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### **Changing Roles and Responsibilities of Woman in Politics in Southeastern Anatolia**

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#### **Abstract**

This article is aimed at investigating the importance of Kurdish women's place and role in politics. The political activeness of Kurdish women, which became an important part of the reviving Kurdish political movement during the Republic period – in particular during the 1970s – has become more pronounced since 1980. Within the framework of these developments, the reasons and factors, which have changed Kurdish women, shaped their role and built a new identity for them, as well as the contribution of those women to the reformation, revival and development of their nation, will be investigated in this research. This article will assess women's contribution to the Kurdish political movement while exploring the way women have changed and the new dimensions of relationships between individuals in the Kurdish community, by bringing clarification to the social development, change and the current status of Kurdish women.

**Keywords:** Kurdish woman; Kurdish movement; New identity; Kurdish feminism; Free woman; Republic of Turkey.

#### **Introduction**

In the period since the end of the twentieth century, women's movements have been quickly developing, organizing and strengthening, and in so doing have been putting forward an alternative to the patriarchal management system that exists throughout the world. Although possessing the potential to influence the way the social order is formed (but still not achieving the expected outcomes), these activities have been subject to many political and academic studies. This study explores the social and political activity of Kurdish women that has emerged over the last 30 years in Turkey, and is based on both ethnic identity and gender.

The current Kurdish problem is perceived from different points of view: a problem of ethnic identity, an economic problem, terror, separatism or a national problem. The aim of this article is not to study the core reasons of the Kurdish problem. Nevertheless, the reasons behind the politicization of Kurdish women will necessitate investigating the core reasons of the conflict and looking into its causal factors. There are also some feminist elements in the ideological basis of the Kurdish movement, and these strategies influence the position of women in society and shape their collective power. The successful incorporation of women in mass into politics is one of the main features of the Kurdish political movement in the post -1980 periods.

Overtime, Kurdish women have become the most influential part of the movement. They initially started by taking roles in the political party establishments and street demonstrations then in the armed struggle. Although it is argued that Kurdish women engage in political struggle for reasons of ethnic identity, in reality, they struggle not due to being left behind, but in order to change their oppressed role in society. Even today, young Kurdish women who cannot get out of their homes due to the strict control of other family members join political parties and participate in street demonstrations very easily as a way of fighting for identity and gender equality in society.

In written and visual sources found in the public sphere, women with colorful and bright dresses symbolize the Kurdish culture, while women in front of prisons are characterized as symbols of *victimization and demand for rights* (Caglayan, 2012), women in military uniforms are represented as *signs of salvation*. As a very important component of the struggle for the recognition of ethnic identity and a mechanism that allows for new practices, *de-genderizing* has strengthened the Kurdish political ideology and covered both sides of the society by ensuring the involvement of both sexes.

Today, total politicization and representation of Kurdish women in all fields of Kurdish political struggle is the main issue. Through their activeness, women establish and run their own trade unions, political parties, media organizations, magazines and newspapers, while contributing to different activities within and outside of the country. Either active or backstage (there is no passive one) activities of women at all age groups - children, young adults, adults and the elderly - have reached a level that cannot be ignored. Various sides perceive the situation differently; either as a revival, a rise of awareness, an emancipation and livening-up, or as having fallen victim to propaganda, exploitation and abuse of women's power.

Considering that the East part of Turkey suffers from economic and social underdevelopment in comparison with other parts of land, it is captivating how the masses have managed to change and mobilize. Besides symbolizing identity (consciously or unconsciously), the participation of Kurdish women in the struggle – as a result of being touched by the situation from the male perspective (father, spouse, brother, relatives, etc.) – in the Kurdish political struggle comprises the emotional aspect of the issue.

Relevant books, academic papers, studies and experimental data that have been looked through discuss these cases. Nonetheless, it is necessary to consider the questions that trigger this opinion: The underlying question is whether emotional reasons are a satisfactory trigger for the mobilization of a strong army of women. In order to find out the other underlying reasons for and factors of the politicization of women, answers to the following questions have been provided in this study:

- What is the policy for women in the Kurdish political movement and political parties?
- Which factors have had an impact on the mobilization of women in legal Kurdish political parties and Kurdish illegal movements, such as the PKK, which is internationally recognized as a terror organization?

### **Gender policy of kurdish official political parties**

*"[...] Kurdish youth should understand that women and family are issues of existence and life. Above all, the ways of raising the femininity of "Kurdishness" should be investigated. It is very well known that clever and wise mothers are as essential as food. [...]" Ergani Madenli Y.C., Roj-i Kurd, 12 September 1913*

The above text is taken from an article published under the title of *"The issue of Women in Kurds"* in the journal *Roj-i Kurd* by *Ergani Madenli Y.C.* from 12 September 1913. Although there is no clear evidence as to how influential this article was at the time, it calls for women in the current Kurdish movement to mobilize, be they Kurdish women from rural or urban areas.

Although Kurdish women's need for power in this struggle is perceived as strengthening the ideological and ethnic struggle, in fact, it is related to the fact that women are the main carriers of ethnicity, language and culture in Kurdish society.

What makes the situation different is the change of methods and roles (from invisible to visible), which thus become influential by adapting to the conditions and criteria of the modern struggles. Indeed, even before the emergence of the Kurdish political movement, the Kurdish woman was an important actor, yet one lacking mass visibility in public and social life. They have taken part in the struggle as individuals and fought for the survival of their ethnicity and culture both biologically and culturally by keeping their identities and cultures alive (in particular the language).

The Kurdish political movement and revival of its feminist movement have led Kurdish women out of a passive, restricted, oppressed, and deprived situation similar to enslavement. The leaders of the movement have understood the benefits of this development for Kurdish people as a whole, and have thus, set about promoting this ideology. In this manner, after 1980, as it was before it, the position of women in the society has developed as an indicator of the socio-political situation of the Kurds (Caglayan, 2013: 87).

Caglayan explains that, while before 1980 Kurdish women were a symbol of "separate" and "civilized" nation, it was in the post-1980 period that an image of "free, strong and leader" Kurdish women were developed. At first there was the image of Kurdish women as "slaves" and "depressed", who characterized the Kurdish nation of the time. Afterwards, an image of free Kurdish women emancipating their nation was promoted in the agenda (Caglayan, 2013: 87). At this point criteria were brought into politics that would strengthen the identity, and in particular the movement.

In the Kurdish movement today, freedom and equality are the cornerstones of women's liberation ideology (10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Movement, 26 August 2008). Especially since the 1990s, there has been a distinct proliferation of political parties, organizations and trade unions built upon these criteria, as well as books and research defending and promoting these values. Today, there is almost, no single political party or organization that contributes to the Kurdish struggle but does not engage in anti-sexism, or promote libertarian and egalitarian principles. In order to investigate the issue in detail, it is useful to analyze the issue of women in legal Kurdish political parties (an organization which reflect the spirit of people, understanding them and thus, ruling) involved in Turkish politics. Indeed, the women policy in the charter and programs of the political parties mentioned below have developed overtime, and with each step the policy has become more and more comprehensive.

Support to women in the programs of the banned Kurdish political parties (HEP, DEP, HADEP, DEHAP) is conventional. But the issue was dealt with more effectively by the BDP. In fact, until the BDP, other Kurdish political parties set the basis of the current activeness of Kurdish women as well as contributing to the popularization and comprehensiveness of the women issue by considering it in a conventional dimension.

It can be considered that the Kurdish movement either directly or indirectly affected the gender composition, institutional basis and formation of the policies of political parties established in the 1990s such as HEP, DEP and HADEP (Caglayan, 2013: 129). As mentioned above, although the banned political parties had a women policy, none of them were active in this issue, and it never appeared as one of their major strategic concerns. This was due to the conditions under which they operated and restrictions they faced.

On the issue of women in charters and the programs of political parties regarding women (both in legal political parties and in terms of the identity of women politicians), Caglayan (2013) finds that the attitude of the HEP towards women's rights in its 64-page party program was summed up over just a single paragraph:

"Schooling ignoring the equality women and men and excluding women from social life will be prevented, rules against the equality of women and men will be eliminated from laws, economic,

\* HEP – HalkınEmekPartisi – People's Labor Party; 1990-1993

DEP – DemokrasiPartisi – Democracy Party; 1991-1994

HADEP – HalkınDemokrasiPartisi – People's Democracy Party; 1994-2003

DEHAP – Democratic People's Party; 1997-2005

social, cultural and legal measures will be taken to ensure the equality of women and men in all ways of social life” (HEP: 1992:53).

All those mentioned in this paragraph can be defended in the program and charter of every party that bears secular, liberal, socialist, etc. values. If that is indeed the case, then there is nothing specific that addresses the politicization and mobilization of Kurdish women. But in the new period, it is one of the first steps towards the exacerbation of the women issue. Classically speaking, DEP is on a similar track as the HEP, and yet DEP covered the issue of women in its program in a more comprehensive way.

“Formal or informal gender discrimination and violation of human rights is a serious problem for democracy. Laws will be redesigned in order to ensure the equality of women and men and their equal participation in all ways of social life, all ideological and social barriers will be cleared. In the work life, women will be protected from repression and exploitation.” (DEP, 1993a:11, Caglayan: 2013)

The text taken from HEP’s program defends the basic principles of self-expression, finance, employment and education, all of which ensure the position of women society. However, DEP elaborated on these in great detail in its program:

- Gender inequality was taken hand-in-hand with human rights. (Caglayan, 2013: 130)
- The equality of women and men is not a generalization here; the emphasis was made on the amendments of law providing the equality of women with men.
- By paying close attention, it is possible to see that equality is not horizontal (equality of women and men) but vertical (equality of women with men); equality is emphasized and in terms of gender-equality nothing is mentioned in regard to the protection of men (and there is no need for this).

Thus it is not just for general reasons, but also for the development of the situation of women, for which the amendments of laws are being considered, which are emphasized.

The question of female labor, (i.e. the employment of women whose care work goes unnoticed), is defended in the public sphere. At this point, DEP reflected one of the three strategies prescribed by *Simone De Beauvoir – a feminist writer* in her work on the topic of “how women can overcome being the second sex” - “the employment of women in the public sphere” in its program (Beauvoir: 1970, Sasman: 2007).

In HADEP's program, the women policy was moved from the section of social policies to the section on democratization. Despite having almost the same characteristics as the DEP, the sentence stating, “maternity institution - a “social and natural responsibility” will be taken under protection” carries special importance (HADEP, 1994:12). Although mothers who lost their children in the armed struggle were also paid special attention to in the program, women were considered as an important instrument in the formation of the nation in their potential roles of mother. Considering women policy in a philosophical and romantic way, DEHAP defended Kurdish women as below:

“[...] Today’s world is the product of a history in which women have not taken part but have been excluded and silenced... it does not find solutions to the problems of humanity. Equality while ignoring half of the society is not true equality, democracies where women are not represented with their differences are incomplete democracies” (DEHAP, 2003: 18-19) (Caglayan, 2013:136)

The women policies of banned political parties, all of which supplemented each other, were developed more and more while being inherited from one to another. Consequently, all were re-shaped in BDP’s program, which included its own amendments and additions.

BDP describes itself as a party that is based on the values of the times of democratic civilizations: i.e. libertarian, egalitarian, a defender of justice, pacifist, pluralist, participatory; a party that considers the difference of wealth in society and rejects all kind of discrimination; one that is focused on humanity and society, that embraces horizontal and vertical democratic functioning based on dialogue and re-conciliation; that defends internal democratic functioning with resoluteness, that understands peaceful and democratic politics as essential, adopts global values and defends novelty; sees the freedom of human in gender equality, aims to build a democratic-ecological society, libertarian and egalitarian leftist mass-based party (BDP’s Charter: Description of Party, Article 2) and one that is represented in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

BDP deploys 40% of the gender quota based on both sexes in its selection of candidates for general and local elections, as well as any kind of party structures. The added value of the party's gender quota and the most important feature is the application of positive gender discrimination at all levels. If one of two candidates with the same amount of votes is a woman, then, preference is given to her (BDP Charter. The Functioning Principles of Party: Article 4, g).

Provision of this opportunity is one of the strategic details mobilizing, motivating and accelerating the politicization of women. BDP has been represented with 29 among 548 deputies in the 24<sup>th</sup> term Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM). According to gender, while 46 out of 327 deputies of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), 19 out of 134 deputies of the Republican People's Party (CHP), 3 out of 52 deputies of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), 2 out of 6 independent deputies are women, BDP are represented in the TBMM with 9 women deputies out of 29 deputies in total (TBMM). In terms of share, the proportion of women in the parliament is as below in the Table 1:

**Table 1.** The Distribution of Deputies of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey 2014

| Name of the Party | Women     |               | Men       |               | Total |
|-------------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-------|
|                   | In actual | In percentage | In actual | In percentage |       |
| AKP               | 46        | 14.06%        | 281       | 85.93%        | 327   |
| CHP               | 19        | 14.17%        | 115       | 85.82%        | 134   |
| MHP               | 3         | 5.76%         | 49        | 94.23%        | 52    |
| BDP               | 9         | 31.03%        | 20        | 68.96%        | 29    |
| Independent       | 2         | 33.33%        | 4         | 68.66%        | 6     |
| Total             | 79        | 14.41%        | 469       | 85.58%        | 548   |

Source: TBMM

Women are represented in the party structures and boards of BDP as well as in local (Town and District Women Assemblies) and central organizations (Central Women Assembly) and in Party Groups (BDP Charter: Structure of Organization, Article 15). Including legal budget support, 15% of the income at town, district and provincial levels is directed to women assemblies. (BDP Charter: Budget and Final Accounts, Article 108). However, the most surprising issue is that, in defense of women's rights in civil law emerging from the principle of gender equality marriages, more than one at a time resulted in the cancellation of membership (BDP Charter: Terms and Conditions of Membership, Article 5)

### **Kurdish woman in political life**

The Kurdish woman has been a part of politics throughout every period of Kurdish history, but her participation has been partly visible and often absolutely invisible. She has not always been active in social and political life; her place has been at home, caring for children and speaking Kurdish to them. The measures of her political visibility, and the number of female politicians, have been limited but she has become a powerful influence on society. The Kurdolog Bruinessen (2001) defined this period as "From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana" and emphasized that there was a political participation of Kurdish woman and that over time this has changed the methodology and strategy of political life.

The invisible political participation of Kurdish woman was massive and effective. These aspects created new challenges for women who take on both an invisible and visible role in political life. Other instances of invisible activity developed as well, such as having an influence on decision-making in family, or latent dominating of mothers, mothers of husbands and grandmothers, which could be accepted as the domestic hegemony of woman. Unfortunately, this power was a part of man's hegemony and in reality those women made contributions to tribal and unjust systems. They were not free, and nothing occurred of their own free will when they ruled. This system made known the notion of the "male woman." However the participation of Kurdish women in political life can be distinguished in two different aspects: *legal participation and illegal participation*.

- **Legal participation** covers the participation in legal political Kurdish parties, in parliament, and in other political organizations, which are officially recognized by the Turkish government and State.

**Example:** For the first time in Kurdish history a woman represented a political party in the Turkish parliament when Leyla Zana, who was the first female member of the legal party DHP, was elected in the parliamentary elections of 1991. Thus began the new era of Kurdish women in political life. She was one of the politicized women who had been educated and took on political responsibility and participated in political activity after the arrestment of her man.

- **Illegal participation** is being a member of the PKK and of other institutions related to the PKK, such as the Woman's Liberation Party – PAJK (Partiya Azadiya Jinên Kurdistanê), media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) etc.

**Example:** Both kinds of female participation began with the establishment of the largest Kurdish Movement. During the establishment of the party some women decided to participate. One of the five founders was Sakine Cansiz, who was killed with two Kurdish activists on 9 of January 2013 in Paris. She was the only female founder that was active for the PKK in Europe. Over the followed pages this case will be analyzed in detail and will be fleshed out in order to develop further questions about the legal and illegal representation of women in political life, in parties, parliament, movements, media, NGOs and the army.

### **Kurdish woman in political parties**

The political experiences of Kurdish women in political parties began with those of Leyla Zana, who was the first Kurdish female politician. She founded the Democracy Party (DEP), which were a continuation of the HEP and the first female parliamentary member of Kurdish opposition in TBMM in 1991. But Leyla Zana could not stay in TBMM and did not realize her mandate over the course of 5 years. Her speech in the Kurdish language while swearing in for the TBMM was considered an illegal felony and it led to her imprisonment for 15 years. She was re-elected as an independent member from Diyarbakir but was supported by the BDP in 2011. Kurdish parties were not represented in TBMM from 1991 till 2007.

Since 2007, the Kurdish parties have been more powerful and active, with significant achievements regarding ethnic and religious questions in Turkey, as well as questions of democracy. Participation in these parties, which were continuations of each other, increased year by year. Social activity in political parties was a new challenge for Kurdish woman. Political parties ensured the socializing of Kurdish women on a massive scale.

The table below shows some research results of Caglayan (2013) into the scores of female relations with the political party HADEP. Caglayan analyzed the participation by comparing the age, educated situation and profession in the party, as well as taking into account obstacles and other problems for activity in the party. According to Caglayan's research (2013:256) it is women over the age of 41 who make up the largest part of HADEP membership. However, membership is very low in the age bracket from 36-41. Table 2 shows the following:

**Table 2.** Age groups of female party members

| <b>Age groups of female party members</b> |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Age</b>                                | <b>%</b>   |
| 18-23                                     | 13.5       |
| 24-29                                     | 14.8       |
| 30-35                                     | 19.9       |
| 36-41                                     | 14         |
| 41- +                                     | 37.8       |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>100</b> |

**Source:** Çağlayan, Handan. **Kürt Kadınların Penceresinden**, İstanbul, İletişim Yayıncılık, 2013.

The educational situation of female members is also interesting. Table 3 shows how the education level with regards education in Turkish in South-East Turkey is particularly low:

**Table 3.** Educational situation of female party members

| Educational situation of female party members |            |
|---|------------|
| Education                                     | %          |
| Illiterate                                    | 8.2        |
| Able to write and read                        | 15.8       |
| Primary school                                | 64.7       |
| Secondary school                              | 4          |
| High school                                   | 7.3        |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>100</b> |

**Source:** Çağlayan, Handan. **Kürt Kadınların Penceresinden**, İstanbul, İletişim Yayıncılık, 2013

From the tables given above one can imagine the educational level of female party members in a party. But there is a question: firstly how are the female members of these parties represented, and secondly, women from which professions make the greatest contribution to the party's activity? (Table 4). It is important to bear in mind that the typical place of the Kurdish woman was the home, until the end of the 90s.

**Table 4.** Professions in the party's activities

| Professions in the party's activities |           |      |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Professions                           | Frequency | %    |
| Member of neighborhood commission     | 4         | 3.3  |
| Member of woman division in districts | 20        | 16.4 |
| Member of woman division in city      | 59        | 48.4 |
| Member of Board                       | 28        | 23.0 |
| Member of Central woman division      | 5         | 4.1  |
| Member of council of municipalities   | 2         | 1.6  |

**Source:** Çağlayan, Handan. **Kürt Kadınların Penceresinden**, İstanbul, İletişim Yayıncılık, 2013

For Kurdish women, being able to actively participate and mobilize in large numbers over social and political issues (with the support of the new Kurdish ideology) is a great victory, especially considering that this is in spite of restrictions from the tribal system. Indeed, the problem of political activation of women has been solved, but there are still restrictions from family members and other members of kin. In Table 5, given below, Çağlayan argued the situation of women in the HADEP party with regards these restrictions:

**Table 5.** Restrictions from people

| Restrictions from people |           |     |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Who                      | Frequency | %   |
| Father                   | 9         | 7.4 |
| Mother                   | 5         | 4.1 |
| Husband                  | 2         | 1.6 |
| Brothers and sisters     | 1         | 0.8 |
| Kin                      | 4         | 3.3 |

**Source:** Çağlayan, Handan. **Kürt Kadınların Penceresinden**, İstanbul, İletişim Yayıncılık, 2013

Today, the Kurdish party BDP has 44.156 members and a considerable assembly of women. BDP organized 2 women's congresses. The last women's congress was held in April 2013, in which 10.000 women from different regions of Turkey took part. The women involved consider the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as women's century and they work strongly on woman issues and develop strategies for party policy on women. In the local elections in 2014, BDP declared its quota of women from the districts.

### **Kurdish woman in Turkish parliament**

Historically, the first experiences of Kurdish woman in Parliament began with Leyla Zana's win of the 1991 parliamentary election. This was groundbreaking development for the Kurdish opposition in Turkey. The women are represented not only in the parties, demonstrations and protests, but also in the parliament. Women's political activity has experienced a wave of popularity, stemming from the legitimization of female political activity, which led to a new beginning of political mobilization of Kurdish women.

However, in 1991 there was only one female Kurdish parliamentarian, and it was only after sixteen years that the Kurdish community was able to win in the elections and enter the Turkish parliament as BDP. The number of female Kurdish parliamentarians was eight persons. In total there have been (since the last period) 12 female parliamentarians in the Turkish National Grand Assemblée.

These women are ethnic Kurds and Zazas. The education level and social experiences and engagement of these female parliamentarians vary, but their point of focus and connection is in their grasp of the concept. The main point is that some of these female parliamentarians have experienced arrestment or punishment regarding their judgment over issues related to separatism or terrorism. Additionally, several of their activities are heavily criticized and some of them have become topics for discussion in the media and state institutions. A relevant case in point is the example of *Kisanak*, *Tugluk* and *Tuncel* with regards to a meeting with PKK members in the Shemdinli – Derecik region (10/2012).

### **Kurdish woman in socio-political movements**

The movements can be defined as a union of supporters in pursuit of a common goal and common interests. The movements were often the first step of the political parties. Some movements were so strong that they developed into political parties. Movements are also a political and social platform for Kurdish women to claim their own targets, to protest and to make demands.

In this part two popular movements of Kurdish women will be presented. They are:

- *Saturday's mothers* (Turkish: *Cumartesi anneleri*)
- *Peace's mothers* (Kurdish: *Dayîkên Aşîtyê*, Turkish: *Barış anneleri*)

The concept of the factors of "motherlessness" and political activation bolster each other. Mothers have always held special status in society; the state even provides provisos for the rights of mothers with laws. This is the first incident of women carrying the identity of the mother in action. It is important to bear in mind that motherhood is perceived as an institution in Kurdish society and in the Kurdish movement.

Moreover, these movements cover the political elements and are derived from political concerns. Today, both movements are effective at making contributions, impressing society and challenging the political and social situation. The aim and background of both movements are described in this next section.

**Saturday's mothers** was established in 1995, inspired by mothers from Argentina, who came together in the *Plaza de Mayo* Square demanding that political groups take action over their sons who had disappeared. Every Saturday, Kurdish mothers went to Galatasaray Square and protested about the disappearance of their sons. Their objectives were to receive a genuine answer from the state about their sons' disappearance.

This movement begun from the initiative of Kurdish women, but it is now presents all over Turkey. The Kurdish men are always the main players in the political struggle against nationalist

strategies and politics, which are direct barriers and have a provocative influence in politics. Junta groups have used this as a means of rejecting the danger that stems from the politicized community.

**Peace mothers** is an initiative founded by those mothers whose children died in the mountains while taking part in military operations, and who were the victims of this struggle. The aim of Peace mothers is to promote peace between all ethnic groups in Turkey, especially between the Kurds and the Turks. This civil rights movement was established in 1999 and is still active today. Peace mothers now include mothers whose children died in military operations in the mountains, as well as those whose children serve or served in the Turkish army.

**Dongu Engin** became a member of Peace mothers after she lost her daughter and son in the mountains. Her other son is a soldier in Turkish Army. This speaks of an inherent conflict by which members of her own family have to fight each other.

### **JINELOJI – WOMANOLOGY; Woman Sciences of Kurdish Feminism**

The feminist ideology in the Kurdish movement has been developing over a period of 90 years. But it is some books and articles (of Kurdish politicians, researchers, activists, lawyers etc.), which have clear feminist approaches, which have brought women's policy to the mainstream of Kurdish policy. The comparisons of "women and the motherland" or "free women and a free country" were the first triggers leading to the mobilization of Kurdish women and Kurdish society.

The idea of these feminist approaches, based on woman policy, was discussed for the first time in the first woman congress in Iraq in the year 1993. It was a highly complicated case for male members of Kurdish movement. Members of a feudal and tribal system were not ready for it but they had to make an effort to understand it, in order for there to be an intellectual revolution in Kurdish society. In order to achieve this goal, there have been academic approaches by academics, feminist reforms in the political parties by politicians, as well as propaganda and popularization by Kurdish NGOs and Unions.

However, the result of this popularization has been an evolution for the Kurdish people. This virtually new field in feminist sciences is called **JINELOJI**, which translates into English as **Womanology**. The word *Jineloji* literally means, "Jin" woman and "loji" (*logos*) translated as *studies of woman*. *Jineloji* is a field that encompasses all facets of scientific approaches to the feminist perspective, and constructs new fields from a woman's perspective.\* According to Kurdish Member of Turkish Parliament *Emine Ayna*, elected from Diyarbakır, *jineoloji* and feminism are different things and cannot be compared with one other:

*"Jineloji is the ideological definition. But feminism is the political and organizational field. So, feminism is the political, organizational and actionable area. Feminism is the history of Jineloji. It means feminism is the beginning point, origin and inspired part of Jineloji. [...] We will not build the system with feministic struggle. But we have to introduce the scientific phenomenon of it."*<sup>†</sup>

In 2012 a *Jineloji* conference<sup>‡</sup> was organized with the participation of all Kurdish women's organizations to discussing *Jineloji*, as well as its aims, targets and perspectives. Additionally, the organizations were concerned with contributing towards a solution of Kurdish problems via Kurdish women.

Moreover, Kurdish feminists maintain that all existing systems (and also all sciences) are formulated and developed from the male brain and from a male perspective. Therefore this system should be destroyed and built again from the point of view of a female brain with a dual gender perspective.

\*Kadın mücadelesinin ideolojisi *Jineloji*.10.06.2013

<http://www.yeniozgurpolitika.eu/index.php?rupel=nuce&id=21156>

†Kadın mücadelesinin ideolojisi *Jineloji*.10.06.2013

<http://www.yeniozgurpolitika.eu/index.php?rupel=nuce&id=21156>

‡*Jinelojikonferansı* yapıyor. 18.10.2012, <http://yeniozgurpolitika.com/index.php?rupel=nuce&id=14085>

## Conclusion

The role of women throughout the world has changed considerably in the last century. Socio-political activities such as voting, electing, participating in demonstrations, education etc. have been made available to women after men. But since the end of the twentieth century, women have quickly developed (in the spheres of education, social and political participation), organized (movements, networks, parties, groups, lobbies) and strengthened their positions in socio-political life alongside men.

This study has explored the social and political development of Kurdish women based on both ethnic identity and gender. This change has led to Kurdish women being politicized and participating in the political sphere. However, the reason for the politicization of Kurdish women has been due to events that have taken place via the political parties and movements, most notably due to feminist elements in the ideological basis of the Kurdish movement.

Moreover, Kurdish women have become the most influential part of Kurdish political parties and political life. Kurdish women began by taking part in street demonstrations, then in the establishment of political parties and finally in the illegal armed struggle.

These changing activities of Kurdish women have been with the aim of changing their oppressed role in society. She has become a symbol of Kurdish culture and Kurdish identity. The politicized Kurdish women achieved the establishment and subsequently control of their own trade unions, political parties, media organizations, magazines and newspapers.

In fact, the Kurdish movement has both directly and indirectly affected the gender composition, institutional basis and formation of policies of political parties. The prevention of equality between women and men and exclusion of women from social life will continue to be criticized by the parties, who demand the elimination of legislation that prevents equality between women and men. These same parties also protect economic, social, cultural and legal measures to ensure the equality of women and men.

Parties consider gender discrimination and violations of human rights as a serious problem for democracy. These factors have influenced the politicization of woman and led to a massive political mobilization of Kurdish women. Women's participation in both politics and an illegal armed struggle could create an expansion of women's unity. Moreover it could drastically alter the character of relations in society.

Today it is very obvious that most Kurdish women who were in different roles and positions at different times have now cultivated a new identity. Women's changing roles in society results in, and reflects, the change of balance. This balance provides the ground for the new identity of Kurds – a homogenous society. The most important finding in the study is that it has showed how, step-by-step and overtime, women have been politicized, and that the political mobilization of women has reached a level, which cannot be ignored.

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