



**RAYFEL**  
**LEGAL**

**Agenda Item: Women's Rights**

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## **1. Letter From The Head of Academy/USG**

Dear Delegates,

It is my absolute honor to welcome you all to the first edition of our school's Model United Nations conference. As the head of Academy and also the USG of LEGAL committee, I look forward to hearing about your talents, confidence and innovative solutions. As the LEGAL Committee, we aim not only to identify problems thanks to your ideas, but also to produce solutions, raise awareness, and achieve permanent changes by communicating with decision-makers. Your participation in the committee is a great opportunity for you to discuss such international problems.

According to the UN, “gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is not just a goal in itself, but a key to sustainable development, economic growth, and peace and security”.

I sincerely believe that the knowledge and awareness we will gain during the two-day sessions will inspire us all. Your participation, support and contribution are extremely valuable to us.

Even though we can't change the world, we will all take big steps for ourselves in two days to shape the world of the future. I wish you all a great MUN experience. I have no doubt about your talent and knowledge, good luck to you all.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. My door is always open. You can contact me via my email address.

Yours faithfully,

*Defne YAMAN*  
Head of Academy

[defnee.ymn@gmail.com](mailto:defnee.ymn@gmail.com)

## **2. Introduction to the Committee**

The United Nations General Assembly Sixth Committee (also known as the Legal Committee or C6) is one of six main committees of the General Assembly of the United Nations. It deals primarily with legal matters and is the primary forum for the consideration of international law and other legal matters concerning the United Nations.

To this extent, the Legal Committee has largely tasked itself with the promotion of international cooperation towards progressive policy and legislation, its oversight of new treaties being formed across a broad array of topics, and its influence on other states as it continues to advise more of them to take part in this global cooperation.

### **3) Background of the Agenda Item: Women's Rights**

#### **a) Invisible Barriers Women Face in Business Life (Glass Ceiling Syndrome):**

The "glass ceiling" describes a situation where women and minority groups are limited in their careers by invisible but tangible barriers that do not explicitly state or state the rules, but systematically make it difficult to advance.

##### **i) Prejudices and discrimination against women in the workplace:**

Some stereotypes that are deeply rooted in society cause women to be disadvantaged in business life. Some of these are: Women are emotional and cannot make rational decisions in times of crisis. Women cannot be successful in technical or leadership-requiring jobs. Women cannot focus enough on work due to roles such as marriage and motherhood. Women cannot work for long periods of time and quit their jobs, prioritizing home and childcare.

Such prejudices cause women to fall behind in the recruitment, promotion and task distribution processes.

Discrimination against women sometimes manifests itself openly and sometimes in more subtle ways: discrimination in recruitment, discrimination in promotion and advancement, job sharing and task distribution...

##### **ii) The problem of equal pay for equal work:**

"Equal pay for equal work" is a principle that states that women and men working in the same job or in a job of the same value should receive the same pay. This is considered both a human right and a fundamental measure of justice in working life. However, today, women still receive lower wages than their male counterparts in many sectors. This situation is called the "gender wage gap" or "gender wage gap"

According to recent studies, women worldwide earn an average of 15-20% less than men. This gap often persists even with the same level of education and experience. This is because women are often employed in low-wage sectors such as care, education and services, while men are directed to higher-wage fields such as engineering, finance and technology.

For women, taking time off work for reasons such as having children or taking care of children can result in a decrease or stagnation in their wages. For men, being a father is not usually seen as a disadvantage.

### **b) Social Reflections of Women's Economic Freedom**

Women's economic freedom means having their own income, achieving financial independence through work, and being able to decide how to spend their earnings. This is not just an individual gain, but also a force that transforms society.

#### i) The Impact of Female Employment Rate on Society

The female employment rate indicates how many of the working-age female population participate in the workforce. In other words, women are actively involved in business life, earning income, and taking on a role in production processes.

An increase in this rate paves the way for positive changes not only in women's individual lives, but also in the entire society in economic, social and cultural terms.

In many parts of the world, women still participate less in the labor force than men.

According to the World Employment and Social Outlook, Trends in Women's Employment 2018 Summary, the global labor force participation rate of women, at 48.5%, is still 26.5 percentage points behind that of men. When these are considered, for every 10 employed men, only 6 women are employed.

#### ii) The Role of Economic Independence in Family Balance

Women's participation in business life leads to significant changes in the family structure, both economically and socially. A working woman's income strengthens the family's financial situation and increases the quality of life. Women's work also has positive effects on children. When children see their mothers as productive, independent and strong individuals, this also contributes to their self-confidence. A working mother can be an inspiring role model, especially for girls.

However, women's work does not eliminate responsibilities at home. Most of the time, women have to live in a busy tempo both at work and at home. This can sometimes cause problems such as fatigue, stress and burnout.

Some stereotypes that still exist in society can also put pressure on working women. Thoughts such as women's work will harm the family and children will be left unattended sometimes force women to make choices. However, with the right support mechanisms and equal sharing of tasks, a healthy balance can be established between both work and family life.

Women's participation in business life is not only an individual right, but also a necessity for social development.

### c) The Effects of Inequality of Opportunity in Education on Girls

Girls are one of the groups that generally face inequality in education opportunities worldwide. This situation seriously affects girls' future lives, social roles and economic independence. Inequality in education opportunities is one of the most important obstacles that limits girls' future career opportunities.

Inequality in education opportunities also reinforces gender roles. When girls do not go to school, they are more confined to traditional roles at home. They are often directed to housework and care responsibilities, which prevents them from creating more opportunities in life. Such lack of education perpetuates gender inequality and leads to women assuming a more passive role in social life.

As a result, inequalities in girls' access to education have serious consequences not only for individuals but also for entire societies. The economic, social and cultural development of a society accelerates as equal opportunities in education are provided. Securing girls' right to education supports the development of not only them but also the entire society.

#### i) The Effect of Rural and Urban Areas on Girls' Education

Rural women often have fewer educational and employment opportunities than those in urban areas. Rural women in traditional sectors such as agriculture and animal husbandry often work in their own family businesses or on the fields. Urban women have access to a wider range of employment and education opportunities and often work in office, service or professional careers.

##### In Rural Areas:

- Girls' access to education often faces a number of barriers. The most important of these barriers is geographical distance. In rural areas, schools can often be further away than in urban centres. In this case, going to school, especially for girls, can sometimes be perceived by their families as dangerous or unnecessary. This restricts girls' access to education.
- Additionally, social norms and traditional gender roles in rural areas can be major obstacles to girls' education. Girls are often relegated to housework and childcare. This traditional understanding restricts girls' participation in education and can lead them to marry and start families at an early age.
- Schools in rural areas often suffer from infrastructural deficiencies. Poor condition of school buildings, inadequate number of teachers and lack of educational materials negatively affect the quality of education. This also affects the success and continuity of girls' education.

In urban areas:

- In urban areas, educational opportunities are often greater. Schools may be closer, transportation is easier, and educational infrastructure is often more developed.
- In urban areas, there is less social pressure to educate girls. Girls in these areas often have more opportunities.
- However, some inequalities can also be found in urban areas. Especially in low-income areas, girls may face inequality in educational opportunities. This may occur due to reasons such as families not being able to afford the cost of education, inadequate preschool education opportunities, etc.

ii) The Effect of Early Marriages on Education

The Effect of Early Marriages on Education is at the intersection of many issues such as gender inequality, economic deprivation and cultural pressures. This situation is a problem that seriously threatens the right to education, especially for girls.

Early marriage often leads to girls dropping out of school. Education is a long-term and continuous process. However, a child who is married off at an early age cannot complete this process, unlike her peers. The increasing responsibilities that come with marriage – housework, childcare, spousal relationships – make it largely impossible for a young person to continue their education. Girls who are married off, especially during middle and high school, completely disconnect from school and often never return to education.

The effect of early marriages on education is not limited to not being able to attend school. Forced or pressured marriages can also cause psychological trauma and loss of self-confidence. This situation negatively affects not only the individual's academic success, but also their personal development and mental health.

As a result, early marriages deprive girls of their right to education, hindering their individual and social development. The solution to this problem is possible through social awareness activities, ensuring equal opportunities in education, and raising awareness among families, especially in rural areas. Education is the right of every individual, and no child should be deprived of this right due to marriage.

**d) Digital Violence and Harassment Against Women on Social Media**

i) Cyberbullying and Sexist Hate Speech

“Digital violence, also known as “cyber violence, virtual violence, online violence, cyber bullying, cyber harassment”, is distinguished from other types of violence by the fact that harmful actions are carried out through information technologies.

In the literature, it is stated that the party most exposed and affected by digital violence is women in terms of gender, and digital violence against women is defined as "a type of gender-based violence that is carried out, supported or made more severe against a woman simply because she is a woman, in whole or in part, using information and communication technology methods such as mobile phones and smartphones, the internet, social media platforms or e-mail, and that disproportionately affects women."

The most dangerous aspect of this situation is that digital harassment is often legitimized under the name of "jokes," "criticism," or "freedom of thought." However, such behaviors are the digital reflection of psychological violence and directly interfere with women's individual freedoms. Digital violence can take many forms, such as threatening messages, insults, sexist discourses, unwanted private messages, sending inappropriate images, disclosure of personal information (doxxing), dissemination of unauthorized images, and systematic discrediting on social media. This prevents women from expressing themselves freely on digital platforms; it causes feelings of fear, anxiety, and insecurity. Many women limit their use of social media or completely stop using it because of the harassment they are subjected to.

#### e) Tension Between Women's Rights and Cultural and Religious Values

Although there is a universal framework for women's rights, how these rights are perceived and implemented by societies is directly related to the cultural structure. Because each society has different traditions, values, belief systems and social norms, which affect women's social role, access to rights and freedoms.

##### i) Differences Between Universal Human Rights Understanding and Local Values

Disregarding all other possible differences, human rights are seen as superior rights that individuals should have simply because they are human, and one of their most typical characteristics is that they are universal. According to the ideal of universality of human rights, a person has inalienable and inalienable rights from birth, independent of time and space.

Some cultural structures establish a clear hierarchy between men and women. In such societies, men are seen as decision-makers and authorities, while women are positioned as more passive individuals who must obey. This perspective leads to women either not benefiting from basic rights such as education, work, political participation and inheritance, or benefiting from them in a very limited way. For example, while in some cultures it may be considered shameful for women to be in public, in other cultures this situation may be considered completely natural.

Intercultural differences are also clearly seen, especially in the issue of women's rights over their bodies. While in some societies women have no say over their own clothing, bodies or fertility, in other societies these issues are recognized and protected as individual rights. For example; Due to the pressure of some cultural structures, practices such as early marriage, bride price, honor killings and female circumcision still continue to exist. Although these traditional practices are against the basic human rights of women, they can be continued under the name of "cultural heritage".

## ii) The Perspective of Some World Countries' Cultures on Women's Rights

Sweden: In Sweden, gender equality is a state policy and is very strongly culturally adopted. Women have equal rights with men in business, politics, education and the family. Practices such as maternity leave cover both parents, and domestic duties are shared equally in society.

India: The caste system, patriarchal structure and some traditional practices (such as dowry and child marriage) are still widespread in rural areas. Although women have many legal rights, they may have difficulty exercising these rights due to cultural norms. Education and employment rates show significant differences between urban and rural areas.

Saudi Arabia: Sharia-based laws and patriarchal social norms severely limit women's lives. Women were prohibited from driving for long periods (until 2018), and there were severe restrictions on travelling alone or working in certain jobs. Although some reforms have been made in recent years, cultural barriers remain prevalent.

Iceland: Society is sensitive to gender equality, and women's economic and political activity has become normal. Women are strongly represented in all areas of society. "Equal pay for equal work" practices are effectively monitored. The world's first female president also came from this country (Vigdis Finnbogadottir).

Türkiye: There is a structure that combines both modern and traditional elements. Women's rights to education, work and political participation are constitutionally recognized; however, especially in rural areas, traditional roles and pressures may limit the use of these rights. Violence against women is an important social problem.

## iii) The Impact of Different Religious Views on Women's Rights

Religion is an important factor that shapes women's position, access to rights and areas of freedom both in individual lives and in the social structure. Religion is a powerful social institution that affects individuals' value systems, and perceptions of male-female relationships are often shaped by religious interpretations. However, what is important here is not the essence of a religion but how that religion is interpreted and how it is intertwined with culture.

Christianity: Christianity is divided into different sects and the view of women varies among these sects. There are different approaches in each of the main branches such as Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism. In traditional Catholic interpretations, women are excluded from the church hierarchy and cannot hold religious leadership even if they are nuns. The dominant idea is that women should be obedient and self-sacrificing. On the other hand, in some branches

of Protestantism, women can become priests and hold leadership positions in the church. Along with feminist theology, equality-based approaches have been adopted in some Christian communities.

Judaism: The most basic requirement for being a Jew is to be born of a Jewish woman. Here, women are much superior to men. Converts, that is, those who choose Judaism as a religion later, are evaluated in a different category. Social life is shaped according to gender and women do not play a role in social life. They are responsible for protecting the family, giving birth to children and continuing the lineage. As a mother, women have a special place and are expected to be respected. They are dependent on their men and the men are responsible for their livelihood.

Islam: The religion of Islam has fundamentally granted certain rights to women: the right to inherit, the right to education, the right to divorce, the right to work, etc. However, the implementation and interpretation of these rights vary greatly from country to country and sect to sect. In some societies, the religion of Islam is interpreted in a rather traditional manner, which plays a restrictive role in matters such as women's clothing, their presence in public, their right to education, and their position within the family. For example, there are interpretations that consider women's employment as a sin and that confine them to the roles of mother and wife.

Modern and inclusive interpretations, on the other hand, can support women's participation in education and business life. For example, in some Muslim countries such as Indonesia and Tunisia, women are more active in public life.

#### f) Legal Regulations in Combating Violence Against Women

Legal Regulations to Combat Violence Against Women encompass legal tools developed to protect women's right to life, safety and dignity at both national and international levels. Since violence can be applied not only physically but also psychologically, economically, sexually and digitally, these legal regulations aim to provide multi-dimensional protection.

##### i) Types of Physical and Psychological Violence

Types of Physical and Psychological Violence are among the most common and visible forms of violence against women. These types of violence cause serious damage not only to women's bodies, but also to their mental health, self-confidence, social roles and quality of life. Although both types seem like individual attacks, they are actually reflections of gender inequality, power imbalance and patriarchal structures.

Physical Violence: It covers all kinds of actions that are aimed at directly harming a woman's body. It is usually the most easily noticed and visible type of violence.

Examples:

- Slapping, punching, kicking
- Hair pulling, pushing, strangling
- Harming with cutting/piercing tools
- Leaving physical damage such as burns, bruises, fractures
- Forcibly detaining a woman or restricting her freedom

Effects:

- Permanent physical damage
- Fear, panic, post-traumatic stress disorder
- Deterioration in self-confidence and body image
- Hesitation to access health services

Psychological (Emotional) Violence: It covers all actions that involve verbal, behavioral or emotional pressure aimed at damaging the mental integrity of women. It is often difficult to notice from the outside, but in the long run it can be as devastating as physical violence.

Examples:

- Humiliation, insult, mockery
- Constant accusation or threat
- Restriction of freedom under the name of jealousy
- Underestimating and controlling the woman's decisions
- Isolation: Keeping away from family and friends
- Manipulation and emotional blackmail

Effects:

- Anxiety disorders, depression, loss of self-confidence
- Self-blame and feelings of worthlessness
- Withdrawal, alienation from social environment
- Injury to the self

ii) Some Existing International Laws

Istanbul Convention (2011): Prepared by the Council of Europe and signed by Türkiye as its first signatory. It obliges party states to take comprehensive measures to prevent violence against women and domestic violence. Although Türkiye withdrew from the convention in 2021, it is still a binding text for many countries.

CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women): It is affiliated with the United Nations and Türkiye became a party in 1985. It obliges states to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. It protects women's right to live without violence.

Lanzarote and Palermo Conventions: These are conventions that provide for the protection of women and children from sexual abuse and human trafficking and impose obligations on the party states.

### iii) Why Some Existing Laws Are Ineffective

Although laws on violence are strong around the world, there can be deficiencies in implementation. Problems such as violations of protection orders and lack of deterrent punishments pose serious risks. Sometimes women fear that if they complain, the perpetrators will go free or that they will be subjected to more violence in return. The existence of laws may not be fully effective unless the cultural codes of society that legitimize violence change.

Legal regulations are of great importance in combating violence against women; however, in order for these regulations to be effective, they must be applicable, women must have access to these rights, and they must be complemented by social support mechanisms. The law should not remain only on paper; it should be the guarantee of a safe, fair and equal life.

### iv) Difficulties for Women in Accessing Justice Against Violence

Access to justice for women does not only occur in courthouses or at the police station; this difficulty also covers the process before applying. Due to social pressure and feelings of shame, many women choose to hide the violence they experience. Because society still believes that “shame”, “women are at fault”, “breaking up your home” are dominant, women may remain silent out of guilt, shame and fear of exclusion.

Some women do not seek legal action because they do not know their rights or because they think the process is complicated. Access to justice can only be achieved in a world where the functioning and guidance of these institutions are not discriminatory, where women feel that they can go to these institutions, ask questions, and apply without any anxiety or concern.

When women file a complaint, they may be threatened by the perpetrator. Threats such as “If you complain about me, I will kill you and your children” force women to back down. Even if protection orders are obtained, they are sometimes not implemented effectively enough. Some law enforcement or judicial institutions may not take women’s complaints seriously. Applications may be dismissed with statements such as “Such things happen within the family” or “Make peace”. This breaks women’s trust.

### v) Protective services

Protective services (shelter, psychological support): In the fight against violence against women, it is of great importance not only to punish the perpetrators but also to ensure the safety of the victims and to reintegrate them into life. At this point, protective services are multifaceted practices that support both the physical and mental well-being of women who are victims of violence. Institutions such as shelters and psychological support services in particular play a vital role in women getting back on their feet.

Shelters (Women's Guesthouses): Women's shelters/protection houses are houses where women and their children who have been subjected to violence are provided shelter and protection at any time of the day or night. Women's shelters/protection houses are open to all women who have been subjected to physical, mental, sexual and economic violence. No distinction is made whether you have been beaten, insulted and threatened, raped or your right to access money has been taken away from you. All women are accepted to a women's shelter/protection house, regardless of the woman's origin, financial situation, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity.

In addition to those operating under the state, there are also shelters operated by some non-governmental organizations.

Main Objectives:

- To remove women from the environment of violence
- To provide a safe, confidential and protected living space
- To support women and enable them to stand on their own feet

Services Provided:

- Safe shelter
- Provision of food, clothing, hygiene materials
- Nursery and education support for children
- Guidance and counseling services
- Legal support and guidance when necessary

*Electronic Handcuffs:* Electronic handcuffs are devices that are placed on perpetrators of violence by court order. With this device, an immediate warning is given if the suspect exceeds a certain distance and intervention is provided. The location of the perpetrator can be continuously monitored with the GPS system integrated into the handcuff. At the same time, a tracking device (portable receiver) is given to the victim. In this way, the locations of the perpetrator and the victim are monitored simultaneously. If the perpetrator approaches the victim more than the specified distance, both law enforcement and the victim are notified.

*Psychological Support Services:*

Women who are subjected to violence experience not only physical but also emotional and mental trauma. Therefore, psychological support is very important for women to process the trauma they have experienced, regain their self-confidence and establish an independent life.

*Types of Support:*

- Individual therapy
- Group Therapies
- Crisis intervention services
- Post-traumatic support programs
- Special psychological support for children

*Providing Institutions:*

- Counseling centers affiliated with the Ministry of Family and Social Services
- Municipalities' women's counseling centers
- Psychological counseling units of universities
- NGOs and women's associations

#### 4) Notable NGO's



Many important international organizations that work in the field of women's rights and are influential worldwide play an active role in protecting women from violence, ensuring their access to equal rights and ensuring gender equality. These organizations both produce policies and raise awareness by carrying out projects and campaigns.

*United Nations Women (UN Women):* UN Women is the UN organization delivering programs, policies and standards that uphold women's human rights and ensure that every woman and girl lives up to her full potential. It is the most competent UN organization in terms of women's rights and gender equality. It carries out global movements such as the "End Violence Against Women" campaign. It supports the development of women's policies by cooperating with governments.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA): It focuses on issues such as women's health, sexual and reproductive health, youth and women's empowerment. It works on issues such as early marriage, female circumcision, and family planning. It provides health and psychosocial support services for women subjected to violence.

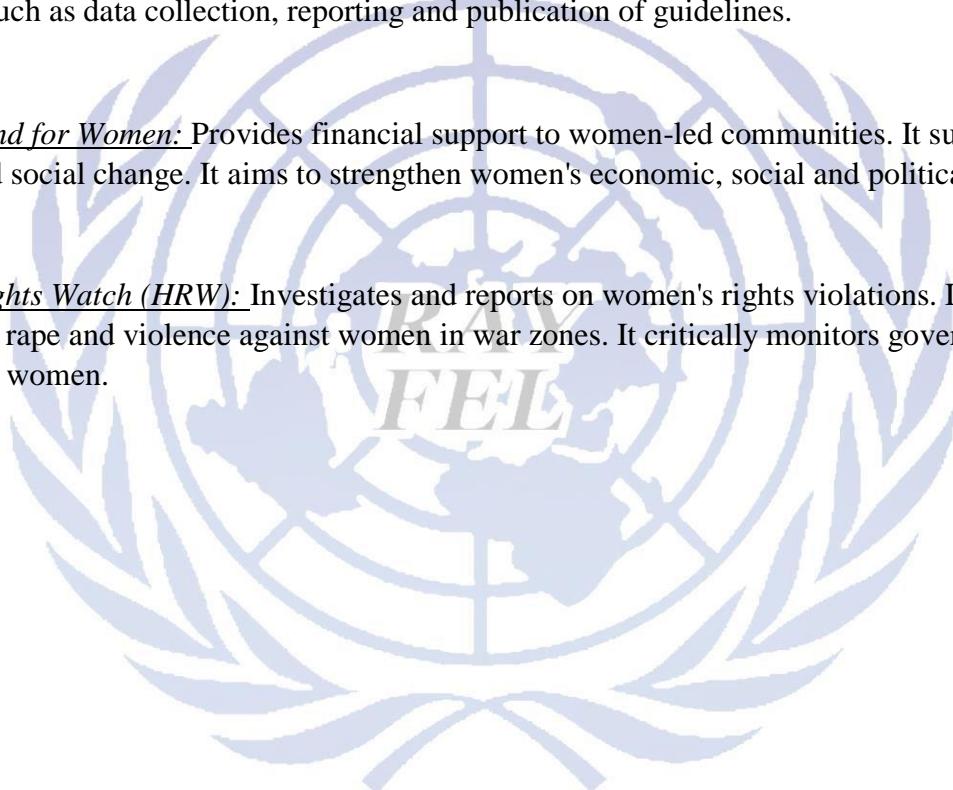
CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women):

Adopted by the United Nations in 1979. It is the most comprehensive international legal document on women's rights. Parties (including Türkiye) are obliged to comply with this agreement. Each country's progress reports are monitored by the CEDAW Committee.

World Health Organization (WHO): Conducts important studies on women's health and the effects of violence on women's health. It treats violence as a public health issue. It carries out activities such as data collection, reporting and publication of guidelines.

Global Fund for Women: Provides financial support to women-led communities. It supports women-led social change. It aims to strengthen women's economic, social and political rights.

Human Rights Watch (HRW): Investigates and reports on women's rights violations. It documents rape and violence against women in war zones. It critically monitors governments' policies on women.



## **5) Topics a Resolution Should Address**

- 1) How are women's access to health services structurally inequalities present, particularly in the areas of sexual and reproductive health? Is the subject position of women over their bodies sufficiently recognized in medical decision-making processes?
- 2) Do national education curricula reproduce patriarchal values instead of supporting gender equality? How should gender-sensitive education models be structured and how should teacher training be integrated into this process?
- 3) When women's representation in political structures such as parliament, ministries and local governments is low, how does the rate at which policies in women's favor are produced and implemented change?
- 4) While social media offers an area of awareness and organization for women's rights, it also brings with it new risks such as digital violence, harassment and disclosure. What structural measures should be taken to empower women in the digital sphere in this two-way dynamic?
- 5) How do women who experience forced migration face two-fold discrimination due to both their migration status and gender? Should migration policies be redesigned with a gender perspective?
- 6) How does the media's use of expressions such as "crimes of passion" or "provocation" to describe murders of women distort the public's perception of crime and indirectly affect judicial decisions?
- 7) How can it be measured whether measures such as electronic bracelets, restraining orders, and shelters implemented to prevent violence against women are truly functional and what kind of gaps exist in the implementation processes of these measures? What can be introduced as different solution policies?
- 8) Should women's rights be universal, or should they be interpreted within the cultural context of each society? Can a sustainable dialogue be established between universal women's rights principles and local traditions?
- 9) What impact would a country's withdrawal from international agreements on women's rights have on that country's foreign relations?
- 10) Are global agreements on girls' rights (e.g. the Convention on the Rights of the Child) really implemented equally around the world, or how do some cultural or political barriers prevent these rights?

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