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Why Poland's treatment of Jews is wrong on so many levels

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When you talk about growing antisemitism in Britain, a lot of people will claim it a smear campaign designed to undermine the credibility of the left in this country. However, it is all part of a worrying trend in modern Europe, and nowhere is this more evident than Poland.





This January, as the world was set to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, a day to remember the victims of the Holocaust, as well as atrocities in Cambodia, Bosnia, and Darfur, Poland passed a law essentially outlawing any suggestion Poles were complicit in the genocide. This was criticised by [France and the United States](#)...

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The term "Polish death camps" is now prohibited and punishable with a fine or three years in prison. The government does not wish to allow anyone to undermine the stance that the Polish people were heroes during the Second World War. There is no doubting that several of the people in the country performed heroic deeds during the war and the occupation. The



includes in the Holocaust, and several Polish citizens have been honoured by the State of Israel for their roles.

Polish historian Jan Grabowski [says to say there was no complicity whatsoever is false](#). According to his study, 20,000 Jewish deaths came as a result of direct or indirect betrayal by Polish neighbours. Some Jews were even hunted down and turned over to the Nazi's.

In Jedwabne on 10th July 1941, 340 Jews were burnt to death in a barn. In 2003, the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, this massacre was conducted by the Polish inhabitants of the town, with around 40 believed to be involved.

A year after the war had ended, 42 Jews were murdered and another 40 wounded in a pogrom in Kielce.

But according to President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki's government, this did not happen.

Ignoring the freedom of speech implications as that's a completely separate issue, this is very worrying.

It denies history and absolves the perpetrators of their crimes, as though the thousands of Jews massacred somehow do not matter, it also cheapens the deeds of Poles who protected Jewish neighbours, their task made harder by the fact they had to protect Jews from their own neighbours.

Morawiecki was then seen paying respects at a grave to the Holy Cross Mountains Brigade, a resistance unit that has been accused of [collaborating with the Nazis](#).



To make matters worse Morawiecki told an Israeli journalist that there were "Jewish perpetrators" at the [Munich Security Conference](#).



Setting aside the diplomatic repercussions, this accusation is one that is deeply offensive towards many Jews. It also demeans the message of The Holocaust and undermines attempts to educate and eradicate with regards to the issues that lead to genocide. The notion of Jewish people being involved in the crimes automatically paints a picture that the plight of European Jews was not as bad as made out, which is one of the first steps on the slippery slope to full-blown Holocaust denial.

Poland has also [frozen](#) the Holocaust Survivors' Restitution Bill, which would have returned confiscated property to victims of the Holocaust, both Jewish and otherwise. Poland is the

only major European country which has not enacted a law returning such property.

The  victims had their land illegally removed from them, due to their ethnicity - what good reason  is there not give it back?



This all at a time of heightening tension, a coalition of Jewish groups in Poland [expressed growing fear](#) over anti-semitic attitudes which they believe to have infiltrated the public sphere and into national media.

It's no wonder - the actions of Morawiecki are just plain wrong. Very few would accuse Poland have been behind the Holocaust, but to say Polish people had no role in it whatsoever is to deny history and encourage Holocaust denial.

To absolve yourself from blame is to deny yourself the opportunity to learn and move forward. It also suggests a through disdain towards Jewish people that they will not take the oppression committed upon them seriously.

This then, in turn, enables anti-semitic elements within Polish society. People think they can get away with it, as after all if the government denies the crimes of Jedwabne, why would they make a big deal or a stand out of a racist attack?

That is why these actions create problems for Jewish people living in Poland today. It is unclear how many Jews live in Poland today, [with estimates ranging from 10,000 to 100,000](#), but the government have put their livelihoods under threat.

Many have pondered whether Morawiecki is just ignorant but that's no excuse, the leader of a country has put the safety of a significant proportion of his population at risk and made them feel unsafe, that cannot be accepted at all.

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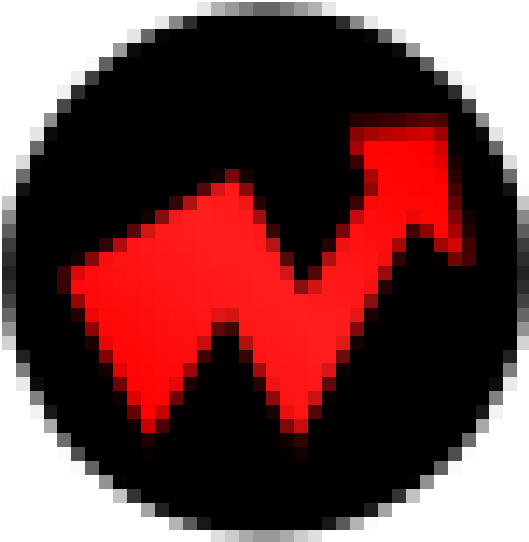


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