



ADL Shocked at Polish Education Minister's Failure to Acknowledge History of Pogroms at Kielce and Jedwabne

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The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) today voiced shock and disappointment at “appalling remarks” of Polish Education Minister Anna Zalewska, who in an interview repeatedly refused to acknowledge that Polish citizens were responsible for killing their Jewish neighbors during anti-Semitic pogroms in Jedwabne and Kielce during and after World War II.

Her televised remarks yesterday came just days after an ADL leadership delegation attended the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the massacre at Jedwabne, where, on July 10, 1941, about 350 Jews were murdered by their Polish Catholic neighbors while the town was under Nazi occupation. Most of the Jews were forced into a barn, which was set on fire. Earlier this week, a group of ADL leaders attended the memorial observance, along with Jewish and Polish officials in an effort to remember the innocent victims who lost their lives that day.

“Minister Zalewska’s remarks are appalling, especially coming from a government leader who is responsible for ensuring the education of Poland’s youth,” said Jonathan A. Greenblatt, ADL CEO. “These pogroms are not matters of historical dispute, and her remarks only enable those who promote Holocaust denial and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories claiming that Jews are trying to damage Poland’s reputation with false accusations.”

In a letter to Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski, who earlier this week met with the ADL delegation in Warsaw, Mr. Greenblatt wrote that while he appreciated recent public statements by Poland’s leaders at Holocaust commemorations, denial of the actual events at Jedwabne and Kielce “...represent the insidious phenomenon the Polish government should be fighting, not promoting.”

“It is incumbent on the government of Poland to remove any doubts created by Minister Zalewska’s comments,” said Mr. Greenblatt. “It is the duty of every Polish leader to ensure that the history of anti-Semitism, as painful as it may be, is taught to all Poles.”

Leslaw Piszewski, President of the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland, and Rabbi Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland, said: “We are stunned and hurt by the words of the Minister of Education. The historical truth is as clear as it is painful. Poles, citizens of Poland, murdered their Jewish neighbors, both in Jedwabne and Kielce. Those who have any doubts in this matter should read once again the words of both Prime Minister Szydlo and President Duda at the anniversary of the Kielce pogrom just last week.”

Dr. Rafal Pankowski, co-founder of NEVER AGAIN Association, a Polish partner of ADL, added: “We strongly disapprove of the Minister of Education’s comments which, just days after the commemorations of the Jedwabne and Kielce pogroms, promote the distortion of the historical truth about anti-Semitic violence. Polish elites must condemn her remarks and make clear that the school curriculum will respect the memory of those extreme acts of anti-Semitism and combat contemporary forms of anti-Semitism and racism.”

The Anti-Defamation League, founded in 1913, is the world's leading organization fighting anti-Semitism through programs and services that counteract hatred, prejudice and bigotry.