

World Report 2025 - Poland

In 2024, the coalition government led by Donald Tusk that came to power in December 2023 started addressing rule of law concerns that developed during the previous Law and Justice (PiS) government. New measures included reform proposals to the judiciary and steps to restore media freedom, some of them controversial. Reforms to strengthen women's and girl's reproductive rights and the rights of LGBT individuals were slow to materialize and insufficient. While Poland opened its borders to refugees from Ukraine, unlawful and sometimes violent pushbacks of migrants and asylum seekers to Belarus continued.

Rule of Law and Public Institutions

In January 2024, Justice Minister Adam Bodnar [presented a bill](#) that aimed to depoliticize the National Council of the Judiciary (NCJ). In April, the Sejm—the lower house of parliament—[adopted amendments](#) to the bill on the NCJ requiring that members of the NCJ be elected by judges, not parliamentarians as had been the case since 2018. In May, taking into account criticism by the Council of Europe Venice Commission, the Senate—the upper house of parliament—[adopted the bill](#) with amendments allowing judges appointed under the previous government (so-called neo-judges) to stand for re-election to the new NCJ. The amendments were rejected by the Sejm in July, resulting in the exclusion of new judges for election to the NCJ. PiS-aligned President Andrzej Duda in August [sent the law to the Constitutional Tribunal](#), stalling the reform process.

In April, Bodnar [established a codification commission](#) tasked with reforming the courts and freeing the prosecutor's office from political influence.

In February, Bodnar [dismissed the president and vice-president](#) of the Poznan district court appointed to their positions by former justice minister Zbigniew Ziobro, and indicated that more dismissals would follow. Also in February, a [competition commission chose](#) Dariusz Korneluk—who in 2016 had been demoted and later faced disciplinary charges when Ziobro led the ministry—to be the new national prosecutor. Bodnar stated that [he would separate the positions](#) of attorney general and justice minister, merged by the previous government.

By June, Bodnar had [initiated dismissal procedures](#) against 81 presidents and vice presidents of courts across Poland at the request of judges in those jurisdictions and with the approval of the court college of presidents. Also in June, President Duda, in violation of the Polish Constitution and EU law, [appointed](#) 60 neo-judges.

The new director of the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution under the Justice Ministry, tasked with educating future judges and prosecutors, in July [decided](#) that neo-judges and judges who signed lists supporting candidates for the neo-NCJ could no longer teach at the school.

Justice Minister Bodnar in August [withdrew two cassation complaints](#) before the Supreme Court that had been filed by former Justice Minister Ziobro. The complaints had sought to overturn verdicts in favor of two judges who had been politically targeted and subjected to disciplinary proceedings by the former government.

In August, Bodnar asked the European Parliament [to lift the immunity](#) of Michal Dworczyk, a new Polish MEP who was head of the prime minister's office under former PiS PM Morawiecki, over his involvement in a scandal triggered by leaked emails published on Telegram in 2021. The emails included discussions between Dworczyk and Morawiecki about cases investigated by the PiS-controlled Constitutional Tribunal and messages to the previous president of the public broadcaster, Jacek Kurski, about public smear campaigns on behalf of the government. Bodnar acted in his

capacity of prosecutor general, an office that in Poland has often been concurrently held by the Minister of Justice.

Freedom of Media

In December 2023, Culture Minister Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz [ordered the liquidation](#) of public broadcasters TVP, Polskie Radio, and the Polish Press Agency. In January, [the Warsaw District Court approved](#) the decision to put the Polish Press Agency into liquidation, and by mid-February [courts also had accepted the liquidation](#) of all regional branches of Polskie Radio.

In February and March, authorities [detained four Ukrainian journalists](#) on two separate occasions for reporting close to the Poland-Ukraine border. In the March incident, the Polish Internal Security Service ordered the deportation of two journalists as “persons who threaten the national security of Poland,” with no further details provided.

Attacks on Civil Society

Legal proceedings against five volunteers providing humanitarian aid to migrants continued. The five were arrested in 2022 and are facing charges of [illegally organizing crossings](#) of the Poland-Belarus border, with prison terms up to five years. The first hearing is [scheduled for January 2025](#). In September, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Michael O’Flaherty [called on Polish authorities](#) to drop criminal charges against the humanitarian volunteers.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people continued to face discrimination and demonization.

In June, Bodnar [revoked a directive](#) issued under previous Justice Minister Ziobro that had prevented recognition of same-sex marriage certificates obtained abroad.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [in a September ruling stated](#) that the lack of legal recognition for same-sex partnerships in Poland left couples in a “legal vacuum” in violation of their human rights. The ECtHR called on Poland to create a legal framework granting same-sex couples the same recognition and protection of their relationships that heterosexual couples enjoy.

Women’s and Girls’ Rights

In August, the government [issued new guidelines](#) aiming to facilitate access to safe abortions. The guidelines state that a recommendation from one specialist doctor is enough to obtain a legal abortion at a hospital, and that doctors performing the procedure should not face prosecution. Reproductive rights activists said the [guidelines are insufficient](#) and called for full decriminalization of abortion.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in August [found that](#) Poland’s restrictive abortion law inflicts serious harm on women, resulting in grave and systematic violations of their human rights. The committee called on Poland to legalize and fully decriminalize abortion and recognize access to abortion care as a fundamental right.

The Sejm in June [adopted amendments](#) to the definition of rape in the criminal code making it a crime to engage in sexual intercourse without consent.

The Supreme Court in August [threw out a case](#) against Deputy Culture Minister Joanna Scheuring-Wielgus, previously an opposition politician, brought against her for offending religious feelings when she staged a protest in a church in 2020 against the previous government's introduction of its near total abortion ban.

Refugees, Migrants, and Asylum Seekers

As of late September, [Poland was hosting 970,120 refugees](#) from Ukraine, out of a total of 1,837,620 who had registered for temporary protection in Poland since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

According to an aid group citing information from the Polish Border Guard Directorate, between December 2023 and August [at least 9,889 pushbacks occurred](#) on the Belarus border. A volunteer group [published footage](#) of a May pushback of migrants by Polish border guards. In September, Commissioner O'Flaherty [called on Polish authorities](#) to stop all summary returns to Belarus.

In March, a Bialystok [court in two separate cases found](#) that border guards had violated the law by pushing Afghan and Ethiopian migrants across the border to Belarus after they crossed irregularly to Poland.

Following the stabbing to [death of a Polish soldier](#) preventing migrants crossing in June, the [government reintroduced a no-go zone](#) at its border with Belarus, preventing aid workers and journalists from operating in the designated area. In September, the government [extended the no-go zone](#) for 90 days.

In July, the [parliament adopted legislation](#) making it easier for border guards, soldiers, and other uniformed staff at the border to use firearms. The law removes criminal liability for employing weapons in certain cases, including "repelling a direct and unlawful attack" that threatens the "life, health or freedom" of officers during an "attack on the inviolability of the state border," or when "counteracting actions directly aimed" at such an attack. President Duda signed the law into effect in August. Commissioner O'Flaherty in September [called on Poland](#) to repeal the law.