



# The Relationship Between Men's Persistent Stalking and Harassment Behaviors in Domestic Violence Against Women: Case Report

Erkeğin İsrarlı Takip ve Taciz Davranışları (Stalking) ile Kadına Yönelik Aile İçi Şiddet İlişkisi: Olgu Sunumu

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## Abstract

In the case presented, the aim is to discuss the causes of men's persistent stalking and harassment behaviors and the precautions that can be taken, as well as what should be done in terms of protecting women, ensuring their safety and the legal aspect. It is emphasized that the men's persistent stalking and harassment behaviors can escalate into domestic violence against women within a certain period. The case involves a 43-year-old woman seeking divorce from her 41-year-old husband, where persistent stalking behaviors escalated into domestic violence. The men's actions, starting from the dating period, included following the woman, waiting outside her home, and workplace harassment. Despite the woman perceiving these behaviors as love, the marriage resulted in physical, mental, and verbal abuse, leading to her job loss. Despite obtaining a protection order and filing for divorce, the men's stalking and harassment behaviors continued for eight years. In light of such cases, it is evident that forensic medical evaluation and psychiatric follow-up are crucial for effective treatment. Equally important is the need for reporting and documenting instances of violence against women. Furthermore, recognizing the persistence of stalking behavior as a crime in legal regulations is imperative. It is suggested that making such incidents public should not solely rely on the woman's complaint; instead, it should be addressed within the framework of legal regulations pertaining to persistent stalking behaviors. This comprehensive approach ensures a more robust and proactive response to the complex dynamics involved in cases of stalking and domestic violence against women.

**Keywords:** Stalking, domestic violence, trauma, medicolegal report, forensic medicine.

## Öz

Sunulan olguda erkeğin ısrarlı takip davranışlarının nedenleri ve alınabilecek önlemlerin yanı sıra kadının korunması, güvenliğinin sağlanması açısından neler yapılması gerektiği ve hukuki boyutunun tartışılması amaçlanmaktadır. Erkeğin ısrarlı takip ve taciz davranışlarının belli bir süre içinde kadına yönelik aile içi şiddete dönüşebileceği vurgulanmaktadır. Olgu, 41 yaşındaki kocasından boşanmak isteyen 43 yaşındaki bir kadını kapsamakta ve ısrarlı takip davranışları aile içi şiddete dönüşmektedir. Erkeğin flört döneminden itibaren yaptığı eylemler arasında kadını takip etmek, evinin önünde beklemek ve iş yerinde tacizde bulunmak yer almaktadır. Kadın bu davranışları aşk olarak algılamasına rağmen evlilik fiziksel, zihinsel ve sözlü tacizle sonuçlanmış ve işini kaybetmesine neden olmuştur. Koruma kararı almasına ve boşanma davası açmasına rağmen erkeğin takip ve taciz davranışları 8 yıl boyunca devam etmiştir. Bu gibi durumlar göz önüne alındığında, adli tıbbi değerlendirme ve psikiyatrik takibin etkili tedavi için hayati önem taşıdığı açıktır. Aynı derecede önemli olan, kadına yönelik şiddet olaylarının raporlanması ve belgelenmesi ihtiyacıdır. Ayrıca ısrarlı takip davranışının devam etmesinin yasal düzenlemelerde suç olarak kabul edilmesi zorunludur. Bu tür olayların kamuoyuna duyurulmasının yalnızca kadının şikâyetine dayanmaması; bunun yerine ısrarlı takip davranışlarına ilişkin yasal düzenlemeler çerçevesinde ele alınması gerekmektedir. Bu kapsamlı yaklaşım, kadına yönelik taciz ve aile içi şiddet vakalarının içerdiği karmaşık dinamiklere karşı daha güçlü ve proaktif bir yanıt verilmesini sağlayacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İsrarlı takip, aile içi şiddet, travma, adli rapor, adli tıp.





## Introduction

Stalking is defined as a deliberate, repeated, and threatening behavior towards another person that undermines her/his sense of safety. It is characterized by a series of systematically repeated actions, causing severe psychological impact on the victim (1). In our country, the crime of “Persistent stalking” was incorporated into the Turkish Penal Code (TCK) on 12.05.2022, requiring the victim’s complaint (2). Unfortunately, a significant portion of domestic violence against women, encompassing any violence inflicted by current or former family members, is predominantly perpetrated by husbands or partners—the individuals closest to the women (3) and persistent stalking, harassment, and domestic violence are interconnected, forming a troubling duo where control and dominance behaviors are extensions of each other (4). In a study of 332 case files on intimate partner violence (IPV) from a major police department in one of the five largest and most diverse cities in the United States, findings revealed that almost one in five cases, 19.3% of the total, involved stalking (5). Notably, in our country the legal system addressed persistent stalking and harassment for the first time as “Unilateral persistent stalking” within the context of violence against women in Law No. 6284 on the Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women. In Turkey, according to the findings of the Research on Domestic Violence Against Women (6), approximately 3 out of every 10 women across the country have experienced stalking and harassment at least once. Disturbingly, threatening forms of stalking and harassment are predominantly perpetrated by ex-spouses or ex-partners. Shockingly, 53% of women seeking help from institutions or organizations due to stalking and harassment reported that they did not receive any meaningful results. In the presented case, it is crucial to underscore that men’s persistent stalking and harassment behaviors often escalate into domestic violence against women over time. This prompts a discussion on the underlying reasons for such behaviors and the necessary precautions. The discourse extends to addressing the measures required to protect women, ensure their life safety, facilitate their reintegration into society, and explore the legal dimensions of the issue.

## The Case

The woman, aged 43, and her 41-year-old husband, currently seeking divorce through the Family Court,

share an 11-year-old son. The woman holds a university degree, while the man has a high school education. The court’s request entails a comprehensive assessment, including examinations of both parents and the child, a thorough review of the case file, and the preparation of a report to determine custody arrangements for the joint child. The spouses initially met in a professional setting, working in different capacities (Manager - Personnel Chief) at the same workplace. The man’s troubling behavior, characterized by persistent stalking and harassment, began during their work tenure and extended into their personal lives. He would follow the woman after work, wait outside her house, engage in surveillance, inquire about her with colleagues at the workplace, send flowers, and consistently call and message her—behaviors that started during their dating period. The persistent stalking and harassment, initially causing anxiety and restlessness in the woman, led her to contemplate changing her workplace. Over time, however, she began interpreting the man’s actions as expressions of love and attention. The marriage ensued after a seven-month dating period. Within the marriage, the man escalated to multiple forms of physical, mental, and verbal violence against the woman, driven by jealousy, eventually resulting in her termination from employment. The woman, reacting to the severity of the situation, lodged two complaints with the judicial authorities. Despite her efforts to distance herself by leaving their shared residence, obtaining a protection order, and initiating divorce proceedings, the man’s persistent stalking and harassment persisted. The contentious divorce case has spanned nearly eight years. Insights from individual interviews with both spouses and the child, combined with forensic medical and psychiatric evaluations, provide a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

In her forensic medical and psychiatric evaluation, it was revealed that she has been diagnosed with “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.” medical treatment has been initiated, and ongoing polyclinic follow-up is recommended. The joint child expressed a desire to reside with his mother in the event of a divorce. Throughout the divorce proceedings, it was reported that the child experienced adverse effects, including academic decline resulting from changing schools twice, loss of friendships, difficulties adapting to the new school environment, and the manifestation of



symptoms such as mood changes, irritability, and introversion. The expert report, taking into account the father's propensity for violence, recommends granting permanent custody of the joint child to the mother in the event of divorce. It advocates for establishing a personal relationship between the child and the father without cohabitation. The report underscores the man's persistent stalking and harassment of the woman before marriage, which continued throughout the legal case, as well as the physical, verbal, and emotional abuse the woman endured during the marriage. Furthermore, her psychiatric follow-up and treatment are ongoing. The medical opinion asserts that the impact of the traumatic experiences on the woman is significant, requiring more than simple medical intervention for resolution.

### Discussion

When perpetrators engage in domestic violence, a form of stalking and harassment that is both pervasive and perilous, the drive for power and control over the woman intensifies upon facing rejection. The woman, perceived as a valuable commodity, becomes a target, and the denial of the ended relationship exacerbates the situation (7). Notably, ex-spouses and partners exhibit more varied and severe stalking behavior compared to acquaintances or strangers (8). The duration of stalking and harassment employed as a tool of intimidation by ex-spouses or partners, coupled with complementary forms of domination, is nearly double the typical duration observed with strangers (9). Also, women stalked by the fathers of their children, a uniquely vulnerable group, require special consideration and support due to shared parenthood, which provides various avenues for stalking behaviors, including contact, harassment, intrusion, or threats through social and legal channels or directly involving the children (10). As a result, victims of stalking and harassment experience behavioral changes including coping mechanisms to manage their lives such as persistent attempts to influence the harasser through meetings, making substantial life changes such as relocation, resisting or defending when necessary, pursuing self-improvement, or seeking professional support (11). The pervasive and enduring impact of persistent stalking and harassment underscores the urgent need for comprehensive support systems and legal measures to ensure the safety

and well-being of victims.

### Conclusion

In cases of persistent stalking and harassment, the primary objective of legal regulations is to proactively prevent violent acts, particularly those targeting women, and to safeguard victims by holding perpetrators accountable. Reporting and meticulously documenting instances of violence against women are crucial aspects, emphasizing the significance of forensic medical evaluation and psychiatric follow-up for effective treatment of victims. Legal frameworks must prioritize the recognition of persistent stalking behavior as a crime, emphasizing the necessity for these incidents to be treated as public cases rather than relying solely on the woman's complaint. To enhance societal awareness, expanding training programs for women and broadening the collaboration between the state and non-governmental organizations is an appropriate approach. This comprehensive strategy ensures a more proactive and inclusive response to persistent stalking and harassment, contributing to the overall safety and well-being of those affected.

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