

Twitter, YouTube Allowing anti-LGBT Hate Speech, Antisemitism and Racism to Thrive in Poland

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(This article contains sensitive material and offensive language.)

Marginalized communities and minorities in Poland have been under increased pressure and attack in recent years, with an escalation in the last several months. They're faced with a polarizing social climate and a government that is backsliding on democratic protections, with displays of an open disdain for the LGBTQ community, women's rights, and the Jewish community, among others. This is happening in public venues, on television, and especially on social media such as Twitter and YouTube.

The LGBTQ community has been desperately seeking fair and safe treatment, but it seems it is for now out of their grasp.

On August 7, 2020, there were demonstrations in Warsaw and other cities after the arrest of Margot, a renowned LGBTQ rights activist in Poland, along with two others. The arrests came after Warsaw monuments were draped with pride flags and pink masks. The charges were for "offending religious feelings and desecrating Warsaw monuments" and can carry a sentence of up to two years. (Margot was also arrested for defacing a bus that drove around blaring anti-LGBTQ slurs from a loudspeaker, including that homosexuality and pedophilia are connected.)

Police brutally arrested dozens during the demonstrations, including peaceful protesters and bystanders. There are allegations of beatings, people being held without charges, and invasive strip searches including a body search of a trans woman performed by a man. One trans woman was reportedly forced to wear pants instead of her skirt after her arrest.

This past weekend, peaceful protestors were again arrested, shown in a shocking video, for placing themselves in the path of the aforementioned bus, nick-named 'homophobus', that broadcasts terrible lies about the LGBTQ community. The far-right nationalist group All Polish Youth also organized a march through the city under the banner of "Stop LGBT Aggression" and set fire to a pride flag.

There are no laws against anti-LGBTQ hate speech and no specific hate crime protections for the LGBTQ community in Poland. And now LGBTQ people are fleeing Poland in despair.

It is in this climate that the current president, Andrzej Duda of the Law and Justice Party, who was endorsed by American President Donald Trump, was narrowly reelected in July 2020 after running on a right-wing populist platform rife with antisemitism and anti-LGBTQ policies and rhetoric. For example, implying that his opponent would be influenced by Jewish special interests, Duda vowed that he would never sign a bill which "treat[s] one ethnic group more favorably than others." This was in reference to discussions about property restitution of the nearly 3 million Polish Jews who were killed in the Holocaust.

The campaign was also marked by vicious attacks claiming that the LGBTQ rights movement is "worse than communism" and that "LGBT are not people." He vehemently opposed marriage equality, officially proposed a ban against adoption by same-sex couples, and signed a declaration to help families by "protecting children from LGBT ideology," with a ban on "propagating LGBT ideology in public institutions."

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who himself created a Human Rights Panel that is widely believed to subvert the rights of the LGBTQ community and women, visited with Poland's leadership on August 15 and signed an agreement to redeploy US troops from Germany to Poland.

Rafal A. Ziemkiewicz: From SciFi to Holocaust Denial and Homophobia

Polish language social media is filled with language attacking Jews, the LGBTQ community, and other marginalized communities. Much of this content is in violation of Twitter and YouTube content policies, yet nothing is really done to stop the growth of hateful attacks.

Case in point is columnist and copious social media user Rafal A. Ziemkiewicz, a prominent figure in the Polish right-wing populist movement. Ziemkiewicz is a prolific tweeter with more than 200,000 followers who routinely spouts antisemitic and anti-LGBTQ vitriol on social media. He also appears on multiple far-right YouTube news channels with hundreds of thousands of subscribers.

Ziemkiewicz started as a science fiction/fantasy novelist in the 1990s, winning several awards for his books. In the same decade, he transitioned to conservative journalism, contributing to multiple outlets, including the Polish edition of Newsweek, and working with several radio stations.

In recent years, he has become an incendiary figure for his antisemitism and anti-LGBT rhetoric, calling the Holocaust a "myth" and saying that LGBT people should be "fought" and "shot."

But that hasn't stopped him from gaining even larger audiences. He hosts television programs on multiple channels, including the state-run TVP and Telewizja Republika, and makes regular appearances on far-right YouTube channels wRealu24 and wSensieTV. He has his own website uziemkiewicza.pl where he also publishes his abhorrent views, and co-runs Do Rzeczy, a far-right news site, with a weekly publication and accompanying YouTube channel.

Samples of Ziemkiewicz's anti-LGBTQ, racist, and antisemitic Twitter posts and YouTube videos. More examples are available at the end of the article.

On Twitter:

Real women don't have breasts, real women have penises #LGBTQ - August 12, 2020

I encourage all those who, whether out of meanness or naivety, to say that the sodomite banner imposed on Jesus "does not offend", I encourage them to throw pork into the mosque and then go to the Muslim brothers with a saying that pigs are cool and cuddly, and healthy meat cannot make anyone offend - August 12, 2020

Twitter has a bite. When a Negro goes after Jews for racism, what to do - block it and become racists, or not block it and be anti-Semites? "The crunch carries the ganglia." I have no sympathy (Some claim the Polish word, Murzyn, translated here as Negro, can be used without offense. Black people of Poland find it to be a racist term, and the Polish Language Council officially deemed it offensive.) - July 29, 2020

During my scholarship in the USA, I was interested a lot in the black moves that took off in #BlackLivesMatters There was hatred of whites, greater for Asians and Arabs, but wildest for Jews. For black activists, Jews were the worst enemies because they "steal the compassion of the world." / 1 - June 14, 2020

On YouTube:

“Margot is queer-binary, you know what that means? Me neither, but it’s like in Teddy. No one knows, so Margot can rest assured that no one will ask. He put the bullshit on these girls that he is a woman and when they sleep with him, it’s as if they were sleeping with a lesbian.” - August 15, 2020 Cinema Polonia

“There’s such a hype, that saying it is not allowed, that you can even get sent to jail for negating the Holocaust, but why does it only work one way? If Mr. Grabowski really wants to... Why take the responsibility of the Jews from them, because it wasn’t Poles who put Jews into train cars, hunted them down, escorted out of the Ghettos, but it was other Jews, Jewish police, based on lists issued by the Jewish Judenrat, who managed it all.” - June 23, 2020 TVP Info

“The main point is to humiliate white people, so hit squads are running around, attacking white people on the streets, making them kneel, and if they don’t agree, beat them up.” [in reference to US protests following George Floyd’s death] “Let’s leave our audience with this conclusion, that the more you fight racism the more of it there is, because that’s the rule.” “Whenever someone starts to talk about tolerance, it is almost certain he will soon be trying to cut someone’s throat.” - June 7, 2020 Cinema Polonia

Ziemkiewicz’s Views Challenged in Poland and Abroad

While Ziemkiewicz has continued his prolific tweeting and YouTube appearances, his views have not gone unchallenged. He has faced opposition from advocacy groups as well as his own colleagues. For example, several complaints about Ziemkiewicz have been filed with Poland’s National Broadcasting Council. One in June 2020 was reported by the Commissioner for Human Rights ombudsman for antisemitic speech on a television program. It was related to Ziemkiewicz saying, “so as not to take away the responsibility of the Jews, because it was not the Poles who put these Jews into the wagons, caught them, escorted them from the ghetto, but other Jews, the Jewish police, on the basis of lists prepared by Jewish Judenrat that managed it all.” The Council’s decision on any action is pending.

In September 2019, a Polish appeals court held Ziemkiewicz responsible for personal injury to a journalist which began with an October 2016 tweet, inexplicably still available. He also later attacked her personal appearance on television.

In August 2019, the tabloid Fakt, Poland’s largest daily paper, suspended its association with Ziemkiewicz, reportedly after fellow journalists objected to working with him.

In June 2019, Ziemkiewicz published an article on Interia.pl, a news site that he had a long relationship with, pushing conspiracy theories that LGBT people are trying to force their “beliefs” on governments and in the education system. He attacked the “ideology” of the LGBT community, crying “I want to say strongly and clearly: you have to shoot LGBT! Not literally, of course - you have to fight them, you must know that they are not people of good will, but new Bolsheviks, new Nazis who want to destroy us in the name of their insane ideology.” Interia.pl took down the post within a few hours and terminated its association with Ziemkiewicz. Ziemkiewicz promptly published the now-edited article on his own site, with an explanation of the earlier version.

In 2018, Ziemkiewicz was supposed to appear at several speaking engagements in the UK, but parliament members and academics vehemently objected to his presence and he cancelled the events.

In another instance, Ziemkiewicz’s colleague, the deputy chief of Do Rzeczy’s weekly magazine, resigned after his op-ed criticizing Ziemkiewicz’s statements was blocked in April 2018. Earlier in the year, Ziemkiewicz had a Twitter exchange in which he called Jews “greedy” and “scabs” (scabs translated from the Polish word *parchy* is considered to be the most offensive word for Jews in the

Polish language, reminiscent of the Nazi era.) When challenged, he double-downed, tweeting “a nasty word associated with all the negative traits attributed to the stereotypical Jews, which is precisely why (I used it).”

Ziemkiewicz published his latest book, *Cham niezbytowany*, in May of 2020. It was immediately met with opposition by academics and anti-racism and human rights groups. The book calls Jews “ruthless,” the Holocaust a “myth,” and claims that young Israelis are trained to be “killing machines.” “Zionism because of the Holocaust, or rather the myth of the Holocaust, which it built itself, gained particular cruelty. Shoah has proved, its prominent representatives say today, that Jews must be ruthless,” the book reads. The “NEVER AGAIN” Association in Poland immediately placed it on its list of books and other items it does not recommend for distribution and called upon Allegro, an online bookseller, to remove it from its offerings (which it did temporarily). The Open Republic Association filed a complaint with the Warsaw prosecutor’s office saying the book was hate speech based on nationality.

Despite these actions, Ziemkiewicz’s anti-LGBT and antisemitic material is still available on Twitter and YouTube, and he continues to add more.

Social Media Policy Enforcement is Lacking

Twitter’s hateful conduct policy forbids “attacks based on race, ethnicity, national origin, caste, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or serious disease” on its platform. Additionally, it prohibits content that “incites fear or spreads fearful stereotypes” and content that “repeatedly uses slurs, tropes or other content meant to dehumanize and degrade.” And its new policy forbids outlinks to sites and content that do the same.

The enforcement of YouTube’s content policies is highly subjective. Its hateful content policy states that, “Hate speech is not allowed on YouTube. We remove content promoting violence or hatred against individuals or groups based on any of the following attributes: age, caste, disability, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, nationality, race, immigration status, sex/gender, sexual orientation, victims of a major violent event and their kin, and veteran status.” But YouTube is filled with this content.

Ziemkiewicz’s tweets and YouTube appearances violate the policies on several counts. In fact, his Twitter feed has content warnings and hidden comments. And there are links to and from his hateful Twitter commentary to his own websites, other sites, and to his YouTube appearances. What more is necessary to have Twitter and YouTube enforce their own policies? Global Project Against Hate and Extremism reported the content to Twitter and YouTube, but there's no word yet on whether action will be taken.

Ziemkiewicz’s social media posts might be getting a pass because they are in Polish, as content moderation in lesser known languages is a major problem at American social media companies. They claim to be global in their policies and reach, but their actual knowledge of various languages and enforcement of policies across borders is severely lacking.

The social media companies should rigorously enforce their policies. And they should not be limited by borders or language. Allowing this kind of material to proliferate is particularly problematic in a country like Poland where there are very real concerns about a continuing free media, the abuse of state-run media, and a political environment where marginalized communities and minorities are openly denigrated and attacked. Indeed, giant social media companies have an even greater responsibility to not be the vehicles that spread hate speech and oppression in countries with fragile democracies.

That is precisely why homophobia, antisemitism, religious intolerance, and racism must not be allowed to thrive anywhere in the world, and why actors like Rafal A. Ziemkiewicz must not be given a platform to reach hundreds of thousands, if not millions, with their hateful vitriol.

Translations provided by Google Translate, Translate this Tweet, and Poland-based translators

Ziemkiewicz Twitter continued:

It's obvious. For example, if we encourage young children to smoke in school, we will soon have a huge increase in cancer rates. If we start teaching gluttony, obesity-related diseases will quickly become a problem. Etc. The result of entering LGBT school their "equality education," disguising boys as girls, and vice versa, MUST be an increase in the incidence of identity disorders, resulting depression, affective disorders, and, consequently, teen suicide. And that's it, Lenin is waiting for these LGBT suicides for / 2 "Imperialist war", which is why they are still talking about them, but for now there is nothing about it. This is the logic of the revolution that people of the type directly talk about by creating and magnifying the problems he fights, he gains more and more justification for himself / 3 - August 13, 2020

I don't think they identify themselves. The fact that they do not want to dazzle with their homosexuality, or to publicize their intimacy at all, makes them defenseless against bent fags and winding up a spiral of aggression by them. Probably it is not easy for them to free themselves from the propaganda of the media - August 8, 2020

If someone (I do not encourage you) wanted to demolish a car, choke it, swing a knife in front of the face, not to mention blasphemy - they are in favor. They will applaud yet. These are just "views," "independence," "own opinion" etc. - August 7, 2020

All LGBT propaganda is based on lies. Whole. From the beginning to the end. And p Walczak is only one of the age of cogs in the machine spreading these lies - August 7, 2020

I mean, the coronavirus is a Jew? Goebbels wouldn't have figured it out - August 4, 2020

And all the politicians and media officers of the Civic Platform who rushed in with expressions of solidarity and support for the spreading fags are Kaczynski's agents. It is quite possible - August 2, 2020

A disgusting fagot sticking out her tongue during the anniversary of the uprising and patting her balls - the quintessence of the left-liberal opposition. Nothing to add - August 1, 2020

Hence this stupid and mean scream that "LGBT is not an ideology, it's people" - that the excesses and provocations of the bastards who implement this ideology should go in the eyes of society not on their account, but blame the homosexuals as such - July 30, 2020

The goal of the movement #LGBT is not the good of homosexuals, and using them to overthrow the "capitalist" order - so on the contrary, it is about confronting the homo with society, creating in people the homo stereotype as an aggressive freak, repulsive and dangerous, in homo / 1 - July 29, 2020

Let me add one thing: LGBT provocations are also designed to provoke a reaction. They are counting on a homol getting hit in the teeth at last. Another thing is that if he doesn't get it, they'll make it up anyway, like "suicides" or "free zones" - July 29, 2020

According to the same logic, ebola is a proof that Africans have to be exterminated and HIV the proof that homosexuals have to be exterminated - June 30, 2020

And the worst thing is, you can't even hate the Jews because that's exactly what those sons-of-bitches
- February 16, 2019

There is this type of New York scabs (I've met): greedy, ruthless, arrogant, modern Shylocks. It is they
who spoil the opinion of all Jews (see above translation of parchy) - August 29, 2015

YouTube continued:

"LGBT are not people, it is a band of provocateurs." - July 31, 2020 Cinema Polonia

“Black Americans ‘generally hate Jews [...], because they believe they are the centre of the universe. When it comes to suffering, it was the slave trade, now that was the biggest crime in history, not some Holocaust, and they think 100 million of them died as a result of slavery. This is nonsense, just like the 6 million, a number taken off the wall, of Holocaust victims. And no one is counting this anymore, because even when you're just trying to get the facts straight, you're already a Holocaust denier - I already am.” - June 23, 2020 Monika Jaruzelska zaprasza

“This is an old German tradition. [in reference to Nazi death camps] We introduce a pipeline with exhaust fumes to the gas chamber...” (Ziemkiewicz), “Actually not to the chamber. The gas chamber proved to give a better output. This was such a trial and error method. In the beginning they used cars, these were such gas chambers on wheels...” (Wolski), “But Germans complained that it took too long and it was necessary to kill off those who turned out undergassed and still alive, so they changed to an improved technology” (Ziemkiewicz). “If we are to say that nations collaborated, then the Jewish nation collaborated in the Holocaust. So, is this the language we are to use?” (Ziemkiewicz), “Using this terminology, we can say that these camps were neither German, nor Polish, but Jewish camps, because, after all, who serviced these crematoria?” (Wolski), “and who perished in them?” (Ziemkiewicz).
- January 30, 2018 wTelewizji.pl.

<https://www.globalextrémism.org/post/twitter-youtube-allowing-antisemitism-racism-and-anti-lgbt-hate-speech-to-thrive-in-poland>