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**Newsletter Europe November 2020**

Dear Activists, Amnesty supporters and Local groups

Over the last few months we have admired the courage of women leading the protests against repression and injustice, resisting violence and intimidation. More than 400000 women were marching on Wednesday for their reproductive rights in Poland. Over the summer we have seen women marching for democracy in Belarus. 3 Polish women : Elzbieta, Anna and Joanna are threatened with jail sentences for claiming the right to freedom of expression and standing up against discrimination and hate.  <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/poland-activist-elzbieta-podlesna/>.

On 29th September 2020 Amnesty International released long awaited and previously delayed due to the pandemic situation report on criminalizing peaceful protests in France. (Full report is attached) And in Hungary and Poland the rule of law, the independence of courts and judges and therefore the right to a fair trial is under attack.

Defend the Human Rights defenders ! Please continue to take action.

For further information, group talks and long term involvement on France please contact our Western Europe coordinator Anna Radzikowska [anna.radzikowska@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:anna.radzikowska@amnesty.org.uk)

For further information on Belarus please contact Tess Linton. Please note that Belarus falls under the Former Soviet Union team and is not usually covered by the Europe team. For any more involvement please contact the Belarus coordinator directly at

[tess.linton@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:tess.linton@amnesty.org.uk)

For group talks on Turkey , information, and involvement in the case of Eren Keskin please contact our coordinator for Turkey Helen Clarke [helen.clarke@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:helen.clarke@amnesty.org.uk)

For Central Europe, Balkans and work on Human Rights of Roma and Refugees please contact [Ulrike.schmidt@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:Ulrike.schmidt@amnesty.org.uk)

Best regards Ulrike

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**“Eyes on France” campaign**

**29 September 2020 -10 April 2021**

By Anna Radzikowska country coordinator for Western Europe anna.radzikowska@amnesty.org.uk

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**On 29th September 2020 Amnesty International released long awaited and previously delayed due to the pandemic situation report on criminalizing peaceful protests in France.**

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The report examines problematic areas where the French authorities restricted the right to freedom of peaceful assembly unnecessarily and disproportionately from 2018 to date, in contravention of international and regional human rights law and standards that France is party to.

Amnesty International is concerned that the French authorities have failed to respect, protect and ensure the right to freedom of peaceful assembly with sweeping consequences. Urgent and far reaching actions must be taken by the authorities to end the violations highlighted in the report and safeguard this crucial human right in France.

Specific and detailed recommendations include:

1. Stop the criminalization of protesters who have not committed acts of violence and drop the charges against peaceful protesters.
2. Repeal all laws that impose a punishment solely for the exercise of the right to peaceful assembly and are in violation of international human rights law.
3. Amend vague and broad legislation to ensure it is not used arbitrarily to limit people’s right to peaceful protest.
4. Ensure that measures introduced to protect public health do not impose undue restrictions on the right to peaceful protest such as for example blanket bans;

**“Eyes on France”** campaign aims to work towards shifting the narrative in France around the issue of protest –seen by some as leftist, rebellious, violent activity, but also dangerous and not always clear in its causes. AI aim to go back to basics and restate that everyone should be able to protest peacefully and express a dissenting opinion whenever they want to without fear for their safety or of prosecution or fines.

This campaign is one of the priorities for Amnesty France in 2020/2021 and it aims to frame the tone and the narrative to highlight a positive message and solidarity with the people peacefully protesting on the streets of France. It aims to achieve a multitude of objectives across media and communication, mobilisation and activism, advocacy and policy calls. The work at the national level will aim to support and mobilise a critical mass of ‘the street’ to support our campaign and calls, while the international part of the campaign will strengthen international criticism and scrutiny of France.

**Get involved and sign the petition**

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/france-right-to-protest-freedom-of-expression/>

Please find attached the full report : Eyes on France

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**Poland**



For the last 2 years we have been campaigning for the absurd charges of “insulting religion” to be dropped against Elzbieta Podlesna , a brave defender of Womens’ and LGBT rights and a principled activist against intolerance and hate. Now on 4th of November the trial against Elzbieta and two other activists Anna and Joanna is starting . For the last 4 years the Polish PIS government has systematically brought the judiciary under the control of the government, disciplining, sacking and harassing judges who were defending independent

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courts. It is highly questionable if the three women will receive a fair trial. Please take action !

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/poland-activist-elzbieta-podlesna/>

Please read the full statement by Amnesty International to be released on Monday 2. November

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur37/3278/2020/en/>

**Solidarity with Polish Women defending reproductive rights !**

For the last 4 years the right-wing PIS government in Poland has curtailed the right to protest, the independence of the judiciary and repeatedly tried to attack women’s reproductive rights. The first attempt legislating a total abortion ban in 2016 resulted in “Black Monday” where thousands of women dressed in black and went on strike. The Government then retreated.

Poland has already the (with Northern Ireland) most restrictive abortion laws in Europe, only in cases of incest, rape, risk to the life of the mother and severe foetal abnormality can a legal termination of pregnancy be granted. Now, after taking control of the Constitutional Court, the PIS government made another attempt to outlaw abortions. Over 400000 women and supporters took to the streets to protest. Despite excessive use of force by police and many arrests the women are continuing to protest.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/10/poland-authorities-must-protect-peaceful-protests-against-abortion-restrictions/>.

More articles by the BBC :

# [Poland abortion ruling sparks 'women's strike'](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-54716780?fbclid=IwAR0J7Yh2sLa1QT-lek27K1PcRcTMFG41f19tmsqlm7aTWlkAGBQIGcw1FTE)

And the Guardian

[Pro-choice supporters hold biggest-ever protest against Polish government](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/30/pro-choice-supporters-hold-biggest-ever-protest-against-polish-government?fbclid=IwAR2mgfVYP3CSVHdLBJbzQssEfrxTChB0bgXe-RunZk8VcSIKlNikiIHfv3A)

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**Hungary**The rule of law has been backsliding in Europe, particularly in Hungary and Poland, for some years now. What does that mean? Simply put, if human rights are not respected, there is no rule of law. Where there is no rule of law, human rights are not respected. The rule of law means no one is above the law, everyone is treated equally, everyone is held accountable to the same laws, there are clear and fair processes for enforcement, there is an independent judiciary, and human rights are guaranteed for all. The rule of law and human rights are two sides of the same principle, the freedom to live in dignity. For years now, the Hungarian government has fast-tracked problematic pieces of legislation, eroded checks and balances in the country, silences dissent and cracked down on civil society and human rights defenders. Despite such offensive towards human rights and freedoms, the Hungarian government continues to face domestic resistance and international scrutiny for its ongoing rollback on human rights and violations of international and EU law.

Please read six stories and hear testimonies explaining the urgency to defend independent courts in Hungary.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2020/08/hungary-rule-of-law/>

### **Take action now to call on EU governments to stand up for human rights and the rule of law in Hungary, Poland and across the EU please sign and share the on-line petition before mid November**

[**And please take Action !**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/europe-rule-of-law/?fbclid=IwAR3asYlMKOmO1J6CVYPEgssWFoOukLqoiZCPg6QKsgomm6QfvjRD_6H5uoY)

**Update on the situation in Belarus by Tess Linton, country-coordinator for Belarus**

The dire situation in Belarus, which has seen almost 14,000 people detained, continues. This week Amnesty International informed the Belarusian Minister of Internal Affairs that we have collected 191,000 signatures from 184 countries and territories, calling for an end to police violence against peaceful protesters.

The nearly two hundred thousand signatures that we have collected send a clear message to the Belarusian authorities: stop the violence; the world is watching, and people care. We will continue to demand accountability for the killings of peaceful protesters by the Belarusian security forces, the indiscriminate detention of peaceful protesters, the torture of detainees, and the arrests of opposition leaders.

We are still campaigning for the freedom of two human rights defenders, Marfa Rabkova and Maria Kalesnikava. Please take action to help free them from detention:

Marfa Rabkova: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur49/3178/2020/en/

Mariya Kalesnikava : www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur49/3106/2020/en/