

Polish senator calls for Israeli ambassador's expulsion



March 10, 2018

(JTA) — A Polish senator for the ruling party said he would not shake hands with Israel's ambassador and that he favors her expulsion from Poland for saying anti-Semitism was on the rise there.

The senator, Jan Zaryn, criticized the Israeli envoy, Anna Azari, amid a diplomatic crisis between Israel and Poland over a Polish law that makes it a crime to blame Poland for Nazi crimes.

Azari, in a speech last week, said that since the law's passage she could see how "easy it is to wake up in Poland anti-Semitic demons, even when there are hardly any Jews in the country."

Zaryn responded during an interview published Friday by the wPolsce news site.

"If anyone today thinks to equate in any way the rule of the Law and Justice party to the persecution of Jews led by the communist party apparatus in 1968, or by the marshals, then I certainly will not shake hands with such a person. If this is done by the ambassador of a foreign state, then maybe we have to ask this lady to leave this country," he is quoted as saying.

Several Jewish groups said the Holocaust rhetoric law impedes open debate and risks censoring research. Some critics of the law said it whitewashes what they called Polish complicity.

These allegations unleashed a wave of anti-Semitic hate speech online and several real-life anti-Semitic incidents, which Azari last month condemned. According to the Never Again watchdog on anti-Semitism, the volume of anti-Semitic hate speech in Poland since January exceeds that observed in the preceding decade combined.

The United States has also publicly condemned Poland's legislation on discourse about the Holocaust and, according to one report, is resolved not to host Poland's senior leadership until the crisis is resolved.

Azari revisited the issue during her speech last week at an event in Warsaw commemorating the events of March 1968, when tens of thousands of Jews left the country during a government-condoned wave of anti-Semitism.

<https://www.jta.org/2018/03/10/news-opinion/polish-senator-calls-israeli-ambassadors-expulsion>