

We are making this public appeal out of our concern for the state of Polish-Jewish and Polish-Israeli relations. We call on all parties to exercise emotional restraint in the name of protecting the common good; the truth and the dialogue that has been fostered over the past quarter of a century. The Amended Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, passed by the Polish Sejm on 26 January to the next stage of legislation, introduces criminal penalties of up to three years' imprisonment for "public and contrary-to-fact conduct that attributes responsibility or co-responsibility for Nazi crimes committed by the Third German Reich to the Polish nation or the Polish state".

This unfortunate bill has made major news in Poland and internationally, raising logical, moral and legal concerns. Why must a discussion of historical facts involve courts and prosecutors? Why should the victims and witnesses of the Holocaust have to watch what they say for fear of being arrested, and will the testimony of a Jewish survivor who "feared Poles" be a punishable offence? Why must this be argued based on paragraphs from the criminal code and not through the merits of debate? Is this law intended to be symmetrical to the law forbidding Holocaust denial? And why are certain professions given a free pass – why are only academics and artists free from prosecution for voicing "anti-Polish" opinions? What about Journalists? Teachers? Where is the line between acceptable education and art and punishable journalism, and who would determine these undeniable "facts"?

The intention behind this bill was to defend the good name of Poland, that much is clear. When Poles hear the words "Polish camps", they assume, often overreacting, that they are being accused of being responsible for Auschwitz (when Jan Karski wrote about "Polish camps" he was describing "camps located in Poland"). This bill goes further than that – it assumes the Poles' complete innocence, framing them as the only guiltless nation in Europe. This is not the way to reclaim Poland's collective dignity. All is not yet lost. Legislators still have a chance to reconsider and we urgently call on them to do so.

Anne Applebaum

Anna Barańczak

Maria Barcikowska

Witold Bereś

Bogdan Białek

Anna Bikont

Yael Birenbaum

Halina Birenbaum

Jacek Bocheński

Teresa Bogucka

Krzysztof Burnetko

Anna Dodziuk

Barbara Engelking

Zofia Floriańczyk

Andrzej Friedman

Beata Fudalej

Jolanta Gałązka-Friedman

Timothy Garton Ash

Konstanty Gebert

Agnieszka Glińska

Jan Tomasz Gross

Irena Grudzińska-Gross

Mikołaj Grynberg
Jan Hartman
Jan Hertrich-Woleński
Agnieszka Holland
Krystyna Janda
Maria Janion
Zofia Jankiewicz
Jacek Kleyff
Sergiusz Kowalski
Stanisław Krajewski
Maria Kruczkowska
Krystyna Krynicka
Ryszard Krynicki
Ireneusz Krzemiński
Joanna Kurczewska
Jacek Kurczewski
Jarosław Kurski
Aleksander Kwaśniewski
Andrzej Leder
Wojciech Lemański
Paweł Liberski
Barbara Mechowska-Kleyff
Edward Mitukiewicz
Krzysztof Niedałowski
Przemysław Nowacki
Stanisław Obirek
Janusz Onyszkiewicz
Piotr Pacewicz
Grażyna Pawlak
Monika Płatek
Masza Potocka
Stanisław Radwan
Shoshana Ronen
Jacek Różycki
Andrzej Rzepliński
Paula Sawicka
Dorota Segda
Radek Sikorski
Marek Siwiec
Jarosław Sławek
Aleksander Smolar
Kazimierz Sobolewski
Piotr Sommer
Krystyna Starczewska
Andrzej Stasiuk
Dariusz Stola
Joanna Szczęsna
Kazimiera Szczuka
Monika Sznajderman

Piotr Szwajcer
Paweł Śpiewak
Frank Telling-Saphar
Róża Thun
Olga Tokarczuk
Joanna Tokarska-Bakir
Aleksandra Trzaska
Mikołaj Trzaska
Magdalena Tulli
Grzegorz Turnau
Marian Turski
Piotr Wiślicki
Krystyna Zachwatowicz-Wajda
Maja Zagajewska
Adam Zagajewski
Katarzyna Zimmerer
Jacek Żakowski