



Monthly Report

Women's Rights Team

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List of Abbreviations

CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment
CEDAW	Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Aim of the Monthly Report

March has a massive connection with women's rights and gender equality in many countries. In countries like the U.S, March is used to celebrate female historical figures that are often overlooked or marginalised in society, history, and culture. March is an even more critical time as the month starts with celebrating International Women's Day hosted on March 8.

This monthly report aims to present an overview of important news and significant developments within women's rights during March 2022. The report will cover essential violations against women and even recognise significant developments that aim to empower women. This report first presents an in-depth overview of specific countries like Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, followed by other significant developments in women's rights during March.

Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls through awareness and policy reform is this report's fundamental aim. UN Secretary-General António Guterres rightfully pointed out on International Women's Day 2022, "we need to turn the clock forward on women's rights; the time is now" (Guterres, 2022).

Chapter 1: Egypt



An Exhausted Lawyer Reading the Case Paper. Source: Ekaterina Bolovtsova/Pexels, 2020.

1.1 Historical Moment for Egyptian Women

The beginning of March marked a historical moment for Egyptian women. For the first time in history, a female judge was appointed to sit on the bench of Egypt's State Council, which is one of the main judicial bodies in the country. The State Council is an independent body that adjudicates disciplinary cases and administrative disputes (EgyptJustice, n.d.).

Last year, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi appointed 98 women to join the council. One of them, Radwa Helmi, presided over a case on March 5th, 2022. In a press conference, she thanked the president for his historic decision that was “an essential part of supporting every Egyptian woman” (Al-Shamaa, 2022).

In Egypt, there are hundreds of women lawyers. However, it took decades for one of them to become a judge. It should be noted that a similar precedent existed before, when in 2003, Tahany al-Gebaly was appointed to Egypt's supreme constitutional court (Hirschl, 2010).

There is no law or rule prohibiting women from serving as judges, yet the judiciary system has long been dominated by men (Qureshi, 2022). This was also confirmed by the grand imam of the highest Sunni institution in Egypt who stated that Islam does not prevent women from holding high-ranking positions (Agence France-Presse in Cairo, 2022). Despite this, women have faced discrimination in the judiciary for many years. Currently, Egypt has 16,000 male and only 66 female judges. And even this small number of women were not appointed the same way as their male colleagues, but rather selected from the already-appointed members in the Administrative Prosecution Authority and Egyptian State Lawsuits Authority (Gadalla, 2020). This injustice has resulted in various initiatives around the country, such as Her Honour Setting The Bar. It was established to combat the discriminatory ban that prevents graduates from applying to the judiciary. This initiative believes that gender should not be a requirement when making a decision on who deserves to sit on the bar (Gadalla, 2020).

Women in Egypt gained the right to vote and run for public office in 1956. A constitutional amendment in 2018 gave women 25 percent of parliamentary seats, a number that has never been seen in the country before. They currently hold 168 seats in the 569-member parliament and about a quarter of cabinet posts. Additionally, the cabinet of the president has eight women ministers (Tabikha, 2022).

On March 17th, 2022, The Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations in Geneva launched a new initiative to support the economic empowerment of women. The country also asked for the renewal of its commitment to ensuring gender equality (Ahram Online, 2022). These decisions are indeed important and necessary for Egyptian women and the recent progress is undeniable, however, it is also obvious that there is a lot to be done to ensure the respect for the rights of women.

Chapter 2 : Saudi Arabia

2.1 Introduction

Saudi Arabia has a unique history that a complex culture has impacted. It is socially and religiously conservative that boasts cultural homogeneity based on an amalgamation of tribal and Islamic traditions. "Royal Power, oil and Puritanical Islam" are the main components that define the country, especially within the global order (Commins, 2015). While other aspects of Saudi Arabia have changed over the years, the Wahhabi doctrine and the house of Al Saud (the ruling royal family of Saudi Arabia) have remained unchanged. Wahhabi doctrine is a Sunni fundamentalist ideology created by its namesake Muhammad ibn Abd al- Wahhab that has been predominant in Saudi Arabia since its inception. This orthodox interpretation of Islam is not popular in many Muslim countries as they reject this outlook. However, by the 1800s, with the help of Muhammad ibn Saud (founder of the Saudi State and Saud dynasty), the doctrine became dominant in the country, with other theological opponents being silenced (Commins, 2015). While the Saudi Crown Prince (often referred to as MbS) rejects 'Wahhabism' in the country, it is evident that the orthodox interpretation of Islam that is based on Sunni ideology has gone hand in hand with the ruling royal family's socio-cultural and political laws (Goldberg, 2018).

2.2 History of Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia

Saudi women have highlighted their plight and dissected their subordination through literary texts and editorial essays throughout the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the 1970s, as Saudi Arabia began to enjoy the new opportunities from their newly gained oil wealth, gender equality and civil rights were not something that the government was concerned with (Al-Rasheed, 2013). The new wealth helped ban opposition and independent associations that would question the exclusion of women from Saudi society (Al-Rasheed, 2013). However, Saudi women's voices have become accentuated, especially on Social Media, as time has passed. The most significant campaign to demand equality and freedom was based on the 'right to drive' (Women2Drive campaign), personal choice to veil and male guardianship laws (#EndMaleGuardianshipSystem) (Alotaibi and Mulderrig, 2021). Many women worldwide enjoy fundamental rights, irrespective of their country's Gender Gap Index, however this is not the case for Saudi women. Many Saudi women are treated as legal minors or

second-class citizens who need written permission from their guardian for everything, including enrolling in university, getting a job, or even applying for official documents. The gender hierarchy in Saudi society is deeply entrenched in social and government structures and practices. Women's lack of access to fundamental rights compels them to rely on their 'male guardians', reinforcing the orthodox patriarchal tradition and practice.

In Saudi Arabia, campaigns that reject systems like the male guardianship laws that are interwoven with Islamic cultural practices, are considered by many to be challenging God's law. For many Saudi women, women are marginalised due to the Islamic discourse based on Prophet Mohammed's saying that "two women equals that of one man" (Alotaibi and Mulderrig, 2021). However, many Islamic scholars like Saudi national Suhaila Hammad argued that the Qur'an has multiple verses that advocate for gender equality (Alotaibi and Mulderrig, 2021). Nonetheless, Saudi society is still heavily patriarchal and uses a crude interpretation of the Qur'an to justify its discriminatory laws based on gender. While many verses in the Qur'an support gender equality, it is the interpretation prescribed in the Sharia that spells out the precise rules and regulations. Despite reforms over the years, male guardians can still file cases against women for "disobedience", which can put them in prison (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Disobedience could be considered as simply disagreeing with the male guardian as there is no exact penal code. Women have been sent to the detention facility Dar Al Raeya merely for disagreeing with their male guardians and experience prison-like sentences that are often much worse than the public system (Salem, 2021). Gender inequality is significant in the country; however, there have been some positive developments with the rise in protests and campaigns that demand equality. Yet, the process of achieving equality is sluggish.

2.3 International and National legislation in the country

As a member of the United Nations, Saudi Arabia is compelled to uphold the universal human rights standards as set in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). However, the country abstained from the vote on UDHR on the basis that Article 16 (men and women have the right to choose to marry and equality within marriage) contradicted Islamic principles (Mehrotra, 2022). Despite Saudi Arabia's reluctance to vote on UDHR, the country has ratified numerous international conventions like the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW 2000), Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC 1996), and Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD 1997) that aim to stop discrimination against women. However, the Saudi national laws are entirely against the human rights principles enshrined in the international conventions as they are incredibly discriminatory against women.

Reforms like the Royal Decree M.134 (2019) have removed some restrictions on women imposed by the country's discriminatory male guardianship system. With the new amendment, women are now allowed to apply for their own passports to travel abroad without the written permission of their male guardian (Sadek, 2019). Moreover, the Royal Decree also allows women to register the birth of their child (without male permission) and benefit from protections against employment discrimination (Human Rights Watch, 2019). While the reforms are long overdue, it is still unclear if the landmark decisions will be an actual improvement to women's lives in practice. For example, the Royal Decree allows women to apply for their passport without a male guardian; however, the Decree does not remove the law that states women need the permission of their male guardian to leave the country (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Therefore, while there are some reforms that can be seen as positive developments, the Saudi government fails to advance women's rights through adequate legislation as it still retains the discriminatory male guardianship system.

2.4 Saudi Arabia's Women's Rights Development in March

2.4.1 Green Light to the 'Personal Status Law'

On March 8th, 2022, the Saudi Cabinet approved the new personal status law that was first announced by the Crown Prince a year ago on February 8th, 2021 (Al-Khudair, 2022). According to the Crown Prince, the law is based on Islamic (Sharia) law that is in line with the international conventions and judicial practices which have been adapted to modern Saudi life (Fatima, 2022). The establishment of the personal status law is exceptionally beneficial for women and children. While the law has been defined as aiming to improve the status of families and children, human rights defenders argue that the law will empower Saudi women. Moreover, by creating a uniform codified law, discrepancies in rulings by different judges will be removed, therefore, removing the risk of corruption and protecting civil rights.

The new law will allow Saudi women to apply for new employment opportunities while also allowing them to run family affairs independently of male relatives' interference. The Crown Prince argued that the reforms were meant to address the discrimination against women at the home and at work. The law also covers matters like alimony, dowry, the choice to marry (for women), annulment, custody rights and protection for women after divorce. A Saudi lawyer argued that the new amendment declares that the legal (male) guardian does not have “the right to prevent a woman from marrying someone” (Al-Khudair, 2022). The new reforms, especially the personal status law, are extraordinary in protecting human rights while specifically ensuring female empowerment. Moreover, by introducing the law, Saudi Arabia is adhering to its promises to the international community with its ratification of the CEDAW and CRC.

2.4.2 Female Drivers at an International Platform



Saudi Arabian Female Race Driver has become the First Woman to Drive a Formula 1 Car in Saudi Arabia. Source:© BWT Alpine F1 Team, 2022.

For years, Saudi women have conjured up a particular image. They have traditionally been heavily veiled and have been excluded from society. However, in March 2022, a new vision of the modern Saudi woman was depicted internationally. During the Saudi Arabian Formula 1 Grand Prix weekend, Saudi racer Aseel Al Hamad and W series driver Abbi Pulling were the first women to drive a Formula 1 car in Saudi Arabia (F1 News 2022). The women were supported by the Saudi Tourism Authority. Although Saudi Arabia legally permitted women to drive in June 2018 (Williams et al., 2019), depicting the women in Formula 1 cars while driving around streets of Saudi Arabia on an international platform reiterates the Crown Prince's commitment to development and female empowerment. Moreover, showcasing women in this way, especially the Saudi woman, as a contrast to the heavily veiled woman, is a way to boost tourism in the country and become more tourist-friendly like its neighbours. Irrespective of the government's motive, supporting female F1 drivers internationally can significantly influence women's position in Saudi society.

Chapter 3 : Turkey

3.1 Turkey and the Istanbul Convention

On July 1st, 2021, Turkey inconceivably withdrew from the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention, following the shocking announcement of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan by Presidential Decree No. 3718 on March 20th, 2021 (ICJ, 2021). Turkey's abrupt withdrawal not only puts millions of girls and women at great risk of violence but also sends "a reckless and dangerous message to perpetrators who abuse, maim and kill: that they can carry on doing so with impunity" (Amnesty International 2021). This shameful decision thereby made Turkey the first country in history to withdraw from an international human rights convention as a member of the Council of Europe (Amnesty International 2021).

3.1.1 Turkey's History with the Istanbul Convention

When the Istanbul Convention was opened for signature on May 11th, 2011, Turkey became the first country to sign the Convention (Altan-Olcay & Oder, 2021). With its unanimous ratification in parliament on March 14, 2012, Turkey also made its country the first in history to ratify it, followed by 34 more countries¹ from 2013 to 2021 (Hacaloglu, 2021). Thus, the Istanbul Convention came into force on August 1, 2014.

But even though Turkey was the first country to give the green light to providing legal protection against all forms of violence against women and girls, it did not take long for the country to give the world and Turkish society a red light. On its 10th anniversary, in March 2021, Turkey announced its decision to withdraw from this landmark convention, hiding behind spurious claims that the Istanbul Convention was being used as a tool to "normalize homosexuality", which the Turkish government stated as a reason to justify the decision (ICJ, 2021). According to the Turkish government, it is "incompatible with Turkey's social and family values" (ICJ, 2021).

1. "In June 2021, Liechtenstein became the 34th country out of 47 in the Council of Europe to ratify the Convention" (Amnesty International, 2021).

After the sudden news that came overnight, the Turkish people and many organisations rose up for women's and LGBTIQ+ rights and requested the Council of State, the highest judicial authority in administrative cases, to annul the Presidential Decree, which caused Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention (Altan-Olcay & Oder, 2021). The opposition parties such as CHP, İYİ Party, Deva and HDP also supported the objections and participated in the campaigns, while the Turkish Industry and Business Associations, TUSIAD, issued a statement against the withdrawal (Altan-Olcay & Oder, 2021).

The backlash from the public, associations, politicians and bar associations in Turkey, did not cease even after the rejection of the request for the annulment of the said decision by the highest administrative court on June 29th, 2021 (ICJ, 2021). On the contrary, it intensified, especially after the debates on the unconstitutionality of the withdrawal and the controversial statement of the Court that the procedure was found to be lawful. The Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu, We Will Stop Femicide Platform, following the decision of the Council of State, prepared protests, statements, and reports in almost all provinces of Turkey for the re-implementation of this Convention and hence the re-application of its Article 6284. Accordingly, its importance stems from the fact that no evidence or document of the use of violence is required in order to take protective measures against those who have suffered or are at risk of being subjected to violence (Öztürk, 2021). As indicated by the Judicial Registry Statistics data of the Ministry of Justice, 116515 protection orders were filed in Turkey in 2020 alone. While 13358 cases were rejected, 9344 cases were accepted. Given the 2020 data of the Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu, only nine percent of women who lost their lives due to femicide had a protection order. In 89 percent of cases, it could not be determined whether there was a protection order in place or not (Satil, 2021).

Ankara Bar Association Women's Rights Centre Head Lawyer Ceren Kalay Eken says that despite all the positive regulations in national law, there are still not enough regulations regarding the protection of victims during investigations and the Istanbul Convention covers this deficiency (Öztürk, 2021).

Moreover, it is also important to note that "The Istanbul Convention sets out comprehensive standards for the prevention of violence against women, protection and support for survivors, and prosecution of perpetrators, as well as establishing obligations for State parties to provide minimum essential support services to victims, such as shelters and medical assistance." (ICJ, 2021). In addition, "The Convention requires State parties to respect, protect and fulfil women and girls' human rights,

including refugee and migrant women. Importantly, the Istanbul Convention contains provisions to hold the authorities accountable for meeting their treaty obligations" (ICJ, 2021).

Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary-General later said: "Turkey has set the clock back ten years on women's rights and set a terrifying precedent." Besides, Turkey has also been condemned for its shameful withdrawal decision by many governments, international bodies and world leaders, such as the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen.

3.2 Femicide and Violence against Women in Turkey

In 2022, at least one to two women are killed every day in Turkey because they are women. The lack of legal protection and deterrent punishments paves the way for perpetrators, who are mainly their partner, family member or ex-boyfriend, fiancée or husband, to think that they have the power to do so. In other words, this signals to wider society and creates a mentality among men that violence, and even lethal violence, against women is permitted and does not come with any consequences or punishment.

We can witness the atrocities committed against women in the country, in the face of the fact that 141 women were killed or murdered in a suspicious manner in the first three months of 2022 (Kadin Cinayetlerini Durduracagiz Platformu, 2022).

In the face of this brutality, femicide has now become political in the country. In other words, femicide is nothing but political in Turkey. The women and girls, after being subjected to violence or threatened repeatedly, try to take refuge in police stations and in the justice system and file complaints on numerous occasions, but still end up being killed. That is, women do not refer to femicide as political in order to propagate against a particular political party. It is said to be political by women because of the treatment they face when their lives are at stake and even after facing death within the system set up to protect them.

Furthermore, Professor Tülin İçli's research on violence against women is the first study on this issue in Turkey. This study, with the support of UNESCO and the Ministry of Justice, was published in 1995 (Habertürk, 2015).



"Los Zapatos Rojos" by Mary Ellen Bleeden, via Flickr, 2018.

3.2.1 Cases of femicide between 2002 - 2010

According to femicide figures from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, and the Ministry of the Interior, 4289 women were killed from 2002 to 2010 in Turkey, and possibly even more (Meryem, 2020). In the light of this data, that is to say in the years before the Istanbul Convention was signed and ratified, a horrific increase in femicides appears from 2002 to 2009. Especially during these years, 663 women were killed in 2006, 1011 women in 2007, 806 women in 2008 (Satil, 2021), and 953 women were killed in just seven months in 2009 (Bianet, 2011).

3.2.2 Cases of femicide between 2011- 2020

After the signing and ratification of the mentioned Convention, there was a noticeable and significant decrease in femicide, especially in the first years, compared to previous years. While 257 women were killed in 2011, the year the Istanbul Convention was signed, this number decreased to 165 in 2012 (Satil, 2021).

However, these promising numbers did not last long at all. When we look at the annual report of Kadin Cinayetlerini Durduracagiz Platformu, a significant and striking increase has been observed since 2015, especially in 2019 with 474 cases of femicide, reaching an appalling level. This figure did not deteriorate again in 2020, and in one year 471 women were killed because they were women, because those who could prevent the deaths chose to do nothing or even ignore the women (Kadin Cinayetlerini Durduracagiz Platformu, 2020).



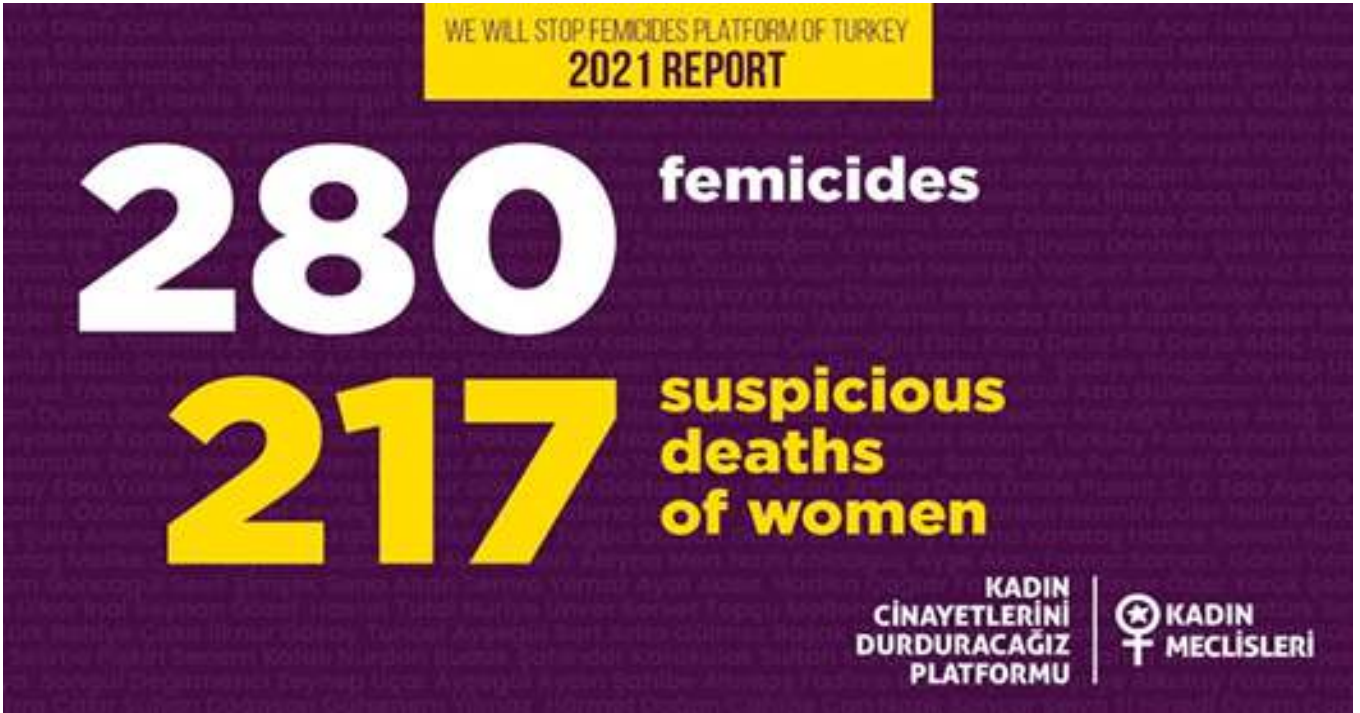
2019 Annual Report" by We Will Stop Femicides Platform of Turkey, 2019.

However, despite the brutal murders of women every day of the year, the impact of the Istanbul Convention on justice and preventing violence cannot be ignored. While around four thousand women were killed in eight years before the Istanbul Convention, as of 2011, almost three thousand women were killed in nine to ten years (Meryem, 2021).

3.2.3 Cases of femicide 2021 - Present

After Turkey's unbelievable decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention in 2021, 280 femicides and 217 suspicious deaths of women were registered in one year.

Lastly, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court reiterates in Article 7 that a widespread or systematic attack against the civilian population is considered to be a crime against humanity. Article 8, – dedicated to war crimes – paragraph (b) includes among serious violations of international law and customary law the intentional “attacks against the civilian population as such or against individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities;” and the intentional “attacks against civilian objects, that is, objects which are not military objectives.”⁸ It is established that the targeting of civilians and civilian areas is severely condemned by major international treaties, and it has become a solid rule of customary international law. However, data and testimonies show different practices taking place in Ukraine, where major targets are the civil society and civilian facilities. The next section will go further into detail, outlining Russia's targeting of Ukrainian civilian areas since the beginning of the invasion in February 2022.



2021 Annual Report" by We Will Stop Femicides Platform of Turkey, 2021.

In the 2021 Annual Report of the above-mentioned Platform, it was stated that "... In the data, we compiled this year, we are faced with two more significant results, together with the increase in suspicious female deaths. It has been revealed that 33 of the 280 women murdered this year had previously filed a complaint with the police or the Prosecutor's office or had a restraining order. Although 33 women went to the authorities, they were killed by male violence due to the authorities' failure to fulfil their duties..."

Additionally, in the absence of the crucial Article 6284 and with the approval of Article 13 of the fourth Judicial Package in 2021 by the Turkish Parliament, which stated the requirement of concrete evidence for the arrest of crimes such as sexual abuse and murder, has worsened the situation for victims, putting them at greater risk in Turkey (Özbilek, 2021). Therefore, even though there is evidence, perpetrators are not arrested, laws are not enforced, and perpetrators continue to murder women freely.

In the first month of 2022 alone, 26 women were killed by men and 28 women died suspiciously. The country, which receives daily news of femicides from every city and region, is turning into a massive graveyard of women.

3.3 Turkey's Women's Rights Developments and Violations in March

3.3.1 The controversy over the unconstitutionality of the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention resulted in victory for women

The decision to withdraw unilaterally from the Istanbul Convention in 2021 caused controversy among experts, lawyers and politicians in Turkey.

In this decision, the President's authority to terminate the Istanbul Convention is based on Article 3 of the "Presidential Decree No. 9 on the procedures and principles regarding the ratification of International Treaties", which entered into force on July 15th, 2018 (Sayin, 2021). According to this article, "Suspending the implementation of the provisions of international agreements (...) and terminating them is by the decision of the President" (Sayin, 2021). Although the meaning of this article appears very simple and clear from reading it, in the implementation part, the experts argue that the President does not have such authority over the Istanbul Convention, as it was accepted by law in 2012.

Moreover, the lawyer Turgut Kazan expressed that Presidential Decree No. 9 covers conventions and agreements that have not been accepted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly. So, the Istanbul Convention, which is an international convention that has entered into force by law, cannot be abolished by Presidential Decree, either for the aforementioned reason or pursuant to Article 90 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey.² The Istanbul Convention, therefore, remains in effect legally, unless the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), the Turkish Parliament, enacts a new law (Sayin, 2021).

Thus, after a year-long debate on the constitutionality of withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention by the Presidential Decree, on March 3rd, 2022, the Chief Prosecutor of the State Council indicated for the last time that the Istanbul Convention was not legally terminated due to the absence of a decision from Parliament, and therefore demanded the annulment of President Erdogan's decision (Uludag, 2022).

The prosecutor gave his opinion in the application filed by IYI Party President Meral Akşener to the Council of State against the annulment of the Istanbul Convention by decision of the Presidency. "According to paragraph 17 of Article 104 of the Constitution, which defines the duties and powers of the President in detail, the provisions of these treaties cannot be changed, terminated or repealed by a Presidential Decree" (Uludag, 2022).

2. Article 90. The ratification of agreements to be made with Foreign States and International Organisations on behalf of the Republic of Turkey depends on the approval of the Turkish Grand National Assembly by a law (the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey).

Chapter 4 : Other Developments in Women's Rights in the Month of March

In addition to the country-specific developments discussed in depth in the previous sections of this report, other developments have also occurred around the world in March 2022. This section will be dedicated to these developments; mainly the ones that have been part of the GHRD or GHRTV World News Bursts.

The section contains four sub-sections: International Women's Day, Violations and Restrictions of Women's Rights, Positive, New Legislations, Court Decisions on Women's Rights and Women's Rights Related Events (Other).

4.1. International Women's Day

International Women's Day which owes its origin to the labour movement in 1908 has been celebrated by countries around the world for more than 100 years and by the United Nations for 47 years. (Yildiz, 2022a) This year's International Women's Day was observed with the UN official Theme "Gender Equality today for a sustainable tomorrow" and the campaign theme for the celebration was "Break the Bias" (Abebe, 2022a).

The UN marked the occasion with a virtual event on the day as well as speeches delivered by various UN officials including UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. The UN General's speech recognised the negative effect of Covid-19 on the advancement of women's rights amongst other issues and stressed the need to turn the clock forward on women's rights (Abebe, 2022b).

Countries around the world have observed the day in different ways by organising events, marches and protests. Unfortunately, the stories that made headlines regarding the day were not all of celebration and advancement. In Turkey, the annual International Women's Day night march, which was calling for an end to femicide, was met with a ban and later with a police confrontation (Abebe, 2022c). The International Women's Day march in Pakistan referred to as the 'Aurat' march also faced challenges. Although not prohibited by the government like the one in Turkey, the march was met with opposition from conservative religious groups. The groups along with the Minister of Religious Affairs suggested the replacement of the day as they believed it led to the erosion of Islamic values. Instead, they suggested the replacement of the day with Hijab Day; a day to preserve Islamic values (Orujova, 2022).

4.2. Violations and Restrictions of Women's Rights

Various violations of women's rights were reported globally during the month of March. The ones which will be discussed herein include: the unjustifiable restriction on right to education and movement of women in Afghanistan, the increased vulnerability of Ukrainian women to trafficking, the report on conflict-related sexual violence in South Sudan, and period poverty in Japan.

In Afghanistan, the right to education and the right to movement of women were severely and unjustifiably restricted by the de facto government Taliban during March. Although the Taliban had previously promised to allow girls in grades seven to 12 to attend school again, the girls were banned from entering their school on the day class was scheduled to begin (Yildiz, 2022b). The restriction of women's rights did not stop at the right to education but also extended to the right to movement. The Taliban banned women from boarding planes unaccompanied by a male relative or guardian in March (Osman, 2022). These two moves by the Taliban are violations of the right to education and the freedom of or right to movement protected under Article 13 of ICESCR and Article 12 of ICCPR respectively.

Moving on to Ukraine, the invasion of Russia has, in addition to death and suffering, resulted in mass displacement of people, mainly women and minors. The women who have fled Ukraine for fear of their lives have become refugees in other countries and have come face to face with another danger; trafficking. The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) has warned that the vulnerability to trafficking will increase with the increase in the number of the refugees (Souza, 2022).

The widespread and systematic conflict related to sexual violence in South Sudan also came to the limelight in March, with the report of the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan. The report indicated that the government was not doing enough to prevent the sexual violence from occurring (Abebe, 2022d). It was also reported that the insufficiency of the government's actions had led to the worsening of the situation in the country.

Another issue that was in the headlines in March was the 'period poverty' of women in Japan. In March 23rd, 2022, a survey released by the Japanese Health Authorities reported that the suffering of Japan's economy due to Covid-19 had left 8.1 percent of women in the country in period poverty. These women

were unable to afford basic sanitary materials such as pads for their periods which had an effect on their reproductive health as they had to either settle for unsafe substitutes or utilisation of such materials for longer than advised (Wiethaus, 2022).

4.3. New Legislations

Various new legislations have been passed or proposed regarding women's rights during the month of March in 2022. The legislations have resulted in different effects on women's rights with some advancing these rights while the others have resulted in a setback or negatively affected these rights.

The legislations that have resulted in the advancement of women's rights are the following. Regionally, the following legislations were notable. The first legislation is the Model Law on Caregiving that was launched by the Inter- American Commission of Women (Souza, 2022b). This legislation was launched to give more value to care work which is mostly done by women and goes unnoticed and unvalued by society. Another legislation that falls under this criterion is the Directive of the European Parliament and the Council on Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence that was proposed by the EU Commission on March 8, 2022 (Abebe, 2022e). The directive is aimed at preventing violence against women and domestic violence within the EU. The directive adopts a modern and comprehensive definition of consent.

In addition to regional organs, certain countries have also passed or proposed legislations that have had a positive impact on the advancements of women's rights. On March 8, Brazil passed a decree that provides for free menstrual pads for 3.6 million poor women (Souza, 2022c). Bangladesh has also made progress in women's rights by passing a law that bans the use of 'immoral character' evidence in rape cases (Osman, 2022b). In another part of the world, Germany has passed a law that abolishes the Nazi- era abortion law which had banned doctors from giving factual information about abortion (Osman, 2022c).

On the flip side, various legislations that restrict the rights of women have also been proposed and passed during the month of March. The most notable ones were the following. In Idaho, US, a bill that prohibits abortion after six weeks and gives a right to fathers, grandparents, siblings, aunts, and uncles of the fetus to bring a suit against doctors that perform the procedure, was passed by the legislature (Viavoori, 2022a). The bill does not provide an exception for rape and even allows family members of

the rapists to sue the doctors that perform the abortion procedure. Similarly, Guatemala's congress has passed a legislation that extends the jail sentence from one to three years to five to 10 years for women who undergo an abortion (Souza, 2022d).

4.4. Court Decisions on Women's Rights

A few court decisions, as well decisions by international bodies, have been given regarding women's rights in the month of March. Three of such decisions will be discussed herein under.

In giving its views on a communication received as per the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW, the CEDAW Committee has held the criminalization of the same-sex relationship of women as a violation of human rights (Osman, 2022d). The Committee urged Sri Lanka, which was the country against which the communication was brought, to decriminalise same sex relationships.

Moving on to local/ national courts, the following decisions have been reported in March. In Guatemala, the Guatemalan High Court has acquitted a woman who killed one of her attackers in self-defence (Souza, 2022d). The woman who is named Eva 'Higui' De Jesus was attacked by a group of ten men who tried to rape her in October 16th, 2016. In an attempt to protect herself, she defended herself with a gardening knife which resulted in the death of one of the attackers. Higui was charged with homicide and had spent eight months in prison in 2017. Another victory for women's rights was observed in Bangladesh where the High Court has issued a rule questioning the discrimination against women in the country regarding various matters including social status and jobs (Katare, 2022). The court issued this rule of its own motion or suo moto.

4.5. Women's Rights Related Events (Other)

In addition to the International Women's Day events, the major event that was held regarding women's rights in March was the 66th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. This session was held from March 14th to March 25th 2022, with a theme of "Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes" (Abebe, 2022f). The session focused on the dynamic between women and climate change and other environmental issues in which it highlighted the comparatively disproportionate effect of the latter on women as well as women's role in prevention.

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