

POLAND REVIEW

III. Media Freedom and Pluralism

C. Framework for journalists' protection, transparency and access to documents

Other

In 2023, under the Universal Periodic Review, Poland supported a recommendation to strengthen media pluralism and refrain from actions that may undermine media freedom ([A/HRC/52/15/Add.1](#), para. 114.112).

IV. Other institutional issues related to checks and balances

B. Independent authorities

Independence, resources, capacity and powers of national human rights institutions ('NHRIs'), of ombudsman institutions if different from NHRIs, of equality bodies if different from NHRIs and of supreme audit institutions

In 2023, under the Universal Periodic Review, Poland supported several recommendations related to strengthening the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights by allocating the appropriate human and financial resources for the fulfilment of its mandate ([A/HRC/52/15/Add.1](#), paras. 114.44, 114.45).

D. The enabling framework for civil society

Rules and practices having an impact on the effective operation and safety of civil society organisations and human rights defenders. This includes measures for protection from attacks – verbal, physical or online – intimidation, legal threats incl. SLAPPs, negative narratives or smear campaigns, measures capable of affecting the public perception of civil society organisations, etc. It also includes measures to monitor threats or attacks and dedicated support services.

In March 2023, some UN Special Procedures¹ strongly condemned the sentencing of Justyna Wyrzyńska, a Polish woman human rights defender who was found guilty of assisting in the process of obtaining abortion and demanded her acquittal from all charges. They said that the charges against Ms. Wyrzyńska appear to be intended to punish her work as a human rights defender and to instil fear among those who are supporting Polish women in accessing safe abortion care, and already working in a hostile environment ([UN experts urge Poland to acquit woman human rights defender Justyna Wyrzyńska | OHCHR](#)).

In March 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, in the preliminary findings and recommendations after her official visit to Poland raised concern over the ongoing criminalisation of human rights defenders in the

¹ Mr. Fernand de Vareennes, Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues; Farida Shaheed, Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Alexandra Xanthaki, UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

country, especially individuals and organisations advocating for the rights of women and girls, LGBTQI+ persons, migrants and refugees. The Special Rapporteur called on the Government of Poland to allow for Polish civil society to remain active and vibrant, and to not let regressive forces impede their essential work, including on LGBTQI+ rights, refugee and migrant rights, and women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Special Rapporteur said that the case of Justyna Wydrzyńska illustrates the shift towards the criminalisation of women's human rights defenders for claiming their rights, and I reiterate my call to drop all charges brought against her. The Special Rapporteur stated that the crackdown has also been experienced through restricting the access of these organizations to funding opportunities provided by the State and urged the Polish authorities to end the unequal treatment and discrimination of civil society organizations and their access to financial resources ().