

URGENT ACTION

POLAND'S PRESIDENT APPROVES JUDICIAL OVERHAUL BILLS

On 8 December, Poland's Parliament passed two bills which increase the government's control of the judiciary, threatening judicial independence, the rule of law and human rights protection in Poland. On 20 December, President Andrzej Duda signed the bills into law.

On 8 December, the lower chamber of the Polish parliament, the *Sejm*, approved amendments to the Law on the National Council of the Judiciary (NCJ) and the Law on the Supreme Court. The upper chamber of the Polish parliament, the *Senat*, approved the bills on 15 December. President Andrzej Duda did not exercise his power to veto the amendments, signing them into law on 20 December.

The amendments grant parliament – dominated by the ruling party - the power to appoint judges to the NCJ, which is currently a self-regulating body. They also decrease the retirement age of Supreme Court judges from 70 to 65 years, which would require the retirement of about 40% of currently presiding Supreme Court judges. Any Supreme Court judge seeking to continue to work would need to be vetted by the President. Taken together, the amendments would significantly increase the government's control of the judiciary.

Thank you to all those who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network.

This is the third update of UA 173/17. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur37/7504/2017/en/

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