

**“Information Notes on Panel During UN CSW on Istanbul Convention”**

Red Pepper Association organized a panel titled “Attacks Against the Istanbul Convention”, "The Continuing Struggle for Women's Rights", in the sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

The 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in New York every year in March, was organized online this year. Among these meetings, the session in which Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention was discussed attracted a lot of attention. Speakers from Turkey, Poland, Bulgaria and the USA attended the meeting, which was organized as a webinar panel.

The meeting, hosted by the Red Pepper Association, was held on Tuesday, March 23, between 12:30-14:30 local time in New York. The meeting, which was followed by more than 300 participants, was attended by Hülya Gülbahar from Turkey, on behalf of EŞİK – Women's Platform for Equality, Genoveva Tisheva from Bulgaria, on behalf of the Gender Research Foundation, Zuzanna Krztałava from Poland, on behalf of Humanity in Action, Rosalyn Park from the United States joined on behalf of Advocates for Human Rights. The facilitation of the meeting was made by Özlem Altıok from the EŞİTİZ- Equality Monitoring Women's Group.

Prof. Dr. Feride Acar, former chairman of Istanbul Convention Expert Group- GREVIO, – connected to the meeting to give a short message. She stated that the decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention encourages men who are prone to use violence and that the state leaves women unprotected and sends the message that it does not care about their life safety through this step.

Lopa Banerjee, UN Women Director of the Civil Society Division, attended the meeting by sending a support video. Stating that they fully support the Turkish women's movement in the fight against violence against women, Banerjee called on Turkey to urgently reconsider its decision and implement the Convention comprehensively.

Fatma Aytaç, President of the Red Pepper Association, said that they have attended the Status of Women meetings for 5 years, but this is the first time she has attended such an exciting meeting in her opening speech. She said that the withdrawal from the Convention with the President's Decision 3 days before the meeting made this meeting critical and they encountered a great demand for participation. She said that the decision affected not only the women's movement in Turkey but also women's groups and women's rights

defenders around the world and that they would continue to fight violence against women, also known as the "shadow pandemic".

Özlem Altıok, who was the facilitator of the panel, said that the President's decision regarding Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention dealt a blow not only to women's rights but also to basic human rights and democracy. Referring to the speech made by Volkan Bozkır, who was the chairman of the UN General Assembly of this term, at the General Assembly, Altıok drew attention to the irony of the Presidential Decision, which was announced a few months after such a speech saying that "multilateralism" and "social gender equality"

should be a priority for the UN, made by a senior diplomat of the state. She mentioned that in these dark days, women's solidarity that goes beyond the borders of the nation increased the hopes of those who set their hearts on this struggle.

Hülya Gülbahar shared the statistics of femicide in the last 20 years, emphasizing that femicides in Turkey have reached a level of genocide. She emphasized that the rate of women who have been subjected to violence benefiting from institutional application mechanisms is very low. She stated that the attempt to withdraw from the Convention with the signature of a single person is against the law, that a convention accepted by law can be withdrawn by law, therefore this decision of the President is null and void. Gülbahar criticized the Council of Europe's immediate enforcement of this null and void decision and invited the women's movement of Turkey and the world to object to this unlawful process altogether.

Genoveva Tisheva said that the situation in Turkey will adversely affect the situation in the countries that are party to the Istanbul Convention and that the effect of this will not be limited only to Turkey. She said that the rejection of the Istanbul Convention by the government and the constitutional court for the elections to be held on April 4 in Bulgaria is being used as propaganda material.

Zuzanna Krztala explained that a movement has emerged in Poland that currently aims to withdraw from the convention and calls for a new regional convention and that the motto of those with this alarming trend is "Yes to Family, No to Gender". Addressing the women's movement in Turkey, she said "You will never walk alone" and said that they would always support this struggle.

Rosalyn Park made a presentation in which she discussed the arguments used in the attacks on the Istanbul Convention, one by one. She explained the methods of dealing with them. She stated the anti-LGBTI arguments of those who oppose the Convention and that they introduced the Convention as a Trojan horse aimed at attacking the traditional values of Poland. She said that they formed an opposing view in society over these. She said that the opponents of the Convention use discourses that bring the family against the

Convention and that they said that men's rights are excluded from the Convention, that these are not true, and that they include everyone who has been subjected to violence and discrimination.

The women attending the meeting emphasized that they are right and determined in this struggle; they expressed that the cross-border women's movement will fight together in solidarity and that they are determined to protect the Istanbul Convention together.