

July 13, 2017

Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of Poland
listy@prezydent.pl

cc: Mr. Marek Kuchcinski Speaker of the Sejm (Polish Parliament)
Marek.Kuchcinski@sejm.pl

Ms. Beata Szydło, Prime Minister of Poland
kontakt@kprm.gov.pl

Dear Mr. Andrzej Duda:

We again write on behalf of Global Doctors for Choice (GDC), an international network of physicians from a range of specialties committed to improving women's reproductive health and rights. GDC is committed to the provision of high-quality medical care grounded in science and to the defense of human rights. We strive to protect and expand access to comprehensive reproductive health care through advocacy for evidence-based policy and medical research.

We write to urge you to protect the legality of abortions for fetal abnormalities and thus not to sign any initiative aimed at banning abortion for fetal abnormalities in Poland.

Receiving a diagnosis of a fetal abnormality can be a catastrophic and traumatic experience for a woman. Reasons for terminating a pregnancy with a fetal abnormality include preventing pain and suffering of the affected fetus, preventing pain and suffering of the woman and her family, and beginning the healing process from this physical and psychological trauma.

Forcing a woman to continue a pregnancy with a fetal abnormality increases both the physical and psychological pain and suffering, and the trauma of the experience and imposes health risks on the woman. Any attempt to force women to continue a pregnancy and continue to experience pain and trauma would constitute a violation of these women's human rights.

Various international medical and public health organizations, such as the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO), and the World Health Organization, as well as the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, have expressed their concern regarding the direct relationship between restrictive abortion laws, and the risk to the life, health, and well-being of women.

Further, many international committees such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the United Nations Human Rights Committee, and the International Committee on Civil and Political Rights have said that the prohibition of abortion is a fundamental violation of women's right to life and health.

There is consensus among medical, public health, and human rights groups that safe abortion is essential to ensure the best possible conditions for women's health, and there is strong evidence

that the prohibition of abortion does not significantly deter the practice, but rather results in women seeking clandestine and often unsafe procedures. We are alarmed at proposals to deny women access to safe abortion services, particularly in this most serious circumstances.

A doctor's first duty is always to our patients. As a global network of physicians, we urge you to vote against any proposals to limit abortion for fetal abnormalities and thus prevent unnecessary medical and psychological harms for women in Poland.

Sincerely,

ANA CRISTINA GONZALEZ V.

Dr. Ana Cristina González Vélez
Grupo Médico por el Derecho a Decidir
Bogotá, Colombia



Dr. Alfonso Carrera
Grupo Médico por una Libre Elección
México DF



Dr. John Koku Awoonor-Williams
Global Doctors for Choice
Ghana



Dr. Wendy Chavkin
Columbia University
New York, USA



Dick Van der Tak
Executive Director, Global Doctors for Choice
New York, USA