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Poland

Defend Polish women's abortion rights!

- News from around the world -

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The appeal published below has been published by Polish feminist and campaign groups, together with one trade union and a small left party, to protest the grave threat to abortion rights in Poland. If measures before parliament go through, Poland will join Nicaragua in banning virtually all abortions. The appeal calls for international support for the pro-choice demonstration on November 4 and for protest messages to be sent to the Polish government and media. The list of organisations making the appeal is given at the end.

APPEAL

The time has come to once again speak up for women living in Poland. Politicians want to take away the remains of our already limited rights. The League for Polish Families (LPR) has presented a proposal to change the Constitution of the Polish Republic, aiming to protect human life from the moment of conception. This means that abortion will become illegal in almost every, even the most dramatic, situation.

[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/serious_Polish_woman.jpg]

Polish women face harsh attack on reproductive rights

The law currently in force is the Law on family planning, the protection of the human foetus and the conditions allowing termination of pregnancy of 1993, amended in 1997, which allows termination of pregnancy in only three situations: when the life or health of the woman is threatened, when we are dealing with genetic defects or serious incurable diseases of the foetus or when the pregnancy is a result of crime (e.g. rape, incest).

However the general mindset arising from the ban on abortion means that in practice even legal abortions are not carried out. Many women have lost their health due to this and some have paid with their lives due to the hypocrisy of the doctors and politicians. The draft law of LPR could mean that we begin to treat the current law as a compromise. We cannot agree to this. The ban on abortion is in violation of the rights of women to planned parenthood and is at variance with human rights and European standards. It is also in essence ineffective.

Official data indicate that there are approximately 150 abortions annually (sic!), whilst independent research indicates that the number of illegal abortions is anything from 80,000 to 200,000. It is the poor majority who cannot afford a backstreet abortion that the ban affects the most. As a result of the refusal to carry out a legal abortion and refusal to carry out genetic prenatal testing, the life and health of women in Poland is under threat.

New cases against Poland are being taken to the European Tribunal of Human Rights. The first cases of deaths amongst women who were refused treatment and medical aid due to their pregnancy are dark shadows over the history of women's rights in Poland. At the same time the majority of Polish citizens, both women and men, accept termination of pregnancy, not only for a threat to the health or life of the woman or foetus and the case of when the pregnancy is a result of crime, but also for social reasons.

However, this is of no importance because the politicians in Poland together with some doctors have taken control of the life and health of women, refusing them even the right to decide about their own bodies. In this situation backstreet abortions in Poland are big business.

Abortion is available for 2000 - 3000 zlotys (500 - 750 euros) in private surgeries, often carried out by the same

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doctor who refused to carry out the abortion in the hospital. The tablet RU-486 is also available on the black market. Health, dignity and freedom in Poland cost 750 euros. Not many women can afford that. The increasing number of cases of abandoned babies is clearly a result of the law which forces women to give birth, who for personal and/or economic reasons cannot decide to have a child.

The problem of the extremely bad situation of Polish women, who cannot have a legal abortion, was raised by the United Nations Committee for Human Rights in its observations and recommendations for Poland in October 2004 as well as the EU report on human rights in the European Union, prepared by Network Experts in 2004 and 2005.

In the current situation, which is already drastic enough, we are dealing with yet another proposal to restrict the law on abortion, a proposal to finally, constitutionally, enslave women, in the name of political pre-election games. As women, as people, as citizens, both male and female, we cannot agree to this.

We appeal to all those for whom women's rights are important to help and support our actions to preventing the amendment of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland aimed at the protection of life from conception. We also appeal for support for the initiative to liberalize the law on termination of pregnancy. Our obligation is to stand up for the health and life of women.

As a sign of protest we have decided to organize a series of actions including a march under the slogan NO TO WOMEN'S HELL. WE DEMAND LEGAL ABORTION!

On 3 November 2006 there will be a Tribunal for the Right to Choose at which the history of women who are victims of the restrictive abortion law in Poland will be read out. We will also present proposals for legal solutions which would ensure women the right to planned parenthood.

On 4 November 2006 there will be a national demonstration against the changes in the constitution. The demonstration begins on place Defilad at 12:00 in Warsaw. We are counting on support and help.

We appeal for solidarity pickets and marches as well as contacting the Polish media about them. Please send protest letters to the president and prime minister of Poland. Letters of support will be read out at our demonstration. We need your support.

Polish media:

Gazeta Wyborcza: swiat@agora.pl; sekretariat.naczelnych@agora.pl; obcasy-p@agora.pl

Rzeczpospolita: J.Haszczyński@rzeczpospolita.pl; M.Solecka@rzeczpospolita.pl

Dziennik: dziennik@dziennik.pl

Polityka: polityka@polityka.pl

Polish Press Agency: A.Kurkus@pap.pl; A.Malecka@pap.pl

Polish authorities:

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President of the Republic of Poland: listy@prezydent.pl

Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland ul. Wiejska 10 00-902 Warszawa

Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland: cirinfo@kprm.gov.pl

Organizers of the protest: Committee for the Aid and Defence of Victimized Workers; Polish Federation for Women and Family Planning; 8 March Women's Alliance Association; Pro-Femina; Lesbians Alliance; Independent Trade Union 'August '80'; Polish Labour Party.

Contact: pro-choice4@wp.pl magostr@o2.pl tel : +48 22 696053595 (Katarzyna Bratkowska) tel : +48 22 660838005 (Ewa Dańbrowska-Szulc)

We are protesting against the attempt of yet another attack On the health, life and rights of women living in Poland!
Enough hypocrisy! We demand rights!