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Poland: Judicial harassment of woman human right defender Justyna Wydrzyńska

On 8 April 2022, Warsaw Praga Południe District Court will consider the case of woman human rights defender **Justyna Wydrzyńska**. She 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.

[Justyna Wydrzyńska](#) is woman human rights defender and founder of the website [Women on the Net](#), Poland's first online forum supporting women seeking safe abortions, contraception or sex education. She currently works with [Abortion Dream Team \(ADT\)](#), a grass roots initiative of four women human rights defenders who came together in October 2016 with the goal of providing direct and immediate assistance to women who needed abortions. ADT campaigns against abortion stigma in Poland and counsels Polish women on how to safely find and take abortion pills. ADT is a member of Abortion Without Borders (AWB), a network of groups working for abortion freedom and access in Europe.

In 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic when Poland's postal service suspended international packages, Justyna Wydrzyńska provided her own abortion pills to a woman with an unwanted pregnancy, who had reportedly been prevented by her husband from travelling to an abortion clinic abroad. After she received the abortion pills, the woman's husband reportedly called the police. On 22 November 2021, the woman human rights defender was 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.

Justyna Wydrzyńska's first hearing will take place on 8 April 2022 in the Warsaw Praga Południe District Court. This is the first case in Europe of a human rights defender being charged with aiding an abortion by providing pills. If convicted, Justyna Wydrzyńska faces up to three years' imprisonment.

In October 2020, the politically-compromised Constitutional Tribunal in Poland restricted abortion even further and ruled that abortions on the ground of "severe and irreversible foetal defect or incurable illness that threatens the foetus' life," are unconstitutional. In the first year following the ruling, AWB has helped 34,000 people from Poland access safe abortions.

Members of ADT have previously been targetted for work in the defence of reproductive rights. In October 2020, an anti-choice group co-opted a magazine cover featuring the founders of ADT, labelling them an "Abortion Killing Team" and [used](#) the image alongside that of a dead infant on billboards and on a truck that drove around Warsaw. In March 2021, another anti-choice group reported ADT to the regional prosecutor's office in Gdansk for allegedly persuading women online to have abortions and committing "genocide."

Front Line Defenders believes that the charges against Justyna Wydrzyńska are solely motivated by her legitimate work in defence of reproductive rights in Poland.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Poland to:

1. Drop all charges against woman human rights defender Justyna Wydrzyńska;
2. Cease targetting human rights defenders in Poland, in particular the defenders of reproductive rights, and guarantee in all circumstances that they will be able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals.