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Photo: Hüseyin Aldemir

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President and Justice and Development Party (AKP) Chair Recep Tayyip Erdoğan raised the topic of the Feminist Night March on the March 8 International Women's Day in a rally he held in the capital Ankara.

After showing footage from the march that allegedly shows feminists blowing whistles against the azan (Muslim call to prayer) from a mosque, Erdoğan addressed his rivals İYİ Party Chair Meral Akşener and the Felicity Party (SP): "You are together with these enemies of the azan."

[CLICK - Police Attack Feminist Night March With Pepper Gas](#)

Women on March 8 gathered on the Taksim square in İstanbul for the 17th Feminist Night March. The demonstration was dispersed by a police attack. On the following day, Erdoğan claimed that the women whistled the call for prayer from a mosque. Feminists denied the claim, saying they were protesting the police.

Feminist lawyer Meriç Eyüboğlu said in response to Erdoğan's claims that the women used their constitutional right and making sounds with whistles and musical instruments are a part of the feminist march.

"Whom are you fooling?"

Erdoğan continued his claims in yesterday's (March 14) rally for the March 31 local elections:

"Those are the ones who burned our flag. Those are the ones who cannot stand our azan."

"The CHP Spokesperson shamelessly says 'They blew whistles against the police.' Whom are you fooling? Do you think this nation is a dupe?"

"I asked the Governor of İstanbul whether they got permission or not. I received the answer that the demonstration was unauthorized."

"There was no permission for the gathering. By entering the square (Taksim) and the street (İstiklal) from different routes, they engaged in an occupation movement."

"Didn't they burn our flags in Gezi (2013 Gezi Park protests)? Didn't they attack the shops of craftspeople? Didn't they burn buses, automobiles?"

"This is our constitutional right"

We spoke with feminist lawyer Meriç Eyüboğlu on Erdoğan's claims regarding the Feminist Night March. Eyüboğlu has been involved in the organization of all of the night marches since 2003.

Eyüboğlu said the following on Erdoğan's statement that there was no permission from the Governorate:

"Just like what we have done for 17 years, we did not make an administrative application as we know that our march is not within the scope of the Law No. 2911 on Gatherings and Demonstration Marches. So we held a meeting with neither the Governorate of İstanbul nor the İstanbul Security Directorate.

"We are using our constitutional rights upon the Articles 25 and 26. Besides, Article 4 of the Law No. 2911 says that marches that became a tradition are not within the scope of the law.

"So, being organized for the 17th time, the Feminist Night March became a tradition and there is not a need for an application. March 8 has been celebrated for 162 years. An event that has been taking place, a day has been celebrated for 162 years is unarguably traditional.

"Moreover, this is the use of a constitutional right. Everyone can hold a gathering and a demonstration march on the condition of being peaceful. Article 34 of the Constitution says that. Articles 25 and 26 which regulate the freedom of speech also allow this."

"They put everything in the same bag"

On Erdoğan making a connection between the Feminist Night March and the 2013 Gezi Park protests, Eyüboğlu said,

"The Feminist Night March has no connection between the Feminist night March and the 2013 Gezi protests. I don't know if this can be said for all the women in the Feminist Night March, but we, as the feminists who have been organizing this march for 17 years, were of course at the Gezi, at the feminist tent. We were the ones who said, "Resist with tenacity, not with swears," and the ones who covered sexist graffiti around the park with paint.

"We see that they are putting everything in the same bag.

"The women's movement is one of the constituents of the social opposition. The women's movement is being treated the same way.

"Neither at Gezi nor in another time did we vandalize any place in our feminist demonstrations. Anyway, no one would vandalize anywhere for no reason. I take it as abasement to say that this claim does not reflect reality.

"Noise and rumble is in the nature of our protests"

For the last part, she answered our question on Erdoğan's claims that the feminists whistled the call for prayer:

"We have a pluralistic structure. Among us, there are non-religious women as there are religious ones. There are women who believe in different religions. This was the only reason that made me concerned. What kind of an experience the women who participated in the march had and would this artificial agenda hinder our pluralism? As we saw, this was an unnecessary question.

"The İstiklal Avenue was closed that night for the Feminist Night March, which we always do.

"There was for sure a reaction against the police barricades. So making sounds with whistles, musical instruments was a part of that. But the format of our demonstrations has been like this for years. Noise and rumble is in the nature of our protests.

"This year, the slogan we put forward was 'feminist revolt' and we were screaming our revolt.

"Of course we were so enthusiastic, stubborn and noisy. Our only agenda was ourselves. Frankly we did not have the azan in our agenda. So, we were not different from the police who used violence against thousands of women during the azan by slaps, kicks, chemical gases, hitting with shields, squeezing them to a point that they cannot breathe.

"And we didn't have an agenda that contains azan or mosque. A point that never came to our heads, that was not in our agenda is constantly being brought forward against us and I regard this as disrespect to all women who were there or on their ways to go there.

"For the last part, the videos show everything but let's say we whistled them in large and small groups, or even we all whistled them... Does this take away the police violence against us, the arbitrary blocking of our march, the violation of our right? We don't want and permit any discourse to make these points invisible." (EKN/VK)

Erdoğan Says 'March 8 Demo Unpermitted', Feminist Lawyer Reminds Legislation

Feminist lawyer Eyüboğlu has spoken on President Erdoğan's claim that the March 8 Feminist Night March was unauthorized, saying that the traditional marches are out of the scope of the Law No 2911.

[Ekin Karaca](#) İstanbul - BIA News Desk 15 March 2019, Friday 11:07

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