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## **Slovakia ditches international treaty on women's rights**

Kafkadesk (01.04.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2COkdmI> - Last week, the Slovak Parliament passed a resolution to force the government to drop the ratification process of the so-called Istanbul Convention – a Council of Europe treaty to protect women against domestic violence and promote gender equality.

Presented by junior coalition member Slovak National Party (SNS), the resolution was passed by 101 in favour and 28 against. SNS, a conservative and nationalist party, claimed the convention contradicts the Slovak Constitution's definition of gender.

In 2014, Slovakia passed a constitutional amendment that defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman, effectively banning gay marriage (same-sex civil partnerships are not legally recognized either).

Last February, former Prime Minister and Smer chairman Robert Fico, who was forced to resign last year under the pressure of mass protests, had already announced the country would not ratify the convention, arguing the treaty "needlessly questions natural differences between men and women and calls them stereotypes".

He was referring to the controversial article 3 of the convention that defines gender as "social roles, behaviors, activities and characteristics that a particular society considers appropriate for women and men". He also stated that Slovakia would gladly adopt the measures that specifically concern the protection of women against violence.

Slovakia's Roman Catholic Church also publicly criticized the convention.

Although Slovakia signed the document in 2011, the legislative ratification process has been repeatedly postponed. Although more than 40 countries already ratified it, several EU countries, mostly from the former Eastern bloc including Hungary and the Czech Republic, haven't ratified the convention either (Poland, where the treaty came into force in 2015, is the only Central European to have done so).

You can find the full text of the Istanbul Convention [here](#).