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WITHDRAWAL FROM ISTANBUL CONVENTION MUST HAVE CONSEQUENCES

Statement of the National Council of German Women's Organizations on Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention

The National Council of German Women's Organizations (Deutscher Frauenrat, DF) condemns Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and demands consequences for German and EU-Turkish relations. At today's Council meeting, the EU Foreign Ministers will discuss the current developments together with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell.

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, the so-called Istanbul Convention, is the result of decades of efforts by the women's movement to outlaw violence against women in all their diversity. "Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention is shocking. Sadly, it is not surprising. Women's rights are under attack: Worldwide, among the member states of the Council of Europe, within the EU, as well as in Germany. However, they are not negotiable," says Mona Küppers, Chair of the National Council of German Women's Organizations.

The Council of Europe Convention was signed by the first member states in Istanbul in 2011, and ratified by Turkey in 2012. In the recent past, however, Turkish President Erdogan and his party have repeatedly called it into question - a sharp international reaction to this has so far failed to materialise. At the birthplace of the convention, the withdrawal by decree is now causing major protests. "Women's rights are human rights. This common sense is being called into question again. We, as a women's movement, cannot and will not accept this," stresses Lisi Maier, Deputy Chair the National Council of German Women's Organizations.

Recent figures from the World Health Organisation show that every third woman worldwide has been affected by physical and/or sexual violence in her lifetime. Also - and especially - the young generation of women suffers violence at the hands of current or former intimate partners. In addition, experts are warning that the Corona pandemic has exacerbated domestic violence. The Turkish organisation "We will stop femicides" counted more than 300 femicides in 2020. To terminate a violence protection convention in this situation is cynical and wrong.

In solidarity with the Turkish women's movement and women in Turkey, the National Council of German Women's Organizations calls for the German government:

- /// In the context of the current German Presidency of the Council of Europe, to call on Turkey to reverse this step. An expression of [regret](#) is not enough.
- /// As a current member of the EU Trio Presidency, to advocate without delay Turkey's withdrawal should have consequences for German and EU relations with Turkey - especially in the current negotiations

on the continuation of the migration pact with Turkey. The NATO member's progressing distance from democratic values must no longer be ignored.

Not only Turkey, but also EU member states such as [Poland and Hungary](#) repeatedly question gender equality and specifically the Istanbul Convention. The National Council of German Women's Organizations therefore calls on the German government:

- /// To advocate at EU level for the EU to ratify the Istanbul Convention without delay. An [expert opinion](#) of the Advocate General of the European Court of Justice recently stated that this is legally possible.
- /// To prevent an anti-feminist avalanche in the EU. Within the EU, it must be ensured that EU members do not follow Erdogan's withdrawal of the convention. Gender justice and the protection against violence must not be put up for negotiation - neither in Europe nor worldwide.