

Commission on the Status of Women

CIMUN

Topic 1: Addressing the femicides in Turkey and its withdrawal from the
Istanbul Convention

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Trigger warning: This report mentions and/or discusses rape, femicides, domestic violence and suicide. If any of these topics are triggering to you, the author of this report highly recommends not participating in this committee.

Introduction

In 2012, Turkey was the first country to sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention (also known as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence). On the 20th of March 2021, it stated that it would be withdrawing from said convention, which it did on the 1st of July 2021. Femicides are a key aspect of the violence against women which the convention aims to end. Reports on the number of femicides that have occurred in Turkey differ as a result of falsified information and bias, with estimates ranging between 300 and 500 for 2020 alone. This research report will attempt to offer background research on the Istanbul convention and the reasons for Turkey's withdrawal from it, as well as the femicides in Turkey. Furthermore, the report includes information on involved countries and noteworthy UN resolutions and reports on the topics. Additional research material will be recommended to delegates reading this report.

Key Terms

Femicides: “the gender-based murder of a woman or girl by a man” ([Merriam-Webster dictionary](#))

Convention: “a formal agreement between country leaders, politicians, and states on a matter that involves them all” ([Cambridge dictionary](#)).

Council of Europe: Founded in 1949, this is Europe's largest and oldest intergovernmental organization, currently consisting of 47 states. It is not the same as the European Union.

Ratification vs signing: When the involved states have completed their negotiations when creating a treaty, the treaty is signed. The signing displays the state's interest in following the treaty but does not bind the state to it. This is followed by ratification; the treaty must be dealt with by the individual states according to their individual national procedures, and once this has been done the other states are notified and the treaty is officially binding ([Government of the Netherlands](#)).

Honour-killings: “the traditional practice in some countries of killing a family member who is believed to have brought shame on the family” ([Merriam-Webster dictionary](#)).

Background Information

The femicides in Turkey

Reports of and specific statistics on the number of victims of femicides in Turkey differ depending on the source. The possibility of bias and falsified information on both sides of the issue need to be taken into account when further researching this and making claims.

According to the Stockholm Center for Freedom, the Interior Minister of Turkey, Süleyman Soyulu, has stated that the number of femicides has decreased by 21% in the first months of 2021 when compared to 2020. Activists and organizations accuse the minister of hiding information and releasing inaccurate numbers to the public. Eylem Atılgan, lawyer and activist, claims that three women in Turkey are murdered a day, along with “many others under suspicious circumstances” ([Stockholm Center for Freedom](#)). An article on femicides in Turkey being labelled as suicides claims that in Turkey in 2020, 300 women were murdered, and mentions that the number of official cases of femicides “could be far higher as femicides are often filed as suicides” ([DW news](#)).

The Istanbul Convention

The legally binding Istanbul convention was drafted on the 7th of April 2011 and signed on the 11th of May 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey. Amnesty International describes it as “the most far-reaching international treaty specifically designed to tackle violence against women and domestic violence”, which “sets out minimum standards for governments in Europe on prevention, protection, and prosecution of violence against women and domestic violence” ([Amnesty International](#)).

Turkey’s official statement on the withdrawal contains an explanation of Turkey's commitment to the protection of women's rights and a reminder that they were originally the first to sign the convention. As a reason, it mentions that the convention “was hijacked by a group of people attempting to normalize homosexuality – which is incompatible with Türkiye’s social and family values”. Despite this, the statement states that the withdrawal from the convention “by no means

denotes that the State of the Republic of Türkiye ‘compromises the protection of women.’ Türkiye will not give up on its fight against domestic violence by quitting the Convention.” The statement ends with explaining the steps being taken to promote women's rights and combat violence against women in Turkey ([Turkey Directorate of Communications](#)).

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Turkey was the first country to ratify the convention in 2012. The countries which have ratified the convention are Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland ([Wikipedia](#)).

In Turkey's official statement on its withdrawal from the convention, it mentions the countries which have not ratified the convention yet, with particular emphasis on Poland. According to the statement, “Poland has taken steps to withdraw from the Convention, citing an attempt by the LGBT community to impose their ideas about gender on the entire society” ([Turkey Directorate of Communications](#)).

The treaty is the result of “the Council of Europe’s continuous efforts since the 1990’s to prevent violence against women and domestic violence,” ([Council of Europe](#)). The convention was arranged by the 47 member states of the council ([Council of Europe](#)). 34 of the member states have officially ratified the convention, and another 12 and the EU have signed it. In March 2021, Turkey announced its withdrawal from the convention and officially withdrew on the first of July 2021.

Relevant UN Resolutions and Reports

Taking action against gender-related killing of women and girls
Adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 21 July 2015
https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/RES/2015/21

Multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women
Adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 17 July 2020
https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/RES/2020/15

To search for more or specific ECOSOC documents on specific topics, use the following website: [United Nations ECOSOC documents](#)

Previous Attempts at Resolving This Issue

Activists and organizations are working hard to spread awareness about the issue of femicides in Turkey and gain international attention. One of many examples is the platform ‘We Will Stop Femicides’ “provides legal assistance to women who want to be safe from violence and join their fight for their lives” ([We Will Stop Femicides - english](#)) by joining court cases and offering support.

Turkey itself addressed the issue of violence against women by continuously implementing ‘The National Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women’ ([Action Plan official document](#)), in the years 2007-2010, 2012-2015 and 2016-2020. The objective of this action plan is “To Take and Implement the Necessary Measures for Prevention of Any Form of Violence and Domestic Violence against Women and for Effective Protection of Victims of Violence in our Country, in Cooperation with All Stakeholders.” However, the action plan does not mention the keyword femicides.

Regarding the withdrawal from the Istanbul convention, UN Women issued an official statement regarding the withdrawal, in which they expressed their concern and recommended that Turkey reconsider this decision ([UN Women](#)). It should be noted that the withdrawal took place on the first of July 2021, therefore not much has occurred to combat this.

In Turkey’s official statement regarding its withdrawal, it discusses the steps that will be taken to combat the issue of violence against women, despite the withdrawal from the Istanbul convention ([Turkey Directorate of Communications](#)).

Possible Solutions

While a commonly suggested solution to Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul convention is for them to just rejoin, it should be kept in mind that the UN can not simply force a country to ratify a convention.

Spreading awareness and increasing international attention can help in the fight against femicides, however, platforms such as “We Will Stop Femicide” recommend measures such as the implementation of new constitutions and the founding of a new ministry. Furthermore, offering more financial, emotional and legal aid to victims of violence against women and/or those at risk of becoming a victim of a femicide can play a part in solving the issue. Other suggestions include increasing the severity of punishments for crimes. Links to more information on solutions are included under ‘For More Information’.

For more information

Istanbul convention

Istanbul Convention official document: [link](#)

Summary of the Istanbul Convention: [link](#)

Leaflet with facts about the Istanbul Convention: [link](#)

Further facts and info about the Istanbul Convention: [link](#)

Turkey's statement on leaving the Istanbul Convention: [link](#)

The Istanbul Convention Easy To Read document: [link](#)

Femicides

Femicides explained by the World Health Organization: [link](#)

Honour killings in specific countries: [link](#)

The prevention of violence against women: [link](#)

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