

HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
GREEK NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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## Statement on Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention

31.3.2021

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR), as the National Human Rights Institution in Greece, does not limit its actions at national level, but it also has been entrusted, since its establishment in accordance with the Paris Principles, with the dual role of promotion and protection of human rights beyond national borders. Its particular added value lies, inter alia, in its mission, to the extent that its main concern is to bridge the gap between international human rights standards and domestic reality, responding essentially to the need to bring universal human rights closer to the national legal order.

In this context, the GNCHR maintains a close, ongoing and multifaceted cooperation with all Council of Europe bodies, encouraging the ratification of international treaties signed within the framework of the Council of Europe, such as the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), and subsequently contributing with texts and reports to the monitoring of the implementation of agreements within the State. In this regard, the GNCHR had repeatedly addressed a Recommendation to the Greek State on the need to accede to the Istanbul Convention,<sup>1</sup> as this Convention was a very important step in ensuring respect for women's rights and equal protection of victims of violence in all member states of the Council, through both the legal commitment of its States Parties to a treaty guiding their efforts to end gender-based violence and their political commitment to observing the principles and values enshrined in the Convention. Finally, Greece ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2018<sup>2</sup> and is expected to be evaluated for the

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This Statement was adopted by the GNCHR Plenary on 31.3.2021. Rapporteurs: Prof. Maria Gavouneli, GNCHR President, Dr. Katerina Charokopou and Eva Tzavala, GNCHR Legal Officers.

<sup>1</sup> **Submission** by the GNCHR to the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review of Greece, September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Entered into force on 1.10.2018 (Law 4521/2018, Government Gazette 62/A/5.4.2018). See GNCHR **Observations** on Draft Law regarding the "Ratification of the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing on

progress of implementation of the commitments undertaken thereby by the competent independent committee (GREVIO) within 2021. The GNCHR will assist the Greek State once again.

**The GNCHR deeply deplores** Turkey's decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, a decision which poses a real threat to the protection of women and girls in the country. Turkey was the first country whose Parliament ratified the Istanbul Convention and is the first country to raise the issue of its withdrawal from any Council of Europe Convention, causing concern and turmoil in the Organization's overall protection system<sup>3</sup> and the international human rights protection system.<sup>4</sup> The decision of the President of Turkey to withdraw from the Convention without any prior legislative procedure **indicates the total collapse of the rule of law**<sup>5</sup> and the reduction in the level of protection enjoyed by certain population groups, among others, due to gender, gender identity or sexual orientation<sup>6</sup>.

In this context, the GNCHR calls on:

- **the Greek State to join forces with the other Contracting States to the Istanbul Convention** in order to fully preserve the acquis of the Convention because, as recently emerged in Greek society, the road to elimination of gender-based violence is long and we need each and every institutional tool to combat the "scourge", and
- **the European States** to honour their commitments under the Council of Europe to protect the rights and freedoms of women of all backgrounds, regardless of age, race, religion, social origin, immigration status or sexual orientation, as well as to protect individuals from violence and domestic violence.

In the Council of Europe's system for the protection of human rights everybody counts!

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preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and adaptation of the Greek legislation", March 2018.

<sup>3</sup>Joint Statement by the Presidents of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretary-General in a Press Release: "[Council of Europe Leaders react to Turkey's announced withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention](#)", 21.3.2021. Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Statement: "[Turkey's announced withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention endangers women's rights](#)", 22.3.2021. Marangopoulos Foundation for Human Rights, Press Release: "[On the occasion of Turkey's withdrawal from Istanbul Convention](#)", 22.3.2021 [in Greek].

<sup>4</sup> 4 UN News, [Turkey: Withdrawal from Istanbul Convention is a pushback against women's rights, say human rights experts](#), 23.3.2021.

<sup>5</sup>League for Women Rights, Press Release, "[The denunciation of Istanbul Convention by Turkey was not unexpected. To stop setbacks also in Greece](#)", 22.3.2021 [in Greek].

<sup>6</sup>Para. 3 Article 4, Istanbul Convention