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POLISH LEAGUE AGAINST DEFAMATION

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**Peter Wolodarski**  
**Editor-In-Chief**  
**Dagens Nyheter**

Dear Sir,

*Dagens Nyheter* has recently published Anna Bikont's article entitled "*Omfattningen av judehatet i Polen är chockerande*," in which the author describes the alleged rise in anti-Semitism in Poland. The article seems to promote a vision of hidden anti-Semitic "demons" taking over Poland at this very moment by way of a sinister amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance.

It is not the first time that Anna Bikont has spoken about Polish anti-Semitism, but her text, released in *Dagens Nyheter*, in which she compares the present situation in Poland to the events which took place in March 1968, proves not only her malintent, but also her inadequate perception of the social conditions in contemporary Poland. Unlike the author, we see no similarities between 1968 and the present. Poland now has democratically-elected authorities which force no-one to leave the country.

This is the state of the allegedly increased anti-Semitism in Poland.

As written in Gabriel Kayzer's book entitled "*Clinch? The Polish-Jewish Debate*," the Polish Embassy in Tel Aviv issued 2,665 passports in 2016, whereas in 2017 this number grew to 3,530. If Poland is no longer a safe country for Jews, as many people seem to suppose, where does this great interest in our country come from? Does it only stem from the need to tackle history and learn about one's forebears? Would Jews really be willing to visit a country in which they cannot move safely?

While in Poland, Jews don't need a police escort. Various Jewish festivals, events and celebrations (e.g. the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków and the Singer's Warsaw Festival) are safe, and enjoy huge popularity, not only among visiting Jews, but also among Polish people and visitors from other countries. These things look different in many European countries.

In Poland nobody mocks the religious customs of Jews. Quite to the contrary, they are respected, and frequently attended by the State authorities. There are also numerous museums devoted to Jewish culture and history, such as the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, and the Warsaw Ghetto Museum (to be established soon), as well as cafeterias, shops, education centres and synagogues – none of which need to have offensive slogans or graffiti removed on a daily basis.

In her despicable attempts to accuse the Polish people, the author is in the habit of using false arguments. It is far from true that the waves of anti-Semitism in Polish history are part of the Polish nature, and a feature we are known for. Even the most basic facts from the history of Poland and Europe show that for hundreds of years our country has provided shelter to Jews exiled from many other countries.

Before giving an opinion on the Act which, in principle, is meant to facilitate fights against, *inter alia*, false historical statements, it would seem advisable to thoroughly read its content. Instead, Bikont tries to convince the public in Sweden that the new regulation might actually *deter* historians from investigating into the truth about the Second World War, and the fate of both Poles and Jews. It is a pity that the author fails to mention that this does not apply to either academic studies or artistic activities.

Bikont claims that using such phrases as “Polish death camps” is not problematic. She suggests that no leading academic teachers or politicians claim that these death camps were in fact governed by Poles. However, as an organisation dealing with the monitoring of this subject-matter, we know that this phrase is actually used quite often. Moreover, it appears surprising that, when referring to leading politicians, the author seems to have “forgotten” about Barack Obama. The American President spoke about “*a Polish death camp*” in 2012, while formally praising Jan Karski, who, during the Second World War, warned the Allies about German crimes on Poles and Jews, asking them to intervene.

The article introduces a rather dangerous change of roles, with the reader's suddenly discovering that a major element of the Polish-Jewish relationship was “*the tremendous number of denouncing letters and homicides committed by Poles on Jews during the War.*” Obviously, there were isolated cases of improper behaviour which need to be strongly disapproved of. However, they may not be viewed as reflecting the overall attitude of the whole nation. Let us recall that any assistance provided to Jews in occupied Poland was punishable with death, and this punishment was often inflicted by the Germans not only on individuals but also on their families, or even entire villages. The Polish people bear no responsibility for the Holocaust. Reducing the Polish-Jewish relationship to this historic period, and making it exceptionally important and immense, is not only unfair but also truly inaccurate. It is a sign of an anti-Polish attitude.

It would seem advisable that your newspaper present objectively the events in which Poland was engaged, its history, and the social attitudes prevailing in our country. Accuracy requires presenting all aspects of a problem, rather than referring to one-sided opinions.

Proper proportions should be maintained when dealing with the issue of anti-Semitism in Poland, both nowadays and in the past. As stated by Szewach Weiss, a former Ambassador of Israel to Poland, “*The thing is about proportions. The Second World War brought a breakdown in all human values. When we compare Poles to other nations, they still present a more-favourable picture.*”

Kind regards,

**Polish League Against Defamation**