

Top Turkish court upholds exit from key treaty protecting women

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President Erdogan withdrew Turkey from the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention last year, prompting anger from women's rights groups.

A top administrative court in Turkey has ruled that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decision to pull the country out of a key European treaty protecting women from violence was lawful, rejecting petitions seeking its cancellation, the state-run news agency reported.

Erdogan [withdrew Turkey](#) from the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention last year, prompting condemnation from women's rights groups and Western countries. The landmark convention was signed in Istanbul in 2011.

Several women's groups and other organisations had petitioned the Council of State, arguing that Erdogan's move to pull out of the treaty through a presidential decree was [unlawful](#).

The court's judges, however, ruled by a majority decision on Tuesday to reject the petitions, Anadolu Agency reported.

The court's legal reasoning was not immediately released to the press.

But a lawyer representing the We Will Stop Femicide Platform rights organisation said the 40-page ruling referred to the president's "right of discretion" when interpreting Turkey's laws.

"It is terrifying from a legal perspective," lawyer Ipek Bozkurt told AFP news agency. "This erroneous decision should have been stopped by the court."

Last year's decision to leave the convention came after some officials from Erdogan's party had advocated for a review of the agreement, arguing it was inconsistent with Turkey's conservative values by encouraging divorce and undermining the traditional family unit. Critics also claimed that it promoted homosexuality.

Meanwhile, Erdogan's political opponents argued the president did not have the power to unilaterally cancel membership in an international agreement.

The treaty - now enacted by dozens of European countries - requires member states to adopt domestic legislation and strictly punish domestic abuse and gender-based violence.

Erdogan insisted it wouldn't be a step backward for women and in March, Turkey's parliament ratified a bill aimed at combating violence against women that included introducing tougher sentences if the victim of a violent crime is a woman and making persistent stalking punishable by prison.

At least 226 women have been murdered in Turkey so far in 2022, and 425 last year, according to the We Will Stop Femicide Platform.

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