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Our Strike is Essential! Together with Polish Women for Freedom of Abortion

ESSENTIAL AUTONOMOUS STRUGGLES TRANSNATIONAL (E.A.S.T.)

Friday 6 November 2020, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 3 November 2020).

AFTER POLAND'S TRIBUNAL tightened its already strict abortion laws on October 22, 2020, protesters filled the streets, ignoring the ban-given the pandemic—on gatherings of more than five. Over the next several days there were a series of street blockades and demonstrations not only in the major cities, but even in smaller towns.

That next Sunday protesters disrupted mass, staging sit ins and unfurling pro-abortion banners. Graffiti sprouted on church walls, demanding a separation of church and state. Activists called for a strike to interrupt production and social reproduction. October 30 saw a demonstration of 100,000 in Warsaw.

This ruling came after Members of Parliament from the rightwing Law and Justice Party (PiS) submitted a legal challenge to a law already so restrictive that 100,000 women are forced to go to other European countries each year in order to obtain a needed abortion. The tribunal, packed with PiS supporters, ruled that abortion is illegal even in cases where the fetus has a serious and irreversible birth defect. The only valid reasons left are in case of rape, incest or to protect the woman's life. But the government, caught off-guard by the massive reaction, has delayed publishing its ruling.

The tribunal's decision, which was in response to a challenge from a group of rightwing MPs, has focused anger on the Law and Justice (PiS) party. PiS has ruled Poland since 2015 and has been accused of eroding democratic norms during its time in power, including by packing the constitutional tribunal with its supporters.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawieck, has called for talks with protesters and opposition MPs, while the PiS-aligned president, Andrzej Duda, suggested a new proposal that would split the difference, allowing abortion in cases of life-threatening birth defects but not for conditions such as Down's syndrome. Duda's proposal will be criticized by both the hard right and those who believe women should have the right to make the decisions about their own bodies.

Meanwhile far-right nationalist men have blocked women activists from entering churches, claiming they are guardians who "protect" the churches. That does not seem to have stopped the women and their supporters. But as a result of collaboration between church and state, the demonstrators have been driven to shout "It's a war" and even anti-clerical slogans.

This statement was published on October 28 on [Left East](#)

WE, ESSENTIAL AUTONOMOUS Struggles Transnational, stand together with the strikers. At our first public assembly joined by dozens of people and watched by thousands from Central and Eastern

Europe and well beyond (see the recording of the meeting [here](#)) we decided to support the strike actions in Poland because in this strike we recognize a powerful response to yet another attack on our freedom.

The abortion ban in Poland is the sign of a reaction against women's freedom that is taking place everywhere around Europe and the world and has intensified in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. In several countries abortion is under attack while the governments use the pandemic crisis to impose restrictions hoping to avoid contestations.

We see a clear link between the intention to condemn women to the destiny of being mothers and their identification with the role of "natural" caretakers that is making them pay the highest price of the pandemic.

Women are overworked, exploited, and underpaid in the so-called essential sectors as nurses, care workers, medical staff, cleaners, logistics and agricultural workers. As such they constantly run the risk of being infected due to years of cutbacks which brought the disastrous collapse of healthcare, entailing a massive lack of personal protections. Migrant women are left with no subsidies, no residence permit, and often without a house, forced to move in dangerous conditions across borders, in search of a wage and a better life, or to remain living in overcrowded and unsafe places.

These attacks on women's and reproductive freedom are central in the reproduction and crystallization of hierarchies in the pandemic society. We stand once again together with Polish women today in their fight for safe, legal and free abortion. Their struggle is strategic in our project of transnational connection and a way to go out of isolation: in it we recognize the claim not to be subaltern, and the possibility to overturn the hierarchies which oppress all of us.

Our lives are essential, our freedom is essential, our strike is essential!

Info and signatures: essentialstruggles@gmail.com

First signatures:

LevFem (Bulgaria)

Transnational Social Strike Platform

InfoKolpa (Slovenia)

The Other Balkan (Balkans)

CLARA Collective (Czech Republic)

Mad Pride (Romania)

Colectiva Urzica (Romania)

MAHALA - Comunitatea Muncitorilor Militanți / Community of Militant Workers (Romania)

LenexRadio (Romania)

Editura Pagini Libere (Romania)

FemBunt (Bulgaria, Germany)

zine fem (Romania)

a szem (Romania)

Dreptul la Oraș / Right to the City (Romania)

FCDL - Frontul Comun pentru Dreptul la Locuire / Common front for the Right of Housing (Romania)

Căși Sociale ACUM! / Social Housing NOW! (Romania)

Asociația Front (Romania)

Feminism Romania (Romania)

FILIA Center (Romania)

Plural Association (Romania)

Asociația SexWorkCall (Romania)

A.casă (Romania)
Precarious (dis)Connections (Italy)
Women's Solidarity Foundation-KADAV (Turkey)
Colectiva Autonomă Macaz (Romania)
LeftEast, transnational web platform
PostOst-Migrantifa (Germany)
Interventionistische Linke (Germany)
Filaret 16 (Romania)
România - Țara Muncii Ieftine (România)
E-Romnja (România)
SC Dunja Skopje (Macedonia)
Assemblea Donne del Coordinamento Migranti (Italy)

Collective

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P.S.

Against the Current

<https://againstthecurrent.org/our-strike-is-essential-together-with-polish-women-for-freedom-of-abortion/>