

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

- 1. Please provide information on state protection for women in Turkey who fear honour killings.**
- 2. How do the police in Turkey respond to threats of honour killings?**
- 3. Please provide information on the Safi sect of Islam in Turkey.**
- 4. Is the Safi sect of Islam present in eastern Turkey?**
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- 6. Is there information on the system of honour known as Tore in Turkey?**
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RESPONSE

- 1. Please provide information on state protection for women in Turkey who fear honour killings.**

Sources indicate that in recent years, the government has introduced a number of reforms to prevent honour killings in Turkey. However, sources also indicate that honour killings continue to occur in Turkey.

According to an article in *The Economist* dated 12 April 2007, “Turkey’s mildly Islamist government” had bowed “to pressure from the media, feminist groups and the European Union” and had “launched an unprecedented campaign against honour killings, disarming even its fiercest critics.” It is stated in the article that:

State-employed imams now declare honour killings “sinful” in the Friday sermons they deliver across the country. Tens of thousands of army conscripts and police recruits are taught that violence against women is bad. Brooking the ire of his conservative constituents, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the prime minister, told a gathering of foreign Muslims that “discrimination against women is worse than racism.” Nor is this mere talk. Turkey’s penal code has been tweaked to stiffen penalties not only for those who commit honour killings but also for those who plan them.

The article notes that “[i]n Diyarbakir and elsewhere in the south-east, new efforts are being made to protect vulnerable women through emergency hotlines and shelters for abused women. The first government-run refuge opened its doors outside Diyarbakir two years ago.” However, the article also notes that “[t]he trouble is that, despite the government’s efforts, honour-related crimes show little sign of abating. A parliamentary report last August found that 1,091 such crimes had been committed in the past five years—over four a week. Only three of 51 honour killers interviewed for another study said they had any regrets” (‘Turkish honour killings: A dishonourable practice’ 2007, *The Economist*, 12 April – Attachment 1).

The US Department of State report on human rights practices in Turkey for 2006 indicates that “[t]he government did not effectively enforce the law” that “prohibits violence against women, including spousal abuse”, although “the interior ministry and Prime Ministry issued circulars during the year instructing relevant departments to better enforce these laws. Domestic human rights organizations reported that these measures were partially effective; more women called the police emergency hotline for domestic violence and went to police stations to file abuse reports.” In relation to honour killings, it is stated in the report that:

The government undertook a major campaign during the year to end the practice of honor killings--the killing by immediate family members of women suspected of being unchaste; however, the practice remained a problem. The government reported that there were 1,806 honor killings between 2001 and 2006. During the same period, 5,375 women committed suicide. After the government increased penalties for honor killings, family members increasingly pressured girls to kill themselves in order to preserve the family’s honor, according to women’s rights groups. Broaching the formerly taboo topic, Prime Minister Erdogan condemned the practice of honor killings at the Organization of the Islamic Conference in November. In July the Prime Ministry issued to all ministries and provincial governments a circular that reminded each government institution of its responsibility to prevent domestic violence, including honor killings. In December the interior ministry issued a circular to provincial governors instructing them to form special committees to prevent honor killings. Turkish imams joined pop music stars and soccer celebrities to produce television and billboard ads declaring honor killing a sin and condemning all forms of violence against women. The State Ministry for Women began a prevention of violence against women educational program for all soldiers doing their mandatory military service. Government officials worked with advocacy groups such as KA-MER, the leading women’s organization in the southeast, to hold town hall meetings and set up rescue teams and hotlines for endangered women and girls. Under the Penal Code, honor killings require punishment of life imprisonment. Women’s rights groups reported that there remained dozens of such killings every year, mainly in conservative Kurdish families in the southeast or among migrants from the southeast living in large cities. Because of sentence reductions for juvenile offenders, observers noted that young male relatives often were designated to perform the killing.

The report provides information on a number of honour killings, and refers to a Turkish press report on 27 October 2006 regarding Naile Erdas, a 15 year-old girl from the city of Van in south eastern Turkey, who “was killed by her family when she gave birth to a child conceived

during a rape. The girl, who hid her pregnancy, reportedly begged doctors at a state hospital where she gave birth not to return her to her family, fearing that she would be killed in accordance with the local tradition demanding her family's honor be cleansed. Doctors informed state authorities, but the prosecutor nevertheless handed the young woman over to her family, which, as Naile feared, killed her. At year's end, Naile's uncles and father were under arrest for making the decision to kill her, while her brother, the suspected killer, remained at large." The report also refers to another honour killing involving a man who, on 25 November 2006, was sentenced by a court to life imprisonment for killing his daughter after she "left her husband and took her two children to Ankara, allegedly with another man." The convicted man's two sons were acquitted in relation to the murder (US Department of State 2007, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006 – Turkey*, March, Section 5 – Attachment 2).

An article dated 14 February 2007 on the European Parliament website provides information on the second report of the European Parliament "on women's role in social, economic and political life in Turkey." The report condemned "instances of violence against women, including honour killings, domestic violence, forced marriage and polygamy" and called "on the Turkish Government and the Commission to tackle "violence in general and honour crime in particular" as a priority and to set up special high-security shelters. The report also "stresses the importance of systematic investigation and effective punishment" and therefore the training of police and judicial authorities in gender equality issues and the fight against violence" ('Women's rights in Turkey – MEPs say improvements still needed' 2007, European Parliament website, 14 February – Attachment 3).

A *Turkish Daily News* article dated 11 January 2007 indicates that "[a]s a part of measures to prevent so-called "honor killings," Turkey's Minister of Internal Affairs had "asked for shelters for the abused to be set up as soon as possible in towns that do not yet have them" ('Interior Ministry issues circular for more shelters' 2007, *Turkish Daily News*, 11 January – Attachment 4).

An article dated 9 January 2007 in the *Los Angeles Times* refers to "jail sentences for men and boys who commit" honour killings being "stiffened, and new provisions in the penal code make it harder for a court to reduce sentences. (As recently as 10 months ago, in a typical case, the life sentence of a young man who had killed his sister was substantially reduced because the judges decided he had been "provoked." He had buried her up to her neck in rocks after she was impregnated in a rape)" (Wilkinson, Tracy 2007, 'The World; Taking the 'honor' out of killing women; Turkey, under pressure from feminists and the European Union, works at a level unheard of in the Islamic world to end the ritualistic violence', *Los Angeles Times*, 9 January – Attachment 5).

Another article dated 20 November 2006 refers to a girl "who became pregnant without getting married, in Ilicak village in Baskale town of eastern city of Van," being "taken under state protection against the possibility of honor killing. The gynecologist informed the Sub-Governor's Office about the situation of the girl by taking into consideration the moral principles of the region." According to the article, "[w]ith the directives of Sub-Governor Ali Aslantas," the girl "was taken from her house and sent to Van" ('Turkey-Press Scan (2)' 2006, *Anadolu Agency*, 20 November – Attachment 6).

The European Commission 2006 progress report on Turkey indicates that in relation to women's rights:

The legal framework is overall satisfactory, but implementation remains a challenge. The Law on the Protection of the Family is only partially applied. Despite the provisions in the new Penal Code that lists moral killings as an aggravated circumstance for murder crimes, the sentences issued by courts reflect a mixed picture. While in some cases courts imposed maximum sentences (life imprisonment), in others they opted for lighter sentences, especially if a minor had committed the murder.

The report also indicates that “[c]rimes in the name of honour and suicides committed by women due to the influence of the family continue to occur, especially in the regions of the East and Southeast”, and that “[w]omen’s suicides are not always properly investigated, especially in the Southeast”. The report notes that “[t]here is still a need to further increase the provision of shelters for women subjected to domestic violence¹¹. The provision in the Law on Municipalities, adopted by Parliament in July 2004 is not yet fully implemented. All municipalities with a population greater than 50 000 should provide a shelter” (European Commission 2006, *Turkey 2006 Progress Report*, 8 November, p. 18 – Attachment 7).

A *BBC* article dated 22 June 2005 on honour killing notes that “[u]ntil June 2005, local judges” in Turkey “had the power to hand down reduced sentences to the small number of honour killers who were caught.” The article also notes that:

Since the introduction of a new penal code, designed to conform to EU law, honour killings have been re-categorised as murder with a life sentence attached.

Eren Keskin, head of the Istanbul branch of the Human Rights Association, said: “There are some positive developments in these new laws. However, in Turkey the written law and its enforcement can be two very different things. Until the feudal make-up of society, until the very mentality behind these crimes changes, we cannot expect anything very different” (‘Crimes of ‘honour’ 2005, *BBC Religion & Ethics*, 22 June http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/ethics/honourcrimes/crimesofhonor_print.html - Accessed 30 August 2007 – Attachment 8).

An *Anadolu Agency* article dated 1 June 2005 indicates that “[t]he new Turkish penal code has gone into effect this morning (Wednesday), along with the procedure penal and the law on the execution of sentences.” The article lists a number of the changes in the new penal code, including that “[p]erpetrators of honor killings will receive a penalty of life in prison” (‘New Turkish penal code goes into effect today’ 2005, *Anadolu Agency*, 1 June – Attachment 9).

However, an article dated 28 August 2006 from *BBC News* indicates that the new penal “code criminalises custom killings, such as inter-tribal deaths” and “makes no reference to honour killings” (‘Turkish boys commit ‘honour’ crimes’ 2006, *BBC News*, 28 August <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5285726.stm> - Accessed 5 September 2007 – Attachment 10).

A report dated 20 May 2005 by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the consideration of the fourth and fifth periodic reports of Turkey refers to information provided by Ms. Aksit, a member of the Turkish delegation, regarding the term custom killings in the new Turkish penal code. It is stated in the report that “[i]n response to the question concerning the definition of custom killings and honour killings in the new Penal Code, the term “custom killings” implied, first and foremost, honour

killings, while “honour killings” were always linked to a custom. In short, they were the same concept.” Although the new Penal Code was not yet in force at that time, “judges were already applying that interpretation, and she was sure that, as implementation of the law gained ground, more concrete terms would emerge” (United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women 2005, ‘Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (continued) – Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Turkey’, CEDAW/C/SR.677, United Nations website, 20 May, p. 10 [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/898586b1dc7b4043c1256a450044f331/994cde7c003f1cf7c125729700391617/\\$FILE/N0521465.doc](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/898586b1dc7b4043c1256a450044f331/994cde7c003f1cf7c125729700391617/$FILE/N0521465.doc) - Accessed 3 September 2007 – Attachment 11).

A report dated October 2004 by the Kurdish Human Rights Project notes that “[i]n September of 2004 Turkey passed Penal Code reforms. Under the new penal code there are stiffer penalties for ‘honour killings’, there is no longer reduced sentences for rapists who marry their victims, and mothers who murder children born out of wedlock. However, despite the encouraging Penal Code reforms, women’s groups continue to express concern about the actual implementation of these reforms.” According to the report, “Turkish legislation and the implementation thereof does not seem to effectively prevent all communities from engaging in ‘honour killings’, it is therefore necessary that increased energy be put into the issue. Notably, legal prohibition and prosecution is not, by itself, adequate.” However, the report also indicates that “Penal Code reforms are slowly being felt. As for-stated, the new reforms call for stricter punishment for perpetrators of ‘honour killings’. The legislative change is, albeit minimally, affecting sentencing. In March of 2004, a court in a southeast city sentenced nine family members to jail for their role in a 14-yearold girl’s death. She had become pregnant as a result of an incestuous rape. In February 2004, the State Religious Affairs authority nationally publicised a sermon condemning ‘honour killings’, stating that they were a sin against God (Kurdish Human Rights Project 2004, ‘Turkey: The situation of Kurdish children’, Kurdish Human Rights Project website, October, pp. 26-28 <http://www.khrp.org/publish/p2004/KHRP%20Turkey%20Situation%20of%20Kurdish%20Children%202004%20full%20pdf.pdf> – Accessed 3 September 2007 – Attachment 12).

2. How do the police in Turkey respond to threats of honour killings?

The article in *The Economist* dated 12 April 2007 indicates that steps taken by Turkey’s government in relation to honour killings includes “[t]ens of thousands of army conscripts and police recruits” being “taught that violence against women is bad” (‘Turkish honour killings: A dishonourable practice’ 2007, *The Economist*, 12 April – Attachment 1).

The article dated 14 February 2007 on the European Parliament website in relation to the second report of the European Parliament “on women’s role in social, economic and political life in Turkey” indicates that the report condemned ““instances of violence against women, including honour killings” and ““stresses the importance of systematic investigation and effective punishment” and therefore the training of police and judicial authorities in gender equality issues and the fight against violence” (‘Women’s rights in Turkey – MEPs say improvements still needed’, European Parliament website, 14 February – Attachment 3).

The *Turkish Daily News* article dated 11 January 2007 notes that Turkey’s Minister of Internal Affairs had “sent a circular to governors regarding “The coordination of prevention of honor killings,”” in which” the Minister indicated “that procedures regarding women or children that are victims of violence and who have turned to law enforcement officers for help should be handled by female officers, with the victims’ psychological well-being

paramount at all times.” The Minister had also “asked for shelters for the abused to be set up as soon as possible in towns that do not yet have them” (‘Interior Ministry issues circular for more shelters’ 2007, *Turkish Daily News*, 11 January – Attachment 4).

According to the European Commission 2006 progress report on Turkey, “[i]ssue related to *gender equality and women’s rights* receive growing public attention in Turkey. The legal framework is broadly satisfactory. However, in practice women’s rights are not always protected, in particular in the poorest areas of the country. ‘Honour crimes’ need to be investigated more systematically and where appropriate followed-up with prosecution and convictions” (European Commission 2006, *Turkey 2006 Progress Report*, 8 November, p. 61 – Attachment 7).

A *Reuters News* article dated 31 October 2006 indicates that “[a] new penal code came into effect in mid-2005 which gave women more rights, but many say implementation is lagging.” The article refers to the comments of “Zelal Ozgokce, an activist with the Van Women’s Association” in the eastern Turkish city of Van, who said “police often ignore reports of violence against women and regularly do not act when men breach restraining orders.” In one case, a “policeman said ‘this is your wife, take her home tonight,’” she said. “Some of the police are good, but in general, it’s very hard.”” The article also indicates that “[h]onour killings”, where women are murdered by family members who believe they have dishonoured the clan name, continue despite tough, new penalties” (Ross-Thomas, Emma 2006. ‘Turkish women slow to benefit from Ankara’s reforms’, *Reuters News*, 31 October – Attachment 13).

An article dated 7 April 2006 refers to “signs that Turkey’s government, police and non-government organisations are starting to work more effectively to combat” honour killings. The article indicates that “[s]pecial “intervention” teams grouping women activists and representatives of the police, local government and the mosques are being set up to help save women and, if necessary, to resettle them with new identity papers in other parts of Turkey.” The article also refers to the comments of Naime Kardas of the Ka-Mer group, who said that “[e]very state body should practise positive discrimination in favour of women, Kardas said, noting that policemen sometimes tell women who suffer abuse just to put up with their lot” (Jones, Gareth 2006, ‘Turkey faces battle to stamp out “honour killings”’, *Reuters AlertNet*, 7 April – Attachment 14).

The US Department of State report on human rights practices in Turkey for 2005 notes that “[t]he law prohibits violence against women, including spousal abuse; however, the government generally did not effectively enforce the law. Police were reluctant to intervene in domestic disputes and frequently advised women to return to their husbands. Spousal abuse was considered an extremely private matter involving societal notions of family honor, and few women went to the police” (US Department of State 2006, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005 – Turkey*, March, Section 5 – Attachment 15).

An Amnesty International report dated August 2005 on human rights in Turkey indicates that Amnesty had “been greatly heartened by the recent steps taken by the government to improve the level of protection that women enjoy from violence in the family”, including “the amendments to the Turkish Penal Code”. It is also stated in the report that “[j]udging from other recent legal and constitutional reforms in Turkey, the passing of laws in itself is not enough - implementation of the laws will be key. Effort is needed to make sure that these reforms are communicated to women in Turkey as well as to prosecutors, governors, judges, police officers and others who may be responsible for implementing the law.” Amnesty

International also requested “the development of mandatory training programmes for the police, medical personnel, gendarmerie officials, members of the judiciary and other professionals who may be a first point of contact for women who have experienced violence” (Amnesty International 2005, *Turkey – Memorandum on AI’s recommendations to the government to address human rights violations*, August, EUR 44/027/2005, pp. 23-24 – Attachment 16).

An earlier Amnesty International report dated 2 June 2004 indicates that the police had frequently failed “to investigate or press charges against perpetrators of violence against women. Women are not encouraged to bring complaints against their attackers and receive almost no effective protection from vengeful husbands and relatives. Those responsible – including the heads of family councils – are rarely brought to justice” (Amnesty International 2004, *Turkey: Women confronting family violence*, 2 June, EUR 44/013/2004, p. 2 – Attachment 17).

The report dated October 2004 by the Kurdish Human Rights Project indicates that the police had rarely intervened on behalf of women or girls in relation to honour killings. It is stated in the report that:

In 2003, there were at least 5 documented cases of ‘honour killings’ in Turkey⁸¹ though it is believed that many more may occur but are not thoroughly investigated by the police. One NGO noted, “no one knows the death toll from honour killings in Turkey, but experts estimate about 30 to 70 women are murdered annually, mostly in the Kurdish southeast. Scores of other women take their own lives under pressure of fear of attack.”⁸² The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) report to the Committee Against Torture indicated that the number of women killed by the families annually might be above 200⁸³. Police see themselves as peacemakers in the family context and rarely intervene on behalf of the women or girls. Police and courts do not usually provide shelter or protection to women and girls who are at risk of being killed by their families or partners (Kurdish Human Rights Project 2004, ‘Turkey: The situation of Kurdish children’, Kurdish Human Rights Project website, October, pp. 26-27 <http://www.khrp.org/publish/p2004/KHRP%20Turkey%20Situation%20of%20Kurdish%20Children%202004%20full%20pdf.pdf> – Accessed 3 September 2007 – Attachment 12).

3. Please provide information on the Safi sect of Islam in Turkey.

4. Is the Safi sect of Islam present in eastern Turkey?

5. If so, what is its level of influence compared to other Islamic sects in eastern Turkey?

A search of the sources consulted found little information in relation to the Safi sect of Islam in Turkey. An article in *Middle Eastern Studies* dated 1 July 2001 refers to Sunni Muslims accepting “four mezheps” (school of jurisprudence), being “(Hanefi, Safi, Hanbeli and Maliki) as legitimate; Shiis and Kharijies have their own mezheps. Each Muslim must choose which mezhep he will follow, although Muslims generally belong to the mezheps prevalent in their regions.” The article, which is in relation to Kurds in Turkey, indicates that “[m]ost Kurds are Sunni Muslims and strict adherents of the Safi rite.” It is stated in the article that:

Islam plays an important role in the lives of Kurds and has always been used as an ideological tool in Kurdish mobilization. Major Kurdish revolts during the 1920s in Turkey were primarily Islamic in nature with varying degrees of Kurdish nationalist ideology; that is, while the intellectual cadres of these revolts were Kurdish nationalists, they used Islam as a mobilizing force. The Kurdish nationalist movements of the 1960s and 1970s which flourished among leftist groups were, however, shown no sympathy by the anti-Communist

Islamist Kurds. In 1984, the Marxist-Leninist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) started a guerrilla war against the Turkish state in the southeastern part of Turkey, which intensified in the early 1990s.

Most Kurds are Sunni Muslims and strict adherents of the Safi rite. In the Ottoman Empire, the rulers of the Kurdish emirates established their own medreses since the official mezhep (school of jurisprudence) of the Empire was Hanefi. There were also schools attached to some of the village mosques and led by mollahs who had a reputation for learning. These medreses played a prominent role in the development of the Kurdish language and literature. They functioned until the 1970s even though medreses were officially closed down in 1924 in Turkey. Legal experts of Islam, educated in state and independent Kurdish medreses, have played a significant role in the lives of Kurds. Sufi orders have also been active and widespread among the Kurds. Although various Sufi orders were represented, it seems that the Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiyya orders dominated Sufi Islam in the region (Atacan, Fulya 2001, 'A Kurdish Islamist group in modern Turkey: Shifting identities', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 1 July – Attachment 18).

6. Is there information on the system of honour known as Tore in Turkey?

The Amnesty International report dated 2 June 2004 indicates that the literal translation of the term *tore cinayetleri* "is 'custom murders'" (Amnesty International 2004, *Turkey: Women confronting family violence*, 2 June, EUR 44/013/2004, p. 26 – Attachment 17).

A Minority Rights Group International report dated July 2004 on minorities in Turkey refers to *tore cinayeti* as "'customary killings' regarding certain communities" (Minority Rights Group International 2004, *Minorities in Turkey – Submission to the European Union and the Government of Turkey*, July, p. 39 – Attachment 19).

A report dated November 2005 on honour killings in Turkey provides information on 'tore' killings. The report refers to *tore* as "morals and customs" and *tore* killings as "'töre' (custom) killings where family council decisions come into play." Tribal relations played "a crucial role in terms of 'töre' killings". The report notes that people in Istanbul in particular, tended to differentiate between *tore* killings and killings for the sake of honour, while others in areas where such events were more frequent "did not differentiate between 'tore' and other honor killings." It is stated in the report that:

An important finding is that people tend to differentiate between killings for the sake of honor and 'töre' (custom) killings where family council decisions come into play. In particular, Istanbul respondents talked about custom based killings as quite distant from them and as a problem of 'others'. Such assessments were not only observed among Istanbul natives; migrants expressed similar positions. Those who deemed 'töre' killings a problem of others saw them as particularly connected to the Eastern and Southeastern Regions due to their social structure, underdevelopment and various deprivations. They assessed other honor related murders as inevitable, more individually based actions that could happen anywhere. There were also people who thought of a man's jealous murder of his unfaithful wife as 'something that could happen to anyone'. Therefore, custom and honor related killings are differentiated from each other based on how the murder was committed rather than their reasons and consequences.

On the other hand, people in places where such events were experienced more frequently, especially those who were involved in or closely witnessed such events, did not differentiate between 'töre' and other honor killings. Overall they approached such events with more of an 'insider' perspective. Here, what was emphasized was the understanding of honor underlying

these events. They used expressions such as ‘it doesn’t matter whether it is honor or custom [‘töre’] related, they are both the same anyway, they both mean honor’ to express that customs play an important role in the determination of values related with honor in their regions. On the other hand, it was also observed that there was a young, educated group (especially young female university students) living in city centers who stated that custom related killings only took place in rural areas (and were gradually decreasing) and perceived these events as very distant from their own lives even though they lived in places where such events frequently occurred.

The report also notes that “[s]ome people also said that ‘töre’ killings in general comprise killings related with disputes were among families and/or tribes such as blood feuds, and those for the sake of honor are a smaller group under it.” The report also refers to a small number “of people, mostly men and particularly young men, who stated that it is almost impossible to change the traditions and values that lead to honor related crimes. In fact, some of them said that they are against violence, but ‘töre’ (morals) are important and necessary for the protection of the society and family and the decent upbringing of girls. They concluded, therefore, that something should be done to clear away violence, but morals and customs should stay.”

The report indicates that in the south-eastern Turkish city of Sanliurfa,

... most of the respondents accepted the incidences of ‘töre’ killings in their region. However, the respondents compared the possibility of ending a dispute over ‘dishonorable action’ in various ways, including bargaining for peace-making in different ethnic groups. It seemed that, although most of the respondents did not support the killings straight out, they saw no other alternative under the rules of tribal living and intense social pressure. Even among young male university students the issue was discussed cautiously by stating that they were against the violence embodied in honor killings, but that the norms of conduct dictated by ‘töre’ should be kept because they discipline people and teach them manners (Kardam, Filiz 2005, ‘The Dynamics of Honor Killings in Turkey’, United Nations Population Fund website, November, pp. 25-26, 50, 54 & 62 – Attachment 20).

An earlier article in *The Independent* dated 7 May 1999 refers to the comments of a journalist in Sanliurfa, who said that honour killings were “part of the tore, the traditional code of honour people live by in the region,”... “Not all aspects of tore are bad. We’re proud of the tore, but many of us are against these killings” (Huggler, Justin 1999, ‘Women killed to save male face’, *The Independent*, 7 May – Attachment 21).

7. Is there a link between the Safi sect of Islam and the Tore system of honour in Turkey?

A search of the sources consulted found no information in relation to a link between the Safi sect of Islam and the Tore system of honour in Turkey.

Although not specifically in relation to Turkey, the *BBC* article dated 22 June 2005 on honour killing refers to the comments of “Ram Gidoomal CBE of the South Asian Development [Partnership]”, who said that “[n]one of the world’s major religions condone honour-related crimes. But those who are guilty have sometimes tried to justify their actions on religious grounds.” The article also notes that “[l]eaders of the world’s faiths have also strongly denied a connection between religion and honour killings” and that “[i]n 2003, Inayat Bunglawala of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) told the BBC: “Many Muslims are uncomfortable about how Islam has been dragged into this, because Islam categorically does not allow

people to kill their own daughter” (‘Crimes of ‘honour’ 2005, *BBC Religion & Ethics*, 22 June http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/ethics/honourcrimes/crimesofhonor_print.html - Accessed 30 August 2007 – Attachment 8).

The article dated 28 August 2006 from *BBC News* refers to “an in-depth study into honour killings in Turkey” carried out by “Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen, a UN Population Fund representative in Ankara”. According to the article:

Her team’s research has attempted to establish how the practice fits in with Islam, the country’s main religion.

They found that while imams were not known to be advocating honour killings, their strict moral code meant that the general public might feel that Islam was actually condoning such practices (‘Turkish boys commit ‘honour’ crimes’ 2006, *BBC News*, 28 August <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5285726.stm> - Accessed 5 September 2007 – Attachment 10).

The report dated November 2005 on honour killings in Turkey notes that “[a]lthough people base their honor-related attitudes and actions on their religious beliefs, the situation overall is quite contradictory.” According to the report:

While some people stated that they killed the woman or man because the religion dictates it, others stated that religion (meaning Islam) is against taking people’s lives since life is given to us, and can only be taken, by God. Also, as was often referred to by Imams and other religious people, it is almost impossible to definitely determine a case of adultery because according to some hadiths four trustworthy men from the community must witness the people during sexual intercourse. And when adultery is uncertain, then the death penalty should not be given.

It is also stated in the report that:

Religious authorities at the higher levels of bureaucracy may give sermons concerning [sic] these murders and adapt a discourse of protection of women’s rights in the name of religion. Indeed, all of the Imams who participated in this study stated that killing people cannot be legitimized. However, in the way they perceive honor and honourable women, most of them were not very different than the people justifying these crimes (Kardam, Filiz 2005, ‘The Dynamics of Honor Killings in Turkey’, United Nations Population Fund website, November, pp. 43 & 57 – Attachment 20).

The article in *The Independent* dated 7 May 1999 indicates that “men, young and old” in Sanliurfa believed honour killings to be “a religious duty.” One man said “the killings are a matter of religion, not race. “I want what is written in the Koran,” he says. “If we had Islamic sharia law in Turkey, the courts would punish the women. But there is no Islamic court to decide, so the families must do it.”” However, the article also refers to the comments of a journalist in Sanliurfa, who said “that religion is not the cause. “This is part of the tore, the traditional code of honour people live by in the region,” he says” (Huggler, Justin 1999, ‘Women killed to save male face’, *The Independent*, 7 May – Attachment 21).

8. Would a woman under threat of honour killing in Istanbul be able to safely relocate to eastern Turkey?

An article in the *Turkish Daily News* dated 17 January 2007 refers to a report in the Turkish daily *Milliyet* that in Istanbul, “one woman every two weeks was victim to a murder caused by traditional beliefs about a woman’s place in society.” According to the article:

Milliyet said, according to data from a Parliamentary commission, Istanbul ranks first in the number of crimes related to protecting family honor. The same report found that violence against women and children was on the rise. Police in Istanbul said 18 honor killings occurred in Istanbul in 2000. In the following years until 2005, 19, 16, 17 and 24 such crimes took place while 25 women were victims of honor killings last year. According to police, two children were killed by their own parents in 2005. Milliyet said authorities believed educating the people was the only way out of violence against women and children. Culprits of honor crimes were almost always people from eastern or southeast Turkey, the report said. A lawyer from the Istanbul Governor’s Human Rights Chair told Milliyet that the victims were usually women who risked getting caught and being murdered and ran away from domestic violence, almost always taking their children with them. In Istanbul, the total number of murders, rapes and beatings of women and children was 3,670, according to police records (‘Turkish Press Yesterday’ 2007, *Turkish Daily News*, 17 January – Attachment 22).

In relation to whether a woman under threat of honour killing in Istanbul would be able to safely relocate to eastern Turkey, a number of sources indicate that honour killings continue to occur in eastern and south-eastern Turkey.

The article in *The Economist* dated 12 April 2007 indicates that many honour-related murders occur “in the Kurdish provinces”, where “[r]ampant poverty and illiteracy have been exacerbated by the forced eviction of millions of Kurdish villagers by the army in its war against PKK rebels in the 1990s.” The article refers to the comments of “Fatma Sahin, a deputy from Mr Erdogan’s AK Party” who blamed “the deeply entrenched patriarchal and feudal system in the Kurdish provinces” (‘Turkish honour killings: A dishonourable practice’ 2007, *The Economist*, 12 April – Attachment 1).

The UK Home Office country of origin information report on Turkey dated 12 March 2007 includes information on honour killings in the east and southeast of the country. It is stated in the report that:

22.37 The International Helsinki Federation (IHF) for Human Rights June 2006 Turkey report noted:

“Thirty-nine women and 29 men fell victim to ‘honor killings’, and 116 women and at least 45 children were killed as a result of domestic violence. The year was also characterized by increased government and public awareness of the violence against women and children, a women’s rights NGO working in the southeast and among IDP communities in other parts of Turkey preventing a substantial number of ‘honor killings’.” [10a]

22.38 The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre ‘2004 Report of fact-finding mission to Turkey noted that:

“Like other forms of violence against women, honour killings happen in all parts of the country. They appear to be more frequent in the Black-Sea Region and in Kurdish inhabited areas in the Southeast, where tribal customs play an important role in

everyday life. From the sunni-dominated areas of central-Anatolia (such as Konya) however, fewer cases are reported...Just like other kinds of violence within the family, no comprehensive recording or statistical monitoring is conducted as to the prevalence of honour killings. Most of the NGO's representatives I talked to, estimated that the number of unreported or undetected cases was significantly higher than the official numbers. Honour killings are often hushed up and some women who have apparently committed suicide have in fact been killed or even forced to kill themselves by their family." [16] (p33-34)

22.39 The European Commission 2006 report recorded that:

"Crimes in the name of honour and suicides committed by women due to the influence of the family continue to occur, especially in the regions of the East and Southeast. Nonetheless, there is still a lack of reliable data on such events as well as on domestic violence more generally. According to the preliminary results of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, causes of suicides are early and forced marriages, domestic violence and denial of reproductive rights. Poverty, urbanisation, displacement and internal migration, and thus changing socioeconomic situation of women are the contexts within which suicides occur. Women's suicides are not always properly investigated, especially in the Southeast. In parts of the South East it still occurs that girls are not registered at birth. This hampers the fight against forced marriage and crimes in the name of honour since these girls and women cannot be properly traced" [71a] (p18) (UK Home Office 2007, *Country of Origin Information Report: Turkey*, 12 March, Paragraphs 22.37-22.39 – Attachment 23).

The US Department of State report on human rights practices in Turkey for 2006 refers to "[w]omen's rights groups" reporting "that there remained dozens of" honour killings in Turkey "every year, mainly in conservative Kurdish families in the southeast or among migrants from the southeast living in large cities" (US Department of State 2007, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006 – Turkey*, March, Section 5 – Attachment 2).

The *BBC News* article dated 28 August 2006 indicates that "[d]espite the recent reform of Turkey's penal code, honour killings have continued, mostly in the east of the country where ancient traditions are strong" ('Turkish boys commit 'honour' crimes' 2006, *BBC News*, 28 August <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5285726.stm> - Accessed 5 September 2007 – Attachment 10).

The previously mentioned report dated November 2005 on honour killings in Turkey notes that people in Istanbul in particular "talked about custom based killings as quite distant from them and as a problem of 'others'. Such assessments were not only observed among Istanbul natives; migrants expressed similar positions. Those who deemed 'töre' killings a problem of others saw them as particularly connected to the Eastern and Southeastern Regions due to their social structure, underdevelopment and various deprivations. They assessed other honor related murders as inevitable, more individually based actions that could happen anywhere" (Kardam, Filiz 2005, 'The Dynamics of Honor Killings in Turkey', United Nations Population Fund website, November, p. 62 – Attachment 20).

The report dated October 2004 by the Kurdish Human Rights Project indicates that "[t]here are numerous reasons that 'honour killings' continue to be a problem in the southeast. In the absence of a positive political and economic environment, many Kurds in the Southeast cling to their tribal rituals, which include the absolute authority of the clan leaders." It is also stated in the report that:

Another factor in the complex climate of the southeast is the desperate economic situation of many Kurds. Young virgin brides can command a large dowry price. In the destitute southeast, income generated from dowry is a significant force in the economy. Children are often required to act as executioners because they face less jail time if caught. Tribal authorities that sentence the victim to death and the minor to enact a murder rarely face penalties.

It should, however, be noted that many Kurdish communities do not practice 'honour killings' and are in fact disturbed by the continuance of the practice (Kurdish Human Rights Project 2004, 'Turkey: The situation of Kurdish children', Kurdish Human Rights Project website, October, p. 27

<http://www.khrp.org/publish/p2004/KHRP%20Turkey%20Situation%20of%20Kurdish%20Children%202004%20full%20pdf.pdf> – Accessed 3 September 2007 – Attachment 12).

The article in *The Independent* dated 7 May 1999 notes that there had been "angry clashes when women's rights activists" had blamed honour "killings on the South-east's large Kurdish population. But you can hear three languages on the streets of Sanliurfa. The city's population is a mixture of Turks, Kurds and Arabs and honour killings have occurred in all three communities" (Huggler, Justin 1999, 'Women killed to save male face', *The Independent*, 7 May – Attachment 21).

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