



**Wielka Koalicja za Równością i Wyborem**  
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Warsaw, 28.07.2020

**Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission**

**Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality**

**Charles Michel, President of the European Council**

**David-Maria Sassoli, President of the European Parliament**

**Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany**

**António Costa, Prime Minister of Portugal**

**Janez Janša, Prime Minister of Slovenia**

YES TO THE PROTECTION OF VIOLENCE VICTIMS,

NO TO THE IMPUNITY OF PERPETRATORS

We are deeply concerned by the announcement of Marlena Małag, the Polish Minister of Family, Labor and Social Policy, of Poland withdrawing from the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). The document, signed in Istanbul, Turkey in 2011, has been ratified by 34 Council of Europe states, including Poland on 13 April 2015.

For a few years in Poland, there have been attacks on the Convention. Andrzej Duda, the President of Poland, spoke on the Convention in a condescending manner, arguing that the document is unnecessary, since the Polish law sufficiently protects victims of violence. Moreover, Krzysztof Bosak, member of the Confederation party and a presidential candidate in recent elections, demanded that Poland withdraws from the Convention, and the Deputy Minister of Justice has recently described it as "gender gibberish."

A few days ago, a Polish fundamentalist religious organization – the "Ordo Iuris" Institute for Legal Culture, together with the Christian Social Congress, announced a citizen initiative in favor of withdrawing from the Convention, as part of the "Yes to Family, No to Gender" initiative.

Taking into account the earlier announcements of the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Policy to amend the Act on Counteracting domestic violence contrary to the spirit of the Istanbul Convention, as well as the current political situation in Poland, we fear that the threat of withdrawing from the Convention is real. There is also a real risk of deteriorating the protection and safety of women affected by violence and their children.

Statistics show that in all European Union countries 62 million women over the age of 15 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence. The violence is negatively



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impacting their health, but also the health of their children and other family members in homes, where the abuse takes place. Without effective state aid, many women and often also their children lose their lives at the hands of the family torturer. Center of Women's Rights, a Polish non-governmental organization, estimates that each year in Poland between 400 and 500 women die as a result of domestic violence. That number includes victims of homicides, batteries with fatal outcomes, supposed manslaughters, and suicides. Furthermore, circa 200 women are serving time in prison for killing their torturer, while acting in self-defense, having not received appropriate help from the state.

The social and economic cost of violence against women as well as of the state ignoring the problem are great. It is high time to stop that! Female citizens of the European Union must be provided with the right to live free from violence! We are calling on the European Union institutions to be more active in combatting violence and effectively protecting women and children.

It has been three years since the European Union signed the Istanbul Convention, but the ratification process has unfortunately stalled. We regret that the EU member countries failed to reach agreement on such an important issue for millions of women and children, even though ratifying it would have real impact on their health and lives, possibly saving many human lives. The Convention provides tools, which allow to, more effectively than before, prevent and combat domestic violence. It is time for it to be implemented and used in practice. The European Union, which is silent on counteracting violence is creating space for fundamentalist organizations in member countries to force their agendas, which would be blocked if the Convention was adopted on the EU level.

We are calling on the European Union member countries to ratify the Istanbul Convention and on the EU institutions to hasten actions leading to the Union adopting the Convention.

We also expect for periodic review mechanisms to be introduced in order for the EU to monitor the implementation of the Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime by the member states. Its implementation in many EU countries leaves much to be desired. A complex EU strategy on preventing and combating violence against women is also needed, along with the adoption of legally binding legislative solutions, which would allow to implement the Convention standards in the entire European Union.

We also count on the announced greater involvement of Germany, which now presides over the EU, similarly to the whole leadership trio (Portugal and Slovenia), in implementing the Convention on the union level, as well as adopting complex legislation aiming to counteract violence against women and children.

Undertaking common and comprehensive activities aiming to provide more effective protection of women from domestic violence is especially important today. Not only due to the announced withdrawal of Poland from the Convention, but also because of the increased risk of violence due to the COVID-19 pandemic and regulations aiming to limit its scope and effects. The situation in millions of homes is bad, or even dramatic, and the pandemic is nowhere near its end. The forecasted second wave of infections all over Europe and restoration of restrictions are only going to worsen the situation.



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That is why we are calling for the immediate undertaking of the above-mentioned steps, as well as any other actions, which might ensure safety of millions of women and children at risk.

CC: Media

Statement signed by 103 organizations and informal groups affiliated in the Great Coalition for Equality and Choice:

- 1 ADDP l'Association Défense de la Démocratie en Pologne (Stowarzyszenie na rzecz obrony demokracji w Polsce)
- 2 ASTRA Network
- 3 BABA Lubuskie Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Kobiet
- 4 Berliński Kongres Kobiet
- 5 Black Brussels Balloons
- 6 Czarny Protest Gliwice
- 7 Democracy is OK (DOK)
- 8 Demokratyczna Unia Kobiet
- 9 Dolnośląskie Forum Kobiet Stowarzyszeń i środowisk Kobietych
- 10 Dziewuchy Berlin
- 11 Dziewuchy Dziewuchom Francja
- 12 Dziewuchy Kieleckie
- 13 Dziewuchy Londyn
- 14 Dziewuchy Szczecin
- 15 Farsa
- 16 Federacja na Rzecz Kobiet i Planowania Rodziny
- 17 Federacja Polskie Lobby Kobiet
- 18 Femini Berlin Polska
- 19 Feministyczne Stowarzyszenie Polonijne Elles sans Frontieres ASBL
- 20 Fundacja Klamra
- 21 Fundacja Centrum Praw Kobiet
- 22 Fundacja Czas Dialogu
- 23 Fundacja Edukacja – Równość – Aktywność – Dialog Era Dialogu
- 24 Fundacja Feminoteka
- 25 Fundacja Głosuj na Kobiety
- 26 Fundacja im. Izabeli Jarugi-Nowackiej
- 27 Fundacja im. Kazimierza Łyszczyńskiego
- 28 Fundacja Inicjatywa Kobiet Aktywnych
- 29 Fundacja KiDs
- 30 Fundacja Kobiety Zmieniają Świat
- 31 Fundacja na Rzecz Równości i Emancypacji STER
- 32 Fundacja Nie Tylko Matka Polka
- 33 Fundacja Nowoczesnej Edukacji SPUNK
- 34 Fundacja Pozytywnych Zmian
- 35 Fundacja Prawnikon
- 36 Fundacja Przestrzenie Dialogu
- 37 Fundacja Rodzić po ludzku
- 38 Fundacja Trans-Fuzja
- 39 Galeria Inspiracji
- 40 Grupa nieformalna Równość.info
- 40 Inicjatywa Sto Lat Głosu Kobiet
- 41 Koalicja KARAT
- 42 Kobiety w Sieci
- 43 KOD Kobiety
- 44 Konferencja Episkopatu Polek
- 45 Kongres Kobiet Północnej Wielkopolski (Stowarzyszenie „Metropolia Wielkopolska”)
- 46 Kongres Kobiet Województwa Śląskiego
- 47 Kongres Świeckości
- 49 Koszalińskie Stowarzyszenie Aktywności Lokalnej Era Kobiet
- 50 Lambda Warszawa
- 51 Lubelska Koalicja na Rzecz Kobiet
- 52 Łódzki Szlak Kobiet
- 53 Manifa Łódź
- 54 Manifa Rzeszów
- 55 Manifa Toruńska
- 56 Manifest Wolnej Polki



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- 57 Mapa kościelnej pedofilli
- 58 Marsz Godności
- 48 Medical Students For Choice Poland
- 59 Międzynarodowy Strajk Kobiet
- 60 Nic o nas bez nas. Ruch kobiecy  
Gliwice i Pyskowice
- 61 Nieformalna Grupa Czarny Protest
- 62 Nieformalna Grupa Inicjatywna z  
Bydgoszczy
- 63 Niezłomne-śląskie (Katowice)
- 64 Obywatelskie Stowarzyszenie  
"Możemy"
- 65 Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet
- 66 OSK Gryfino
- 67 OSK Poznań
- 68 OSK Puławy
- 69 OSK Sanok
- 70 OSK Sochaczew
- 71 OSK Warszawa
- 72 OSK Zawiercie
- 73 Polskie Towarzystwo Genderowe
- 74 Polskie Towarzystwo Prawa  
Antydyskryminacyjnego
- 75 Protest kobiet
- 76 Ratujmy Kobiety
- 77 Ratujmy Kobiety Tarnów
- 78 Stowarzyszenie Aktywne Kobiety
- 79 Stowarzyszenie Dolnośląski Kongres  
Kobiet
- 80 Stowarzyszenie im. Stanisława  
Brzozowskiego – Krytyka Polityczna
- 81 Stowarzyszenie Inicjatyw Kobięcych
- 82 Stowarzyszenie Klub XXI wieku
- 83 Stowarzyszenie Klucz Stop  
Społecznym Wykluczeniom
- 84 Stowarzyszenie Kobięcy Słupsk
- 85 Stowarzyszenie Kobięta na PLUS
- 86 Stowarzyszenie Kongres Kobiet
- 87 Stowarzyszenie Koniński Kongres  
Kobiet
- 88 Stowarzyszenie Łódzkie Dziewuchy  
Dziewuchom
- 89 Stowarzyszenie Nasz Bocian
- 91 Stowarzyszenie ON/OFF
- 92 Stowarzyszenie Poprawy Spraw  
Alimentacyjnych – Dla Naszych Dzieci
- 93 Stowarzyszenie Pro Femina
- 94 Stowarzyszenie Stop Stereotypom
- 95 Stowarzyszenie Szlakiem Kobiet
- 96 Stowarzyszenie Tuż Obok
- 97 Stowarzyszenie Wszechnicy  
Oświeceniowo-Racjonalistycznej
- 98 Tęczowy Tarnów
- 99 Tomaszowski Kongres Kobiet
- 100 Toruńskie Dziewuchy
- 101 Trójmiejska Akcja Kobięca
- 102 Warszawskie Dziewuchy
- 103 Wielkopolski Kongres Kobiet