

5 August 2020

Poland: Two LGBTI+ rights defenders arrested

On 3 and 4 August 2020, **Margot** and **Lania**, two LGBTI+ rights defenders who go by pseudonyms for security purposes, were arrested in Warsaw for placing rainbow flags into the hands of several statues in the Polish capital.

[Margot and Lania](#) are LGBTI+ rights defenders and activists from “Stop Bzdurom” (Stop Bullshit), an initiative created in response to “Stop Pedophilia”, a campaign that publicly associates LGBTI+ people with paedophiles. The initiative also protests the so-called self-proclaimed “LGBT-free zones” that have been declared in an estimated 30% of the country. “Stop Bzdurom” uses performances and street actions to bring public attention to discrimination against LGBTI+ people.

On the evening of 3 August 2020, Margot was arrested by police in the street, handcuffed and put into an unmarked police car, following a warrant issued by the Prosecutor’s office. On the morning of 4 August 2020, her colleague Lania was also arrested. Both defenders are currently detained and charges have yet to be brought against them. Their colleagues learned that their detention is likely in relation to a previous street action where they put rainbow flags into the hands of several statues in Warsaw, including those of Siren, the symbol of Warsaw, Copernicus and Jesus Christ. This action was intended to highlight the lack of protection of LGBTI+ people by the state and religious institutions of Poland and to seek the symbolic protection of Polish monuments. Both defenders had access to a legal counsellor but at the time of writing had not been questioned by the police. One of the defenders is non-binary and may face additional risks in detention linked to her gender.

It is believed that both defenders may face criminal charges for “offending religious beliefs”, as was the case with woman human rights defender Elzbeta Podlesna, who was arrested last year in relation to her posting of stickers displaying the Black Madonna of Czestochowa with a rainbow halo. Elzbeta Podlesna was indicted on the basis of Article 196 of the Criminal Code for “offending religious beliefs”.

Front Line Defenders condemns the detention of Margot and Lania as it believes that they were arrested in retaliation for their peaceful and legitimate work in the defence of LGBTI+ rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the Polish authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Margot and Lania as Front Line Defenders believes that they have been held solely as a result of their peaceful and legitimate human rights work;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Margot and Lania while in detention adheres to the conditions set out in the Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights;
3. Guarantee in all the circumstances that human rights defenders in Poland can carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisal and without any restrictions.