

HONOR-BASED VIOLENCE

**BUILDING CROSS-BORDER
SOLIDARITY FOR A
DECOLONIAL AND
INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST
PRACTICE**





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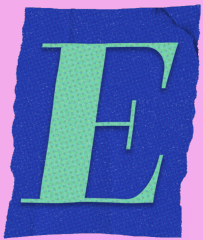
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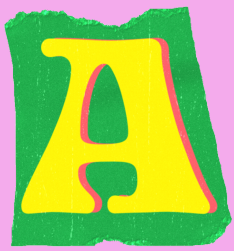
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DEFINITION

HONOR BASED VIOLENCE IS A FORM OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Put simply, honor based violence "consists of violence committed, most commonly, against (young) women by male relatives and is usually carried out in order to preserve or restore the 'honour' of families, communities, or individuals." (Hague)


These acts of violence are committed with the stubborn and inherent assumption that honor is directly tied to a relative's conduct and behavior, with the specificity that those relatives identify as women.

Specific to Kurdish cases of honor-based violence, there is a pattern to the reasoning behind such violence:

The misogynist values held in families is a byproduct of an assumed patriarchal normality in society that deems any deviation from the binary gender roles as a threat to an order deemed natural and correct.

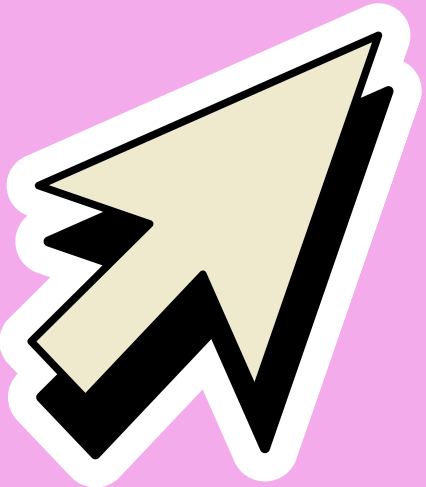
Due to an abundant amount of migrant families who continue to uphold this normality, Kurdish women who engage in activities such as seeking education, dating, "dressing inappropriately", or even be suspected of doing so are likely to be subject to violent consequences.

It takes many forms aside from the more known "honor killings". Honor-based gender violence can be embodied in suppressing liberty via shame, exemplified by altering how you dress, all the way to concealing your aspects of your personality, if not entirely. It's a code of conduct by which women are expected to live by. Any deviation welcomes threats and possible punishment. This, in turn, fosters a perpetual **cautiousness** that often becomes subconscious, since now your life is not only monitored but potentially threatened.



Traditional values are one of the most commonly used terms to express the patriarchal and misogynist oppression prevalent in families that practice honor-based violence. What about this is traditional?

DEFINITION



IN reality, these values hold little to no connection to cultural tradition. Rather, these values are historical. The specific value of, for example, preventing women from seeking education is more revealing of a reactionary habit formed out of cross-cultural or intercultural interaction than it is of a universal trait found in SWANA societies. Neglecting the habit of being sensitive to cultural and regional contexts in cases of gender violence can generate stigmatisation of these communities due to a stereotype exaggerated by Western media.

WE ARE FOCUSING ON KURDISH WOMEN IN THE DIASPORA, STILL WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT KURDISH WOMEN BACK IN THE HOMELAND ARE EQUALLY SUBJECT TO HONOR BASED VIOLENCE AND OFTEN WITH EVEN MORE LIMITED RESOURCES OF RELIEF.

LENS



COMMITTED TO AN ANTICAPITALIST TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST PRACTICE

- A feminism that does not erase borders from consideration of feminist liberation but analyzes how these borders contribute to the sexist and patriarchal domination/oppression that women experience.
- I am accepting the existence and impact of borders on gender-based violence of diaspora Kurdish women and also analyzing how crossing these borders foster different outcomes and responses to honor-based violence.
- Mohanty's comparative feminist studies and solidarity best characterizes my position "rather than formulating activism and agency in terms of discrete and disconnected cultures and nations, it allows us to frame agency and resistance across the borders of nation and culture." (Mohanty 509)
- We do not neglect that there is complexity in both the micropolitics and macropolitics of each cultural and social context that affects different groups of women, and in this zine, with respect to Kurdish women in the diaspora.



KEEP IN MIND

Orientalism is a pattern that will be observed often when discussing Western views of honor-based violence.

American anthropologist Laura Nader discusses Edward Said's famous definition, stating "Orientalism is a form of discourse, a way of dealing with the Orient 'by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it... an accepted grid for filtering the Orient into Western consciousness.'" (Nader 326)

Western media reports on honor-based violence uphold an Orientalist prejudice, which can in turn perpetuate further **othering** of Kurdish and other SWANA families.



Researcher Michaela Rogers defined othering as "the attitude towards or treatment of a person (or group) as fundamentally different from and alien to oneself." (Rogers 234)

BANAZ

MAHMUD

Banaz Mahmud was a 21 year old Kurdish woman living with her family in Mitcham, South London.

She sought divorce from a forced arranged marriage to an abusive cousin in the same tribe as Mahmud's family.

She developed a romantic relationship with a Kurdish man from a different tribe named Rahmat Suleimani. This was deemed incredibly disgraceful by Mahmud's family. By organization of the men in the family, mainly her father, uncle, and brother, she was strangled and buried in a suitcase. Her remains were found 3 months after her disappearance. (Begikhani 100)

Banaz Mahmud's case kickstarted an explosion of attention of honor-based violence in the UK. The responses to Banaz's case along with many other Kurdish women victims of honor-based violence were created with an undertone of *othering*. A study describes "these media discourses have usually ignored the efforts of Kurdish women's rights activists and organizations to address [violence against women] from within their own communities, tending instead to adopt a generally **negative** or **voyeuristic** attitude in a blanket way" (Hague 392). The social and familial context in which Mahmud resided was prominent in many Kurdish families in the UK, though media depiction reflected as if there was a hidden "sub-world" within the Western world.

DOSKI

AZAD

Doski Azad was a 23 year old Kurdish transwoman living with her family in Duhok, Southern Kurdistan (Northern Iraq). Azad, though her last name meaning freedom, experienced repression and violence for being a transwoman. She was known as a talented make-up artist who's death motivated the hashtag #JusticeForDoskiAzad in February 2022. (Al-Rubaie)

Doski Azad was shot and killed by her brother who then fled to Europe after the murder. She was murdered for the sake of maintaining honor and ridding shame brought upon the family name by her mere existence as a trans woman. Azad's case was met with empty promises of investigation by both political and authority figures in Southern Kurdistan. Kurdish LGBTQIA+ rights activist Zhiar Ali noted, "As long as the [Kurdish Regional Government] turns a blind eye to the LGBT+ cause and the issues the community face in the region, things like this will continue happening," (Al-Rubaie).

Azad's case underlined an ominous sense of injustice and inaction. Kurdish people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community as well as LGBTQIA+ justice activists in Kurdish communities, both in the diaspora and in the homeland, live under consistent threat. Queerness and queer activism is extremely taboo in most Kurdish families. However, as mentioned in page 2, the prime cause of this should not be noted simply as a "backward traditional culture" but rather the systemic homophobic and transphobic tendencies embedded within the patriarchal structure these families hold in their community.

CONCLUSION

Unfortunate is the inaction and subjugation of Kurdish women and Kurdish LGBTQIA+ community. Unfortunate is the ignorance of these people's calls for help and the negligence of media coverage after violence already committed.

Western media coverage of Banaz Mahmud being reductive and voyeuristic in perspective and the indifference that Kurdish police forces present towards the case of Doski Azad are appalling. But they can be prevented ●●●

However frequent these cases are, an intersectional and decolonial transnational feminist practice is essential to active justice seeking for these victims. Justice-based approach activism, rather than simply a rights-based approach, can emphasize the severity of these instances and bring the deserved significance to women and gender-nonconforming people. Keeping in mind that borders supplement and even generate the contexts in which honor based gender violence happens allows for prevention.

**SEEKING,
PROVIDING,
CARING,
ASSISTING,
PROTECTING,
AND AMPLIFYING...**

**...ALL FEMINIST
PRACTICES TO
PREVENT MORE
VICTIMS OF
HONOR BASED
VIOLENCE.**

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