



**Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP: Contribution to Council of Europe Debate, 22 April 2021**  
**The Functioning of Democratic Institutions of Turkey**

I welcome the fact that the Council of Europe is debating Turkey, and I compliment John Howell and Thomas Hammarberg for presenting a detailed and balanced report on Turkey.

The role of the Council of Europe is to monitor human rights across all our member states. Monitoring is not an attack on an individual country, but it is a very important and responsible role that we must fulfil.

The European Convention on Human Rights, and the European Court of Human Rights protect our rights: the rights of assembly; the rights of religious, press and academic freedoms; and the right to be a member of a trade union.

I am very concerned about the many issues facing the people of Turkey at the present time and I wish to draw attention to the following.

President Erdogan's attempt to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention:

This convention was a huge step forward in the protection of women in society. It is a terrible message when any government tries to withdraw from something that at the outset clearly a huge step forward. I strongly urge the Turkish government to reconsider that step, and to recommit fully and unequivocally to the Istanbul Convention.

Anyone who believes in free speech must be concerned at the number of journalists who have been imprisoned, apparently for expressing criticism of the government of Turkey. This is unacceptable and journalists should be able to speak out freely without fear of legal action when they are giving an opinion or telling the truth about a situation.

The closing down of political parties is also of the greatest concern. The rights of minorities in Turkey must be respected within the terms of the Convention on Human Rights and I draw your attention to the rights of Kurdish people to their linguistic and cultural freedoms as well as political expression.

To reiterate, my words are not an attack on Turkey or its people, but are intended as an act of solidarity on behalf of the people of Turkey. I would hope the government of Turkey would respect the views put forward in a fraternal matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Jeremy Corbyn'.

**Rt Jeremy Corbyn MP**