

STATEMENT

Commissioner urges Poland's Parliament to reject bill which restricts access to abortion care

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"I am deeply concerned to learn that this week the Polish Sejm pursued the examination of a bill called "Stop Abortion", prepared by a group of citizens", said Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.

"Poland has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe, permitting abortion in three circumstances only: when there is a risk to a woman's health or life, a severe foetal impairment, or the pregnancy is the result of sexual assault.

If adopted, the draft law would remove the possibility of terminating the pregnancy in case of severe foetal impairment, including in cases where such impairment is fatal. This step would be at variance with Poland's obligations under international human rights law. In particular, it would endanger women's right to freedom from ill-treatment and go against the principle of non-retrogression prohibiting any measures that diminish existing rights in the field of health.

Preventing women from accessing safe and legal abortion care jeopardises their human rights. I therefore urge the Polish Parliament to reject this legislative proposal and any other legislative proposal that seeks to further limit women's access to their sexual and reproductive rights in Poland."