

Furor as Polish Soccer Association Celebrates 4-0 ‘Pogrom’ Victory Over Israel in Euro Qualifier

Ben Cohen
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Poland’s national soccer association has defended its use of the word “pogrom” in a social media post during Monday’s UEFA Championship qualifying game against Israel in Warsaw.

Israel was resoundingly defeated 4-0 in a disappointing performance at the National Stadium in the Polish capital. After midfielder Damian Kadzior scored the home team’s fourth goal of the night six minutes before the final whistle, the Polish Football Association’s social media team declared on Facebook: “Goooooal! This is already a pogrom! We are beating Israel 4-0!”

The word “pogrom” — derived from the Russian verb “to destroy” — emerged in the late nineteenth century to describe the systematic explosions of mass violence targeting Jewish communities throughout Russia and Eastern Europe. Several pogroms took place on Polish territory from the 1880s onward, including what many historians say is the last such event to have occurred on European soil: the massacre of more than 40 Jews, many of whom had recently been liberated from Nazi concentration camps, in Kielce in July 1946.

Over the last two years, tensions have escalated between Poland’s nationalist government, Israel and world Jewish organizations over legislation that prohibits discussion of Polish collusion with the Nazi German authorities during the Holocaust.

But a spokesperson for the Polish Football Association (PZPN) insisted that the word “pogrom” was frequently used to describe emphatic sports victories like the one over Israel on Monday.

“Maybe in this match, [the word ‘pogrom’] was awkwardly used, because as you can see it raises unnecessary emotions, but that is in no way what we wanted,” the PZPN’s spokesperson, Jakub Kwiatkowski, told journalists on Tuesday.

One of Poland’s leading anti-racism campaigners pointed out that the social media post was in sharp contrast to the tolerant atmosphere in the stadium.

“In contrast to the supporters good conduct, the use of the word ‘pogrom’ in a post about the game shows a complete lack of sensitivity in the Polish Football Association’s communications department,” Dr. Rafal Pankowski — head of the Polish “Never Again” Association — told The Algemeiner on Tuesday.

Pankowski said the post had “opened the floodgates to many more offensive comments about the game on social media using Holocaust imagery, jokes about ‘gas,’ and the like.”

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