

# Holocaust Denial Watchdog Set to Be Banned From Visiting Schools Near Auschwitz

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The Never Again Association is on a list of groups that will not be allowed to engage with students, even if their parents allow it, if a regional supervisor blocks their admission.

One of Poland's most prominent groups combating antisemitism and Holocaust denial is likely to be banned from engaging with students in the region that includes the Auschwitz death camp site.

According to local media reports, Barbara Nowak, a right-wing nationalist who serves as superintendent of the Małopolska province – which includes Krakow and Auschwitz – has compiled a list of hundreds of civil society groups which she says are seeking to “implement a strategy of gradual destruction of social norms” while pretending to be engaged in educational activities.

The wide-ranging list, which was drawn from reports by far-right activists, includes the Oswiecim (Auschwitz) Jewish Center, the Association of Roma in Poland, a Down syndrome advocacy group and the Never Again Association – a watchdog group that fights antisemitism and Holocaust denial.

The list is part of a controversial new law that is expected to pass and which, its originators say, will protect schoolchildren from “moral corruption.”

The listed groups intend to “sexualize under the guise of education” and cause damage to “not only children and adolescents, but also the condition of the entire society,” news site OKO.press quoted Nowak as saying.

The proposed law recently passed the Polish parliament's lower house and, if enshrined, would allow regional superintendents like Nowak to “block classes led by outside organizations, even if they are approved by all parents,” according to an explainer published by the Notes from Poland website.

The Never Again Association, which has long been critical of Poland's nationalist government, has not had a large presence in schools for several years due to an increasingly hostile “social and political climate,” said Prof. Rafal Pankowski, the group's founder.

The ban, he said, is “definitely a reflection of the broader climate of intolerance that is felt particularly in the educational system. Nowak has reasons to think she is representing the official line and ideology that the education minister himself shares.”

Nowak is well known for stirring controversy. She has expressed strong anti-vaccine views and has asserted that only ethnic Poles should be allowed to serve as guides at Auschwitz.

“What is surprising and shocking about this is the crudeness of this policy,” Pankowski said. “She said these organizations are harmful, which is not just untrue but is also very crude, to put it mildly.”

Pankowski’s activism has long annoyed government officials. After giving a talk on racism in Poland, at an antisemitism conference in Jerusalem in 2018, an adviser to Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said on Twitter that the academic and activist had “attacked his own country.”

Pankowski was subsequently denounced as a traitor and threatened online.

Responding to his critics, Pankowski said at the time that “as a Polish patriot, I believe antisemitism should be called out – and to say that is not attacking Poland. It is defending an important part of the Polish multicultural heritage.”

The news of Nowak’s blacklist comes less than two months after the editor-in-chief of a Jewish news website, Katarzyna Markusz, was placed under investigation on suspicion of denying Nazi crimes.

Critics contend that the Institute of National Remembrance – the state-supported historical research body that is carrying out the investigation into Markusz – has engaged in revisionist history while suppressing dissenting voices in pursuit of a heroic national narrative.

Last November, the government body was accused of firing two historians over their Holocaust-era research, leading to condemnations from Yad Vashem and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

Prof. Sławomir Łukasiewicz, one of the terminated historians, was harshly critical of Nowak. “I don’t even know how to comment on such absurd views. She humiliates herself, and the office she represents,” he said.

“The general political atmosphere-climate affects both research and education, though in different ways,” he added. “Nevertheless, it is done by like-minded people to limit our freedoms, including for sound education and research.”

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

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