
BULGARIA'S RULING PARTY SHUNS TREATY OPPOSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DUE TO LACK OF SUPPORT

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The centre-right government, led by Borissov, submitted the Council of Europe convention for ratification last month but the move divided opinion in the European Unions poorest country, which now holds the EUs rotating presidency.

The dispute overshadows Borissovs efforts to present the ex-communist state, which joined the European Union in 2007, as a progressive and open-minded country during its first stint as chair of the bloc.

It also highlights widespread resistance among the more socially conservative countries of the former eastern bloc to the liberal values of wealthier western Europe.

Speaking to Bulgarian television station bTV, Borissov said that GERB would not proceed with the ratification of the treaty, also known as the Istanbul Convention, due to lack of support from political parties, including the nationalist United Patriots, its junior coalition partner.

A few days ago, Volen Siderov, one of United Patriots co-leaders, said that if GERB sought parliamentary approval for the treaty, this could lead to the fall of the government and early parliamentary elections.

"We will adopt the Istanbul Convention only if there is a consensus in Bulgarian society," Borissov said during an interview on Wednesday night, three weeks after his party decided to delay the vote to allow more time for debate.

Critics of the treaty, including the influential Bulgarian Orthodox Church, say it could encourage young people to identify as transgender or third sex and lead to same-sex marriage in the country of 7.1 million people.

Bulgarian President Rumen Radev also came out against ratification, saying the loose and vague language used in the text allows for multiple interpretations, the consequences of which may be dire for the Black Sea state.

He also said that the convention itself does not prevent violence, adding the problem still exists in countries that have already ratified it.

The Socialists, the main opposition party in the Balkan country, even demanded a referendum on

the issue.

Bulgaria's government signed the 81-article document in 2016 and parliamentary ratification is the next step. In all, more than 40 countries have signed.

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