

Turkey

Information provided further the statement by the Lanzarote Committee Chair and Vice-Chairperson on stepping up protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse in times of the COVID-19 pandemic

Initiatives taken to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse as well as from other negative effects of the Covid-19 containment measures

1-During the Covid-19 pandemic, all reports of abuse and exploitation against children can be addressed directly to the prosecution offices and law enforcement units, as well as to the 112 and 155 hotlines providing 24-hour uninterrupted service. "*Women's Emergency Support Mobile Application*" developed by the General Directorate of Security is another platform can be used for such purpose. Furthermore, children's divisions of the local police departments continue to operate round-the-clock in all provinces and in districts with a population of over 50.000. These denunciation mechanisms are announced to the public over social media.

2-"*Alo 183*" hotline of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services continues to provide psychological, legal and economic support 24 hours a day for women and children who are at risk of violence, exploitation or abuse or who need support and/or assistance during the Covid-19 containment measures apply.

3-The Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services has set up a "*Covid-19 Psychological Support Line*" consisting of psychologists, psychological counsellors and social workers to serve everyone in need, including foster families. About 14,000 people a week use this service, which operates round-the-clock in most cities.

4-A video entitled "*14 Rules We Must Follow Against Covid-19*" was prepared and shared on social media by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services in sign language for hearing impaired children and adults. Link to the video:

<https://ailevecalisma.gov.tr/tr-tr/haberler/bakanligimiz-isaret-dilinde-korona-virus-uyarilari/>

5-A "*Covid-19 Information Guide*" was prepared by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services to inform children under institutional care about the pandemic and to help them reduce their concerns. The guide regulates the measures to be taken in terms of child care institutions, adoption and foster family services and socio-economic support units, also includes an action plan for emergencies and is available at the following link: <https://ailevecalisma.gov.tr/media/42385/c-hgm-koronaviru-s-bilgilendirme-doku-mani.pdf>

6-Periodic health checks, psychological counselling support services and informative activities are organized for the children under institutional care and for those benefiting from family-oriented service models. In addition, children of proper age continue their education through the online network named "*EBA*" created by the Ministry of National Education.

7-Audio descriptions for visually impaired children have been added to all issues of the children's e-magazine "Sevgi Bir Kuş", published by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services. In addition, all issues of the e-magazine have been translated into sign language for hearing impaired children. The issues of the e-journal, some of its content determined directly by a publication board consisting of children, can be found at the following link: www.sevgibirkus.com.tr, Instagram: sevgibirkus, Twitter: @sevgibirkus, Facebook: Sevgi Bir Kus

8-A list of 427 books for children has been published by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, estimating that it will help those between the ages of 0-6 to spend productive time at home and positively affect their psychological state. The list is available at the following link: <https://ailevecalisma.gov.tr/chqm/sayfalar/cocuk-dostu-kitap-listesi/>

9-The Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services has also published web links to culture, art and history museums and children's theatres to make the time spent at home efficient and pleasant. Through these web pages, museum visits can be made and children's plays can be watched online. To access these links:

<https://ailevecalisma.gov.tr/chqm/sayfalar/cocuklar-icin-koronavirus-bilgilendirmesi/>

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Responses to specific questions by the Bureau of the Lanzarote Committee on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

- 1. To what extent, if at all, has the threat of child sexual abuse/exploitation changed due to COVID-19? If so:**
 - **Please tell us about whether the level of risk has increased/decreased/remained the same and if possible specify this with regard to the various types of sexual offences against children (Articles 18-23 of the Convention);**
 - **You may also wish to indicate any emerging trends relating to child sexual abuse/exploitation, as the result of COVID-19, and point at measures taken to address them.**

COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD (11 MARCH - 8 JUNE 2020)									
NAME OF THE CASE	NUMBER OF CASES			NUMBER OF CHILD VICTIMS			NUMBER OF SUSPECTS		
	2019	2020	%	2019	2020	%	2019	2020	%
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE	3,848	1,486	-61	4,510	1,619	-64	4,473	1,721	-62

When the data on cases of child sexual abuse between the period of 11 March 2020 and 8 June 2020, when the Covid-19 Pandemic started appearing in our country and the measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic were taken, is checked; it is understood that in 1,486 cases, 1,619 children were taken into process as victims and 1,712 persons were taken

into process as suspects; compared to the data of the same period in 2019, there is a 61% decrease in the number of cases, 64% decrease in the number of child victims and 62% decrease in the number of suspects.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD (11 MARCH - 8 JUNE 2020)									
NAME OF THE CASE	NUMBER OF CASES			NUMBER OF CHILD VICTIMS			NUMBER OF SUSPECTS		
	2019	2020	%	2019	2020	%	2019	2020	%
PROCURING, PANDERING, AND FORCED PROSTITUTION	27	14	-48	32	21	-34	34	25	-26

When the data on cases of procuring, pandering and forced prostitution between the period of 11 March 2020 and 8 June 2020, when the Covid-19 Pandemic started appearing in our country and the measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic were taken, is checked; it is understood that in 14 cases, 21 children were taken into process as victims and 25 persons were taken into process as suspects; compared to the data of the same period in 2019, there is a 48% decrease in the number of cases, 34% decrease in the number of child victims and 26% decrease in the number of suspects.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD (11 MARCH - 8 JUNE 2020)									
NAME OF THE CASE	NUMBER OF CASES			NUMBER OF CHILD VICTIMS			NUMBER OF SUSPECTS		
	2019	2020	%	2019	2020	%	2019	2020	%
OBSCENITY	55	18	-67	80	22	-73	74	17	-77

When the data on cases of obscenity between the period of 11 March 2020 and 8 June 2020, when the Covid-19 Pandemic started appearing in our country and the measures were taken to prevent the spread of the pandemic, is checked; it is understood that in 18 cases, 22 children were taken into process as victims and 17 persons were taken into process as suspects; compared to the data of the same period in 2019, there is a 67% decrease in the number of cases, 73% decrease in the number of child victims and 77% decrease in the number of suspects.

The activities for the generalization of Judicial Interview Rooms, which were established in 2017 and conduct activities in 72 courthouses in order to protect the children victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence and the victims in vulnerable group, strengthen their access to the justice, and contribute to the reveal of the material fact, are continued. As well as observing a partial decrease in the number of children being interviewed in the judicial interview rooms due to the reasons as complying with the quarantine conditions and curfew for the children aged below 20, a significant deviation in the graph on the use of judicial interview rooms is not expected as the trials that were suspended are resumed with the normalization process.

- 2. Did lockdown cause child sexual abuse/exploitation cases (identified/reported) to increase, decrease or stay the same? Please submit data (number of victims/offenders) and highlight what you think may explain the trend.**

Please refer to answer 1.

- 3. Please also tell us whether and how general child safeguarding measures were, or are likely to be, affected by measures taken by governments in response to COVID-19. In addition, highlight any additional, specific measures put in place during lockdown to ensure reporting by victims of child sexual abuse/exploitation as well as to support and assist them, and whether these measures will be maintained even when the lockdown is lifted.**

In our country, the notifications for any kind of child sexual abuse and exploitation can be made through the 112 and 155 emergency hotlines that provide service 24 hours nonstop as well as directly to the Chief Public Prosecutor's Offices and law enforcement. In addition to these, KADES (The Women Emergency Assistance Notification System) that was developed and put into operation by General Directorate of Security is another platform to be used for the notifications within this scope. The public service aid, social media devices, television channels and the various media organs are used to make KADES application known publicly.

Through the "183 Emergency Support Hotline" that provides service within the body of Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services; psychological, legal and economic support are continued to be provided for the children and women under the threat of violence, sexual exploitation and abuse or who are in need following the pandemic period as well as during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, the notifications and complaints transmitted to the official e-mail account of Directorate of Judicial Support and Victim Services of Ministry of Justice are answered by means of transmitting them to the necessary authorities, and the aforementioned practice will be continued to be implemented when the life returns to normal.

The notification mechanisms regarding all kinds of offenses against the children, particularly the sexual abuse, operate smoothly. The active fight against this kind of offense continues, and the collaboration with the relevant non-governmental organizations and international organizations is also maintained.

The actions for the children within the scope of Child Protection Law No. 5395, are primarily executed by the juvenile units of the law enforcement, there are children's branch offices in all the provincial directorates general of security, and the juvenile bureaus in 131 districts with population over 50,000. The units in question continue their activities 24 hours nonstop to prevent the children from being victims of offenses, as in pandemic period.

Lastly, the children in elementary education continue their education at home through the online classes conducted over "Educational Informatics Network (EBA)" developed by the Ministry of National Education without any interruption.

- 4. Finally, please tell us whether children have been duly listened to on decision-making concerning their protection against sexual abuse/exploitation during this period. Please also tell us whether and how children will be involved in decision-making on or assessing the impact of COVID-19 measures in the future.**

The social review reports regarding the children involved in judicial process, particularly the children exposed to the sexual abuse offense and pushed to the crime, are prepared by the psychologists, pedagogues and social workers assigned at the courthouses through having face to face interviews with the children. The main function of these reports in the juvenile justice system is to assist the judicial system in taking the most suitable decisions for the psycho-social development of the children pushed to crime in order for them to live a healthy and productive life in the future. These reports include the offense, personal features of the child, environmental conditions of the child, the information regarding his/her family, the reasons for the commitment of the offense and the instructions on how the new offenses may be prevented. In the reports prepared, the opinions and requests of the children are especially taken into account, also by looking at the things expressed by the child; the suggestions regarding which measure will be beneficial to take for the child, whether it is needed for the child to be kept under provision and how long the measure or supervision will be implemented, are included as well. In this respect, the social review reports occupy an important place in terms of protecting the children's rights during the judicial process and providing their active participation in the process.