

EPSU Executive Committee condemns the attempts of Turkey, Poland and other leaders and governments that have exploited this period of pandemic to restrict women's rights



Statement adopted by the EPSU Executive Committee, 7-8 April 2021

(8 April 2021) EPSU Executive Committee condemns the attempts of Turkey, Poland and other leaders and governments that have exploited this period of pandemic to restrict women's rights. The impact of Covid 19 is not gender neutral. In a world that continues to discriminate against women, at work and in society, women have been hit harder by the health emergency (see [Executive Committee November 2020 statement](#))

It is an insult to the rule of law to withdraw from an international instrument such as the Istanbul convention and replace it with national legislation that clearly aims to undermine the rights of self-determination, fair justice, protection from violence and discrimination.

International Instruments set minimum requirements and leave the possibility to national laws to provide better and higher standards. If Turkey or Poland wanted to provide women with more and better protection from violence and discrimination, they could have done so. But that was not their goal. Instead, they want to impose a system where women are second-class citizens and the LGBTIQ+ community is destroyed to create a structure for institutionalised violence, discrimination and homophobia.

Today we condemn these acts and express our solidarity with women and the LGBTIQ+ community in Poland and Turkey but also in any other country across Europe that has seen a degradation of human rights under the pandemic. We call upon the “Visegrad countries”, Slovenia and others not to be lured by the Polish government’s idea to withdraw from the Istanbul convention and to conclude a separate treaty which will give women and the LGBTIQ+ community fewer rights and protections.

We will never be silent but will keep fighting with them. A health emergency, or any other critical situation, should not be used as an excuse to limit human rights.

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