

UN experts urges Poland to ensure unrestricted 'civic space' during climate talks

Poland's new law designed to address safety concerns during the United Nations climate change conference to be held there later this year could infringe on the privacy of environmentalists and curtail their rights to protest peacefully, the world body's human rights experts said Monday.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) will take place in a southern Polish city of Katowice from 26 November to 16 December.

"For the COP24 to be a true success, the Polish Government must do its utmost to prepare and hold the meeting in a manner that facilitates the climate change negotiations and also ensures [meaningful civic space](#) that is free from undue surveillance and restriction," said a group of UN experts in a news release issued by the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR).

These experts – including Clement Nyaletsossi Voule, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and Joe Cannataci, Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy – raised the issue, as the Polish Government briefed officials about COP24 at a preparatory meeting being held in Bonn, Germany.

"All eyes are on the Polish Government to see how, as the host and the president of COP24, it will honour its human rights obligations and uphold its responsibility to ensure free and unfettered access for broader participation," the experts said.

Specifically, Article 17 of the new legislation appears to give sweeping surveillance powers to the police and secret services to collect and process personal data about all COP24 participants, and Article 22 appears to prevent spontaneous peaceful assemblies in Katowice.

The UN experts encouraged the Government to [clarify](#) these matters.