

The Tragedy of İkbal Uzuner and Ayşenur Halil



In the year 2024, Türkiye has recorded the highest ever femicide rates, being over 390 women. One of the two most controversial femicides being the murders of İkbal Uzuner and Ayşenül Halil. These women were murdered by 19-year-old Semih Çelik. These two young women were murdered in broad daylight on the same day, highlighting the unsafe conditions young women in İstanbul are living in. This article will elaborate on the murders of İkbal Uzuner and Ayşenur Halil, along with analysing this cases' impact on women in İstanbul.

Semih Çelik, the 19-year-old murderer of Ayşenur and İkbal was trained as a butcher after he was taken out of his preschool in third grade. Prior to the murders in the year 2024, Semih was treated in a mental hospital around 5 times, was reported missing twice, and attempted suicide once. According to the investigation made by Turkish police, Semih had no criminal record prior to the brutal incident. However, investigators found a sketch believed to be the corpse of İkbal Uzuner. According to the statement given by Semih Çelik's father Adem Çelik, Semih was a classmate of İkbal's and was treated in a mental hospital due to his psychiatric illness. Adem Çelik also mentioned that his son was a believer of Allah up until the age of 16. *"He was praying too. He even said to me, 'Why don't you pray? You're going to burn in hell.'"* ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com))

On the day of the murders, Semih invited Ayşenur, who was suspected to be his girlfriend at the time, to come over to his house. At exactly 10.3, he brutally murdered her. Around three hours later, Semih (at 13.58) met up with İkbal Uzuner under the city walls. He later took her to the city walls and violently murdered İkbal. After the inhumane acts he committed, Semih tied a rope around his neck and jumped off the walls, ultimately ending his own life as well as the two young innocent women.

The murders of İkbal Uzuner and Ayşenur Halil sent a terrifying message to young women across İstanbul. The fact that both killings occurred in broad daylight, in public spaces, made many feel that there is no place truly safe for women. For teenagers and women in their early twenties, the case reinforced the fear that harassment or violence can strike anywhere, even in spaces that should feel familiar and secure.

These events also triggered anger and solidarity. Women's rights organizations and feminist groups across Türkiye organized vigils, marches, and social media campaigns demanding stronger protections against gender-based violence. Many young women began openly discussing their daily precautions, such as carrying pepper spray, avoiding public areas alone, or sharing live locations with friends. These actions reflect the constant state of vigilance required to navigate the city.

The case also reignited debates about Türkiye's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, with

activists stressing that the government's lack of commitment to international protections leaves women vulnerable. For many, the murders of İkbal and Ayşenur became not only a symbol of personal tragedy but also of systemic failure, showing how urgently change is needed to ensure women in İstanbul can live without fear.

Bibliography

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