

One of the greatest historic mysteries to me is the global tradition of violence against women. Why would a man, who had a mother who cared for him, and later a wife and daughters who depended on him to love and protect them, hate women? Why do so many around the world beat and even kill their wives and sometimes their daughters?

This ancient practice has become socially unacceptable in every educated modern society today, supported by laws that protect women from the still unenlightened. I would not choose any time in the past if offered a time-machine journey, knowing what I do about women's lives in former times.

For a period after western women won the right of full citizenship (voting), many lesser developed countries were shamed into passing laws protecting women from domestic abuse and opening doors to almost all occupations beyond housewife. This enlightenment produced a generation of upper-class women in almost every society who benefitted from the new opportunities open to them. The difference between the enlightened and traditional countries, however, was the percentage of women who benefitted, and the compliance or non-compliance of the governing men.

For the past few decades, a backlash has emerged: largely from religious authorities and the man-made traditions they invented: rules about women's bodies, mobility, sexuality, and even longevity. The UN publishes what annual statistics they can about femicide: the numbers of women murdered by men. The numbers are accurate in the developed world (democracies), but more difficult to come by in the less developed, religiously-ruled, or dictatorial countries.

Investigative journalists covering hospitals and morgues can penetrate the deliberate falsifications of government numbers. They can approximate the murders, but it is more difficult to unveil the murders mislabeled as suicides, raped women thrown out of windows (recently reported).

Women kill themselves out of desperation, fear of their menfolk, and forced pregnancy which they try to abort. One more shocking statistic that is worldwide is men beating and sometimes killing women at their most vulnerable, when they are pregnant. This horror exists in even enlightened countries.

Backlash against women sharing in the same rights as men is on the rise, not only in backward countries, but even in the United States. Laws are being passed to abolish abortion rights or to undo the national Roe v. Wade law. Indignant men do not want women having authority over their own bodies, a power that they hope that the newly conservative-majority Supreme Court will overrule.

Other conservatives, such as the previous Trump-appointed Secretary of Education, also tried to weaken university rules protecting women from rape, claiming that these laws were "unfair to men."

Organized orthodox religions are bastions of male control over women, limiting their roles to motherhood and unpaid household labor, demanding obedience to their menfolk. Only brainwashing and social control creates female enforcers of these male rules. In some regions, such as Muslim-majority Saudi Arabia, villages in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Sudan, Somalia, disobedient or inconvenient women (unwanted wives) are publicly executed.

Turkey, once a proud modernizing Muslim country, has withdrawn from a European Union treaty that they had once signed: protecting women from violence. Increasingly dictatorial President Recep Tayyip Erdogan annulling the Convention claims that it "undermines the traditional family and promotes homosexuality through categories such as sexual orientation, and gender identity." He hopes to remedy Turkey's low birthrate by mandating motherhood as the only Islamic occupation for women and punishing women who do not comply.

Violence against women is on the rise in Turkey. Rights groups cite at least 77 women killed since the start of the year, murdered by their near and dear. Turkey's first modern president, Kamal Ataturk, must be spinning in his grave. This is the consequence of nullifying the Istanbul Convention that states men and women have equal rights and obliges state authorities to prevent violence against women, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators.

This is one more reason to throw Turkey out of NATO and roster of American allies.

Dictators and conservative religions are no friends of women. Combined, they are deadly.

Next time: The Backlash

678 words

Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of "How Do You Know That? Contact her at Lfarhat102@aol.com or www.globalthink.net.