Psychological Consequences of Trauma Experiences on the Development of Migrated Kurdish Women in the European Union

Final Results and Background of a Survey in Five European Countries and Turkey

Conducted and Issued Jointly by
International Free Women's Foundation, Rotterdam
Utrecht University, Department of Clinical and Health Psychology
Kurdistan Information Office, Paris

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Willebrordusplein 10a
NL-3037 TC Rotterdam
Phone: 0031 (0) 10 465 18 00
Fax: 0031 (0) 10 265 14 65
E-Mail: info@freewomensfoundation.org
Internet: //www.freewomensfoundation.org

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Preface

Due to courageous efforts of many women rights activists and women's organisations, many unmentioned taboos in the context of violence against women have been unveiled during the last ten years. Crimes like "honour killings", domestic violence, female genital mutilation, sexual torture and rape as a war crime have become subjects of public discussions and international campaigns. They influence the biographies of millions of women . The broad spectrum of domestic and institutional gender-based violence and discrimination poses a major risk of traumatic life experiences for women in all patriarchal societies. Still, many aspects of gender based and sexualised violence and especially their correlation with other forms of discrimination yet need to be examined closely in order to combat them effectively.

Against this background, women's rights organisations and the media have been paying attention to the situation of Kurdish women since the year 2000. Since then newspapers have reported surging suicide rates among women in the Kurdish province of Batman (Turkey), self-burnings by women in the Kurdish regions of Iraq and Iran, or repeated incidences of "honour killings", which threaten the lives of many Kurdish women in their homelands and in the places of migration. However, these spotlights cannot sufficiently explain the complex patterns of discrimination and forms of violence influencing the lives of Kurdish women. Patriarchal violence within "traditional" social structures is not the only form Kurdish women are confronted with. However, such violence can be as life threatening for Kurdish women as for women in any other patriarchal society. Cultural, national, economic and political oppression directed against the Kurds in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria has determined their lives over nearly four generations now.

The interaction of national discrimination, disadvantaged opportunities, migration and forced displacement, massacres and wars together with gender oppression in the institutional and domestic sphere have been important risk circumstances for Kurdish women's rights, lives and health. A high number of Kurdish women have witnessed sexual torture and rape by security forces. So far, criminal courts and the European Court Of Human Rights have tried

some individual cases of human rights abuses against Kurdish women. Still, there is a high number of unreported and undocumented cases of human rights abuses against Kurdish women. Hitherto, in spite of conceivable needs and problems the mental and social consequences of trauma experiences by Kurdish women have not been the subject of scientific research. The increasing numbers of suicides by women in different Kurdish regions also indicate a possible risk for traumatised Kurdish women in EU-countries. Examination of traumata causes and consequences among Kurdish migrant women as well as providing support for the victims has become a frequent demand of individuals and institutions inside and outside the Kurdish community.

However, we do not intent to victimise Kurdish women by drawing attention to the causes and effects of violence. On the contrary, Kurdish women have been playing a central role in the development and conduct of this project. Their demands: "Stop the killing of women!" next to "Kurdish women want peace!" became slogans of "International Women's Day" on 8 March and "International Day for the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women" on 25 November. They also influence them throughout their daily lives. Not least, it was the engagement of the movement of young Kurdish women in the four parts of the divided country as well as the emancipative engagement of several Kurdish women rights activists and associations, which broke the silence. By naming and uncovering the different forms of violence that women have been exposed to for generations, both as migrants and as Kurds, they started to explore ways and means for overcoming them.

One approach was the idea to contribute to closing the deficit of scientific research in this field. It seemed necessary to establish a scientific basis for women's organisations, NGOs, policymakers, healthcare services and professionals in order to help them develop an understanding of the existing problems and to cooperate in finding adequate solutions. In order to respond to this challenge, the International Free Women's Foundation from Rotterdam initiated a close cooperation with Kurdish psychiatrists, the Department of Clinical Psychology at Utrecht University, the Kurdistan Information Centre in Paris, and a number of Kurdish women's associations in Europe and Turkey. Our aim was to collect baseline data on the problem and to outline

recommendations for future action in this area for EU institutions, which were to include healthcare services and organisations offering support to victims.

The research report consists of four main chapters:

First, an introductory chapter provides a general survey of the historical context and the present situation of Kurdish women in their homelands. We summarise the main characteristics of gender oppression, oppression of national identity, and the war and migration processes experienced by Kurdish women. We then describe the current situation of Kurdish migrant women in the European Union.

The second chapter is consigned to scientific methodology and theoretical and conceptual considerations relevant in the conduct of this survey. This chapter contains the core results and statistics resulting from the evaluation of questionnaires by means of quantitative and qualitative data analyses, comparisons of certain categories and scientific conclusions concerning the psychological consequences of trauma experiences on the development of Kurdish migrant women in Turkey and the European Union.

The third chapter contains recommendations based on the study's findings. We publicise them to support the target group of the project, i.e. health care professionals, women's shelters and organisations, NGOs, policymakers and community services. In this sense, we express our hope that all actors will take the appropriate measures within the scope of their responsibilities to contribute to the prevention of avoidable traumatic experiences as well as to provide the mandatory support for traumatised Kurdish migrant women.

Fourth, we have added life testimonies of five Kurdish migrant women to this research report. These women were interviewed during the survey. They relate in their own words some key events of their biographies. We felt it important to add such testimony to the report. They form the background of the data we raised about the lives of Kurdish migrant women. Moreover, they give us an idea of the concrete human life experiences behind the figures. Unfortunately, these life stories are not the "most shocking" reports we lis-

tened to. We choose them as individual examples of events and problems reported by many Kurdish women.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to all people and institutions who believed in the necessity of this research in order to enable more effective measures in support of traumatised Kurdish migrant and refugee women as well as in terms of raising consciousness for an effective prevention of avoidable traumatising events in the future.

The project coordinators are especially grateful for the support received by the Daphne II Programme of the European Commission's Directorate – General Justice, Freedom and Security for selecting and funding our project proposal. This support was a major contribution to the realisation of the study.

In particular, we express our heartfelt gratitude to all volunteers who helped us with this survey including 1.127 Kurdish migrant women who sacrificed their time and had the strength to relate us their mainly painful life experiences.

On behalf of the International Free Women's Foundation

Ann-Kristin Kowarsch and Nursel Kilic

About the editors

This research was conducted by

International Free Women's Foundation (Rotterdam, Netherlands; the foundation is an expert centre in the fields of women research, education, empowerment, violence and trauma with excellent network and logistics capacities.)

In close cooperation with:

Department of Clinical and Health Psychology at Utrecht University (Netherlands; experienced in large scale scientific empirical studies in the field of 'psycho trauma and cultural diversity', e.g., Knipscheer, 2000; Knipscheer, Kok & Kleber, 2004; Knipscheer, Gülsen & Kleber, 2007)

Centre d'Information du Kurdistan (Paris, France; providing links between the Kurdish community and the French public; experienced in research on 'Kurds in Europe', e.g Berruti D., 2002)

Realisation, Evaluation, and Documentation of the Project

Project coordination: Ann-Kristin Kowarsch and Nursel Kilic, International Free Women's Foundation (IFWF)

Scientific experts: Dr J.W. Knipscheer, Dr C. Gülsen, Prof. Dr R.J. Kleber, Department of Clinical and Health Psychology Utrecht University

Project partners: Eyyup Doru, Fidan Ünlübayir and Kader Balikci, Centre d'Information du Kurdistan

External evaluator: Dr. Bernard Granjon, Honorary President of Medecins du Monde

Advisory Board

The study was accompanied by an advisory board consisting of experienced practitioners in the field of psycho trauma therapy: Sevinc Iscanli, MD psychiatrist; Zübeyit Gün, clinical psychologist; Maaike de Vries, PhD in Medicine and Nil Kaymaz, MD psychiatrist attended at different levels to the progress and evaluation of the research. Members of the advisory board also provided a training course and supervision for the volunteers who participated in the data collection.

Remarks of the External Evaluator

Personally, I followed this project and its proceedings with great interest. Taking earlier studies on problems related to political violence into consideration I can state that an excellent study work has been carried out to examine the *Psychological consequences of trauma experiences on the development of migrated Kurdish women in the European Union*. The research has been well, thoroughly and seriously conducted.

Especially I would like to emphasize the impartiality and competence of the experts from the Netherlands involved in the study project. Relevant and reliable bibliographical sources from the United States, Australia and New Zealand have been evaluated. Nevertheless, the works of Argentinean psychiatrists constitute further references in the field of state violence's consequences, which could be important sources in reconceiving the results of this project at a later stage.

The original approach with respect to the applied methodology has been related consequentially to the psychological disorder observed on Kurdish women by paying attention to their cultural reality. This specific topic has been very well analysed and the outcome of this study will be of great importance, particularly for therapeutics bound to deal with patients of the target group. The negative role of acculturation effects has become evident in the loss of the former human and cultural protective surrounding and the women's difficulties in reconstituting a new social surrounding in the host country.

Further, the network of cooperation that has been established between Kurdish women and their local agencies for the successful implementation of this project has provided a solid foundation for its realisation that is incontestable.

Despite an emphasis on the schematic representation, a good analysis of the observed disorders among migrated Kurdish women in EU countries and Turkey has been provided. Classified in wide categories the results are

comprehensible and coherent. They facilitate comparisons with observations made in other studies.

The results of the study are clearly presented, well explained and based on a particularly well conducted statistical work including eventual impact of different variants such as for instance religion, internal displacement or exile, recent arrival in the host country. Concerning the results of the study I only can mention that the disclosed rate of sexual violence experienced by the interviewed women (28 %) appears to be quite low in comparison to our experiences and the results of other studies. Thus, we may allow for the possibility that this might be a result from the conditions in which some of the interviews were made. In particular, it might be possible that in some cases other family members were present during the interview. Indeed, we know that experiences of sexual violence are hardly ever reported in presence of the husband or any other family member especially by Muslim women. Therefore, the choice of female field interviewers in this project was consequential and should have contributed to fewer restricted possibilities of expression for the interviewed women.

The importance of the interviewers' approaches and the possible involvement of a translator in the research process are well underlined: Indeed the translator is more than just a translator in that he/she represents a vital mediator between two cultures, two societies and the differences, which do not facilitate the approach and understanding of a trauma. Their task is to convey the voices of women and their children, who are the most oppressed groups, confronted with any kind of violence in civil society.

Doubtless, the research carries more statistical elements than clinical. As this study is unique, it may complete other research in process as for example an expertise on the situation of political prisoners released in Turkey after a long period of incarceration during which they suffered from isolation and torture. In the context of further studies, especially the problem of transgenerational transmission of violence and consequences of trauma experiences should be elaborated. Particularly in Argentine, some psychiatrists like Janine Puget have drawn attention to the consequences that children face due to their parents' continued suffering from trauma experiences. Since the

consequences of a broad range of possible trauma experiences on the development of migrated Kurdish women compose a recent field of scientific research it will probably take us a few years to evaluate the psychological damages passed on through generations. This might be a crucial topic for further investigation in the coming years.

I hope that this excellent work will contribute to open the eyes of the world's policy makers to the legitimacy of Kurdish claims. It is more than ever necessary and urgent to satisfy these claims in order to stop the devastating effects of violence from which the civil population and particularly Kurdish women in Turkey suffer the most.

Sincere Congratulations

Dr Bernard GRANJON

Founding Member and Honorary President of Médecins du Monde

Contributors and Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to a number of institutions and individuals who contributed to the realisation and publication of this research.

First, we would like to thank the European Commission - Daphne Programme for providing financial support (Grant number 2005-1-093) and helpful advice on how to manage this project. In addition, we wish to thank the CiBo Foundation (Netherlands) which also provided funding for this study.

Besides thanking the members of the advisory board for their important contributions, we wish to thank the Kurdish women's and migrant's organisations in Europe and Turkey, which played a central part in this project and which cooperated with the project-team by sharing their experience and advice, providing facilities to access respondents and obtain data. We are notably indebted to the following associations and institutions: Kurdish Women's Association for Integration (Gothenburg, Sweden); Roj Women's Association (London, UK); Internationale Fraueninitiative e.V. (Bremen, Germany); Kurdischer Frauenverein DESTAN e.V. (Berlin, Germany); Migrants' Association for Social Co-operation and Justice GÖC-DER (Istanbul, Turkey); AMARGI Women's Cooperative (Istanbul, Turkey); Women's Association GÖKKUSAGI (Istanbul; Turkey); Women's Education and Psychological Counselling Centre EPİ-DEM (Diyarbakir, Turkey); SELIS Women's Centre (Diyarbakir, Turkey); KARDELEN Women's Centre (Diyarbakir-Baglar, Turkey); Municipality of Diyarbakir (Turkey); Migrants' Association for Social Co-operation and Justice GÖC-DER (Batman; Turkey); EU – GAP Region Cultural Heritage Development Project: Traditional Handicraft Workshop (Batman; Turkey); Van Bostanici Women's Cooperative (Van, Turkey).

The enthusiastic and persistent engagement of women who spent their time and energy collecting data and conducting the interviews was vital for the realisation of this research project. In this regard, we especially would

like to highlight the efforts of Askin Haskaya, psychologist (Istanbul, Turkey) in coordinating the research works in Turkey. Furthermore, we express our gratitude to Evin Kum, social anthropologist (Istanbul, Turkey); Özlem Celik, lawyer (Istanbul, Turkey); Gülsen Sadikoglu (Istanbul, Turkey); Sema Buldan (Istanbul, Turkey); Nurcan Akyol (Istanbul, Turkey); Minaver Sahin (Istanbul, Turkey); Ruken Hanim (Istanbul, Turkey); Cemile Eminoglu (Diyarbakir, Turkey); Tuba Kizilkaya (Diyarbakir, Turkey); Rahsan Ok (Diyarbakir, Turkey); Hidayet Ok (Diyarbakir, Turkey); Evin Demir (Diyarbakir, Turkey); Arzu Abur (Diyarbakir, Turkey); Newroz Ekinci (Batman, Turkey); Berivan Tunc (Batman, Turkey); Gülistan Günes (Batman, Turkey); Delal Ugurlu (Batman, Turkey); Nilüfer Solmaz (Hamburg, Germany); Türkan Türkyilmaz (Bremen, Germany); Adalet Tüysüz (Köln, Germany); Gülistan Tüysüz (Köln, Germany); Sibel Öksüz (Köln, Germany); Pinar Mansuroglu (Köln, Germany); Suna Tunc (Bonn, Germany); Refika Turhalli (Bonn, Germany); Leyla Boran (Bielefeld, Germany); Elif Köksecen (Dortmund, Germany); Müzeyyen Palabiyik (Dortmund, Germany); Kudret Denktas (Magdeburg, Germany); Dien Rubawa (Berlin, Germany); Susanne Rössling (Berlin, Germany); Safiye Erol (Berlin, Germany); Funda Kizilates (Frankfur, Germany); Aynur Nazlikul-Arici (Frankfurt, Germany); Meral Cicek (Frankfurt, Germany)Leyla Orak (Stuttgart, Germany); Mülkinaz Geyik (Wengen, Germany); Eylem Aysel Güler (London, UK); Fadime Düzgün (Gothenburg, Sweden); Melek Sakar (Gothenburg, Sweden); Pinar Boral (Rotterdam, Netherlands); Ayten Adlim (Rotterdam, Netherlands); Fidan Ünlübayir (Paris, France) and all other volunteers, who did not want to be mentioned by name, for their contributions to the realisation of this research project.

In conclusion, we would like to gratefully acknowledge the courage and strength of all the women who participated in this study by responding to the questionnaires. They shared their life stories with us, and their pains and hopes. We feel obliged, therefore, to take action on their behalf – by stopping the ongoing events that traumatised them, and by providing adequate aid for those who had to go through such pain.

Chapter I – Introduction

1. General approach and Background

Being a migrant, being a Kurd, and being a woman are categories, which are not homogenous but bring together multiple factors of discrimination. However, in order to develop a better understanding of the possible stressors and trauma experiences of Kurdish migrant women in the European Union we felt the need to refer to these categories. Along with general definitions of the terminology used, we attempted to explore the impact of certain historical developments on Kurdish women by focusing on migration processes and gender-relations within their historical context. These developments form the background, which today constitutes the legal, social, religious and political framework Kurdish women live in as well as the basis of their development opportunities in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and in the European Diaspora.

Migration

Migration is a term used in different disciplines and thus differs slightly depending on its background. Migration always includes a process of spatial mobility either within a society or between different societies and their geographical and cultural "areas of life".

Often, migration can be characterised in terms of internal and external migration, voluntary or forced migration, temporally limited or continuing migration. (K.H. Hillmann, 1994, p. 920)

In this research, the term migration has been used to describe the mobility of Kurdish women as a result of various reasons but mainly due to the impact of often forcible external factors like displacement and several forms of discrimination.

Gender Discrimination

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) defines gender discrimination as "(...) any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." (CEDAW, 1979)

The use of terms like "gender-based violence" or "patriarchal structures" in this document refers to the CEDAW-definition of gender discrimination. Over millennia, many different forms of gender discrimination have been used throughout the world in order to justify concepts of male dominance over allegedly inferior women. On the following pages, we try to highlight certain forms of gender-based sexual violence that Kurdish women are confronted with in their public and private lives.

Oppression of National Identity and Racism

According to the UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, "all peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development" (UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, 1960). Furthermore, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination defines the term racial discrimination as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life" (ICERD International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965).

In this report, we have evaluated the different forms of national oppression and racism Kurdish people experience in line with the definitions given

by international declarations and conventions. Denying a people its national identity and banning its cultural and linguistic forms of expression are clearly in conflict with the international legal framework.

2. The Situation of Kurdish Women in the Four Parts of Kurdistan

For gaining an insight into what Kurdish women have in common and what distinguishes them with a view to their socialisation we need to look at the historical and present developments in their places of origin. Due to the restricted number of sources explicitly concerned with Kurdish women's history it also became necessary in the course of this research to compile an abstract of the historical events leading to the present status of Kurdish women. The historical background gives evidence of the unity and diversity of Kurdish migrant women's problems and the prospects for solutions.

2.1. The Kurds – An Abstract of a Stateless Nation's History Until 1923

The history of Mesopotamia, the homeland of the Kurds, bears analogies to the history of women: from the pre-historical roots of a creative, egalitarian and constitutive culture to an estranged, displaced, suppressed, and heteronomous existence under the rule of patriarchal sovereigns. According to archaeological and ethnological research one of the first human civilisations was created in the land between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. The earliest evidence of permanent settlements and an economy based on agriculture and animal husbandry comes from this area. Between ten and eleven thousand years ago, the foothills of the Zagros Mountains in the so-called 'Fertile Crescent' were the centre of the "Neolithic revolution" (Solecki, 2006; Meyers Lexikon Online, 2007). In the Neolithic Age women played a leading role in society because they had developed skills and knowledge crucial in agricultural production. Due to their fertility, they were worshipped as the source

of life. Woman's ability to give birth and her agricultural skills: both were symbols of wealth and power. In Kurdish, woman and life can easily be related to a common origin because the words are very similar. Woman means jin and life means jîn. During the period of 2000–1700 BC, Sumerian mythology broached the issue of conflicts between male gods and powerful, creative goddesses being attacked and finally marginalized by them. The most famous example is the epic of Gilgamesh. The interpretation of these ancient sources indicates a gender conflict in what seems to be the transition from a predominantly matriarchal social organisation in the Neolithic to a patriarchal order under the rule of the Sumerians (Öcalan, 2006).

Antiquity

The earliest account of the Kurds comes from a Sumerian cuneiform clay tablet dating back to 2150 BC, on which the name of a land called *Karda or Qarda* is inscribed (Özoğlu, 2004). The ancient culture of the Kurds is characterised by their early settlements and their agricultural production on fertile soils. However, there is also evidence of many wars and incursions fought about the rich resources of this region. Hence, Kurdish history is also marked by destruction, displacement, assimilation, and uprooting until today.

In 612 B.C., the ancestors of the Kurds united with the Persians to overthrow the tyranny of the Assyrian empire over Mesopotamia. They formed the Median confederation. The war of conquest by the Persian king Kyros in 550 BC and the invasion of Greek troops in 401 BC were followed by the resettlement of Kurds into western and southwestern Anatolia under the Seleucids in 181 BC. After deportations of Kurds during the Sassanid era from the late sixth to the early seventh century, Kurdistan was conquered in the seventh century by the Arab-Islamic troops of caliph Omar II. The Arabs forced the population to abandon their traditional, mainly Zoroastrian faith and to converted them to Islam (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002, p.23). Thousands of young Kurdish women were kidnapped as spoils of war by Arabic troops (Qendil, 2006). In the beginning of the ninth century, Kurds put up resistance against Arab invasion and forced Islamisation, which lasted twenty years under the leadership of Papak-i Khorram. Their aim was a society with equal rights for men and women. (Nebez, 1997)

Their faith, Zoroastrianism, was one of the oldest religions of the Middle East. It approached humanity and nature on the basis of knowledge. It opposed oppression and taught love, tolerance and friendship (KonKurd, 2002). The strong cultural imprint of Neolithic culture and Zoroastrian philosophy may have been an important reason why Kurdish women retained a stronger social position than other women in the Middle East even after Islamisation and in spite of the hierarchic, patriarchal structures of their tribal society.

In traditional Kurdish literature, both matriarchal and patriarchal tendencies can be found. In the ballad *Beytî Las û Xezal*, female tribal rulers openly compete over a lover, while on the other hand patriarchal contexts depict women as subjects of male violence (Joseph/Najmabadi, 2005). Kurdish women's assertiveness was also reflected by their appearance. European travellers for example mentioned their impression that Kurdish women seemed to enjoy greater freedom than their Persian, Arab or Turkish counterparts did. They also noted the absence of veils and their free contact with men from inside and outside the family. (Aziz, Kurdistan, 1992; Galletti, M./Mojab (ed.), 2001)

The Middle Ages

In the second half of the tenth century, "the eclipse of the Sassanid and Byzantine power by the Muslim caliphate, and its own subsequent weakening" (Izady, 1992), gave space for the establishment of four big Kurdish principalities. Different Kurdish dynasties and states maintained their rule in the Middle Ages. In the 13th and 14th centuries, this period of regional Kurdish governments was interrupted when Mongolic troops devastated the Kurdish areas and eliminated many Kurdish tribal chiefs (Özoğlu, 1996, p.11). In the sixteenth century, under the Safavids, the Kurdish cities were again systematically devastated. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds, along with large groups of Armenians, Assyrians, Azeri and Turkmen, were forcibly deported from the border regions of the Ottoman Empire and resettled in the interior of Persia, Balochistan or even in Gharjistan in the Hindu Kush Mountains of present-day Afghanistan. After the victory of the Ottomans in the battle of Chalderan in 1514, many Kurdish tribes were deported west to central Anatolia. This date marks the first division of Kurdistan, which later was

formally confirmed by the Qasr-i Shirin convention in 1639. Turning against both Ottoman and Persian penetration into the region, the Kurds were beaten in the battle of Dimdim near Lake Urmia. The uprising was crushed violently and again deportations followed.

Whereas the Kurds of the lowlands were permanently confronted with war and forced migration, the nomads in the mountain regions largely succeeded in protecting themselves and their culture. According to Ahmad, the Kurdish nomads hardly got into contact with Islamic or other patriarchal societies, and their women held high positions in their clans and tribes (Şenpınar, 1999; cf. Ahmad, F., 1991). The flourishing Kurdish culture and literature of the Middle Ages indicates the importance of women in political and social life. The Sharafnama, one of the most important documents of Kurdology, written by Sheref Xan-Bitilisi in 1597, mentions three Kurdish women, who came to power in the Kurdish principalities. The notes of the famous Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi confirm this report. He noted that Kurdish women occasionally assumed power in Kurdistan and even the Ottoman authorities accepted the succession of female rulers in those principalities (Joseph/Najmabadi, 2005). Another rich source of culture, gender relations, and the new national aspirations among the Kurdish people is the drama of *Mem û Zîn*, written in 1694 by the famous Kurdish poet Ehmede Xani (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002, p.218).

The 19th Century

The Kurdish writer *Mahmud Bayazidî* sketches the social conditions of Kurdish women in mid-nineteenth century in his book titled *Customs and Manners of the Kurds* written in 1859. Like other writers, he also stresses the fact, that Kurdish women did not go veiled and participated in social activities such as work, and dancing and singing together with men (Bayazidî/ed. Rudenko, 1963).

An example of the strength of Kurdish women gives the female tribal leader Kara Fatma in the nineteenth century. She came from the Kurdish area of Maras and had three hundred soldiers under her command. According to the Illustrated London News published in 1854, Kara Fatma and her

soldiers went to Istanbul to ask the Sultan to free her husband from prison. After long negotiations, she was eventually able to obtain his freedom. During the Ottoman-Russian war in 1878, she fought side by side with men in defence of the city of Erzurum. While many of her fighters fell in the course of the battle, she kept fighting. She did not hand the city over to the Russian army and became a legend. (Şenpınar, 1999)

The Kurdish uprisings

Before the nineteenth century and its many uprisings, the Kurdish principalities had enjoyed various forms and degrees of autonomy under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Against the increasing centralisation efforts of Sultan Mahmud II, two Kurdish feudal chieftains rebelled in the 1830s. The insurgencies of Beydirxan Pasha in West Kurdistan and of Muhammad Pasha of Rawanduz in South Kurdistan were put down forcefully. More than thirty Kurdish rebellions and their bloody defeats followed in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. All Kurdish leaders and their supporters were either assassinated by the authorities or had to go into exile. In the areas of these insurrections, the Kurdish population subsequently experienced repression, killings, and displacement. (Elphinston, 1946)

During World War I, the Kurdish region became the background of the first accurately calculated genocide based on religious racism and Turkish nationalism. According to several surveys, one and a half million Armenians and half a million Assyrians were killed in the pogroms organised by the Ottoman army and tolerated by the allied German Empire. Thousands of Sunnite Kurds were recruited to the Hamidiye regiments to fight the "Christian heathens". Some researchers argue that the Ottoman army under the command of Enver Pasha also intended to use these special forces against Alevi and Yezidi (Zoroastrian) Kurds afterwards. (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002; Işık, 2005)

The Hamidiye troops can be seen as predecessors of the village-guard system used by the Turkish government today to control the Kurdish region.

With the rise of a new world order after the defeat of the German and Ottoman Empires in World War I, the treaty of Lausanne in 1923 set the seal

on the division of Kurdistan into four parts. Following their profit interests in the Middle East and its resources, the European powers, especially France and England, favoured the division of the country instead of supporting Armenian or Kurdish national independence, as had been agreed upon in 1920 in the treaty of Sevres, which had never been ratified, though. After the Lausanne treaty, the newly drawn boarders between Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria divided people in Kurdistan, families, tribes, and villages arbitrarily. Till today, a number of unsolved conflicts resulting in war and human rights abuses in the Middle East including the Kurdish question can be traced back to the Lausanne treaty and Western "divide and rule" policy.

2.2. How Kurdish Women Live

On the one hand, regional and religious diversities within the Kurdish community emerged because of geographical differences and the peaceful coexistence with other peoples and cultures. On the other hand, different government policies of the states, among which Kurdistan is divided, and the policies of external hegemonic powers influenced the situation of Kurdish women directly and to a varying degree. They also influenced the migration processes they were part of, gender relations, and opportunities for emancipation.

2.2.1. Kurdish Women in Turkey and North Kurdistan

At the time when the Turkish Republic was founded, its policy towards the Kurds was not yet marked by assimilation and denial. In the founding session of the Grand National Assembly, in Ankara in 1920, Mustafa Kemal mentioned two peoples as founders of the republic, the Turks and the Kurds. (Yeğen, 2006)

The situation changed after the treaty of Lausanne. According to the Turkish sociologist I. Beşikçi, this treaty was "an imperialistic partition treaty", which "legalised the implementation of divide-and-rule policies

against the Kurdish people and Kurdistan" (Beşikçi, 1987). Although the roots of nationalist assimilation and genocide policies go back to the Young Turk movement and the Hamidiye regiments in the Ottoman Empire, the treaty of Lausanne provided a fundament for the nationalist assimilation policy, which followed the proclaim of the republic on 3 October 1923 and the new constitution passed in 1924. The existence of other peoples than the Turks was constitutionally denied in the Turkish Republic. The implementation of this new nationalism, well known under the term "Kemalism", started straight away: At the elections for the national assembly in 1924, the former Kurdish delegates and candidates were arrested. From now on, the Kurds were called "Mountain Turks". While their country was colonialised, numerous Kurdish representatives and prominent personalities were murdered, Kurdish schools were closed and newspapers forbidden. (Hinbun)

In reaction to state repression, several large-scale Kurdish revolts took place in the 1920s and 1930s. They started with the uprising in Beytussebap in September 1924 and the Saikh Said Rebellion in 1925 in the area of Diyarbakir, which spread quickly into many northern Kurdish provinces. All rebellions were answered with general mobilisations of the Turkish army. In spite of broad Kurdish resistance, all rebellions were smashed by tens of thousands of Turkish soldiers. The result was bloodshed, mass executions, village destructions, and deportations. Between 1925 and 1928, approximately one million Kurds were deported to the west of Turkey (ibidem). This cycle of rebellion and defeat repeated itself until the rebellion of Seyd Riza in Dersim 1937. This was the last great rebellion. After that, "the silence of death" as many call it prevailed in Turkey until the 1960s.

Kurdish Women Rebels

Although women of the Kurdish nobility had already formed an organisation named *Society for the advancement of Kurdish women* in Istanbul in 1919 (Alakom, 1995), the political role of Kurdish women became more widely known by their engagement during the rebellions in the Kurdish regions. Kurdish women remarkably participated in the rebellions and often played an important role in organising the resistance. "With women being attentive to social problems, they turned their solidarity and sympathy to-

wards their soils and culture into a motivation for resistance. They took responsibility in all fields of the insurrections. Beside general support, they took on military tasks including command posts. These women have become examples of courage and heroism." Among the women who became well known for their leading roles in the rebellions were Zarife in the Kocgiri uprising (1920-21), Perixan in the uprising of Diyarbakir (1925), and Bese in the uprising of Dersim (1937). (21. yy Kadın Özgürlük Manifestosu, 2003)

İskân Kanunu – Systematical Displacement and Ethnic Cleansing

In 1934, the Turkish National Assembly passed a law called the "İskân Kanunu". It was part of an overall concept aiming at a "demographic recomposing of Anatolia according to ethnic considerations". The aim was to "turkisise" those who were no Turks. "*Turkisising* meant deporting those who were no Turks to Turkish regions, and settling Turks in regions with non-Turkish population." (Yeğen, 2006) Due to this law, settlement in certain regions was prohibited. Because of "hygienic, economic, cultural, military and security reasons" the regions of Agri, Sason, Dersim, Van, Kars, the southern part of Diyarbakir, Bingöl, Bitlis and Mus had to be "depopulated". (İskân Kanunu, 1934)

The systematic implementation of the İskân Kanunu began with the siege of Dersim. Against the military occupation and foreseeable deportations, Seyd Riza had formed a resistance movement with more than eighty thousand fighters in the province of Dersim. In battles with the Turkish army, sixty to a hundred thousand Kurds were killed (Bumke/ed. Andrews, 1989). Most of them were civilians, who had not taken part in the fights. Those who were caught by Turkish soldiers were killed cruelly. Eyewitnesses reported mass rapes and extensive violence against women. In this way, the Turkish army meant to penetrate and occupy the country and destroy the "honour" of the Kurds symbolised by the bodies of the Kurdish women. In order to save themselves from rape and torture, thousands of women and girls committed suicide and threw themselves from high rocks into the Munzur River (Schumann et al., 1992). The remaining population, approximately a hundred thousand people, were forcibly deported from Dersim into western Turkey. On 20 No-

vember 1937, two days after the execution of rebel leader Seyd Riza, Nuri Dersimi and four tribe leaders urged the League of Nations in Geneva to take immediate steps for the protection of the Kurds. "The Turkish government closes our schools, forbids the use of the Kurdish language, removes the words 'Kurd' and 'Kurdistan' even from scientific publications, uses barbarian methods in order to force Kurds including women and girls to work on military building projects in Anatolia, they deport the Kurds." (Deschner, 1983)

However, neither the League of Nations nor the Western countries took any efforts to protect the Kurds from injustice and killing. Furthermore, some western states, especially France, Britain, later Germany and the USA, supported Turkey's "counter-insurgency" logistically.

Assimilation – Ethnocide and Lingocide

Along with systematic displacement of the Kurdish population, an intense assimilation policy was implemented. The "Şark Islahat Planı" aimed to ban the use of Kurdish 'in public'. A law from1934 replaced all Kurdish surnames, names of towns, villages and mountains by Turkish names. It was forbidden to give children Kurdish names and to wear traditional Kurdish clothes. (Yeğen, 2006)

The education system served as another means of creating an "ethnically homogenous Turkish homeland". Turkish schools used physical violence, nationalist rituals, and separation from the family to prevent children from speaking Kurdish. "Students were also punished for speaking their language outside the classrooms during the breaks. Boarding schools (Bölge Yatılı Okulları) were established in 1964, in order to isolate students for the greater part of the year and to encourage them to forget their mother tongue" (Hassanpour, 1992).

Another attempt to ban the Kurdish language was law no. 2932, which was passed in 1983 and had to be lifted again in 1991. With the beginning of the Turkish EU candidacy in 2000, some legal reforms were enacted. However, until today, Kurdish people are still prosecuted by Turkish courts for speaking, singing, or writing in the Kurdish language. (TIHV, 2003)

Economical and Social Exclusion vs. Subsistence Economy

During the years 1940-1980 Kurds mainly migrated for economic and social reasons. The development of the economy and infrastructure in the rural areas, especially in the Kurdish region, was much neglected. Therefore, it is difficult to distinguish between economic and political reasons in Kurdish migration. Because of high unemployment in the Kurdish region, mostly male migrants went from villages to the cities in western Turkey - especially to Istanbul - or to West European countries in search of jobs and income. "The emigration of the Kurds from their places of origin was always also an escape from discrimination and political oppression. (...) The labour migrants connected their escape from political oppression with the expectation of a better economic situation in the so-called "economic miracle countries" of Western Europe." (Blaschke, 1991)

The national economic policy after 1950 favoured urban development one-sidedly. It was probably one of the main causes for the wave of internal migration in the 1950s. In urban areas, social services - in particular health and education - were fostered intensively, while rural areas remained unsupplied (Bellér-Hann, 2005). With the improvement of transport and communication, urban live became increasingly attractive for many people. In contrast to the rapid industrial development due to enormous population growth in the west, the eastern parts of Turkey remained excluded from investment and industrialisation. The unequal economic and social development between north-west and southeast played an important role for the structure and motivation of migration in Turkey. These processes, from the disadvantaged regions in the southeast to the advantaged regions in the northwest, are mainly characterised by migration from rural areas directly into large urban centresö from rural areas to a small towns and then to large urban centres or from small towns to large urban centres. (ibidem)

The following figures from the beginning of the twenty-first century clearly reflect the continuing geographical decline and inequality. "While the annual per-capita income in the economically flourishing Marmara region is about fourteen thousand dollars and is thus already comparable to European Union standards today, it is approximately eight hundred dollars in the east of Turkey, and in the southeast only six hundred dollars per year." (Kızılhan, 2002)

In 1961, Turkey signed the first bilateral agreement for the recruitment of workers with the Federal Republic of Germany. Until the end of 1973, the Turkish employment agency sent more than 780,000 workers to Western Europe. More than eighty percent went to Germany. It is hard to ascertain, how many Kurds were among these labour migrants because they were registered as Turkish nationals both in Turkey and in their new host countries. The real number of Kurdish migrants can only be estimated. The following figures give a rough picture: It is estimated that until today thirty-five to forty percent of the Kurdish population of Central Anatolia has migrated to Europe for economic reasons (Berk, 2003). There are four million migrants from Turkey living in Europe; a quarter is estimated to be Kurds. (Berruti et al., 2002, cf. Lochak)

Labour migration in the 1960s and 70s was mainly migration of men. Out of the total of so-called "guest workers" from Turkey, only twenty percent were women (Eryılmaz, 2001). Women, children, and elderly people remained in the rural areas. Married men usually visited their wives only during their vacations. This situation changed the role of Kurdish women in the village community strongly, because now they alone were responsible for agricultural production and the family's reproduction. The term "feminisation of agriculture" describes this development in Kurdistan. Since almost only women and children remained in the villages, they were no longer exposed to male control. Kurdish women created a "women's world" for themselves. They now could decide independently in family matters and farming issues. This improved their self-esteem. Everywhere women were present and strong. They split their work and other tasks among each other. Their social behaviour was characterised by openness, mutual understanding and sympathy towards each other. (Şenpınar, 1999; cf. M. Mies, 1989)

After 1973, therefore, the social status of Kurdish women was deeply influenced by the next migration process in the framework of family unification. During the economic recession of the 1970s, the West European countries refused to admit new labour migrants. In this context, the majority of predominantly male migrant workers who had decided to stay permanently in the host country had their wives and children follow them (Hecker, 2006). Cut off from traditional means of production and the women dom-

inated social structures, Kurdish migrant women experienced difficulties in redefining their own life concepts. This situation was even aggravated by institutional racism and daily prejudice in the host countries.

Political Persecution and "Low-Intensity-Warfare"

In the 1960s and 70s, for the first time since the abatement of the Dersim uprising in 1937, Kurdish intellectuals in Turkey began to raise the Kurdish issue again. They were inspired by the development of a Kurdish movement around Mollah Mustafa Barzani in South Kurdistan (Iraq). With the progress of the anti-colonial struggle of national liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America as well as the socialist student movement in Turkey, the "Kurdish question" became a broader discourse in the 1970s.

In the wake of the state of emergency declared in 1979 and the military coup in 1980, tens of thousands of Kurds were arrested and tortured. Beside a strong involvement of Kurds in left parties and social movements, more and more Kurds started to organise themselves in the new national liberation movement under the leadership of Abdullah Ocalan. The massacre in the Kurdish town of Maraş had shown clearly the attitude of the Turkish state towards Kurds, communists, and Alevites. Between 21 and 26 December 1978, supporters of the fascist MHP party in collaboration with security forces marked and raided houses of citizens that fell among one of the above categories. Due to official records, one hundred and two people were killed and seventy-five arrested. However, eyewitness reports confirm the death of several hundred people in this pogrom (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002).

Elif Ronahi, who witnessed the massacre as a twelve- year-old girl, describes the events in the following way: "The soldiers brought our family to an education institute. After some days, they managed to escape. In front of their eyes the heads of hundreds of people had been cut off, they had been killed cruelly. Tens of girls had been raped. Many of them were our school friends or from our neighbourhood. (...) For months, sometimes for years, people remained under the impression of these horrific moments that they had gone through. Their psychology had been deeply devastated by these events. (...) It mentally affected us, when my aunt and her daughters went through their crisis remembering the children that had been

nailed to the walls during the massacre. (...) In addition to the massacre, the Turkish state carried on with the cleansing of Maraş from Kurdish Alevites in the years '79-80. They organised mass migrations to European cities. Before that, only very few people had gone to Europe under very hard conditions. After the Maraş massacre, especially Kurdish Alevites were made to migrate, some of them did not even need a visa." (Istanbul Indymedia, 2006)

The foundation of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in 1978 and the beginning of the armed struggle in 1984 need to be surveyed in connection with the political and military oppression that the Kurdish people and oppositional forces had to suffer by the hand of the Turkish state. The fights between the Turkish army and Kurdish guerrilla fighters covered most of the Kurdish provinces since the 1990s and are usually described as low-intensity-warfare (Kızılhan, 1994). Tens of thousands of Kurds, mainly young men and women, went to the mountains and joined the guerrilla. Although most of them were motivated by the aim of national liberation, especially women also joined the struggle in search of social change and women's emancipation. In the course of the struggle women organised autonomously under the umbrella of the liberation movement, in the mountains as well as in society. In this way, patriarchal gender roles and family structures also have been challenged. The majority of the Kurdish population in the rural areas supported the guerrilla movement either logistically or ideally, although any support or sympathy for the Kurdish liberation movement was severely punished by the Turkish authorities.

According to the motto "To catch the fish you must dry up the sea", Dogan Gures, head of the Turkish general staff, ordered the beginning of the Turkish army's special warfare (Der Spiegel 2/1995). Although the PKK repeatedly declared unilateral ceasefires, the Turkish authorities never responded to any call for a political solution of the conflict. The war and its consequences have affected all fields of life in the Kurdish region as well as in many parts of Turkey. About thirty-five thousand people lost their lives. Some hundred thousand people were detained and interrogated over several days at police stations, where the interrogation involved physical and psychological torture (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002).[1]

Tens of thousands of people were arrested for political reasons and received sentences from ten to thirty years or more. 1,964 persons (eighty percent of them in the Kurdish region) 'disappeared' as a result of 'killings by unknown perpetrators' between 1989 and 2000 (IHD, 2000). Large areas around human settlements have become no-go areas for civilians. They are mined or are occupied by the military, which also restricts civilian use of the farmland. Natural resources were destroyed. An official and an unofficial war economy have developed, including the village guard system. Poverty, deficiencies in healthcare, education and other social services are some of the war's consequences and reflect its deep impact on the daily life of the civil population.

According to the 2001 report of the refugee association *Göç-Der* in Turkey, the migration movement kicked off by the violent conflict over the Kurdish question can best be described by "forced migration". The report states further: "The migration movement resulting from this problem between 1989 and 1999, led to deep disarrangements in the social structure of Turkey and its economical, cultural and psychological surrounding. It caused the evacuation of 3,438 settlements in rural areas. It evicted between four and four and a half million citizens of the Turkish Republic with Kurdish mother tongue from their homes and lead to the loss of their productive qualities." (Barut, 1999–2001)

The majority of these refugees became 'internally displaced persons' migrating to the big cities in western Turkey. After1980, some hundred thousand refugees from Turkey sought political asylum in Europe, the majority of them in Germany and France. Eighty to ninety percent of the 338.430 asylum seekers who came from Turkey to the European Union between 1980 and June 2002 are estimated to be Kurds (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002).

[1] Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002, p. 42: (After the military coup) „650.000 persons were arrested and nearly all of them were tortured or mistreated, 49 were hanged; 171 lost their lives due to torture in prisions. (…) 14.000 persons were expatriated."

Cultural, Historical, and Natural Destruction by 'Modernisation'

Apart from permanent fights, military operations, and repression, there will be more displacement on account of the big dam projects the government plans for the Munzur, Tigris and Greater Zap rivers in the framework of the so-called Southeast Anatolia Regional Development Project (GAP). The realisation of the Ilisu Dam project alone will displace an estimated seventy-eight thousand mostly Kurdish people. It will destroy significant parts of the region's natural resources and cultural heritage, including the historical town of Hasankeyf (Fact-Finding Mission Report/ed. KHRP, 2005). In spite of strong local, regional and international opposition at all levels, the Turkish government and international companies insist on the beginning of construction works in 2007.

Impact of War and Oppression on Women

Low-intensity-warfare in the Kurdish region and the resulting consequences affected the lives of Kurdish women severely. Kurdish women were directly exposed to the crimes of war as civilians and as combatants. Along with cruelties and destruction that all people in the region suffered from, women suffered additionally from gender-related violence at the hands of Turkish security forces.

Sexual Torture

Sexual torture has been used systematically as a weapon of warfare by the military, by paramilitary village-guards, and the police force in Turkey. In the first five years after the military coup, 1,750 women were raped in police stations or prisons (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002). This is only the number of women who reported to the public. This number as well as the following figures can be estimated to be much higher as women are generally averse to report such abuses because they either feel ashamed or are afraid of reprisals or proscriptions. Moreover, women interviewed for this study reported rape, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment during raids on their villages by soldiers or village-guards. Amnesty International states: "In a study published in 2000, two per cent of women situated in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast reported being the victims of sexual violence at the hands of security forces." (Amnesty International, 2003)

In Turkey commonly reported methods of torture include electroshocks, *falaka* (beating of the soles of the feet), stripping people naked, blind folding, hosing, severe beatings, rape, death threats, sexual assault, and 'Palestinian hangings' (KHRP, 2006). Common forms of sexual torture performed by Turkish security forces reported by the victims include vaginal, oral, or anal rape using penis, batons, water hoses, or other materials; mass rapes; urinating into the victim's mouth; electroshocks to breast nipples and sexual organs; forced virginity-tests; strip-searching, and stripping during questioning. Women participating in this study further reported they had been subjected to sexual violence or threatened with rape in the presence of their husbands or other close family members. In this way, using the traditional Kurdish concept of honour, the perpetrators wanted to force them to surrender.

"The image of Kurdish women taking up arms against the masculine army of the Turkish state was intolerable. (...) In this context, national and male chauvinisms combined forces to launch a vast propaganda campaign against women guerrillas. While official nationalism labelled the males as 'terrorists,' its patriarchal politics reduced the women to 'prostitutes.'" (Mojab, 2001)

Eyewitnesses report, that the soldiers raped female PKK combatants captured during combat sometimes repeatedly, before they were tortured to death. Some reports say that soldiers cut off women's breasts or shot their guns into their vaginas. Other reports say that soldiers raped women and exposed the corpses. Some soldiers even took parts of their bodies with them as souvenirs, like ears for example, or photographed these horrible crimes and put them in their diaries. (Çelik, 2005; Cankatan, 2006)

With the organisation of a Kurdish women's movement since the middle of the 1990s, women have started campaigning to broach the issue of sexualised violence at the hands of security forces to a wider public. By the support of women's and human rights organisations, victims of violence found the strength and courage to report this tabooed form of violence. It also contributed to a change of mind within the Kurdish communities. At least in the context of state violence, the patriarchal concept of 'honour' had to be questioned. The women who suffered such violence must not be regarded as

guilty and 'impure', but those who perpetrated these deeds in the name of the state must be put to trial! In 1997, the *Legal Support Office Against Sexual Abuse and Rape in Custody* was established in Istanbul with the intention to support victims of sexual violence at the hands of state forces. Later, it also opened a branch in Berlin so that refugee women could also apply for help after their migration. In March 2005, the lawyers Eren Keskin and Fatma Karakaş reported, that two hundred and eleven women had applied for legal support with their office within nine years. They also gave the following figures: The majority of perpetrators, in total one hundred and sixty-three, were policemen, followed by gendarmes, soldiers, prison guards, and village guards. The majority of women attacked were Kurdish, in total one hundred and sixty-seven. A majority of the women, in total one hundred and eighty-eight, cited political or war related reasons as causes for their arrests. Out of the two hundred and eleven cases, eighty-four were still pending, of which thirty-four had been brought before the European Court of Human Rights. Fifty-eight women reported they had experienced severe repression after their application. For this reason, fifty-six of them did not want to pursue the proceedings anymore. Two women committed suicide, while their cases were still tried in court. Only two of the cases ended with a conviction of the perpetrators in Turkey (Keskin/Karakaş, 2005). Taking into account the figures published by the *Legal Support Office*, it seems that the tedious progress of the legal procedures, in Turkey as well as before the European Court, produces enormous pressure and psychological strain for victims and witnesses, which they have difficulties to stand through.

Female witnesses of sexualised war-related violence reported similar difficulties at international war crimes tribunals. In a manual for the support of traumatised women, Gabriela Mischkowski inter alia mentions painful memories, long duration, insufficient information on the trial, and the technique of interrogation applied by the court as important risk factors, which could be the cause for enormous pressure on the witnesses. (Mischkowski/ed. Media Mondiale, 2006)

"Justice heals" is the name of a campaign coordinated by the 'Coordination Office for a Worldwide Network in the Fight against Impunity' in Bochum. Its organisers claim that beside individual therapy, social and political changes

resulting from democratisation have been able to show that justice heals indeed. The healing effect brought about by the conviction of former torturers is not only an important outcome for the witnesses involved in the trial but for all survivors. Amazing recovery successes were experienced by changes of position: Stepping out of the victim role, regaining initiative and later defending themselves against the perpetrators, gives people an active subject role again. It also makes it easier for them to integrate the exceptional humiliation they experienced into their biographies. In addition, the attitude of the public towards the survivors is changed by the conviction of the culprits. (Rauchfuss, 2002)

Displacement

The most important problems women face during the displacement process are pauperisation, estrangement, and social isolation due to destruction of their social surrounding as well as insecurity due to the ongoing violent conflict and continuing state oppression. While women had been productive before in the agricultural rural economy and society, they now feel "worthless" when they are confronted with poverty, homelessness, and malnutrition because of unemployment in the places of migration. Therefore, many women develop physical and psychological illnesses, which they did not have in their earlier village life. (EPİ-DEM, 2007)

A research on the mental and social results of forced internal migration carried out among Kurdish refugee women in Istanbul in 2002, finds that

- 80 % of Kurdish refugee women complain about separation from their family and relatives
- 65 % of middle aged and elderly refugee women have difficulties coping with city life because they do not speak Turkish
- 75 % complain about isolation from their environment because their not able to leave the house
- 90 % complain about psychological problems and frequent headaches after their migration to Istanbul

– 95 % of middle aged and elderly women want to return to their villages; by contrast, only 20 % of young girls want to return – they think they can move more freely in the cities. (Aker et al., 2002)

Domestic Violence, Suicides, Murders in the Name of 'Honour', and Prostitution

State oppression and war always contribute to the recurrence of patriarchal violence. So far, the unsolved Kurdish question and the resulting war have always been an obstacle for emancipative social transformations. After many attempts for a peaceful political solution, and after repeated ceasefires by the Kurdish guerrilla forces, people's attention has shifted from struggling for their lives under war conditions towards social questions and contradictions. This has also created new spaces for women, where they can bring forward their needs and demands.

Kurdish society is still characterised by feudal, patriarchal structures. While the individual's social status and relations are determined by family and tribal affiliation, women are held in a subordinate position within this feudal social system. Many fields of life especially in the rural areas are controlled by the Aghas, the landowners and tribal authorities. Since the 1940s, after the Dersim uprising, the majority of the Kurdish population and the tribal authorities, which had put up resistance, were punished and marginalised, while the rest of the Agha class was integrated into the state system. The alliances of some tribe leaders with political parties and state authorities contributed to an amplification of the feudal, patriarchal system in the Kurdish region (Ertürk, 2006). Therefore, the collaboration between Aghas and state can be cited as one important obstacle to the emancipation processes, including women's emancipation, within Kurdish society. It also contributed to the preservation of the patriarchal concept of honour and the gender oppression within the traditional social structures. Not only in the Kurdish regions but also in the rest of Turkey, this concept served to retain tight control over women, their behaviour, and their bodies. Only in 2002, the reform of the Turkish civil code abolished the supremacy of men in marriage. Before the reform of the penal code in 2005, rape and sexual violence were officially defined as "crimes against public decency and family order". These important

improvements of the legal framework were achieved by the combined campaigns of several women's associations and organisations in Turkey. Nevertheless, these reforms have not yet been implemented satisfactorily. Still, a change of mentality is necessary in order to challenge patriarchal dominance and hierarchic structures effectively. Domestic violence, forced or arranged marriage, child marriage, 'honour killings' or 'töre' are still rife in all parts of Turkey as well as under a variety of different labels in all parts of the world.

The situation of Kurdish women in Turkey over the last years was characterised by suicides and honour crimes. Alarmed by the extent of incidents and related claims, the UNHRC Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Yakin Ertürk, between 22 and 31 May 2006 undertook an official mission to examine the causes of these incidents. While the general suicide rate in Batman and other Kurdish provinces is slightly lower than the national average for 2003 in Turkey, the sex ratio of the victims differs. Unlike global and national figures indicating that more men than women commit suicide, in the Kurdish provinces of Batman and Van more women committed suicide than men. In her report, Yakin Ertürk emphasised that "suicides occurring in the south-eastern/eastern region are intimately linked to violence emanating from the understandings of *namus* and *töre*. There are reasonable grounds to assume that some of the recorded suicide cases are indeed disguised murders." (ibidem) Further, the strictly patriarchal oppression of women, especially in the case of forced and early marriages, domestic violence, incestuous rape, denial of reproductive rights, and the absence of adequate state protection are stressed as key contributing factors to the suicides of women in the region (ibidem). Examining the causes of femicides and suicides, the links between the women's death, patriarchal and ethnic oppression, domestic violence and war violence as well as the area of conflict between the strengthening influence of Islam and the spread of prostitution, pornography and trafficking in women cannot be neglected.

While it is still a taboo, a few publications indicate that more and more Kurdish women, especially refugee women, in Turkish cities as well as in the Kurdish region, have been forced into the prostitution. For a rising number of women, prostitution is the only way to ensure their living and the living of their families. Some of them are single mothers who lost their husbands

in the war. According to field research, about six thousand women in Diyarbakir alone earn their living through prostitution. (Sümbül, 2004)

However, prostitution and trafficking in women are not only "side effects" of war; they have always been a part of war policy. A sex industry and sexual enslavement practices were often installed systematically by occupying armies in order to "serve their soldiers" and to totally subjugate the enemy people (Mischkowski/ed. Medica Mondiale, 2006)[2]. A major part of the sex business, of prostitution and women trafficking in Turkey, is run and organised by state special units. By making Kurdish women available for the prostitution market, these units aim at disrupting the social structure of Kurdish society and preventing women from getting active in politics. Once stuck in the trap of prostitution, the patriarchal role-typing of women including its conception of 'honour' leaves the women without a chance of return (Köker, 2006).

In 2006, the Democratic Free Women's Movement, an umbrella organisation of various women's organisations and individuals, reacted to the problem by organising a conference discussing the reasons for prostitution, its consequences, and approaches towards the issue. In their final statement, the participants in the conference announced their solidarity with women who had to earn their living as sex workers. They agreed on a common action plan to counteract discrimination and exploitation of female sex workers, to expose the male profit-makers and users of trafficking in women, and to establish shelters for the protection of women who want to leave the prostitution sector. This conference is an example for the taboo challenging initiatives of women's rights activism for social peace and justice in Turkey and the Kurdish region. Declaring, "we do not want to be victims of traditional values", civil society initiatives of young women, NGOs, and the Democratic Society Party (DTP) work in the Kurdish region on comprehensive strategies to eliminate violence against women. (Ertürk, 2006)

[2] pp. 35: e.g. since the Korea War in the 1950s the US-army established systematically a sex industry in the Asian-Pacific region.

2.2.2. Kurdish Women in Iraq and South Kurdistan

During World War I, British troops occupied the territory of today's Iraq. In addition, South Kurdistan remained under British mandate when the treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923. While Iraq moved towards independence during the 1930s, Kurdish tribe leaders called for Kurdish self-determination. Kurdish uprisings under the leadership of Sheikh Mahmoud and Sheikh Mollah Mustafa Barzani were suppressed by British air and ground forces. Britain maintained its economic and military control even after the formal independence of Iraq, while Barzani was forced to leave the country. Upon his return, Barzani started another attempt to reorganise the Kurdish movement during World War II. Again, the combined efforts of the Iraqi and British governments forced him into exile in Iran in 1945. After the collapse of the Mahabad Republic he sought refuge in the Soviet Union.

After his military coup in 1958, General Abdul Karim Qasim promised to recognise "Kurds and Arabs as equal partners". During this time, Barzani was able to return from exile. Supported by the Kurdish population and some other tribe leaders, he founded the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which was granted legal status in 1960. Soon afterwards, repression by the Iraqi regime started again. In June 1961, the KDP revolted against the Iraqi government with the aim of achieving Kurdish autonomy. The cycle of repression and rebellion went on. The Iraqi army replied by bombing Kurdish settlements, also using napalm and phosphor bombs. Although the Baath party took over in 1967 with Kurdish support, the new government continued the war against the Kurds for another ten years. The Iraqi campaign in the 1960s destroyed countless Kurdish villages and killed tens of thousands of Kurds. (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002)

Nevertheless, at the beginning of 1970s, Kurdish peshmergas gained control over the main parts of South Kurdistan. In March 1970, the Kurds and the Iraqi government signed a peace agreement including a plan for broader autonomy, official acknowledgement of the Kurdish language, political representation in the Iraqi government, and amnesty for Kurdish prisoners of war. However, the agreement was not sufficiently implemented and the Iraqi government refused to hand over the oil-rich province of Kirkuk to the con-

trol of the Kurds. Since Kirkuk was traditionally Kurdish territory, the KDP revolted again in 1974. The Iraqi army retaliated with tanks, artillery, and air force. The Kurdish resistance had to withdraw from the towns; the peshmergas were pushed back into the mountains on the boarder of Iran. Within one year of fighting, more than twenty thousand people lost their lives on both sides.

In 1975, five years after the agreement that had promised autonomy, the Iraqi and Iranian governments signed the US-sponsored *Algiers Pact*, in which they agreed on cooperation in the fight against the Kurdish movement. The agreement left the Kurds helpless. As the Iranian government started to close the boarders and cut off his support lines, Barzani and about two hundred and fifty-thousand Kurdish men, women, and children fled into Iran. Later he emigrated to the US. The peshmergas either surrendered or went into exile, while Jalal Talabani founded the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in the Soran region of South Kurdistan. In order to secure its control over the north of the country, the Iraqi government began an Arabisation programme by settling the oil regions in Kurdistan with Arabs, particularly around Kirkuk and Mosul. Moreover, about two hundred thousand Kurds were relocated into barren desert regions. In 1978 and 1979 six hundred Kurdish villages were burnt down. The villagers were deported to other parts of the country. The boarder region between Iran and Iraq was depopulated. Despite massacres at the hands of the Iraqi regime, competition between the Kurdish parties, KDP and PUK, turned into a "war between brothers", in which hundreds of Peshmergas lost their lives on both sides.

Genocide and Gendercide

During the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), the Kurdish region on both sides of the boarder became a battleground and mine field. According to UN estimations, about ten million mines were planted in the mountainous boarder region; many of them threaten people's lives even today.

Both conflicting countries implemented anti-Kurdish policies and tried to play off the different Kurdish groups against each other. After the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein had accused the Kurds of treason because of alleged

collaboration with Iran, he initiated the "Al Anfal" campaign, which constituted a systematic genocide of the Kurdish people in Iraq. The victims, including women, children, and the elderly, were only picked because they were Kurds who lived on their traditional land, which now had been made a "prohibited zone" (HRW, 2006). "Al-Anfal" means "legitimate spoil of war". Under this name, more than two thousand Kurdish villages were destroyed and one and a half million people were uprooted from their homes (Brunner, 2006). Tens of thousands of Kurdish refugees sought refuge beyond the boarders of Turkey and Iran. Sources estimate that about a hundred and eighty thousand Kurds were murdered deliberately by the widespread use of chemical weapons or "disappeared" due to mass executions (Der Standard, 2007).

In a directive for the Anfal campaign, it was ordered that all persons captured in the "prohibited zone" and its villages "shall be detained and interrogated by the security services, and those between the age of fifteen and seventy shall be executed after any useful information has been obtained from them, of which we shall be duly notified." According to reports from Human Rights Watch, men and women were separated as soon as they had been deported to detention camps. After torture and interrogation, the male captives were mass executed. Adult men and boys from the rural areas were slaughtered systematically. However, women and children were mainly killed by means of gassing, starvation and deliberate neglect of any need. In some regions, e.g in the region of southern Germian, "an estimated two thousand women and children" were executed at a site in the Hamrin Mountain, between the cities of Tikrit and Kirkuk. (cf. Jones, 2004; HRW, 1994)

On 16 March 1988, within a couple of hours, about five thousand people, among them many women, children, and elderly people, lost their lives in a poison gas attack on the town of Halabja. Ten thousand more were injured, many of them later died painfully, due to the poisoning. Others remained handicapped; pregnant women from the area of Halabja had miscarriages or gave birth to disabled children. Preceding the Iraqi High Tribunal after the fall of the Saddam regime, no international court had dealt with these crimes against humanity. Eventually, it will be difficult to clear up everything in detail and identify all perpetrators after the execution of Sad-

dam Hussein, while the trial on the "Anfal campaign" was still under way. Many victims still are seeking justice and want to know the truth.

Rape and sexual slavery were also among the weapons used against Kurdish women. Eyewitnesses reported rapes of women in detention camps during the Anfal campaign (Unifem, 2006). One case became publicly known after the fall of the Saddam regime. It was the trafficking of eighteen young women and girls in 1989. A document from the general directory of intelligence in Kirkuk addressed to the director of intelligence in Baghdad gives evidence of the order and operation of the trafficking of Kurdish women. It says, "We have arrested different groups of people, among them young girls between fourteen and twenty-nine years of age. According to your request, we have sent a group of these girls to the harems and nightclubs of the Arab Republic of Egypt." (O'Donnell, 2003)

Other women report that important Baath party officials and their relatives, including the sons of Saddam Hussein, were free to kidnap women for the purpose of sexual violence and enslavement. Opposition members received video tapes showing how their female relatives were being raped by members of the secret police (Lasky, 2006). By raping Kurdish women, again, the concept of honour was used as a strategy by Iraqi officials to destroy the self-esteem of these women and their community.

Survivors of the Anfal campaign continue to suffer both from psychological trauma and from the social problems of displacement, high unemployment, and lack of public services. Many Anfal widows are even unable to remarry because they have never received an official death certificate for their murdered husbands as the former Iraqi government refused to issue them. Psychologists report that many Anfal survivors are still living in a state of shock. Many suffer from flashbacks of their experiences. (Jamal, 2004)

After the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, US-led coalition forces began to attack Iraq and re-conquer Kuwait on 16 January 1991. This strike had been covered by UN Security Council resolution no. 678 in 1990. After the Iraqi government had been weakened, the Iraqi Kurds in South Kurdistan again revolted against the Saddam regime, assuming that the allied forces would

back them. However, the U.N. coalition forces did not interfere when the Iraqi air force attacked Kurdish villages and cities. Again, more than ten thousand Kurdish civilians were killed during the attack; two million were displaced to Turkey and Iran. In April 1991, only after more deaths and forced mass migrations, the U.N. installed the northern "No-Fly-Zone", to protect the Kurds. South Kurdistan remained an autonomous region in Iraq populated by three million Kurds. After KDP and PUK had supported U.S. and British forces in defeating Saddam Hussein in 2003, both parties were integrated in Iraqi state structures. After their participation in the provisional Iraqi governing council established by the Coalition Provisional Authority, PUK-leader Jalal Talabani became president of Iraq, while KDP leader Massoud Barzani became president of the autonomous Kurdish regional government in south Kurdistan.

State – Tribalism – Religion and Kurdish Women's Rights

According to the Iraqi provisional constitution of 1970, women and girls in Iraq were formally guaranteed equal rights. Other laws specifically ensured women's political participation and civil rights. After 1990, the Iraqi government changed many of theses laws governing divorce, child custody, education and inheritance rights so as to limit women's rights and freedoms in order to get sympathy from neighbouring Islamic states, religious and tribal leaders. Laws were adjusted to the Islamic Sharia. Accordingly, murders in the name of "honour" dramatically increased after Saddam's government reduced the prison sentence for the male perpetrators from eight years to less than six months, if the female victim had had a premarital relationship, had been raped or had behaved in any other way that might "dishonour the family". However, the felony of rape was erased completely, if the perpetrator married his victim. Polygamy was legalised for men who could now take up to four wives (Sandler, 2003). The extent of double moral standards became clear when special military units were founded in 2000 who were instructed to behead women accused of prostitution (Lasky, 2006). Furthermore, women suffered most from the economic and social consequences of the U.N. sanctions after the Gulf war in 1991. The effects included increased mortality rates; increased rates of divorce, polygamy and domestic violence; a significant increase in malnutrition among women and children; lack of medica-

tion and an added burden of responsibility as women had to care for children traumatised by war and oppression (Unifem, 2006).

Neither the Iraqi government nor the tribal feudal structures in South Kurdistan improved Kurdish women's rights and safety. On the contrary, the deliberate promotion of reactionary patriarchal religious beliefs, arguments, and laws put even more pressure on Kurdish women. One example was the attack on a women's shelter set up by the Independent Organisation of Women (IOW) in Suleymania, on 14 July 2000. Armed forces of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) closed the shelter, imprisoned its residents and confiscated some of its property. A few days after that, a former resident of the shelter was murdered by her brother. Opened in 1998, this shelter had been supported by European women's organisations. While the shelter was open, it protected more than four thousand women escaped from honour killings. (A-infos, 2005)

The Kurdish researcher Shahrzad Mojab stated: "The parliament of the Regional Government of Iraqi Kurdistan took many steps backward by refusing to repeal the misogynist laws (personal status and penal codes) of the Ba'thist regime. At the same time, the two Kurdish ruling parties allowed Islamic groups, funded by Iran and Saudi Arabia, to push for Islamisation of gender relations in Kurdistan. Violence against women, especially honour killing, in Iraqi Kurdistan reached unprecedented proportions under nationalist rule in the 1990s." (Mojab, 2000)

Although the penal code saw some reforms, it still included laws concerning the "purification of shame" even in 2001, when the Kurdish region was governed by two regional governments. Kurdish women's rights activists criticise these legal reforms as insufficient and not preventing new "crimes of honour" (HRW Briefing, 2003). A number of recent reports including reports from women's organisations and the UN, express concern about an increasing number of incidents. Only in the first three month of 2007, some forty cases of alleged honour crimes in Erbil, Dohuk, Suleymaniya, and Salaheddin were reported to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. Young women reportedly died from accidental burns at their homes or were killed by family members for suspected immoral conduct. (UNAMI, 2007)

On 7 April 2007, members of her community in the city of Mosul, stoned the sixteen-year-old Yezidi girl Do'a Xalil to death. The girl had been sentenced for "dishonouring" her family and community by falling in love with a Muslim boy. According to reports by independent Kurdish newspapers, up to a thousand men participated in the stoning of the young girl. The Kurdish Women's Rights Watch stated on the event: "While honour crime in general and honour-based killing in particular are enshrined in secrecy and silence, the case of Do'a was made public through mobile phone video footage taken by witnesses at the scene, since circulated through the internet. The footage shows the male members of her family and community throwing stones at her while she is stripped naked and crying for help. Disturbingly, the footage reveals that police officers were present while the murder was being carried out and that not only did they fail to intervene to prevent the crime and save Do'a but they actually sought to encourage the crowd." (KWRW, 27-04-2007)

Another widespread and tabooed form of violence against girls and women in many regions of South Kurdistan is female genital mutilation (FGM) before the marriage age. The consequences of FGM are devastating, many girls die due to blood loss or infections. Most of the survivors are traumatised and suffer from serious health problems. In 2005, reports stated a cutting rate of nearly sixty percent in several rural areas. Activists and physicians reported similar rates from other parts of the Kurdish region in northern Iraq. According to research carried out in eighty-four villages of the regions Erbil, Germiyan, and Koye 2,281 women out of a sample of 2,437 women had experienced cutting of their clitoris. Because of the findings, Women and Human Rights Organizations initiated a public debate and awareness raising campaigns on the physical and psychological consequences of FGM with the aim to achieve a legal ban and an end of this practise. (TJAK, 2006; KWRW, 2007)

A survey on violence against women in the region of Sulaymaniya highlighted an alarming rise in the tendency for violence against women and for women's self-immolation. Comparing the 2005 figures on violence against women with those of 2006, an increase of forty-one percent has been reported. Self-immolation by burning is the most common method of suicide

for women (TJAK, 2006). In 2006, about fifteen hundred women in the region tried to end their lives this way, according to statistics from the Sulaymaniya Emergency Hospital. Almost a third of them died from their injuries. Experts say domestic violence often drives women to such desperate measures. A lack of psychological or marital counselling as well as the strict social code, restrain people from discussing personal matters inside and outside the family. They feel there is nowhere to turn for help. (Khalil, 2007)

The Movement of Freedom-Loving Women in Kurdistan (TJAK) in their report criticised the fact, that in spite of public statements and legal reforms for the benefit of women, the government does not want to damage the relations between the tribes. Therefore, they would release murderers of women and would not implement the laws for the protection of women. In this way they even promoted crimes against women. Even a better alphabetisation of women would not be enough to thwart the violations of women's rights. Serious support facilities and a stronger cooperation among women's rights organisations are required in order to bring about a change of mind. Women and their bodies must no longer be seen as "namus" (honour) of the family that needs to be protected by killing. Other factors contributing to the continuation of this state of mind include continued militarism, the unresolved national question, and the spread of religious fundamentalism. (TJAK, 2006)

Since the overthrow of the Saddam regime, only little progress could be made to provide protection for women in danger and help traumatised survivors of war and violence in South Kurdistan. Examples are the first psychiatric section in the hospital of Erbil, so far with a capacity for forty people, or some women's shelters organised by independent NGOs despite economic difficulties and security issues (Habasch, 2006).

2.2.3. Kurdish Women in Iran and East Kurdistan

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the situation in Iran was mainly determined by the hegemonial influence of Russia and the British Empire. In 1921 and 1925, uprisings of tribes under the leadership of Agha Simko were bloodily crushed by the British supported regime of the Persian

Shah Reza. After the rebellions, many Kurds were forcibly displaced; hundreds of Kurdish tribal leaders were deported and forced into exile. While the government confiscated their lands, Kurdish language, culture and clothing were banned. Along with his plans for "modernising" the country in accordance to western standards, Shah Reza issued a decree for coercive unveiling of women in 1936. Correspondence between government officials makes it clear that there was no need for banning the veil in Kurdistan, since women there were usually unveiled. Nevertheless, as a part of the Iranian government's assimilation policy, the colourful traditional Kurdish female costumes were banned as "*ugly and dirty*" and had to be replaced by "*civilised*" dresses. (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002)

During World War II, the Red Army and British troops occupied the territory of Iran as Shah Reza continued to collaborate with Germany. After the war, the Soviet Union initially tolerated the foundation of the autonomous Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, which was proclaimed by Ghazi Mohammed on 22 January 1946. During its three hundred and thirty days of existence, the Republic's main challenge was the development of the education system. For the first time in history, there were Kurdish schools, including a girl's school. Women's education and participation in public life were encouraged along with the promotion of Kurdish publications, language and culture. However, due to western pressure and an agreement on mutual economic interests with the Iranian government, the Soviet army withdrew from the region. Shortly after that, the Iranian army invaded the young republic and assassinated Ghazi Mohammed, his brother, and his cousin at exactly the place where the Republic of Mahabad had been announced eleven months before. In the wake of the oppression by the Shah regime and its security forces and secret services, Kurdish schools were closed down, Kurdish language, Kurdish publications, and Kurdish clothing were again banned. However, despite repression, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), which had been established just before the foundation of the Mahabad Republic, continued to organise a mass movement under their programmatic demand: "Democracy for Iran, autonomy for Kurdistan".

Patriarchal Dominance in State and Society

With a view to the developments in East Kurdistan, we need to consider the differences resulting from the many different religious faiths among the Kurds and the different ways the government treats these faiths. The majority of Kurds define themselves as Muslims belonging to the Shafi school of Sunni Islam, a minority of Iranian Kurds mainly living in the province of Lurestan and around Kermanshah belongs to the religious group of Ahl-e Haqq. Another minor Kurdish group are Shia Muslims, primarily living in the provinces of Ilam, Kermanshah and Khorasan where the influence of Persian culture and language is more palpable than in the other provinces. Since the ruling class in Iran traditionally consisted of Shia Muslims, the city of Kermanshah was used as a military basis for the Shah's control over the East Kurdish region.

Until the 1970s, the lives of women in Iran and East Kurdistan were very much determined by their religious faith, regional feudal structures, their nationality and place of birth. The majority of women, in rural areas about eighty percent, were illiterate without access to education and health services. Among the Ahl-e Haqq Kurds "berdel", the exchange of girls between two families for arranged marriages was as common practice. Since the beginning of the 1970s, other Kurdish regions have also adopted the "berdel" custom. Girls were the capital of a family as the bride price provided the family a good income. Patriarchal structures and violence shaped the lives of women and their status. Women had no rights, neither at home or in public. They could not file for divorce, travel abroad at their own will, or participate in any decision-making. The saying goes that women enter their husbands' house in a white wedding dress and will only be able to leave it in a white shroud. In the communities of the Sunni Kurds, the tribal and religious leaders, aghas and mullahs, played a particularly powerful, oppressive role.

In some areas, mainly in rural areas as for example in the province of Hawraman, female genital mutilation (FGM) has been a common practice. The same applies for polygamy especially in agha families. (Ahmedi, 2006)

However, Kurdish women were also targeted by state repression. Contemporary witnesses state that at the moment when about 250,000 Kurdish

refugees were trying to escape across the Iraqi-Iranian border, after the defeat of the Kurdish rebellion under Barzani in Iraq in1975 (Zülch, 2003), Iraqi and Iranian security forces raped about three thousand Kurdish refugee women. With the decision of the Iranian government to deport refugees who had settled down in Kurdish villages to central refugee camps, many families were divided and scattered.

Besides the militarization of the society, which included two years of compulsory military service for all boys and girls, the Shah regime began to invest in the education of girls in the 1970s. Girls gained access to primary and secondary education, first in the province of Kermanshah, later also in other Kurdish cities. However, because of economic problems and thanks to continuing opposition by religious leaders, many girls still cannot enjoy school education.

A Women's Revolution?

Along with growing poverty and political oppression, discontent with the Shah regime grew among the population in all regions of Iran in the 1970s. However, even today written sources hardly notice that the revolution against the Shah regime actually had been triggered by the remarkable rebellion of three Kurdish girls from the town of Baneh. While criticism against the Shah was already circulating in illegal publications, they were the first who acted.

The Baneh rebellion

In spite of strict social codes and state repression, the teenagers Golabah, Nesrin and Esmert managed to organise the pupils of their girls' grammar school. On 12 October 1978, they made a secret appointment to break the rules by dressing in traditional Kurdish clothes and carrying their protest against the Shah regime onto the roads. An eyewitness interviewed during this study told us that the whole population of Baneh had been both shocked and fascinated by the marching girls' courage. After the incident the Iranian secret police started a search for a "terrorist group" supposed to be responsible for this "provocation". Nevertheless, the girls

successfully organised a second rally three days later, this time with broad support by the population. (M.J., eyewitness)

The Baneh rebellion played a significant role for the spreading resistance against the Shah, which eventually resulted in the overthrow of the Pehlewi Dynasty in 1979 and the reorganisation of the Kurdish peshmerga in the mountains. During this time, Kurdish women became active in political organisations and all fields of life, including the armed resistance movement. Inspired by socialist ideologies they broke with feudal, patriarchal, and religious gender typecasting. In addition, Persian women and women from other ethnic groups in Iran played an important role in the struggle against the Shah regime. Putting on the black veil at mass demonstrations was rather an expression of women's rebellion against the Shah than the demand for a new code of clothing.

Formation of the Islamic Republic – More War and Oppression

The majority of the Kurdish population supported the endeavours for autonomy of the Kurdish region in East Kurdistan. In the pre- and post-revolutionary era, KDPI, Komala, and other Peshmerga groups gained control over the Kurdish territory, supported by eighty percent of the votes of the Kurdish population in the 1980general elections (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002; Aziz, 1992). Accusing the Kurds of "separatism"(Khomeini; quoted in McDowall, 1996), the new government under Ayatollah Khomeini declared "holy war" on Kurdistan and denied the Kurdish representatives their participation in the Assembly of Experts, which negotiated on the new Iranian constitution. Since the majority of Kurds belonged to Sunni Islam, Kurds were considered as "infidels" and deprived of their rights under the rule of the Shia clergy. A huge military campaign of the new Iranian government resulted in bombing and burning down Kurdish towns and villages and eventually in occupation. More than 10,000 Kurds were killed in the attacks (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002). After eight months of fighting, the Iranian army had gained control over East Kurdistan. As a consequence of this war, displaced Kurdish refugees had to escape across the Iraqi boarder. For twenty-three days, Iranian army units cut off the drinking water supply of the Kurdish town of Sanandaj, and afterwards reopened it with poisoned water.

It is estimated that about four hundred people lost their lives in this chemical attack. (M.J., eyewitness; Moradi, 2005)

With the formation of the Islamic Republic, the so-called "sharia law" was implemented in all fields of life. By this law, the mullahs imposed their absolute power and their double moral standards on girls and women. The clergy ordered the "Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution" to rape captured Kurdish women as these women were "non-believers". Along with other methods of torture, rape and sexualised torture were systematically utilised in Iranian prisons to break women's resistance and personality and make their male relatives surrender. In addition, girls and unmarried women were raped by the warders before their execution, since under Iranian law the execution of a virgin is illegal. The strength in resisting cruelties and torture shown by some women gained recognition by other prisoners. However, after their release from prison, women could hardly talk about their experiences. The society was also not able co cope with these traumatic experiences, nor would the Iranian regime keep them alive. Only a few Kurdish women in exile found the opportunity and courage to testify their experiences in Iranian prisons.

During the 1980s, East Kurdistan became the frontline of the Iraq-Iran war. Iranian and Iraqi military emplacements and troops occupied parts of the Zagros mountains and their foothills.. As in South Kurdistan, in the East too Kurdish villages were destroyed, large areas were mined, and the population suffered from killings, injustice, displacement, repression and war captivity. The despotism of the Khomeini government was not restricted to the Iranian territory. Oppositional Kurds were also chased by the Iranian secret police in their exile countries. In 1989, amid negotiations over Kurdish rights with Iranian representatives, Iranian agents assassinated the general secretary of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI), Dr. Ghassemlou, and two other Kurds in Vienna. Again, in 1992 four Kurdish dissidents were killed by members of the Iranian secret police at the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin. While the Austrian police handed the culprits over to the Iranian embassy in Vienna, a Berlin court confirmed the responsibility of the Iranian government for the assassinations. (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002; Aziz, 1992)

These events also contributed to the persistent anxiety among the exiled Kurdish community in Europe. The migration of Kurds from Iran to countries of the European Union was mainly a result of national and religious discrimination, political persecution and war. There was no explicit labour migration to Europe as among Kurdish migrants from Turkey. The majority of refugees from Iran were middle-class students and academics with a good financial background. Especially qualifications and level of education of the female refugees were above the average of women from other refugee communities in Europe. (Jannat, 2005)

After the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Khatami government enacted a number of reforms. In 1997, Khatami had won the presidential elections mainly because of the votes of women and the young. He had promised to improve the status of women and respond to the demands of the young generation in Iran. However, after eight years of his presidency many of his supporters were disappointed because they felt he had failed to carry through some fundamental democratic changes. Nevertheless, during the Khatami period Kurds in Iran were able to gain political representation in the Iranian parliament with the election of eighteen independent candidates from the Kurdish provinces. Furthermore, the ban on Kurdish culture and language was lifted and publication and education in Kurdish became possible.

Another wave of Kurdish mass protests in Iranian Kurdistan occurred when PKK-leader Abdullah Ocalan was kidnapped in February 1999. These protests were quelled violently by the government leading to the death of at least twenty Kurds. After these events, which some analysts evaluated as a cross-boarder *trans-nationalisation* of the Kurdish movement (Natali, 2000), the Iranian authorities increased their repression against the Kurdish population. Especially Sunni Kurds undergo attacks and discrimination. In October 2001, all six members of parliament from the province of Kurdistan collectively resigned in protest against the denial of legitimate rights and a "campaign of repression and serial killings" against the Kurdish community (UNHCR, 2002). Human rights abuses including torture, executions and village destructions by Iranian security forces are rising in the Kurdish region since the bilateral rapprochement between Turkey and Iran is making progress. During joint military operations in order to prevent the Free Life

Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) from building an organisation among the urban and rural Kurdish population in Iran, there were village bombings and heavy combat with Kurdish guerrilla fighters resulting in deaths and injuries on both sides (MHA, 23-06-2005). Since the beginning of the presidency of Ahmadinejad, the situation in Kurdistan more and more resembles a situation under martial law. Ahmadinejad had already showed his attitude towards the Kurds with his presence at the assassination of the Kurdish politicians in Vienna on 13 July 1989, when he was still a member of the Iran secret police. By the words "the newly elected Iranian President is associated with the death penalty for Kurds", a group of Kurdish refugees from Iran expressed the fears, which subsequently led to an increasing migration of Kurds into Turkey after 2005 (DIHA, 12-07-2005).

Overcoming the Trap of Self-Immolation

Over the years, Kurdish women assumed different roles in the society and in public life. By the year 2000, a significant number of Kurdish women had become part of the labour market, and an increasing number engaged in intellectual activities such as poetry, journalism, film making, or music. On the other hand, discriminatory laws against women, patriarchal violence and moral concepts in the public and private spheres forced many women to commit suicide, most commonly through self-immolation. Figures published in February 2006 by the Human Rights Organisation of Kurdistan (RMMK) and the Association of Kurdish Women Defending Peace and Human Rights (AKWDP&HR), indicate that common forms of domestic violence like forced marriage, beating, economic dependence, prohibition of education or wage labour, sexual violence, and rape make the lives of hundreds of women unbearable. Within only nine months, a hundred and fifty Kurdish women in Iran's Western Azerbaijan Province committed suicide, the majority of them by setting themselves on fire. The majority of these women were young, between fourteen and thirty to 30 years, with no or little education. Human rights defenders interprete these suicides as an outcry against the abuse of women's basic rights and against the "patriarchal system" in state and society. (Esfandiari, 2006)

According to the Iran Human Rights Solidarity Committee, violence against women surged with the presidency of Ahmadinejad. Between 2006 and 2007, according to official statistics, 5,978 women were arrested; 317,000 women were reproved for their clothes and the way they moved; eight women were stoned to death or executed and 19,000 women were sold to foreign countries for domestic labour. (ANF, 02-04-2007)

Along with women rights activists who organise and campaign for a change of Iran's gender policy, women writers, journalists, or musicians are being threatened by imprisonment, torture, and other punishments defined in the penal code of the Islamic Republic, like flogging or stoning (Mahnaz /Friedl, 1994). When the poet and musician Naze Ezizi from eastern Kurdistan was called to a security office in Mahabad in 2005, a fine was imposed on her and she was threatened with stoning in case she would continue her cultural activities. Security officers explained the law to Ezizi by saying, „Your songs have been played in Iraqi Kurdistan during the Khatami period but now we have real Islamic justice and it is the time of emperor Ahmedinejad's regime. We will not allow people to violate the rules as the wish. Women should stay home and use their looks and their voices to entertain their husbands and not anybody else." (Mahabadi/MHA, 2005)

So far, neither women shelters nor adequate health care services are available for women in the Kurdish provinces. Progress is hindered by various factors related to infrastructural deficiencies of the regions inhabited by Sunni Kurds or patriarchal codes of state and society. Kurdish experts report that the availability of family mental-health centres and psychological programmes, including programmes for the survivors of war and torture, may reduce the rate of self-immolation in the region. Furthermore, Kurdish women desperately demand more awareness of women's issues in order to change social and cultural patterns related to male behaviour. (Esfandiari, 2006)

2.2.4. Kurdish Women in Syria and Southwest Kurdistan

Before World War I, the territory of Syria was controlled by the Ottoman Empire. After World War I, French troops occupied Syria and Lebanon. In 1920, the League of Nations created the French mandate over Syria, which was formally recognised in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

The Berlin-Baghdad railway constituted the new boarder between Syria and Turkey. Kurdish communities and families were arbitrarily divided. While the Kurds had no political rights under the French mandate, they obtained some cultural rights like newspaper publishing and radio broadcasting in Kurdish. For this reason, many Kurdish intellectuals and political activists who escaped ethnic cleansing in Turkey sought refuge in Syria. (Şahin/ Kaufeldt, 2002)

Expatriation, Displacement and the War on Water

Despite several rebellions against French hegemony, Syria achieved its independence only after World War II and became a member of the UN in 1946. With the establishment of the Baath party in the 1940s, strong pan-Arab nationalism developed around the slogans "Unity, Freedom, and Socialism". Against the background of increasing Arabisation, Kurdish cultural rights were revoked. Shortly after the unification of Syria and Egypt as United Arab Republic in 1958, Kurdish politicians of the Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria and other opponents were detained and tortured. The secret police established a system of systematic social control and observation. Even before the announcement of the state of emergency in 1963, repression was expanded on Kurdish communities as a whole. By means of exceptional censuses in 1962, the citizenship of 150,000 to 200,000 Kurds was arbitrarily withdrawn under the pretext that they were migrants from neighbouring countries (Refugees International, 2006). In 2007, the number of stateless Kurds living in Syria was estimated to be approximately 300,000. (UNHCR Standing Committee, 2007)

The Arabisation policy introduced in the 1960s and continued under the Baath government of Hafiz Assad, included the displacement of Kurds from their homelands and the confiscation of their land and properties. In return, Arab population was settled in Southwest Kurdistan in order to form an "Arab belt". The official use of Kurdish language and Kurdish publications was banned. The expatriated Kurds had to pay taxes, but were excluded from political and social participation including primary education for their children and access to public health services. The Syrian Baath government took immense efforts to ban all expressions of Kurdish identity in order to eliminate it. (Galie/Yıldız, 2005)

Kurds were discriminated in all fields of life and excluded from all leading positions in state and army. Unlike all other ethnic minorities in Syria, the Kurds are still banned from practicing their cultural heritage or their cultural traditions. (SHRC, 2005)

Along with the Euphrates Basin Development Project the construction of the Attawra dam by the Syrian government in 1974 caused severe environmental damage and was responsible for the displacement of about seventy thousand Kurds from the region of Cizre. The regulation of the Euphrates water supply since the 1990s by the Turkish Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP Project) leads to extreme water shortage destroying farmlands in southwest Kurdistan. In 1990, Turkey impounded the Euphrates River for nine days to fill the reservoir of the Ataturk dam (Galie/Yıldız, 2005). Both Turkey and Syria used the Kurdish issue against each other as a means of pressure or a means of appeasement. Despite repression and censorship against the Kurds in Syria and Southwest Kurdistan, the Syrian Baath government under Hafiz Assad supported political activities of the Kurds in Turkey and Iraq with regard to its own interests. After the military coup in Turkey in 1980, many left-wing Turkish and Kurdish activists and organisations found accommodation in Syria. The leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Abdullah Öcalan, and other party officials were able to continue their political and organisational work from Syria. During more than twenty years of activism in Syria, the PKK gained broad support and sympathy among the population of Southwest Kurdistan. Thousands of young men and women from South-

west Kurdistan joined the guerrilla to fight the Turkish army in the mountains of North and South Kurdistan. (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002)

In return, Turkey threatened Syria repeatedly with cutting off Syrian water supplies and mobilising troops in the boarder region. The relationship between Turkey and Syria improved again, after Syria had expelled Abdullah Öcalan in 1998. Several agreements followed ensuring cooperation on the Euphrates water projects. (Olson, 2001)

Double Discrimination of Kurdish Women

The Baath party formally promoted gender equality and women's participation in all fields of life. In article 45 of the Syrian constitution, the state declared its intention to remove all "restrictions that prevent women's development and participation in building the socialist Arab society". Nevertheless, in contrast with the secularist constitution, Syria's civil code ruled according to the sharia in personal and family matters. While this law discriminates women in questions of inheritance, divorce, fatherhood, custody of children, it also makes marriage between Syrian women and men without Syrian citizenship illegal. Due to these discriminating laws women cannot pass their nationality on to their children. Since a majority of Kurds does not possess Syrian citizenship, children of a Syrian mother and a Kurdish father are not registered and hence deprived of all citizenship rights from their birth (Galie/Yıldız, 2005). Furthermore, the criminal code indirectly encourages so-called "honour killings" by male relatives of women who are suspected of adultery (HRW, 2007). According to the law, the murderer is only handed a six months sentence on probation, even if the woman had been raped. As Kurdish women without citizen rights do not have access to legal protection they are even more vulnerable. Unmarried women who have been raped are often forced into a marriage with the rapist.

Although the general literacy rate in Syria for women between fifteen and twenty-four years is about ninety percent (UNESCO, 2004), there is still a high degree of illiteracy among Kurdish women. While children without citizenship are excluded from public education, the combination of ethnic and gender discrimination gives Kurdish girls even less educational opportunities

compared to Kurdish boys. Especially women from rural areas are at a disadvantage and mostly restricted to reproduction, housework, or badly paid unskilled labour. Due to these circumstances, many Kurdish girls are forced into early marriage at the age of fifteen or sixteen. In addition, the land reforms introduced in Syria in the 1970s and 80s discriminated Kurdish women in the rural areas in a double way. Following the centralisation of agricultural production, the fragmentation and disappropriation of their land, most Kurdish families were not able anymore to make a living by farming. (Galie/Yıldız, 2005)

Restricted access to water and destruction of agricultural resources resulted in mass labour migration of men to the cities and neighbouring Lebanon. Consequently, the workload of Kurdish women in rural communities grew enormously. Nevertheless, women's political, social and economic status deteriorated as their farm labour and their contribution to the family income was less acknowledged. As non-citizens, Kurdish women were deprived of all state benefits. Displaced persons only received very little compensation or none at all. For the Kurds, the displacement process also meant loss of their cultural and social environment, while they were often confronted with xenophobic attitudes in the new settlement places with Arab majority. As a result, we find domestic violence and Kurdish women in isolation, forced to stay inside their homes. Poverty, lack of education, and unemployment often force young women into early marriage. Many women, in particular victims of rape and sexual violence, also resort to prostitution in order to survive. (Galie/Yıldız, 2005)

Demands for Civil and Women's Rights

Meanwhile many Kurdish women demand effective measures against domestic violence, and the protection of women's public rights and their Kurdish identity. Progress is often obstructed by repressive patriarchal structures, Arabic nationalism, and a general lack of freedom in the Syrian political system. "The boundaries between governmental, non-governmental and civil society organisations in Syria are extremely blurred since all these sectors have been artificially created by the state and are controlled by it." (Ed. Joseph, 2000)[3]

When Bashar Assad became the new president of Syria after the death of his father in 2000, he promised more democracy. Some reforms, including a general amnesty for six hundred political prisoners stimulated the emergence of civil rights groups. In 2001, more than a thousand Syrian intellectuals supported a call for the abolishment of the emergency act of 1963 (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002). However, shortly after the rise of the young civil rights movement, its activists were again confronted with state repression, imprisonment and torture. This conflicting attitude also reflects the government's approach towards the question of the rights of the Kurds in Syria.

In 2002, during a visit to the Kurdish provinces, Bashar Assad promised to consider Kurdish demands and the recognition of the Kurds as an integral part of Syrian history. However, only two years after the first visit of a Syrian president to the Hasake province, armed security forces again attacked the Kurds in Syria and southwest Kurdistan. In March 2004, protests following the death of Kurds during clashes after a soccer match in Qamishli, turned into the first Kurdish riots against Syrian state authorities. The military attacked the demonstrators brutally and surrounded the whole town of Qamishli. According to Human Rights Watch, more than thirty Kurds were killed and about four hundred were injured in the incidents. (HRW, 2007, Syria)

About two thousand five hundred Kurds, among them also children, were imprisoned and tortured. The London based Syrian Human Rights Committee has documented systematic torture while at least thirteen people among them eleven Kurds died from torture in custody (SHRC, 2005). Despite a general presidential pardon for those involved in the March 2004 clashes, in 2007 dozens of Kurds were still awaiting their trials in the criminal court of Hasake (HRW, 2007).

Although the Qamishli events reflect the state's readiness to use military violence against the Kurds, the population of southwest Kurdistan has not suffered from constant warfare like the Kurds in other parts of the divided country. Nevertheless, Kurdish women in Syria encounter various forms of discrimination and their consequences. The denial of individual and collec-

[3] Quotation in: Galie/Yıldız, 2005

tive human rights, displacement, political oppression, and patriarchal discrimination in state and society can be cited as main reasons why Kurdish women leave their home countries (cf. Münchner Flüchtlingsrat, 2005). In addition to economic difficulties and western asylum policies, which exclude the great majority of refugees from migration to western countries, Kurds from southeast Kurdistan are even more handicapped. Being stateless and having no travel documents, they must take enormous risks when leaving Syria. They usually must pay enormous amounts of money to human smuggling networks without any certainty, whether or when they will arrive at their destination.

3. The Situation of Kurdish Migrant Women in the European Union

Supposedly, more than a million Kurds reside in countries of the European Union (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002). Difficulties in ascertaining the exact number of Kurdish migrants result from incomplete data on migrants from stateless nations. Although gender awareness in migration studies has developed during the last decade, women from stateless nations are still hardly recognised in official statistics. Therefore, it is even more difficult to obtain reliable data sources on Kurdish women in the Europe Union.

3.1. Migration to Europe

Kurdish migrant women in Europe are a heterogeneous group. Various factors characterise the diversity and disparity concerning their age, their reasons for migration, their religious, political, and educational background as well as their social status and the state policies in their countries of origin and the European host countries (Berruti et al., 2002). These factors also influence the women's opportunities and preferences in choosing a certain host country in Europe. While a great part of Kurdish women came to Europe in

connection with the labour migration from Turkey in the 1970s, the reasons of migration of the Kurdish women after the 1980s were mainly related to their experiences of war, and national, political, and gender oppression in their home countries. A small proportion of women from each part of Kurdistan came as students and academics in order to advance their occupational career.

The factors mentioned above resulted in a concentration of particular Kurdish communities in certain European countries and cities. For example, out of the estimated number of thirty-five thousand Kurds in Sweden refugees from Iraq are by far the largest group (Berruti et al., 2002). A great proportion of the forty thousand Kurds living in Britain has come from the Kurdish provinces of Maraş, Sivas and Kayseri in Turkey (Şahin/Kaufeldt, 2002). Among the estimated number of seven hundred thousand Kurdish migrants in Germany (Berruti et al., 2002; cf. Lochak) approximately forty thousand are members of the Yezidi community (Tolan), a rather small religious minority among the Kurds. The majority of Kurdish migrant women has maintained their ethno-national identity in Europe and passes it to the next generation. Life in the Diaspora often strengthened and preserved their national consciousness (Berruti et al., 2002).

During the period of labour migration from Turkey in the 1970s, mainly young Kurdish single women migrated in search for job opportunities. They wanted to earn themselves a living, which would enable them to support their families in the home countries. Although single female migration contradicted the traditional understanding of gender roles in Kurdish society, migration was generally accepted as taking responsibility for the family. Studies indicate that Kurdish women of the first migrant generation had an education level above the average of the female Kurdish population in their home countries. Nevertheless, they could only find low qualified jobs and had no access to higher education because qualifications from their home countries were not recognised. Segregation from the native population made it difficult for them to interact with the society of the host country. The situation of Kurdish women migrated to Europe in the framework of family reunion was characterised by the loss of their social networks. While their husbands had already created some social structures in accordance with the

male traditions of their home countries, Kurdish women often experienced a second, "internal migration" as they found themselves isolated and reduced to their duties as housewives and mothers. (Kızılhan, 1994)

The migration processes of Kurdish women seeking asylum due to war and political oppression, however, show varying patterns. Nevertheless, generally these women could only reach Western Europe via other countries. While some women came alone in order to save their lives, others had to take care for their children or were accompanied by relatives. Many mothers were at least temporally divided from (some of) their children and husbands.

Since the restriction of immigration and asylum laws in the European Union in the 1990s, it has become increasingly difficult for Kurdish migrants to obtain a residence permit. While some progress was made by the recognition of gender specific oppression in the framework of the asylum law, deficiencies in its implementation persist. Tedious asylum procedures often cause uncertainty and are an obstacle to participation and cross-cultural relations in the host countries. Furthermore, the new legislation on integration measures for a permanent residence permit in EU countries especially impedes the situation for socially disadvantaged women or women with lower education.

3.2. (In-) Visibility and Stigmatisation of National Identity

In Europe, many Kurds found open spaces where they could rediscover and redevelop their national and cultural identity, which had been denied and sanctioned by their countries of origin. Since the late 1980s, the Kurdish Diaspora in Europe has created important cultural, social, political and linguistic Kurdish institutions and a network of Kurdish media, including the first Kurdish satelite television channel Med TV and the Kurdish Parliament in exile in 1995 (Gülşen, 2006). In addition, Kurdish women could express themselves within these cultural and social networks.

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, Kurdish migrants and especially Kurdish migrant women have hardly been visible in European statistics and publications due to undifferentiated approaches and a lack of awareness for the concerns of Kurdish women. In administrational matters, European authorities tend to rely on the embassies and governments of the countries of origin of the Kurds rather than on agencies of the Kurdish community. For example, German authorities repeatedly refused to register Kurdish names for newborn babies, since these names did not appear in a list of recognised names issued by the Turkish embassy (Timar, 1998). Confronted with attitudes similar to the discrimination in their home countries while following the continuing conflict there, many Kurdish women identified themselves with the national liberation struggle. Life experiences, media broadcasts and communication with relatives maintain a close connection and interaction with the developments in Kurdistan.

Furthermore, the situation of Kurdish migrant rights in the EU has also deteriorated following the public discourse on "PKK-terrorism" which led to the stigmatisation and prosecution of Kurdish communities in the EU. In particular, since the PKK ban in 1993, human rights organisations and representatives of Kurdish associations in Germany complain about the criminalisation of the Kurdish community and its associations. (Berruti et al., 2002; YEK-KOM, 1996)

As members of a middle-eastern and mainly Muslim community, Kurds were additionally affected by growing xenophobia in the west after the attacks of 9/11, when legal restrictions and deportation of non-European citizens to their home countries were intensified (cf. Yaghmaian, 2002). Kurdish women have often been stigmatised as "oppressed Muslim women" without having been able to introduce themselves and their concerns.

3.3. Gender Oppression and Kurdish Women's Emancipation

As in their country of origin, Kurdish women in Europe are also confronted with gender-related discrimination in a double way. On one hand the patriarchal structures within their families and community are imposed on their lives, on the other hand those of the state institutions and the dominant society they live in. Kurdish women - along with all women regardless of their nationality - face gender-related discrimination and marginalisation on the labour market, have to carry the double burden of productive and reproductive works, and encounter sexualized violence in the public and private domain. They face domestic violence including sexual violence in the family and forced, early, or arranged marriages; bride prices and berdel; restrictions of freedom of movement, decision-making and of reproductive rights, and other forms of gender specific violence in the feudal Kurdish communities.

However, the patterns of the patriarchal structure of Kurdish communities are often in contradiction and conflict with the rules of the dominant society. This makes it particularly hard for young women of the second or third immigrant generation to define their own concepts of life. Kurdish women reported that their situation suffered setbacks in many ways after their migration to Europe. For example, young Kurdish women in France stated that certain traditional customs like early or child marriage were still being practiced in immigrant communities while they had already lost their significance in their countries of origin, where Kurdish women had been able to improve their position. (Berruti et al., 2002)

So-called crimes in the name of "honour" are also related to conflicting attitudes towards life and family codes. In this context, the killings of the Kurdish girls Fadime Shahindal (cf. Berruti et al., 2002) in Sweden and Hatice Sürücü (cf. Der Tagesspiegel, 2007) in Germany raised a controversial discussion in Western media on the issue of so-called "honour killings" among Kurds. Unfortunately, this discourse mainly negated the earlier and lasting efforts of Kurdish women's rights activists and organisations to counteract any form of violence against women within their own community.

Furthermore, Kurdish women criticised the biased approach towards the problem. Kurdish women's rights activists stated that the condemnation of "honour killings" could only result in changes if the complexity of the patriarchal structures was also taken into consideration including the impact of war and colonialisation on the Kurdish society. (Ceni, 2007)

In parallel to the activities of the women's movement in their home country Kurdish women in the Diaspora have also created an autonomous network of cultural, social and political women's associations in different European cities. Various Kurdish women's rights organisations and the *Kurdish Women's Action Against Honour Killing* (KWAHK) are dedicated to supporting and promoting women's rights in the Kurdish community, whether in Kurdistan or in the Diaspora. In periodic publications like the monthly women's newspaper *Newaya Jin* or by means of seminars, public meetings and women's programmes on Kurdish television channels, they raise tabooed issues and discuss strategies and experiences, which help to counteract violence against women.

3.4. Kurdish Migrant Women and Trauma

It can be estimated that a high number of Kurdish migrant and refugee women in Europe suffers from psychological and physical health problems created by repeated experiences of shocking life events. This is also supported by statistics of the Psychological Ambulance for Refugees in Konstanz (Forschungs- und Modellambulanz für Flüchtlinge, 2003/2004) and the psychological counselling centre Refugium Stade in Germany. While the majority of the help seekers at the Konstanz Ambulance were Kurds, the Refugium found that the largest and steadily growing group of help seekers were Kurds with a female majority among them (Siedentopf).

Experiences of multiple discrimination, violence, war, displacement and/or migration are common experiences among migrated women from the Kurdish community. Being isolated and a "foreigner", many women cannot confide to anybody what they have been living through. This appears to

be especially true for women who fear sanctions either by state authorities or by their own community. The permanent fear of deportation and uncertainty about the developments in Kurdistan even worsen the situation. For example, a Kurdish mother of two children, whose husband was killed by so-called "unknown perpetrators" while she was raped by Turkish soldiers, told us she had been waiting ten years for the Dutch authorities' to decide on her asylum application. (Adlım/IFWF, 2005) All these factors are frequent sources for the development of Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD). (Joachim/ed. Medica Mondiale, 2006)

In our daily life experiences, we noticed that especially women who had been exposed to sexual torture or whose behaviour was inconsistent with the patriarchal traditions of their society often were stuck in a cycle, which can lead to addiction, depression or even suicide. The need to provide adequate findings and sources for education on PTSD and migrant women's health issues in relation to the specific situation of Kurdish women became obvious during our activities at the International Free Women's Foundation. As the psychologist Cinur Ghaderi stated in her presentation on the structures of psycho-social support for Kurdish women in Germany, psychosocial centres and therapy centres for torture victims, be they centres for social counselling or therapy, usually do not offer programmes explicitly for Kurdish women, but rather for the entire groups of migrants or refugees, women or sometimes Kurds (Ghaderi, 2002).

Chapter II – Final results and Findings of research

By Jeroen W. Knipscheer[1],[2], Cheko Gülşen[2] & Rolf J. Kleber[1],[3]

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Correspondence Address:
Jeroen W. Knipscheer, Ph. D.
Utrecht University, Department of Clinical and Health Psychology
P.O. Box 80140, 3508 TC, Utrecht, Netherlands
e-mail: j.w.knipscheer@.uu.nl

1 Theoretical Background

A substantial body of knowledge on the health effects of traumatic experiences has been accumulated over the past years. Recent epidemiological studies in USA, Australia and New Zealand (e.g, Al-Saffar, Borgå, Edman, & Hällström, 2003; Breslau, 2002; Creamer, Burgess, & McFarlane, 2001) have shown that most community residents have experienced one or more traumatic events in their lifetime. Characteristic psychological reactions after a traumatic experience are the posttraumatic responses of intrusions and avoidances, as described by cognitive theories on trauma (Brewin & Holmes, 2003; Horowitz, 1976). The traumatic experience is persistently re-experienced in recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, nightmares, pangs of trauma-focused emotions and preoccupation with the event.

[1] Department of Clinical and Health Psychology, Utrecht University, Netherlands
[2] Institute for Intercultural Research, Utrecht, Netherlands
[3] Institute for Psychotrauma, Zaltbommel, Netherlands

These intrusions interact with manifestations of avoidance: the implications of the event are warded off which is expressed through emotional numbness and avoidance of thoughts and images of the traumatic event. Next to these posttraumatic symptoms, victims can suffer from serious other mental health problems, such as depression, panic and anxieties, hyperarousal, physical symptoms and fatigue (Başoğlu, Kılıç, Şalcıoğlu, & Livanou, 2004; Norris, Friedman, & Watson, 2002). A substantial minority will develop a mental disorder, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression (Breslau, Kessler, Chilcoat, Schultz, Davis, & Andreski, 1998; Kleber, Figley, & Gersons, 1995). Surveys indicate that 10–30 % of populations affected by traumatic experiences will develop PTSD (DeGirolamo & McFarlane, 1996; Kleber & Brom, 1992).

1.1 Ethnic Differences and Trauma

Most traumatic stress studies have been focused hitherto on the Caucasian population in the US, Australia, New Zealand, and Western Europe (DeGirolamo & McFarlane, 1996). The prevalence of mental health problems after traumatic experiences for ethnic minority groups has as yet hardly been empirically investigated adequately. However, culture has an impact on the ways that violence, war and disaster are experienced and processed by individuals, families and the community at large (Boehnlein, 2002). Research indicates that ethnic minorities affected (such as migrants and refugees) show more health problems in the aftermath of disasters than indigenous residents (Halligan & Yehuda, 2000; Norris et al., 2002).

Vulnerability of ethnic minorities for posttraumatic health problems can partly be explained by their relatively low socio-economic situation (Breslau et al., 1998), which in general is a risk factor for health problems (Bhugra, 2004). In addition, several studies have pointed explicitly at the role of minority ethnicity per se, in increasing the risk of developing PTSD. For instance, in a study of an entire year's cohort of psychiatric outpatients in Sweden, the prevalence of PTSD was reported higher for Iranians (69 %), Arabs (59 %) and Turks (53 %) than for Swedes (29 %), with an odds ratio

of 2.44 for belonging to an ethnic minority (Al-Saffar et al., 2003). In the US National Comorbidity Survey, PTSD was found to be more prevalent in minority groups, especially those with the lowest education and income (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes & Nelson, 1995). In the Netherlands, the Enschede disaster health study showed that affected Turkish migrants reported more problems than affected indigenous Dutch respondents (compared with non-affected control groups) (Drogendijk et al., 2003).

1.2 Gender and Trauma

Next to the relation between the concept of culture and traumatic stress, the impact of gender and gender oppression in social relationships as well as a part of institutional oppression and warfare are to be considered as well. Women and men experience violence in conflicts in different ways. While men are often forced to fight wars and are more often killed in war, women often experience sexualized violence. Studies on violence, women and trauma reveal that around the world, women and girls are victims of countless acts of violence. In a great many of these instances, the violence is not random — women and girls are victims because they are female. Among other abuses, violence against women includes rape, sexual mutilation, domestic violence, battering, and marital rape.

Violence against women in wartime is a reflection of violence against women in peacetime, as long as violence against women is pervasive and accepted, stress, small arms proliferation and a culture of violence push violence against women to epidemic proportions, especially when civilians are the main targets of warfare. Women often face violence in wartime due to the nexus between their gender and their other identities. For instance, in Bosnia Muslim women were targeted for rape as part of the "ethnic cleansing" campaign to form an ethnically pure Greater Serbia. Over 20,000 women are thought to have been raped during the war (The European Community Investigative Mission into the Treatment of Muslim Women in the Former Yugoslavia. Submission to the United Nations Security Council, U.N. Doc. S/25240, Annex I).

An assessment of gender-based violence in refugee settings, internally displaced and post-conflict settings conducted by the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium revealed sexual violence to be only one of several types of gender-based violence that armed conflicts exacerbate. Other forms of violence against women that may increase during conflict include early or forced marriage, female infanticide, enforced sterilization, domestic violence, forced or coerced prostitution and trafficking in women and girls. Domestic violence is shown to increase during wartime and post-conflict due to ex-combatant trauma and the influence of a militaristic culture of violence strain domestic relations. Official statistics from East Timor, for example, show that nearly 40 % of all reported crimes were cases of domestic violence or violence against women, such as rape and sexual assault.

Although there exists little reliable, accurate and independent data on violence against women in Turkey, EU reports tell us the following: Between 1990 and 1996, 1,259 women were interviewed, of whom 88.2 % said that they were living in a violent environment and 68 % said that they had been beaten. According to men, 34 percent of married women were subjected to violence by their spouses in 1995. Almost all women living in slum areas in Ankara in 1995 had experienced domestic violence. 58 % of women in east and southeast Anatolia reported having experienced a physical assault in 1998. 23 % of high- and middle-income women had been assaulted or beaten by their husbands in 1998. 86.1 % of the victims of domestic violence are women.

The consequences of experiencing traumatic stress are not the same for both sexes. For instance, Punamaki et al. (Punamaki, Komproe, Qouta, Elmasri, & de Jong, 2005), studying a Palestinian community sample, reported that men experienced more traumatic events but exposure to trauma was associated with PTSD in both genders. Exposure to lifetime trauma was associated with anxiety, mood, and somatoform disorders only among women but not among men.

1.3 Internal Versus External Displacement and Trauma

Being a change in one's physical environment, migration has many economic, social, political and psychological consequences on an individual's life. It is generally assumed that migrants are more vulnerable to mental disturbances due to migration experiences, cultural adaptation demands and an often disadvantaged socio-economic position (the so-called 'condición migrante'). Migration is considered a harrowing experience, as are the circumstances that have led to the decision to migrate such as poverty, a lack of future perspectives, and (political) repression. The resulting cultural adaptation (acculturation, see 1.4) is a prolonged and often laborious process. Migrants have to become accustomed to another language, to different attitudes, and to new roles (Berry, 1994; 2005). Furthermore, existing social networks have fallen apart often resulting in a lack of perceived and received social support.

A meta-analysis (Porter & Haslam, 2005) compared mental health outcomes in refugees and internally displaced persons (n= 22.221) with non-refugees (n= 45.073). They reported poorer mental health outcomes for refugees, particularly those living in institutional accommodation, experiencing restricted economic opportunity, displaced internally within their own country, repatriated to a country they had previously fled, or whose initiating conflict was unresolved. Older age, higher education, and female gender also predicted worse outcomes. Another systematic review of refugee mental health research (n = 6743) concluded that resettled refugees in Western countries may be ten times more likely to suffer from PTSD than age-matched general populations (Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005).

Forced internal displacement, which is a phenomenon that lacks the attention other forms of migration have received, adds even more dimensions to this picture. Today, internal displacement is as important as the refugee problem. For centuries, Turkey has had many migration movements. In recent years, forced internal displacement has added to the problem. It is obvious that internally displaced people have faced many traumatic experiences

during this process, and that they are confronted with many social and psychological problems. Moreover, the family structure of internally displaced persons changes and many adjustment problems occur.

1.4 Acculturation – The Forgotten Factor

Health effects of being allocated into a different culture and having to cope with acculturation demands are substantial for migrants and refugees (e.g, Bhugra, 2004; Kleber et al., 1995). Acculturation refers to the process in which an individual adopts or adheres to attitudes, beliefs, practices, or behaviours congruent with that of the dominant culture. Acculturation has been conceptualized as a confluence of traditional rituals and practices, food and activity preferences, ethnic composition of one's interpersonal relationships, values, perceived self-identity, and immigration status variables (e.g, place of birth, generational status in the host society, length of residency) and demands (skills and stress) (Berry, 2005).

A cumulative effect of both pre-migration trauma exposure and post-migration factors (social difficulties like low proficiency in the language of the country of resettlement, poor social support, poor accommodation, alienation and isolation) is implicated by overall psychiatric morbidity. Results of various studies indicate that development of PTSD is related to factors that occur before, during, and after a traumatic event, whereas failure to recover is related primarily to factors that occur during and after the event (e.g, Schnurr, Lunney & Sengupta, 2004). For instance, the current social situation contributed to the intensity of ongoing health complaints next to the reported traumatic experiences among Latin-American and Middle-Eastern refugees in the Netherlands (Hondius, Van Willigen, Kleijn & Van der Ploeg, 2000). The level of acculturation of the affected migrants to the host-society may thus influence mental health after traumatic experiences. General health studies have indicated that negative attitudes of migrants towards the host culture and less skills required in the host-community, were related to health problems (Bengi-Arslan, Verhulst & Crijnen, 2002; Kamperman, Komproe

& De Jong, 2003). Empirical results of a study on refugees in Sweden yielded poor acculturation and economic difficulties to be stronger risk factors for psychological distress than exposure to violence before migration (Sundquist, Bayard-Burfield, Johansson & Johansson, 2000).

To what extent the acculturation level of migrants with traumatic experiences is associated with health problems, however, is unknown. For example, skills such as fluency in the language of the host country and "knowing your way around there" can facilitate solving the practical problems after an accident, an act of violence, or a devastating disaster. Furthermore, present feelings of loss could be influential with regard to psychological problems such as depression. Moreover, specific domains within the acculturation realm may have a stronger impact on mental health than others. In a study among different ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands, a specific domain of acculturation called 'cultural affiliation' implying the preservation of the original culture and habits was associated with less mental disorders. At the same time, mental well-being was positively associated with the amount of social relationships with Dutch people as well (Kamperman et al., 2003; Knipscheer & Kleber, 2006).

1.5 Kurdish Migrant Women in the European Union

PTSD is a reasonably well-defined and useable concept. Nonetheless, there are serious dilemmas in its definition and utilisation in scientific research and clinical work. These perplexities become manifest with victims and refugees from countries and cultures outside North America, Europe and Australia (e.g, Al-Saffar et al., 2003; Bracken et al., 1995). Studies of refugees and violations of human rights demonstrate the concept of PTSD to be rather limited. The circumstances are so complicated and prolonged that individual adjustment is damaged to a greater degree than it is after an event in a stable society. There appears to be plural traumatisation (Kleber et al., 1995), a process characterised by the threat of destruction of the individual, his sense of belonging to the society, and his social bonds and activ-

ities. A current and poignant example, in which these phenomena exist, forms the situation of the Kurdish population in Turkey.

The Kurds with approximately 12 million people constitute the largest minority group in Turkey. Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Kurds have lost their status as a separate ethnic minority. Until the foundation of the Turkish Republic Kurds were still counted as a people that essentially participated in the founding of the Turkish Republic; Kurds were not counted as a "minority", but as "brothers". Afterwards a policy of denial and elimination has been adopted against the Kurds living on the territory of Turkey.

The Turkish government recognises only the Turkish identity; the use of any other language or the expression of any other culture than Turkish was prohibited and vigorously oppressed. Many Kurds found themselves increasingly marginalised and economically deprived. This is why a large size of Kurdish migrants sought a better life some place else. Sources (Beruuti, Doru et al., 2002) estimate the number of Kurdish people currently living in Europe at about one million. European countries with a large Kurdish population are Germany (700,000–800,000 Kurds, 60,000 Kurds from Iraq, 4,000 from Iran, 4,000 from Syria, and 15,000 from Lebanon) and France (130,000–150,000 Kurds, 4,000 Kurds from Iran, 2,000 from Iraq, 200–300 from Syria). Approximately 35,000 Kurds are currently living in Sweden, the UK and the Netherlands.

Besides assimilating to the new society and trying to get an economic foothold in their new homeland, the Kurdish people developed a stronger ethnic identity than ever before. The armed struggle began in 1984 and was not only a struggle "for self-determination and more cultural rights for the Kurdish people in Turkey" but for the rights of Kurds in all four parts of Kurdistan and for unity among the Kurdish people. The emergence of the Kurdish armed struggle acted as a catalyst for renewed ethnic awareness amongst Kurdish migrants. In an effort to root out the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) and its supporting network, the military-dominated government of Turkey took far-reaching measures. In the mid-nineties, the Turkish military intentionally destroyed villages and evacuated the Kurdish inhabi-

tants to state controlled urban areas. The armed struggle escalated into a full-scale guerrilla war and profoundly marked the Kurdish consciousness as a separate and oppressed people (Griffiths, 2001; Gülşen, 2002).

In most European studies Turkish migrants are considered a homogenous group (Bengi-Arslan et al., 2002; Virta, Sam & Westin, 2004). However, the Turkish group consists of many subgroups with different ethnic origins (Gülşen, 2002) Empirical studies have shown considerable ethnic-related mental health differences, most particularly between Turkish and Kurdish migrants, such as in Sweden (Bayard-Burfield, Sundquist & Johansson, 2001) and the Netherlands (Knipscheer, Drogendijk, Gulsen & Kleber, 2007). Kurdish people differ from Turkish people in substantial ways. For instance, a characteristic of the Kurdish population is the diversity of religious believes and practises – like Sunni Islam, Alevitism, Zoroastrian faith and practises, and the still existing influence of natural, polytheistic believes.

Kurdish migrants differ from Turkish migrants in their reasons for migrating. Over the years, political factors too became, an important reason for Kurdish people to migrate besides economical factors – especially after the military coup in 1980. Due to oppression, Kurdish political refugees often have a history of violence, imprisonment and torture (Gülşen, 2002). As other people who have been exposed to political violence (e.g, Latino Americans, see Eisenman, Gelberg, Liu & Shapiro, 2003), Kurds were found to show mental associated with political violence (e.g, PTSD) and poor health-related quality of life in conjunction with substantial reservations telling a clinician about their traumatic experiences.

Women are a special risk group. The efforts of the respective governments of the countries with a large Kurdish minority to preserve their country's national integrity historically led to brutal oppression of the Kurds. Women all over Kurdistan are exposed to common dangers. They are confronted with gender-specific warfare such as rape and sexual humiliation as tools of repression and a means to stain the victim's 'honour'. As a situation of insecurity persists, violent acts and sexual abuse against women in the private sphere are also increasing. Instead of receiving treatment and support after enduring such abuse, women too often face exclusion by their family and the

wider community. In the extreme, but not entirely uncommon case, they are even killed to preserve the family 'honour'. Increasingly, there seems to be evidence of a linkage between apparent suicides and honour killings. Some researchers and lawyers contend that a number of suicides reported are in fact cover-ups for honour killings and forced suicides, where women are forced to choose between their being killed or committing suicide in order to preserve the family honour. The rigid patriarchal oppression of women and the accompanying human rights violations, in particular forced and early marriages, domestic violence, rape and denial of reproductive rights, continue to be a feature of women's lives in Kurdistan. Owing to the lack of an integrated strategy for the development of the economic, social and cultural needs of Kurdish women, they are suffering a long-standing accumulation of problems (illiteracy, poor health, poverty, exclusion etc.). Economic, political and social problems affect the Kurdish society as a whole and they are responsible for this increase in violence against women. Facing triple discrimination, i.e. gender discrimination coupled with ethnic and religious discrimination by the authorities, intensifies the Kurdish women's struggle. In a climate of ongoing hostility (especially within a militarised society), there is often an increase in domestic violence as men internalise and release their aggression against people they perceive as weaker, including women and children.

In Turkey, Kurdish women have suffered in particular as a result of conflict and forced internal migration. They are not only vulnerable to state violence like torture and rape but the Turkish justice system also fails to offer adequate protection or redress. Such human rights infringements are even worsened by the failure of the state to enable and help the internally displaced to return to their former homes, or facilitating in some ways the hardship of entire families migrated to the cities where women frequently bear the burden of the resulting social commotion. With the contradictions of globalization, modernization and traditionalism being particularly pronounced in Turkey, their impact on the status of women in society has been devastating. Furthermore, although Kurds make up more than one quarter of the population of Turkey, they have only recently been granted very limited rights.

Honour (*namus*) is an important value in Turkish society; it serves as a means of rigid control over women and their sexuality. Honour is a partic-

ularly important concept in the region, as traditional norm has been codified into customary law (*töre*). Accordingly, the family must ensure that its members observe the code of honour; transgressions (or mere rumours of such transgressions) are seen as 'stains' on the entire family. These stains, then, must be removed at any cost, if necessary by murder. The suicides occurring in the south-eastern/eastern region are intimately linked to the violence resulting from the understanding and interpretation of the concepts of *namus* and *töre*. There are reasonable grounds for the assumption that at least some of the suicide cases recorded in fact are disguised murders.

1.6 Help-Seeking and Trauma

How can we help people suffering from posttraumatic stress? Mental health treatment has been shown to be effective (Harvey, Bryant & Tarrier, 2003) and holds the promise of shortening the duration and lowering the level of psychological distress following traumatic events. Many people with posttraumatic stress symptoms seek medical help, but a significant proportion does not seek or receive mental health treatment. If posttraumatic disorder is left untreated it can be complicated by other disorders such as depression and substance misuse. Getting in touch with patients suffering from posttraumatic stress remains a special challenge to health services. Several theoretical models have been proposed in an attempt to explain the complex process of treatment-seeking behaviour. One intriguing question is why many individuals do not use health services although they appear to need help. To answer this question, predisposing factors (tendency towards using health care), enabling factors (financial means, employment, knowledge of existence of services), and actual need (own view of severity of the illness and the professional's assessment of the patient's mental health status) have to be distinguished. The degree of psychological distress is the best predictor of mental health service use; further factors frequently found include female gender, younger of age, comorbidity, higher education, urban residence, and separation or divorce. Young adults, males, substance users, and the cognitively impaired are less likely to seek help.

A literature review yielded inconsistent results with respect to factors influencing treatment seeking after traumatic events, due to methodological differences in the assorted studies. Some findings are clear, though. Level of type of exposure to trauma was an important predictor of psychopathology after the event. Severity of current psychopathology correlated strongly with treatment seeking in most studies reviewed. However, it was not a significant factor in multivariate analyses when the influence of other factors (especially somatic symptoms and general health status but also the number of traumatic life events and time since trauma) was controlled. Ethnicity was associated with treatment seeking in a number of studies as well. The factors most consistently associated with treatment seeking were level of psychopathology, level of exposure, and being Caucasian (Gravilovic, Schutzwohl, Fazel & Priebe, 2005).

An important question is whether refugees remain at increased risk of mental disorder in the long-term, there being a dearth of research focusing on that question. It is an important question given the growing opposition to the admission of refugees to the industrialised countries of the West. Such reluctance could increase should refugees be depicted as people carrying the risk of long-term psychiatric impairment making them a burden to their host societies. Conversely, underestimation of the mental health needs of refugees could lead to the neglect of disabling psychiatric disorders in that minority group. In a study among Australian-born people and Vietnamese refugees, the Australian-born showed a trend for more consultations with mental health specialists than the Vietnamese did. The chief finding of this study was that a Vietnamese refugee community resettled in Australia for an average of 11 years reported approximately one third the level of anxiety, mood, and substance use disorders compared with the host population. That finding is of key importance when considered in conjunction with the body of data showing high rates of disorder amongst refugees in the immediate post-displacement period. In fact, it suggests that such reactions may be amenable to improvement over time (Steel, Silove, Chey, Bauman, Phan, & Phan, 2005).

However, it remains poorly understood why so many people suffering from psychological symptoms do not seek or receive mental health treatment after traumatic events. For example, if a Kurdish woman experiences physical

or mental health problems, our evidence suggests she may struggle against a treatment. Linguistic barriers and cultural attitudes towards the cost of health care act to impede access to healthcare for Kurdish women. A significant difference between the Kurdish region and the rest of Turkey is the disparity in access to resources. At present, there is only one state-run shelter for victims of domestic violence in the Kurdish region. Despite adverse conditions, various NGOs continue to play an important role in addressing these concerns and issues. However, they cannot begin to tackle such a large-scale problem without much wider support and infrastructure, including tribal, local, national and international bodies.

1.7 PTSD: A Culturally Valid Construct?

The question is whether the reactions of people to such an ongoing situation of disempowerment and disruption are represented in the concept of PTSD. The question of the cultural valid application of PTSD is relevant, as its empirical basis comes almost exclusively from studies with the Caucasian population in the USA, Western Europe and Australia (Summerfield, 2001). Evidently, culture has an impact on the ways individuals, families and the community at large experience and process violence, war, and disaster (Boehnlein, 2002). Critics point out that the diagnosis of PTSD distorts the perception of refugees and their suffering since the underlying assumptions of the disorder are implicitly based on core concepts of western ontology, such as mind-body dualism and an individualistic orientation, which may not be an adequate concept for other cultures (Kleber et al., 1995). Not all symptoms of the PTSD categories are always present in every population and in case that the same symptoms of PTSD are identified in different cultures, the question remains whether they refer to the same sickness and have the same impact (Hudnall Stamm & Friedman, 2000).

PTSD is the product of the interaction between trauma and culture. Nevertheless, how and where does culture intervene? Inspired by the ideas of Chemtob (1996), Van Dijk (2005), and Kleber et al. (1995), the following conceptual model represents the interplay between three interactive clusters

of key variables, i.e. reactions on shocking events, cultural schemes, and cultural adaptation (Figure I).

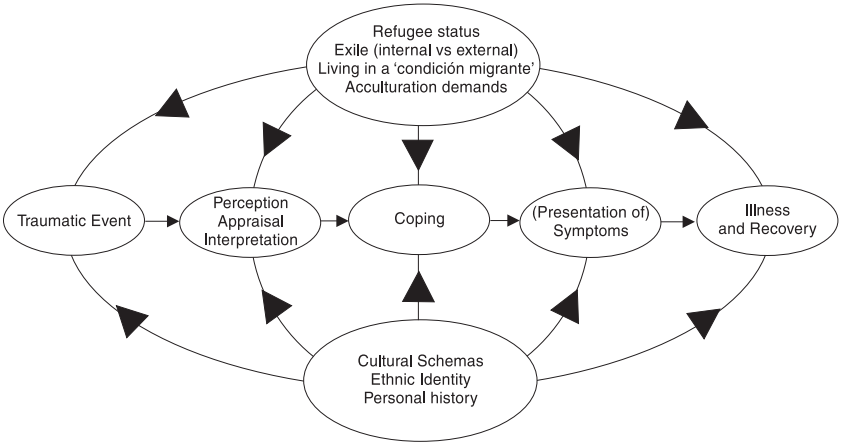

Figure I **Model representing the interplay between reactions to a traumatic event, cultural schemas, and cultural adaptation.**

In this model, the interplay of three clusters shapes the specific reaction to a certain shocking event. The chain of reactions begins with perception, appraisal and interpretation of the event, followed by coping and the development (and the presentation) of symptoms, and ending with the dynamics of illness and recovery.

Cultural reference frames or schemas influence each step in this process. Within the Kurdish population, cultural and religious expectations about fate possibly modify the perception of individual traumatic events. The decay of community cohesion and political solidarity among the Kurds will have an impact on the way atrocities are perceived and coped with (Bracken et al., 1995). People have to derive meaning from the traumatic experience and to discover significance in the confrontation with violence and loss. Cultural belief systems provide people with `tools' for adjusting to traumatic experiences; norms and values as well as cultural images and rituals channel thoughts

and emotions and help the person in his or her attempts to adjust to the situation (Kleber et al., 1995). With regard to the development of symptoms, health consequences of trauma commonly consist of reactions as nightmares, hypervigilance, problems concentrating, and flashbacks. Somatic symptoms will be frequently present and numbness will be commonly experienced.

Migration and refuge make this picture more complicated. Refugees live in a 'condicion migrante', in a situation of displacement and rootnessless and they have to deal with new cultural demands. They do not have reference frames to cope with discontinuity, and social support systems have fallen away. Moreover, vulnerability of ethnic minorities for posttraumatic health problems can partly be explained by their relatively low socio-economic situation (Knipscheer & Kleber, 2006). A cumulative effect of both pre-migration trauma exposure and post-migration factors (acculturation demands, like low proficiency in the language of the country of resettlement, poor social support, and social difficulties) is implicated by overall psychiatric morbidity. Social and cultural factors and economic difficulties in exile even appear to be stronger risk factors for psychological distress than exposure to violence before migration (e.g, Laban et al., 2005; Sundquist et al., 2000). A one-sided approach on PTSD when dealing with problems of refugees may lead to an overemphasis on working through the specific traumatic events and to ignoring the sometimes more pressing needs to alleviate daily life.

1.8 Aim of Study and Research Questions

Minority groups and especially those with a refugee background (who have migrated involuntary and may have a history of loss and traumatic experiences) are at risk for developing PTSD, which warrant attention to these groups. A study of its psychological consequences on non-western populations, in their home countries or abroad, seems necessary for a better understanding of PTSD.

The areas of trauma and cultural adaptation are, however, very distinct. The current literature on the relationship between posttraumatic stress, cul-

tural adaptation and mental health does not provide a comprehensive explanation of the ways acculturation exerts either positive or adverse effects on the mental health of migrants. Many Kurdish women are confronted with potentially traumatic events like honour vengeance, religious and domestic violence, sexual violence and torture (Dogan, 2003). A central aspect in this context is the inclusion of the role of migration: Does migration lead to more insecurity or does it offer opportunities?

In this report, we present the results of an empirical study concerning the relationship between posttraumatic stress reactions, cultural adaptation and mental health symptoms among Kurdish women who experienced one or more traumatic events in their lifetime and who have migrated within the territory of Turkey or from Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq to a country in the European Union. Problems and difficulties the Kurdish refugee/migrant women had to face were related to ethnic origin, war, oppression of national and cultural identity, displacement and gender-related oppression. These phenomena have not yet been studied extensively in conjunction with each other. Our study is unique in that. For the first time, we have also treated refugees and migrants from the same country of birth in the same survey.

The main aim of this study is an insight into mental health problems and the impact of coping with trauma and acculturation among Kurdish women migrated into EU countries. The key question was: What is the psychological impact of traumatic events on Kurdish women who have been displaced within Turkey or have migrated to a country in the European Union? This question will be elaborated in the following related issues:

(a) What kind of traumatic events have the Kurdish women experenced? Are they mainly related to gender-based violence within social structures or to institutional violence and war? What are the sources of the main stress factors for Kurdish migrant women and to which degree do they have an impact on their lives?

(b) What are the psychological consequences of their traumatic experiences in terms of reactions and (mental) health symptoms?

(c) What is the relative contribution of posttraumatic experiences, mental health problems, coping style and cultural adaptation demands to posttraumatic stress?

(d) What is the significance of the social context in which people live (are there any differences in symptoms and coping between internally and externally migrated Kurds)?

We hypothesised that Kurdish migrant women would report many traumatic events, high levels of posttraumatic stress reactions and high health impairment. In addition, we considered the role of acculturation in the relationship between symptoms of PTSD, mental health and posttraumatic stress reactions.

2. Methods

2.1 Design

This research was designed as a survey of a random convenience sample out of the population of female Kurdish victims of potentially traumatic life events who had migrated (internally or externally). Via networks of the International Free Women's Foundation (Netherlands), the Centre d'Information du Kurdistan (France), Kurdish Women for Integration (Sweden), Roj Women's Association (UK), Internationale Fraueninitiative e.V. and Kurdischer Frauenverein DESTAN e.V. (Germany), a broad collaboration of various Kurdish organisations and local community agencies in Europe and Turkey had been created thus providing access to respondents and a representative sample. All interviewers were female and mainly Kurdish in order to create a situation, which would encourage women to talk about events they would hardly tell a man (e.g sexual violence).

2.2 Participants and sample characteristics

Eleven hundred and twenty seven Kurdish women participated in the study, 558 internally displaced civilians in Turkey and 568 externally displaced migrants living in one of the EU countries covered by this study.

Country of birth The majority of the Kurdish women was born in Northern Kurdistan (N = 993, 88.3 %), about 8 percent in Turkey (N = 85, 7.5 %), most people came from the Diyarbakir province (N = 160, 14.5 %), other provinces representing more than 5 percent of the sample are Mardin, Batman, Sirnak, Hakkari. About two thirds (N = 710, 63.3 %) were brought up in rural areas ((small) village).

Age, marital status and religion The average age of the women was 38 years (M = 37.7; SD = 11.3, range 16–86). Most women were married (N = 744, 66.1 %), a small fifth was single (N = 191, 17.0 %), others were divorced (N = 66) or widowed (N = 106) (N = 172, 15.3 %). Most respondents had children (M 4.4), a fifth had no children (N = 241, 21.7 %). The sample consisted mostly of Sunni Muslims (N = 832, 74.1 %), while about 16 % were Alevites (N = 184, 16.4 %); a small minority reported other religious affiliations (Yezidi (Zoroastrian)) or no religious affiliation at all (N = 63, 5.6 %).

Education and income More than a third was illiterate (N = 438, 39.0 %). Less than half finished their school education (N = 603, 53.8 %). Of these respondents, almost half (N = 268, 44.4 %) had primary level of education, a third secondary (N = 220, 36.4 %) and a fifth higher levels of education (N = 116, 19.3 %). Forty percent of the total sample received their earnings via their partners (N = 338, 30.3 %) or children (N = 135, 12.1 %), about a fifth had their sources of income from a paid job (N = 225, 20.2 %), another fifth (N = 242, 21.6 %) received an unemployment benefit or a social benefit, two percent (N = 23) received illness payments or labour unfitness payments, 21 persons had pensions (1.9 %) and 15 persons a study benefit (1.3 %).

Language The major Kurdish dialects represented were Kurmanci (N = 905, 84.9 %), Sorani (N = 7, .7 %) or Kirmancki Zazaki-Dimili (N = 154, 14.4 %). Second languages spoken were Turkish (N = 795), Arabic (N = 13) or Persian (N = 1). Some also spoke the languages of the countries they had immigrated in. However, half of the respondents knew the language of the country they had migrated to only (very) little (N= 548, 50.5 %); while almost a third knew these languages (very) well (N = 314, 28.9 %).

Migration The emigrated Kurdish group resided with an average of 15 years (M = 14.7, SD = 7.5, range 0-69) in their new living situation. The majority had emigrated once (N = 613, 54.9 %), a quarter twice (N = 293, 26.2 %), about 10 percent three times (N = 104, 9.3 %), another ten percent even more than three times (N = 107, 9.6 %). About half of the people migrated within their original region or state to another village or city (N = 558, 49.5 %; within Turkey (N = 527, 46.7 %) or Iraq (N = 31, 2.8 %)). The other half migrated to a country in the EU (N = 568, 50.5 %) and live now in Germany (N = 333), France (N = 82), Netherlands (N = 51), Sweden (N = 51), or U.K. (N = 51). Among the main causes given for migration were "political reasons" ((N = 417, 37.0 %), "war and oppression" (N = 397, 35.2 %), "marriage/family reunion" (N = 163, 14.5 %) and "labour or education" (N = 115, 10.2 %). The most important problem(s) the migrants had to face in their target countries were cultural adaptation (N = 609, 54.0 %), and similar problems related to integration – assimilation, and effects of forced displacement. Other problems mentioned were economic problems (N = 403, 35.8 %), psychic problems (N = 398, 35.3 %), language difficulties (N = 337, 33.5 %), and problems finding a job (N = 229, 20.3 %).

2.3 Instruments

Core variables in the instruments were derived from theoretical insight in trauma, health consequences and migration. They focus on subjectively perceived health status, characteristic reactions, acculturation strategies, and need for help. We administrated a survey containing culturally well-validated standardised questionnaires. All of these instruments were translated and validated in Kurdish.

Socio-demographic information A demographic questionnaire was used to obtain information about age, country of birth, ethnicity, marital status, highest educational achievement, religious affiliation, urbanization rate of childhood surroundings, source of income, preferred languages and fluency of language of host country, length of stay in the host country, reason of migration and stresses following from migration.

Traumatic experiences In this study, we used a broad definition of trauma. The following major life events were assessed: any (major) physical violence (including rape, sexual violence, or childhood abuse); political violence (including torture and imprisonment); a serious (life threatening) accident or natural disaster; death of a family member or close friend; a life threatening illness; robbery or burglary; serious relationship-problems; migration.

Health symptoms For the assessment of occurrence and severity of general health symptoms, the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28 item version) was used (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979). This questionnaire measures the recent state of subjective well-being in four areas: (a) psychosomatic symptoms, (b) anxiety and insomnia, (c) social dysfunction, and (d) (severe) depression. Each subscale consisted of seven items, e.g: 'Have you recently been getting any pains in your head' (somatisation); have you recently lost much sleep over worry' (anxiety and insomnia); 'have you recently been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities' (social dysfunction); 'have you recently felt that life is entirely hopeless' (depression). All items were endorsed on a 4-point Likert-type scale: (0) less than usual; (1) as usual; (2) more than usual; (3) much more than usual. Goldberg and Hillier recommend scoring the first two categories by assigning a value of zero while assigning a value of one to the last two answer categories. The GHQ total score is obtained by adding the item scores. The scores for GHQ-total ranged in our sample from 0 to 28. The currently recommended cut-off point based on studies of general populations in 15 countries (Goldberg et al., 1997) suggests a score of five or lower to be consistent with absence of non-specific psychiatric morbidity. Persons who answered 6-11 questions positively had moderate psychiatric morbidity, and persons answering 12 or more questions positively had substantial psychiatric morbidity. Cross-cultural validity of the GHQ-28 was established for instance with Turkish samples in the Netherlands (Bengi-Ar-

slan et al., 2002). The internal consistencies of the GHQ-28 subscales in our sample were excellent with Cronbach's α for the subscales varying from .71 for social dysfunction to .87 for depression, and .91 for the total GHQ 28 score.

Other stressors Besides the traumatic life event, respondents could indicate other stresses they encountered related to gender-based violence, institutional oppression and war as well as stresses during the process of migration and displacement. The stressors were investigated by asking about thirty items concerning issues such as being forced to leave place of origin, racism due to being a Kurd, torture, forced marriage or domestic violence. In order to investigate indications for the level of impact that these possible stresses had on the lives of the women, the level of impact could be indicated on a scale from 0 (= absent) to 9 (= affected me very much). S. Iscanli and A.K. Kowarsch compiled the stress list especially for this study to examine the occurrence of different stressors and their possible degree of impact on the lives of Kurdish migrant women.

Depressive symptoms To assess the amount of depressive response, 18 characteristic symptoms of depression (as established by DSM IV) were administered. Each item was weighted endorsed on a two-point scale (present or absent; scored 0, 1). A total score was obtained by summing all scores, a higher score implying more and severe problems. Examples are, 'Do you have less appetite?', 'Do you feel worthless?' and 'Do you sleep much longer or much less than usual?' The scale was found to be statistically reliable with internal consistencies (Cronbach's α for the total scale score is .85). When more than four symptoms were reported in combination with the ascertaining of the question whether respondents were obstructed by these complaints in the main part of their lives, an indication whether they would be labelled as depressive was obtained.

Panic and anxiety To assess the amount of anxiety, ratings of 14 characteristic symptoms of a panic attack or anxiety (as established by DSM) were administered. Each item was weighted endorsed on a 2-point scale (present or absent; scored 0, 1). A total score was obtained by summing all scores, a higher score implying more and severe problems. Examples are: 'palpitations

of the heart' and 'feeling of dizziness or faint'. Cronbach's α for the total scale score is .78. When more than four symptoms were reported in combination with the ascertaining of the question whether respondents were obstructed by these complaints in the main part of their lives, an indication whether they would be labelled as suffering from panic attacks or severe anxiety was obtained.

Posttraumatic reactions: intrusions, avoidances and hypervigilance To assess the characteristic responses of intrusions, avoidance and hyperarousal reactions, ratings of 23 items measuring intrusion, avoidance and hyperarousal were administered by means of an adaptation of the Structured Interview for PTSD (SI-PTSD: Carlier et al., 1998). Each item was weighted endorsed on a 2-point Likert-type scale (present or absent; scored 0, 1), reflecting the occurrence of reactions during the past seven days. A total score was obtained by summing all scores, a higher score implying more and severe problems. Examples of items are 'Are there certain things that remind you the event without wanting to?' (Intrusion), 'Are you trying to avoid activities, places or people that arouse recollections of the event?' (Avoidance) and 'Are you easily getting frightened (even form a small sound)?' (Hyperarousal). The scale was found to be statistically reliable, with excellent internal consistencies (Cronbach's α for the total scale score is .88). Respondents were diagnosed suffering from a posttraumatic stress disorder on the premise that at least one symptom was scored on intrusion, at least three on avoidance, and at least two symptoms on hyperventilation, while the complaints lasted longer than three months and obstructed the main part of the daily life of the respondent.

Coping through self-reliance To assess a coping resource questions concerning self-reliance were administered. Each question was weighted endorsed on a 4-point Likert-type scale (not at all to very; scored 1, 2, 3, 4), reflecting the general opinion and reactions. A total score was obtained by summing all scores, a higher score implying more self reliance. Examples of items are 'I always manage to solve difficult problems as long as I try hard enough'; 'I can deal with unexpected events well'. Cronbach's α for the total scale score was .91.

Cultural Adaptation To assess the level of cultural adaptation the Lowlands Acculturation Scale (LAS; Mooren, Knipscheer, Kamperman, Kleber & Komproe, 2001) was used. The LAS was developed specifically to measure stressors and affiliations directly related to migration. This 10-item scale includes five different dimensions: 'Skills', the ability to perform the adequate skills for the new society (including language); 'Traditions', the preservation of the original culture and habits; 'Social integration' in the new society, such as personal contacts with the indigenous people in the host country; and 'Loss', the experiences of loss feelings concerning the country of birth. The set of items was designed to distinguish between a global orientation towards the past (and land of origin) as opposed to the orientation towards the future (and country of current residence). Time of reference was the past three months. All items were rated on a Likert-type scale (1–6; one reflects the tendency to totally disagree with the item, six is an expression of total agreement with the item). Examples are 'I have difficulties understanding the language of this country' (Skills); 'I consider it important to pass our traditions on to the next (future) generation' (Traditions); 'I have frequent contact with the indigenous people of this country' (Social integration); Even though I live here, it does not feel like my country' (Loss). Internal consistency of the LAS in our sample was satisfactory; Cronbach's α for the total scale score was .69.

Help seeking and Evaluation of Services By means of the Help Seeking Route and Evaluation Questionnaire (HREQ: Knipscheer, 2000), 24 items concerning help seeking and satisfaction with different aspects of service provision were administered. Examples are 'Who was the first person or institution you approached to get help for your problems?', 'Did you find it difficult to ask this person for help for your problems?', and 'How important is it to you that your health care provider is of the same ethnic background as you are?'

2.4 Procedure

Participants were recruited by means of snowball sampling, a sampling method that is being used with increasing frequency for the study of hard-to-reach populations (De Jong & Van Ommeren, 2002). Snowball sampling

involves selecting individuals using referrals by insiders within the population to be studied. An individual who has been selected on a certain characteristic (in this case being a Kurdish woman, having experienced a life-shocking event and being internally displaced or having externally migrated) will be asked to list others with the same characteristic. From this list, (at least) one person is randomly selected and approached for an interview. In return, the interviewee is asked to list others and the same procedure is repeated several times. The technique is especially useful and feasible to find marginal research populations that are often difficult to study using conventional sampling techniques, such as traumatised refugees and torture survivors (e.g, Crescenzi et al., 2002). In addition, mental health care agencies and individual psychotherapists were approached also according to the snowball method.

Only adults (18 years and older) who were born in Kurdistan or had at least one parent born there, were invited to participate in the face-to-face interview. If a person expressed an interest in participating in the study, she was asked to provide a contact phone number or a direct appointment was made. We aimed at collecting data from as many people as possible and attempted to maximize the socio-demographic diversity.

Approximately 90 % of the persons solicited agreed to participate, independent of the recruitment method. It was not possible to compare those who chose to participate in the interview with those who declined.

The respondents were recruited at several community centres, agencies and organisations run by and for members of the Kurdish communities as well as during home visits in various places in Turkey and five countries of the EU. One hundred and two different interviewers (all female with a Kurdish background) administered the semi-structured interviews. Guidelines on assessment research with ethnic minorities stress the involvement of expert cultural and ethnic consultants (Okazaki & Sue, 1995). In line with these recommendations we consulted various key persons in the Kurdish community during the development of the measures and the interpretation of the results (e.g, during 'experts meetings'). All instruments were translated into Kurdish applying a back-translation procedure. A preliminary version of the questionnaires was pilot tested with 10 women and both content and

format were revised based on the results. Inter-rater reliability across the interviews was enhanced by means of a protocol and a practical training. The protocol guided the interview process and consisted of questions derived from the themes mentioned in the introduction. Interviewers from all regions where the study was implemented, took part in an intensive training provided by the project coordinator and two Kurdish psychiatrists (İşcanlı & Gün). The training covered aim and implementation of the study, the way in which the interviews was to be conducted, how to handle possible risks of (re-)traumatisation as well as ethical aspects concerning the personal data collection process. The interviewers came together on a regular basis in order to extensively discuss how questions were administered, how answers were noted and how special situations were dealt with (such as respondents who refused to answer certain questions or who did not understand certain questions). The project coordinator also made counselling visits to the regional groups. Additionally, the interviewers could call the research coordinator (first author) for advice. An evaluation meeting attended by representatives of the regional groups of interviewers was organised, where they could share their experiences, contribute to the mid-term evaluation of the research results (due to the presentation of the evaluation of 500 questionnaires) and received supervision to reflect possible effects of the interview process.

The respondents were informed on the aim of the study by means of an information sheet. The interviewers were instructed to read the information sheet to illiterate respondents. It was emphasized that anonymity would be guaranteed. Participation was voluntary. Participants were reassured about confidentiality and told that they were not obliged to answer questions that they did not wish to answer. The interviews took place mainly at the respondents' homes. In some cases they were conducted at community agencies, associations or public places (like cafeterias) – whatever the participant preferred. The majority was interviewed in the Kurdish language. Most of the interviews took place without a translator (N = 947, 85.0 %). The duration of the interviews varied from 40 to 180 minutes (mean duration about one hour). The answers were noted on paper by the interviewer (the questionnaire forms were numbered and distributed by the project coordinator according to a proportional contingent of Kurdish population) and later processed by the researcher (second author).

2.5 Statistical analyses

The data collected on the women were stored without names and contact details. Access was restricted to researchers who had undergone training on the nature of case management and ethical use of personal data.

Analyses were performed using univariate (e.g, t and χ^2) tests to make between-group comparisons (e.g, internally versus externally displaced respondents) in demographic factors, mental health and subscales of the LAS. In order to analyse differences in variances in acculturation level, we use the Levene's test for equality of variances. In addition, multivariate techniques (e. g, sequential and hierarchical multiple regression analysis, logistic regression analyses) were conducted, providing an appropriate and comprehensive framework for analysing individual and contextual influences on trauma (Kawachi & Subramanian, 2006).

3. Results

3.1 Sociodemographics and Mental Health

Age influenced mental health reporting: Older respondents reported more health problems than others did ($r = .14$, $p < .001$), especially somatic complaints. Marital status also had an impact: Widowed women reported the greatest number of mental health problems compared to the other marital groups ($F (4, 931) = 8.27$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, respondents with a more children reported more health complaints than others did ($r = .14$, $p < .001$), again especially somatic complaints. Women brought up in rural circumstances have significantly lower education. Religion is an important factor as well: Muslims report more somatic problems ($F (3, 1058) = 5.02$, $p < .01$) and depression ($F (3, 1052) = 5.26$, $p < .001$). Alevite respondents differ from the rest in having the longest time of residence in their host countries ($F (3, 1106) = 13.50$, $p < .001$); nonreligious people have the highest education rate ($F (3, 599) = 29.84$, $p < .001$).

Illiterate respondents reported more health problems (M = 14.1) than those who could read and write (and were about ten years older) (M = 11.7), t = –6.49, p < .001. Respondents who finished school reported less health problems than those who did not or never started in the first place (F (2, 931) = 20.25, p < .001). Higher educated reported less health problems than others did (r = –.10, p < .05), especially depression. People with a paid job (who were also younger and better educated) reported less health problems (especially somatic and social problems) than those living on some form of transfer income or from the earnings of their partners or children (F (2, 833) = 4.16, p < .05).

3.2 Migration and Mental Health

Most health problems were reported by respondents currently living in Turkey Diyarbakir (M = 15.9), followed by people living in Turkey Van (M = 13.0); respondents living in other countries did not differ significantly in the health symptoms reported, the least number of symptoms were reported in England (M = 11.1) (F (10, 926) = 6.72, p < .001), see Figure II. Respondents in England and Sweden have the longest time of residence in the host country compared with the rest (F (10, 1102) = 4.99, p < .001) and the highest education (F (9, 593) = 6.23, p < .001); respondents in Turkey Diyarbakir and Van score the lowest on both variables.

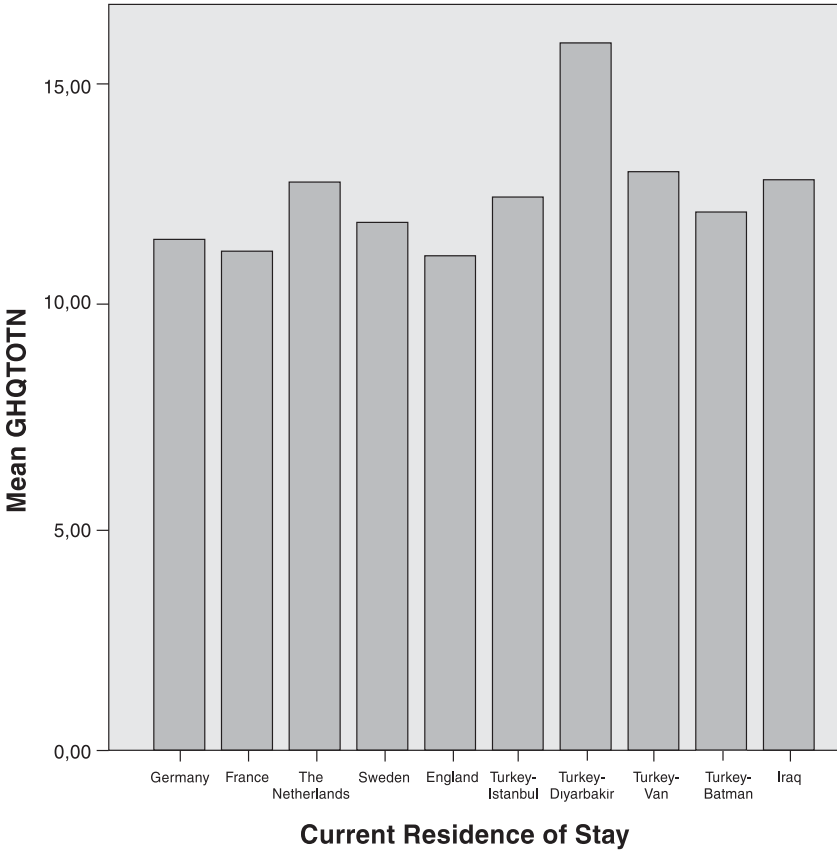

Figure II Reported GHQ scores by current residence of stay

People who had more recently migrated reported more health symptoms ($r = .07$, $p < .05$), especially on social functioning. No relationship was found between times of migration and health problems. Less knowledge of language is correlated with more health complaints ($r = -.18$, $p < .001$).

Most health problems were reported by respondents who also reported war and oppression as migration reasons, followed at a distance by people who had migrated for political reasons, while respondents with other migra-

tion motivations did not differ significantly in the health symptoms reported ($F (4, 926) = 6.84$, $p < .001$). Women who had migrated for labour or education reasons differed from the others in having resided longer times in the host country ($F (4, 1104) = 30.18$, $p < .001$) and having achieved higher levels of education ($F (4, 595) = 8.32$, $p < .001$).

3.3 Traumatic experiences

Respondents were questioned about their memories of the shocking events they had experienced over the last years with a major impact on their lives. Life threatening experiences and incidents most frequently mentioned were: death/life threatening disease of a loved one (child/husband) or other family related matters (N = 560, 49.7 %); political violence/detention/torture (N = 309, 27.4 %); military violence and destruction (N = 305, 27.1 %); crime (N = 242, 21.5 %); relation problems (N = 124, 11.0 %); migration issues (N = 84, 7.5 %), and disaster/accident (N = 13, 1.2 %).

More than 80 % experienced the events in question more than five years ago (N = 822, 82.5 %), only six percent (N = 62) experienced them less than one year ago. The incidents had taken place most frequently in Turkey (N = 830, 82.8 %), an for a smaller part in Europe (N = 133, 13.3 %).

3.4 Traumatic Experience and Mental Health

Respondents who reported political violence/torture (M 13.8) or military violence and destruction (M 13.8) reported the largest number of health symptoms; those reporting death/life threatening diseases (M 13.1), crime (M 13.3), relationship problems (M 13.1) or migration issues (M 13.3) reported a medium number of symptoms and those who experienced disaster /accident reported the smallest number (M 9.2) of health complaints. However, the kind of event experienced was not significantly reflected in reported

health symptoms nor did the time between experience and interview have any influence on the kind of health symptoms reported, i.e. depression, panic, posttraumatic stress reactions or acculturation stress reactions. Interestingly, respondents who could or should have done something to prevent another person's traumatic experience reported greater health problems.

3.5 Other Stresses

Table I shows the different forms of stress mentioned by the respondents. Most stressors were related to forced displacement and its detrimental psychosocial and material consequences. Discrimination because of a Kurdish background was also frequently mentioned. About half of the women reported some form of domestic violence; one out of four women mentioned sexual violence. About forty percent reported having been imprisoned or tortured at some point in time. Women suffered most from forced displacement and the material consequences of destruction, experiencing racism for being a Kurd also had a substantial impact on their lives.

Table 1 **Percentages of respondents who had suffered from a specific form of stress and mean indications of the level of impact these stresses had on their lives**

Displacement from social surroundings or friends	91.7%	(8.04)
Being forced to leave the village/place of origin	90.4%	(8.49)
Uncertainty about the future	89.8%	(7.67)
Loneliness	8.4%	(7.99)
Racism due to being a Kurd	87.7%	(8.24)
Discrimination due to political opinion	85.1%	(8.05)
Displacement of natural means of production or ways of living	84.7%	(7.90)
Not being able to return to home country	84.6%	(8.46)
Not feeling safe at present place of residence	83.4%	(7.46)
Poverty	82.1%	(7.28)
Disruption of family due to war or migration	80.7%	(8.16)
State/police oppression	80.1%	(8.19)
Sexism	79.3%	(7.71)
Ban of language	75.1%	(7.77)
Experiencing fear of death	74.5%	(7.47)
Military fighting	60.4%	(8.13)
Discrimination due to culture and clothing style	58.5%	(6.94)
Village destruction	57.2%	(8.30)
Being threatened by death	56.7%	(8.22)
Domestic violence verbal	55.1%	(7.15)
Domestic violence and economic oppression/dependency	52.9%	(7.59)
Domestic violence and mental oppression	50.1%	(7.26)
Being illiterate	49.0%	(7.94)
Loss of husband or relative	46.8%	(8.08)
Discrimination due to religious belief and traditions	46.0%	(6.68)
Detention/imprisonment	44.5%	(7.63)
Domestic violence and physical abuse	42.7%	(6.88)
Torture	42.7%	(8.16)
Forced marriage	35.2%	(6.97)
Loss of children	29.7%	(7.99)
Being separated from child and not being able to experience its growth	28.0%	(7.87)
Domestic violence and sexual violence	24.9%	(7.22)
Rape	14.6%	(7.85)
Blood feud	11.2%	(7.32)
“Honour” killing	10.4%	(7.32)
Divorce own request	6.4%	(7.36)

In general, more stressors correlate with more health problems (r = .40, p<.000). Internally displaced women reported more stressors than externally displaced women (t (718.83) = –6.09, p < .001), see Figure III.

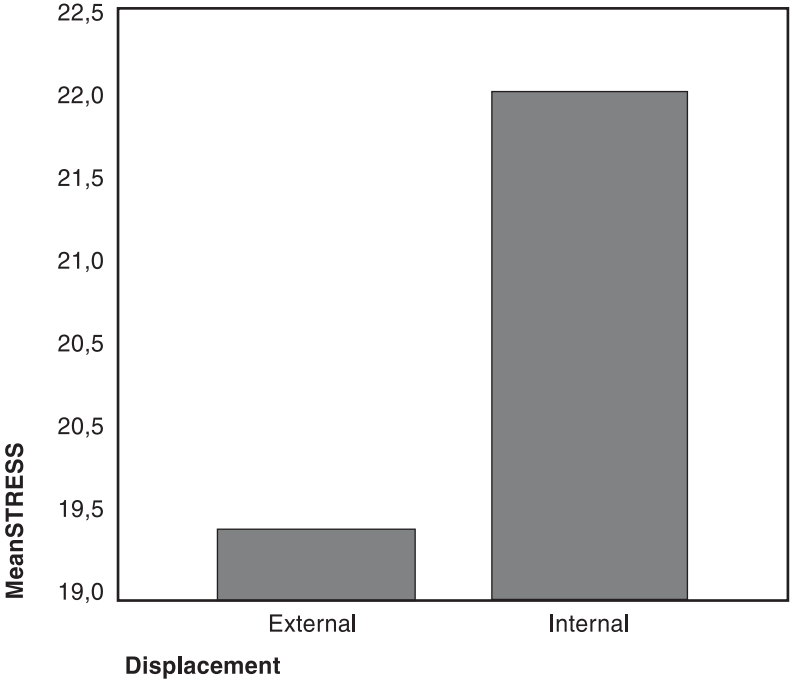

Figure III Reported stressors for internally and externally displaced women

3.6 Depressive Reactions

About forty percent of the sample (N = 442, 39.2%) can be labelled as having a depressive episode or disorder. A fifth (N = 208, 20.1%) tried to commit suicide at least once, sixty one respondents three or more times.

3.7 Panic and Anxiety Reactions

About a third of the sample (N = 411, 36.5 %) indicated having had sudden and short crises sometimes, which made them very discomforted; they reported four or more symptoms of a panic attack. About half of them (N = 230, 53.6 %) reported that the crises had been more than five years ago.

3.8 Posttraumatic Stress Reactions

Most respondents reported severe posttraumatic problems like intrusions (N = 1016, 90.2 %), avoidances (N = 902, 80.0 %) and hyperarousal (N = 933, 82.2 %). About three quarter (N = 860, 76.3 %) of the respondents reported a level of posttraumatic reactions that was indicative for the diagnosis of PTSD. For 710 (71.4 %) persons the complaints lasted longer than three months and for 604 (60.6 %) the complaints obstructed the main part of their daily lives. In conclusion, almost half of the respondents would be diagnosed as suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (N = 523, 46.4 %).

3.9 Coping and Self Reliance

Based on ten questions concerning coping with events and situations based on self-reliance, half of the sample (N = 502, 50.5 %) labelled themselves considerably self-reliant and a third (N = 298, 30.0 %) as very self-reliant. About 2 percent of the sample (N = 20, 2.0 %) labelled themselves as not at all self reliant, a fifth (N = 174, 17.5 %) hardly feels self-reliant. Respondents who were more self-reliant were also younger, had been staying longer in their new residence, and had a higher education. They reported less health problems on GHQ, less other stresses, and less symptoms of depression, panic and posttraumatic stress.

3.10 Cultural adaptation

Based on 10 questions concerning cultural adaptation in the new society (only administered to those respondents that had externally migrated to an European country), about 3 percent of the sample (N = 19, 3.4 %) reported no problems with cultural adaptation at all, about forty percent (N = 212, 38.3 %) reported moderately acculturation problems, and more than half of the sample (N = 322, 58.2 %) reported much or very much cultural adaptation problems. Respondents who have more problems with acculturation are older, duration of residence is shorter, they are lower educated and report more often depression, panic, or posttraumatic stress symptoms, and less self reliance.

3.11 The Impact of Internal Displacement

Internally displaced respondents (N = 558) were older ($t(1152,53) = -3.64$, $p < .001$), resided less longer in the host country or region ($t(848,17) = 3.36$, $p < .001$), and had a lower education ($t(601) = 5.51$, $p < .001$) than women who had migrated externally (N = 568). Furthermore, internally displaced women were more illiterate (60.5 %) and mainly Muslim (96.9 %) whereas more than half of the externally displaced were affiliated with other religions (30 % Alevitic) or are not religious at all (10 %)). A larger number had been raised in rural environments and was more dependent on the earnings of their partners (74.3 %). They had also more frequently migrated because of war (and thus less of them in search of labour or education, or for marriage or other family reasons), and had encountered more politics related traumatic events and more military violence. Moreover, internally displaced respondents reported more health problems than women who had migrated abroad ($t(928,06) = -5.26$, $p < .001$) as well as more frequently depression, panic, posttraumatic stress, and acculturation problems, and were at the same time less self-reliant than externally displaced women.

3.12 The Impact of Domestic Violence

A comparison between occurrences and impact of gender-based (domestic) violence and institutional violence and war related violence revealed that more women reporting domestic were illiterate and had encountered more frequently marriage or family related traumatic events. Moreover, respondents reporting domestic violence also reported more health problems ($t(936) = -7.24$, $p < .001$, see Figure IV) as well as more frequently depression, panic, and posttraumatic stress (51.4 % PTSD cases versus 34.1 %).

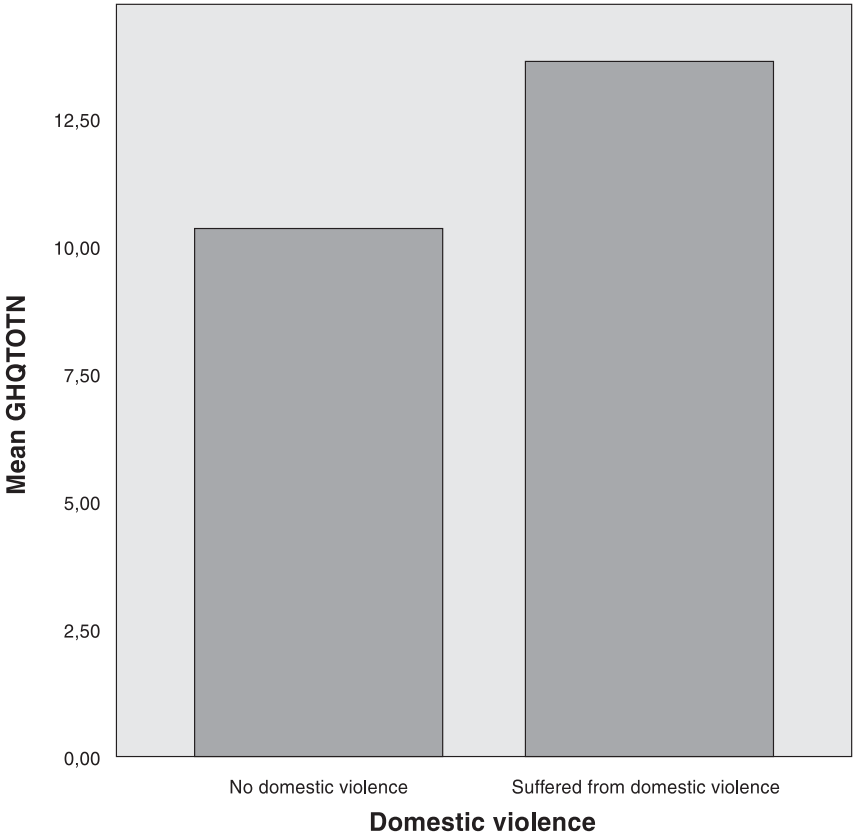

Figure IV Mean GHQ Scores of Women Divided By Domestic Violence

3.13 Predictors of Mental Health Symptoms

The relation between life events and general mental health, when controlled for acculturation level, posttraumatic problems and demographic factors, was analysed by sequential multiple regression analysis. The life events were entered in the first step (Model 1). In the second step we entered the migration motives, stressors and the number of years in the host country. Coping style was entered in step 3. Indicators for depression, anxiety and PTSD were entered at step 4. At step 5, the demographic factors were entered. The dependent variable was the GHQ total score. Indicators for a depressive disorder, a panic disorder, a PTSD, being less self reliant, being internally displaced, and having experienced politics as life event predicted high general mental health symptoms best, the sixth model contributed 40 % of the variance, $F\ (20, 688) = 24.8$, $p < .0001$.

3.14 Predictors of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Predictors of posttraumatic stress disorder were age, degree of knowledge of the language of the host country, religion, life events, a depressive indication, a panic indication, coping and the total general mental health score; the model contributed 27 %, $\chi^2\ (15) = 250.6$, $p < .0001$. Older respondents, Muslims, persons with less knowledge of the language of the host country, or with family related problems, or a crime as life event, with depressive indication, panic indication, low self-reliance, and a greater number of mental health problems were more at risk for developing a posttraumatic stress disorder.

3.15 Comparisons with Other Samples

The PTSD levels in the Kurdish women sample were higher than the levels of posttraumatic stress disturbances in Turkish people affected by disaster

in the Netherlands (Drogendijk et al., 2003), and considerably higher than the PTSD rate among earthquake survivors in Turkey (23 % at the epicentre and 14 % in Istanbul; Başoğlu et al., 2004). The levels of general mental health symptoms were equally high compared with a Turkish earthquake sample in the Netherlands (M = 13.0, Kurt et al., 2001), but somewhat higher than Bosnian refugee samples in the Netherlands (M = 11.8, Mooren, 2001, see also Knipscheer, Kok & Kleber, 2004) and an Albanian refugee sample in the UK (M = 10.4, Turner et al., 2003). They were also substantially higher than a Kurdish migrant sample (almost all of them refugees for politic reasons) (M = 6.11, SD = 7.43; see Knipscheer, Gulsen & Kleber, 2007).

3.16 Help-seeking

Two hundred forty of all respondents (EU countries and Turkey) had sought help for their problems. This paragraph offers an evaluation of the health care available for the complaints these respondents had because of negative life events they had been exposed to. Forthcoming publications will give information on national and regional differences of this help-seeking behaviour in more detail.

The majority (N = 203, 86.0 %) received a doctor's diagnosis and most of them used medication (N = 177, 73.8 %). Nearly half of the women (N = 121) tried to do something about it themselves, which was reported helpful by 61 women. General practitioners were for most respondents (N = 97, 40.2 %) the first persons or institutions they approached in order to find help for their problems. Medical officers or hospitals were also frequently consulted (N = 76, 31.5 %). Friends, family, and the professional mental health care service followed. About a third of the respondents (N = 81, 34 %) sought help within a year, almost another third waited more than five years before seeking help. Forty percent (N = 96, 40.5 %) did not find it difficult to ask for help. The others found it difficult to talk about their problems, either because their problems posed an illness in their culture or because they were afraid of social control. Medication, physical treatment

or referral to another health service were most frequently mentioned kinds of help received after contacting a health care service. About half (N = 128, 55.1 %) felt better after the first help contact and reported that the complaints had decreased. Professional help and treatment were seen as most beneficial as well as communication with (social) helpers.

A third of the persons seeking help subsequently sought help from an individually practicing psychologist or psychiatrist (N = 69, 31.7 %), a psychologist or psychiatrist from an organisation for mental health care (N = 32, 14.7 %) or a psychiatric clinic of a hospital (N = 33, 15.1 %); most of them came on their own initiative or were referred by a GP. More than half of these persons (N = 83, 57.2 %) did not find it difficult to ask a psychologist or psychiatrist for help. Medication, physical treatment or referral to another service were again the kinds of help most frequently mentioned, which seems rather strange since a psychologist usually mainly talks. For a quarter of the respondents (N = 36, 25.7 %) the health care provider shared the same ethnic background with them. For more than half of them (N = 85, 55.2 %) it was to some extent or very important that the health care provider share the same ethnic background (mainly for communication reasons). Half of the sample seeking psychiatric help (N = 79, 52.0 %) had a female therapist, a third (N = 56, 36.7 %) reported it as to some degree or very important that their therapist be of the same sex (making it easier to talk about themselves mainly).

Fourteen respondents (9.2 %) had had contact with a culturally or religiously affiliated therapist, such as a hodja, priest, dede or fortune-teller. Five people consulted a traditional healer because they felt other health care professionals would not be able to cure certain aspects of their sickness. Eight people did not find it difficult to ask these persons for help. They mainly received treatment by meditation, amulets, or other traditional methods of healing. Five people felt better after these treatments (more secure, more self-confident).

3.17 Opinions on the Meaning of 'Onur' And 'Namus'

Answers to the question 'How do you define *onur* (= dignity)?' were mainly: proudness (12 %), very important (9 %), everything (8 %), and humanity (7 %). Other answers were: Belief, living freely, pride, having a good character, honesty, way of life, self-respect and one's intelligence, life, being able to do something bad, Kurdishness, being able to struggle, holy, something good and something bad, not being dependent on anybody, social and individual values, respecting and loving one another, something good, not to insult anybody, self-respect and existence, good moral standards, my land, my family, women, being successful, my personality, nothing at all, protecting yourself and your family, I don't belief in something like that, freedom, parents, martyr and leader Apo, happiness, self-confidence, quality and stability, not refrain from your aim/cause, being able to stand on your own feet, identity, man, faithfulness, my people, to unite with my people, (religious) belief, a human being's honor is his/her religion; language; people, our goods, not allow anybody to suppress you, decent education, virtue, something that needs to be protected, not causing a bloodshed, to work, respect, my children, my ethnic background, to work for my people, not to do anything bad, my personality, to have principles, generosity, and culture.

The question 'How do you define *namus* (= honour)?' was most frequently answered by: Very important (10 %), everything (10 %), my country (7 %), women (7 %), honesty/respect (6 %), proudness (5 %), something that I need to protect (4 %). Other answers were: Connected with religion, definitely not women, nonsense, I don't know, living with honour, tradition of my culture, I don't understand, not important, being faithful to your husband, taboo, thought, to know why and for what you live, land, honour, free will, protecting tradition and customs, belongs to man, culture and struggle, protecting your identity and personality, humanity, life, attending to something, guerilla, country, leader (Abdullah Ocalan), being faithful to your home, not to wear anything that shows too much of your body, my family, something difficult, personality, my girl, myself, sexuality, something good, virginity, dying, martyr and leader, freedom, being aware of your ac-

tions, words and your body, a chain wrapped around our necks, sorrow, having moral, character, raping women, (religious) belief, our possessions and house, my fright, your own values and standards, my ethnic background, knowing the meaning of life, behaving consciously as a woman, making choices, community chain, very relative.

For a majority both terms were equally important (N = 717, 66.1 %), for 177 respondents Onur was more important, 171 persons thought Namus more important. For 19 women these terms were not so important.

4. Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between traumatic experiences, posttraumatic reactions, mental health symptoms, and acculturation levels in Kurdish women who were either internally displaced within Turkey or externally displaced to a country in the European Union. Results confirm the findings of previous studies (e.g, Silove et al., 2005; Steel et al., 1999) that documented high prevalence of traumatic events and mental health problems among migrated individuals. Our study also highlights the diversity of trauma in the life of these migrated women.

4.1 Main Results on Health, Coping, Acculturation and Help-Seeking

Half of the interviewed Kurdish women had experienced the death or a life threatening disease of a loved one (mostly child/husband), a quarter had to endure political violence, detention or torture and a quarter had to face the consequences of military violence and destruction. About a fifth of the sample had been confronted with a crime, and about a tenth reported relation problems or migration issues as traumatic event. One percent mentioned having been victim of a disaster or an accident. Other major stresses frequently reported were related to forced displacement and its detrimental

psychosocial (e.g, social loss, uncertainty about future; loneliness) and material (destruction of homes, poverty) consequences. These stressors led to the most suffering among the women affected. Experiencing racism and discrimination for being a Kurd also had a substantial impact on their lives and was frequently mentioned as well. Furthermore, about half of the women reported some form of domestic violence and one out of four women mentioned sexual violence. About forty percent reported having been imprisoned or tortured at some time. About forty percent of the total sample can be labelled as having a depressive episode or disorder, a third has an indication for an anxiety disorder (panic attack) and almost half of the respondents could be diagnosed as suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder. The majority cope with the difficulties and problems in their lives in a rather self-reliant way. Most of the externally displaced women reported cultural adaptation problems (forty percent moderate problems, more than half of them reported many to very many problems).

Kurdish women who sought help for their problems relied particularly on primary care physicians for their mental health care. Nonetheless, about a third eventually called on mental health care. For more than half of them it is important that the health care provider share the same ethnic background. For a third, it is important that their health care provider be of the same sex. Tradition/culturally based healers played only a minor role in the provision of mental health care.

4.2 Risk Profiles – The Impact of Internal Displacement

The risk profile for developing *mental health problems in general* consists of having experienced political trauma and having been internally displaced, next to having an indication for a depressive disorder, a panic disorder, a PTSD, and having less self-reliance. Determinants of developing *specifically a posttraumatic stress disorder* are being older, a low knowledge of the language of the host country, being a Muslim, having experienced family related problems or a crime as life event, next to reporting substantial mental health

symptoms and having a depressive indication, a panic indication, and low self-reliance.

The consequences of experiencing traumatic events for the mental health are substantial. The levels of posttraumatic stress are high. Consistent with our hypothesis predicting that traumatic events would go along with substantial mental health symptoms, most of our sample reported considerable mental health symptoms. This finding is congruent with a growing literature indicating that persons with (political) trauma develop significant psychological distress and psychiatric morbidity (e.g, Shrestha, Sharma, Van Ommeren, Regmi, Makaju, Komproe, Shrestha, & de Jong, 1998). It can be concluded that these women mainly referred to institutional violence and war and in a somewhat lesser sense to gender-based violence within social structures. The psychological consequences of the traumatic experiences in terms of reactions and mental health symptoms were worst for respondents who had suffered from political violence, torture or military violence and destruction. This subgroup reported the greatest number of mental health complaints. Still, the majority also suffered from verbal and physical forms of domestic violence – next to war and oppression. Moreover, women exposed to domestic violence reported more health, psychiatric and posttraumatic problems and less-self reliance than other women did.

The comparison of aspects of severity of trauma, health problems, psychological consequences and coping/acculturation between internal and external migration revealed that internally displaced women were more at risk for developing problems on these aspects than externally migrated women. The results are confirmed by the meta-analysis on the impact of displacement on mental health (Porter & Haslam, 2005) with poorer mental health outcomes for particularly those migrants who were displaced internally within their own country. However, since it was hypothesized that the impact of the uprooting process from their natural surrounding, culture and language in addition to the difficulties in social and political participation in a foreign country would have detrimental effects on their health status, several possible explanations need to be considered for the better mental health status obtained for the externally migrated women. One option is the possibility that they successfully resettled in a stable environment in one of the EU countries

(especially UK and Sweden stand out). They were able to adapt well to their new environment from a mental health perspective, although that tentative inference warrants testing on other ethnic groups. Another explanation could be that the externally displaced have obtained greater self-confidence as a consequence of the distance to their geographical and cultural origin compared to those who stayed in the Turkish society.

Further it has to be taken into consideration that internally displaced Kurdish women are still confronted with an exceeding risk of potential, repeating traumatic experiences. This is especially due to enduring conflict-situations and instability in their countries of origine. Political, economic and personal uncertainties as well as the very limited access to help-seeking facilities which is related to the infra structural neglect of Kurdish settlement areas compose further factors that may contribute to the development of (mental) health problems.

4.3 Methodological Considerations

In interpreting the results of the present study, a number of caveats need to be acknowledged. To start with, the sample was not selected randomly. The so-called snowball-sampling technique can be used to explore relatively unknown populations, such as refugees and migrants. This method is not strictly random and cannot be compared with representative sampling methods. Nevertheless, the method is recommended in cases where one does not know population characteristics and expects a reluctance to co-operate with researchers (Kaplan, Korf, & Sterk, 1987). Given the frequent reservation of Kurdish women to take part in scientific research, this sampling technique is advisable (Okazaki & Sue, 1995). Moreover when people are traumatized (especially because of political reasons, e.g Kurds), they are often suspicious and mistrustful of someone asking them personal questions. Consequently, the present sample may not be fully representative of the wider group of Kurds in the community. Those suffering the greatest psychosocial impairment might not be motivated to join the interview whereas those who are healthy and/or who have sound social supports may not want to participate.

Nonetheless, the response rates are high. It is likely, therefore, though difficult to confirm, that the present sample represents a midrange of psychosocial impairment among traumatized women of Kurdish decent.

Furthermore, studies have shown that discrepancies may arise because of socially undesirable characteristics of mental illnesses in Kurdish society. Also, cultural differences in responses to psychiatric questionnaires may exist. Concerns have been expressed about the accuracy of using Western diagnostic assessments in assessing mental disorder across cultures. Such procedures may lead to the neglect of indigenous expressions of distress and yield misleading prevalence rates. Consequently, there could be a cultural tendency for Kurds to under-report symptoms, and their real health status may be even worse. On the other hand, participants may choose to accentuate their difficulties while hoping to cause sympathy for their plight (in order to get public awareness and support for their case). Thus, the possibility of biased answers cannot be discounted entirely, although the pattern of results suggests that participants were responding honestly to questions. In addition, cultural differences in operationalising and understanding concepts of 'trauma', trauma exposure and PTSD symptoms are known to exist. Our survey questionnaires were not formally culturally validated for the ethnic groups with which they were used, and the likelihood of culturally biased response to questionnaire items cannot be excluded. However, the inclusion of indigenous members in the advice board aimed to address these concerns adequately.

Finally, the current study is limited by its retrospective nature and reliance on the self-reporting of participants. Retrospective reporting may result in forgetting or misremembering aspects or nuances of particular experiences.

4.4 Practical and Clinical Implications

Notwithstanding the limitations, the present study provides needed documentation of the sequential stressors experienced by individuals who have migrated from Turkey to a country in the EU. Mental health care providers have to address precisely this cluster of traumatic, coping and acculturation factors in applying services to traumatised migrants. There is a need for structural attention to the experiences people have been through (and still are in) and to the coping strategies employed to adapt to the many transitions in the migration process. Our findings have implications regarding the policies and forms of psychosocial treatment aimed at traumatised migrants and ethnic minorities. Mental health professionals dealing with traumatised migrants should not limit their evaluation efforts to posttraumatic symptoms. Mental health may deteriorate as a result of the combined impact of traumatic migration experiences and post-migration problems. Clinicians should inquire about a history of political violence experiences in migrant patients whenever the differential diagnosis includes trauma-related illnesses, such as depression and PTSD. Overall, our findings emphasise the urgency of preventing traumatic events. Initiatives aimed at decreasing trauma exposure may ultimately have a greater impact in terms of reducing psychopathology than treating maladaptive coping approaches that contribute to symptoms of mental health distress. This study contributes to the literature on trauma among migrants and ethnic minorities by illustrating the diversity of traumatic experiences within a group of migrants and refugees from the same country. It also accentuates the relationship between gender and trauma, indicating the detrimental aspects of gender-based violence.

Chapter III – Recommendations

The results have a European impact and contribute to the development of EU policy and practice since Kurdish women from countries as Germany, France, Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands and Turkey have closely participated in the survey and the evaluation of its results.

From a psychiatric view, the picture includes not only post-traumatic stress disorder but also depression and other anxiety disorders. Forced internal displacement has as negative effects on the individual's psychological situation as have war and gender related violence. Two or more of these negative experiences result in an increase of the patient's psychological problems and disorders. Solutions to this problem should also be considered from a multidimensional perspective. Apart from urgently needed political, legal and economical assistance and relief programmes, health and especially psychological health programmes should be included. In this respect, community-based approaches could be effective.

We would like to contribute the following recommendations for prevention and recovery concerning psychological consequences of trauma experiences on the development of Kurdish refugee women:

Women's organisations and NGOs should

- Develop approaches and offers that respond to the specific situation and needs of Kurdish migrant women, while especially taking into consideration the particular the needs of disadvantaged groups such as illiterate and elderly women as well as mothers with many children.

- Provide spaces and shelters that respond to the requests of Kurdish migrant women with a view to health care, education, support and empowerment, including offers in their mother tongue.

- Refer Kurdish migrant women's needs and requests to local, national and international bodies by providing information and creating awareness.

- Support Kurdish migrant women in gaining access to required health care services, physical and psychological treatment.

Health care services and practitioners should:

- Be accessible to Kurdish migrant women. Health care supply and treatment should be locally available, financially affordable and offered in the Kurdish mother tongue.

- Employ female Kurdish practitioners and health care personnel in order to facilitate successful medical treatment by improving the communication between medics and traumatized Kurdish migrant women.

EU-policy makers and institutions should:

- Recognise the multifarious ways of discrimination Kurdish migrant women are exposed to and pay attention to their specific situation and requirements. Data and statistics referring to this should be made available.

- Take effective measures for the protection of Kurdish women's human rights with respect to international agreements including the implementation of the CEDAW (Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women, UN 1979) and the recommendations of ICERD (International Center for Environmental Resources and Development) concerning affirmative action. They should also encourage measures towards a peaceful solution of the Kurdish question. Belonging to the most vulnerable parts of the population, social and economic rights of the internally displaced should be taken particularly into consideration.

- Create the mechanisms and the institutional support Kurdish migrant women will need in order to report on rights' abuses and in seeking prosecution of the offenders. The survivors of violence should be granted security and reliability.

- Support establishment and funding of NGOs and other institutions especially at the local community level promoting gender equality and providing education, health care, counselling and legal support for Kurdish migrant women both in the EU and in countries with significant numbers of internally displaced Kurds. Special efforts should be made to ensure the establishment of treatment facilities for traumatised women in regions with high numbers of internally displaced (e.g in Diyarbakir and Van).

Chapter IV - APPENDIX

1. Testimonies

1.1. Case 1- Diyarbakir/Turkey

I was born in the village Kulp. My father was a member of the village council. We were five girls and five boys, altogether ten children. Although it was somewhat crowded, we were a happy family. We did not know much about the world. Our village seemed to be the whole world. We had animals, fields, grapes and a garden. There was no school. I grew up without knowing what a school was. I remember that I enjoyed looking after animals. My father adored me. My mother was a firm woman. My mother had a relative who kept coming to our village. One day he asked my parents if they would give their daughter as a wife to his son. My father did not want to marry me off, but my mother did. Finally, she persuaded my father. Then his family came to ask for me. He was much older than I was. He had already served his time in the army, while I had not even had my first period. They did not ask me. I do not even know what I would have said, if they had. I felt so ashamed. I said that I would do what my father told me. It was snowing all the time during our wedding day. They send me away as a bride to another village. My husband and his family treated me very well. They did not oppress me. They trusted and valued me. The village population liked my husband very much. In every election, they voted for him as "muhtar" (village headman). Each day we went up into the mountain pastures to look after our livestock. Our financial situation was also very good. I gave birth to my first child while we were staying in the village. After that, we moved to a small town about thirty minutes from Kulp. There, I gave birth to my other children. I have six children, three girls and three boys. First, the girls were born one after the other, then the boys. In this new place, my husband again became village headman. However, it was not the same thing anymore. Our world was no longer just our village. People started to challenge things. Everything we had learnt so far was called into question. My children were

growing up. My daughters did not go to school. Instead, they married. My sons were still small then and managed to go to school. Two of my sons went to high school and our youngest son gained a place at the university. He went to the University of Diyarbakir. We learned that our language was not inferior to other languages, and we understood that stupidity had no voice at all. They had always called us "stupid" when we came to a place like the hospital and could not speak any Turkish. Learning Turkish meant saving us from stupidity. The government was powerful and strong. We had to obey their orders. If the government ordered you to die you had to die, if they ordered you to stay you had to stay, if they ordered you to go you had to go. A soldier of nineteen years with a gun in his hand was enough to enforce all of that. That was the way they ordered and taught us. However, by and by we began to understand that it was not destiny what they did to us. We developed awareness. Before that, we believed that everybody was living just like us. Nevertheless, that was not true. Learning about this entire injustice and abuse people became desperate to do something. Therefore, in 1992 my son quitted his studies at the University of Diyarbakir just before his final exams. We needed to get our voices heard. We needed to stand up against all this injustice. Yet, those who opened their mouths were killed. Either you yielded to that injustice or you would die. There was no other way. In order to show that they would not yield, people went into the mountains, which had always been our friends.

My eldest son worked in Istanbul. One day he was riding in a company car with four of his friends when special security and police shot at them.

Two of his friends died immediately, two people were injured. Trying to escape my son threw himself out of the car. He tried to hide in a building lot but the special security teams found him. Although he was injured, they tortured him cruelly. Apart from his bullet wounds, he had been beaten up and his intestine was severely injured. We heard it in the TV news. For one month and a half, my son stayed in hospital. We sold all our belongings to pay for his medical treatment. But they did not look after my son. He did not even receive any treatment. Then we received the message of his death. At the same day, our house was raided by soldiers and they took my second son into custody. On the one hand, they did not give us the dead body of my son, who

they killed; on the other hand, they tortured my second son heavily at the JITEM unit. I did not know what do to, or how to bear all this. Before my son died, he said that we should carry him to our village and bury him in the soil here he had been born. Therefore, we went from Istanbul to Kulp to take his dead body home. At the outskirts of Istanbul, the police stopped our cars; they did not allow any of us to go on. They only allowed the hearse to pass. In Kulp they did the same again. They blocked all roads. Riot teams and soldiers blocked all the roads from Lice and Silvan. My daughter had come from Diyarbakir to join the funeral, but they beat her as if they wanted to kill her.

They even constrained the people from the village to come to the graveyard. Everywhere were soldiers. Only me, his father and one of his sisters were able to join to the funeral. It was as if a part of mine was in the mountains, another part in the torture chambers of the JITEM and another part being buried. It was hard for me to stay on my feet. However, in defiance of the debasers I stood on my feet and did not cry. I made them open the shroud, looked in his face, kissed him and said good-bye to him.

Then oppression, cruelties, and humiliation started in our village. It went on day by day. Once in winter, in the middle of the night while it was snowing, they raided my house. Shouting, "Where is your son? Go and get your son!" they came into our house and turned everything upside-down. They did not find anything. Three or four days later, they came to our house again. I told them: "You can freely search our house. We are two old people. What is your problem with us? What can you find in the house of an old woman? I don't have any weapons or anything." They messed up everything. They threw my quilts on the floor. I told them not to dirty my quilts and my house. I told them they would not find anything: "You searched my whole house. You did not find anything, so get out of my house." They went away eventually after everything was broken down. Five or six days later I started to receive letters. Every week another letter came. I did not know why I received these letters. They said, "Go away from here, if you don't go we will blow up your house. Nothing will be left." I knew who they were. One day somebody called me on the phone. It was the special security forces. They said, "We will burn down your house, we will burn you, we will kill you. Your children have gone; you cannot live in peace again."

We heard shootings near the village. Bullets hit our house. They kept shooting and shooting. The whole neighbourhood was illuminated like in daylight. Pieces of bombs came down. Our quilts and blankets, everything began to burn. Finally, I sat down and cried. A tank was coming and going around our house. They fired at our house without any break. Our house crushed down, everything was buried under it. Our stable, barn, cattle they burned everything down. Nothing was left. We escaped from there and went to Bismil. From the region of Kanika we came to Silvan. I was together with two of my daughters. The children of our neighbours were also with us. We all had to flee from Kulp. We came to Diyarbakir. However, I did not know where my husband was. When we fled from the village, everybody had run away in different directions. We were afraid that the soldiers might have caught my husband. We received a call one day later. Somebody who came from Kulp to Diyarbakir told us, "Fikri is alright, he is safe. He hid in a house and managed to save himself. But he cannot come to Diyarbakir." Quite some time later, a friend took him by car from Kanika via Silvan to Diyarbakir. In Diyarbakir, our daughter rented a small flat for us. It was subterraneous. We moved into the flat and tried to settle down. Some generous people gave us a carpet and some other stuff. My husband, and me we were again staying together. However, here they found us, again. They called us every day and threatened us. "Is this Fikri's house?" I kept on saying. "No, it is not Fikri's house." They asked. "Who is Fikri?" I said I did not know. We could not sleep peacefully anymore, we were afraid. Sometimes we stayed in the house of one of our daughters, sometimes here and sometimes there. One day my husband said "I am going to the hospital. I am getting some medicine and coming back." He went out. It was not even ten minutes later when somebody knocked at the door. It was a child. I knew him. He was from our village. He said, "They took uncle Fikri. They took him into a white car here on the main road. It was a Toros model with grey panes. I saw four people in it. The shopkeeper, the tailor, the butcher, everybody saw what happened. It was half past nine. And there were four people in the car." I understood. If they had taken him this way, they would not let him leave again. I went out of the house. My daughter came across the road, crying, "Mother, they took my father. Where have you been? Let's go to the Human Rights Association and make a request straight away." We went to the Human Rights Association and they helped us to write request. Then we

went to the DGM (State Security Court). There, they rejected our request. The request was in my name. In any case, I did not want to risk that they might arrest my daughter. At least her children should not be left behind. However, they rejected my request: "We did not arrest or see anybody like that." If we had asked the people who saw what had happened to confirm it, they would not have come, because everybody was afraid. At that time, every day about ten people were killed in Diyarbakir. People were very frightened. On the one hand, there were the Hezbollah and the Contras, on the other hand the police, who made people disappear in detention. Nobody would have dared to witness what he or she saw. We went to the police. There they sent my daughter to the anti-terror department. My daughter said: "My father has been arrested. He was taken away by policemen." They asked my daughter, "How do you know that your father has not been kidnapped by terrorists?" My daughter answered: "If terrorists can have taken him in the middle of the main street at ten o'clock in the daytime, what kind of police are you? How can people you call terrorists walk around in the town centre at that time of day?"

It has been ten years now that my husband disappeared. The case of my husband went to the European Human Rights Court. For ten years, I have been waiting day by day....

We are human beings, too. They have burnt down our village, our towns and our homes. Why? I had a house, a village and cattle. They looted everything. My children died. I lost so much. My heart has been burnt. I do not know how I still can live. However, I want to reach out my hand for peace. Above all, I want peace and brotherliness. Nevertheless, we want real brotherliness, not some fake brotherliness. We mothers have cried a lot. I have cried a lot. At least, other mothers coming after us should not need to cry anymore. Nobody's mother should cry neither the mother of a soldier, nor the mother of a police officer. It is enough! I do not want war. Kurds and Turks are brothers. Nor should Assyrians, Armenians, or Persians be killed. And please, I pray that Kurds should not be killed just because they stand up for their dignity. I would be happy with a small hut in my village, but I could not be happy even in a palace here in this town.

1.2. Case 2 – Sweden

I was born in 1975 in a village in North Kurdistan. My family are Alevites. I married twice. Altogether, I have three children, two from my first marriage and one from the second. My first marriage was a forced marriage with somebody whom I did not know before.

However, in 1982 when I was a first-grader in primary school my class teacher raped me. He also raped two of my girl friends. This went on for two years. He repeatedly threatened to kill us, if we told anybody. At school, his eyes were always watching us. We were very frightened. I went home in tears, but I could not tell my mother, because I was afraid. I just told her that I did not like the school and that I did not want to go to school anymore. However, my mother thought that I was lazy and forced me to go to school. These rapes destroyed all my childhood dreams. My life fell apart. It affected my whole future. I hated school and lived in great loneliness and fear. This incident influenced my life again and again. I also could not be happy after I had married. Not being able to share my experiences with anybody, my first marriage broke up. During my second marriage, I went through similar problems. Fourteen years later I told my father about these things. He was so shocked he could not speak for days. After my arrival in Sweden, during the last months I also tried to speak to my husband. He did not behave in a differently after he knew. However, I am not sure, what he feels inside. I have my doubts.

I still have a feeling of coldness for my mother. She seems so cold and strange to me, because she did not understand and help me. I do not feel any interest or love in life. My life seems to be meaningless to me. I just live for others. Because of a general hatred I developed towards men, my marriage remains one-sided. I cannot find myself at home hin this marriage. It just happened to me because of our traditions and habits. Twice I tried to commit suicide. The events I went through also destroyed much of my self-confidence. It seems as if the eyes of my teacher were still watching and following me. Again and again, wherever I go, I look into these eyes.

I never had the chance to be myself. I have never been able to live as a woman. All that happened to me had such an impact on my life, that I was not even able to show a reaction if somebody attacked me. I just try to hide myself. Even when seeing doctors here in Sweden I have huge difficulties to express myself. I feel ashamed, I cannot confide in anybody. It is as if I lived through these terrible events in my spiritual world every day….

1.3. Case 3 – Germany

I was born in the village of Karakoçan in 1955. We were five brothers and three sisters. Our financial situation was good, because my father worked in Europe. I lived in the village until I was 16 years old. During that time, the Kurdish freedom struggle was expanding and this development influenced us too. It was important to recognize ourselves as Kurds, to understand that we had been denied our identity and that we were not even given our basic rights. At that time, we came to know some of the leading figures of the struggle and one of my elder brothers joint them. In 1985, our whole family was detained for allegedly being affiliated with the PKK. Some other members of my family, my cousin, and I were arrested on remand for 45 days.

Talking about these times is still very painful for me. We were exposed to a number of different torture methods. They laid us down in the "Falaka", left us in the "Palestinian hanging", put us in ice-cold-water, they stripped us naked and abused us. They threatened to rape us. They attacked us with knives and weapons saying they would kill us. I knew if I started to talk, there were other things to follow. In spite of all this, we did not surrender. They set me free and a short time later, they arrested me again. After that, I was banished and sent to Istanbul for one year. Our life had become very difficult. After one year of banishment, we returned home. However, the oppression of our family and the detentions started to become more and more unbearable. Police officers were observing our house all the time. They forced our neighbours to give them information about us. They said they would eliminate us in our own house if we did not leave and go somewhere else. In short intervals, they came and searched our house messing up everything,

over and again. We could not sleep in peace anymore. When we left the house, police was there loading their weapons and pointing them at us. They also called us on the phone and tried to set a snare for us. They said, "If your brother does not surrender you will see what happens..." They wanted me to contact my brother. However, my brother had gone to the mountains on his own decision. He would not have returned because of anybody's call. They said they would for sure kill my brother one day and hang his dead body on a helicopter and show him everywhere. One day, assuming it was my mother and me, they detonated a bomb while a mother and her daughter were passing close by our house. The girl lost one of her legs and they concealed the whole incident very quickly. In 1992, my brother who was a guerrilla fighter was killed. However, they did not believe it was he and so the oppression went on. We could not stand it any longer, and so we fled from our homeland to Istanbul in 1994. Nevertheless, as our family name was well known they did not give us any rest there, either.

Finally, after countless difficulties I came to Europe. Of course, here my problems did not end. This time, I was cut off from my surroundings and I found myself exposed alone to all the difficulties of life. I was an illiterate woman who had not married until her mid-forties. After I having applied for political asylum, they sent me to East Berlin. Can you imagine, they gave me a train ticket saying, "Come on, go away"? How should I go? I did not know the language. I could not read nor write. I did not even know how to find the train station. I was a foreigner. I was afraid that something could happen to me. I showed my train ticket to everybody whom I came across. Finally, I managed to find the train station. I was hungry, because I had not eaten for two days. When I reached the camp and met other Kurdish refugees, I became less frightened. The other Kurdish refugees helped me with many matters. I stayed in the refugee camp for two and a half years. After I had received my passport and found a flat I started to live on my own. Then, however, my family and my environment urged me to get married. Eventually, now that I was 45 years old and even if it was difficult, I was able to look after myself. That was important to me. Nevertheless, while I was also growing older I felt it would be no good not to be alone all the time. I wanted to have somebody to share my life with, as a friend. Therefore, I got married. However, this marriage did not turn out to be what I had intended in the beginning. In-

stead of being a friend to me, my husband just made my life unbearable. Apart from the violence of the enemy, I had never experienced any domestic physical violence. However, I started to experience violence from my husband. Because of I had gone through in Turkey, my psychology was not good anyway, but my husband's behaviour even deepened my crisis. He even interfered when I wanted to go out. Being a man he wanted everything he said to be done right away. If that was not the case, he became offensive and violent. He restricted my freedom even more. Talking about all these events puts me into a bad mood. I got a depression. As I do not know the language here, I cannot go to a psychologist that I feel I can trust. Maybe you might ask why I did not learn the language in all these years. Actually, I went to school. However, because of my past I could not concentrate well enough and was unable to learn. After many efforts and thanks to the support of a women's association I found a female psychiatrist who spoke my language. I started with a psychological therapy, but this time I had financial problems as the psychiatrist lived quite far away from my place. The ticket is very expensive, but neither my health insurance nor the social services are paying for my travel expenses to the doctor. I am fed up with being sent from one service to another. They say my situation is not severe. Therefore, they would not give me any money to go to the doctor. I do not know how bad my situation must become before they decide to do something about it. Meanwhile, I have weird daydreams. I hear voices. I cannot stay at home on my own. At night I cannot sleep, I often have nightmares. I am unhappy and feel a deep loneliness. I am not able to overcome the impact of my past. Here, they do not understand me, and I do find not the help I need.

1.4. Case 4 – Germany

My family had migrated to Istanbul before I was born. As a result, I came into the world as a child of a refugee family. We were eight brothers and sisters. My family was not rich. My parents hid the fact that we were Kurds and Alevites from our neighbours. Actually, they were speaking Kurdish at home, too. However, they would not tell us anything about our identity. My father was very perfectionist. In his presence we all had to behave like sol-

diers, we could not make the smallest move. He was very authoritarian and repressive. When I finished primary school at the age of eleven my parents did not allow me to go to school anymore. I was supposed to work. Actually, all my brothers and sisters were treated this way. According to my parents, there was no need for studying. At a very young age, they expected us to bring money home. Before I was 18 years old, I had had six or seven different jobs. I sold clothes, worked behind a sales counter, or at a hairdresser. Either my working conditions were very hard or the money was very little. I was very pleased with my last job at a sack factory. However, I quitted because I was afraid of the attacks of a man at my work place who was much older than me. I wanted to free myself from these attacks. I did not tell my family about them. When I quitted my job my parents were very angry with me. I will never forget. Even if it was just a very short period that I had no work and brought no money home, my mother looked at me saying "You are like a snake in my eyes." I will not forget these words until the end of my life. Even a stepmother would not do anything like this. A relationship should not be determined by profit thinking, like the relationship between parents and children. Nevertheless, I experienced a mother-child relationship based on profit thinking. Again, I found a job. Meanwhile, a member of my mother's family wanted to marry me. I did not agree and believed that my father would support me. One day I was kidnapped in order to marry. A cousin and a sister of mine were also involved in kidnapping me. My family did not want me to marry a foreigner someday and therefore they had devised a plan to kidnap me in order to marry me to somebody I did not want at all. All my laments were for nothing. Passers-by who heard me lamenting curiously asked what was going on. When my parents told them, "This is nothing, they are just kidnapping a girl", they behaved as though it was something very ordinary, like saying: "Oh, if that is all", and then they went away. Then they held me locked in a room for a couple of days. I was still hoping that my father would not agree with this and rescue me. It was as if the whole world broke down for me, when he said to me day: "Why do you keep calling 'father, my father'... I also knew that they would kidnap you." Finally, I knew that there was no way out. For a long time, they used to leave a guardian with me. I was terribly hopeless. This pain remains like a wound in me and it will remain there until the end of my life. I do not have any expectations from life anymore. I turned mad, I could not think anymore. The

people in my environment behaved as if a kidnapping was something common. At the same time, they started the wedding preparations. I had to surrender. There was no place, where I could have gone. The wedding night was an awful torture; it did not come to an end. Representatives of the family were waiting in a neighbouring room for the bloody sheet, which was to give evidence of my virginity. After that night, I could not bear his presence close to me. After all they had done to me, my husband still expected interest, love, and coquetry from me. He went to my mother and complained about me. My mother pulled me into a room, shouting and scolding me: "What do you want, this man loves you. Why don't you show any interest in him?" I was afraid, unable to talk to my mother. As if I was guilty of something, my tongue was frozen. Inside me, I had so many things that I wanted to say, but I was not able to speak at all. My mother spit in my face and threatened me. I kept silent. I did not find the strength to say a word. I do not know what kind of mood or state of mind I was in. I thought that I could not do other than suffer what happened. Howsoever all these things had come about, I was married and received no support from my family. My husband and his family even opposed my wish to find a job. I reached the point where I felt that maybe a child might help improve the bad atmosphere at home; I thought that it would make my life easier. With a child, I would be able to find refuge and comfort. However, it did not make my life easier. The child's burden and the tyranny of my mother-in-law were back-breaking. Again, my family left me in the lurch. I was unable to think and raise my child properly.

Some years after we had married my husband came to Germany pretending he wanted to visit his brothers and sisters. When he left, I told him, "In any case, don't try to stay there." I knew if he stayed there, he would do everything to drag me behind him. In Turkey, in spite of everything else, the presence of my brothers and sisters was still a comfort to me. However, this was not important to my husband. He just went to Germany and applied for asylum. While I was still hoping that his asylum application would be rejected, he had already received his passport. According to my family and my surroundings, a wife had to stay with her husband. Finally, against my will I followed my husband to Europe. I did not know anybody there. I could not speak the language. I felt a deep strangeness in this environment. I was afraid

to go out. Everything seemed to be so empty and artificial. I was crying all the time. My husband was no help to me. At that time, I became pregnant with my second child. Afterwards we moved into a house near his relatives. As soon as my second child was born, I was lost anyway in daily housework. I never had a joyful time in my marriage. It was always his opinion, which counted. He is very selfish, and does not pay any attention to my wishes. At this moment, I am just a housewife....

1.5. Case 5 – The Netherlands

I come from the Kurdish region. In 1955, I was born in a village near Erzincan. I grew up in the city. I am an Alevite. During that time, there were no honour killings, blood feuds, or anything like that. Alevites are a bit more open-minded towards these issues. I did not see any domestic violence. Occasionally my mother slapped me. Of course, that affected me, but what had the worst impact on me were the beatings by my teacher. In my family, there was no verbal violence. However, there was psychological pressure in my village environment. I first experienced migration when we went from the rural area into the city. When I was in my fifth year at school, my father died. My mother had from an urban background; my father had come from a village. My maternal uncles came to express their condolences. At that time, my marks at school were quite good. My uncles wanted my mother to give me the possibility to study. My mother agreed to entrust me in their care for my studies. At that time, there was a big difference between living in a village or in the city. I felt inferior coming from the village and was afraid that I would not manage it. I also did not know anything about Sunni Islam. In religious education, my mark was zero. However, in mathematics I had a mark of ten, which was the best mark possible. I had to hide the fact that I was an Alevite, because they always tried to humiliate us during their period of fasting. Finally, I finished my higher education at a teacher college in that town.

I migrated twice, once from Erzincan to Istanbul. Then I migrated from Istanbul to the Netherlands. I had to flee for political reasons both times. The police was searching for me. Within five years, I had to change houses four-

teen times. Under these conditions, it was the most difficult thing for me to give birth to a child while being illegal. I was afraid I would not be able to protect my child, which was the most horrific feeling in my life. It was in June 1980 when I had to leave my home and shortly after that on September, 12th, the military coup took place. One month after the coup I was pregnant while my photographs were spread all over the Turkish Republic. The police wanted me. I was accused of violation of law no. 141. My photographs had even been put up at bus stops. I wanted to keep a low profile, and so I always dressed like the religious women did. I am still hiding the headscarf that I used at that time. My brother, my husband and I were wanted. For that reason, my mother also had to flee. They raided her house every day. Several times the head of the political police section assaulted her sexually. He kept telling my mother: "If I find your daughter, I will do the same thing again." For these reasons, my mother left her house and stayed with her relatives for years.

When the police arrested me, I was tortured and abused. They threatened me, saying, "We will rape you before your husband's eyes." In fact, they said, "We will fuck you." I lived under this threat for years. Sometimes when we meet with our friends, we talk about those times, now. We just talk about what we would do, if we caught the men who had tortured us. Generally, I could not torture those who did all this. I would just kill them and leave. Nevertheless, if I caught this man, I would just do one thing: I would cut off his genitals and stuff them in his mouth. Actually, this kind of torture has been used against many men from the east (the Kurdish region of Turkey) to make them talk. Their emotions in this respect are well known. They (the police) wanted to make sure that the men gave up by threatening and attacking their wives or girlfriends sexually in front of their eyes. My husband was also always threatened with this. We had just married one week before they arrested us. During the torture, they did not let me sleep for three days. Today, I scream if somebody touches me while I am sleeping.

For fifteen my husband and I had been arrested and interrogated, and later, after my release I learnt that my husband was dead. These were shocking events. However, I did not know where my husband was buried, and that upset me most. I always had the feeling that he might be still alive. I kept

mourning all the time. This happened in February 1984. The Istanbul police wanted us, and he was arrested again. From this arrest he disappeared. We received the death certificate, but we never saw his corpse. I heard that my husband had been killed, but I could not share this information with anybody. Anyway, I was alone. All my problems wer caused by the state. The police kept threatening to kill me. Police officers asked me, "Shall I shoot you? Shall I kill you?" I replied; "If you want to kill me, do it." I was permanently living with this threat. They wanted me to surrender in order to get information out of me. That is why they kept threatening me.

While I was on the run I lived in deep poverty. Sometimes I could not even find some bread for my child. These conditions were horrible. I worked as a servant in the houses of the rich. They did not know who I was. When my child was three years old, I used to take her with me to where I worked. She was terribly aware of the discrimination. The name of the patron was Arzu, but my daughter always called her "Harzu". She often revolted asking me: "Do you really have to do all her work?"

Now, I live with my daughter in the Netherlands. I know Turkish and Dutch. My command of Dutch is good. Three more persons depend on my income: my mother and my brother in Turkey. I have to look after them, economically. I experienced discrimination due to my political opinion and due to being a Kurd. I always knew myself as a Turk, since we had been displaced from Kurdistan for a long time. I remember my father telling us. People always want to know their mother tongue. It is quite horrible to be a Kurd and not to know your language. It is horrible for people not to be able to talk about themselves. People best express their feelings and thoughts in their mother tongue. For example, I do not feel relief when I curse in Dutch, but it relieves me when I curse in my mother tongue.

I did not leave my country on voluntarily. I came here with a false passport. At the airport, I went through very mixed feelings. On one hand, you save yourself from death but on the other hand, you leave many people behind. You do not want to go, but you are forced to do so. This situation affected me a lot. It was hard for me that I could not return to my country for a long time. For fourteen years I could not go. I was always yearning for it.

However, after twenty-three years I came to Erzincan, again. At that moment, I re-lived through all I had experienced at the time when I was wanted in Turkey. For example, I felt paranoia and fear of the police. You think that somebody is watching you and so you keep walking until you are sure this person is no longer there. All these experiences were traumatic. The situation I experienced in the Netherlands, too. I went on the metro. If somebody got off at the same stop as I did, I would dawdle. I had to ensure that he walked ahead of me. You cannot get rid of this. You constantly live by saying "maybe". For example, I had a traffic accident. The first thing I said was "Turkey wanted to kill us." They told me I was paranoid. However, it was something the way I felt. We had prepared an information file on human rights abuses in Turkey, which we handed over to the Dutch parliament. One week after we had handed the file in, we had a severe accident. This happened three weeks ago. They wanted to kill us. This is one of the simple methods so frequently used in Turkey. On one hand you say, it cannot be, on the other hand you are frightened. I feared for the life of my child, not for myself. Under torture they had made my husband disappear, I wished I had also disappeared.

(...) I have psychological problems. My most important problem is PTSD. I have difficulties coping with my daily life. Actually, I am strong, but my complaints have even affected my child. The events I experienced have made me sick. My doctor's diagnosis is PTSD related chronic depression. At first, I tried to solve my problems by myself. I worked hard, had difficulties accepting this. I tried to forget, but then I realised that I was finished. (...) Uncertainty, not knowing what will happen to me, affected me a lot. I passed my life trying to sort something out all the time. I always lived in uncertainty and fear. Imagine, you have lost a person, but he has no grave. Everything remains unfinished; it is not clear what will happen.

2. Reaction of a Woman Participating In the Survey

I took part in study. It was a serious survey. So far, it was the most serious survey on women that I had ever been confronted with. I answered the questions. Some of them I left without reply… but my life… my life could not jump over these questions. It took all of them bit by bit. Being a woman made you feel like living at the abyss, until you were about to get mad.

The first question already finishes everything. They ask your sex. What is it? History once treats it with mysticism and then again associates it with pain. Speaking out the word "woman" forms a cry inside you coming from the deep darkness somewhere between the empty pages in your hands that are waiting to be filled in... You are asked for events that were at that time numbing your feelings, your past as a woman. From the darkness and loneliness inside you, your answer forms, saying, "Women are their own drugs numbing themselves". I finished the questions and closed the questionnaire. I left my pen on the table.

My life... Finally, a questionnaire is lying on the table that hopefully will be able to explain a woman's life by means of the answers given. A woman's difficulties. Even if I had answered those questions I left without reply, in life such a thing would not have been so easy. Obviously, it is quite easy to talk about "this or that". The life of a human being, on top of all a woman's life seems so easy with answers like "I experienced this, I experienced that". On the other hand, answering questions by "yes or no" seems quite easy as well. However, life is not like that...or is it? Did not many of us send themselves into the grey of ashes, did they not burn themselves by saying "yes" so many times?

They ask my age. How easy is it to write "30" on the dotted line. However, has it really been so easy to say this woman is thirty... staying on your feet...and further to respect her dignity ("onur") her...and adding honour ("namus") to it...

They asked me: "What is "onur", what is "namus"?"... Now, what do I have to say? Explain them what our elder brothers, our mothers, our husbands say.. or what we read in books? How am I supposed to know, which is more real? As though I had the freedom to define "onur" and "namus" according to my own values. Instead of an enemy, in several situations this "namus" stood in front of us. Should I write about my broad-ranged understanding of the term "namus" or should I write about the artificial understanding of the world, which was in agreement or in contrast to the term "namus".

The questions went on. "Does the life of a woman consist of fifty questions perhaps?" goes through your mind. If we were able to understand and answer these fifty questions, could we make a woman happy then? …or does a woman fit into fifty questions? If we solved the troubles of women answering questionnaires, in how far would this mean progress for us ...but it has to be solved, so every step is worthwhile step.

I am confronted with questions concerning women, which should be answered with a single word: *yes* or *no*. Could yes or no tell my story? Could "*a bit*" express me? ...Nevertheless, I try to explain myself by saying "*a bit*". I describe myself by answering in 50 words.

Opposite of me sits a young girl. She may be astonished about my questions. On the other hand, did she imagine me to be like that just a few moments ago? The glow in her eyes seems to fade while I answer with increasing numbers to the questions. Anyway, the numbers increase!

Have we not increased our age by becoming a woman or increased our womanhood by getting older? Didn't we fill our pens with tears instead of ink? Didn't we fill the diaries of our lives with transparent drops of water instead of blue letters?

Did not all these things happen in the name of "onur", or in the name of "namus"? I feel like saying: "Don't ask me". I am still not free, so that I could define "namus" in my understanding. Still, life is a story in male words. I am still living with a man's chip in my head, how am I supposed to give definitions freely?

It took us one hour and fifteen minutes to write down what it means to be a woman. It took us about fifty words we had always hidden inside. We cannot ignore the pains of our lives; examining our lives after the questionnaire, we cannot just leave the pen. We cannot simple escape the difficulties of life as a woman.

Eventually you have summarised your life, you lay down pen and paper and return to the point where you were before. However, just a moment ago, you looked at this woman from above. It was like examining, reading and understanding the life of someone else....and answering the questionnaire was like successfully presenting your knowledge in a college exam. You divide the questions according to multiple-choice possibilities. Yet, living through all that in reality, could you have chosen so easily, who you were? ... In life, womanhood is hard.

I thought of the violence against women. I thought... I cannot remember which question it exactly was, but at that moment I was thinking: Living through this actually, did time pass by so easily for these women who are now answering all these questions. Being able to say, "yes, I experienced physical violence... mental violence... sexual violence" is difficult for a human being. It hurts, saying these words. Even if it is a woman who is sitting next to you, it hurts. Even if a woman just writes this down, she would be ashamed of looking at the writing paper. If anything, how could the pen accept to write these words. There should not have been any reason for writing words like these. This kind of multiple choice should not have turned up in our lives. "Did you ever experience...?" If only this kind of question would never have been asked in our lives. Summarising the life of a woman, this kind of question should not be there. If only there were nice questions for women. About nature, for example; if only they asked us which flowers we liked. After all, these surveys are looking for women's hidden reality. While women live in this world, these things will be asked…emotions of events, which were cornerstones of our lives, which affected us deeply. However hard it was, we stood up, again. At that time, there was not even an interviewer. We were alone. No one to rescue us, no one to support us. Our souls left alone.

However, we were women and had to stand the examination on our own; we had to pass the hard examination that life provides for women. Why, nobody knows, just because we were women we were examined on the bridge of destiny in loneliness.

Moreover, the most difficult thing: something that was not formulated precisely, that is maybe the only question of our life: "Which of our identities?" According to which of my identities should I answer the questions. Like the woman who stood opposite her husband, like the woman who has been socialized in this society, like the daughter of my mother, like the friend of my friends, like a brave woman that I knew from the books I read, that I was trying to create (or would this be too political?) ...or like the imaginations of a body who is called "woman"? Which woman, I mean to say, should write about a woman who had lived many different lives that did not belong to her in a single body. There were so many women. There were so many identities that a woman had to satisfy! Thus, fifty questions were not enough...

I finished the questionnaire and I felt a tiny bit of happiness for myself and for all women. Even things we regard as very small may lead to a result one day, even small efforts may return to us and strengthen our self-confidence. This survey, carried through by a young woman who took us back to our past, was administered in several European countries. I wish all Kurdish women who have passed their lives with migration, would answer the questions. (...) Maybe this survey makes it possible to get in touch with other women in our vicinity who are already on the brink of committing suicide. Even if we do not know about them yet, we may reach somebody who is experiencing violence. (...)

Best regards

Newal Bilge

7.09.2006

4. Questionnaire

Questionnaire: ***Psychological consequences of traumatic experiences on the development of migrated Kurdish women in the European Union***

Code of questionnaire: _____

Name interviewer, location and interview date: _____

Was a translator involved in filling in the questionnaire? _____

Which language was used? _____

Introduction to the respondent

We are very grateful that you will participate in this survey. First, we want to explain the relevance of your participation. This research is conducted to get insight in the consequences of experiencing shocking life events among Kurdish women who have migrated from Turkey to (the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, France or England – *interviewer: choose the correct alternative depending of the situation*). These women often have faced difficulties in having to deal with these problems. Moreover, women who migrated to a new country may have difficulty in adjusting to the new circumstances (for instance they have to cope with change of climate and food, with different family and social circumstances, with domestic problems). This may have consequences for health and well being. These women can also experience difficulties in obtaining adequate help for these problems. In order to attain more sufficient care for them, it is important to obtain knowledge about which (health) problems they have and how they cope with these problems. Therefore, we want to know more about the kind of problems you have, what you did to get help, and how sufficient the help was/is. Furthermore we want to ask you some questions concerning your personal experiences with living in the new society. Of course *your answers will be treated strictly confidential and they are processed anonymously*. Your answers will be immediately destroyed afterwards. The results of this study will be useful to get a

better understanding of the needs Kurdish women have and to increase the knowledge of the way in which they deal with their problems. The outcomes of this study will be used to provide Kurdish women with more appropriate treatment and care whenever they have social or health related problems.

Do you have any questions at this time? If not, then we start the interview.

(1) Personal background

The first part of this survey contains some short questions about your personal background.

1. What is your year of birth?
   19....

2. Where were you born?

   - ☐ Kurdistan – North
   - ☐ Kurdistan – South
   - ☐ Kurdistan – South West
   - ☐ Kurdistan – East
   - ☐ Turkey
   - ☐ Iraq
   - ☐ Iran
   - ☐ Syria
   - ☐ Armenia
   - ☐ Somewhere else, namely in: .....

3a. Where was your mother born?

   - ☐ Kurdistan – North
   - ☐ Kurdistan – South
   - ☐ Kurdistan – South West
   - ☐ Kurdistan – East
   - ☐ Turkey

- ☐ Iraq
- ☐ Iran
- ☐ Syria
- ☐ Armenia
- ☐ Somewhere else, namely in: .....

3b. Where was your father born?

- ☐ Kurdistan – North
- ☐ Kurdistan – South
- ☐ Kurdistan – South West
- ☐ Kurdistan – East
- ☐ Turkey
- ☐ Iraq
- ☐ Iran
- ☐ Syria
- ☐ Armenia
- ☐ Somewhere else, namely in: .....

4. Which province of Kurdistan do you come from?

- ☐ .....

5. How big was your place of birth?

☐ Small village	☐ Village	☐ Small town
☐ Town	☐ City	☐ Metropolis

6. When did you migrate?

- ☐ Since .....

7. What was the reason for migrating? (Multiple choice possible)

- ☐ Due to the results of war and oppression ☐ For labour
- ☐ For education ☐ Due to marriage/family reunion
- ☐ Due to tribal or moral traditional reasons
- ☐ Due to political reasons ☐ Otherwise, namely: ...……..

8a. How many times did you migrate?

- ☐ Once
- ☐ Twice
- ☐ 3 times
- ☐ More than 3 times

8b. Where did you migrate to?

- ☐ Within my region of origin to another village/town/city:_____
- ☐ Within the state boarders to another village/town/city: _____
- ☐ To different countries; which? _____

8c. What has/have been the most important problem(s) you faced under the conditions of migration?

.....
.....
.....

9. Where do you live now?

- ☐ Germany
- ☐ France
- ☐ Netherlands
- ☐ Sweden
- ☐ U.K.
- ☐ Turkey
- ☐ Somewhere else, namely in: .....

10. What is your religious belief?

- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Sunnite
- ☐ Alleviate
- ☐ Christian
- ☐ Jewish

- ☐ Zarathustra
- ☐ Yezidi
- ☐ No religious belief
- ☐ Otherwise, namely …….....

11a. Are you …

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widow
- ☐ Lone
- ☐ Otherwise, namely: …….

11b. Do you have children?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, namely (number): ……..

11c. How are you living at this moment?

- ☐ On your own
- ☐ Together with your partner
- ☐ Together with your partner and your children
- ☐ Together with other family members
- ☐ Together with your partner, your children and other family members (e.g together with your parents or parents-in-law)
- ☐ Alone with your children
- ☐ Together with your parents
- ☐ Otherwise, namely: …….

12a. Can you read and write?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12b. Which languages do you know?

- ☐ Kurdish; which dialect(s)
  - ☐ Kurmanci
  - ☐ Sorani
  - ☐ Zazaki-Dimili
  - ☐ Other dialects: …….
- ☐ Turkish
- ☐ Arabic
- ☐ Persian
- ☐ German
- ☐ French
- ☐ English
- ☐ Dutch
- ☐ Swedish
- ☐ Others, namely: ……

12c To which degree do you know the language of the country you migrated to?

- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Little
- ☐ Middle
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Very good

12d. Did you obtain school education?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, but I could not finish it.

12e. What is the highest level of education you've achieved? And where did you achieve it?

☐ Primary school
  ☐ At my place of origin
  ☐ In Europe
  ☐ Somewhere else, namely in: …….....

☐ Basic vocational school
  ☐ At my place of origin
  ☐ In Europe
  ☐ Somewhere else, namely in: …….....

☐ Secondary school (junior high school, grammar school, secondary vocational education vs.)
  ☐ At my place of origin
  ☐ In Europe
  ☐ Somewhere else, namely in: …….

☐ Higher education (senior high school, academy, university etc.)
  ☐ At my place of origin
  ☐ In Europe
  ☐ Somewhere else, namely in: …….....…

13a. What is currently your main source of income?

☐ Job/Work
☐ Illness payment
☐ Labour unfitness payment (WAO)
☐ Unemployment benefit
☐ Social benefit
☐ Pension (AOW)
☐ Study benefit
☐ Earnings of partner
☐ Earnings of children
☐ Otherwise, namely: ..…….....

13b. Are other people depending on your income?

☐ Yes, namely (number) ….. persons at the place of my origin and (number) ….. persons in the country of my present residence or elsewhere
☐ No

(2) Possible Stress Factors

This part of the questionnaire deals with possible events that you might have witnessed and their negative effects on your life. Did you witness or experience those events mentioned below? If you have been exposed to them and if you think of the impact they had on your life, please describe the degree of their negative impact by giving numbers from 0 (= I did not experience anything like that; it did not have any impact on me at all) to 9 (= I have experienced it and it has a very severe and deep impact on my life).

	Not at all									Very deep impact
1. Loss of child / children Due to: _____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. Loss of husband or relative Due to: _____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3. Being separated from a child and not being able to experience its growth Due to: _____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

4. Divorce ☐ by my own request ☐ by the request of my husband ☐ Other: _____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5. Forcible marriage/not being able to marry the person I wanted to	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6. Poverty	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7. Being forced to leave my village/place of origin	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8. Village destruction	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9. Not being able to return to my home country	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10. Not feeling safe at the present place of residence	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11. Experiencing fear of death	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12. Uncertainty (not being able to determine the future)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13. Ban of language/not knowing the own Kurdish mother tongue	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
14. Detention/Imprisonment	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
15. Torture – By whom? _____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
16. Rape – By whom? _____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
17. Blood feud	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
18. "Honour" killing	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

19. Domestic violence										
– Physical	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
– Verbal abuse	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
– Mental oppression (humiliation etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
– Economic oppression/dependency	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
– Sexual violence	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
– Other: _____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
20. Disruption of family due to war or migration	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
21. Displacement from natural (traditional) means of production and way of life	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
22. Displacement from social surrounding and friends (isolation...)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
23. Loneliness	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
24. Being illiterate	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
25. State/police oppression	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
26. Military fighting or use of weapon	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
27. Being threatened by death – By whom: _____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
28. Discrimination due to political opinion	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
29. Racism (discrimination) due to being a Kurd	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
30. Discrimination due to religious belief and traditions	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
31. Discrimination due to culture and clothing style	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
32. Sexism (discrimination) due to being a woman	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
33. Other_____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

(3) General Health Questionnaire (GHQ#28)

We should like to know if you have had any medical complaints, and how your health has been in general **over the past few weeks**. Please answer ALL the questions on the following pages simply by underlining the answer, which you think most nearly applies to you. Remember that we want to know about present and recent complaints, not those that you had in the past. It is important that you try to answer ALL the questions.

Example

Have you recently....

A1 Been feeling perfectly well and in good health?	Better than usual	Same as usual	Worse than usual	Much worse than usual

If you feel as you usually do, please draw a cycle around the choice "same as usual".

Have you recently....

A1	Been feeling perfectly well and in good health?	Better than usual	Same as usual	Worse than usual	Much worse than usual
A2	Been feeling in need of a good tonic? (to make you feel stronger)	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much worse than usual
A3	Been feeling run down and out of sorts? (feeling discontented, annoyed)	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much worse than usual
A4	Felt that you are ill?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much worse than usual
A5	Been getting any pains in your head?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much worse than usual
A6	Been getting a feeling of tightness or pressure in your head?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much worse than usual

A7	Been having hot or cold spells?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much worse than usual
B1	Lost much sleep over worry?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much worse than usual
B2	Had difficulty in staying asleep once you are off?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much worse than usual
B3	Felt constantly under strain?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much worse than usual
B4	Been getting edgy and bad-tempered?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much worse than usual
B5	Been getting scared or panicky for no good reason?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much worse than usual
B6	Found everything getting on top of you?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much worse than usual
B7	Been feeling nervous and strung-up all the time?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much worse than usual
C1	Been managing to keep yourself busy and occupied?	More so than usual	Same as usual	Rather less than	Much less than usual
C2	Been taking longer over the things you do?	Quicker than usual	Same as usual	Longer than usual	Much longer than usual
C3	Felt on the whole you were doing things well?	Better than usual	About the same as usual	Less well than usual	Much less well
C4	Been satisfied with the way you've carried out your task?	More satisfied	About the same usual	Less satisfied than usual	Much less satisfied
C5	Felt that you are playing a useful part in things?	More so than usual	Same as usual	Less useful than usual	than usual
C6	Felt capable of making decisions about things?	More so than usual	Same as usual	Less useful than usual	Much less capable
C7	Been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?	More so than usual	Same as usual	Less useful than usual	Much worse than usual
D1	Been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual
D2	Felt that life is entirely hopeless?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual

D3	Felt that life isn't worth living?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual
D4	Thought of the possibility that you might make away with yourself?	Definitely not	I don't think so	Has crossed my mind	Definitely have
D5	Found at times you couldn't do anything Not at all because your nerves were too bad?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual
D6	Found yourself whishing you were dead and away from it all?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual
D7	Found that the idea of taking your own life kept coming into your mind?	Definitely not	I don't think so	Has crossed my mind	Definitely has

(4) Depression – Anxiety/Panic Disorders – PTSS

(This test has been prepared on the basis of the DSM-IV-TR Manual)

Please answer ALL the questions in this section with ***yes*** or ***no*** simply by underlining the answer, which you think applies to you.

	Which of the below mentioned complains do you have?		
E 1	Depression; feeling of emptiness or sadness or not being able to enjoy anything	Yes	No
E 2	Are you most of the day or nearly every day in a depressed mood?	Yes	No
E 3	Do you feel a markedly diminished interest in many fields of life?	Yes	No
E 4	Do you feel a markedly diminished pleasure towards your life?	Yes	No
E 5	Do you have less appetite?	Yes	No
E 6	Do you have a significant weight loss during the last month? (losing more than 5 % of body weight without dieting)	Yes	No
E 7	Do you have a significant weight gain during the last month? (gaining more than 5 % of body weight)	Yes	No
E 8	Do you recently feel markedly less interest in sexuality?	Yes	No
E 9	Do you sleep much longer or much less than usual?	Yes	No
E 10	Are there irregularities appearing with your menstruation, recently?	Yes	No
E 11	Are you disproportionately irritated or disturbed?	Yes	No
E 12	Are your motions and reactions slowing down or derogating?	Yes	No
E 13	Do you always feel tired or without energy?	Yes	No

E 14	Do you feel worthless?	Yes	No
E 15	Do you feel inappropriate guilty towards yourself or others?	Yes	No
E 16	Are you extremely forgetful?	Yes	No
E 17	Do you have difficulties in making decisions?	Yes	No
E 18	Have you had frequently thoughts of death or suicide?	Yes	No
E 19	Did you ever attempt to commit suicide? If so; how many times? _____ When was the last attempt? _____	Yes	No
E 20	Do you think often that you have a dangerous illness?	Yes	No
E 21	If you have any of the complaints mentioned above, do they obstruct the main part of your daily life?	Yes	No
E 22	Since when have you suffered from these complaints?	_____	
E 23	Did you have similar complaints in former times of your life? If so, when? _____	Yes	No
F 1	Do have sometimes sudden and short lasting crises that make you feel very discomfort? *(If not, continue on the following page)*	Yes	No
	If you have these kinds of crises which of the complaints mentioned below do you have?		
F 2	Shortness of breath	Yes	No
F 3	Feeling of dizziness or faint	Yes	No

F 4	Palpitations of the heart	Yes	No
F 5	Trembling or shaking	Yes	No
F 6	Sweating	Yes	No
F 7	Feeling of choking	Yes	No
F 8	Feeling of being detached from your whereabouts	Yes	No
F 9	Nausea and sickness	Yes	No
F 10	Do some parts of your body feel numb or do get the feeling that some organs of your body are missing?	Yes	No
F 11	Hot flushes or chills	Yes	No
F 12	Chest pain	Yes	No
F 13	Have you had a fear of dying at the moment of the crisis?	Yes	No
F 14	Have you had a fear of losing control or going crazy at the moment of the crisis?	Yes	No
F 15	Since when have you had these crises?	_____	
F 16	How often do you undergo these crises?	_____	

Memories of shocking events

This part of the questionnaire concerns your **memories of the shocking events you've experienced** during the last years. More than one shocking event could have happened in your life. The next questions concern the experiences that have had a major impact on your life. The questions concern the nature of what had happened, your immediate reactions when these events occurred and the way you handle with memories of the events.

1. Which event or events did have an extremely impact on your life? Could you briefly describe what happened? When or in which period did the event(s) occur?

1a. What happened was:
.....
.....
.....

1b. When did this occur?
.....

1c. Where did the event occur?
.....

Explanation:
Underneath some questions are asked concerning the time after ***most shocking event*** that had the most impact on your life. Please memorize the ***most shocking event*** for you and its effects, and answer each of the questions by ***yes*** or ***no*** underlining the appropriate answer.

G 1	Do you have recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event?	Yes	No
G 2	Do you have recurrent distressing dreams or nightmares of the event?	Yes	No
G 3	Do you sometimes get a sense of reliving the event?	Yes	No
G 4	Do you have feelings or thoughts or are you behaving as if you would experience the event, again?	Yes	No
G 5	Are there certain things that remind you the event?	Yes	No
G 6	Do you have physical complaints when you are exposed to certain things that resemble the event? (For example; palpitations of the heart, shortness of breath, trembling or shaking, sickness, sweating, dizziness etc.)	Yes	No
G 7	Are you persistently trying to avoid feelings, thoughts, pictures, talks and behaviours that are associated with the event?	Yes	No
G 8	Are you trying to avoid activities, places or people that arouse recollections of the event?	Yes	No
G 9	Do you have difficulties in recalling (some) important aspects of the event?	Yes	No
G 10	Since the event do you have markedly diminished interest or joy in doing things that you usually enjoyed? (For example; hobbies etc.)	Yes	No
G 11	Do you have a feeling of detachment or estrangement from others since the event?	Yes	No
G 12	Did you experience intensive fear or helplessness related to the event?	Yes	No

G 13	Since the event do you feel as if you would be unable to have positive feelings like joy or love?	Yes	No
G 14	Do you feel uncertain and doubtful about your future?	Yes	No
G 15	Do you hear sometimes voices that others cannot hear?	Yes	No
G 16	Do you see sometimes strange things that others cannot see?	Yes	No
	Did you have any of the following complaints after the event?		
G 17	Do you have difficulties in falling asleep?	Yes	No
G 18	Do you have difficulties in staying asleep?	Yes	No
G 19	Do you easily get irritated?	Yes	No
G 20	Are you less patient? Do you have outburst of anger?	Yes	No
G 21	Do you have concentration problems? Or have you become forgetful?	Yes	No
G 22	Do you permanently feel aroused and doubtful?	Yes	No
G 23	Are you easily getting frightened (even form a small sound)?	Yes	No
	Which of the situations mentioned below are appropriate to you since the shocking event?		
G 24	Not being able to leave the house	Yes	No
G 25	Absence of appetite	Yes	No
G 26	Eating much more food	Yes	No
G 27	Shouting at children	Yes	No
G 28	Not being able to carry out daily works or housework	Yes	No

G 29	Mania for cleanness, cleaning the same things and places again and again	Yes	No
G 30	Quarrelling a lot	Yes	No
G 31	Not wanting to talk to anybody	Yes	No
G 32	Not wanting to watch television anymore	Yes	No
G 33	Not wanting to read newspapers anymore	Yes	No
G 34	Usage of (much more) pharmaceuticals	Yes	No
G 35	Usage of (much more) alcohol or drugs	Yes	No
G 36	Being workaholic	Yes	No
G 37	Not being able to work or to finish a work	Yes	No
G 38	If you have any of the complaints mentioned above, do they obstruct the main part of your daily life?	Yes	No
G 39	Have the complaints you mentioned above lasted longer than 3 months?	Yes	No
G 40	How many days, month or years after the event did the complaints start?		
G 41	Did you think that you should or could do something to prevent others from living through the same shocking event?	Yes	No

This part of the questionnaire concerns your ***personal perception of the world, the events that you have been through and the people around you***. Would you tell with each statement whether you agree or disagree?

	In what way does this concern you?	*not at all*	*hardly*	*consider-ably*	*very*
1	I always manage to solve difficult problems as long as I try hard enough.	G	G	G	G
2	When someone opposes me, I always find ways to get what I want.	G	G	G	G
3	I find it easy to hold on to what I want and reach my targets.	G	G	G	G
4	I can deal with unexpected events well.	G	G	G	G
5	I can handle unexpected situations well.	G	G	G	G
6	With considerable efforts, I can solve most problems.	G	G	G	G
7	I stay calm when I encounter problems be-cause I trust my solving capacity.	G	G	G	G
8	Whenever I am confronted with a problem, I usually can think of different solutions.	G	G	G	G
9	With a difficult problem, I usually can think of something to do.	G	G	G	G
10	Whatever I encounter on my way, I'm always able to handle it.	G	G	G	G

(5) Evaluation of Health Care

This part of the survey contains ***health care*** that you may have offered for the problems you have as a consequence of the life events you've been through.

If you don't have any health-related problems, please continue with the next chapter (6) of the questionnaire.

The questions below refer to health problems that are connected to the shocking event(s) you went through.

1a. Which health complaints do you have?
……
……

1b. What are the most important problems that were caused by these complaints? (What did you have to discontinue because of the complaints?)
……
……

2a. What is in your opinion the cause of the complaints?
……
……

2b. Do you have a doctor's diagnosis?
- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, what does the diagnosis say?

……
……

2c. Do you use medication?
- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, namely:

……
……

3. Did you try to do something about it *yourself*?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes; what did you do?

     ……
     ……

4. Did it help?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes; in which way did you feel well?

     ……
     ……

5. Who was the first person or institution you approached to get help for your problems?
   - ☐ Family or friends
   - ☐ Self help group
   - ☐ Religious/spiritual counsellor
   - ☐ General Practitioner
   - ☐ Social Worker
   - ☐ Medical Officer or Hospital
   - ☐ Professional mental health care (like 'RIAGG')
   - ☐ Traditional healer (like a 'hodja')
   - ☐ Otherwise, namely:

     ……

6. How long did your problems exist before you decided to do something about it?
   - ☐ less than three months
   - ☐ between three and six months
   - ☐ between six months and one year
   - ☐ between one and two years
   - ☐ between two and five years
   - ☐ more than five years

7. Did you find it difficult to ask help for your problems?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes, because I find it difficult to talk about my problems
   - ☐ Yes, because the problems are considered as an illness in my culture
   - ☐ Yes, because I was afraid of social control
   - ☐ Yes, namely:

     …….....

8. Can you specify the kind of help you actually got from your first contact with somebody else?

   …….....
   …….....

9. Did the help you received meet your expectations, for instance did your complaints decrease, did it make you feel any better?
   - ☐ If yes, could you explain how?
   - ☐ If no, could you explain why not?

   …….....
   …….....

10a. From which aspect of this help did you benefit the most? Which aspect of this help would you like to change?

   …….....
   …….....

10b. Has there been anything that you have been missing when you received the help?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes

11. Do/did you have any contact with one of the following persons or institutions?
    - ☐ Psychologist of psychiatrist in an organisation for mental health care; which one? …….....
    - ☐ The psychiatric polyclinic of the hospital
    - ☐ An individually practicing psychologist or psychiatrist
    - ☐ No (please continue with question 17.)

12. Who took the initiative for this contact?
    - ☐ Own initiative
    - ☐ Family, friends or acquaintances
    - ☐ Colleagues or employer
    - ☐ General practitioner
    - ☐ Someone else, namely: ……...

13. Did you find it difficult to ask help for your problems at this person?
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Yes; because: ……

14. Can you specify the kind of help you actually got from your contact with this person?
    ……
    …….....

15a Does your health care provider have the same ethnic background as you do?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No: ……..

15b How important is it to you that your health care provider is of the same ethnic background as you are?
    - ☐ Not important at all
    - ☐ Not very important
    - ☐ It does not matter
    - ☐ Reasonably important
    - ☐ Extremely important

15c. Why do you think that is (not) important?
……
…….....

16a. Is your health care provider female or male?
- ☐ female
- ☐ male

16b. How important is it to you that your health care provider is of the same sex as you are?
- ☐ Not important at all
- ☐ Not very important
- ☐ It does not matter
- ☐ Reasonably important
- ☐ Extremely important

16c. Why do you think that is (not) important?
……
…….....

17. Do/did you have any contact with a culturally based health care provider, such as a hodzha?
- ☐ No (please, continue with question 23)
- ☐ Yes, …….....

18. Did you go to the traditional healer because you felt that certain aspects of your sickness could not be healed by other health care professionals?
- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, namely:

……
……

19. Did you find it difficult to ask this person for help for your problems?
- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, because: ……...

20. Can you specify the kind of help you actually got from your contact with this person?
……
……

21. Did the help you received meet your expectations, for instance did your complaints decrease, did it make you feel any better?
☐ If yes, could you explain how?
☐ If no, could you explain why not?
……
……

22. From which aspect of this help did you benefit the most? Which aspect of this help would you like to change? What have you been missing?
……
……

23. Are there any other persons or institutions you approached to get help for your problems?
☐ No
☐ Yes, namely: ……

24. Is there anything else you would like to mention or to emphasise?
……
……

(6) The Lowlands Acculturation Scale

Below is a list of statements expressing the difficulties migrants are confronted with. Please listen to each item carefully and decide to what extent it is applicable to your recent personal experience (within the last three months) and give the answer that describes your situation best. When you think the comment is not applicable to you, please answer 1 or 2; if it is entirely applicable to you, answer 5 or 6.

When a question mentions "European people", it is referring specifically to indigenous people of the county you life in.

To which extent are these statements applicable to you?

	Not applicable at all					Entirely applicable
1. I have fewer career opportunities than European people do	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I prefer to listen to Kurdish music	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. European people make me feel welcome.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I have frequent contact with Dutch people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I prefer to eat Kurdish food.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I consider it important to pass our traditions on to the next (future) generation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Even though I am living here, it does not feel like my country.	1	2	3	4	5	6

8. Most of my friends have the same cultural background as I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I am misunderstood when I speak the language of this country	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I have difficulties understanding the language of this country	1	2	3	4	5	6

What do you think about the terms mentioned underneath?

1. How do you define ***onur*** *(= dignity)*?

   _____

2. How do you define ***namus*** *(= honour)*?

   _____

3. Which of the both is more important to you?
   - ☐ Onur (=dignity)
   - ☐ Namus (= honour)
   - ☐ Both are equal important
   - ☐ Both are not so important

Thank you very much for co-operating with this interview!

Has to be filled in by the interviewer:

How much time did the interview take? Did you give a break during the interview?

.....
.....

Anything else the interviewer would like to mention or further observations:

.....
.....

Chapter V: Bibliography

Books, Articles, Conventions and Websites

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