

Chapter 71

Honor–Related Violence in the Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

What has the Dutch police learned about violence in the name of the family honor over the years? In the first paragraph, authors will deal with the question: What is violence in the name of the family honor? And what has the Dutch police done to curb this particular form of violence? The second paragraph addresses the question: What tools do the Dutch police have for dealing with this form of violence and helping vulnerable groups in society? The most important lesson that the Dutch Police have learned is that this form of violence has many faces. It might be a threat or have a lethal outcome. Next to that, ancient honor codes are capable of tapping into modern times: offenses against the honor of the family do not only take place in ‘real life’ so to speak, but also online. In the early days in The Netherlands, violence in the name of family honor was often associated with migrants of Turkish decent, but nowadays the police also see cases in other communities.

INTRODUCTION

The Tank Case

On the evening of Saturday 28 February 1976, the following people were in a living room in Leiden at 10.45 p.m.: four members of the Turkish family B., three other people of Turkish origin and two Dutch mechanics who had been tinkering with the cars belonging to the head of the household and to other persons present. Soon after, two other youths (aged 19 and 15) with a Turkish background dropped by. They were looking to get money from their father who happened to be one of the visitors at the B. family. After a short discussion, the boys were given some money. When they were about to leave, the oldest of the two youths drew a pistol which he used to shoot Memis Tank three times. Tank was one of the other visitors. The mechanics recounted later that the shooter came across as cold-blooded. He was totally unmoved, even when he shot the victim in the head at close range. The rumours soon started to

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*fly, rumours that had actually been doing the rounds for some time among people of Turkish descent in Leiden, also among those who were known to the police. The victim had apparently raped the perpetrator's sister. Shortly before, this woman had travelled to Turkey, as had her husband. The victim had also tried to murder this man twice before. Apparently, Tank had also had a relationship with Mrs B., the occupant of the premises where Tank had so violently met his end. Van Dijken and Nauta, who published an article on this case in 1978 in the erstwhile police magazine, *Algemeen Politieblad*, found that, 'Despite the fact that the evidence, both technical [traces at the crime scene] and tactical [looking for punishable offences and suspects] did not constitute particular problems for the crime itself, there was much confusion about the motives that led to the crime' (Van Dijken & Nauta, 1978, p. 228).*

As far as regular police operations were concerned, it was not a difficult case to solve. Even though the witnesses of Turkish descent contradicted one another a few times, the mechanics had a front row view of the events and were able to give a clear report on what had actually unfolded on that fateful Saturday evening. That said, over the years explaining the motive in cases like this proved to be difficult for the cops. In this contribution (partly literally) based on the textbook written by the author that is used at the Police Academy in the Netherlands (Janssen, 2018), we will deal with the question what the Dutch police has learned about violence in the name of the family honour since the Tank case. In the first paragraph we will deal with the question what is violence in the name of the family honour? And what has the Dutch police done to deal with this particular form of violence? In the second paragraph is dealt with the question what tools the Dutch police has for dealing with this form of violence and helping vulnerable groups in society.

Honour Based-Violence and the Dutch Police

Media and Political Attention

In the Netherlands violence in the name of honour has often been associated with migrants with a Turkish background. After the Tank case mentioned in the introduction, a more structural focus on violence perpetrated in the name of honour emerged in around 2000. During the celebrations of the fortieth anniversary of Turkish migration to the Netherlands in 2004, the former minister for Immigration and Integration had the following to say: 'In recent times, honour killings in the Netherlands have been given names: Zarife, Gül, and in the past, Kezban Vural. They represent an as yet unknown number of nameless women that live under duress, are forced to flee, or are victims of violence.'¹ It is interesting to see that in this particular day and age violence in the name of honour was mostly associated with female victims, although from early on – see the Tank case – the police was also confronted with male (lethal) victims.

Nevertheless, the sad fate of these and other women got plenty of attention in the media and, thanks to outrage about the severity of violence and the nature of the motive, it also drew the attention of politicians and policymakers. These cases prompted questions and discussions in the Lower House. For instance, as a consequence of Gül's murder, Ayaan Hirsi Ali advocated strongly for making honour killings punishable as a separate offence in the Dutch Criminal Code. This separate penalisation failed to materialise, however, because, according to former Minister Verdonk, Dutch Criminal Law offers sufficient means to investigate and prosecute honour-killing cases. Some believe that the Gül case marked a turning of the tide in Dutch thinking about honour and violence, thanks to the reactions that followed in the wake of the murder (Van der Zee, 2006). In general, one can state that violence in the name of honour was

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