

## Far-right Polish priest detained at Stansted airport

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25 February 2017

Jacek Międlar held by UK authorities hours before he was supposed to address Britain First rally in Shropshire.

A notorious Polish priest accused of spreading antisemitism and Islamophobia has been detained by UK authorities hours before he was due to address a far-right rally in Shropshire.

Jacek Międlar, a leading figure for rightwing extremists in Poland, was held by UK border officials after landing at Stansted airport, Essex, to prevent him attending the controversial event in Telford.

The rally was organised by far-right group Britain First. Anti-racism campaigners described Międlar's scheduled appearance as further proof of the growing links between British extremists and nationalists abroad.

Branded a "fanatical hate preacher" by anti-racism campaigners in Poland, the 28-year-old attacks his critics as "leftists" opposed to "Polish patriotism".

Telford was reportedly chosen for the anti-Islam march because of a 2016 Daily Mail report that insinuated the market town was "the new Rotherham" owing to alleged child sexual exploitation in the area. The deputy leader of Britain First, Jayda Fransen, last week tweeted: "Come and stand with us against Muslim grooming gangs!"

The protest has been broadly condemned by the town's residents, including the Conservative MP, Lucy Allan, who accused Międlar and Britain First of attempting to "hijack" the experiences of child sex abuse victims for political traction.

Międlar, from Wrocław in west Poland, has cultivated a sizeable following in his country and despite being suspended by his local Catholic church for the content of his nationalist sermons, has addressed tens of thousands people at rightwing rallies.

His speeches target the political left, "Islamic aggression" and immigration and are often accompanied with calls for the "warriors of great Poland" and chants of "God, honour, fatherland".

Anti-racism campaigners have warned he could radicalise some of the 830,000 Poles living in the UK and called on the UK authorities to intervene before his arrival.

On Saturday, UK Border Agency officials reportedly held Międlar shortly after his flight landed specifically to prevent him from travelling to Telford on the grounds of hate speech.

Last year, Międlar was accused of calling Jews a "cancer" who had "swept Poland" during one address to a far-right rally in Białystok, north-eastern Poland, although prosecutors later absolved him of alleged hate-speech offences.

Maciek has stated that he accepted Britain First's invitation to speak in Shropshire in a move to "pool our strength to rebuild a Christian Europe".

Britain First, whose founder Jim Dowson has extensive contacts to far-right networks in eastern Europe, can count 1.4m Facebook followers. However, it struggles to attract significant crowds and is believed to have a membership of between 800 and 1,000 people.

Międłar's invitation to speak in Telford, where at least 2,000 Polish speakers in and around the town make it the most spoken language after English, follows a report by anti-racist group Hope not Hate that a number of Polish far-right groups had become active in the UK.

Hope Not Hate warned last week that Międłar's visit to the UK would bring "rabid extremism to Telford" and warned that Międłar had once claimed that the "biggest enemies of the world are Jewish imperialists and masons".

The Home Office said: "An individual was detained at Stansted airport at 8.40am this morning by Border Force officers working closely with Essex police.

"All passengers attempting to enter the UK are subject to checks by Border Force officers against police, security and immigration watch lists. Where we believe someone poses a risk, Border Force officers can – and do – refuse them entry."

Hope not Hate tweeted: "Bad news for Britain First: Jew-hating priest Jacek Międłar has been held and prevented from entering the country."

Rafał Pankowski of Poland's leading anti-racist organisation Never Again said Międłar was "exceptionally" strident when delivering his hate-filled speeches and that news of his detention had triggered headlines throughout the country's mainstream media. He said: "He's exceptional in terms of the intensity of his hatred, which is a core part of his message."

[https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/25/far-right-polish-priest-jacek-miedlar-detained-at-stansted-airport?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/25/far-right-polish-priest-jacek-miedlar-detained-at-stansted-airport?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)