

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL QUOTE

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## **Poland: Presidential veto is a step back from the brink**

Following an announcement by Poland's president Andrzej Duda that he will veto two controversial judicial reform bills which would have granted the ruling Law and Justice Party wide ranging control of the judiciary, Gauri Van Gulik, Deputy Europe Director at Amnesty International, said:

"With this decision President Duda has pulled Poland back from the brink of all-out assault on the rule of law. These reforms would have brought the justice system fully under the heel of the government, removing judicial independence and jeopardizing fair trial rights in Poland.

"It is partly thanks to people power that this alarming scenario has been averted. Since these reforms were announced, tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets in Poland to defend their freedoms, and President Duda's unexpected announcement is a tribute to the power of public protest.

"While we welcome today's announcement, deep concerns remain about the independence of Poland's judiciary. We are calling on President Duda to veto a third bill, which gives the government the power to appoint heads of the common courts.

"Hundreds of protesters may face prosecutions for their participation in these protests, showing exactly why judicial independence is so important. Until the third bill is vetoed, their right to fair trials will be in jeopardy."

### **Background**

The amendment of the Law on the Supreme Court entered the first hearing in the lower chamber Sejm on 18 July and was adopted by the Senate on 22 July, but needed presidential approval to be signed into law.

Since Friday, the police have ID-checked over 200 protesters, many of whom were fined for blocking the streets or climbing through the police barriers. The majority refused to pay fines and preferred to stand trial in court. Amnesty International is monitoring a number of these cases.

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