

URGENT ACTION

STOP HARASSMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

On 6 May at around 6am the police raided the home of prominent human rights defender Elżbieta Podleśna, arrested her and kept her in detention for several hours. The police claimed to have found copies of posters depicting the Virgin Mary with a halo around head and shoulders in the colours of the LGBTI flag in her home. She is being investigated for “offending religious beliefs”, a criminal offence that carries up to two years’ imprisonment. Elżbieta Podleśna is being targeted for her human rights activism and this absurd investigation must be stopped.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Minister of Interior, Mr Mariusz Kamiński
Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji
ul. Stefana Batorego 5
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Dear Minister of Interior,

*I am writing to express my concern over the ongoing investigation against human rights defender **Elżbieta Podleśna** for “offending religious beliefs”, after the police raided her home at 6am on 6 May and allegedly found copies of posters depicting the Virgin Mary with a halo around head and shoulders in the colours of the LGBTI flag.*

Following the raid Elżbieta Podleśna was arrested and taken into detention for several hours. The police also confiscated her electronic equipment, including her laptop, phone and memory cards.

Having, creating or distributing posters such as these should not be a criminal offense, and is protected under the right to freedom of expression.

Elżbieta Podleśna is already facing numerous legal proceedings stemming solely from her peaceful activism. The way she is targeted with absurd charges in this case is consistent with this pattern of harassment.

I therefore urge you to ensure that the investigation against Elżbieta Podleśna for “offending religious beliefs” is halted immediately, that the police return all of Elżbieta Podleśna’s belonging and that she can carry out her peaceful actions free from harassment and reprisals.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Human rights defender Elżbieta Podleśna had just returned from a trip to Belgium and the Netherlands with Amnesty International, when her home was raided by the police at 6am on 6 May. It remains unclear why it was necessary to investigate Elżbieta Podleśna or why the prosecutor's office authorised the raid instead of just summoning her to the police station to testify. Elżbieta Podleśna was arrested by the police and taken into detention for several hours. The police also confiscated her electronic equipment, including her laptop, phone and memory cards.

Elżbieta Podleśna is suspected of "offending religious beliefs", after the police claimed that they found copies of a posters depicting the Virgin Mary with a halo around head and shoulders in the colours of the LGBTI flag, when they raided her home. The image had been posted around the town of Płock, in central Poland, at the end of April. Having, creating or distributing posters such as these, should not be a criminal offense and is protected under the right to freedom of expression. Poland is bound by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), as well as the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the EU, to respect, protect and promote the right to freedom of expression.

This case should be seen in the broader context of harassment of activists and human rights defenders in Poland. Elżbieta Podleśna is facing at least 14 different proceedings in relation to her peaceful activism and she is under constant police surveillance. As documented in the recent report [The power of "the street": Protecting the right to peaceful protest in Poland](#), this form of harassment is common against outspoken activists and human rights defenders.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Polish and English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 6 November 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Elżbieta Podleśna (she/her)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS: Embassy of Poland, 47 Portland Pl, Marylebone, London W1B 1JH