prey to a fast backlash. Moreover, no one has to be a model. Even taking someone as a model ultimately amounts to the creation of a hierarchy. We are all learning by trial and error.

Misty Mountain: This is my latest experience.

An academic, somewhere in the world, who calls herself a feminist, conducted a study in a region where violence and poverty were at their peaks. At the end of the study, she received a number of criticisms from those in the area where she had conducted the study, and she felt unhappy. There are many possible reasons for her unhappiness, of courses. Maybe she had failed to find the right language and approach, or she hadn't set up a solid framework, or she hadn't established proper boundaries in her relationships in the field, or local participants were particularly sensitive to certain topics, etc.

But the feminist academic, rather than taking a critical look at herself and discovering things within herself, glossed over her experience by claiming that it was impossible to return in a happy state anyway from places where violence and poverty were so rampant. She had been presented with an excellent opportunity to increase her self-awareness, but she failed to seize that opportunity. She most likely approached the matter from the perspective that she was already aware of everything and that she never made mistakes.

Terra Firma: These days new political parties are being formed in Turkey. And well they should be, because there is a serious political vacuum here now. For us feminists, all areas of life are areas where one can make politics; we have redefined politics. Nevertheless, I follow political parties and new initiatives with great curiosity.

The leader of one of the new parties said on a TV program: “The old systems have collapsed, and now we can criticize the past. This being the case, new political parties, the parties of this new world, must be formed. We have started something new. We abide by participatory methods in the work that we do. We, the founders, have put the disabled, environmental problems, economic matters, and the woman question on our agenda.”

These words were enough for me to understand that the new formation was nothing more than the repetition of the old.

I hope for the day when such a speech starts like this:

“We, men and women who have become aware of the gender question, are launching a new party, a new movement.”

Women are not one field amongst many in which “new” parties are active. Only those parties or movements founded by women and men together, which question “feminine” and “masculine” roles, will really truly be “new.”

Wavy Water: Because of women who believe that they should stay as they are, who aren’t open to criticism, who think hierarchically and impose their own conception of feminism, who don’t question, who keep teaching but aren’t open to learning, some women begin to say: “If this is feminism, I am not a feminist.”

Terra Firma: I once believed that animals and plants existed to make human beings happy, that that was the reason for their existence. Thanks to feminism, I now think that the first form of hierarchy began with human beings’ domination over nature. We’ve managed to go from being creatures who once lived under trees, to creatures who replace trees with skyscrapers, and live in them.

Scorching Sun: And without getting permission from the trees.

Terra Firma: Yes, there is an Earth and there are living things on

it. Living things are human beings, animals, and plants. The only thing that differentiates us is our intellect. We have used our intellect solely to exercise power and thus put the Earth in the horrible state that it's in. This is the greatest awareness that I have arrived at in the last five years. Now we grow old, and the Earth grows older. We have polluted and abused the Earth so much that we don't know what is going to happen.

Sandy Hill: I want to have an idea, an opinion about every subject, but I don't know how to go about it. For example, I read a page and then I think about what I've read. I feel that I've become aware of something, but I'm unable to put a name on it. I'm experiencing the pangs of this process right now. I'm unable to produce ideas on my own.

Terra Firma: You're unable to produce ideas? About what, for example?

Sandy Hill: Yes, I am sometimes unable to name the thing I have become aware of.

Terra Firma: I believe that you have been able to produce ideas quite well. I think that one needs to learn things first in order to produce an idea. You have been able to produce ideas very well on the subjects you have learned well; moreover, you have been able to object to practices that don't sound reasonable to you. For example, in my opinion, you're excellent when it comes to the techniques of studying violence. Remember in a regional visit, you stopped an interview with a woman who wanted to free herself from violence, because the interview began without her being taken into the interview room. You knew very well that the story of each and every woman is unique and private. The women who come to our centers may not know this, but we do, and we have prepared interview rooms for this reason. You want to learn everything at once and produce an idea about everything. We said that feminism was curiosity and learning, but we cannot learn everything at one and the same moment. Besides, we don't need to learn and know everything.

Sandy Hill: Yes, all problems in the world interest me. Even insects walking in the grass. I think feminism is learning. But sometimes I can't understand; I feel deficient.

Misty Mountain: It has been ten years since you came to KAMER. When you came, you were cooking mantı (Turkish type ravioli). Now you are conducting neighborhood activities. If you ask me, you've come a long way. Does everybody have to learn everything? Can we learn everything at the same time? I think that first comes curiosity, next the process of learning, and then sharing your knowledge and experience with others. Everything can't happen at once! Just give an example. Tell us one thing that you're unable to produce an idea about?

Sandy Hill: For example, the Kurdish question and its possible solutions have been debated recently. I listened to some of the debates and found that I felt some things were wrong, but I'm unable to express exactly what.

Silent Deluge: I think that the problem you're talking about is not the inability to produce an idea. It's something different. Anxiety about what will happen if I speak my mind makes us behave in ways that are shaped by the sexist system and hierarchical structures. I think you are able to produce ideas very well.

Sandy Hill: No, I can't express myself.

Pistachio Nut: Another question: do you think feminists have to know or learn everything? And must we have to say or piece at each and every meeting?

Terra Firma: But we all experience this, I think. For example, after I became aware of the relationship between human beings and nature, I began to read and make observations about it. Moreover, there is no end to learning. Just let's be careful: we shouldn't think that we know everything, and we shouldn't use a language of absolutes. If we do, we will begin not to hear and see.

Shining Star: I know very well that I want to be a feminist and live the rest of my life as an individual. This is my true ambition indeed. Even though I believe that I have been questioning myself, my experiences, and the society for so long, and effecting change via that questioning, the process of gaining awareness is a neverending one. What did they teach me for so many long years? What impacts have the roles of friend, wife, and mother had upon me? I am trying to question and change each one, but when my thoughts and behaviors do not complement one other, that's when I face a dilemma. I understand that there are things that I haven't been able to change, and so I'm self-conflicted. Perhaps I am afraid that my contrary ideas and behavior will lead to my complete isolation.

Terra Firma: I think feminism entails contradiction and transgression. Otherwise, how can we get out of this system? We are contradicting the usual practices and seeking a way of behavior that conforms to our principles.

Shining Star: Either I am too impatient, or the social environment I am part of is too large and too difficult to change, I don't know.

Terra Firma: Of course it's difficult. But we are not trying to push others to accept what we have become aware of, our new language and attitudes, too rapidly. We think that other people haven't gone through the process of awareness-raising yet. We abide by the important principle of thinking globally and working locally. Keeping this in mind, we are trying to find out how we can convince others to become aware of what we have seen. We are developing methods. Otherwise, we will just start fighting with the world. Our intention is to achieve our goals, not just to fight. It is of course difficult to live in an unchanging social world with all of the awareness that we have. But we have made a choice and decided that we will try to convince people despite all the difficulties. It's a matter of patience and methodic work...

Shining Star: Just a year ago, I used to wonder why everybody didn't

understand me. Now I'm no longer in that frame of mind. I am aware of the fact that it will take time to speak the same language. What is crucial is that we don't compromise our values.

Scorching Sun: I'm thinking about surrender. Conflicting, debating, objecting... If you cease to do these things, then you've surrendered to the system.

Shining Star: I know the difficulties of trying to achieve what I want to. Even though it wears me out, I have no intention of surrendering. On the contrary, the struggle empowers me, strengthens my spirit. And over time, more people have begun to believe that I am right.

Sandy Hill: The difficulty comes from our own contradictions. We must find and resolve the contradictions within our own minds.

Scorching Sun: Perhaps embracing our own values rather than those of the society can be a solution. I mean, when I behave contrary to the hierarchy sanctioned by society, when I speak to somebody who is older than or who holds a higher position than me in an unexpected manner, an action which might give rise to a negative reaction, I try to smooth things over by claiming the values of honesty and compassion.

But while struggling, I don't intend to write on water. If we see progress, we'll feel less tired.

Wavy Water: Maybe one day there will come a time when we'll say "That's it, we've done it."

Scorching Sun: But that's not enough. Exhaustion and then the overwhelming sense of loneliness are just too much.

Wavy Water: In fact, as soon as you begin to become aware of things, that's when you start becoming lonely. Doesn't each one of us feel homeless because of our awareness?

Terra Firma: Yes, we do. But I think we have a new world we have created. We are multiplying every day. There are places of solidarity where we can overcome the feelings of homeless. The other forms of friendship or intimacy are simply not enough. We will have to reshape each one of these—above all friendship.

Shining Star: I believe that we can overcome all these together and by multiplying.

Terra Firma: You're unlucky in a way. You have very close kin relationships and you are unable to exclude them. You don't want to. Those relationships are tiresome. Everyday you witness something that you don't approve of, every day right next to you, and your life is a constant struggle. And that exhausts you. That's what makes KAMER different from other jobs. It's not something like working in a tax office. One is not able to say "I've finished my work day, I'm home now." This is a never-ending job, because we are trying to change life itself.

Silent Deluge: It is more difficult for academics to be feminist, to become aware of things and to accept what they have become aware of. Everyone has some self-esteem, some self-importance, and that self-importance increases the higher a position one holds in society. Thus does one acquire more layers of self-protection which are harder to get rid of. The society views you as an important person, and you speak to newspapers and TVs. In feminism, the crux of the matter is not only to become aware of the discrimination and violence that others perpetrate, but also to become aware of those that we ourselves perpetrate, and to carry on the process of awareness-raising. Feminism is process; that is, one cannot say it's done, settled.

Terra Firma: I think there are two separate cases. In one case, one behaves so because she is not aware. In the other case, there is no consistency between thought and behavior. The first case isn't such a bad thing, if you ask me, but the second is bad.

Green Leaf: Something like fraud.

Scorching Sun: And that person might act as if she were in a position of authority.

Misty Mountain: I think we shouldn't call it fraud. Look at our lives before feminism; we were all frauds. Your mother tells one lie and you tell another, saying that you are going to study, or to take an exam, when really you're going out to meet your lover. Circumstances force you to lie. It's impossible for people to be open and honest with one another.

Green Leaf: Yes, that's right. I discussed this with my mother. I told her the truth, and she told me not to do it again. So I had to tell a lie again the next time.

Terra Firma: That's it, they distort our integrity. And so your plan, program, idea, and feelings are one thing, but what you end up doing is something else entirely. On the other hand, feminists who can maintain their integrity and live in accordance with their own decisions are severely criticized. I know that the areas where we struggle for women's emancipation cannot become areas of freedom for us. I lived that way. This is a choice. In some cases women have made use of these areas that the women's movement created just for themselves, for their individual freedom, and we have suffered because of it. I wish we could talk about it together, among ourselves. But since we cannot, we have no other choice but to say "everyone's feminism is binding for herself alone."

Wavy Water: Because of them, there's this widespread belief that feminists don't care about anything, that they just do what they want.

Silent Deluge: There are two very important points for KAMER's feminism. First of all, it encourages a never-ending process of awareness-building and questioning. Secondly, the women of KAMER limit their own areas of freedom in order to create free space for

other women. So it is very important to be aware and respectful of local characteristics and sensitivities as we conduct our work.

Sandy Hill: Or the window out of which I look at the world is different from the one through which my mother views it. It is necessary to understand her by looking through her window too.

Misty Mountain: Empathizing with her.

Sandy Hill: For it's not that easy to change my mother.

Shining Star: To accuse only men in a judgmental manner, or to behave in a way that is spiteful of others, with a claim to behaving in a feminist manner, is a reductionist approach; that is to say, it is an oversimplification. Feminism is for the change and development of first ourselves and then of the entire society. One must keep this in mind at all times when engaging in the struggle.

Terra Firma: Otherwise, feminism gets marginalized and fails to become more widespread.

Wrought Iron: Nowadays I feel as if I belong nowhere. I'm not sure how to describe it. There are three men near to me: my father, my brother, and my husband. I sometimes think that they are genderless since they love me so much and try to treat me so well. Then I notice that they resemble other men so much! My husband was very different before I married him.

Pistachio Nut: I got married thirty years ago. We lived together for one and a half years before we got married. When I married my husband, I used to think that he would save both the world and me. He was a hero. He used to say to me: "Don't go out. Stay at home. You've had an operation. It's dangerous out there." Then he set up his own business, and I dropped out of university for him and stayed home. And when I began to go regularly to KAMER, I noticed that he was upset and disappointed. So I explained to him

what KAMER was all about. I told him that our goals were what the new world would be built on. He said that was wonderful and so on. But where is that perfect man now? He's become just another plain old guy.

Green Leaf: Some time after I began working at KAMER, I saw my ex-husband walking on the opposite side of the street. He seemed like such a big man to me before I got divorced. But then I looked at him that day and saw how he'd shrunk: he looked smaller than me. I said to my mother: "Mum, my husband's become so tiny; he's only about as tall as me now."

Then I realized that neither had he gotten smaller, nor I gotten taller. Thanks to feminism, I began to see everything in its actual size.

KAMER Awareness Groups

A Group of Women from KAMER

The beginnings of the group workshops that we call today “Awareness Groups” date back to the times before KAMER was established. These group activities, which used to be called “consciousness-raising” and “legal literacy,” started in 1996.

By the time KAMER was established in 1997, the average number of women participating in these groups was 40-50. What led us to form KAMER was not an awareness of violence against women, or knowledge of gender issues, inequalities, or discrimination. What we questioned back then was simply violence, seen through the eyes of a group of women who were not aware of gender.

There was curiosity about violence. Could violence be a means of communication or a way of attaining a goal?

We were suffering from violence, but were we unwittingly producing and enlarging it too? It must have been the case, because violence was expanding and becoming increasingly normalized.

That KAMER was launched in order to question things was what made us different. This difference has not changed since then.

We remember that each one of us avoided our own personal story, tried to console ourselves comparing our stories with what we heard, and resisted facing ourselves in awareness groups.

We had always accepted our lot in life, seeking consolation by comparing ours to worse cases, so it was not easy to overcome this. It was we who resisted change, and then it was again we who faced ourselves, who eventually came to stop resisting as we shared our stories with one another.

It was the ability to say “I” which had the greatest impact on us. No matter who we were, we began to talk by saying, “My father says, my husband says, the mayor says, my neighbors say...”

In our opinion, one of the best and most challenging practices in group work was to be able to say: “OK, they say so. But now forget

about them! What are you saying?” We had very little to say; no one had ever asked us what we thought. One of the most important rules in the awareness group was to produce our own independent ideas. The principle of “independence” was the most important policy we produced in the awareness groups.

We created an independent space where we could be independent and think and debate to form ideas. Ever since, each and every one of us has had an idea to voice.

From the very beginning, as we sought to confront ourselves, we felt uneasy about the “language” we used in our discussions and the one employed in activities carried out for women.

“Raising women’s status” was a very common expression we encountered. We discussed this in a group discussion.

I remember how we talked:

“Do we really have a status? Our status is ‘slavery’! Our status is ‘womanhood’ in the traditional sense! Our status is obedience, serving, submission, so forth and so on. We don’t accept women’s present status, and we mustn’t talk about raising something that we don’t accept.”

Then, we made a decision amongst ourselves. We would never mention “raising status.” If we absolutely had to, we would use the phrase “changing and raising women’s status.”

After a while, we felt uncomfortable with the phrase “consciousness-raising.” Who amongst us had higher consciousness than whom? We were all born into this system, and had been brought up according to its rules. We were tarred with the same brush.

As the number of women increased, our ideas became more crystalized. There are no places or systems in which women are able to live as equal individuals of society—not here, in our country, nor anywhere else in the world.

We didn’t have a “consciousness,” and we couldn’t raise something we didn’t have.

A process was beginning for each one of us. Whoever we are—whether Turkish, Kurdish, German, Arab, Assyrian, Yezidi, or Ar-

menian—we were all undergoing similar things in this process. No one of us could say to another: “I have some consciousness, let’s raise it now.”

Each one of us was confronting ourselves in group discussions, remembering our pains and traumas, and questioning all of our identities in a perplexed manner.

“Consciousness-raising” was not a definition befitting what we were doing, but it wasn’t easy to replace it with something more appropriate.

As we discussed it, we came to realize that what we did was to “become aware.”

We were becoming aware in group discussions. There was no difference amongst us. We were all becoming aware of things together.

There was of course some difference amongst us—the difference between newcomers and those who had already taken part in the workshops and who would be facilitators in the new discussions.

We defined this difference as follows:

“We, all participants in awareness groups, must form a ring. There must be no missing link in the ring. Group facilitators, however, must at once feel themselves to be part of the ring and not forget that they have started to become aware of things earlier. Therefore, facilitators must support the other participants experiencing the same process now.”

We disposed of the title “group leader” after the first few group workshops. We have preferred the term “facilitator” ever since.

“Leadership” implies superiority, and we thought it impossible to be a “leader of awareness.”

Even though one of us might have become aware of many more things, earlier, and more easily, we realized that awareness would be a never-ending process.

After forming the ring as we intended (which also means confidence within the group), each one of us tried to confront ourselves: we began sharing things that we had once forgotten, memories brought to the surface anew, and we began telling about experiences we had never shared before out of shame. So, each us shared to our heart's content.

Group facilitators did as their titles states, facilitating and guiding discussion.

During this process, we at times felt deeply sorry and indignant. Sometimes we couldn't help but cry. At other times we wished that the meeting would never end. As we confronted ourselves, we sometimes got angry at our parents, or our husbands, or our siblings. There were times when we didn't want to see them.

Then we discussed it. Our struggle was not against men. Our problem was gender roles. We decided that we would make men aware of masculine roles and question them, as we resisted the feminine roles that were enslaving us.

We felt very strong emotions at each meeting: at times grieved, at times indignant, at times cheerful, at times very weak or very powerful.

Each and every one of us was amazed: our own discoveries amazed us.

Some of us were mothers, and we had used violence on our children. As we faced up to what we had experienced, our own mistakes stung our hearts. We felt deeply guilty and couldn't look our children in the eyes for some time. Then, we discussed this too.

We had no evil intentions towards our children. We had done what we had, believing that it was the best for them. We couldn't possibly

have realized at the time that we had in fact constrained, oppressed, hurt, and even objectified them.

We faced up to what we had done to our children, discussing it and sharing all our emotions with them. We explained to them how the sexist system distorted motherhood. Our relationships with them changed.

This system gave women the opportunity to exist only in men's shadow. Many of us believed that there were no forms of existence other than that as someone's daughter, wife, or mother. We were suffocating each other even while expressing our love. We stopped doing this.

As we discovered ourselves, we became aware of the violence, hierarchy, and insularity in our lives.

We observed that the hierarchy that began at home extended to the outside world too, growing to fill the dimensions of any habitat. Then, we realized that hierarchy was one of the pillars of the system, which was practiced with diligent care.

As women obeyed men, the young obeyed the old at home, students obeyed teachers at school, or workers obey their supervisors at the workplace, we did not realize that each and every act and expectation of obedience contributed to the creation of hierarchy, which was one of the most important components of politics, from the smallest sphere to the world stage.

We came to realize how we had internalized insularity and a lack of openness.

We wanted to stop keeping everything private and hiding the distress we suffered, but it wasn't easy for us to figure out how to go about doing so.

We redefined “openness” very recently, last year. We don’t remember how many redefinitions we made, but we are perfectly satisfied with this one.

They had always wanted us not to share our emotions and thoughts. Moreover, whatever our emotions and thoughts were, our acts had to be proper. Whether we were in love, sad, hungry, or thirsty, we were supposed to keep it to ourselves. It was not proper for women to laugh or cry in public, or talk too much.

As we always argue, violence is assault on physical and psychological integrity!

They upset the balance amongst our emotions, thoughts, language, and behaviors, thus forcing us to withdraw into our shells.

That’s why we had always tried to smile even while we were deep in sorrow.

For this reason, we defined openness as “ensuring the balance amongst emotions, thoughts, behaviors, and language.”

We came to realize that we would not become individuals without achieving this. This is not something to be done at once; it will certainly take long years, but there is no other way. It is through trial and error, with each stumbling step, that we learn.

No matter who it is that we are in contact with—whether our husbands, fathers, mothers, children, colleagues, or each other—we try to ensure our integrity at all times.

Thus, we need a new language, because the form of communication we will create will be about doing things, rather than undoing things. We will not judge, exclude, or despise. The language that we have used thus far has included all of these; the new language will not.

We sometimes hesitate and stutter. We are trying to create a new language in order to create a world. It is something like being re-born. This is not, of course, something easy. We have sometimes found it too difficult, too trying. Some have given up and left us.

All of these took place in awareness groups.

In these groups we first came to realize the injustices done to us and as we did so, we became terribly angry. But we are trying not to allow this anger to overcome us. We are striving to understand our immediate vicinity, our street, our neighborhood, and then our country and the world.

Each one of us has tried to go beyond the “single identity” we were confined to. We discovered a lot of identities within ourselves.

In fact, there is much to tell.

In 2007, when we were celebrating our 10th birthday, we tried to put everything we wanted to tell into a single sentence. We said:

“Thanks to the methods women developed while trying to deal with their own violence, they have made it possible for us to imagine a new world.”

We believed wholeheartedly in this sentence. A new world can only be created through our common struggle, through “awareness groups” in which everything about the old world is questioned and replaced with something new.

If this does not happen, everything new will be deficient, and thus misconceived from the very beginning...

KAMER's Awareness Initiatives

“Group workshops for creating awareness is an initiative in which each one of us revisits our lives, recognizes and questions our traditional roles, develops methods for change, and creates a new language and forms of communication, thus laying the foundations of a new world.”

“We come together once a week. The maximum number of participants is 15. We meet for 14-15 weeks.”

“We are learning first to say ‘I,’ then to communicate in methods that are different than the ones we are used to.”

“I have recognized that I experienced and perpetrated violence both in my home and my workplace. I felt terribly sorry when I became aware of the violence I inflicted upon others, especially my children and students. I tried to speak to them and to make it up to them at every opportunity. When I thought about that time, I told myself that I did what I thought to be the best. Fortunately I later recognized and corrected it.”

“I never used to begin speaking with the words ‘I’ or ‘I think,’ because I couldn’t. Some people would interpret what happened around me and I would think and act in accordance with what they said. It is not the case now, and I am trying to say ‘I’ about everything. I am trying to learn and interpret what happens in my family, my neighborhood, our province, our country, and in the world.”

“I didn’t know that such a large number of forms of behavior were, in fact, violence. Now I think twice about my actions everyday to see if they contain some form of violence.”

“Sex was a taboo for me. I couldn’t talk about it. But now I can talk about it with my husband or, when necessary, with my doctor. Moreover, I strive to enable other women talk about it too.”

“This activity helped me redefine myself. I suffered a lot for some time because of it though. All my identities became meaningless, and I felt homeless. KAMER and the women in the group became my only support. Then, it was as if I were reborn again. Now I am stronger than before. Everybody began to pay attention to me.”

There are some essential rules for awareness groups

“Kin and close friends cannot be part of the same group, because women share their experiences of discrimination and violence in awareness groups. Being with kin and close friends may prevent sharing these experiences.”

“Awareness groups must be places where everybody feels safe. KAMER, which has been forming awareness groups since its inception, has recognized that in small places it would be impossible to form groups if this rule were strictly observed. Therefore, KAMER is trying to create awareness by developing new methods.

Awareness groups using various methods continue in the 23 provinces and their districts.

Methods for making women aware of their traditional status as women include hall meetings with a larger number of participants and inviting the usage of third person language so as to make it easier for women to express themselves.

We also try to reach women individually by means of home visits.”

Emergency Support Centers

In Emergency Support Centers, which are active in all the provinces where KAMER is organized, women are provided the assistance they need in a short amount of time so that they can overcome problems stemming from their gender identity and “honor killings.”

The data obtained in these centers are assessed in order to define problems and create solutions.

About violence,

We meet women who ask for help to free themselves from the violence to which they are subjected. In these talks, we strive to help the women to overcome their feelings of loneliness and shame, to explain their legal rights to them, and to play a facilitating role in order for them to decide what kind of support they need. While supporting women who want to free themselves from violence, there are some important rules that we observe:

- The woman herself must decide to ask for support. This will be the most important step taken by her in order to free herself from violence. If it is another woman, a friend or a relative of hers who has applied to us, though we may start the process to end the violence of which she is not yet aware, this process will not continue if the woman herself does not ask for support.
- Information shared at Emergency Support Centers remains confidential.
- We do not have talks with a woman more than four times apart from very exceptional cases.
- Whoever she is and whatever her problem is, we never use judgmental language and we never offer easy solutions.

About “Honor Killings”,

“As for possible ‘honor killings,’ the method we use can vary in part from case to case. Since a woman’s life is at stake, we cannot wait for the woman to come and apply to an Emergency Support Center herself. Moreover, when necessary, we go to the place where she lives, with necessary support from government agencies. The confidentiality principle ceases to be valid. Furthermore, procedures are pre-determined in order to ensure the woman’s and Emergency Support Center’s staff members’ security.

She might be too frightened or she might not be able to see the greatness of the danger she is in.

After taking necessary legal steps to ensure the woman’s security, we become facilitators so that she can decide how to organize her life from then on.

Women's Entrepreneurship,

Violence destroys creativity and entrepreneurialism. Women who become aware of the violence they are subjected to and strive to free themselves from it begin to regain these abilities after some time.

The "Women's Entrepreneurship Project" conducted by KAMER was planned to meet the demands of women who have become aware of and begun to question their traditional positions.

KAMER support women entrepreneurs wishing to set up their own businesses. We also set up businesses ourselves in order to ensure the economic sustainability of KAMER.

"When it comes to women, people don't usually consider the quality of work. Embracing what we call 'the spirit of charity sale,' they tend to accept women's products and services, even if they are of poor quality. Our primary goal is to offer the best quality services and products and become a viable competitor in the market."

"Hasanpaşa Caravanserai was a historical building run for centuries by men. Now we women run the courtyard and the cellar restaurant within the complex. We take great pains to offer impeccable dishes and services. The resistance of those who don't want women to run these places, however, has posed a serious problem."

"We have great expectations of Women's Entrepreneurship initiatives.

We want women to set up their own businesses.

We want these businesses to cover at least in part the expenses of KAMER. Above all, we are developing a method for working in the field of women's entrepreneurship without compromising feminist principles."

Early Childhood Education,

KAMER's "Life to Children Project" came into being as a result of a real need.

Women used to come to KAMER with their children, especially

those not yet of school age, in order to take part in various activities. However, this hindered women's freedom of movement. Thus, we began to work in early childhood education.

“Over time, we came to realize that early childhood education was the most effective method in the struggle against sexism. Children are molded into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ roles in early childhood, i.e., between the ages of 0-6. The family, the society, and all the institutions providing early childhood education compete with each other to achieve this goal.

Children learn masculine and feminine roles at these ages.”

“Children learn discrimination during early childhood. We teach our children discrimination while teaching the oppositions between good-evil, clean-dirty, and beautiful-ugly.”

“So many people use phrases such as ‘I’ll spank you if you make me angry,’ ‘Shame on you! Behave yourself!’ and ‘If you don’t eat, you’ll become blind.’ Children are also often simply beaten. We can add a lot of things to this list. All of these contribute to the creation of the human type of our generation.”

We believe that the focal point for the creation of the new world is early childhood. An educational model free from sexism can lay the foundations of a new world.

In KAMER’s “Life to Children Project,” we aimed to provide education without violence or discrimination. We were particularly keen on developing new approaches to prevent gender discrimination, offering all children the opportunity to love each other, and placing emphasis upon how to share.

Examples

“We share responsibility for children between parents. If the mother brings the child to the center, then the father picks him or her up at the end of the day.”

“Children of all different backgrounds—rich or poor, disabled or not, and those speaking different languages— are educated altogether in our centers.”

“All boys and girls take part in decisions and practices in everyday dealings. This participation goes beyond usual methods. Boys go shopping, work together with girls in the kitchen, and boys and girls play with the same toys.”

“Perhaps the most important change can be seen in the use of language. We encourage the balanced use of ‘boys’/‘girls’ and ‘men’/‘women,’ instead of ‘erkek’/‘kız,’ whereby the word ‘erkek’ (‘man’) is used for males of all ages, and the word for ‘girl,’ ‘kız’ is used for females of all ages.”

“We perform activities that help develop children’s imaginations. We let them come up with the ends of tales themselves, which means that sometimes we end up with ten different endings for the same tale!”

“We carry out workshop activities in order to encourage learning by doing, living, and sharing.”

Our Common Principles

Independence

The most important policy meticulously followed by KAMER is that of independence. Even before establishing KAMER, we had clearly set the principle of “independence” as our most indispensable.

This principle was defined as “being in favor of human rights in general, women’s human rights in particular, but being independent in structural and ideological terms.”

Back then, awareness was not as profound as it is today. But “violence” was being questioned. Our position was that we were opposed to all forms of violence. That being the case, first of all, we had to keep our distance from those claiming “My violence is right,” or “my violence is innocent.” As our awareness of sexism became more profound over time, the principle of independence became more important. We became aware of the fact that sexism is a sys-

tem elaborately constructed over the centuries, a system that has seeped into our very beings, to the very marrow of our bones. Now, however, we had an independent space where we women could meet and talk about how we were subordinated and exploited, and where we could decide on the proper means of subverting the system and gaining our emancipation. We resisted those who attempted to seize this space from us. We received death threats, we were isolated, and we had to struggle against a large number of conspiracies aiming to destroy our policy of independence. Nevertheless we have always abided by this principle without exception.

“Before taking part in KAMER’s activities, we used to act in accordance with decisions made by others. We used to do what our mother, father, brother, teacher, party leader, husband, or father-in-law told us to do. We used to live lives in which we regarded their decisions as our own. In KAMER’s activities, however, we learned to use the language of ‘I’. We were so bewildered at first! For example, an issue was raised and I was told to express my ideas beginning my words with ‘I’. I had never ever begun to speak by saying ‘I’ or ‘I think’ though. I had always begun speaking by saying, ‘my father, brother, husband’ or ‘our party.’ But with time, I got used to this new way of speaking. And that is no small achievement, no small change. One must be interested in everything in order to produce ideas and make decisions. Now I take an interest in all the problems of the household, of the neighborhood, and of the entire country, so that I can produce ideas and begin to think about solutions to problems.”

No discrimination

Examples:

“I am a woman and Kurdish.”

“I am a woman and Turkish.”

“I am a woman, Alevi, and Zaza.”

“I am a woman and of mixed blood. I have a very complex family background. I am Alevi, Sunni, Armenian, and Kurdish.”

“I am a woman and Arab.”

“What makes us come together is that we are all women and aware of gender inequality. Even though we have different identities and persuasions, we have similar experiences. It is not important how we dress or what our educational, economic, or social backgrounds are. What is important is that we have common concerns and common dreams. We imagine a new world where we will take our rightful positions as women.”

“I remained a mere spectator to what was happening to women in my family for long years. I took part in awareness groups and became aware of what happened to you all and what roles they ascribed us. If you have room amongst you, I'd like to share the same dream with you too.”

Openness

“In my opinion, the sexist system is based on insularity, on a lack of openness. The society as a whole has been divided into parts, each of which lives within itself, closed off to the outside world. This makes it easier to sustain the sexist and militarist system. Different ethnic identities, different religious groups, tribes, systems based on aghas, and above all, family secrets... All of these conceal stories of outrageous violence and injustice. Walls are erected against justice. There is a separate system of “justice” within each closed structure. Values developed within these structures are usually ones that disregard women and children. They are treated like possessions. Violence, “honor killings, and incest are typical for these structures. The fact is though that “human rights are universal and comprise an integral whole.”

“KAMER strives for openness in all its activities. In order for the abovementioned structures to be open, first individuals must believe in openness and be able to open.”

“Openness does not mean disrespect to privacy. It is, above all, to know oneself by creating a balance between one's language, behavior, and thoughts. The purpose of violence is to upset this balance. And each one of our lives has dozens of stories on violence.

Each one of us remembers dozens of memories when we had to try to smile even though we suffered deep sorrow... We had to go somewhere we didn't want to so many times, or we had to do something we didn't want to. Openness means, above all, shaping our behavior in accordance with our own thoughts and emotions.

It also means admitting that the culture of violence has been powerful enough to shape our personalities, to make us obedient, oppressive, or subordinate, and it means accepting the possibility that we can become aware of a sexist act of our own at any moment.

Being the most correct, the best, or the most self-confident is not our goal. Openness means being aware of oneself and allowing others to make us become aware of our mistakes.

We first try to be consistent. Consistency helps us to know and confront ourselves. If we achieve this, then an incredibly beautiful process starts.

For example, while confronting ourselves, we become aware of our identities that we were forced to forget, thus freeing ourselves from being part of a narrow group. In this way, we acquire a variety of identities, and our world is enhanced.

Openness to ourselves and each other is our most difficult task. We parted ways with so many women, because they refused to be open. Unfortunately, change is a long and difficult process.”

Non-violence

“KAMER was established in a period when normalization of and increase in violence were considered to be problem, in order to tackle domestic violence against women, in the belief that violence was being normalized and reproduced within the family each and every day.

10 years after its establishment, KAMER made the following statement: “The new methods developed by women to overcome violence enable us to imagine a new world.”

“We women have tried to cope with our own violence, while at the same time striving to identify each and every component of the hi-

erarchical structure within the family, which objectifies women and children.”

“While questioning the culture based on the sanctity and insularity of the family, where everything is kept secret, we realized that insularity and secrecy served to conceal all kinds of dehumanizing behavior, and that the antidote to violence is women’s empowerment.”

We redefined “power.” In our opinion, women’s power involves awareness, sharing our knowledge and experience, acting independently, and leading a life in accordance with our own decisions.

“We know that violence has been the fundamental method shaping our behavior for centuries. It will take many long years to become aware of all forms of violence. It is extremely important that we be conscious of this fact.”

Sharing and solidarity

“Women can only empower themselves by means of sharing and solidarity. These forms of behavior help women support each other to become empowered, and hinder the creation of hierarchy in different ways.

Thus, KAMER finds the ways to share its experiences with women both in Turkey and throughout the world.

The principle that helped KAMER become organized on such a large scale is that of sharing and solidarity.

All the knowledge and experiences we have accumulated, beginning with our initial activities launched in Diyarbakır, we have willingly shared with all women who have requested it.”

Thinking globally, working locally

“KAMER’s ultimate goal is to contribute to the process of internalization of the Convention for the Prevention of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was an achievement of the world women’s movement, and which Turkey signed without any reservations in 1979.

The rights granted may not bring about the necessary changes despite the passing of long years.

It is the rights that are internalized, demanded out of need, and taken which are put into practice and which thus effect the desired change. KAMER is striving to transform the rights in the CEDAW, which is the most advanced legal document for equality between men and women in the world today, and turn them into rights that are needed, demanded, and practiced in daily life.

The most important step taken for this purpose by KAMER is its very definition of the problem and of its role: “to identify the local practices of the sexist system, which are harmful to men and women, to develop their alternatives and to render them practicable.”

“In every province, local women identify which practices are harmful to women and children.”

“The methods of struggle are determined by all women involved in KAMER.”

“In every province, we communicate in the language(s) commonly used there. Thus, we try to overcome problems stemming from linguistic differences.”

“KAMER allows for each and every woman to define her own feminism.”

What are difficulties and risks?

During the time of our establishment, we experienced our greatest difficulties as a consequence of our principle of independence. This difficulty still continues—albeit somewhat lessened. Neither government agencies nor other organizations wanted to believe that we were independent. Each one considered us to be the “other side”.

“Some did understand that we were independent, but they were hostile to us since they could not see the difference between independence and neutrality. They did not want to understand the fact that

KAMER was on the side of women's human rights."

"Some groups argued that they would save the world, that they would free women at one and the same time, and that our separate organization was unnecessary, a luxury, and part of an imperialist plot."

"While these words were being spoken, women continued to be killed. We received threats and attempts were made to obstruct our progress. They tried everything in their power to exhaust our energy."

"And of course they were not only men. The resistance of women attempting to gain a place in the men's world was always greater. For the greater their opposition to us, the higher their prestige in the circles to which they belonged."

"We can view what we have done until now as a beginning. We have looked carefully into violence against women, with a scrutinizing eye, and defined the problem. We have offered a number of solutions to the problem, of which we too are a part. It is in the forthcoming period that these methods will be further developed and put into practice."

"We began to work in all the provinces of the region, and in some districts. We haven't started to work in villages yet. We will try to find ways to reach each and every woman individually."

"We will work with men too, encouraging them to begin questioning masculinity."

"We have worked hard to ensure KAMER's political sustainability. Now we are striving to ensure its economic sustainability, so that it will be able to continue its activities for many long years."

"We are trying to create a new language for a new world. We are trying to establish unity between our language, behavior, and thoughts."

"Women are making the future."

KAMER's Policy on Cooperation between NGO's and the State

We have recently noticed that the matter of KAMER's cooperation with state and government bodies has piqued the interest of many. Assuming that this curiosity reflects a genuine desire to learn more about KAMER rather than any ill will, we find it appropriate to share our policy once again.

KAMER has defined its conception of feminism with the participation and input of hundreds of women. This conception is also regarded as an institutional mission.

KAMER defines this mission as "identifying the local manifestations of the sexist system, which are harmful to women and children, developing alternatives to them, and rendering these alternatives practicable."

In the meeting held in each province and district, women themselves identify the practices that are harmful to them and children.

For this very reason, it is very important to carry out activities that help all segments of society to recognize and question the deep-seated sexist system. This is what KAMER aims to achieve in the awareness groups that it has organized with women and men and in the meetings it has held with representatives of official state bodies. KAMER takes pains to form collaborations with all official and non-official bodies and persons without compromising its own principles, in order to strengthen the defense of women's rights and create awareness about gender issues.

KAMER's unvarying principles are:

Independence

Always taking sides with human rights and women's rights

Non-violence

Taking a position against hierarchy (equality without devaluing knowledge and experience)

Thinking globally, working locally
Embracing solidarity and sharing.

The sole ground upon which KAMER relies during such collaborations is its confidence in its own stance.

To give a few examples;

KAMER strives to take part in Human Rights Boards at provincial and district levels.

It strives to take part in City Councils.

It strove to collaborate with the KSGM (Directorate General on the Status of Women). It took part in meetings regarding preparations for the National Action Plan.

It was important for KAMER to take part in this meeting and it will continue to take part in similar activities.

It is important for KAMER to be part of the Violence Monitoring Committee headed by the State Minister on Women, where there is a representative from each department and where it is possible to communicate about the difficulties encountered on the ground.

For this reason, it is important for KAMER to be part of the committee and it will continue to do so.

When encountering violence against women, especially a possible murder to be committed in the name of “honor,” KAMER considers it a duty to do anything and everything possible to stop such violence and to cooperate with anyone who can help save women’s lives. We have observed that the relationships formed during this process of cooperation have been particularly effective in terms of creating awareness.

KAMER strives to increase cooperation in this way.

KAMER recognizes the transitivity amongst various forms of violence and believes that there is no difference between a man engaging in violence—whoever he is—and an official engaging in torture.

KAMER sincerely supports all the projects that help the police and

other public officials become gender conscious and has the opportunity to observe the benefits of these training programs.

KAMER constantly questions itself in order to maintain its gender awareness, knowing that sexism has shaped us for centuries.

Believing that each and every body—wherever they work—should have the opportunity to become gender conscious, we hold that the world will change only thanks to such opportunities.

KAMER does not view NGOs as the key cure to social ills.

We believe that the fundamental duty of women’s organizing is to identify discrimination and violence caused by gender roles, to develop the methods for solutions, and to open them to debate, so that they become more practicable and common.

KAMER has defined its role in all the platforms as “creating awareness about gender roles.” It takes great pains to construct its language in accordance with this role.

KAMER willingly joins anyone on a common platform in order to create gender awareness, but it is never in alliance with anyone who advocates violence.

KAMER does not view official bodies as the key mechanisms for women’s problems.

It never compromises the principles outlined above in any of its partnerships.

KAMER considers gossip a sexist form of communication and does not take it into account.

Reaching faraway corners, KAMER works with women who are directly experiencing the problem of violence and shapes its policies in accordance with their views.

KAMER identifies authoritarian sexist groups and people that try to oppress others and condemns their forms of communications. It maintains its position and continues its activities, without paying undue attention to them.

My Kurdish Issue

Nebahat Akkoç

Esteemed Guests,

Welcome to the meeting...

Today I would like to issue two "thank you"s.

First of all, I thank everyone who contributed to organizing this important event. I would like to express my second thanks at the end of my talk.

As you know, KAMER celebrated its 10th anniversary in September 2007. The poster we made for the celebrations read:

"We believe that the methods women have developed to free themselves from violence will enable us to imagine a new world."

In order for us to be able to form this sentence, we had to work with more than 30,000 women in the struggle against violence for more than ten years.

This significant experience, gained through a great deal of labor, has showed us once more that violence against women is not violence inflicted solely by bad-tempered, uneducated, poor, unemployed, or alcoholic men.

Violence against women is, in fact, a starting point upon which hierarchy, racism, discrimination, nationalism, and a culture of war, conflict, and violence is based. Violence against women is systematic and planned, and it aims to eliminate the power of women and to force them to obedience so that a militarist system can be established.

When women begin to struggle against the violence they are subjected to (they usually begin to do so only when the violence becomes unbearable), they also begin to question hierarchy, racism, discrimination, nationalism, and wars, all of which are integral parts of militarism. As they question them, they change and transform themselves too.

And as they transform themselves, they enable us to imagine a world where each and every person is significant with their uniqueness, and where there is no discrimination.

Discovering and questioning violence destroys our sense of belonging and what we have been accustomed to. We pass through this period of suffering with an intense sense of homelessness and shattered self-identity.

In this period, women's solidarity is very important. This solidarity leads to a process of discovery. We begin to see every situation, every relationship, and every article with a new eye, recognizing what we have not noticed before and naming them anew.

It is as if we were born again into a new way of life, because we are no longer someone else's daughter, wife, sister, mother, or a member of an organization or a party who never questions things and whose sole duty is to obey and implement decisions. We become the subjects of our lives—not the objects. To achieve this means to have a mind of one's own and to reason out everything.

As one of the women who passed through this process, I tried to redefine the "Kurdish Issue," like all the other issues, with my own language and via my own story.

What is my "Kurdish Issue"?

My "Kurdish Issue" comprises the following:

Growing up in a home where Kurdish was not spoken, and being envious of Kurdish-speaking friends and wanting to be one of them since they appeared to be much more fun as a group.

How my parents admonished me to learn Turkish well first, saying that after that, I could learn Kurdish too, and how, despite their discouragement, I persisted in my attempts to learn Kurdish as a child. My curiosity about why Kurdish was never spoken in our home.

My literature teacher, Türkan Hanım, who yelled at me "Dirty Kurd" because I was late for the rehearsal of a play at Manisa Teachers's Training College in 1970.

Dozens of men who were gathered in the town square of Silvan in 1970 or 1971, who were ordered to form a single file, to do a handstand, and to crawl, as they were accused of being Kurdist, and women who watched them doing these.

In 1971, I became a teacher in Zeydan Village, Dicle, Diyarbakır, and had difficulty in understanding my pupils even in Kurdish. So I had to learn a third language, Zazaki, in a very short while.

In the aftermath of the military coup in 1980, my husband and brother were under arrest, I had to visit them in prison. During these visits, I made friends with visiting women in front of the prison. Most of them spoke only Kurdish or Zazaki. Since they were illiterate and did not know Turkish, they were unable to do anything under the circumstances. Every one of them told dozens of stories about men's violence. They were ill-treated, beaten, and taken into custody right there in front of the prison gates.

The pain frozen on the face of my mother-in-law, who did not know Turkish and was not allowed to speak to her son under arrest in Kurdish; and my silent revolt against this.

In 1991, I was the head of the local branch of EĞİT-SEN (Education Employees' Union) and heard the news of a new death everyday. So many of my dear colleagues were killed or narrowly escaped death. Since I objected to dying or killing, several administrative investigations were launched against me and I was found guilty.

The Platform of Democracy, which we founded with the dream of creating a front against violence.

A large number of activities conducted by the Platform of Democracy; above all, the conference on the right of individual application to the ECHR (European Court of Human Rights), and then the individual applications submitted.

My legal struggle, the first step of which started in 1992, and which continued until 2000.

My husband was murdered in 1993.

Between 1994 and 1997 I was taken into custody and tortured several times; I began to question violence and womanhood then.

While questioning them, my curiosity began to increase day by day. I discovered why Kurdish was not spoken in our home. I learned that my mother's father was killed in Garip Uşağı Village, Ovacık, Tunceli, and that my mother was born into an Alevi family, but that she was brought up by a Sunni Turkish family. I also learned that my

father was the child of migrant parents who had moved from Van to Urfa.

I came to understand why Turkish was spoken in our home, why the streets were believed to be scary. I also thought about the reasons for learning Zazaki with great joy in such a short period time.

Our wish to create an independent space for women only... We founded KAMER in 1997, which has been growing everyday ever since.

In a region divided by camps, never-ending prices for thinking independently, especially as a woman, and for striving to attain the freedom of expression and organization... Slanders, threats, and never-ending obstructions... Violence, conflict, fears, and pain... Amongst all these, increasingly more women began to grow conscious, question things, and challenge them.

Sisters and brothers who take sides with violence, who think that they are in the opposition movement by doing so... Thus, they strengthen those who want to subdue independent women's movements and who do harm to women's resistance.

The joy of creating a new hope with women in the midst of violence and despair...

My heart bleeding with a new piece of news about violence and conflict everyday...

That is my "Kurdish Issue."

What would I do if I were in their shoes?

We—my friends at KAMER and I— strive to take a position against violence despite all the difficulties. We take sides with non-violence—a position, we think, very important for the solution of the Kurdish question.

But still I thought what I would do if I were in their shoes.

I would not try to be part of the existing power structure by declaring "we fought together, we died together; thus we are the essential components of this state." I would never, ever think this way and say it like that. If I had ever said anything that could amount to the same

meaning, I would have said sorry to all the subjugated and excluded. I would have had nothing to do with fights to snatch a share of power. I would have done my best to stop all wars, violence, and conflicts. No reasons could have been sufficient for me to justify violence. I would have rejected violence categorically. I would have succeeded in demilitarization. I would have developed the methods of non-violent struggle to attain my just goals by taking support from NGOs. I would thus have cleared the way for the people who have been spending their lives in prison or on the mountains to take part in social life. I would not have tried to hinder the development of independent women's organizations that strive to emancipate women and to create a non-violent culture, and that have been able to see the linkages between the normalization of violence and sexism. I would, on the contrary, have tried to gain their support. I would have recognized that sexism has been dominant for centuries and has been internalized and maintained by each and every one of us. I would have realized that activities questioning sexism should be independent, hence I would have encouraged them. I would not have regarded anyone who is different from me or who does not take sides with me as an enemy. Believing that differences are enriching and that the freedoms of expression and organization are indispensable, I would have tried to listen to, understand, benefit from, and convince those who are different from me, and I would have been open to being convinced myself. I would never have forgotten that what is essential is human beings. While striving to find my identity, I would have thought about who lived in this region just 100 years ago and what happened to them. I would not have tried to create myself in terms of victimization. I would have thought about other victims and striven to be part of the solution. I would have believed that the solution to the issue begins with me, and I would have tried to recreate my language and reorganize my actions on the basis of this belief. I would have believed that the only solution is participatory democracy, and I would have lent an ear to what has been said about it.

I would have heard the screams of women about participatory democracy.

Women say: "We demand the right to think and act independently!" We demand that people not be polarized, and that everybody be enriched with different identities of belonging, but also that they are able to live lives based upon their own decisions and choices.

We have realized that objectification is not only women's problem. We now know that all processes that do not involve participation entail objectification for some people.

We demand a world without hierarchy!

While demanding a world without hierarchy, we suggest that we begin to share what we hold rather than what others do. We now see that hierarchy is reproduced everyday with seemingly insignificant daily acts. We believe that it is possible to develop a relationship without devaluing anybody, any knowledge or experience, and that the problem and the solution to it should not be looked for in far-away places, but within everyone.

We do not want a world where power-holders dominate.

We want a world without discrimination!

We demand that everyone be free to live their own differences, and that no one should be despised or excluded on account of their differences. We believe that the antidote to discrimination is meeting, talking, and sympathizing with others. We believe that the starting point for the solution to the problem of discrimination is the recognition of the fact everyone is different from everyone else, and that our use of epithets for making differences might be problematic.

We want a world without violence!

We hope for a world where all forms of violence are recognized and where no justification can be used for legitimizing violence.

We want a world based upon sharing and solidarity!

We want a life in which we become empowered through sharing what we know, what we experience, what we achieve, our prerogatives, and responsibilities.

We want to live in accordance with universal human rights without losing our local characteristics!

We hope for a world where all people, whatever language they speak, wherever they live, and whatever level of education and economic power they enjoy, lead their lives in accordance with the norms of universal human rights.

At the end of my talk, I would like to express my second thanks. I have been punished for the last ten years since I launched an independent initiative against sexism.

This is the first time that I have the opportunity to speak at such a meeting in this region.

I would like to thank the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the Diyarbakır Bar Association very much for giving me this opportunity.

Learning as We Go: Lessons from the Journey Thus Far

KAMER's activities are carried out by volunteers whose numbers increase with each passing day. Our belief in empathy as a driving force for change has been reinforced by the fact that a large number of women who applied to KAMER seeking support in their own struggle against violence later joined us as volunteers wishing to help others escape violence just as they had. We came to realize that the way to heal wounds is not to focus upon those wounds, but rather to lend a hand, thus recovering together...

Struggle against violence is no easy job. There is a limit to what can possibly be done when you are forging your own path. Keeping this in mind, we have always tried to educate ourselves. Our awareness groups have been instrumental in this regard, as have expert supervisors and advisors, and the organizing of training programs. Moreover, we have always kept in mind that there is much to be learned from the journey itself. We learned by listening to each other, sharing our experiences, writing, reading, and telling our stories. Hoping that it might be inspiring for those who intend to take this journey, we are presenting anecdotes from our experiences in order to record our own transformation, what we have learned, and our practical (sometimes comical) solutions.

When I begin to conduct home visits in the neighborhoods, I set off feeling sad, thinking of my own life story. I know that a large number of women whose doorbells I will ring do not live with the awareness that I do.

I often imagine: if I weren't part of KAMER, they would ring my doorbell too and I would share many things without becoming aware of underlying facts.

Perhaps I would not be aware of my femininity. But as a woman who has been made aware, it makes me happy to knock on other women's doors, to listen to them attentively, and to try to understand and support them.

After taking part in the group workshop, I began to make important decisions about my life.

In the past, I would deem it necessary to receive the approval of others concerning my decisions about myself, because I didn't have confidence. I would play by the rules imposed upon me by others. But fortunately I am part of KAMER and aware of so many things now.

I have a two-year-old son. I know how to bring him up. If I hadn't undergone an awareness process, I would have accepted the conventional way for a "boy" to become a "man."

Now I am strong and determined enough to exist in this world as a woman.

No one can stand in my way.

I have my feelings, my rights, and my humanity. I have my womanhood.

I went into a luxury block of flats yesterday. There were two apartments opposite one another. I rang the bell of the first apartment and saw that the place was crowded. The family had gathered. They invited me in.

They all seemed very happy. Their positive energy made me feel better too.

Then, I rang the bell of the second apartment. The woman who opened the door was so sad that I immediately felt awful myself. When we began talking, she said she had been forced to get married. Since I had met such cases several times before, I wasn't particularly surprised. When I invited her to KAMER, she took me by the hand and said: "Come and let me show you something, but don't be afraid!" She repeated the words "Don't be afraid!" a few times. I went into a room, where there was a bed on the floor. While uncovering the blanket, she said "Don't be afraid" once again. I answered her that I wasn't afraid at all and she uncovered the blanket.

Her disabled son was lying there. She wept kissing her son: "How can I come, leaving him alone? I can't, I can't."

I thought how strange life is. Two apartments opposite each other, and two different lives... In one of them, profound suffering; in the other, joy and happiness. I was really impressed.

The old me was oversensitive, fragile, quick to cry, lacking self-confidence, and unable to defend her rights. She was naïve, nervous, but too shy to speak her mind. She was hopeless and had no expectations from life.

She didn't love her father. She blamed everything negative in her life on her father and hated him for destroying her life. She held him responsible for even her own failures.

The new me is not as sensitive as the old one, but she cares about the world. She does not cry as often as she used to.

She is calm, but she defends her rights, and is able to express her ideas and feelings.

She has learned that no one is indispensable. She is strong and self-confident.

She has hopes and plans about life.

She still hates her father, but she does not let this have a negative impact on her life.

The new me is cheerful in spite of all the negative things in life.

She is indebted to KAMER for providing me the new me.

I became a twin to my sister who is two years older than me and whose twin sister died. My parents didn't register her death, and I was given her ID.

My real birth date is 1969, but my ID says it is 1967. That is to say, I was subjected to discrimination the moment I came into this world.

I got to know KAMER in 2006. I believe that I am at a loss since it was very late, but I have always viewed it as the turning point of my life.

I came to know KAMER thanks to a group workshop they organized

in our province as part of “An Opportunity for Every Woman Project.” On my way to the workshop, I thought to myself: “I am already knowledgeable and experienced enough, what can I really learn there?” I was biased, but I soon changed my mind since I was fascinated by the second session.

I began to question everything... As the group workshop progressed, I came to realize that I had not been a woman until then.

OK, I was married with two beautiful daughters. But I had not been a woman. My sexist frame of mind and taboos had been so oppressive that I had not forgotten my womanhood.

As I questioned my life, I suffered a lot. But as I suffered, I carried on questioning everything. It has been years since then, but the questioning never ends for me.

While thinking that I was perfect, it was very difficult to admit that I was just nothing. What a big ego I had! I had done everything to feed my ego.

Today it seems that I have come a long way, yet I still have a lot of work ahead of me.

Now I am able to say “I am a woman.” I have rights and carry on my struggle to protect them. I am hopeful for my daughters. They are growing up with KAMER, and have already begun questioning.

One day, my eight-year-old daughter got angry with me and asked: “Mom, you are always talking about women’s rights, but are you aware of children’s rights?”

I was really pleased.

My elder daughter got her first period when she was 12. We celebrated the event, inviting all our relatives and cutting a cake.

One day, at school, students told a joke about Bülent Ersoy’s sexual orientation and my elder daughter ended the laughter saying, “it’s her sexual preference, you have no right to joke about it.” When she told us what happened at school, we were really happy.

All of these things took place thanks to KAMER. After KAMER found me, I found myself.

I have a lot of sisters in 23 provinces now. We are advocates of women’s human rights, engaged in the struggle against the sexist system.

I believe that the world will change and that it is women who will achieve this change. Thanks to KAMER, I will be part of the change too.

I am Nezahat. The first change in my life began when someone from KAMER visited us.

I strove very hard to be a good wife and a good mother for many years, and I think I was successful.

But something was always lacking, since I was not around. Before I got married, I was my parents' daughter. After I got married, I was a wife. When I had children, I was their mother.

But who was I?

When my children grew up, I began to question this.

What did I want?

So, one day I began to visit KAMER. I took part in group awareness workshops.

Even though I knew the language of 'I', I had never used it. The time had come for me to do things for myself.

First of all, I took the university entrance exam (when I was 40). I was successful. And now I am a second-year student. It was my biggest dream, and I was very happy when I began university.

Another source of happiness for me has been to take part in a project conducted by KAMER.

I believe that there will be many good things in my life.

I don't know how I can express myself.

It was such a big change in my life. The best part of it all is that I became aware of my existence. I am happy to be a woman. I used to say, "If I were lucky, I would have been born a boy," but now I think just the opposite.

I believe that I am really lucky; I believe this for myself and for my daughter.

KAMER made me aware of many things. I in turn try to make my family and the people around me too become aware of many things. I don't let anyone direct me. Even I myself am amazed by the change in my personality and my newly gained self-confidence.

I used to take permission to leave home. Sometimes they wouldn't let me go out. But now I attend meetings outside our province. Family members who wouldn't allow me to go shopping before are now proud of me.

On the first day when I took part in the group, I said: "Thank goodness, I have no problems." But I was simply not aware of what I lived through and made others live through too. I used to accept a lot of forms of violence since I considered it normal for a woman to experience them. When I became aware of them, I got terribly angry and cried.

Now I am strong and know my own true self.

When talking to women in the neighborhood, I say to myself: "I wish they all could come to KAMER and take part in a group."

Since I am a feminist, I always wanted to work at KAMER. So, finally, one day I decided to visit. In an awareness workshop, I became aware of the fact that this is a never-ending process. I became aware of the fact that even though I defined myself as a feminist, I was sometimes not able to empathize with other women, using judgmental—or more interestingly—sexist language.

I had difficulty talking for a long time because I had thrown my usual language and words into the wastebasket, so I had to buy time with "er...er."s in order to find words to speak.

While carrying out our activities, we visit government agencies. By using our new language, we help people working there to become aware of sexism.

Road Stories

So I'm on my way to Erzurum. It's January. It's snowing, and there are 8 women on the bus, the rest are all men. We've passed Bingöl and are just about to drive around the curve on Çat road when an avalanche comes crashing down. It's a miracle that the bus isn't buried under the snow.

We can't move forward. The bus driver tells us we'll have to go back.

The road's too narrow though. It's impossible to turn around.

So we started driving backwards, all the way to Bingöl, which is a pretty long way.

By the time we got to Bingöl it was 2.00 in the morning. First they took us to a boys' dormitory and gave us chairs to sit on. Later the bus driver came and, apparently feeling bad for us, said, "I want to take the women home with me. We won't be able to take off again tonight; it'll be morning before the roads are clear again. You can't spend the night on these chairs like this, ladies, it just won't do."

And so we eight women set off for the driver's house. He must have sent word because when we got there, the heater was blasting with a kettle of tea boiling on it, and clean beds with fresh sheets had been readied for us on the floor. It was a pleasant atmosphere, with eight women meeting each other for the first time. Thinking, "This is my chance," I began to talk. The daughter of the household joined us and I began to tell them about KAMER.

The women were so happy and excited that they stayed awake for the longest time; they kept asking question after question. Once the women had finally fallen asleep, the young woman from the home where we were staying came over to me and said, "I passed the exam and got into university, but my parents won't let me go. I could still go though, because I registered but then took a year's leave of absence. Please, would you have a talk with my father? I just know you can convince him to let me go." She complained, "If I were a boy he wouldn't hesitate to send me, but he won't because I'm female and he's worried about what others will say." Well how could I say no to a request like that! When we woke up that morning at dawn, the driver had already come to get

us. As we walked out to the bus I approached him. I thanked him and then said, "What a bright daughter you've got! She's very intelligent. Why isn't she in university? I'm sure she'd be very successful, and make you very proud." The man looked at me; the color was drained from his face. "I know," he said. "She already got into university. Didn't she tell you?"

"No, no she didn't," I said. "We talked about other topics."

"I know my daughter's very bright, and she's very well-behaved. She's had some health issues, that's why she didn't go this semester, but she's going to start first thing next semester."

"Definitely let me know if she does," I said. "That would make me really happy, to know that she's in university."

"I promise, ma'am, I'll call and let you know," he replied.

And theen... about a month later I ran into the driver at the Erzurum Bus Depot. "Hey, I sent my girl to university!" he yelled. "I did the right thing, didn't I?"

I can't tell you how happy I was. An indescribable feeling; you have to experience it for yourself.

I was going from Kars to Ağrı. I had to transfer at Khorasan to get to Ağrı. I was waiting for the bus. It was cold out and I was waiting in front of a coffeehouse. A boy of about 12-13 who was dealing in tickets told me, "Hard to tell when the bus will arrive. You might have to wait a long time, the roads are awfully icy."

From outside where I was, the inside of the coffeehouse looked warm and cozy; the furnace was on, and the place was full of men.

The windows were fogged over from the heat inside.

A voice inside told me to go in and sit down.

After all, that's how change starts, and I had set out to bring about change.

I decided to do it. I walked in. Suddenly, everyone fell silent. All of the men's eyes were fixed on me. Paying no heed to them, I walked straight to the table in the very center of the room. "Could I get a glass of tea?" I asked. The silence continued. You could've heard a pin drop. They were all staring at me in awe.

My tea came. The waiter slammed the tea down on the table with great force, as if chucking it right at my head. Meanwhile I continued to observe the men, to see how they reacted. Within a few minutes everything had returned to normal, except they had lowered their voices. Just then, the kid who'd spoken to me outside came over and asked, "Are you married?"

"No," I answered. "Why do you ask?"

"What happened to your husband?" he said.

"He's dead," I answered.

"Well that's obvious," he said.

He wasn't surprised at all. For a woman without a husband, such behavior seemed perfectly normal to him.

"Have a seat," I said. "So, do you think it's so awful for a woman to sit at a coffeehouse?"

"Of course it is, sister. Around here women can't even leave their homes, let alone go to a coffeehouse."

"But," I responded, "it's freezing outside and I have to wait a long time. So what should I do? How am I any different from you? So what if I sit here for a while?"

"You can't, you just can't" the kid said. "If you sit here then other women will come in while they're waiting too and that's just not right."

I tried to reason with him but I don't think he was convinced. Meanwhile, an ill woman and her daughter were waiting at the door, looking in at me. I think seeing me sitting there gave them courage and so they too walked into the coffeehouse. Seeing this, the kid turned to me and said, "See, I told you so!"

Soon the bus came and I headed off to Ağrı.

When I passed by that coffeehouse again a week later I saw several women inside.

The kid saw me and said, "Sister, if you hadn't sat down in there, a bunch of people would've frozen to death waiting in front of this door!"

That kid's grown up now. Every time I pass through that station we have a chat. I've noticed that he's really changed. His attitude towards women in particular is much different now. This story is just a minor, a teeny tiny story of change. But isn't that how change always begins? Slowly and from deep within.

This time I'm heading for Erzincan. It's winter again and there's lots of snow. There are 32 avalanche tunnels in the road from Tunceli to Erzincan. I'd left Tunceli at 10.00 that morning to go to a group workshop to be held that afternoon in Erzincan. The women were waiting for me. Just as we were approached a tunnel near Ağlayan Kayalar (literally, The Weeping Rocks, which shed tears all year round; whenever I see them I am reminded of all the tears I and all women have shed), a thunder-like noise came from the other end of the tunnel and everything went pitch dark. An avalanche had descended, leaving us trapped right at the tunnel exit. A woman was sitting next to me. We were talking about the problems we experienced as women. The woman had an extremely sad life story. She told me all about it, and I listened. Then I told her about KAMER. "I want to volunteer, right away," she said. "I'll do anything and everything I can. I've got daughters and sisters, and they're constantly subjected to violence. All of them need to know that places, organizations and institutions, like yours exist," she said.

We got so wrapped up in our conversation there on that bus! All the other passengers were in a panic, but we hardly could've cared less. The driver announced, "You best call and let folks know we're here for at least another four hours. The highway authority's going to come clear the road and then we can be on our way." Immediately I thought, "Nebahat's going to be worried if she doesn't hear from me; I should call her and then she should call the women in Erzincan and let them know what's happened." Our phones weren't getting any reception though, and we were hungry. One passenger shared all of the cheese and bread in her bag with the rest of us. It grew freezing cold in the bus, and so we had to move around to warm up. We got out of the bus but there was hardly space to breathe outside. We spent the next four hours moving around in the bus at times, or taking a breather outside, and at other times picking up our conversation wherever we'd last left off, until, finally, the road had been cleared.

I called Nebahat; she'd been very worried. Whenever we were on the road, she never slept; she always waited, without exception, until we'd reached our destination. She breathed a sigh of relief when I called.

When we reached Erzincan I went straight to KAMER, together with

my new traveling companion. The women hadn't dispersed yet; they were waiting for me. They'd prepared a delicious meal. I introduced them to my new friend, and then we went our separate ways, planning to meet the next day. The woman I met on the bus made a number of changes to her life. She started her own business, and now she's running a mantı (Turkish ravioli-like dish) restaurant. She's much happier, and much more hopeful now. She's introduced a large number of women to KAMER, and helped them to become aware.

We were decorating an apartment we had rented in another province, preparing to open it as a consultation center. Meanwhile we were introducing ourselves to neighbors and local merchants, and explaining our work to them. Our upstairs neighbor was a young man living with his mother and younger sister. Just two or three shops down was a hooka café. Once we'd finished our work, I went over to recuperate and have something to eat. I was having a coffee when I met a couple who worked as reporters for the local newspaper, and so I began telling them about KAMER. "From now on, you can count us amongst your volunteers. We'll stand by your side at all times; you have our full support," they told me. They presented the consultation center with a painting as a gift. Every time I went to that province I always met up with them. Lots of pleasant talks and meetings were held at the hooka café. I had the opportunity to meet a lot of new people there and tell them about the work that KAMER does. The owner of the café came from a very conservative family.

Later a woman who was being forced to marry the man who had raped her came to us for support. It was an extremely difficult situation that she was in, and it wasn't something that we could deal with on our own. The owner of the hooka café, who had become my friend, first hid the woman in his own home, and then later in the home of a relative, thus saving her life.

He continues to support our work in that province, as a courageous volunteer.

We were conducting a group awareness workshop in one of the districts. We were a group of 15. There was no place for us to spend the night there. Once a session ended we would go to a nearby province and from there take a van or bus back to Diyarbakır. I think it was our seventh time meeting with this particular group. Our topic that week was “gender roles and what it means to be a girl.” Everyone shared such intense stories! 11 of the 15 women in the group told about their experiences of incest. Just about everyone broke out in tears at one point or another. Once we’d restored some calm to the group, it was time to leave. Because of all that had happened that day though, we were leaving later than usual.

We took a car from the district to the center of the province, but by the time we got there, we’d already missed the bus to Diyarbakır. The owner of bus firm told us, “Just wait here; we get vans passing by every now and then, I’ll put you on one of them.” Having no other choice, we agreed to wait. 15 minutes later a van arrived. We were so happy! It had been a trying day and we both just wanted to make it home as soon as possible. Besides ourselves, there were two male passengers and the driver. Some time after we set off, we realized that the men had been drinking. They laughed impertinently, offered us cigarettes, whispered amongst themselves. We asked how much we owed. They refused to take any money, telling us it was on them. Both my friend and I had begun to grow frightened, but we did our best not to let on. There was a brief silence and then we realized that the two men were giving the driver some orders in Kurdish. They were insisting that the driver pull over at some secluded spot. Thank God we knew Kurdish and could understand what they were saying. Then they turned off the lights inside the van. Immediately I yelled, “Turn those lights back on! What kind of women do you think we are?!” They were shocked when we began speaking Kurdish. “We thought you weren’t from around here,” they said. That made me even angrier. “So you think a woman doesn’t have the right to travel on her own at night?”

We continued arguing all the way to Diyarbakır. It felt as if the journey had lasted a lifetime. Once we got off at Diyarbakır we deposited ourselves onto the sidewalk and just sat there, stunned, thoughts of what might have happened to us running through our minds...

During one journey we were stopped and searched at four separate checkpoints. During the fourth search, when they saw that my friend and I were born in Diyarbakır-Ergani, they put us through a thorough interrogation. Then we continued on our way. It was winter. The roads were covered in ice and snow.

As the vehicle climbed a slope, we suddenly began to slide backwards. The driver's assistant opened the door and hopped out; he placed a wedge behind the wheel to keep the vehicle from sliding any further. On one side of the road was the rocky cliff of a sharp descent.

When we made our way along the same road three years later, the number of checkpoints had decreased, but just ten minutes earlier, a howitzer missile had been launched, making a giant, gaping hole in the road the size of a car. Once we reached our destination, we wanted to have a rest. Though we were in the city center, there were no other women about. We found a coffeehouse and took a seat. The owners tried to stuff us away in some corner but we chose to sit next to the window. As we sat there looking out, we saw passersby staring at us, stunned. Then we saw two women walking past, gazing at us in awe. A short while later, the women came back and walked past once again, staring at us all the while. Five minutes later, they came in and sat down at the table next to us.

We looked at each other and smiled.

EPILOGUE

We Could Have Stopped It!

The name of the last book that we published in 2006 was **“We Can Stop This.”**

Now it is 2011, and the title of the publication you are holding is once again titled “We Can Stop This.”

In the report we published in 2006, we had written that that we had learned a lot about murders committed in the name of “honor,” that we had developed solutions using our own means, and that we had shared all the information, knowledge and experiences we had accumulated with a vast number of people via four separate publications.

Moreover, we had reached the conclusion that what happened from then on depended on our willpower. If we wanted it strongly enough, and everybody did her or his part, then murders committed in the name of “honor” would gradually decrease in number, eventually dwindling to zero. But if, on the other hand, we did not want it strongly enough, then murders would continue for many years and we, all of us, each of us, would be to blame.

Obviously, we do not expect the sexist system, the roots of which reach extend back through the centuries, to end in a short amount of time.

We know that the solution to this problem requires a long and strenuous effort. However, as we made our efforts to this end, we naturally enough harbored fervent hopes that each year would be more radiant, with less violence and deaths than the year before.

The Ministry of Justice announced that murders of women had increased by 1400% in the past year.

To tell the truth, we do not believe that the murder rate can have increased this much. We think that this increase is due in part to the

increased visibility of the problem. While up until recently women's dead bodies found alongside roads or under bridges, most of which could not even be identified, did not attract much attention, today murders of women are covered by news agencies, thus rendering them visible in newspapers and on TV. Though with great sadness at the thought of such murders, we might describe this increase in press coverage as a favourable development.

That's it though; nothing more. Nothing more was possible, because we did not want it strongly enough.

- If it had been possible to really enforce the “Prime Minister's Circular,” if all institutions and bodies had taken seriously their roles as defined in the circular, and if coordination units had been established in all provinces,
- If everybody, and especially the employees of government and state institutions and bodies, had made efforts to gain awareness of gender roles and of the violence and discrimination deriving from these roles, and had been more sensitive,
- If enforcers of justice had been more aware and sensitive about gender equality and had observed the sanctity of the right to life,
- If, for example, instead of sending her back home when she arrived at the police station asking for protection, they had taken Medine from Kâhta in and given her the support she sought...
- If Ayşe Paçalı had been protected, regardless of whether she was married or divorced...

If these things had happened, then Medine, Ayşe and many more like them would still be alive.

But it was not to be. It was not to be because we did not want it strongly enough, and so they died.

Are those who during the N.C. trial basically blamed N.C. herself for what had happened to her, and those who reduced the sentences of rapists for good behaviour in court, or because they had said, “I hadn’t finished off yet,” aware that they will be responsible for every case of rape from now on?

No matter how much legal regulations change, so long as we lack a willpower that is unafraid of the empowerment of women, and so long as coherent policies fail to be put in place, harassment and rape will continue.

And we women shall continue to die so long as we do not take it upon ourselves to play an effective role in the construction of the willpower that is necessary for us to live.