



20 March 2021

## **Statement by the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network Secretariat on Turkey**

President Erdogan has decided to withdraw Turkey from The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). In this difficult situation, the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN) Secretariat expresses the utmost solidarity to all Turkish women, who are the victims of this decision.

In 2012, Turkey was the first country to ratify the Istanbul Convention, which was opened for signature on 11 May 2011 in the Turkish city. On 20 March 2021, the country announced its decision to withdraw by Presidential decree.

*“A huge step backwards that compromises the protection of women in Turkey, in Europe and even beyond”,* says the General Secretary of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejcinovic Buric, after Erdogan’s announcement. *“In a country where three women are killed every day, (the Convention) it was our only hope, abandoning it the Turkish government challenges human rights and gender equality”*, says writer Elif Shafak.

*“The withdraw is unconstitutional”* declared Yakin Ertürk, member of the MWMN Turkey Antenna, *“All legal experts have declared that the Istanbul Convention is still in force, legally speaking. Unfortunately, we are not talking about legality. The rule of law in this country has been seriously ruptured and when the attacks on rights are legitimated at the political level, there is no telling where it will end. I fear that this is not just an attack on women’s rights, but is an outright systemic issue.”*

The MWMN Secretariat expresses its support and stands in solidarity with all Turkish women, who are raising their voices to denounce President Erdogan’s decision, unwilling to give up their freedom of choice and their rights to be protected against gender-based violence by their own institutions.

We stand ready to support initiative to raise awareness and give visibility to the issue, challenging the decision to withdraw Turkey from the Istanbul Convention.