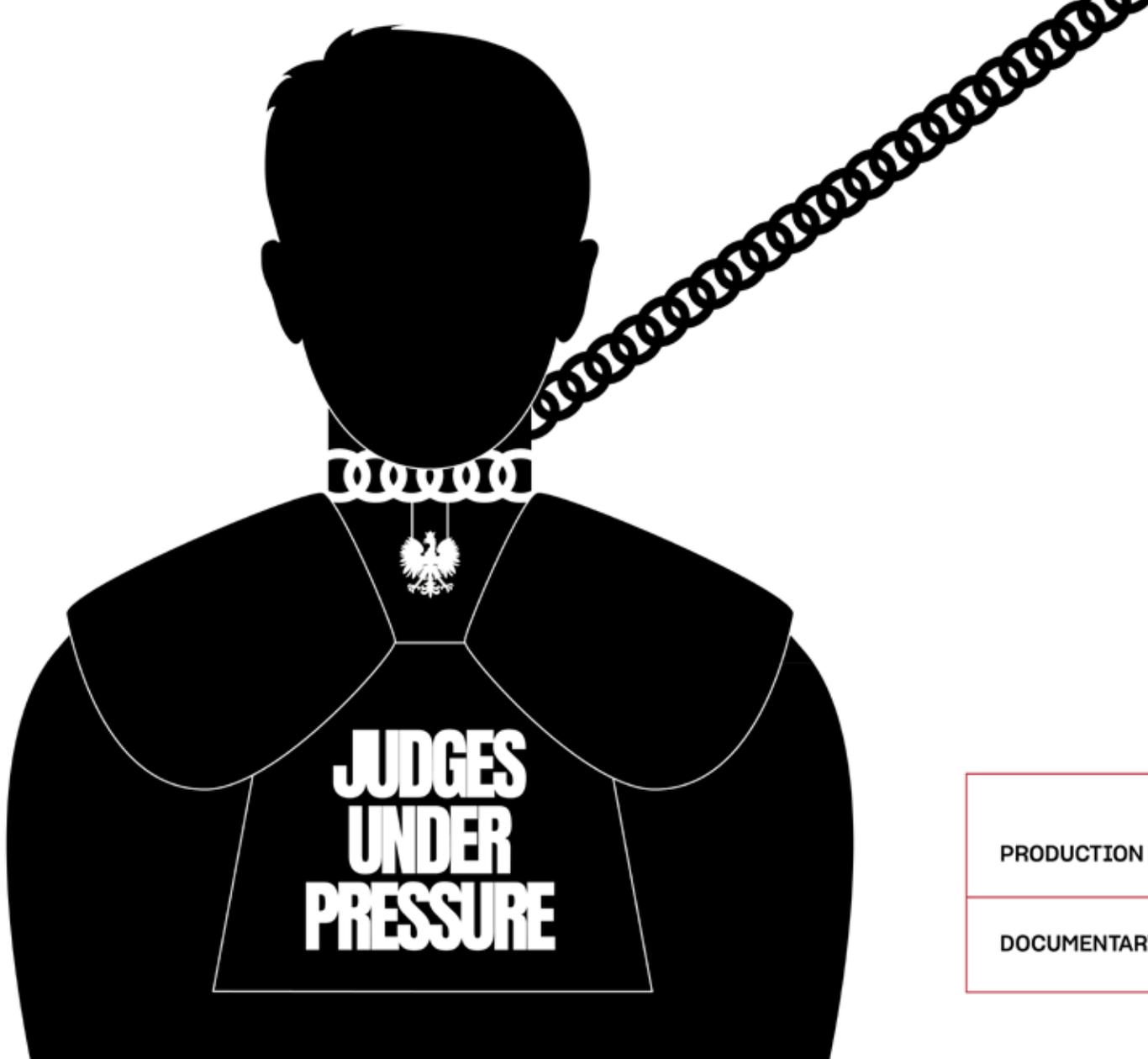


ORLI

HOUSE MAGDOBY FILMOWE 2022

nominacja



PRODUCTION LOLLIPOP
FILMS

DOCUMENTARY, 87 MIN.

**THE TALE OF JUDGES'S RESISTANCE
IS TOLD WITH PASSION AND MUTUAL TRUST
BETWEEN THE FILMMAKERS AND CHARACTERS**
/ Tygodnik Powszechny

**THIS IS A FILM WITH THE TEMPO
OF A FAST TICKING CLOCK**
/ Modern Times Review

**IN A NUTSHELL, "JUDGES UNDER PRESSURE"
IS TESTIMONY THAT THE END OF INDEPENDENT COURTS
WILL TOUCH EVERY ONE OF US**
/ Interia Film



**JUDGES
UNDER
PRESSURE**

LOGLINE

While democracy and the rule of law in Poland are under assault, judges risk their freedom to defend the rights of citizens.



SYNOPSIS

In 2015 the Law and Justice Party (PiS) comes to power in Poland. The party's leader, Jarosław Kaczyński, announces total reform of the state and seeks unconstrained power. Independent courts stand in his way.

"Judges under pressure" tells the story of defiant judges who stand in defence of the Constitution and the separation of powers. One of these judges is Igor Tuleya who withstands the pressure and issues verdicts that are unfavourable to those in power. For the government he is public enemy number one; for protesting citizens - the face of the judges' resistance. In the film we see the consequences of his uncompromising stance, we look at how political pressure affects his life. At the same time, we witness the remarkable solidarity that is shown to him both by other judges and ordinary people. Meanwhile, a cruel illustration reveals the extent to which the rule of law has been dismantled. After the politicised Constitutional Court decides to severely restrict access to abortions, Poland is swept over by the largest wave of demonstrations in its history. Judges take to the streets hand in hand with ordinary people to defend of the rule of law.

A WORD FROM THE FILMMAKERS

“Judges under pressure” is a story of a clash between people and the system. When the foundations of the separation of powers are being destroyed and the government dismantles the mechanisms of the rule of law, responsibility lies with the courts. Every judge is a guardian of the rule of law because only they stand between the people and the power of the state.

In making the film we quickly abandoned attempts to explain legal details to the viewer. Instead of taking on the role of journalists, we decided to assume a human perspective. We tried to get as close as possible to people whose strength of character is now being tested by history.

In the film we follow our protagonists and current events which often take us by surprise. When people go out into the streets nobody waits around for the director - there are more important things to do.

This film is fuelled by the energy of rebellion, the very same that has been bringing people out onto the streets since 2015. Rebellion is what sets the tone and inspires the shape of the whole film. We tell stories mostly with a hand-held camera, keeping close to the experiences of our protagonists. The shots are sometimes dirty and imperfect, but always carry human emotion. When Waldemar Żurek faces a disciplinary proceeding we are with him from 6.30 AM and film what he really goes through. When Igor Tuleya is stripped of his immunity by the Disciplinary Chamber, we see his real reaction. To us it was crucial to keep to the truth of the event, the truth of the experience.

Our film was never meant to be political. This is what we wrote in August 2019:

“We are not making a political film. We are aware of the sensitivity of the subject matter and that judges must be seen as apolitical.

That is why we will take care to show the judges' resistance against the backdrop of badly made law and systemic failings.”

Meanwhile the news broke that the Ministry of Justice had steered the actions of an online hate group which slandered judges. The scandalous Muzzle Law was passed. Unlawful elections were first organised at the cost of 70 million zloty and then cancelled at the last minute. Finally, Poles were illegally stripped of their abortion rights. Millions of people across Poland took to the streets to protest for many months, showing a red card to those in power. In the end the politicised Constitutional Court declared its disobedience to the European Union.

„Judges under pressure” is a film full of emotion and born of emotion. It was created out of anger and frustration at the way in which a group of cynical politicians are wasting the efforts of generations of Poles. It was also created out of admiration for our protagonists: people who persistently protest against lawlessness, giving us a lesson in patriotism and civil courage.

In these circumstances siding with the truth is a civic duty. We did this the in the only way we know - camera in hand.

Kacper Lisowski & Iwona Harris



— PROTAGONISTS

Our protagonists are judges hated by the ruling party.

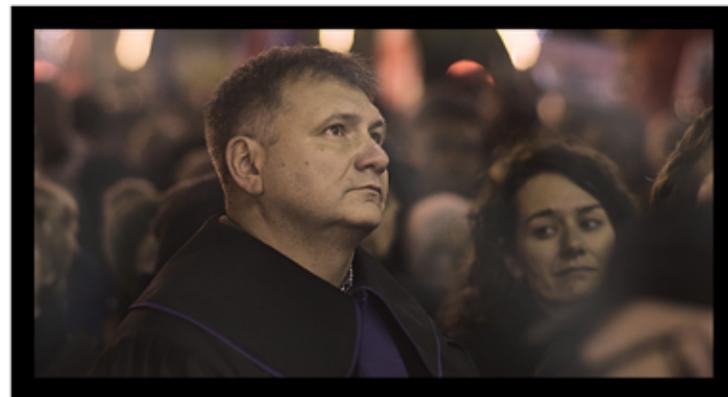
They have now become the accused in disciplinary cases for such crimes as wearing a t-shirt with the word "Constitution" and participating in an educational simulation of a court case. In our film they do not wear gowns and chains, they are not set apart by the judge's desk and the authority of their position. We meet them at a rock concert, meetings with citizens and street demonstrations. We join them in their personal homes and show their human side, we hear about their fears and worries.





Igor Tuleya

Hated by those in power for his uncompromising verdicts and outspoken justifications. He famously denounced the “Stalinist methods” used by the Central Anti-corruption Bureau. He also filed the accusation of high-ranking party officials, including Jarosław Kaczyński, of bearing false witness after a controversial vote held in Parliament’s Column Room. He is one of the judges who have lost their judicial immunity and the right to judge. His engagement and charisma have made Igor an iconic character of the current protests. Member of the Iustitia Polish Judges’ Association.



Waldemar Żurek

One of the most persecuted judges in Poland. Former spokesman for the illegally dissolved National Council of the Judiciary. He is involved in over a dozen disciplinary proceedings and court cases at the European Court of Justice. He persistently refuses to judge alongside people who have been illegally appointed judges by the politicised National Council of the Judiciary, thereby following the verdicts of European tribunals. Member of the Themis Judges’ Association.



PROF. DR hab. inż. JERZY SZYMAŃSKI
KONSTYTUCJA I DEMOKRACJA
24. 7. 2015 r.

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Alongside the judges we will also see lawyers and prosecutors, since the rule of law crisis has led to unprecedented integration in legal circles.

Sylwia Gregorczyk-Abram

lawyer and human rights defender, co-founder of the Free Courts initiative and the Justice Defence Committee. She was the legal representative in cases regarding the ban on the distribution of “LGBT Free Zone” stickers and represented Polish judges (including Waldemar Żurek) at the European Court of Justice.

Krzysztof Parchimowicz

the main face of the resistance to the politicisation of the prosecution. For his critical remarks he has been demoted from the General Prosecution to the regional level. He is systematically moved between different Warsaw units. Former head of the Lex Super Omnia Prosecutors' Association.

Krystian Markiewicz

profesor of law at the University of Silesia and president of the Iustitia Polish Judges' Association. Lecturer and author of tens of publications on civil process and administrative law. Persistent critic of the changes to the judiciary. Initiator of the March of a Thousand Robes. The march was a protest against a bill regarding disciplining judges, referred to as the Muzzle Law.





**JUDGES
UNDER
PRESSURE**

BACKGROUND

25 years of free Poland were a time of increasing aversion to the judicial system. There were many causes: drawn out proceedings, overuse of temporary arrests, discontinuation of proceedings in socially significant cases, bad communication with society.

The Law and Justice Party (PiS) came to power partly due to slogans of judicial reform. Their propaganda included attempts to discredit judges by portraying them as a "caste" that sets itself above the law.

A large portion of society "bought" the narrative according to which judges need to be forced to work, stripped of privileges and disciplined through procedural measures.

This was the beginning of the so-called judicial reform introduced by Zbigniew Ziobro's Ministry of Justice which was in fact an attempt at bringing the courts to heel.

The functions of Minister of Justice and Chief Prosecutor were merged, over 200 heads of courts removed from their posts, loyal disciplinary functionaries appointed and the new National Council of the Judiciary elected by parliament, rather than other judges. The Constitutional Court was taken over to do the government's bidding.

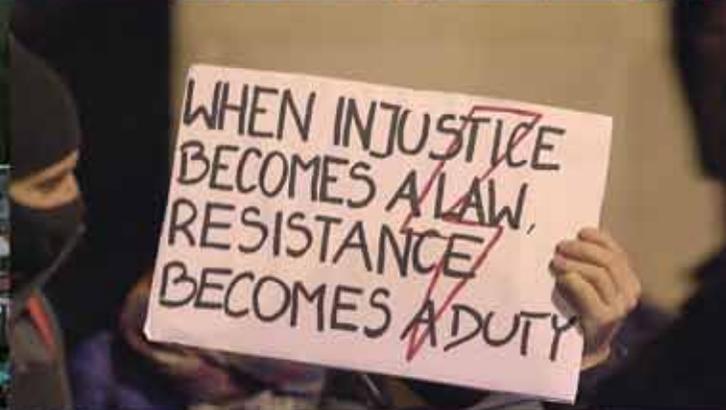
If the reform were to be completed, the judiciary would lose its impartiality and independence and could not reliably supervise the legislative and executive.

However, the government met with resistance. Judges refused to be reduced to the role of obedient civil servants. Rising against the powerful machinery of the state, they found themselves in an entirely new position.

Suddenly, it turned out that judges need to begin a dialogue with the public. They must step down from their pedestals and tell people who they are and what they are fighting for.

Today judges are to be found at rock concerts and book fairs. They protect the rule of law in t-shirts, as well as in their gowns.

An enormous shift has occurred in the way judges perceive themselves and their duty towards society. In the film we wanted to show that change.



LOLLIPOP FILMS / ABOUT US

„Judges under pressure” is a project which we have seen as a challenge right from the beginning. An independent full-length documentary about the rule of law? A film with entirely uncinematic subject matter and an unknown script that is written by the course of life? With protagonists that are viewed as distant, careful, inaccessible? We quickly came to understand that in such a brave and risky project we need to keep together as closely as possible. “Trust” turned out to be the magic word. This film was made on trust. We needed to gain the trust of judges, work with trusted people and trust each other.

This is how the creative duo that makes up Lollipop Films came to be. We call ourselves a duo because partnership is the crucial rule. Although we divide our duties - Iwona Harris is responsible for the production-related and financial side, and Kacper Lisowski for the artistic - all strategic and creative decisions are made together.



Iwona Harris

Is the producer and production supervisor.

An alumna of Łódź Film School who previously studied Political Sciences at the University of Warsaw. Since 2010 she has worked under the brand Lollipop Films. She co-produced the feature film “To Kill a Beaver” directed by Jan Jakub Kolski which was awarded at Karlovy Vary IFF. As an independent producer she debuted in 2018 with the full-length documentary “The Lady of Korczew”, directed by Sławomir Rogowski.

See full credits: <http://lollipopfilms.pl/filmographyiwonaharris.html>

Kacper Lisowski

Is the director and director of photography.

An alumnus of Łódź Film School and the Andrzej Wajda Master School of Film Directing in Warsaw. Works under his direction include the feature-length documentary “World Champion” and the short feature “Father’s Day” which received the Prix de Jeunesse at Clermont-Ferrand ISFF and Silver Lajkonik at Kraków IFF.

The documentary „Judges under pressure” is his latest work as director and director of photography.

See full credits: <http://lollipopfilms.pl/filmographykacperlisowski.html>

OTHER FILM CREW

Bartosz Pietras

is the editor. He studied at Łódź Film School where he now teaches film editing. He began his professional career as a demo reel editor at Squeak Pictures, Los Angeles. Since then, he has worked on numerous fiction and documentary film projects, TV series and commercials. He edited the acclaimed features "Baby Blues" and "Suicide Room", both of which received prizes at the Berlin IFF, as well as the feature-length documentaries "Hugo", "K2. Touching the Sky" and "Walking Under Water" which received numerous awards.

See full credits: <https://filmpolski.pl/fp/index.php?osoba=1149309>



Director and DOP **Kacper Lisowski**

Producer **Iwona Harris**

Screenplay **Iwona Harris, Kacper Lisowski**

Editors **Bartosz Pietras PSM, Marcin Sołtysik**

Sound **Marcin „Bary” Popławski** and others

Translators **Artur Harris** and others

Legal Consultants **LSW**

Music **Maria Peszek** „Sorry Polsko” and

barekprześtań, FISZ EMADÉ TWORZYWO, Kontrola W,

Szumkot, TZN Xenna, WaluśKraksaKryzys

Sound post-production **Uchostudio**

Sound design **Kamil Słodacki**

Sound post-production manager **Marija Mitrovič**

Graphic Design **Marek Kurpios, Mamastudio**

Poster **Marta Ignerska**

Color Correction **Wiktor Sasim**

Online **Marcin Sołtysik**

DCP **HEBO FILM**

Production **Lollipop Films**

World sales **KFF SALES & PROMOTION**

katarzyna.wilk@kff.com.pl



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www.judgesunderpressure.com

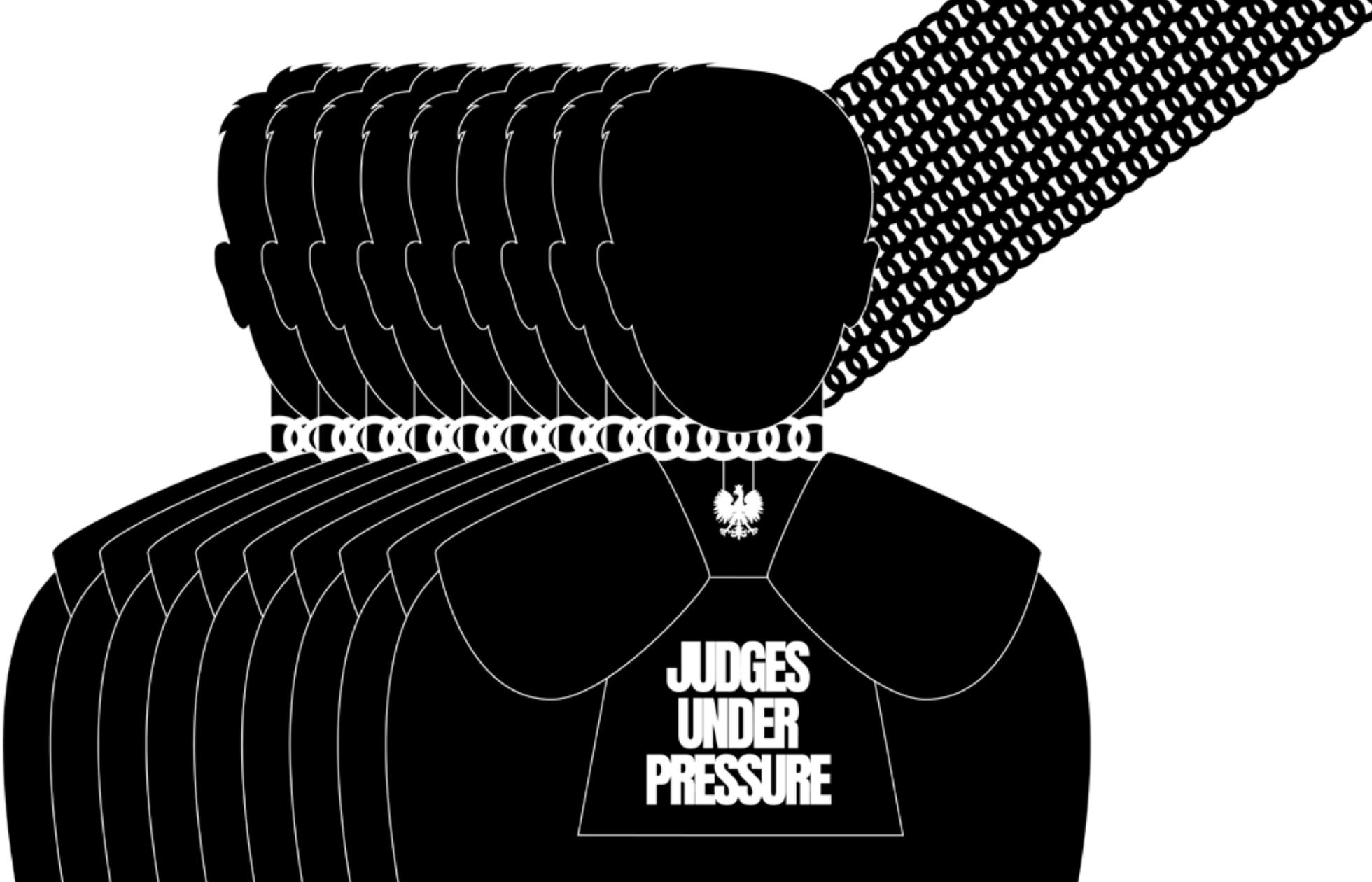
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