



**PRESS RELEASE: Today is a very bad day for women in Poland**  
23 September 2016

Two bills on abortion, both submitted through citizen's petitions, were debated in the Sejm, the Polish parliament, yesterday afternoon and evening. Today, a vote was taken on both of them. The first, entitled the "Stop Abortion" bill, introduced a total ban on all abortions without exceptions and would criminalise women who have an abortion with sentences of up to five years. The bill would stop antenatal screening and sexuality education. It equates women's right to health with the rights of embryos. Polish women will be forced to give birth even if they are victims of rape, have a serious fetal abnormality and even when their health and lives are at risk. Today, it was passed at first reading and was sent for further consideration to a parliamentary commission, following support from 267 MPs. 154 MPs voted against and 11 abstained.

The second bill, entitled "Save the Women" proposed to liberalise the current, already highly restrictive, law on abortion. It would permit abortion until the 12<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy. Additionally, it called for sexuality education, broad access to modern contraception reimbursed by the state, antenatal screening and other elements of reproductive health care. It was defeated by a majority vote on the first reading by 230 MPs, while 173 MPs voted to send the bill to a commission, and 15 abstained.

Last week there was a major national demonstration against the Stop Abortion bill, in which thousands participated. For further background, read [this](#).

In the days leading up to the vote, on social media people in Poland sent photos of themselves dressed in black, as a statement of protest. See a sample of photos [here](#).

Krystyna Kacpura, Executive Director, Polish Federation for Women & Family Planning, said today: "The discussion in Parliament regarding these bills was outrageous. Certain members of Parliament claimed that Poland will be the beginning of a new pro-life civilization. They expect that other countries will follow. Women's rights have been completely rejected and held in contempt by them."

You can find a short statement from the ASTRA Central and Eastern European Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Health [here](#) and the full text of a Joint Advocacy Statement, which was endorsed this week by a range of international advocates for safe, legal abortion, [here](#).

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