



US WOMEN'S CAUCUS AT THE UN

Statement of Support for the Istanbul Convention June 13, 2021

The US Women's Caucus at the UN joins with other members of civil society who are alarmed at the announcement by President Erdoğan of Turkey to withdraw by July 1, 2021 from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. The announced withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention is doubly distressing in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic with increased levels of gender-based violence globally, including in Turkey.

The Istanbul Convention was negotiated in Turkey's ancient capital, and Turkey was the first nation to sign the Convention on May 11, 2011. Turkey was one of the first ten countries to ratify the Convention by a unanimous vote of the Grand National Assembly in 2012. In contrast to that important leadership on behalf of women and girls, Turkey is now the first country to announce its intention to withdraw from the Convention amid wide attacks on women's rights in Turkey. The US Women's Caucus at the UN stands in solidarity with Turkish women and girls who want their country to return to its historic leadership and remain part of the Istanbul Convention.

We are concerned that the withdrawal of Turkey, the first country to sign the Convention, would undermine the Convention's legitimacy in Europe, give credence to disinformation campaigns, and open the door to withdrawals by other signatories. Any withdrawal from a treaty protecting the rights of women and girls puts them at increased risk of violence, femicide, and other human rights abuses.

We urge President Biden to express his consternation at Turkey's announced withdrawal when meeting with Turkey and other NATO partners in the upcoming summit. As the key author of the original US Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) while Senator, President Biden knows full well how important such legislation is to prevent violence, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators of vicious crimes and femicide.

Over the past ten years, the Istanbul Convention has been the gold standard that has protected women and girls and saved countless lives. Its core principles need to be reinforced, more countries need to ratify it, and those who have already signed on need to intensify efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls.

We fully endorse the statement made by our member organization, Zonta International, issued on the tenth anniversary of the Istanbul Convention, urging states to promote and fully implement the landmark agreement:

[https://www.zonta.org/Web/News_Events/Articles/Zonta International commemorates 10th anniversary of the signing of the Istanbul Convention.aspx?WebsiteKey=fa59e7e8-9db0-4736-b8df-7a6476fb9063](https://www.zonta.org/Web/News_Events/Articles/Zonta_International_commemorates_10th_anniversary_of_the_signing_of_the_Istanbul_Convention.aspx?WebsiteKey=fa59e7e8-9db0-4736-b8df-7a6476fb9063)