



May 10, 2016

Mr. Marek Kuchcinski Speaker of the Sejm (Polish Parliament)

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cc: Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of Poland

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Ms. Beata Szydło, Prime Minister of Poland

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Dear Mr. Marek Kuchcinski, Speaker of the Sejm:

We 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 vote against the bill, submitted by the Committee "Stop Abortion," which proposes to amend the Act of Family Planning, Protection of the Human Foetus and Conditions of Pregnancy Termination and related Acts. If the proposed changes were to be approved, abortion would become illegal in all circumstances, including for women who are diagnosed with severe illnesses, are pregnant as a result of rape or incest, or have fetuses with severe genetic or other anomalies. Therefore, this bill would force women to continue such pregnancies until full term and to experience labor and delivery, and thus result in serious physical and psychological pain and suffering for Polish women and constitute a violation of these women's human rights.

Such threats to women's health and human rights already have occurred in Poland. In the case of *Tysiacy v Poland* the European Human Rights Court, found Poland in violation of Article 8, 13 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights. *Tysiacy* sought an abortion as she had received medical advice that continuing the pregnancy would imperil her vision. She was denied an abortion, forced to carry the pregnancy to term, and now qualifies as a seriously disabled person under Poland's social welfare system because her eyesight has deteriorated so severely. In the case of *Z v Poland*, a pregnant woman with ulcerative colitis died, because she was denied treatment because of possible consequences for the fetus.

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.

As doctors, our first duty is always to our patients. 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 that the proposed law denies women access to safe abortion services, even in the most serious circumstances.

As a global network of physicians, we urge you to vote against this proposed bill and thus prevent unnecessary medical and psychological harms for women in Poland.

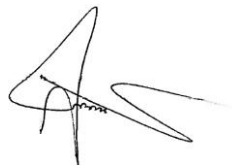
Sincerely,

ANA CRISTINA GONZALEZ V.

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