



COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Warsaw,

Adam Bodnar

VII.531.27.2020

Mr Peter Boshier
The Chief Ombudsman
for New Zealand
Email:
info@ombudsman.parliament.nz

Dear Mr Boshier,

the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Poland presents his compliments to the Chief Ombudsman for New Zealand.

The coronavirus pandemic presents a compelling challenge for all the ombudsman institutions these days. Therefore, I would like to express my recognition for all the efforts made by the Office of the Ombudsman for New Zealand to protect individuals' rights during the course of this emergency. I believe that international cooperation of human rights institutions in the matter is of crucial importance at the moment given the global dimension of the challenge and the extraordinary and stringent character of the preventive measures undertaken worldwide.

In this regard, I would like to kindly draw your attention to the current situation of Polish and European citizens in New Zealand during the period of the COVID-19 emergency. The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Poland has been informed that, due to New Zealand's government's measures aimed at containing the virus, especially the decision to move to Level 4 and a lockdown of the country in consequence, Polish and European citizens have been experiencing serious problems with reaching their country by commercial flights or by the repatriation flights. In this context, as the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Poland I acknowledge with satisfaction the efforts

undertaken by the New Zealand authorities and recent decisions to facilitate foreign nationals stranded in New Zealand in their attempts to access domestic flights and internal transit on their way to embark international flights. Similarly, the repatriation flights allowed again by the New Zealand government may solve the pertinent problem of thousands of travelers.

Nevertheless, I would like to draw your attention to possible problems in the matter that may result from the limitations in the number of existent international flight connections. In this situation, it is likely some foreign nationals may be forced to stay longer in New Zealand. In my opinion, the most important issue at stake of the Polish and European citizens locked down in New Zealand during the coronavirus emergency are their living conditions *ad interim*. Due to the above-mentioned extraordinary measures, many have found themselves without employment and insurance coverage. Many of them have not got sufficient material and finance resources to meet their basic needs. The Commissioner has been informed that some of them have even difficulties finding accommodation during this period and are forced to reside in very poor conditions. I would like to draw your attention also to the potential problem of the lack of necessary medical care in case of foreign citizens gone down with COVID-19. In my opinion, in these circumstances, deployment of a socio-economic support package for the concerned should be envisaged by competent authorities.

I am aware that New Zealand's citizens are also endangered gravely by the epidemics. I would like to assure you of our solidarity with you and all New Zealanders during this emergency situation. I am following communication of the Office of the Ombudsman for New Zealand via your webpage: <https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/news>.

At the same time I would be extremely grateful if you could consider the abovementioned problems of Polish and European citizens in your country. Any help which is possible from your side will be of great importance.

I would like to inform you that all the actions in New Zealand on behalf of the Polish government are coordinated by the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to New Zealand, His Excellency Mr Zbigniew Gniatkowski (wellington.amb.sekretariat@msz.gov.pl). If you would need any help or information from my office, please contact Mr Mirosław Wróblewski,

the Head of the Constitutional, International and European Law Department
(m.wroblewski@brpo.gov.pl).

I avail myself of this opportunity to extend to you the assurances of the highest consideration.

Yours sincerely

Adam Bodnar

The Commissioner for Human Rights
of the Republic of Poland