

Public Prosecutor General, Mr. Zbigniew Tadeusz Ziobro

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Dear Public Prosecutor General,

I am writing to express my deep concern about charges brought against human rights defender Justyna Wydrzyńska that stem solely from her activism to support access to safe abortion. Justyna has been charged with 'helping in the performance of an abortion' on the basis of Article 152.2 of the Polish Penal Code, and 'possession of unauthorised drugs with the aim of introducing them to the market' under Article 124 of the Pharmaceutical Law. If convicted, she faces up to three years in prison.

I am deeply concerned that charges against Justyna appear to be brought in reprisal for her activism and her legitimate efforts to defend access to safe and legal abortions in Poland. Justyna is a doula and an activist who has been outspoken about her own abortion. She is one of the founders of Abortion Dream Team, an activist collective in Poland that campaigns against abortion stigma and provides evidence-based and non-biased abortion-related information, including on World Health Organisation (WHO) guidance on safe self-managed medical abortion.

I would like to stress that laws that restrict access to abortions in Poland -only allowed when the health or the life of the pregnant woman is at risk or when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest - and criminalise those who provide or help with an abortion put pregnant people's health and lives at risk and violate Poland's obligations under international human rights law and standards. It is precisely because of these harmful laws, that Justyna's support to people whose health needs have been neglected and denied by the Polish health care system are crucial and can save lives. Her work should be applauded, not criminalised.

Justyna's efforts are part of a growing movement of individuals in Poland and around the world who show solidarity and compassion, while helping others to access the sexual and reproductive health and rights they are entitled to. Poland must take urgent action to ensure that abortion is fully decriminalised and that people defending sexual and reproductive rights, including access to safe abortion, are able to carry out their legitimate work without fear of reprisals or intimidation.

I therefore urge you to immediately drop all charges against human rights defender Justyna Wydrzyńska and refrain from bringing any other charges with the intention to criminalise her or other activists for providing lifesaving support to people seeking an abortion.

Yours sincerely,