

# A Woman Recounts Getting an Illegal Abortion in Poland



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Protestors during Poland's Black Monday strike. Image via AP.

Poland's parliament recently struck down a total abortion ban instigated by the conservative law and Justice (PiS) party, a move largely attributed to the huge protest organized by Polish women on October 4, known as Black Monday. However, abortions laws in Poland remain extremely restrictive.

Since 1993, the Abortion Compromise has made abortion legal only if there was rape, incest or a severe deformation of the fetus. The law's restrictive severity fluctuated through out the nineties, but in 1997 an exception for when "a woman is in hard life conditions or in difficult personal situation" was declared unconstitutional.

Vice's Izabela Szumen interviewed one woman who had an illegal abortion in Poland before the ban was removed, who said she became pregnant while in an abusive relationship.

The woman's boyfriend, who worked as a touring musician, demanded she have sex with him without a condom to prove she didn't cheat on him while he was out of town. A few weeks later she took a pregnancy test, and he told her to take care of it. The woman was worried about ordering pills online after reading up on the subject on Women on Web, because they could potentially be confiscated or have complications. A friend gave her contact info for a clinic where she'd received an abortion, and she made an appointment:

I had my first appointment in the middle of the day in a private clinic in the center of Warsaw. I was four weeks pregnant at the time. Given my wages, the procedure was incredibly expensive; it would cost me PLN 3,650 [about \$920]—which was almost four times what I made in a month.

The clinic was clean and elegant; there were no coat hangers or dirty bandages. A nice female doctor examined me and had a routine chat with me about my pregnancy—which wasn't put on my medical records. At the end of the appointment, she asked me whether I wanted to “keep it as it is.” I said I didn't. We scheduled the procedure for the following week in a different clinic.

The woman said she was given anesthesia and blacked out during the procedure. A few hours later she took the bus home, where she started to bleed profusely, soaking her skirt. She had a free follow-up, and was given a shot that was supposed to help, but says she continued to bleed for several days.

“The procedure itself didn't mark me in any way—except for the debt it left me in, which was a serious burden for a while,” the woman told Vice.

“The way my boyfriend and my mother treated me after it happened

definitely left more of a mark on me. At the time, I felt there was no safe way out of the situation—I was worried I might not find anyone willing to help me or lend me the money. That was rough, emotionally.”

You can read the whole interview [here](#).

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