



IFE-EFI STATEMENT

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Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI

June 2018

Presidential elections in Turkey, a feminist perspective

The need for greater respect for women's rights is becoming an ever more essential feature in most countries as women continue to be viewed as less capable and less proficient in everything than men.

Similar to various countries' elections this year, Turkey's political parties did not fall behind in the race to attract women and their votes. The June 24th, 2018 election manifestos of the majority of the parties aimed to address issues related to gender equality and particularly in economic and educational areas. The Justice and Development Party (AKP), Republican People's Party (CHP), Good Party (İP), Islamist Felicity Party, People's Democratic Party (HDP) raised notably the notion of women's empowerment and the fight against violence against women.

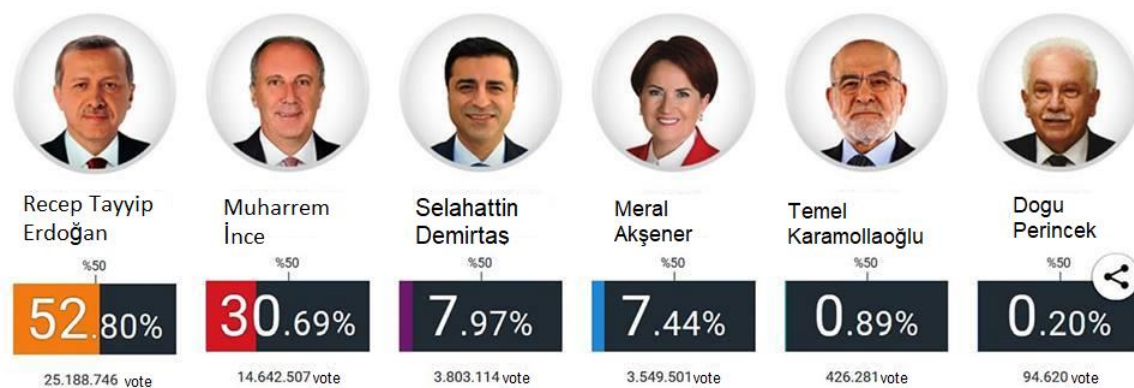
However, feminist activists approach these statements with skepticism, highlighting the parties' and government's continued tradition of instrumentalizing women's rights for their own political purposes, using selective women's rights to weaken political opponents and masking government's disregard for the people's demands of freedom and social justice. The EU governments have long been aware of violations of human rights in Turkey but they preserve their national interest, among others the pertaining of the shameful agreement between EU and Turkey on refugees passed in April 2016.

It was promising to see that political parties have increased awareness on women's rights, comparing to previous elections. The request for change and sustainable equality in most election manifestos was more persistent in Turkey this year. However, how words could turn into reality with President Erdogan when we know that women's oppression can't be dissociated from all forms of oppression, that gender equality can't be reached without a democratic environment, that there are no women's rights when a society is confronted by repression, protesters are put in jail or silenced. How to believe that patriarchy in Turkey would be toppled overnight, especially by a president who has a long historic background of denying basic human rights to people in his country?

Following Sunday's elections, the percentage of women in Turkey's 600 seats parliament has increased from less than 15% to 17.1%, with a total of 103 seats occupied by women and 497 by men. However, this percentage remains very low, and it is useful to remind here that today in most countries around the world, the rate of women MPs does not exceed 30%.

Euromed Feminist Initiative is persistently emphasizing the importance of women's political participation and expresses full solidarity with all feminist civil society organizations and movements that work hard to advance women's status in Turkey. The participation of women's rights defenders in decision making positions is a condition to have women's rights and interests addressed in policy making process. [The Declaration of the Euro-Med Civil Society Conference](#), Euromed Feminist Initiative organized back to back the 4th UfM Ministerial meeting on women's rights (Cairo, November 2017), urges for the adoption of proportional electoral systems, with binding gender quotas of a minimum 40% presence of either sex in electoral lists and governance bodies in order to help overcoming structural deficiencies in democracy.

 Turkey's Presidential Elections (25.06.2018)



Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI advocates for gender equality and women's universal human rights as inseparable from democracy building and citizenship, for political solutions to all conflicts, and for the right of peoples to self-determination.

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