

WE CONDEMN THE DISCUSSIONS OVER THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION AND INVITE EVERYONE TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION!

We are shocked over the intentions that have been voiced at the level of Presidency, on Turkey's possible withdrawal of signature from the "Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence," known as the Istanbul Convention. Opposing the Istanbul Convention, which has the ultimate aim of protecting women from all forms of violence, and eliminating domestic violence, is opposing the equality between women and men, and women's presence in public life as free and equal individuals. While the majority of the population understands the importance of and takes ownership of combating violence against women, some misogynist groups attempt to open up the Istanbul Convention to discussion, and their discourse are opposing gender equality and heightening misogyny in the society. These groups advocate for expropriation of women's rights to inheritance and property under the Civil Law, especially their right to alimony*, and the legitimization of child abuse through marriage. Furthermore, they demand all the rights that safeguard women's participation in the public life as free and equal citizens to be taken away, and want men to be in the decision making position over the lives of women. The ownership of these unfounded claims by the highest positions of Turkey's governance means that Turkey is renouncing its responsibility, as a constitutional state of law, for establishing gender equality, nondiscrimination towards its citizens, and protecting women from violence.

The Istanbul Convention was opened for signatures in 2011 at Istanbul, through the efforts of Turkey, the term president of the Council of Europe at that time, and Turkey has signed the convention as its first signatory, without any reservations. Parallel to the timing of the Convention's getting into force, Turkey has accepted the Law No. 6284 on Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence against Women, and in this scope Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers (ŞÖNİMs) have been opened in all cities of Turkey, ALO 183 hotline has been established and many other concrete measures in accordance with the roadmap presented by the Convention have been taken. Turkey had been a part of the preparation process of the Convention with its state mechanisms and its women's rights movement, The Nahide Opuz decision** of the European Court of Human Rights was one of the core foundations of the Convention. The Convention provides a holistic roadmap for states to combat violence against



*Even though these groups have claimed for months that most of the society is against alimony, KONDA, in their report titled "Poverty Alimony Research Report" published in March 2020, has definitively shown that 76% of the population supports the poverty alimony paid to women. As seen in the example of alimony discussions, these groups are distorting the facts. Please see: https://konda.com.tr/wpcontent/uploads/2020/03/Konda_Nafaka_Dosyasi_Final.pdf

**With the Nahide Opuz decision the ECHR, for the first time, convicted a state for not protecting one of its citizens against domestic violence.

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women and domestic violence effectively, and for the prevention of gender based violence. The Convention clearly states that violence against women is a violation of human rights and is a form of discrimination, and therefore establishing gender equality is a sine qua non / indispensable for ending violence. While providing states with concrete recommendations on how to effectively establish mechanisms for protecting women, preventing violence and prosecuting victims in order to effectively combat violence against women, the Convention also states that these mechanisms should be supported with the policies, established by the state, based on equality. The Convention further gives a detailed description of violence, and tackles not just its physical forms, but also its economic, sexual and psychological forms. Thus, it defines the prevention of a woman from working, the seizing of a woman's income, the deprivation of a woman from all economic opportunities as violence as well. It further considers continuous slurs, humiliation and verbal violence, trying to intimidate a woman through harassment, abuse and rape, as forms of violence, and mandates states to combat violence in all its forms. The groups that oppose this Convention, which was prepared to end all forms of gender-based violence against women, are opposing women's right to a life free from violence in the public and private spheres.

The same groups that claim that the Istanbul Convention is not "native to Turkey, and not national," are using misinformation to delude the public by giving the examples of Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria as other countries that have withdrawn from the Convention. In Poland, the Convention has been in effect since 2015. In Hungary and Bulgaria, the Convention has not been adopted yet, and thus is not yet in effect. On the other hand, other Muslim countries that are not members of the Council of Europe, such as Kazakhstan and Tunisia, have provided the Council with their will to be a party to the Istanbul Convention. None of the state parties that has put the Convention into effect after signing and ratifying the Convention through adoption in its parliament, has withdrawn from the Istanbul Convention, that has the aim to eliminate all forms of violence against women, or taken a decision with a similar effect effect.

The Convention advocates that the measures taken against violence against women and domestic violence should be applied without discrimination to any identity or status. In other words, the Convention also mandates party states to guarantee that the measures taken does not discriminate against sexual orientation and gender identity. The attacks of the oppositional groups to the Convention, over LGBTQI+ individuals, aim to disrupt the prohibition of



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discrimination principle of the Convention, that states that the measures against violence to be applied to everyone that has experienced violence, equally and without discrimination. Every human being, regardless of their identity or status, has unalienable, basic human rights from birth, starting with right to life, and the measures against violence against women and domestic violence should be applied to all. This prohibition of discrimination, is the most basic principle of the international human rights law, and is one of the fundamental responsibilities of the state according to the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey.

Violence against women became a burning social crisis in Turkey. While women are killed by men that are closest to them just because they are women in this country, while we still hear the cries of Emine Bulut that said "I want to live,"*** while child abuse is not being prevented, the steps to discuss the Istanbul Convention, that has the purpose of preventing women from violence, and talking about withdrawing from it is simply indicating that the state is not taking the side of women against violence, is not standing against violence, and does not consider violence against women as an issue that the state should be preventing and combatting. Not just in reference to the Conventions it ratified, but also in reference to its own constitution, the primary obligation of the state is to take concrete steps to establish gender equality and to eliminate discrimination. To ensure an effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention, which a majority of the public is showing ownership towards, is about not making women's right to life a topic of discussion in the arbitrary agendas of certain religious sects and misogynistic groups. Families are not torn apart by the Istanbul Convention, they are torn apart by violence against women.

Owning and protecting the Istanbul Convention is a very essential issue for all those who want to live in an equal, free and just country. We invite all of society to take ownership of the Convention and our future.

#ŞiddeteKarşıİstanbulSözleşmesi / #IstanbulConventionAgainstViolence

#İstanbulSözleşmesi / #IstanbulConvention

#İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır / #IstanbulConventionSavesLives



***<http://bianet.org/english/women/214178-emine-bulut-asked-for-help-from-police-before-being-murdered>