

Conservative Backlash in Europe and

Why Turkey Left the Istanbul Convention on Violence Against Women

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Abstract

This research seeks to answer two questions. How did so many European countries end up retreating from the most comprehensive international treaty on violence against women, *the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women*, also known as the Istanbul Convention (IC)? How did Turkey, the first country among the 45 signatories to ratify the convention, end up withdrawing from the convention? Based on process tracing and content analysis data, we find that conservative civil society mobilization in Europe explains the government retrenchment from the IC. We demonstrate that there was a diffusion of rhetoric and tactics against the convention between conservative civil society actors across different countries. In Turkey, we show that the far-right Felicity Party, conservative NGOs and public figures lobbied the Erdogan government against the convention. While doing so, they used the exact rhetoric that is used in Central and Eastern European countries by framing the IC as an anti-family and pro-homosexuality “Western project.” In addition, we argue that Erdogan leveraged his opposition to the convention as a coalition building tool with the Felicity Party. We show that Erdogan’s claim to execute “the will of the people” by withdrawing from the IC is not supported by public opinion data. Both strategic and ideological reasons explain Erdogan’s decision to withdraw.

Violence against women continues to be a prevalent violation of human rights in various parts of the world. In Europe, 20% to 25% of women have experienced physical violence at least once and 10% of women suffered sexual violence (Council of Europe, Explanatory Report, 2011, p.1). Signed in 2011, *The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, also called the Istanbul Convention, is considered to be the most progressive and ambitious treaty that targets elimination of violence against women. (Handbook, 2019, p.11). The convention recognizes types of violence beyond physical violence, such as psychological violence, and addresses their structural and attitudinal roots. It calls for domestic law reforms to protect women from violence and holds the governments responsible for establishing services for women who suffer from it. It emphasizes the necessity to reform public education to target cultural roots of gender-based violence.

The convention was initially signed by 45 member countries of the Council of Europe in 2011. From 2016 to 2021, several governments, such as Poland, Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Turkey, nullified or withdrew from this most comprehensive international treaty that targets violence against women. What explains this policy diffusion against the IC?

We present evidence for the diffusion of anti-IC framing and tactics across the conservative civil society in the region. In addition, we demonstrate that political actors use the anti-IC mobilization in other countries as an example in their opposition to the IC.

The convention is called the Istanbul Convention because it was opened for signature in May 2011 in Istanbul. Turkey was one of the strongest supporters of the convention and contributed to its writing during the three-year negotiation process of the convention.¹ Turkey,

¹ <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/dunya/129780-avrupa-konseji-nden-kadina-yonelik-siddet-sozlesmesi>

under the AKP government, was the first country to ratify it. A decade later, Turkey, under the same government, officially withdrew from the convention. What explains this policy shift in Turkey?

We argue that both electoral and ideological motivations played a role in Erdogan's decision to withdraw from the IC. Erdogan's coalition changed in the decade after the Istanbul Convention, and we argue that Erdogan needed the more conservative Felicity Party on his side. We present evidence that the far right-wing Felicity Party and conservative NGOs (like *Turkiye Aile Meclisi*, *Turkiye Dusunce Platformu*, and *Diyanet-Sen*) lobbied the government about the "dangers" of the convention. Moreover, Erdogan's unilateral executive decision to withdraw from the most progressive international treaty on violence against women is consistent with his return to Islamist policy positions and rhetoric since early 2010s. Using public opinion data, we show that it was not simply a story of public demand for withdrawal and AKP vote pandering. On the contrary, elite cues and Erdogan's populist claim to execute "the will of the people" by withdrawing from the IC influenced public opinion on the Convention. Public opinion polls show that these cues worked: support for the Convention sorted along partisan lines immediately after Erdogan announced the withdrawal decision.

First, we introduce our diffusion argument to explain how the tide turned against the IC in several countries. Next, we shift to explain why Erdogan decided to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention in 2021. In these two sections, we use a mix of process tracing, content analysis of newspapers, and analysis of public opinion data to evaluate these arguments.

Conservative Mobilization and Diffusion of Anti-IC Tactics

Global civil society flourished since the 1990s with the third wave of democratization. This new civil society aimed facilitating democratization and liberalization processes in transitional

contexts. Civil society tends to be considered as an umbrella term for organizations and movements associated with progressive causes. Recently, forms of civic activism aimed at conservative causes have emerged in both established and more fragile democracies around the world.

Conservative social movements involve different agenda and goals. Some groups advocate for conservative social values and illiberal political ideology in terms of exclusion on the bases of race, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality. Other groups are anti-democracy and employ anti-democratic tactics such as violence (Youngs & Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018). Groups that opposed the IC in Europe fall primarily within the first camp. Civil society actors that campaigned against the IC include religious institutions (mainly churches), religious communities, conservative NGOs, and conservative public figures.

Movements against gender equality and “gender ideology” have been on the rise since the turn of the century (Korolczuk, 2014; Corredor, 2019; Korolczuk & Graff, 2018; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2018). Anti-gender movements target reproductive rights, public education of gender, gay marriage, trans rights, progressive policies on gender-based violence, and gender mainstreaming. Opposition against “gender ideology” plays a central role in the anti-gender movement in Europe. These movements argue that the concept of “gender ideology”, as named by the Catholic Church, is a threat to Western societies and to humanity as a whole because it undercuts the notions of biological differences between sexes, “thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of family” (Pope Francis 2016, as cited in Kuhar & Paternotte, 2018, 5). According to these movements, “gender ideology” is regarded as a political strategy devised by corrupt elites within international institutions that aim to erode national sovereignty with this “trojan horse” (ibid., 7). Their goal is to impose degenerate minority values to the average people in the majority (ibid., 8). The Catholic Church invented “gender ideology” discourse in the late 1990s as a reaction to UN Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 and the

UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, where sexual and reproductive rights were recognized by the UN (ibid., 9). “Gender ideology” discourse already spread from Rome throughout Europe by the early 2010s, when protests started to occur (ibid, 12). Since the early days of the Istanbul Convention, it has been a central target of the anti-gender movement’s attacks on gender equality in Europe.

Similar to the *diffusion* of anti-gender movement between 2000s to 2020s, among Western and Eastern European countries such as France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Poland, Croatia, Slovakia, and Slovenia (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2018), anti-IC mobilization in particular *diffused* across the region between 2012 and today. Diffusion is a “political process in which actors at different levels (strategically) adopt and adapt foreign examples to make national and transnational claims and to change institutional and legal settings, build alliances, and exert pressure” (Soule & Roggeband, 2018). Diffusion does not imply passive reception of ideas and methods from other contexts. Actor actors actively select tactics and framing to tailor them for the needs of their own (ibid). Horizontal diffusion, or diffusion among organizations in different contexts, can happen directly (relational diffusion) or indirectly (non-relational diffusion) (Tarrow, 2005). While relational diffusion refers to cooperation between actors through direct ties, non-relational diffusion happens through mass media and electronic communication (Soule & Roggeband, 2018). Anti-gender mobilization in Europe since 2000s diffused through both relational and non-relational means (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2018). In the remainder of this section, we present evidence that right-wing political actors tailored anti-IC discourse according to their political agenda and issue saliency in the national context. Further, anti-IC movements followed both the relational and non-relational patterns – we demonstrate evidence that actors across countries inspired one another *and* actively collaborated.

Rhetorical challenge and opposition to the IC by government actors began in Poland in

March 2012, even before Poland signed the convention. The first substantive government actions against the IC happened in Poland and Ukraine in late 2016. Government action against the convention in the region accelerated in 2018 when the Bulgarian and Lithuanian governments either halted or refused ratification. By 2020 and 2021, countries like Hungary and Turkey announced their exit from the convention. The map in Figure 1 shows the ratifications, delays (signed but not ratified), and withdrawal as of 2021.

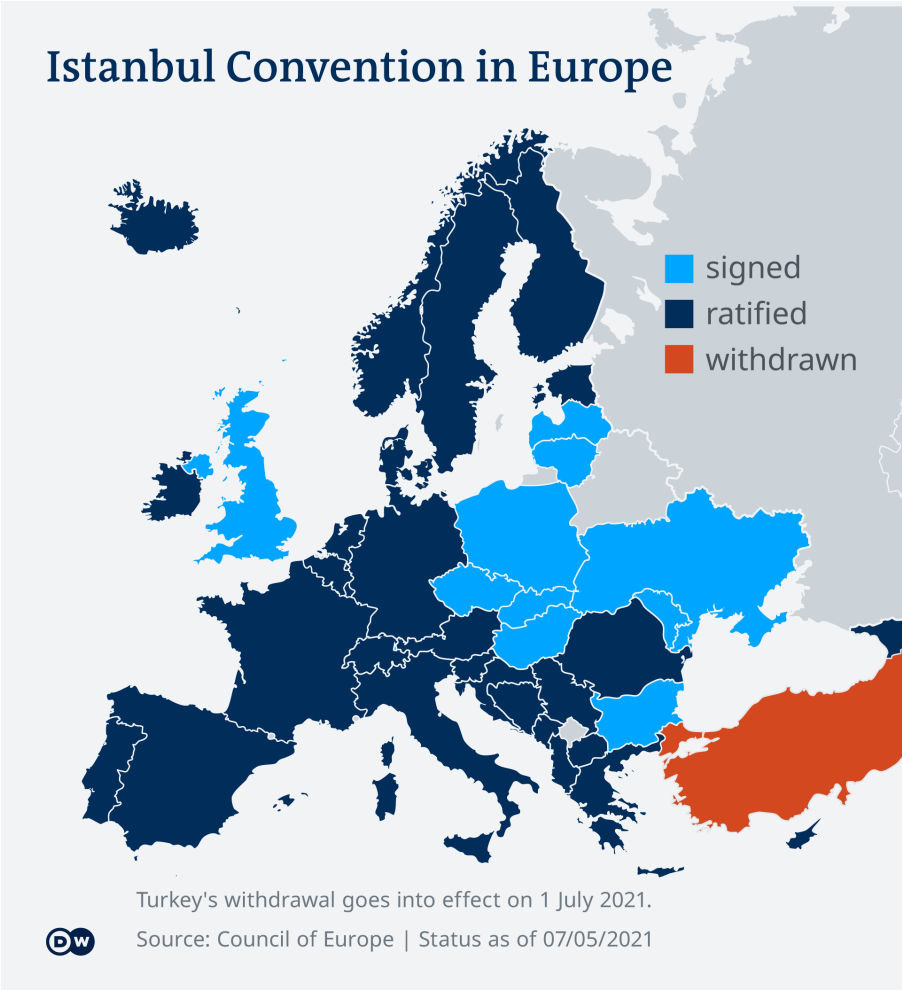


Figure 1. Istanbul Convention in Europe

Campaigns against the IC by non-governmental actors also first emerged in Poland. In July 2012, even before the convention was signed by the government, the Polish Episcopal Conference sent a letter to the prime minister, criticizing the IC for linking violence against

women to religion and tradition, for introducing the concept of gender as socially constructed, and for “denying biological differences between the sexes” (Krizsán & Roggeband, 2021).²

Other conservative NGOs used this same tactic to demand government action on the IC. In 2016, “the highest representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Archbishop of the Lutheran Church, the Latvian Orthodox Church and the Union of Latvian Baptist Parishes” sent a letter to the President of Latvia, criticizing the IC for being a “social transformation project based on gender ideology” (Vizgunova, 2020, p.128). In 2018, Holy Synod of Bulgarian Orthodox Church made public statements against the IC (Krizsán & Roggeband, 2021, p.71). In 2020, Turkey’s Diyanet-Bir Sen’s president (union of employees of Directorate of Religious Affairs) sent a letter to the President and to four parties arguing that the convention would corrupt social morality, and family, and that Turkey should withdraw from it.³ In 2021, Lithuanian Christian religious issued a joint statement against the IC, arguing that the convention will “change the natural concept of family”.⁴ All of these letters argued for the incompatibility of the convention with “Christian/ Islamic values.”

Another common tactic for conservative NGOs was to produce petitions against the ratification of the convention. In 2014, Ordo Iuris in Poland launched an online petition for the review of constitutionality of the IC. In 2017, Society and Value Association in Bulgaria launched online petition against ratification (Krizsán & Roggeband, 2021). In 2020, 23 conservative NGOs across the region collectively launched an online petition against accession to the IC (stopgenderconvention.org).⁵ And in 2020, the conservative Turkiye Aile Meclisi in Turkey launched an online petition for the withdrawal from the IC (the text of this petition can be found

² <https://episkopat.pl/oswiadczenie-prezydium-konferencji-episkopatu-polski-3/>

³ <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/gundem/2020/01/31/diyanet-bir-senin-hedefi-istanbul-sozlesmesi-erkeklerle-zulum>

⁴ <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1361423/lithuania-s-religious-leaders-voice-opposition-to-istanbul-convention-and-same-sex-partnership>

⁵ <https://stopgenderconvention.org/en/>

in the appendix).⁶

In addition to common tactics, IC opponents framed the convention in a strikingly similar way across countries, suggesting either diffusion via copycat or direct collaboration as with the stopgenderconvention.org group. Arguments against the IC falls into four broad categories – family, gender, homosexuality, and “European/ Western” influence.

Campaigns against the IC argue that the convention undermines family by antagonizing men and empowering women. For instance, according to the “Stop Gender Convention” petition launched by 23 conservative NGOs across Europe, the Convention “undermines family and marriage by considering differences between men and women to be the basic source of violence.” Critics blamed increased divorce rates on the IC because of its provisions that grant more rights to women who experienced violence. Felicity Party’s MP Abdulkadir Karaduman, for instance, made a statement about how divorce rates increased in Turkey since the ratification of the IC.

Campaigns against the IC claim that the convention aims to disregard and erase biological differences between women and man by introducing the concept of gender as socially constructed. According to the “Stop Gender Convention” petition against the IC, the convention aims to “abolish objective biological notion of sex and replace it with gender.” Their website motto is simply “Stop Gender. Stand for Family.”

In many contexts, translation of the term “gender” itself has become a controversy. Relatedly, anti-IC movement allege that the Convention’s provision to teach gender as socially constructed roles in schools would enable children to choose their own gender identity without parental approval. The Convention does not have any provisions that suggests such a practice. Anti-IC actors impose meaning on the text based on their already set argumentation against the

⁶ <https://www.change.org/p/tbmmresmi-tcbestepe-aile%C3%A7%C3%B6kmeden-istanbul%C3%B6zle%C5%9Fmesifesholsun-toplumsalciinsiyete%C5%9Fitli%C4%9Fifitnesikalks%C4%B1n-%C3%B6nceaile-ailey%C4%B1kanyasalarkalks%C4%B1n-ailehaklari-org-t-me-ailemeclisleri-iyilikorgtr>

“gender ideology”.

In addition to the gender frame, critics rally against what they claim is promotion of homosexuality. In its provisions, the IC approaches violence against women as a human rights’ violation. It demands the provisions of the convention to be implemented regardless of the identities and preferences of victims, including their gender identity and sexual orientation. The campaigns against the IC highlight this provision and frame it as encouraging homosexuality. Moreover, the provisions of the IC apply to victims of violence both inside and outside of a marriage. Furthermore, based on the use of the term “partner” in this provision, anti-IC campaigns claim that the convention aims to legalize gay marriages. However, there is not a single mention of the term “gay” or “homosexual”, let alone any provisions on gay marriages.

Relatedly, many campaigns emphasize how gay marriage is against “national Christian/Islamic values.” The anti-IC campaigns frame the convention as an attempt of the “West” to corrupt morality of the society by spreading “gender ideology” and gay marriages. A Bulgarian NGO, Meaningful Life Foundation, asserts that the convention “recognizes homosexuality as something normal” and aims to gradually implement “the possibility for transsexuals, bisexuals (etc.), and biologically unisexual with a ‘different’ sexual orientation to get married, and adopt children” (Valchev, 2021).

Beyond these four overlapping frames, the populist right-wing parties also exploited the IC for their overall political agenda. Despite low levels of immigrants and refugees, immigration “threat” has been a highly salient issue for ethno-populist parties in Hungary and Czechia (Vachudova, 2020). Given the saliency of the issue for right wing political actors in these contexts, it is not surprising that actors in Hungary and Czechia connected the convention to the “immigration threat”. In Hungary, Fidesz framed the convention as enabling “illegal immigration”

to the country⁷ and contradicting the country's immigration policy.⁸ Similar rhetoric was voiced against the IC in Czechia as well -- Ministry of the Interior of the KDU-ČSL, the Christian and Democratic Union, voiced opposition to the IC due to its provisions for migrant women.⁹

The convention does have two provisions that touch on migration. First, the convention states that the IC should be applied to everyone regardless of the migration or refugee status. Second, a provision states that victims of violence should be protected if their residency status depends on their violent partner/ spouse by granting them residence permit established by the internal law. In short, the convention requires provisions to be applied to migrant women too, but it does not make any other suggestion about the country overall migration policy. Given that immigration is a highly salient issue in Central and Eastern Europe, framing the convention as a threat to the country's immigration regime is a right-wing populist strategy to utilize the convention in maintaining the party's anti-immigration stance. In other contexts, such as Turkey, where anti-immigration is not as salient for right wing populists as it is in Central and Eastern Europe, there is no evidence for the framing of the IC as a threat to national migration regime. The immigration frame of the convention was not as diffused as other framings of the convention, such as the "gender ideology" and "gay rights" framing.

All across eastern Europe and Turkey, there is evidence of diffusion of frames and tactics from the anti-IC movement. Next, we turn to Turkey itself, which went from a leader in the IC ratification to the first country to officially withdraw in 2021.

Representing the "People" by withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention?

Turkey, under the AKP government, was the first country to ratify the IC. A decade later, under

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/05/hungarys-parliament-blocks-domestic-violence-treaty>

⁸ <https://hungarytoday.hu/govt-rejects-ratification-of-istanbul-convention-due-to-gender-ideology-migration-policy/>

⁹ <https://czlobby.cz/en/projects/istanbul-convention-and-development-situation-czech-republic>

the same leadership, Turkey officially withdrew from the convention. What explains this policy shift? In this section, we evaluate the most plausible alternative theory: Erdogan withdrew from the treaty simply because he was giving the people what they want. Instead, we demonstrate that it is not simply the AKP responding to public opposition to the convention. A simple analysis of public opinion data shows that a majority of voters either have no opinion about the IC or support it.

Representation, responsiveness, and accountability are the core concepts of democratic theory (Urbinati & Warren, 2008). Accordingly, democratic regimes are the ones that carry out the will of the people by representing the people. Representatives win elections if they are responsive to the electorate's preferences. The electorate evaluates the performance of the representatives and punishes them for being incongruent with their preferences (Bakker et al., 2020).

Populist leaders and parties claim to represent “the true people” against the “corrupt elite” (Mudde, 2004). As a right-wing populist party, Justice and Development Party (AKP), and its leader Erdogan frequently claim representing “native and national” values of “the people”. AKP's and Erdogan's populism, similar to exclusionary populisms in Europe, has been ethno-nationalist, traditionalist and, and anti-gender (Kuhar & Pajnik, 2020). Erdogan uses nativist and traditionalist rhetoric on social issues, especially on gender equality, gay rights, abortion, and marriage and divorce. In doing so, he re-defines "us" (the nation) as the carrier of the traditional values, while otherizing citizens who hold progressive views.

Erdogan resorted to claims of “representing the people” when the Istanbul Convention returned to the public agenda. Total campaign against the IC by conservative public figures and organizations, leaders of the religious communities, and Islamist groups, started in 2019 in Turkey. Actors behind the anti-IC campaign lobbied the government about “the dangers” of the convention in 2019 and 2020. Amid the heightened focus on the convention in the mid-2020, Erdogan told his cabinet to “study and review” the Convention because – “if the people demand it to be revoked, a

decision should be made accordingly.”¹⁰

Given Erdogan’s claim to be responsive to the public’s preference, and the non-governmental, conservative actors’ mobilizations and lobbying against the Convention in Turkey, we ask whether conservative civil society and the government were merely representing the public’s preference on the Istanbul Convention, and the subsequent civil law reform (known as 6284) that protects victims of gender-based violence. Was Turkey’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention a result of bottom-up process?

We present evidence that, even amid the heightened media attention to the convention in Turkey in mid-2020, a large majority of the public had not heard of the convention or did not have an opinion about it. Among the portion of the public that expressed an opinion on the IC, a majority disapproved withdrawal. As Table 1 shows, even the majority of the AKP voters who held an opinion on the IC disapproved withdrawal. Moreover, public opinion data demonstrates that after the announcement of the unilateral executive decision to withdraw from the IC on March 20, 2021, the percentage of “no opinion” significantly decreases, and the electorate's view on the IC sorts along partisan lines (Bulut & Yildirim 2021). In line with the work highlighting elite influence on the formation of public opinion (Zaller, 1992; Druckman & Lupia, 2000; Aytac et al., 2021; Bulut & Yildirim, 2021), our descriptive data suggest that elite cues shaped public opinion on the IC in Turkey. Elite cues on gender influence Turkish public’s attitudes on gender egalitarianism (Bulut & Yildirim, 2021). High levels of polarization in Turkey (Lauka et al., 2018) facilitates fast partisan sorting on issues (Nicholson, 2012).

¹⁰ <https://esitlikadaletkadin.org/erdogandan-istanbul-sozlesmesi-talimati-halk-istiyorsa-kaldirin/>

	Konda August 2020 (Pre-Withdrawal)			Konda April 2021 (Post- Withdrawal)		
	Should we withdraw from the Convention?					
	Yes	No	No idea/ NA	Yes	No	No idea/ NA
Population	7	36	58	22.7	53.4	23.9
AKP	13	19	68	45	23.9	31.1
CHP	2	62	36	4.9	86	9.1
MHP	10	29	61	52.1	19.1	28.7
HDP	4	40	56	4.5	89	6.5
IYI	3	48	49	9.9	61.5	28.6
Felicity	20	-	80	62.5	25	12.5
DEVA	-	-	100	22.9	54.3	22.8
Gelecek	-	-	-	25	50	25
Other parties	19	48	33	21.2	72.7	6.1
Undecided	5.4	38.7	55.9	15.9	54.2	25.3

Table 1: Turkish Public Opinion Before and After the Announcement of Withdrawal from IC on March 20, 2021.

Figure 1 provides a coefficient dotplot for supporting withdrawal. Our regression analysis, using August 2020 (pre-withdrawal) public opinion data from *Konda*, shows that being an Erdogan supporter is the most important factor that shapes support for withdrawing from the IC (Figure 1). The second most important factor that affects support for withdrawing from the convention, having a conservative lifestyle, is highly correlated with supporting Erdogan (0.44). Public opinion data does not support Erdogan’s claim that IC was revoked because that’s what the “the people” wanted it.



Figure 1. Logistic Regression model of IC Withdrawal

Conservative actors from the anti-IC campaign claimed that the convention “normalizes” and “encourages” homosexuality and transsexuality, which are framed as contradicting with the “Islamic (or Christian) national values”. Did the Turkish public’s opinion on homosexuality changed from the ratification of the Convention in 2011 to the nullification of the Convention in 2021? World Value Survey data shows that homosexuality acceptance in fact *increased* in Turkey. According to 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 waves of World Values Survey, homosexuality acceptance was 10%. According to the latest, 2017-2022 wave, it increased to 20%.¹¹

In sum, public opinion data does not support the conservative anti-IC actors’ and Erdogan’s claim that the Convention should be revoked *because* the public demands it. In the next section, we explain that instead of following the public, Erdogan and the AKP changed its IC position in

¹¹ <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

response to the changing electoral coalitional landscape.

Turkey and the IC: The Convention as an Instrument for Signaling and Coalition Building

In this section, we argue that the AKP used the IC as a signaling tool for coalition building both in its signing and its nullification. Since AKP came to power in 2002, its close ties with the West have made its hand stronger in the domestic arena, where it faced institutional threats to its power. In 2011, AKP contributed to and signed the most progressive international convention that targets violence against women to signal its determination for Turkey's democratization to the West. Over the ten-year period between 2011-2021, AKP's domestic alliance with liberals, the Kurdish movement, women's movement, and the West ruptured. Since the mid-2010s, the AKP reacted to an evolving coalitional landscape that allows or even forces the AKP to follow its preferred, more conservative socio-cultural ideology. In 2021, now under the new majoritarian, hyper presidential system, Erdogan used the IC to attract the far-right Felicity Party to its coalition with Turkish Nationalist MHP, and to consolidate the conservative portion of the AKP's base. We show that Erdogan had both ideological and electoral motivations in doing so.

In the first years of its government, AKP confronted protests from the Republican base of the public. In 2007, protests movements called "Republic Rallies" organized in major cities against the possibility that Erdogan or anyone from his right-wing ideological background to run for the president of the republic.

Signing international treaties, and specifically human rights treaties, can be powerful signals in terms of the country's willingness to restrain a government's exercise of power to protect individual rights and freedoms (Farber, 2002; Whitehead, 2005; Moore, 2006).

In its first decade in government (2002-2012), AKP struggled to establish executive power vis-à-vis the judiciary and military. These powerful institutions functioned as constraints for

executive power, in large part to protect the state and its founding, secular-republican ideology from elected governments.¹² Erdogan maintained close ties with Western democracies as a signal to both international and domestic audience that the AKP was adamant to democratize Turkey despite the fears caused by the AKP's ideological antecedents. In addition, ratifying the most progressive international treaty against violence against women was a signal to the domestic audience, primarily to liberals and feminists, and to the international audience, primarily to the EU, that the AKP was sincere in its democratization agenda. Turkey's prominent role in the making of the IC, and Turkey's being the first country to ratify it in 2011 should be understood in this context.

In this early period, Turkey's prominent liberal public figures supported the AKP government because of its democratization agenda (both in terms of liberalization and solution of the Kurdish issue) and economic development agenda. 2011's AKP's agenda involved EU membership, a "democratic opening" to reconcile with the Kurdish movement, and acting as a "role model" democracy in the Arab world. The Turkish economy was not as badly affected by the global financial crisis as some of the European countries. In 2010, with a growth of 11.7 percent in the first quarter, Turkey became the second fastest growing economy among the G-20 countries after China. In the June 2011 parliamentary elections, AKP won 49.9% of the votes, the highest percentage of votes it got in its history, and a majority of seats in the parliament. After the election, Erdogan promised to seek compromise with opposition parties and civil society in their effort to change the existing, military-coup era constitution of Turkey. Right after this election, in July 2011, the AKP established the "Ministry of European Union" to coordinate

¹² Dominance of the secular republican ideology in the Turkish judiciary and military posed existential challenges to AKP in establishing its power over the bureaucracy and the state apparatus. For instance, in 2008, the Chief Public Prosecutor of the High Court of Appeals applied to the Supreme Court, demanding the closure of the AKP due to "the party becoming the center of actions against laicite." The Supreme Court concluded that AKP was in fact violating the laicite principle of the state, but it imposed a fine instead of closing it.

Turkey's effort on the process to EU membership.

Erdogan's alliance with the liberals, Kurds, and the West started rupturing during the Gezi protests of 2013. The Gezi protests started in Istanbul initially as a reaction to the AKP government's urban development plan for Beyoglu, Istanbul. The protests diffused to other major cities in Turkey. Throughout the movement, the agenda shifts to other grievances such as concerns with freedom of speech, freedom of press, and lifestyle related freedoms. The governments' reception of the protests with police violence and police brutality first widened and then radicalized the movement. In the end, the government suppressed the movement, but lost the liberals' support.

By the end of 2013, it became apparent that the government had lost another alliance partner – the Gulen movement. In the “17-25 December events” of 2013, a public prosecutor, alleged to have ties with the Gulen community, started an investigation in which some members of government institutions including four ministers were accused of bribery and misconduct. The conflict with the Gulen movement culminated in the failed military coup attempt of July 2016. The Gulen community, with its members in the military, allegedly attempted to overthrow the AKP government. Erdogan called for the public and his base to go to the streets to protect democracy and his government. The coup attempt failed and the Turkish government declared the Gulenists a terrorist organization. The coup attempt and aftermath further solidified Erdogan's grip on power vis-à-vis the military and judiciary.

The elimination of Gulen community members from the state bureaucracy and shut down of public and private institutions related to the Gulen community (newspapers, schools, banks, companies) opened space for other religious communities, like Ismailaga, to prosper. With the appearance of their leaders on the traditional and new media, these religious communities started getting recognition. Their foundations get funding from the government, and members of these

organizations start entering government positions, such as the Menzil community's presence in the Ministry of Health.

The rupture of liberals and the Kurdish movement from the Erdogan government finalized in 2017 with the passing of the referendum for presidential system. Shift to this hyper presidential system changed Turkish politics substantially --- now parties had to form coalitions to win elections. With the rupture with the liberals, AKP instead returned to its more conservative ideological roots and formed a coalition with Turkish Nationalist MHP. The constitutional made the MHP a kingmaker with its 10% base, increasing its leverage over government decisions. As part of this coalitional change, AKP shifted to a nationalist position both in rhetoric and action, especially with regards to the Kurds and the PKK. Simultaneously, the government used the coup attempt as an excuse to pressure the judiciary to prosecute political opponents and increase censorship of the media and public. Thus, as the electoral and institutional landscape changed, the AKP shifted to the ideological right. It is during this period that conservative civil society actors used its new leverage with the AKP to levy attacks on the IC, as we discuss in the next section.

How the Campaign Against the IC Started in Turkey

How did the campaign against the Istanbul Convention start and evolve in Turkey? We argue that Erdogan shifts his position at least partially to attract the far-right conservative groups in the country. If this theory is correct, we should see evidence of the conservative attacks on the IC prior to Erdogan's policy shift. We conducted content analysis of the universe of Islamist/ far-right newspapers in Turkey-- *Milli Newspaper*, *Yeni Akit*,¹³ *Turkiye Newspaper*, *Yeni Asya*, *Ilkha*, *Dirilis Postasi* and *Yeni Safak*. We excluded center-right, mainstream newspapers in our

¹³ Yeni Akit's column and news archive goes only back to 2019.

analysis, such as Sabah and Star, because they overwhelmingly reflect the views of the government, whereas far right newspapers seek to actively pressure the government.

These seven newspapers listed above represent voices of various actors and communities within the conservative circles, but none of them have a large readership (except for Yeni Safak). Among the eight newspapers, we find that seven of them did not cover news or columns about the IC prior to 2018. The exception was Islamist Felicity Party's media outlet -- "Milli Newspaper."

The *Milli Newspaper* is an Islamist newspaper that was established in 1973. Famous Islamist ideologues such as the poet Necip Fazil Kısakurek, and politician Necmettin Erbakan, who was the president of the Welfare Party (predecessor of Felicity Party), published in the newspaper. Currently, *Milli Newspaper* is the media outlet of far-right Felicity Party. Since its establishment, Felicity Party has opposed AKP governments because of Erdogan's public disowning of the Islamist ideology in early 2000s. Felicity Party's ideological components are social conservatism, religious nationalism, anti-Western sentiment, and strong Euroscepticism.

Preliminary content analysis of the *Milli Newspaper* reveals that its total campaign against the IC started in 2019. Prior to 2019, we find sporadic pieces on the convention -- five opinion columns were published between 2014 to 2018 by three authors. Throughout 2019, on the other hand, *Milli* published hundreds of columns and news articles against the IC. 2019 is a much later date than the start of campaigns run in other countries. In contrast, the Polish Episcopal Conference started criticizing the IC in 2012. The campaign against the IC in the country peaked in 2014-2015. (Krizsán & Roggeband, 2021, p.58)

In 2018, the first content against the IC was published in Islamist newspaper *Dirilis Postasi* on May 30th. The piece summarized a panel called "Laws Destroy Family" organized by two conservative NGOs.¹⁴ In the event, figures well known in the far-right circles, (such as Adem

¹⁴ The NGOs are Arastirma ve Kultur Vakfi (Research and Culture Foundation) and Aile Haklari Platformu (Family

Cevik, Abdurrahman Dilipak, and Sema Marasli) spoke out against the IC. The piece summarizes the points and demands made by the speakers: The law reform based on the Istanbul Convention (passed in 2012, and shortly called 6284) should be nullified, and education of gender roles (suggested by the IC) in schools should be stopped. They also demanded revocation of some of the laws granted to women by the civil law, such as the right to permanent alimony.

Chronologically, the second piece published in 2018 against the IC was in *Milli Newspaper* (Felicity Party's media outlet). This particular piece interviewed Felicity Party's female candidates about the parliamentary election of June 24, 2018. In the interview, when asked about the kind of problems women are facing in the country, a female candidate named Nevin Gokce frames the Istanbul Convention as an "imposition by Europe on Turkey".

Among all eight far right media outlets, the third piece against the IC published in 2018 again comes from the *Milli Newspaper* as well. This time a well-known Islamist ideologue, Mehmet Sevki Eygi, wrote in his column about the IC on November 6th, 2018. Titled "Sos: Family is Breaking", the piece frames the IC and the following law reform (shortly called 6284) in Turkey¹⁵ as "causing the destruction of families and more violence against women." He suggests that "the convention reflects the preferences of feminists." that "protection orders for women" that the law facilitates "shatter the family union and discipline," that "women demand protection order against their husbands just because their husbands annoyed them," and that the new law will cause "a rise in divorces."¹⁶

Except for *Milli Newspaper*, the seven Islamist/ far-right newspapers do not have any coverage of the IC until 2019. In fact, a majority of critical IC coverage was published around late

Rights Platform).

¹⁵ Law for the protection of family and prevention of violence against women", 6284 in short, was adopted in March 20, 2012 upon the ratification of IC in the same year.

¹⁶ <https://www.milligazete.com.tr/makale/1742251/mehmed-sevket-eygi/sos-aile-catirdiyor>

2019. Given that the first reports of Erdogan questioning the convention came out in mid-2019, it is not surprising that the number of columns and campaigns against the IC accelerated afterwards. It was a safer strategy for the far-right groups to not contradict Erdogan openly for too long and to run a more intense campaign against the IC after they had some positive signals from Erdogan, but the timing suggests that Erdogan was not simply following the cues of the newspapers but also had his own ideological agenda in play as well.

Religious communities followed a similar tactic, too. Five days after it made the news that Erdogan told his cabinet to “study and review the convention” and “remove the convention if public demands so,” the ultra-conservative religious community, Ismailaga, which is estimated to have one million members,¹⁷ published a statement on their website, claiming that the IC aims to destroy the institution of family and that Turkey needs to withdraw from the convention “to protect our moral values and our civilization inherited from our ancestors, and to fulfill the orders of our religion that ensure our salvation in both worlds.”¹⁸

Another religious community, Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi Vakfi, published a similar statement, arguing that the convention “is a subversion movement that threatens our national existence”, and that they “have full faith in the state dignitaries to remove the Istanbul convention and its extensions.”¹⁹ They published this statement one month later than it broke the news that Erdogan wanted his cabinet to review the convention. These religious communities, such as the two mentioned above, became more vocal in advocating conservative discourse and policy on social issues, especially after the rupture of the AKP and Gulen movement alliance. The Gulen movement was known to present a relatively more progressive stance on social issues.

¹⁷ <https://www.birgun.net/haber/turkiye-nin-iran-inda-bir-gun-dokunulmayan-cemaatten-dokunulan-semte-311268>

¹⁸ <https://www.indyturk.com/node/207931/haber/ismaila%C4%9Fa-cemaati-istanbul-s%C3%B6zle%C5%9Fmesi-evl%C3%A2du-ahf%C3%A2d%C4%B1m%C4%B1z%C4%B1n-de%C4%9Ferlerimizi-muhafaza>

¹⁹ <https://www.hudayivakfi.org/milli-varligimizi-tehdit-eden-ifsat-hareketine-dur-demeye-cagiriyoruz.html>

Similar to the broader European diffusion story told above, we argue that Turkish actors involved in the anti-IC movement borrowed frames and tactics from actors in different contexts. In Turkey, there is evidence that both conservative civil society and political elites were watching the anti-IC movements in other countries. Below, we present evidence that Turkish anti-IC actors were aware of opposition to IC in other countries and adopted their framing and rhetoric to their own campaign.

Turkey's Ombudsman Institution's (KDK) Chief Ombudsman Seref Malkoc gave an interview to right wing *Turkiye Newspaper* about the Istanbul Convention in November 2019. In the interview, he said the convention should be reconsidered because there was not enough public deliberation about it in the time of its ratification. He then refers to other countries, saying that "countries such as Bulgaria and Hungary did not sign it. They even went to the courts after debating it well. Since we did not do these things, we started talking about it when its troubles came to light."²⁰

A so-called NGO called *Turkiye Aile Meclisi* (Turkey Family Council)²¹ launched an online petition against the IC via change.org on July 2019. The petition was named "laws that ruin the family should be removed." In the long text of the petition, there are multiple references to other governments' actions against the IC. The parts of the petition that refer to other countries are as follows:

²⁰ <https://www.milligazete.com.tr/haber/3385345/seref-malkoc-istanbul-sozlesmesi-feshedilmelidir>

²¹ This so-called NGO is not an old, institutionalized organization. It does not have a website, and in different newspapers it is called with different names, such as *Aile Meclisi Platformu* and *Adalet Platformu*. Social media pages under these names all refer to at least one common individual – Adem Celik – as the person in charge. (A mobile phone number shared under his name.) Moreover, these social media pages were created relatively recently. The Facebook page was created on March 19, 2018. Twitter page was created in 2016, and first content related to the IC was posted on March 22, 2018. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ailehaklari/about> <https://twitter.com/AileHaklari/status/976854276382298116> We suspect that *Aile Meclisi* and its derivatives are façade organizations that were established for the sole purpose of giving the impression of an extensive network in their anti-IC campaign.

“Even Victor Orban, Prime Minister of European country, Hungary, was able to refuse to ratify the Istanbul Convention by saying that “People are either born male or female; We do not find it appropriate to talk about socially constructed gender”. We are astonished that Gender Equality policies, which amount to incest, pedophilia, sex with animals, and even other unimaginable perversions, are being tried to be implemented in a Muslim society like Turkey, and we want it to say STOP. Peru, Hungary says stop.

...

The Hungarian Government, under Victor Urban's premiership, stated, "Every country has the right to defend its traditional model of the family and the right of every child to have a mother and father." We care about his refusal to sign the contract. Yes, the issue is precisely “the struggle to defend the right of every child to have a mother and father”, we underline this.

Bulgarian Minister of Youth and Sports Slavcho Atanasov said about the Istanbul Convention: “As a principle, we are in favor of protecting women from violence. We are not discussing this. But this contract is like a nice candy with poisonous fruit; It contains dangerous texts.” He refused to sign the contract. But the Bulgarians could only realize this at a time when the Gender Equality policies brought the family as an institution in Bulgaria almost to the point of extinction. 58 out of every 100 children born in Bulgaria are now born in a fatherless, familyless environment outside of a wedlock....”²²

In their public statement published on their website on July 202, the foundation of a religious community, Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi Vakfi, invites state officials to revoke “the IC and its extensions”, while referring to how other countries did that too. The statement says “Although Poland signed and ratified the Istanbul Convention, it decided to exit. Countries such as England, Ukraine and Hungary, who initially signed the convention, did not put it into effect for a long time.”²³

Erdogan government justified its opposition to the convention by referring to actions of European countries, too. On July 2020, Erdogan allegedly mentioned how Bulgaria, Croatia, and Hungary oppose the convention, and that Turkey should withdraw from it too.²⁴ Erdogan’s Directorate of Communications published a statement after his executive order that withdraws

²² For the full text, see appendix.

²³ <https://www.hudayivakfi.org/tag/istanbul-sozlesmesi>

²⁴ <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/202007151042458449-turkiye-gazetesi-erdogan-istanbul-sozlesmesinden-cekilmeleri-gerektigini-anlatti/>

from IC was announced on the official gazette on the midnight of March 20, 2021. At the beginning of the press statement, it is stated that “Turkey is not the only country that has serious concerns about the Istanbul Convention. 6 members of the European Union (Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia) have not ratified the Istanbul Convention. Poland has also taken steps to withdraw from the convention, citing the attempt by gay groups to impose their ideas about gender on the whole society.”²⁵ Turkey leveraged the opposition in other countries to defend its ideological opposition to the Convention.

Erdogan’s electoral and ideological motives against the IC

In unilaterally withdrawing from the convention, Erdogan had both electoral motives and ideological motives. Under the new presidential system, parties need to form coalitions to win a majority of the votes. The change to a presidential system enabled nationalist and ultra-right parties to pull the AKP to the further right, while the system change led the opposition parties to a more centrist position both because of the difference of ideology among them and their goal to capture the center from the AKP. The coalition of the opposition parties are trying to capture the dissatisfied AKP voters by employing a less antagonistic language and avoiding triggering traditional Muslim sensitivities.

The Felicity Party has a stable 1% vote share, and it represents Islamist policy positions, which are also Erdogan’s ideological roots.²⁶ Based on newspaper content analysis data, we demonstrate that the Felicity Party started the campaign and lobbying against the IC in Turkey in

²⁵ <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/turkiyenin-istanbul-sozlesmesinden-cekilmesine-iliskin-aciklama>

²⁶ Erdogan won the Istanbul mayoral elections in 1994 as a member of the Islamist Welfare Party. In 1998, Welfare Party was shut down by the Supreme Court because of “the actions of the party that do not align with laic/secular republican principles”. Then Virtue Party was established by the former members of the Welfare Party. That party was also shut down by the Supreme Court in 2001. The traditionalist side of the Virtue Party established Islamist Felicity Party, whereas the reformist side, including Erdogan, established the pro-European Justice and Development Party (AKP).

2018. Given the heightened significance of small vote margins in the new majoritarian system (the presidential candidate with 50%+1 wins) and given Erdogan's return to his ideological roots, we argue that Erdogan was motivated with both ideological and electoral considerations.

After Erdogan's alliance with liberals and the Western democracies collapsed, and his alignment with the right-wing Turkish nationalist MHP solidified, Erdogan's Islamist beliefs started directing his policy decision more. A major recent example is his insistence on pressuring the Central Bank to keep the policy rate low despite rising inflation, which led to a crash of the Turkish lira against American dollar to historically low levels. He employed religious arguments against the concept of interest, and the Central Bank's attempt to raise the rate to counteract inflation. His stance on the interest rate is parallel to his ideological antecedents' stance on the issue, which is a position currently represented by the Felicity Party in the Turkish party arena.

Strategically, Erdogan also used the IC to exploit leadership tension within the Felicity Party, with the purpose of pulling the party to his coalition with Turkish nationalist MHP. Temel Karamollaoglu (head of the Felicity Party) and Oguzhan Asilturk (head of the party's advisory council) clearly differed in their views on the AKP.²⁷ Under Karamollaoglu's presidency, Felicity Party became one of the founding members of the opposition coalition against the government, called "Millet." In contrast, Felicity Party's president of the advisory council, Asilturk, had close relations with Erdogan, and the two had one-on-one meetings multiple times in 2021.²⁸ Two weeks

²⁷ <https://www.indyturk.com/node/402891/siyaset/karamollao%C4%9Flu%E2%80%99ndan-asilt%C3%BCrk-a%C3%A7%C4%B1klamas%C4%B1-haddinden-fazla-%C4%B1srar%C4%B1-isabetli-bulmam>
<https://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/temel-karamollaoglu-ittifak-kararini-verdi-oguzhan-asilturk-bu-aciklamaya-cok-sasiracak--471950h.htm>
<https://t24.com.tr/haber/saadet-partisi-nde-deprem-oguzhan-asilturk-karamollaoglu-na-karsi-kongre-harekati-baslatti-hedef-cumhur-ittifaki-na-katilmak,959332>

²⁸ January, 9. 2021. BBC Turcke. "Will Erdogan's visit to Asiltürk lead to a change in alliances and the cabinet?"
<https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-55647814>
March 25, 2021. Cumhuriyet. "Asilturk called Erdogan to congratulate his reelection to AKP's presidency."
<https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/oguzhan-asilturkten-erdogana-tebrik-telefonu-1823162>
April 21, 2021. Cumhuriyet. "Erdogan hosted Asilturk for iftar."
<https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-oguzhan-asilturk-ile-iftar-yapti-1830002>

after their meeting on January 7, 2021, Asilturk stated on a TV program that Erdogan told him that Turkey was going to withdraw from the IC for certain,²⁹ partly as a way to strengthen the Asilturk wing of the Saadet Party's hand against the Karamollaoglu leadership.

In these meetings between Erdogan and Asilturk, it has been argued that Erdogan promised 20 MP seats for the Felicity Party (whose vote share is not high enough to enter the parliament) and positions in the government in exchange of the Felicity Party leaving the opposition coalition and joining Erdogan's coalition with the nationalist MHP.³⁰ Erdogan announced the executive order to leave the convention the night before Saadet Party held its Istanbul congress to elect the head of the party's Istanbul branch on March 21st, 2021.³¹

The policy shift in Turkey had multiple causes and the process tracing highlights how a changing electoral and coalitional landscape, a conservative gender ideology, diffusion from neighbors, and a targeted domestic campaign all fed into the decision of Erdogan to withdraw from the IC in 2021.

Discussion

In this draft, we sought to investigate the growing opposition to the Istanbul Convention. There was a conservative backlash against this international treaty and it was led by conservative NGOs and far-right populist political elites.

Across eastern Europe and Turkey, we demonstrated similar tactics and frames that anti-IC critics used. These critics included governmental, religious, and NGO actors. The most

²⁹ January, 28, 2021. Sozcu. "Asilturk after meeting with Erdogan: Turkey will leave the Istanbul Convention". https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2021/gundem/erdoganla-gorusen-asilturk-istanbul-sozlesmesi-kaldirilacak-6232718/?utm_source=dahafazla_haber&utm_medium=free&utm_campaign=dahafazlahaber

³⁰ <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/erdoganin-asilturke-neler-vadettigi-ortaya-cikti-1867380>

³¹ In the congress, a surprise candidate emerged against the candidate selected by the Karamollaoglu wing of the party, even though the surprise candidate ended up withdrawing from the candidacy (March 21, 2021. Yeni Safak. "" <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/saadette-olayli-kongre-3614683>)

consistent frames can be classified into the following categories: family, gender, homosexuality and a Western influence.

In the content analysis, we provided some evidence that the conservative newspapers and NGOs in Turkey used these diffused frames to attack the IC and call for Erdogan to withdraw. We showed that Turkish public opinion data does not support Erdogan's populist claim to represent "the people's" preference by withdrawing from the Convention. With the public opinion data, we discovered that not only did the issue become more salient only after it was made salient by the political elite, as shown by increased awareness, but that the opponents were primarily conservative, religious, anti-feminist men.

In Turkey's case, we demonstrate that Erdogan changed position on the IC both because he wanted to signal his conservative ideology and because he needed to strengthen his coalition and partnering with conservative civil society actors and political parties was the best option. In future work, we need to evaluate these arguments in other contexts to evaluate strategic and ideological justifications for opposing the expansion of gender rights.

The anti-IC movement across eastern Europe and Turkey represents a new type of attack on progressive gender norms and rights. The evidence we present demonstrates that not only are domestic conservative civil society actors learning from each other, they are also coordinating their attacks. Further, conservative political actors have both ideological and strategic reasons to follow the lead of the conservative civil society. In future attempts to increase awareness and protection of women's rights, advocates will need to take these political incentives and coordinated attacks into account.

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Appendix

Turkey – Online Petition Against the IC by Aile Meclisi Platformu (Turkey Family Platform) “CALL FOR SIGNATURE Campaign to Abolish the Laws That Destroy Family, Revoke the Istanbul Convention and Gender Equality

The "Gender Equality Project", which was signed by Turkey on May 11, 2011, and accepted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly without annotation on November 24, 2011, and imposed on society under the guidance of CEDAW, GRAVIO and similar agreements, especially the Istanbul Convention, which has been in effect since August 1, 2014. Its practices are hostile to humanity and our future.

A new kind of "exploitation of women" is being invented out of the issue of violence against women, which is an issue that can be resolved by ensuring the cooperation of women and men under the just arbitration of the state. This Istanbul Convention, which exploits women and violence against women and directs violence against men, children, families and even the whole society, hides under the slogan of "equality for women" and does not accept the biological genders of femininity and masculinity; We reject and protest the projects, TV programs, media orientations, educational activities that legitimize the constructed tendencies such as lesbianism, gayness, bisexuality and transness under the name of Gender Equality or Gender Justice and impose these trends on new generations as if they are positive.

Istanbul Convention and its applications; It is a contract that sees being a man, family and child-centered togetherness as a pathological, morbid condition and openly declaring that "discrimination against men will not be considered discrimination". In this respect, the Istanbul Convention; We see it as an imperialist "Familyless Society Project" that tries to stay away from women by oppressing men, to incite domestic unrest and divorce by creating a competitive relationship between men and women, to direct societies to deviant and childless relationship models and ultimately to build a population control mechanism.

For this reason, we reject and condemn the Istanbul Convention which imposes severe penalties to the men who approach women with the intention of marriage, establishing a family and having children. It forces man to stay away from marriage.

Even Victor Urban, Prime Minister of Hungary, a European country, was able to refuse signing the convention by saying that "People are either born male or female; We do not find it appropriate to talk about socially constructed gender." We are astonished that Gender Equality policies, which amount to incest, pedophilia, sex with animals, and even other unimaginable perversions, are being tried to be implemented in a Muslim society like Turkey, and we want it to say STOP. Peru, Hungary says stop.

It is strange that although the tender laws have changed 185 times, the laws that destroyed the family are being reformed at the pace of a turtle.

By showing Turkey as a role model for Islamic countries in this sense, this operation is a threat to the Islamic world. In this sense, this threat is an all-out attack against the Islamic society and oppressed peoples. Although this attack seems to defend women's rights, it is also an attack on women. It is an attack against chastity. It is an attack on morality. It's an attack to sacred. This is largely an operation to Dehumanize the world as we enter the age of Humonoids and Cyborgs.

This attack is also the name of a global threat. This operation is a Demonic attack against the Human race through the daughters of Lilith. Behind the projects are international imperialist and Zionist forces and the 300's Assembly.

The Hungarian Government, under Victor Urban's premiership, stated, "Every country has the right to defend its traditional model of the family and the right of every child to have a mother and father." We care about his refusal to sign the contract. Yes, the issue is precisely "the struggle to defend the right of every child to have a mother and father", we underline this.

Bulgarian Minister of Youth and Sports Slavcho Atanasov said about the Istanbul Convention: "As a principle, we are in favor of protecting women from violence. We are not discussing this. But this contract is like a nice candy with poisonous fruit; It contains dangerous texts." He refused to sign the contract. But the Bulgarians could only realize this at a time when the Gender Equality policies brought the family as an institution in Bulgaria almost to the point of extinction. 58 out of every 100 children born in Bulgaria are now born in a fatherless, familyless environment outside of a wedlock.

With this international project imposed on the whole world, the rate of children out of wedlock rose to 72% in Iceland and Chile, and over 65% in Scandinavian countries, Portugal and France. Same-sex marriages in France reached 50,000 in 4.5 years. The number of people who got married in a normal marriage and the number of people who signed a "courteous partnership agreement" came to almost the same level. Half of those who got married got divorced again.

According to the official reports of TURKSTAT in Turkey, 1 couple divorced for every 4 married couples and the divorce rate has increased by 11% in the last 1 year. In other words, the change that can take place in 50 years only took place in the last few years that started in 2014. According to the KEFEK Commission, the decision to take 47 thousand protective measures and 357 thousand preventive measures in 2018 is a disaster for our future and our state, for humanity.

There have been 10 million marriages and 2 million divorces in the last 15 years. It should not be forgotten that protecting the family is much easier than reuniting broken families. Moreover, no country that has dismantled the institution of the family has succeeded in reconstructing it.

We reject the Istanbul Convention because it considers even "0" (zero) year old girls as women; encourages free sexuality by saying "children's sexual life cannot be interfered with in the name of mother/fatherhood religion, honor, tradition, customs" and condemns a man who tries to marry under the age of 18 with good and sincere intentions to the rapists ward for 8-10 years, and confine his wife and children to the prison gates.

We reject the Istanbul Convention because it prohibits mediation and reconciliation. We reject it because it is a contract that puts the man in prison for up to 18 years for rape based on only statement of of the woman.

We reject it because it is a contract that legitimizes group sex environments for all kinds of women to women, men to men intercourse, punishes men who are married for only a few days with lifelong alimony.

We reject all family-destroying laws and agreements that cause divorced fathers to impound their children, make them pay fees to see their own children over and over, and cause the process of "parental alienation" to turn children against their fathers.

We reject the Istanbul Convention because it defines and understands all kinds of relationships outside of a marriage as "normal, healthy union" while incorporating laws like 6284 that sees married man as a dangerous, evil-prone sadist. The convention does that by canceling the most basic principle of the law, the rule of "innocence until proven guilty".

After noticing the results of 1.5 years of implementation of the convention, even Russia aborted 6284, by saying that "It is important for us to protect the family. We can't tear down the family establishment to satisfy a few deranged ladies. We haven't been able to find a more suitable environment than the family for raising children yet." We protest the insistent implementation of the law, 6284, which throws men out of their own homes, in front of their children, humiliates them in public, and takes families to the point of no return.

We have no other solution other than a family where we can raise and protect our children in a healthy way! We say, "Don't you see?"

We remind you that this world will not be Heaven for lonely women who do not have a life partner with whom they can grow old and children to take shelter when they get old. With the motto of "strong woman", the woman who is trying to cut off her ties with her family, to be rivaled with her husband, to be led to an individual life by being separated from her children, is alone and helpless in the face of capitalist capital.

If the process continues like this; Society, man, woman, child, state, we will all lose. Of course, the only profit from this will be the multinational capitalists.

In the name of the rights of future generations, the rights of our own children and grandchildren, the rights of the old people left to die in nursing homes, the rights of the lonely people who are addicted to depression pills who have reached the point of suicide, the rights of the children left on the streets, the name of our future, the name of humanity; we must be able to defend children, fathers, mothers and family.

We want the Istanbul Convention, which has declared war on the family and terrorized the society and the family, the Gender Equality Project and its related practices to be canceled before they reach irreversible stages like European countries. #ÖnceAile We say #ÖnceAileyiKoru.

FAMILY DESTROYING LAWS SHOULD BE REVOKED TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST AND MURDER OF HUMAN AND FAMILY.

If the honest ones are as brave as the dishonest ones, our families, our country, our future and humanity will be saved.

We Declare the 1st of August as the Day/Week of Combating the Distortion of the Istanbul Convention,

We declare 8/15 March Day/Week of Combating Gender Equality Sedition.

We Declare 2020 the Year of the FAMILY.

Announced to the public.

AileMeclisi.net AileHaklari.org t.me/insanHaklari ailehaklari@gmail.com @AileMeclisleri
05322033274 istanbul/Güngören Merter Mete Sk. 8/38”³²

Figure A1. Descriptive for Konda 2020

	Unique (#)	Missing (%)	Mean	SD	Min	Median	Max	
Erdogan Voter	3	25	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	1.0	
Female	3	0	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	1.0	
Age	77	0	40.7	15.8	14.0	40.0	90.0	
Education	8	0	4.3	1.4	1.0	5.0	7.0	
Religiosity	6	3	3.6	0.9	1.0	4.0	5.0	
Conservative Lifestyle	4	4	1.8	0.8	1.0	2.0	3.0	
Anti-Feminism Index	14	6	3.3	2.8	0.0	3.0	12.0	



³² <https://www.change.org/p/tbmmresmi-tcbestepe-aile%C3%A7%C3%B6kmeden-istanbuls%C3%B6zle%C5%9Fmesifesholsun-toplumsalciinsiyete%C5%9Fitli%C4%9Fifitnesikalks%C4%B1n-%C3%B6nceaile-ailey%C4%B1kanyasalarkalks%C4%B1n-ailehaklari-org-t-me-ailemeclisleri-iyilikorgtr>

Table A1. Balance Table with Konda 2020***Sub-group Analysis of IC Withdrawal***

	Stay (N=1176) Mean	in Exit Mean	(N=224) Diff. Means	in Std. Error
Erdogan Voter	0.2	0.7	0.5	0.0
Female	0.5	0.3	-0.2	0.0
Age	37.6	41.1	3.5	1.0
Education	4.9	4.6	-0.4	0.1
Religiosity	3.2	3.9	0.7	0.1
Conservative Lifestyle	1.4	2.2	0.8	0.1
Anti-Feminism Index	2.0	4.8	2.8	0.2

Source: Konda 2020

Table A2. Logit Model of IC Withdrawal

	IC Withdrawal	
Erdogan Voter	1.25***	(0.21)
Female	-0.86***	(0.22)
Age	-0.01	(0.01)
Education	0.10	(0.09)
Religiosity	0.34*	(0.14)
Conservative Lifestyle	0.91***	(0.15)
Anti-Feminism Index	0.21***	(0.04)
Constant	-5.63***	(0.79)
Observations	1,044	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	691.22	

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001