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Turkey

# Abortion is a Right, Decision Belongs to Women

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**Abortion rights have been put under attack in Turkey by the Prime Minister Erdoğan repeatedly saying “I see abortion as murder”. He then outrageously likened abortion to Uludere, the village in Turkey’s Iraqi border where 34 Kurdish civilians were killed by a military airstrike, couple of months ago. Following these statements of the PM, Health Minister expressed that they were working on a new bill that would ban abortion and caesarean, adding that the state would take care of babies born because of incidents of rape.**

There is nothing surprising to us in all these, as the plan of the government on abortion is not coming out of blue, but as the continuation of its policies and discourse concerning women for the last 10 years, and Erdoğan’s long urged demand from women to have at least 3 children to keep the workforce of the country young and dynamic: to impose motherhood as the primary task of women, to equate women with family, and to insist on the secondary, submissive role of women.

Although the government members and the PM set the terms of the discussion from a moral and religious perspective for a public support, we know that abortion ban and the control over women’s bodies that they aim at issues forth from the neo-conservative standpoint of the government shared by all the neoliberal governments of the world, and is in conformity with the demands of the capital. The women are asked to turn back home to undertake their reproductive functions in its dual meaning, to take care of the family and households in order to reduce social expenditure, but also to work in cheap, flexible jobs without any social security to feed their families. The control over women’s bodies is an intrinsic part of the neoliberal policies supported by its neoconservative ideology relying on patriarchy.

Abortion has been legal in Turkey since 1983, until 10 weeks after conception. However, the legalization was not because abortion was seen as an intrinsic right of women to take control of their own bodies, but part of objectification of women’s bodies for the sake of population control, and only to a small extent as a problem of public health because of women deaths from abortion under unsecure conditions. Seen in this way, legalization didn’t bring much for women. Their decisions remained submissive to the male dominancy, to neoliberal reductions in public health services. As they couldn’t reach freely and widely to contraception in the lack of contraception policy for men, they also couldn’t reach cheap, secure abortion.

Against the patriarchal dominancy over women’s bodies, against the control of state, capital and modern medicine over women’s reproductive functions, we defend abortion as an intrinsic social right of women for their social liberation. We are against to set the discussion on abortion in any moral and religious terms in the name of “right to life” of the embryo. We also see abortion not as an issue of individual choice of women, but as an irreducible social right for women’s liberation.

Due to this, we repeat “it is my body, my decision, abortion is a right”. We do not put our right for abortion under discussion. Ban of abortion is itself murder of women. We say no to any control of men, state and capital on our bodies, on our reproductive functions, on our sexuality. We demand:

- Free, secure, easy and accessible abortion. State is responsible to provide these conditions
- Free, wide, secure contraception for men and women. The state should provide contraception services for men and women, including their sex education.
- Immediate measures to protect women’s health, reproductive rights and right to life.

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*Istanbul Feminist Collective*