

**In solidarity with women:
Turkey must return to Istanbul Convention**

In May 2021 EuroMed Feminist Initiative joined the international community to mark the 10th anniversary of the Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

"Despite the persistent fight by women's rights activists and organizations throughout the years, violence against women and girls remains a pervasive, and systematic problem, and women remain subjected to violence everywhere and at all moments of their lives. The Istanbul Convention is a historic treaty which constitutes a judicial frame to protect women. All countries that have ratified it must improve and adopt legislation to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, and take action to implement it," says Co-President of EuroMed Feminist Initiative, Lilian Halls French.

Turkey became the first State to leave the Convention, a decade after being among the first signatories. On March 2021 President Recep Tayyip Erdogan issued a decree withdrawing Turkey from the Istanbul Convention, which took effect on 1st of July 2021, in a move which has been described as a provocation against all women in Turkey, and one to please religious conservative parties including the Islamist Felicity Party (Saadet) and the AKP ahead of the next election in 2023.

Protests in Turkey have erupted in response to Turkey's withdrawal from the Convention, not least because Erdogan used a presidential decree to do so. The Turkish constitution restricts the use of decrees to areas over which the president has authority, with critics affirming that such a move must be subject to a vote in parliament.

Turkish authorities often fail to protect women from violence, and the rate of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and femicide remains high. Over 3,477 women have been killed in Turkey in the last ten years alone. Official figures indicate that at least 38% of women in Turkey are subject to domestic violence. 300 femicides were reported in 2020 alone, according to the 'We Will Stop Femicide' platform.

EFI recognizes that systemic violence is rooted in the normative and institutional denial of the fundamental human rights of women, and the denial of gender equality. *"Patriarchy and misogyny, are sustained by legislations, favoring the impunity of perpetrators, and the absence of legal and social protection measures for survivors," says Leila Al Ali, Co- President of EuroMed Feminist Initiative*

On the tenth anniversary of the Istanbul Convention and as a leading founder of campaign Zero Tolerance for VAWG, EuroMed Feminist Initiative stands in solidarity with all women in Turkey in the struggle for their fundamental right to a life free of fear, violence, and insecurity.