

Women's rights defenders face eight years in prison as Polish prosecutors plan to go ahead with sham trial

25 October 2022, London/Brussels - Three leading women's rights defenders are facing eight years in prison in Poland for exercising their right to peaceful protest.

Prosecutors in Warsaw filed the indictment against Marta Lempart, Klementyna Suchanow and Agnieszka Czerederecka-Fabin of the All-Poland Women's Strike (Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet, OSK), a partner of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, European Network, for allegedly organizing protests during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Massive protests were prompted back in October 2020 by the decision of the illegally appointed Constitutional Tribunal to impose a [near-total ban on abortion care](#). Peaceful protesters were met with [excessive force](#), with authorities using tear gas, pepper spray and physical assault.

Now, two years on, women human rights defenders (WHRDs) are still being attacked by Polish authorities, with defenders facing violence from law enforcement and far-right groups, including bomb threats, as well as smear campaigns in state-controlled media, detention and excessive criminal charges orchestrated and encouraged by the government. In the case of the All-Poland's women's strike members, these charges include "causing an epidemiological threat", endangering public health and publicly praising crimes.

The new indictment against the women's rights defenders came just days before the second anniversary of the near-total ban on abortion, which has killed six women so far. It also comes in the same month that a court hearing was held in the [trial of Justyna Wydrzyńska](#).

Justyna, a member of Abortion Without Borders and the Abortion Dream Team, is facing up to three years in prison for facilitating an abortion that didn't happen. Her case marks the first in Europe where a WHRD is being prosecuted for helping ensure abortion care by providing abortion pills. Justyna's trial is ongoing.

Irene Donadio of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, European Network, said:

"We are appalled by the renewed and escalating judicial persecution of women's human rights defenders by Polish authorities who are using the pretext of the COVID-19 pandemic to disguise politicized attacks. Is this the Europe we live in? Where women are forced through pregnancy and where rights defenders are dragged to court by fundamentalist groups?"

"The Polish government is relentless in its mission to oppress, intimidate, attack and persecute anyone who disagrees with PiS dictatorial policies - journalists, politicians, independent judges and ordinary citizens - using tactics straight out of a dictator's playbook. If we are to counter this sweeping wave of fundamentalism, we must stand our ground."

Marta Lempart, Founder of the All-Poland's Women's Strike, a partner of IPPF EN, who currently has more than 80 [sham charges](#) against her, said:

"We are fighting a politically compromised judiciary made up of illegally appointed judges and prosecutors with an agenda. I am just one of many; we are talking about 6000 people being harassed for protesting, that will be taken down one by one if the erosion of judiciary independence is not stopped immediately."

The International Planned Parenthood Federation is asking people to rise up and support Polish freedom fighters by donating to its [#DefendTheDefenders initiative](#), where funds are used for continued legal assistance in court cases and psychological support and assistance. It is also asking decision-makers and the EU to hold the Polish government accountable and protect the safety of human rights defenders.

“These attacks are a parade of political prosecutions held on the tomb of the rule of law and democracy. We urge the European Union to act now to prevent a dictatorship within its borders and to politically and financially support human rights defenders in Poland.”
continued Irene Donadio for IPPF EN.

Check out our [overview](#) on all things Poland.

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About the International Planned Parenthood Federation

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is a global service provider and advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all.

For over 65 years, IPPF through its 118 Member Associations and 15 partners, has delivered high-quality sexual and reproductive healthcare and helped advance sexual rights, especially for people with intersectional and diverse needs that are currently unmet. Our Member Associations and partners are independent organizations that are locally owned, which means the support and care they provide is informed by local expertise and context.

We advocate for a world where people are provided with the information they need to make informed decisions about their sexual health and bodies. We stand up and fight for sexual and reproductive rights, and against those who seek to deny people their human right to bodily autonomy and freedom. We deliver care that is rooted in rights, respect, and dignity - no matter what.