

Underage marriages are not only a problem for the couples but also for their children, as stated in the Missing Children of the Prime Ministry's Human Rights Presidency.

The report, released this week, underlines that the number of missing children in Turkey according to police is 1,146, but according to other public offices is 833. The report claims that this difference stems from a lack of proper statistics and from a lack of consensus among institutions on the definition of a missing child. However, the report adds that these numbers only indicate the children who are reported missing by their families, but that the actual number could be higher.

According to the report, in cities with large numbers of migrants the number of missing children is higher than elsewhere. İstanbul, for example, is missing 253.

The report also inquires about the reasons for child disappearances and brings suggestions for prevention. According to the report, children born to underage couples are more problematic.

The report states: "Underage marriages, especially for girls, are an obstacle to developing a healthy personality. They become parents before solving their own adolescent problems, and their children become problematic too."

Other central reasons for why children may run away from home include violence within the family, parental unemployment and poverty. The report suggests that large families and families with stepparents are also at risk. Further reasons for why children may leave their homes include curiosity, the desire to make money, academic failures, TV series about the mafia, jealousy of other brothers and sisters, negative effects of internet, sexual harassment and incest.

The report points out that mentally ill children are more likely to get lost. There are also some cases in which children are unable to be identified, such as in traffic accidents.

Children do not always run away. Sometimes they are abducted. Children can be tricked by the promise of marriage or are forced to work in prostitution. Illegal networks such as drug dealers, organ traders, beggars and terrorists abduct children. There is also the threat of people who abduct children with the aim of adoption.

Another problematic area regarding lost children is orphanages. Children who are victims of abuse and subsequently put under state protection can have difficulties with rehabilitation and can run away from the orphanages.

In order to prevent children from going missing, the report suggests that underage marriages should be prevented and that the state should take measures to raise awareness about this issue. The other suggestions are as follows:

Support programs should be implemented for migrant families.

Communication within families should improve.

Police should take note of children who are alone in mass transportation facilities

Special attention should be paid to neighborhoods with high numbers of missing children.

Conditions in orphanages should be improved.