



Israelis and Poles Who ‘Refuse to Be Enemies’ Launch Campaign to Ease Tensions Over Holocaust Bill

After attracting over 1,000 signatures on online petition, activists to take message to political leaders:
Do not tear us apart, again

[Judy Maltz](#)

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- Deeply concerned about rising hostilities between their two countries over controversial legislation that would criminalize statements [about the Polish nation’s complicity in Nazi war crimes](#), a group of prominent Israelis and Poles is hoping to turn the tide.
- In a jointly drafted statement, they tell leaders on both sides: Israelis and Poles refuse to be enemies.
- Some 70 Israelis and Poles actively engaged in recent decades in efforts to strengthen ties between their two countries have signed the letter. [It has been posted as a petition](#) and will now be sent to Israeli and Polish political leaders after garnering over 1,000 signatures.
- “We have built bridges of understanding and human solidarity, our endeavors have evoked worldwide respect and appreciation of both Poles and Jews,” the statement says. “We talked about the most difficult subjects from our common history, from the times of World War II and [the Holocaust](#), as well as about what happened later. The

two painful memories – Polish and Jewish – have come close to each other. No law, made with whatever intention and regardless by whom, shall ever change the facts from the past. We ask politicians: Do not tear us apart. Again.”

- Among the signatories are leaders of organizations engaged in fostering relations between Israel and Poland, individuals active in this effort, plus academics, educators and clergy.
- These include Bogdan Bialek, a Catholic psychologist who has dedicated himself to commemorating the postwar massacre of Jewish Holocaust survivors in the city of Kielce and the subject of a recently released documentary film; Janusz Makuch, the non-Jewish founder of the annual Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow; Zbigniew Nosowski and Stanislaw Krajewski, the heads of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews; Lili Haber, head of the forum of Israelis of Polish Origin; Zvi Henryk Kelner and Ilona Dworak-Cousin, head of the Israel-Poland Friendship Society; Rabbi Meir Azari, the spiritual leader of Beit Daniel, which is the largest Reform congregation in Israel (he is also the spouse of Israeli Ambassador to Poland Anna Azari), and the entire board of directors of the Israeli Association of Delegation Guides to Poland.
- The controversial Holocaust bill would outlaw statements that suggest Poland was complicit in Nazi war crimes. It would specifically prohibit use of the term “Polish death camps.”
- The bill has already been passed by both houses of the Polish parliament and signed by President Andrzej Duda. The president has asked the constitutional court to review it before it is officially enforced.
- One of the campaign organizers is Karolina Przewrocka-Aderet, a Polish journalist based in Israel. (Full disclosure: She is also the wife of Haaretz’s history correspondent, [Ofer Aderet](#).) Przewrocka-Aderet was responsible for gathering signatures for the statement in Israel.



Karolina Przewrocka-Aderet. Marianna Sowinska

- “Many of the people who signed were Jews who grew up in Poland and immigrated to Israel many years after the war,” she said. “These were people who left their hearts in Poland and regularly visit the country ever since the fall of communism in 1989. They have been instrumental in strengthening ties between Israel and Poland over the last three decades, and they are absolutely crushed by what is happening and fear that all their efforts may have been ruined by this one debate.”
- The statement will now be sent to leaders in both countries, Przewrocka-Aderet said.



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