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Dear Zofia Romaszewska

CONCERS OVER FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY IN POLAND

Thank you for your letter of 7 July 2017 in which you assure us that the authorities in Poland respect the right to the freedom of assembly and the right to freedom of speech.

In relation to the ongoing monthly protests, as well as the right to freedom of assembly in general, Amnesty International is concerned that for months now, the government of Poland seems to have been taking measures to mute critical voices of journalists, judges or activists.

Amnesty International notes that on 2 April 2017, an amendment of the Law on Assemblies entered into force which introduced a new provision on “cyclical demonstrations”, that is, those organized by the same entity at the same location several times a year. Under the amendment, these assemblies have a priority over any other gatherings at a given time and location. On this basis, the authorities in Warsaw issued bans on several assemblies notified for 10 of April, May and June in central Warsaw other than the “cyclical” monthly assemblies. Amnesty International is concerned that during the last monthly protest on 10 June, the “non-cyclical” protesters were not allowed to the site of legal demonstration. In addition protesters were held for a period of time which impacted their ability to exercise their right to assembly.

Amnesty International is monitoring the protests in Warsaw on 10 July and continues to scrutinize the use of criminal and administrative law against protesters in Poland. After the protests in June, Amnesty International called on the Polish authorities to ensure that people are able to take part in demonstrations as a means of expressing their views.

We hope to continue our dialogue with you on this important issue and will be in touch to arrange a meeting with our colleagues at your convenience.

Grateful for your attention to these matters, I remain

Respectfully yours

Gauri van Gulik, Deputy Director
Europe and Central Asia Regional Office