

Daycare protest: Turkish lawyer takes her baby to court ^[1]

Author: Koksall, Nil

Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 8 Mar 2015

AVAILABILITY

Read Online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Stepping into Istanbul's newest courthouse, lawyer Feyza Altun Meriç is wrapped in her court robes and armed with her tax law files. On most days she packs something else, too - her eight-month-old son.

Through bursts of baby tears, breast-feeding sessions and regular diaper changes Altun Meriç is sending a clear message: make room for mothers and their babies.

"I don't have a babysitter. I don't want a babysitter. Working is my constitutional right and being close to my baby is my right from birth, so I'm coming to trials with my baby."

It's not that Altun Meriç thinks the courtroom is the ideal place for Ali Yigit, her son. But she says the courthouse she works in, though just two years old and billed as the biggest in the world, is missing some modern essentials.

At first glance, the building seems to have everything. The rotunda through the main entrance is lined with bank branches and a post office. Signs point to a restaurant, tea house and library - and this is just one block of a five-block compound that houses 5,000 rooms, nearly 300 of them courtrooms.

But, a quick scan of the women's bathrooms reveal part of the problem Altun Meriç is protesting. There is nowhere to change a baby's diaper, nowhere to breastfeed.

So, since returning to work two months ago, Altun Meriç has been relying on the kindness of colleagues.

"I know some judges and a few times I asked them if I could use their rooms and they let me."

What makes the lack of facilities more difficult to digest, she says, is that Turkish law states all workplaces with more than 100 women employed have to offer daycare services. The law is not enforced.

"The problem is we have codes and we cannot apply them," Altun Meriç says.

The courthouse itself does have a daycare, but it is only available to a select few - judges and prosecutors. Other lawyers' children are not welcome.

The lack of what she calls essentials doesn't make the job difficult only for her, the working mom says. She worries similar situations across the country could hold other women back from pursuing a career outside of their homes.

"All over the world women are forced to make this cruel choice between their kids and jobs."

Meriç says that's part of the reason she is being so public about her fight.

Istanbul Lawyer Feyza Altun Meriç takes her eight-month-old son to court to protest the lack of facilities for working parents.

Though her style of protest is unique here, her role as a female lawyer isn't. The Union of Turkish Bar Associations says, as of 2013, there were just over 32,000 female lawyers, and 49,528 male lawyers in Turkey.

Still, according to the World Bank, only 24 per cent of Turkish women are part of the workforce.

The attention Altun Meriç has received has garnered promises from the chief prosecutor that a daycare and other facilities are under consideration, but there are no concrete plans yet.

Altun Meriç is meeting with members of Turkey's political parties next week in the capital, Ankara. She's hoping the conversation can bring change to her office and offices across the country.

"Some people think this is not serious but I think this is the most serious thing in the world, being a mom.

"I'm not only taking care of a baby, I'm raising a future husband, a future father so this is why it should not just be my and my husband's responsibility. This is also society and government's responsibility."

Region: Europe ^[3]

Tags: mother's labour force participation ^[4]

workplace child care ^[5]

inequality ^[6]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/15/03/daycare-protest-turkish-lawyer-takes-her-baby-court>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/15/03/daycare-protest-turkish-lawyer-takes-her-baby-court> ^[2]

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/daycare-protest-turkish-lawyer-takes-her-baby-to-court-1.2982623> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/europe>

[4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8142> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/workplace-child-care> [6]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/inequality-0>