

WIDE + Statement of solidarity with protestors and women's-rights activists in Turkey

July, 2013

During the last weeks, youth, environmentalists, women's activists, health workers, teachers, lawyers, intellectuals, unionized and non-unionized workers, non-governmental organizations, citizens, the faithful and non-believers, LGBTIQ individuals, artists, athletes, home makers, soccer fans – women and men from all walks of life have united at peaceful street demonstrations around Turkey expressing their opposition to the neoliberal-Islamist government under Prime Minister Erdoğan. They have succeeded in placing equality, democracy, pluralism and diversity on the top of the political agenda in Turkey, and in Europe as a whole.

As European feminists and women's rights activists, we express our solidarity with the protestors in Turkey. We deplore the repression and massive state violence against people who exercise their basic freedoms of dissent and assembly.

We call upon our governments, the EU and international authorities to

- a) unequivocally oppose the undemocratic behaviour of the Turkish government,
- b) to demand an end to the detention of protestors, medical personnel and legal counsel under questionable anti-terror legislation, the violence against them which contradicts human rights principles and the release of all those detained in connection with the protests, and
- c) to insist on an investigation of the mass violence exerted and persecution of those responsible.

As European feminists and women's rights activists, we reaffirm the indivisibility of human rights, including the rights of democratic opposition, freedom of opinion and media, and the right to move and speak freely in public, the right to a life free from violence and to control over one's own body, health and sexuality. In particular, we reaffirm these rights for all women in Turkey who have been at the frontlines of the years-long struggle for democracy, equality and freedoms - including, but not only, in the last weeks' protests.

While women in Turkey are exposed to widespread everyday discrimination and violence, including rape and murder, the government of Prime Minister Erdoğan has pursued numerous initiatives to infringe women's human rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights. The government instead takes recourse to a patriarchal hypocritical moralistic gender discourse while promoting policies that disempower women and restrict their control over their lives and bodies. Despite the context of fast and high economic growth over the last years, women's economic independence is heavily constrained because of persistent poverty (particularly in Southeast and Northeast Turkey), a low female employment rate and constant disrespect of basic labor rights. Social services remain underdeveloped and inaccessible for a majority of families in Turkey, thus the burden of unpaid reproductive and care work remains disproportionately on women's shoulders, particularly those from unprivileged backgrounds.

In their resistance against Erdoğan's neoliberal Islamism that implies the privatization of common spaces in the interests of so-called economic growth, in their protest against an economic development model that perpetuates, even increases, inequalities and poverty, in their resistance against a shallow democracy controlled by a small elite with a questionable democratic record, in their emphasis on women's rights and human rights and in their practice of peaceful contestation, the protestors in Turkey echo discussions elsewhere in Europe and the world.

The protests in Turkey are a variant of ongoing global struggles against the dominant undemocratic neoliberal economic model that governs Europe and the world at the moment. WIDE+ shares the vision of a true democracy, respect for women's human rights and diversity within human rights for all, gender justice, and an egalitarian economic and social development model that does not continually reproduce poverty and exploitation.