

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

30 March 2021

Senator the Hon. Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA

Street address:

79 Myrtle Street

Chippendale

NSW 2008

T: (02) 83967618

E: exec.admin@amnesty.org.au

ABN 64 002 806 233

Postal address:

Locked bag 23

Broadway

NSW 2007

F: (02) 83967677

W: www.amnesty.org.au

Dear Minister Payne

RE: TURKEY'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION

On 20 March 2021, Turkish authorities issued a Presidential Decree announcing its imminent withdrawal from the 2011 Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, better known as the Istanbul Convention. **We call on your government to encourage the reversal of this retrogressive decision.**

The Istanbul Convention was drafted by the Council of Europe in 2011, designed to provide legal protection for women and promote gender equality through legislation and education. Despite the fact that the text of the convention has not changed since Turkey's ratification in 2012, newfound resistance has emerged from conservative critics in Turkey, who criticise the agreement for promoting homosexuality and threatening traditional family structures.

This dangerous rationale behind the renewed criticism of the convention **blatantly attacks the LGBTQIA+ community**, in addition to the action of withdrawing itself **threatening the protection of women and girls** from violence and domestic abuse. The urgency of addressing this issue is intensified by the reality that the decision to withdraw coincides with a period of increasing rates of femicide and other forms of violence against women in Turkey, especially as a result of COVID-19 measures such as lockdowns.

To protect the rights and dignity of LGBTQIA+ people, women, and girls, this decision must be met with the censure of the international community. The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, is one of many global critics to condemn the decision, calling it "ill-advised" and asserting that "it undermines women's rights and sends the wrong signal to all women in Turkey and beyond." Women's rights activists throughout Turkey have echoed the Commissioner's messaging, organising a series of marches as thousands rally together in protest across the country.

Efforts by Hungary and Bulgaria to distance themselves from the Istanbul Convention and delay or refuse ratification, despite being signatories of the treaty, emphasises the significance of a rigorous response to Turkey's actions, discouraging further erosion of international legislation protecting the rights of women and girls to live free from the threat of violence or abuse.

Rather than attacking LGBTQIA+ people and withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention, the Turkish government should instead re-double efforts to ensure LGBTQIA+ people, women and children are protected from violence and abuse.

I urge you to **contact the Turkish Ambassador in Australia** and call on Turkish authorities to:

- immediately reverse its retrogressive decisions to withdraw from the Convention,
- protect and promote the rights of LGBTQIA+ people, women, and girls, and,
- ensure that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression of all those protesting - including LGBTQI+ people and women - are fully respected and protected.

I also request that you publicly denounce Turkey's decision to withdraw from the Convention and call on it to reverse its decision immediately.

For further information, or to discuss and organise a meeting, please contact Joel MacKay at joel.mackay@amnesty.org.au or 0424 242 112.

Yours sincerely,



Sam Klintworth
National Director
Amnesty International Australia