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**Interviews**

**Rights activist İlkkaracan: Turkey needs urgent initiative on gender equality**

Activist and researcher Pınar İlkkaracan has said Turkey needs to work harder in order to reverse some downward trends in women's participation in public life, and for that to happen it should start an initiative, complete with budgetary allocations and time and target-bound measures.



Pınar İlkkaracan

"We need a gender equality act. It would ensure that all measures – from affirmative action to quotas – regarding gender equality in all areas where women face gender-specific discrimination are undertaken," she told Today's Zaman for Monday Talk.

"Most importantly, there needs to be a meaningful budget allocation for that. In the same way that the government has a Kurdish initiative and there is a budget allocation for that specific purpose, a gender equality initiative is urgently needed with a specific budgetary allocation," she added.

İlkkaracan's and other Turkish women's concerns have been proven right considering Turkey's position in gender-related international indexes. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on the gender empowerment measure of the human development index which was released in October of last year, Turkey is ranked 101st out of 109 countries. A World Economic Forum (WEF) report indicates that Turkey ranks 129th out of 134 countries in terms of dividing its resources and opportunities among men and women. And according to the organization Social Watch, Turkey has been in severe regression since 2004 in terms of gender equity.

Turkey scores badly when it comes to women's political participation as women have only 0.42 percent of seats on municipal councils, and out of Turkey's 2,948 mayors, only 27 (0.9 percent) are women.

Answering our questions, İlkkaracan stressed that Turkey needs comprehensive policy changes to include a gender perspective in all aspects of its plans.

*There have been a few gender-related international indexes, and in all of those Turkey is ranked near the bottom of the list. First, could you talk about those indexes and what they are trying to say?*

One is by the UNDP, the UN gender empowerment measure, or GEM. It's an index showing the level of female participation in the economic and political life of a country. The measure incorporates data such as the percentage of female legislators, senior officials and managers, and female professional and technical workers as well as gender

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'We need concrete policies to be implemented, and for that, we need a gender equality act. It would ensure that all measures -- from affirmative action to quotas -- regarding gender equality in all areas where women face gender-specific discrimination are undertaken. Most importantly, there needs to be a meaningful budget allocation for that. In the same way that the government has a Kurdish initiative and there is a budget allocation for that specific purpose, a gender equality initiative is urgently needed with a specific budgetary allocation'

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