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Europe takes major step forward to end violence against women

Amnesty International welcomed today the adoption of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

After more than two years of negotiations, the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe adopted the text of the Convention. The treaty will be opened for signature at the Ministerial Session of the Committee of Ministers in Istanbul on 11 May.

This treaty establishes a framework for governments to ensure robust action to prevent, investigate and prosecute violence against women. It will also facilitate the sharing of good practices and provide a solid basis for improvements in securing women's equality before the law in Europe. It contains up-to-date models for legislation on the definitions of rape and sexual violence, domestic violence, stalking, risk assessment, protection measures and services for women and girls who are survivors of violence.

The sustained work by women's organizations and Amnesty International's own research on violence against women across Europe shows that laws on rape and sexual violence are not enforced and that impunity for violence against women is deeply entrenched. In too many countries, domestic violence is still considered a social problem, rather than a crime.

Amnesty International states that women and girls are entitled to equality before the law. Violence against women and the persistent impunity for related crimes undermine the equality that is their right, and remain widespread across Europe.

The organization urges states to ratify and implement this treaty and start making the changes to their laws, policies and practices to end this scourge as women and girls across Europe had been waiting for justice for too long already.

Background information

Following its campaign to end violence against women the Council of Europe decided to draft a treaty to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. Amnesty International campaigned intensively for such a treaty by the Council of Europe and participated actively as an observer in the drafting group that negotiated the treaty. Together with other human rights organizations, Amnesty International worked to ensure that existing international human rights standards on women's equality and aiming at eradication of violence against women were appropriately reflected and developed in the new treaty.

See for example:

Time to take a stand: Amnesty International opposes amendments that will weaken the Council of Europe treaty on violence against women (AI Index IOR 61/004/2011, 16 March 2011)

Don't Waste this Opportunity: Make the right decisions on the Convention on Violence against women (AI Doc IOR 61/014/2010, 3 August 2010.) This document contains a list of all Amnesty International's work since 2004 on violence against women in Europe.

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