



SVENSK FÖRENING FÖR OBSTETRIK & GYNEKOLOGI  
Swedish Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology

## Open letter to Public Prosecutor General, Mr. Zbigniew Tadeusz Ziobro.

The case of Justyna Wydrzyńska has come to the attention of the Swedish Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (SFOG). We strongly oppose the prosecution of her and join the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) in writing to ask you to drop all charges, refrain from further reprisals against her or other activists campaigning for sexual and reproductive rights, and fully decriminalise access to abortion in Poland.

Poland's abortion legislation is one of the most restrictive in Europe and globally. Global evidence demonstrates that restricting abortion with laws does not lead to fewer abortions, but to an increase in unsafe abortions and preventable maternal deaths and disability. Likewise, decriminalisation does not result in an increase in the abortion rate but rather to a shift from unsafe abortion to safe abortion, often accompanied by comprehensive services that allow women to receive contraceptive counselling that further prevents unwanted pregnancies. Current legal and policy restrictions in Poland represent discrimination against women and girls that can have an impact on accessing other human rights, for example the right to privacy, body autonomy and integrity.

SFOG as well as FIGO regard reproductive autonomy, including access to safe abortion services, to be a basic and non-negotiable human right of every woman and girl in the world. The provision of safe abortion is time-sensitive, essential health care. There is substantial scientific evidence that safe abortion care should be available on request, universally affordable, and accessible.

SFOG is a member society of the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) that is a professional organisation that brings together more than 130 obstetrical and gynaecological (OBGYN) associations from all over the world. FIGO's vision is that women and girls of the world achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives. FIGO is in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) and consultative status with the United Nations (UN).

The history of the development of UN human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with the subsequent interpretation of their right to life provisions by official interpretative bodies, show that the right to life treaty provisions apply only after birth. In fact, no human rights body has ever found allowing termination of pregnancy to be incompatible with human rights, including the right to life. Standards therefore reflect that human rights protections apply after birth, not before.

The criminalisation of abortion may also prevent health professionals from doing their jobs. Under threat of actual or supposed prosecution, health professionals may be more reluctant to authorise, conduct or provide information and counselling about abortion services. As a result, women and girls

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may continue pregnancies they do not want because they cannot find doctors willing or able to treat them. Others may resort to illegal or unsafe measures with the associated risks of death and disability. Criminalisation contributes to the stigmatisation of both abortion providers and those who need or have had an abortion.

We fully support FIGO in the call for a total decriminalisation of safe abortion, and for the promotion of universal access to abortion, post-abortion care and evidence-based, non-biased abortion-related information, free of force, coercion, violence and discrimination. Abortion should be removed from criminal law and regulated by laws consistent with every other medical procedure, and with the main focus on the wellbeing of women and girls.

We urge you to take an evidence-based approach to the sexual and reproductive health care and rights of women and girls in your country. We also reaffirm our call that you drop all charges against Justyna Wydrzyńska, refrain from further reprisals against her or other activists campaigning for sexual and reproductive rights, and fully decriminalise access to abortion in Poland.

Best regards,

Michael Algovik

President

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