

Declaration of the Polish PEN Club

20 November 2020

We demand that using force against participants of peaceful demonstrations held all across the country be stopped immediately. Pursuant to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, citizens have the right to manifest their views and to participate in assemblies even under the circumstances of an epidemic. It is the legal duty of the police to ensure that the demonstrators are safe and protected.

We demand that those officers who have in any way unlawfully used force against protestors and against detained persons be held responsible for their acts, and that the superiors of those officers be punished. It is totally unacceptable to use state police and other military organisations as a tool of party politics. It is totally unacceptable to resort to masked provocateurs from police forces or paramilitary squads armed with batons and turn them against peaceful unarmed demonstrators. Calling upon them to defend some allegedly threatened national or religious values is something which by definition is an incitement to crime.

Further escalation of violence instigated either by issuing such orders or incited by those in power can lead to tragedies remembered all too well from the times of communist Poland. Today, we are faced with the danger of that part of history repeating itself.