

POLAND ASKS PRAGUE TO STOP “ABORTION TOURISM” OF POLISH WOMEN



Warsaw has asked Prague not to approve a law that would facilitate what the Polish government calls “commercial abortion tourism” by Polish women in the Czech Republic, warning that the approval could damage the relationship between the two countries.

The warning was made in a letter, published last week by Polish media, written by Poland’s ambassador in Prague Antoni Wrega. The document says **it is “regrettable that legislative proposals legalizing commercial abortion tourism” in the Czech Republic disregard “Polish legislation protecting the human life” of the unborn.**

Wrega also said that the proposals “encourage Polish citizens to violate the law of Poland”.

In the letter, the diplomat states that, while Poland respects Czech sovereignty and its right to draft its own legislation, it expects “the Czechs to have the same respectful attitude towards democratic processes and cultural values”.

According to Czech media, the country’s health minister Jan Blatný also replied in a letter, saying that the law in question is being debated in the senate and he, therefore, has no say in the matter.

The minister also recalled that allowing foreign women to have abortions in Czech clinics is something that is in line with national and European legislation.

For his part, Václav Láska, leader of the Pirate Party, which promoted the law, said that the issue exclusively concerns “national law” and Czech doctors. As such, Poland’s intervention is inappropriate.

Poland’s Deputy Foreign Minister Szymon Szynkowski vel Sek referred to the conflict in an interview published afterwards, stating that “monitoring the legislative process of (other) countries, particularly in areas that concern or may significantly affect Polish citizens, is not only a right, but also the obligation of Polish embassies”.

A decision by the Polish Constitutional Court last October declared that it is unconstitutional to terminate pregnancy for fetal malformation, the main cause of around 1.000 legal abortions performed in Poland.

Polish law currently only allows voluntary termination of pregnancy in cases of rape, incest or serious risk to the mother’s health.

Polish women’s organizations estimate that between 80.000 and 200.000 Polish women travel abroad each year for an abortion, which has contributed to the emergence of specialized clinics in Germany and the Czech Republic with dedicated Polish teams. They help women leaving Poland to prepare for the journey and the whole process.

After the announcement of the change in abortion legislation, mass demonstrations took place in all Polish cities, in a campaign called ‘Women’s Hell’.

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