

Statement of I/NGOs in response to the Migration Strategy in Poland and in support of the right to international protection

"I couldn't believe this is Europe."

— Hamza from Yemen, testimony from the Polish-Belarusian border¹.

We, the undersigned non-governmental organisations in Poland and across Europe, are deeply alarmed by Poland's declared intentions to suspend access to asylum, posing a significant threat to the fundamental rights of those seeking safety. We call for a responsible debate about human rights in the context of migration that is inclusive of the voices of civil society organisations as well as refugees and asylum-seekers themselves.

On 15 October 2024, the Polish Government adopted a document titled "Poland's Migration Strategy for 2025-2030. Regain Control. Ensure Security." This document introduces the possibility of temporarily and territorially suspending access to asylum procedures in Poland, adding to a dangerous trend of narrative and policy change with potentially long-lasting repercussions for the entire region. It undermines values such as solidarity, respect for human rights and dignity, the rule of law, social justice, and protection of refugees — values that make the European Union stronger, not weaker, in the face of challenges.

This issue concerns people from the European Union committed to protecting and respecting shared values and human rights, which stem from our shared humanity. It is especially troubling that the European Council has not condemned the proposal to suspend asylum access and has expressed solidarity with the Government of Poland². By raising international awareness, we hope this statement will underscore the gravity of the situation for European society as a whole and rally the support of those who uphold common European values.

Europe's experience of war has shaped global ethical and legal standards. Democracy and the rule of law are the pillars of the modern European legal order and we must not forget the history and legacy that underpin the foundations of the European institutions.

The right to seek asylum in Europe is enshrined in international and European law, including the 1951 Refugee Convention, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention Against Torture, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. It is also protected under Article 56 of the Polish Constitution. States are under a positive obligation to respect these standards, not only in recognition of individual rights but as an essential part of a cohesive human rights protection system rooted in the rule of law. These legal instruments ensure that individuals fleeing persecution or serious harm have the right to seek protection, initiate formal procedures, and have their cases examined on an individual basis. At the heart of this system is the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the return of individuals to countries where their lives or freedoms would be at serious risk. States have a legal duty to comply with binding international law, safeguarding human dignity, ensuring that vulnerable people are not sent back to danger, and upholding Europe's commitment to human rights and refugee protection.

¹ [We have only one war, which is immigration, which is you. The Policy of Pushbacks and border forces violence on the Polish-Belarusian Border.](#) Grupa Granica, We Are Monitoring, Warsaw 2024, p. 18

² [European Council meeting \(17 October 2024\) – Conclusions](#), EUCO 25/24

We have long awaited the announcement of a much-needed migration strategy. However, excluding civil society from the consultation process has resulted in a document that was not built on the wealth of expertise and experience of Polish NGOs and civil society representatives.

It has now been a month since the Government of Poland announced the possibility of temporarily and territorially suspending human rights. Many public statements³ have been made by Polish civil society and academia raising concerns about this issue. However, their concerns have not been sufficiently addressed by the Government of Poland.

We, the undersigned members of Polish civil society, reaffirm our readiness to share expertise and cooperate with the government and local authorities in building and implementing a ethically responsible migration and integration strategy for a safe Poland grounded in European democratic values and the rule of law. Migration policy decisions must be made through meaningful, good-faith consultations with civil society.

We call on the Government of Poland to respect its legal obligations to provide access to asylum and protection procedures and to engage in meaningful collaboration with all relevant civil society actors. We also call on European Member States, institutions, and civil society to show their commitment to European law and values by reaffirming the right to seek asylum for all. National security and refugee protection can and must coexist: the ultimate guarantee of both state security and the safety of individuals lies in adherence to the law and the protection of human rights. These rights are non-negotiable, just as the humanity of every individual is non-negotiable and cannot be suspended.

Signatories:

I/NGO or NGO network operating in Poland:

Akcja Demokracja
Amnesty International Polska
Centralna Rada Romów w Polsce
Conflict Kitchen / Kuchnia Konfliktu
ELIL (European Lawyers in Lesbos)
Europejskie Ugrupowanie na Rzecz Edukacji i Kreowania Aktywności "EUREKA"
European Fem Institute
Federacja Inicjatyw Oświatowych
Federacja Znaki Równości
Foundation Ukraine
FUNDACJA KOVCHEG
Fundacja Artonomia
Fundacja Blind&Proud
Fundacja Centrum Integracji Kobiet NejmovirnaPL
Fundacja Czas Kobiet
Fundacja Dobra Fabryka
Fundacja Dobra Wola

³[Appeal of social organisations in Poland to the Polish Prime Minister for public consultation on migration policy](#) 18th October 2024 and other statements of organizations: [Migration Consortium](#), [Association for Legal Intervention](#), [Grupa Granica](#), [Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center](#), [Ocalenie Foundation](#).

Fundacja dla migrantów DOBRY START im. A.G.Farah
Fundacja Emic
Fundacja Habitat for Humanity Poland
Fundacja Humanity in Action Polska
Fundacja Interakcja
Fundacja Inicjatywa Dom Otwarty
Fundacja Inicjatyw Społeczno-Ekonomicznych
Fundacja Jesuit Refugee Service Poland
Fundacja Jesteśmy Ważni
Fundacja Koper Pomaga - Copernicus Group
Fundacja Miasto Obywatelskie Lubartów
Fundacja na rzecz Różnorodności Społecznej
Fundacja Network of East-West Women, NEWW-Polska
Fundacja Ocalenie / Ocalenie Foundation
Fundacja Panoptykon
Fundacja Polskie Forum Migracyjne
Fundacja Równość.org.pl / Równość.org.pl Foundation
Fundacja Rozwoju Dzieci im. J. A. Komeńskiego
Fundacja The Warsaw House
Fundacja To Proste
"Fundacja w Stronę Dialogu"
Fundacja „Dom tam gdzie Ty”
Fundacji Integracji I Rozwoju Cudzoziemców w Polsce
Grupa Granica
Grupa Zagranica
HIAS Poland
Inicjatywa "Nasz Rzecznik"
Instytut na rzecz Państwa Prawa
International Rescue Committee in Poland
Komitet Obrony Demokracji
Konsorcjum Migracyjne
Lekarze bez Granic / Médecins Sans Frontières
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Poland
Stowarzyszenie na rzecz imigranckich rodzin osób z niepełnosprawnością "Patchwork"
Peace Ambassadors Poland
Plan International Poland
Podkarpackie Stowarzyszenie dla Aktywnych Rodzin
Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH)
Polish Medical Mission
Siła kobiety
Stowarzyszenie "Dla Ziemi"
Stowarzyszenie Dialog Społeczny
Stowarzyszenie Egala
Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej (Association For Legal Intervention)
Stowarzyszenie Jesteśmy Razem
Stowarzyszenie Laboratorium Działań dla Pokoju Salam Lab
Stowarzyszenie Lambda Warszawa
Stowarzyszenie Mudita
Stowarzyszenie Nomada

Stowarzyszenie No To Ci Pomogę
Stowarzyszenie Pontes
The Association of Creative Initiatives „ę”
Ukrainian House Foundation / Fundacja "Ukraiński Dom"

I/NGO or NGO network from Europe, in solidarity:

Action for Women Switzerland / Greece
ARSIS Association for the Social Support of Youth
Association "I want to help refugees" (Latvia)
Association for Integration and Migration (SIMI)
Association Human Constanta International
ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH OF URBAN THEORY AND PRACTICE INOVA
AsyLex
Collective Aid
EmpowerVan
Fenix - Humanitarian Legal Aid
Greek Forum of Refugees
Inter Alia
INTERSOS
INTERSOS HELLAS
Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Malta
Jesuit Refugee Service Serbia
Jesuit Refugee Service UK
Jesuiten-Flüchtlingsdienst Deutschland | Jesuit Refugee Service Germany
JOVESOLIDES SPAIN
JRS Belgium
JRS Bosnia and Herzegovina
JRS Europe
JRS France
JRS Kosovo
JRS Romania
Nonviolent Peaceforce
No Name Kitchen
Northern Ireland Council for Racial Equality
Oxfam
Public Institution Roma Community Centre
PRAB Initiative
Roditelji u akciji - Roda
Russian Democratic Society UK
Sienos Grupė
Terre des Hommes Germany
The Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration (ASGI)
Yoga and Sport with Refugees