

The Coronavirus Pandemic: What else is being forgotten?

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Poland and the Abortion Ban

As the Coronavirus lockdown rules have made street protest impossible in some countries, the Polish conservative government has tried to push through a controversial proposal to tighten abortion law, which is already one of the strictest in Europe. The new bill, seeking to outlaw abortions in the case of foetal abnormalities, could put the lives and wellbeing of women at risk.

Previous attempts have faced opposition and mass protests. On 3rd of October 2016 people in 147 Polish towns, outraged by politicians' public statements, went out to protest for their rights. The day was rainy and most of the attendants had umbrellas- from then on the umbrella has become a symbol of protest and women's rights, similar to the symbol being used in other countries.

But this time, in 2020, not only can't Polish people gather to peacefully express their opposition to the bill, but they are also focused on their uncertain future and health.

However, that hasn't stopped some people from peacefully protesting against the bill. On 14th of April, dozens of women in cars and on bikes with placards and banners blocked a roundabout in the centre of Warsaw.

The resistance started even earlier. People who stayed at homes put up posters, banners, and umbrellas in their windows or on the balconies. There have also been online protests.

On 16th of April Polish Parliament sent the abortion bill to 'further work'. It means that the bill has been neither rejected or accepted and it can be potentially taken into further consideration. In May, legal abortion became even more difficult to access as the Polish Government pushed through new law saying that a doctor who refuses to provide abortion treatment on the basis of conscience clause is not obligated to point a patient to another doctor. Protests continue.

This is just one example of how people are still using peaceful activism to speak up about the causes they believe in, even if the pandemic is restricting the usual methods they would use.

Similar to other countries around the world, Poland has seen a spike in racism and xenophobia during the pandemic. You can find out more about this from the Never Again Association, Poland's anti-racism organisation.

<https://www.peacemuseum.org.uk/the-coronavirus-pandemic-what-else-is-being-forgotten>