



**Women Dignity March. 18.06.2016. Warsaw.**

*Women's rights, are human rights.*

*Dear Sir/Madam,*

The following letter is a request for solidarity with women in Poland. Our rights are threatened. We need your support!

1989 was the year of freedom for the Polish people. A few months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Poland held its first partly free elections. We entered a democratic path of development, we started to build a state of law and in 1997 our Constitution was adopted. A constitution which guarantees equality of rights and duties for all citizens, respect for the dignity, physical integrity, privacy, the right to life, health and education for the Polish people.

At the same, for Polish women, the beginning of the nineties is the start of a systematic erosion of our rights and freedoms. In 1993, Poland adopted a very restrictive abortion law (one of the most restrictive in Europe) which, despite the 1.7 million signatures gathered in sign of protest, entered into force. Currently there is an attempt to ban abortion completely. It is highly probable, that as a result of this attempt, the number of cases when termination of pregnancy is allowed will be reduced from 3 (the pregnancy is the result of a criminal act, it puts in danger the life or health of the mother, serious and irreversible fetal defects) to 2.

Last year, at the beginning of December, the Government has decided to cut off the funding for the centers coordinating a national program of screening mammograms and Pap tests, despite the fact that in Poland cervical cancer kills 70% more women than on average in the European Union. Since mid-2016 the in vitro fertilization method will not be reimbursed by the government, leaving thousands of women with no chance of having a child. As a result of recent changes in the law, medical assistance, including the right of the mother to appoint a midwife of her choosing to be present during the labour was limited. The planned tightening of abortion law will restrict the conduct of prenatal tests and the treatment of diseases and conditions of embryos and fetuses, due to the fact that these may induce a miscarriage/abortion and in this case both the doctor and the woman will be subject to investigation and even prison. The situation of women in Poland continues to deteriorate.

Every year 800 thousand of us are victims of domestic violence. And even though this is generally known fact, this year, for the first time in recent Polish history, one of the biggest Polish organizations fighting for women rights and providing them with psychological, legal and material in case of domestic violence [Centrum Praw Kobiet (Center for Women Rights) operating 21 years], has not been granted a government subsidy, which makes it incredibly difficult to reach those women who need help the most. The official reason on why the subsidy has not been granted is „because the organization limits its help only to a group” (meaning women).

Investigations and lawsuits related to rapes and sexual harassment are so humiliating that 90% of rapes are not reported to the police. 67% of investigations are redeemed, and rapists, who stand in front of a judge usually get much less stringent than they should, often suspended jail sentences.

Evasion of spousal maintenance in Poland is widespread. The current maintenance debt owed to Polish children is as high as 9.7 billion zlotys (about 2,8 billion USD). Women in Poland, as throughout the world, still earn less than men. They are still treated worse in every aspect of life. Polish women are victims of psychological, physical and economic violence..

It all resulted in our belief that we have to say „enough is enough!” In a spontaneous reaction to the proposal to introduce a total ban on abortion on April 1, 2016 we decided to organise a protest. And by „we” we mean a group of ordinary Polish women. We don't have politicians standing behind us. We are not members of feminist organizations. We work in the film industry, in the corpo-world or are self-employed. We decided we can use our energy and potential to organize a march. On 18th of June, in Warsaw we will march with the slogan "Women's rights are human rights" to show that we will let our rights be violated. This is the first step in a long struggle that awaits us.

This is why we need you! We need to make our voice heard. Join us and support us.

Polish Women need your solidarity.

On behalf of the protesting Polish women,

*Dignity March Staff*

#SolidarityWithPolishWomen

More info about the current situation in Poland:

[http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/03/warsaw-protest-against-proposed-abortion-ban?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/03/warsaw-protest-against-proposed-abortion-ban?CMP=share_btn_tw)

<http://information.tv5monde.com/terriennes/en-pologne-le-combat-pour-le-droit-l-avortement-continue-plus-que-jamais-100639>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/poland-ban-abortion-women-speak-out-against-their-governments-plans-for-a-total-ban-on-abortion-a6968601.html><http://www.wsj.com/articles/protesters-rally-against-polands-proposed-ban-on-abortions-1459711371>

