

“I KNOW MY MURDERER”

Sinem Nazlı Demir

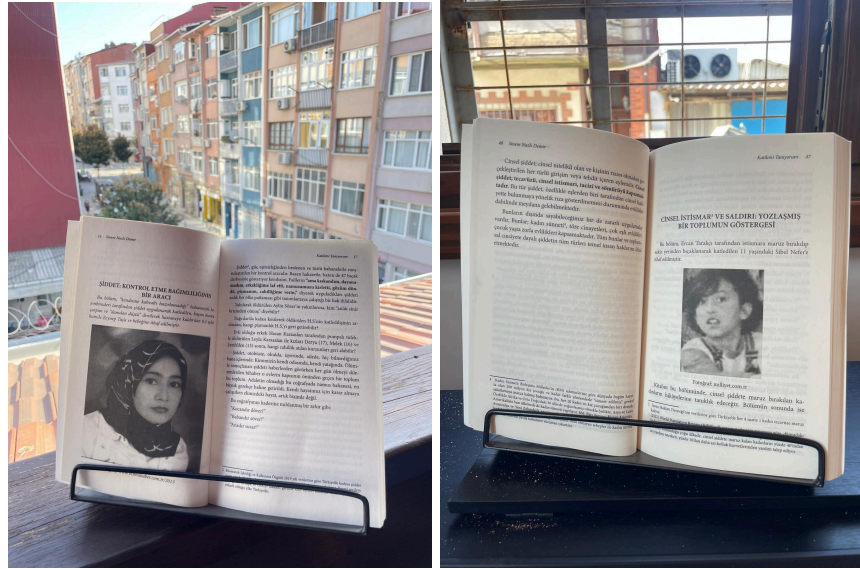


This book is about women who were imprisoned, subjected to violations of their rights, and subjected to violence. It was written as a dedication to all women who were forcibly removed from life.



AUTHOR OF THE BOOK - SİNEM NAZLI DEMİR

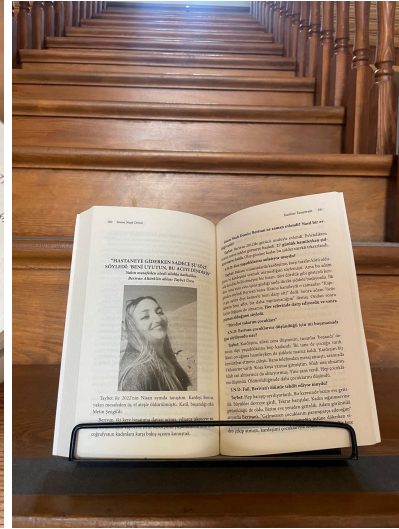
She was born in 1998, in Istanbul. She graduated from Yeditepe University with a double bachelor's degree. She worked as a reporter and announcer for Cumhuriyet Newspaper, ANKA News Agency and ARTI Television. She founded Farkına Var Association for children and women living in disadvantaged conditions. *She is the author of the book **I Know My Killer**, which documents femicides in Turkey.* She started a master's program in “Human Rights” at Fulda University of Applied Sciences in Germany. Every month she gives seminars on women's and children's rights to leading universities and municipalities in Turkey and Germany. She aims to become a globally recognized human rights journalist. She speaks fluent English and intermediate German.



INTRODUCTION OF THE BOOK

This book tells the life stories of 29 women in the words of the women and their families. The author of the book interviewed 19 women who were victims of rape and violence and interviewed the families of 10 women who were murdered. This book was first published in Turkish on January 5, 2024, and its third edition is currently underway. The author is holding meetings to translate the book into German and English, and her biggest goal now is to translate the book into different languages.

The book consists of the following subsections: violence, sexual abuse, being a homeless woman, LGBTI, being an immigrant woman, being a female prisoner, being a disabled woman, femicide. In each section, experts in the specified field were interviewed along with the female subjects, and the latest published statistics were included separately.



SHORT SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

PREFACE

Violence against women is seen in some societies as something that “*should happen*”, and in others as an “*inevitable consequence*.” According to such views, women must be controlled, kept in sight, and their pleasures and desires should not be considered important.

“Why should a woman study? How can she have a say? By what right should she divorce, start a relationship, or challenge ‘tradition’? Why should a woman even live?”

From the youngest to the oldest, from the most ‘democratic’ among us to the poorest...
There is not a single woman who can honestly say:

"Neither I nor any woman I know has been wronged just for being a woman, nor have we witnessed such injustice toward another."

The violence and abuse experienced by the women whose stories I share in this book did not arise in just a few years—and they will not end as quickly as we hope.

Because they are still among us:

Those who judge a woman when she is murdered for being in a relationship with a married man,
Those who witness violence in the middle of the street and say, “It’s a family matter, we shouldn’t interfere,”

Those who associate “honor” with women, but “dignity” with men,

Those who teach morality to girls, and tell boys to “be lions,”

And so many others...

So, really, what is this issue of women's rights? Why are we still trying to prove, in so many parts of the world, that women are not second-class human beings?

Did the people who burned Farkhunda Malikzada alive, or those who shot Fulya Öztürk at close range, not know that women have the right to live?

Did those who called Yağmur Önüt's murder a "joke killing" not know that weapons are no joke?

Did those who stopped searching for Gülistan Doku not know that the ones who truly need to be questioned are still walking freely among us?

They knew. *We* knew.

Because when Gamze Açar was pushed off a tall building, when Muhterem Evcil was stabbed eight times, when 15-year-old Büşra Kabataş was tortured, killed, and burned—**we were all there.**

VIOLENCE: A TOOL OF CONTROL AND DEPENDENCY

This chapter is dedicated to Zeynep Taş, who was eight and a half months pregnant when she was brutally killed by her brother-in-law on the pretext that she didn't prepare breakfast for him. Her head was smashed against a wall and she was taken to the hospital with the fabricated claim that she "fell from the roof."

Violence is a tool of control, fed by power imbalances and legitimized through various excuses. Sometimes it manifests as an insult, sometimes in the form of 47 stab wounds.

It is a violation of rights that perpetrators attempt to define as a momentary outburst of anger, saying things like:

"But I was jealous... I lost control... She insulted my manhood... She dishonored us... I saw red... I'm sorry... Blame it on my ignorance..."

Who can tell the loved ones of Aylin Sözer—burned alive—that it was due to a "sudden fit of rage"?

What kind of ignorance can undo the bullets fired by Hasan Karaaslan, who murdered his wife Leyla and their daughters Derya (17), Melek (16), and Şerife (13) with a shotgun?

Violence is on the bus, at school, at work, in families, behind the closed doors of homes we've never seen.

For some of us, it's in our very own rooms, in our very own beds.

This is a society that walks past doors behind which women wish for death every single day—while we only learn of their deaths through news headlines.

In this land where justice is absent, "honor" has become the most convenient justification.

As we try to make decisions for our own lives, we find that our lives are no longer ours to control.

The story of Emine

-survivor of systematic violence by her husband

“He would tie my hands and feet, smash my head against the wall until I passed out, then drag me under cold water to revive me and then hit me again.”

I met Emine toward the end of 2022. For years, she had been subjected to physical and psychological abuse by the man she was married to.

Now, she is fighting to make her story heard across Turkey.

Her marriage, which began with psychological abuse over not having a dowry, continued with increasingly severe physical violence.

Living under constant death threats, Emine says she is most concerned about her children’s psychological well-being.

author: *How did your marriage begin? Did you notice any early signs of abuse?*

Emine: We moved here in 2002. I met him through our landlord. It was an arranged marriage. They came to ask for my hand, and my family said yes immediately. I didn’t have time to get to know him.

He had already begun insulting me during that period. I told my father, “I don’t want to marry this man.”

He replied, “But he’s a real man.”

Later, when my family started being insulted by him too, they also didn’t want him anymore. But we got married anyway, and I started living with his family.

“He stabbed my legs with a key. I couldn’t walk for 2–3 months.”

author: *When did the physical violence begin?*

Emine: It started while we were living with his family. He tried to strangle me once.

We didn’t have much financially, and my own family was poor. The house had debts, and I had little dowry.

author: *What excuses did he use for the violence?*

Emine: He first said, “*I don’t expect anything from you,*” but later he began saying things like, “*Your family didn’t do this,*” or “*You don’t have a proper dowry.*”

Everything became an excuse.

In the beginning, he would harm himself—cutting his arms with a knife. It affected my mental health too.

Then I had a child, and after that, the violence worsened.

He would tie my hands and feet, smash my head against the wall until I passed out, then put me under cold water to wake me up—and then hit me again.

I would always try to call out to the neighbors. Once, I managed to scream: *“Help me, save me!”*

But when the police came, he lied.

After my second child was born, he once took my children out of my arms, locked me in another room, and stabbed my legs with a door key.

I couldn’t walk for two or three months.

When his mother asked what happened to me, he told her I said: *“I’ll sleep around with other men and cheat on you.”*

“I couldn’t take refuge with my family. And I had nowhere else to go!”

author: *Did he ever try to deny the violence?*

Emine: Sometimes he would cry and beg, saying *“I love you more than life itself,”* and then go on to abuse me again.

If I had somewhere to go... but I couldn’t stay with my family. And I had nowhere else.

I applied to social services.

The more I try to escape, the more trapped I feel.

author: *Did he threaten to kill you?*

Emine: Once he shot up the house and ended up in prison. After getting out, he began threatening me again.

When I appeared in the news, his father said to me: *“You’re disgracing us.”*

Even if I have to eat dry bread, I want to be with my children. He makes everything toxic for us.

He threatens to kill me and my brother.

He says, *“If you divorce me, you won’t get another chance!”*

Would I ever want my brother to be harmed? I keep calling him to make sure he’s safe.

I live in fear. I’ve even given up on myself.

“My eyes are black and blue—I can’t go outside...”

author: *Why do you think violence against women doesn’t end in Turkey?*

Emine: Some people don’t raise their sons properly.

They say, *“He’ll change after marriage, after having kids.”*

How can I “fix” a psychopath?

I was young and naive—I believed him.

I had never felt loved by my family either.

Trying to escape the rain, I ran straight into hail.

Should I raise my kids without love too?

author: *What do you think authorities are doing wrong?*

Emine: Women need protection.

Men who abuse women should be punished.

No one should have to go through what my children have lived through.

My eyes are bruised—I can't go outside.

Did I do this to myself?

Punish this man.

What kind of punishment is a fine?

My daughter asks, *"When will I be free of this house?"*

If she sees even a glimpse of kindness from someone outside, she'll think that's salvation and fall into the same trap I did.

The story of Yağmur

I saw Yağmur sitting with her blanket and bag. I hesitated, but when I realized that she was looking at me as my steps slowed down, I was going to go to her. I introduced myself politely, she said she hadn't slept for days. that she needed a cigarette and, in fact, a friend she could feel safe with. Together we sat down and smoked our cigarettes. The first thing I noticed was that she spoke in a very low voice. Later she explained that on many occasions she had to shout and scream, so her vocal cords were damaged. We stood up and started walking in the other direction. Later, as we were walking, I told her about my book project. She said that she had experienced many traumas and wanted to tell about them. One week later we agreed to meet in the square and then go to one of her favorite cafes. She'd been gone for a week. I always had this question in my mind: What could Yağmur have gone through?

"If someone else does it, you'll get pregnant, don't tell anyone"

Yağmur: I was born in 1978. We are 7 girls and 2 boys. There was a lot of violence and abuse in our house. My father always beat me and my sisters when we left the house. Abuse. As for... I remember the first time. Once I opened my eyes and saw my father in my bed. It was summer.. He started touching me. He took off his underwear and he pulled it out. He rubbed his genitals against me. He came, and then he got up. That night I saw him doing the same thing to my sister, but I couldn't say anything. One day my mom wasn't home. I was 11 years old and he again came in. "Someone else if he does, you'll get pregnant, don't tell anyone." I didn't see him as a father. I was scared. I was running away in case he did the same thing. He always came to us when he saw us sleeping. He didn't put his penis inside us, so we wouldn't get pregnant, and he wasn't afraid to hide it. After a while I told my mom:

"Don't you know how to protect yourself? If you were good, your father would have done this to you."

he wouldn't have done it.” I was so angry that day. My mom was never there for us. I can't even use the word “mom”. Then they started calling us 'whores' in the family. My father used to beat my mother a lot.

He broke her arms and legs. He usually hit me with a stick. When he played with a knife, he was trying to stab me. The abuse continued for years. And then he tried to marry me. That man also got me pregnant, but my family wanted the child to be aborted. They kicked me in the stomach and my child fell.

How did you get to Adiyaman? Is that where you met Abdurrahman?

Yağmur: When these events happened, my three sisters ran away from home. Then I ran away too.

Like, who am I supposed to trust? Who can I trust? Then I met a guy. He was smoking pot. He didn't work.

We slept together, had a wedding. I got pregnant. He started beating me. My daughter was born but this situation did not change. I broke up with him,

I went to Adiyaman. One day we went to sit somewhere with friends, I was 23-24 years old.

That's where I met Abdurrahman, my future husband, and from there he came after me.

I didn't know him before, it turned out he owned the cafe there. He tried to get me to work there.

He wanted me to stand next to the customers when they came. I was living alone at the time.

We started living together and after a while he started locking me in the house. We were not married,

I got pregnant. I wanted an abortion, I couldn't get one, I couldn't afford an abortion, I could not find 200 Turkish liras. I couldn't do it.

He was suffocating me. He strangled me with whatever he had. With belts, with cloths, sometimes with his hands. And I was, I was trying to hide some things in the house without him, so he wouldn't use them against me. He took my cell phone away from me. I couldn't reach anyone, and he locked the door.

I couldn't get out. My child was born. He was trying to strangle my child too. I couldn't get out and when I came, he would ask me to undress, he would look all over my body. Is there a difference,

“Ours is a matter of honor, only death will separate us.” he was saying.

He said, “Take off your top. He took a hammer from the box and started hitting me with it.

Were there moments when you tried to escape?

Yagmur: Once I ran away from home and someone intervened. I said, “This man can't be fixed.” “But he has changed,” they said.

How was he to the outside world?

Yagmur: He seemed very polite and innocent to the outside. But no one knows what I'd suffered. Then I had to go back home. He took me into the room. He took a hammer from the box and started hitting me with it. My cousin heard the sounds and called the police. They searched for him. So he ran away and started hiding in someone's house. One day, he followed me home. I stopped on the street. He came out. I yelled, "What do you want from me?" He stabbed me in the thigh. I remember that moment I had a 9-centimeter wound on my thigh, but they said "minor injury". Even the police commissioner said, "This is the first time I've seen someone hit a woman with a hammer." And the people at the police station still said, "Go home..."

SEXUAL VIOLENCE: A SYMPTOM OF A CORRUPT SOCIETY

This chapter is dedicated to 11-year-old Sibel Nefer, who was sexually abused and murdered with eight stab wounds by Ercan Tarakçı.

In this section of the book, we will witness the stories of women who have been subjected to sexual violence. At the end of the chapter, we will examine definitions and data regarding this issue in Turkey.

Sexual violence is one of the most deeply rooted violations of rights a society can inflict upon an individual.

Women subjected to such violence often find themselves having to prove what they endured during legal proceedings, experiencing a second trauma in the process.

Yet, it is the suspects who should have to prove their innocence.

This reality is not exclusive to our country—unfortunately, the world remains a profoundly difficult place for women.

So how does Turkey speak to its women?

"Tell what you went through, prove it, demonstrate your innocence, tell it again, go to the media, show yourself to the public, explain your trauma to law enforcement, face labeling and threats!"

Here are some of the statements made by women I interviewed as a women's rights journalist—on the condition of anonymity:

"They didn't care about me at the police station."

"I was afraid to tell my family."

"Don't publish my name—my coworkers might find out."

"What would have changed if I had filed a complaint?"

"Why would the police listen to me? Who can I trust?"

“Especially since it happened within the family, they think: ‘She won’t say anything anyway. She doesn’t want to disrupt the family. She’s just a child. She won’t understand. She’ll forget.’”

These are not the kind of sentences we should underline for a moment and then forget.

They were not constructed by a single person or institution.

We built these walls together.

Because when Behiye Çakır was murdered, when Melek B. was crying for help on social media, when Sinem Çiçek’s body was injected with a lethal dose of drugs—we were all there.

The Story of Bilge

“I wash with hot water. I scrub my skin until it hurts. I feel like cutting off certain parts of my body.”

—Bilge, a survivor of sexual abuse by her stepfather

I met Bilge in 2021 at a social gathering, and we later became close friends. When she learned that I was writing a book, she offered to be interviewed. At first, I was simply curious. What was she going to tell me?

We may read about these things in the news, but when it happens to someone close to us, we can become utterly lost.

*Now, we read the childhood memories of my friend—who has chosen the name **Bilge**—and the abuse she endured.*

author: *Can you introduce yourself for those who don’t know you?*

Bilge: *I’m 28. I dance, I’m into music, and I sing.*

“There’s something people don’t understand: telling someone about this is incredibly hard.”

author: *How did the abuse begin? How old were you?*

Bilge: *I went through things I couldn’t talk about until I was 27.*

From the age of 9 or 10, I was systematically abused by my stepfather.

It was such a systematic process that I couldn’t tell anyone.

There were times I couldn’t resist, couldn’t escape.

Because I couldn’t express it outwardly, it built up inside me.

It was a heavy burden—because there’s something people don’t get: this is incredibly hard to talk about.

Abuse is horrifying at any age, but for a child to go through it is especially devastating.

Maybe that’s why I became a teacher—to try to understand them, because no one ever understood me.

“He’s dead, but I still feel like he’s alive.”

author: *Did you ever want to tell someone? Were there times you hesitated?*

Bilge: *I was afraid to tell.*

The couple of times I tried, my mother responded as if I had misunderstood something.

That kind of reaction made me feel I had to bury it.

I thought it would never end and that it would just keep going.

I was scared, because I had to live with him too—he was part of my life.

I was afraid that if I told anyone more, my whole life would fall apart.

If I told my brother, maybe he would have shot him. Our lives would've been destroyed. People could have died.

I was afraid of something even worse happening.

At least this way, I thought, only I was getting hurt.

I didn't want to drag anyone else into it.

For instance, my mother would leave the house in the morning, and he would leave with her.

But after she went off on her walk, he would return.

I hated the mornings.

I was terrified of any sound in the house in the early hours.

He's dead now, but I still feel like he's alive.

He used to say things like, "If you don't let me touch you, I'll do this to your mother," and then he would.

He used violence.

I was a religious child. I was 12. I would make ablution and say, "Stay away from me." I just wanted to protect myself.

"As a child, I used to cut my arms with glass shards..."

author: *How do you feel when you look back now?*

Bilge: *When I look back, I can't believe what I went through.*

I have no idea how I carried that burden at 9 or 10 years old.

It feels incredibly heavy, and not being able to share it with anyone still weighs on me.

The past is the past, but it never really goes away.

Your body remembers.

Sometimes I shower in hot water, scrub myself until it hurts, and feel like cutting parts of my body off.

Even though I didn't do anything wrong, I want to purge the hatred from my body.

As a child, I used to cut my arms with broken glass.

Now, I still find ways to hurt myself.

I fall into deep depressions. Sometimes I don't leave the house for months.

He's dead, but I keep punishing myself.

author: *Why do you think violence against women and children doesn't end in Turkey?*

Bilge: *I don't think it's just about Turkey.*

Violence and abuse against women happens all over the world.

And it stems from a patriarchal mindset.

He used to say, "All men, all stepfathers are like this."

Even now, I refuse to accept that.

But there are men who believe they're entitled to this.

There are even women who believe men are entitled to it.

I'm not very hopeful at the moment.

Even in middle school, we were insulted through concepts of "honor."

Girls were subjected to psychological violence; boys to physical violence.

Unless this mindset changes, violence will not stop.

That man thought, "If I married this woman, and she brought her daughter into my home, I own them both. If I provide for them, they owe me everything. I deserve it."

That kind of thinking is sick. It ruined my life.

As a child, I used to imagine his death.

Now I'm a teacher.

I look into my students' eyes with the hope of understanding them—because no one ever understood me.

No one heard me.

Now I wonder, "Is something happening to any of them?"

I was too scared to speak up.

I only told my sister last year.

I look into my students' eyes in case they want to tell me something.

Maybe they're being abused or neglected by their fathers.

If they are, someone needs to hear them.

"They didn't just do it to us. If they're not stopped, they'll keep doing it."

author: *What kind of country would you want to live in?*

Bilge: *I wish I lived in a country where I could be protected.*

In a culture where my mother hadn't been married off at 16.

If she had gotten an education, maybe she wouldn't have ended up with him.

If my mother had been educated, and my stepfather hadn't had that patriarchal mindset, life could've been so much better.

I wish I lived in a country where no one stands in the way of women becoming independent—

A country where, when I say "this man is doing this to me," I could just grab my coat and leave.

FINAL WORD

*I began this journey fully aware that my book might feel heavy for many readers.
Listening to these stories and focusing on the painful details of the truth was not a choice—it
was a responsibility for me.
Because I needed to look, to see, and—above all—to believe.*

*When we ask a woman who says “I was subjected to violence” the question, “Why you and not
someone else?”
—we must remember that we are laying one more brick on the wall that leads to every murder.*

*Because in my country, those who opposed the Istanbul Convention remained silent when trans
women were burned alive.
Those who questioned Şule Çet—“What was she doing there at that hour?”—ignored the
women who were found murdered with notes in their bags saying, “I don’t want to die.”
Those who said, “Just once won’t hurt,” never understood how fatal and dangerous “just once”
can be.*

*Every woman whose story you have read in this book represents only the visible face of human
rights violations in this region.
The unseen stories haven’t yet made the headlines, their trials haven’t been held, and their
voices haven’t echoed.*

*This land is filled with women whose voices tremble while giving testimony about the violence
they endured—
and with men who freely search online for methods of murder.
Because instead of aiming to end femicides, officials take pride in reducing them,
and present our basic rights as if they are acts of generosity.*

Yet every single one of these murders could have been prevented:

*The machete killing of Başak Cengiz—could have been prevented.
The stabbing of Ceren Özdamar at her doorstep—could have been prevented.
The slashing of Aylin Sözer’s throat—could have been prevented.
And while I was writing this book, the murder of Ülkü Deniz Ersöz—who I reported on after she
was shot in the neck and who died nine days later in the hospital—**could have been prevented.***

*We have not been honest with each other.
Our reactions have depended on the number of murdered women.
And now, we live in a country where dozens of women are killed every single month.*

*We cannot blame only one person.
Nor can we escape the reality we have collectively created.*

*Let the fire burn so that those nearby may feel its warmth.
Salute to those who ignite the flame.*

Until we meet in a world free from silence, violence, and shadows.



LINKS OF THE BOOK

- <https://www.a7kitapstore.com/product-page/katilimi-taniyorum-t%C3%BCrkiye-de-kad%C4%B1n-k%C4%B1r%C4%B1m%C4%B1>
- <https://www.idefix.com/yazar/sinem-nazli-demir-10137122>
- <https://m.n11.com/urun/katilimi-taniyorum-turkiyede-kadin-kirimi-sinem-nazli-demir-a7-kitap-48302245>



This book, the product of 4 years of long and difficult work, sheds light on the causes of femicides, the defense of perpetrators and the experiences of women. The book has been a great success in Turkey and I would like to translate it into English and German and publish it. At the end of each chapter in my book, I interviewed experts in that field and gave readers certain statistics. I also shared my own views and the adventure I experienced while writing the book. Both the writing of the book and the proofreading at the final stage were difficult, because everything told is true.

*“I started this journey knowing that my book might be difficult for many readers.
For me, listening and focusing on the details of the facts was not an obligation, but a duty.
Because I had to look, see and most importantly believe.
Unseen stories have not yet been reported in the press, and their voices have not yet been heard.
It didn't resonate and that is now my aim to publish them”*

CONTACT INFORMATION

Sinem Nazlı Demir

Telephone 1: +49 162 1810227

Telephone 2: +90 534 302 67 48

E-mail: sinemnazlidemirr@gmail.com

Social media accounts:

<https://linktr.ee/sinemnazlidemirr>

<https://www.instagram.com/sinemndemir/>

Address: Heinrich Straße, Number 22 - 36037 Fulda, Hessen





