



## Fans of Far-Right MP Who Vandalised a Menorah Are Now Selling Merch

By Tim Hume  
December 15, 2023

Experts say T-shirts and mugs glorifying Grzegorz Braun's vandalism of a menorah in the Polish parliament is a part of a wave of online support for his antisemitic act.

Online shops are being swamped with listings for T-shirts and coffee mugs glorifying the actions of a far-right MP who this week extinguished Hanukkah candles in Poland's parliament.



Extremism experts described the wave of support for the racist stunt pulled by far right politician Grzegorz Braun on Tuesday as "shocking".

Braun, a leader of the far-right Konfederacja party, and who has a track record of antisemitic provocations, shocked Poland when he took a fire extinguisher to a menorah that had been lit in a parliament building to mark the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. In the chaotic aftermath of the incident, which filled the room with mist and covered bystanders with powder, Braun railed against Judaism as "satanic."

His actions were roundly condemned by the political establishment, with new Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk labelling his behaviour a "disgrace." Braun has been suspended from the current parliamentary session and his own party's parliamentary group, had his salary cut, and been referred to the public prosecutor.

But since then anti-racist groups have been shocked by visible displays of support for Braun's antisemitic actions, including online marketplaces in Poland being flooded with listings of merchandise celebrating the incident.

Polish anti-racist group Never Again documented dozens of listings for products – mostly T-shirts and coffee mugs – that celebrated Braun's actions on the biggest Polish online marketplace, Allegro, and reported them to the platform. Another major platform, OLX, removed similar items from its site after being alerted by Never Again on Friday.

"It's shocking to see this mini-industry of support for Braun spring up," Never Again head Rafal Pankowski told VICE News.

"They all glorify what Braun did. It's part of a bigger picture of support for him."

One of the items was a t-shirt with a stylised fire extinguisher next to a menorah, with two of the candles blown out, on sale for 65 zlotys (\$16.45). The vendor, a Brzesko-based graphic designer and printer who trades as Adrian White, did not respond to a VICE News request for comment about the item, but posted a message about the t-shirt on Facebook saying that sales had been strong.

"We are liked by few, hated by most; Everyone is afraid of us, especially the Jews," he wrote in the post. "I didn't expect such sales, thanks!"

Pankowski said that his organisation had noticed an "alarming surge" in social media posts expressing support for Braun's actions.

"It's difficult to quantify but it's overwhelming, especially on Twitter," he said, referring to the site now known as X. "Any news item mentioning Braun is immediately followed with a lot of comments glorifying him."

Extreme posts - including an apparent bomb threat targeting parliament's menorah - featured on the account of Jacek Cwięka, a former Konfederacja senatorial candidate from Braun's city of Rzeszów, in eastern Poland.

On Wednesday, the account posted: "I will write it again in the strongest terms. The Polish Sejm, the Polish Senate and the Presidential Palace should be DEJUDAIZED! Remove the Jews and Hanukah as soon as possible!"

When another user asked how this should be achieved, Cwięka's account replied "Preferably with Zyklon B" - referring to the gas used in Nazi death camps to exterminate Jews.

The account then posted that a bomb would explode in the parliament during the official relighting of the Hanukah candles, scheduled to take place on Thursday afternoon, adding the hashtag "#PolishHamas." Cwięka later claimed his account had been hacked, and that he had reported the matter to police, while Konfederacja officials distanced themselves from Cwięka. Parliamentary officials said on Thursday they were monitoring the reports of an apparent threat and had appropriate security measures in place.

Braun's actions appear to have spawned at least one copycat attack. On Thursday night, five masked men toppled a large menorah displayed on a street in the western city of Wroclaw, and burned an Israeli flag. The city's mayor, Jacek Sutryk, wrote on Facebook that he had thought that no one would "even think about keeping up with MP Grzegorz Braun and his fire extinguisher from a few days ago... But I was wrong."

Meanwhile, Braun has found a sympathetic platform for his views on Poland's numerous right-wing digital news sites, mostly hosted on YouTube, giving interviews in recent days where he has remained unapologetic about his actions, despite the threat of potential criminal charges hanging over him. On Friday, Justice Minister Adam Bodnar said that prosecutors would ask the lower chamber of the parliament to waive Braun's immunity as an MP, which would allow him to be criminally charged.

Pankowski said it was impossible to know what was behind the timing of the latest outburst from Braun, a hardline traditionalist Catholic who has been an MP since 2019. But it had been timed for maximum impact, when all eyes were on the Polish parliament ahead of a critical vote of confidence for a new government after years of nationalist rule.

Braun's anti-Jewish bigotry was rooted in classic antisemitic tropes, Pankowski said. Braun has referred to "the war which the Jews have waged against the Polish nation," for example - and in his recent interviews he has also made repeated reference to the war in Gaza.

Pankowski said that, as a former film director - including a 2017 film about Martin Luther and the Protestant revolution - Braun had a flair for the theatrical, and had previously carried out similar stunts, albeit to less attention. In January, he dragged a Christmas tree out of a courthouse in Krakow and dumped it in a rubbish bin on the street, as he had taken offence to it being decorated in pro-Ukrainian and pro-LGBTQ colours.

Online marketplace Allegro did not respond to a VICE News request for comment about the listings by time of publication.

*UPDATE: After the publication of this article, Allegro responded to VICE News saying it was removing the items identified in the story from its platform. "Such auctions are against our terms and conditions and we will be removing them immediately. We will also take proper measures to prevent their relisting," said a spokesperson.*

T. Hume: "Fans of Far-Right MP Who Vandalised a Menorah Are Now Selling Merch". Vice.com, 15.12.2023.

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/n7e5ew/grzegorz-braun-polish-mp-menorah-merch-tshirt-mug>