

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0517

April 23, 2018

The Honorable John Sullivan
Deputy Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Deputy Secretary Sullivan:

We write to express our dismay about recent reports of state-sponsored Holocaust distortion and denial taking place in Europe, particularly in Poland and Ukraine. These developments are unacceptable, especially given today's global surge of anti-Semitism.

We urge you to join us and human rights organizations in standing against anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and all forms of intolerance by calling for the Polish and Ukrainian governments to unequivocally reject Holocaust distortion and the honoring of Nazi collaborators and fully prosecute anti-Semitic crimes. We also ask that you detail what steps are being taken by the United States (U.S.) government to monitor instances of Holocaust distortion and ensure that the U.S. is not supporting or funding groups and individuals that promote or justify anti-Semitism. We believe these steps must include a firm request that these offensive laws be repealed.

While the legal questions and historical contexts of Ukraine and Poland differ, developments in both countries are cause for concern. Earlier this year, Warsaw passed a law making it a criminal offense to state that Poland participated in the Holocaust. The law, which was rightfully criticized by the U.S. State Department, the Israeli government, and others, was accompanied by a surge of anti-Semitic remarks. The Israeli Embassy in Warsaw reported being flooded by anti-Semitic vitriol, while members of the Polish Jewish community expressed concern at rising tensions in the wake of the law. Despite Polish President Andrzej Duda's assurances that the law would not be used to stifle free speech, a lawsuit has already been filed against an Argentinian newspaper using this law; Jan Dziejczak, the Deputy Director of the Polish Foreign Ministry, has demanded that Israel change an exhibit in Yad Vashem in Jerusalem; and an Israeli mayor was forced to cancel a commemoration ceremony after he refused local authorities' demands to remove references to Polish complicity in the Holocaust from his speech.

Ukraine's 2015 memory laws went even further by *glorifying* Nazi collaborators and making it a criminal offense to deny their "heroism." However, unlike the Polish law, this move by the government in Kyiv has received little to no public response from the United States. The groups and individuals extolled by Ukraine include Nazi collaborators Stepan Bandera, Roman Shukhevych, and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), as well as the Ukrainian

Insurgent Army (UPA). These paramilitaries and individuals in some cases collaborated with the Nazis and bear responsibility for the murder of thousands of Jews, 70,000-100,000 Poles, and other ethnic minorities between 1941 and 1945.

It's particularly troubling that much of the Nazi glorification in Ukraine is government-supported. Examples include the 2017 pro-UPA campaign conducted by the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory; the naming of streets after Bandera and Shukhevych by the Kyiv city council; and L'viv's 2017 "ShukhevychFest" which took place on the anniversary of the 1941 L'viv Pogroms in which 4,000 Jews were killed.

State-sponsored Holocaust revisionism in Ukraine is accompanied by other forms of anti-Semitism. As Israel's Department of Diaspora Affairs pointed out in its annual report on anti-Semitism, the whitewashing of these Ukrainian "heroes" has coincided with the increasing incidence of anti-Semitism across Ukraine. This includes desecration of Holocaust memorials and Jewish places of worship, such as the desecration of a holy tomb in Uman with a swastika-carved pig's head; a January 2017 march in honor of Bandera, during which participants chanted "Jews Out!"; as well as last summer's firebombing of a L'viv synagogue during "ShukhevychFest."

Last November, Radio Free Europe reported on the presence of torches and Nazi salutes at a 20,000-person march in honor of the 75th anniversary of the UPA. These torchlight marches are closely linked to organizations such as the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, an armed group that was prohibited from receiving U.S. weapons and training by the recently signed Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018. Rather than disband Azov, the government incorporated it into the Ukrainian National Guard overseen by the Ministry of the Interior. The group is widely known to be closely connected to Interior Minister Arsen Avakov.

The deeply troubling actions by Poland and Ukraine have been repeatedly condemned by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry, the World Jewish Congress, Yad Vashem, and the Israeli government.

As members of the U.S. Congress, we have steadfastly supported Poland's and Ukraine's quest to build democratic nations. However, we are deeply concerned that the rise of anti-Semitism and denial of the past will stymie these countries' democratic development and prevent Poland and Ukraine from becoming free and open societies for all their citizens, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. The developments in these two countries, while particularly egregious, must also be taken in context of a rise in glorification of Holocaust-era officials throughout Europe, including Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and the Baltic States. This is a troubling trend that must elicit a strong response from our government.

Therefore, we respectfully request that you respond to our serious concerns with a detailed description of what actions the State Department is taking to work with the Polish and Ukrainian governments, and other governments in the region, to combat the rise of anti-Semitism and Holocaust-denial and distortion.

Additionally, at this moment that anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial is increasing around the world, we ask that you immediately appoint someone for the position of Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism. The longer this position, which has worldwide reach, sits unfilled, the more it sends the message that the U.S. will tolerate anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. Moreover, we recognize the important work that is carried out by the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, and ask that you ensure that his office has the resources necessary to meet the growing challenges in this arena.


The United States must assume a leadership position by firmly standing against anti-Semitism and ensuring that our Eastern European allies continue to develop democracies that are fair and just to all.


We thank you for your attention to this important matter.


Sincerely,


Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress


Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress


Adam Smith
Member of Congress


Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress


Mark Pocan
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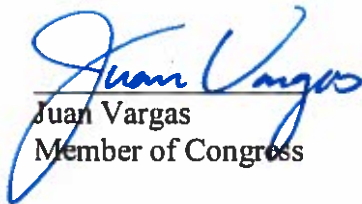
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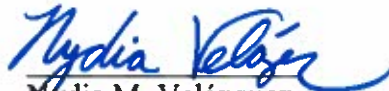
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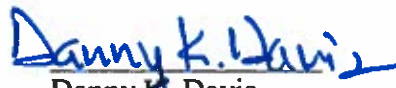

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Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Paul W. Jones, U.S. Ambassador to Poland

The Honorable Marie L. Yovanovitch, U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine

Marcia Fudge

Marcia Fudge
Member of Congress