

Pressing letter Istanbul Convention, March 29, 2021

# An urgent call to Turkey to take the combatting of violence against women seriously

Dear Mark Rutte, dear Sigrid Kaag, and dear Stef Blok,

We address you as outgoing prime minister, outgoing minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, and outgoing minister of Foreign Affairs.

On March 20th of this year, the Turkish president Erdoğan left the Istanbul Convention, the majorly important and broadly supported treaty that was drawn up by the Council of Europe to protect women and LGBTQI+ persons against domestic and sexual violence, without involvement of the parliament.

Since 2011, the Istanbul Convention has been considered the international norm and 'gold standard' for policy and legislation, not only in Europe, but throughout the world. The convention was signed by 46 countries, amongst which the Netherlands. The Istanbul Convention provides a comprehensive framework for the combatting of violence against women, girls, and LGBTQI+ persons, by means of which the participating states can undertake legal, administrative and policy measures. The treaty offers a fundamental guarantee of the human rights of women and LGBTQI+ persons, because it treats several types of domestic violence (physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence) as a crime.

Many women fear that the withdrawal will mean a license for perpetrators to continue with their misdeeds unpunished. The decision arrives at a time during which Turkey has known a bloodcurdling record high of femicides. On the 23rd of March alone, 6 women were killed within only 20 hours. Last year, a total of 300 women were murdered, in 2019 almost 500. The Turkish women's movement does not accept this undemocratic decision and has announced nationwide protests.

The UN has emphasized that during this pandemic, a worldwide rise in domestic violence can be discerned, and it is precisely at this time that the Turkish president has announced the withdrawal. In England and France, there is much turmoil concerning the violence against women. Our country too is compelled to apply the convention and must do all they can to keep upholding it. The Netherlands needs to employ a gender-sensitive approach when combatting domestic violence, and needs to heed the violence against women and LGBTQI+ persons who have not yet obtained a residence permit. Tens of thousands of women are made victim of domestic violence in The Netherlands as well, as was concluded by professor of gender-related crimes at the University of Amsterdam, Renée Römkens, in November of last year.

Those who have signed this letter implore the Dutch government to follow the example of Germany, France, and the United States in condemning the Turkish withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and to stand firmly for human rights, for a world free of all forms of violence against women, girls, and LGBTQI+ persons. This is why we ask you to do anything within your power to prevent Turkey from reneging on the combatting of violence, and to remind president Erdoğan of his obligations in resisting violence against women. We ask you to stand with us in appealing to him and asking him to reconsider his resolution, because we need Turkey as a partner to be able to guarantee women's rights in this region and in the rest of Europe.

Turkish writer Elif Shafak sent out a message on the 20th of March which reads:

**#IstanbulConvention** protects women, children & minorities from violence. In a country where 3 women are killed every day, it was our only hope. By withdrawing from it now the Turkish government defies rule of law, human rights, gender equality and wages war against women **#femicide**

We endorse these important words written by Shafak, and we are counting on you in supporting this matter and taking concrete action.

Sincerely,

Manon Uphoff – author and member of Fixdit  
Sanneke van Hassel – author and member of Fixdit  
Shantie Singh – author and member of Fixdit

Meltem Halaceli – author and program curator at Writers Unlimited  
Ellen Walraven – director at Writers Unlimited

Other Signatories:

Vonne van der Meer – author and president of PEN Netherlands  
Kauthar Darmoni - Director ATRIA kennisinstituut voor Emancipatie en Vrouwengeschiedenis  
Laila Ait Baali Director WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform Martine Schilte - ZONTA Netherlands  
Sanka Smeets and Marjoleine van Doorn - ZONTA Rotterdam  
Marije Cornelissen - UN Women Netherlands  
Sheila Sitalsing – author and columnist  
Nazmiye Oral – theatre maker, actor and author  
Bas Heijne – author and columnist  
Eva Meijer - author  
Erdal Balcı – author and columnist  
Arnon Grunberg - author  
Annelies Verbeke – author and member of Fixdit  
Çiğdem Yüksel - photographer  
Nelleke Noordervliet - author  
Saskia Noort - author  
Jannah Loontjens – author and member of Fixdit  
Emma Curvers - author  
Laura van Dolron – theatre maker, author, and stand-up philosopher  
Ronald Giphart - author  
Fleur Speet – critic and member of Fixdit  
Florence Tonk - author  
Yra van Dijk – PhD, Professor of Modern Dutch Literature at the University of Leiden, member of Fixdit  
Tinkebell - artist  
Christine Otten – author and member of Fixdit  
Raoul de Jong - author  
Anne Vegter - poet, member of the Society of Arts and Poet Laureate of Rotterdam  
Abdelkader Benali - author  
Elfie Tromp - author  
Sinan Can - journalist and documentary maker  
Saskia Goldschmidt - author  
Joke Hermsen – philosopher and author  
Vamba Sherif – author  
Philip Huff - author  
Basje Boer - author  
Tessa Leuwsha - author  
Murat Isik - author  
Tjitske Jansen - poet

**#IstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır | #IstanbulSözleşmesiBizim | #Istanbulconventieredtlevens**

See also:

Writers collective Fixdit strives for more diversity in the canon and the literary world, [Fixdit Facebook](#)

Appeal by Human Rights Watch, March 24, 2021

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/24/turkey-erdogans-onslaught-rights-and-democracy>

US President Joe Biden condemns withdrawal, March 21, 2021, BBC

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56476909>

Number of Femicides in Turkey, we will stop femicides' platform

<http://kadincinayetlerinidurduracagiz.net/kategori/veriler>

Writers Unlimited Winternachten Festival Programme, THE FEMALE CONVENTION

<https://www.writersunlimited.nl/productie/thefutureisfemale-the-female-convention>