

January 29, 2018

**Statement of POLIN Museum and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland concerning a proposed amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance**

We do understand the pain and outrage of those who realize how fallacious and unjust are the terms "Polish concentration camps" or "Polish extermination camps." At the same time, we are aware that such terms most often stem from ignorance, and therefore the right way to react is to promote education.

Passing a law that may exert a negative influence on historical research, that is on searching for the truth about the past, is not a good solution. We feel that the proposed legal measure poses a major risk of such damaging impact. It is highly likely that it will trigger an atmosphere of intimidation and discourage scholars, especially those of the younger generation, from tackling difficult subjects related to crimes committed in the twentieth century on the Polish soil. These concerns are confirmed by vicious attacks on a number of Holocaust historians that we have witnessed with indignation over the past several years.

Moreover, many people may perceive the proposed amendment as an attempt to stifle the debate on crimes committed by Poles, as political interference in historical disputes, and, ultimately, as a confirmation of anti-Polish prejudice.

Allowing space for honest debates on events from our dramatic past was a great success of the Third Polish Republic. Polish debates on Jedwabne, on collaboration with the Communist Security Service, or on the postwar deportations of Germans from the Western Territories were our joint national achievement, despite the voicing of some extreme and unfounded opinions. These debates drew us closer to a deeper understanding of our past, the moral dilemmas of humankind, and risks for the future.

Enormous progress was also achieved in the field of historical research in Poland, including Polish contributions to international studies of the Holocaust. POLIN Museum's core exhibition was created thanks to cooperation with scholars from Poland and abroad. Its Holocaust Gallery, which was produced by a team led by Professors Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, eminent scholars from the Polish Center for Holocaust Research, demonstrates that we are capable of presenting the most dramatic and painful issues in a finely balanced and truthful way.

We are not responsible for a past on which we had no influence. However, we are responsible for what we do about that past today. Above all, we owe the truth to the victims of past crimes, and the truth is fueled by an open and factual discussion.

*Professor Dariusz Stola, Director of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews  
Piotr Wiślicki, Chairman of the Board of the Association of the Jewish Historical  
Institute of Poland*