

NCSEJ Country Report



Republic of Poland



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Executive Summary

Since the end of the Communist era, Poland has made significant economic and political progress. Poland today is a democracy with a strong free-market economy. The country joined NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004. Poland is focused on further integration into European political and security structures.

Poland has established good relations with its immediate neighbors, including Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Belarus, and Ukraine. In recent years, however, relations with Russia have declined. Poland's criticism of Russian actions in the 2008 Georgia crisis, the 2014 Crimea annexation, the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine, and Poland's pro-Western orientation have contributed to tense diplomatic relations with Russia.

Since 1989, Poland has been one of the United States' strongest partners in Eastern Europe. The U.S. and Poland partner closely together in fostering transatlantic security and prosperity and promoting democracy in the region.

Since the fall of communism in Poland, Jewish communal life has been undergoing a revival. Approximately 20,000-25,000 Jews currently live in the country. There is no state discrimination against the Jewish community, and the community has good relations with the government and other religious groups. However, anti-Semitic incidents, in particular desecrations of Jewish sites, continue to occur.

History

Located in Central Europe, Poland is bordered by the Czech Republic, Germany, Belarus, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Lithuania, and the Baltic Sea.

Poland's history as a state can be traced back to the 10th century. The Kingdom of Poland was founded in 1025, and in 1569, together with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania it formed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This large and powerful state dominated the region throughout the

Statistics:

Population: 37,739,785 (*Jan. 2022 est.*)

Size: 312,685 sq. km.

Capital: Warsaw

Major cities: Warsaw, Kraków, Łódź, Wrocław, Gdańsk, Lublin, Katowice, Białystok

Jewish population: 20,000-25,000

Head of State: President Andrzej Duda

Prime Minister: Mateusz Morawiecki

Foreign Minister: Zbigniew Rau

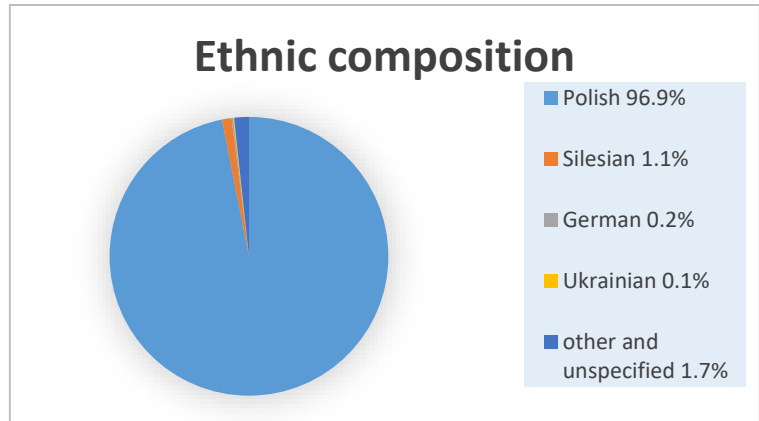
Ambassador to United States: Marek Magierowski

U.S. Ambassador to Poland: Mark Brzezinski

Freedom House Rating: Free

16th and 17th centuries. At the end of the 18th century, Russia, Prussia, and Austria partitioned the country, and for more than a century, no self-governed Polish state existed.

Poland regained independence at the end of World War I, until it was overrun by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939. Germany occupied all of the Poland's territory in June 1941, after the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union.



Under German occupation, three million Jews and one million ethnic Poles died in Nazi extermination camps.

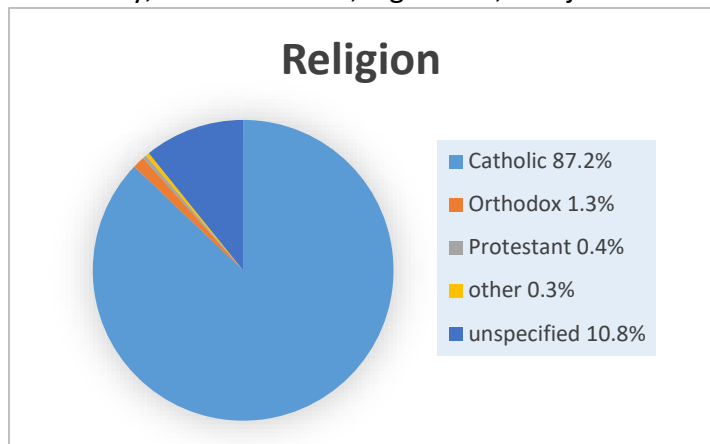
Poland became a Soviet satellite state in 1947, until the revolutions of 1989 brought the Communist era to an end, and Poland adopted a new constitution.

In 1990, Poland's government introduced a package of free market reforms. Poland became a NATO member in 1999, along with the Czech Republic and Hungary, and joined the European Union in 2004.

Political Situation

The Republic of Poland is a parliamentary democracy, with executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The president heads the executive branch and represents Poland internationally, as designated by the Polish constitution. The president is elected by popular vote for a five-year term and can be reelected once.

The prime minister is the leader of the cabinet and the head of the government of Poland. The president appoints the prime minister, who then forms the cabinet. The office of the prime minister has greater political power than the president.



The legislative branch consists of an upper house, the Senate, and the lower house, the Sejm. The Senate has 100 seats, with members elected for four-year terms in single-seat

constituencies by majority vote, and the Sejm has 460 seats, with members elected for four-year terms in multi-seat constituencies by proportional representation.

The judicial branch consists of the Supreme Court, Constitutional Tribunal, State Tribunal, regional and appeal courts. The president of the Supreme Court is nominated by the General Assembly of the Supreme Court and selected by the president of Poland; other judges are nominated by the 25-member National Judiciary Council and appointed by the president of Poland. Judges serve until retirement, usually at age 65, but tenure can be extended.

The opposition Law and Justice Party LAO won the October 2015 parliamentary elections, signaling a major political shift rightward for the country. The Law and Justice Party is Eurosceptic, opposes joining the euro zone, and advocates for a strong NATO stance in dealing with Russia. In November 2015, President Duda swore in the new conservative government of Prime Minister Beata Szydło.

In December 2015, President Duda approved a controversial reform that makes it harder for the constitutional court to make majority rulings, despite large protests and European Union concerns about the implications for oversight of government decisions.

In December 2016 anti-government protestors across Poland demonstrated against the perceived illiberal agenda of the ruling right-wing Law and Justice Party that threatened to reverse democratic gains made since 1989. A key concern of demonstrators was government proposals under consideration by the Polish parliament to restrict the right to freedom of assembly.

In January 2016, the European Commission began investigating a new media law, which allows the government to appoint heads of state-run TV and radio, as a potential “threat to European Union values.”

In April 2017, Poland welcomed NATO troops deployed in the northeast, as part of efforts to enhance security following Russia's annexation of Crimea. In May 2017, tens of thousands of people marched in Warsaw to protest against perceived curbs on democracy imposed by the governing Law and Justice Party.

In July 2017, President Duda vetoed controversial laws that would have given the government extensive power over the judiciary.

Economic Situation

Poland joined the European Union in 2004. EU membership and economic reforms gave a major boost to the economy. Between 1989 and 2007, Poland's economy grew by 177%, showing the fastest progress in Eastern and Central Europe.

Poland's economic strengths include its agricultural, pharmaceutical, aviation, steel, and machinery sectors. Poland's economic advantages also include a low level of public debt and being outside the euro zone. However, Poland's high unemployment rate and low wages have resulted in massive Polish migration since 2004, especially among younger workers. Since 2008, the unemployment rate in Poland has consistently been below European average. The rate fell below 8% in 2015, leading to the possibility of a labor deficit.

Dynamic growth, together with legislative, organizational, and IT tax administration measures, led to an unprecedented improvement in value added tax (VAT) compliance. This was the first time since the early 1990s that the cash-based state budget had recorded a surplus in the first half of the year, accompanied by a surplus at the local government subsector, which reached 0.7% of GDP in the first half of 2017.

Currency: \$1=4.10 Polish Zloty (2023)

GDP: 67.21 billion (2021)

GDP per capita: \$7,302.3 (2021)

GDP Growth: 2.3% (2021)

Polish laws encourage foreign entrepreneurs and offers various forms of state aid. Most foreign direct investment comes from Germany, France, and the Netherlands. Germany remains Poland's biggest export market, accounting for 30% of exports. Since the beginning of 2014, the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia has led to a dramatic reduction of Poland's exports of fruit and vegetables to Russia.

In 2021, Poland had a 2.3% increase in their GDP. Their GDP is expected to slow to 0.7% in 2023, but then expand again in 2024 to 2.7%.

Foreign Policy

As a NATO and EU member, Poland is focused on further integration into European political and security structures. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Poland established good relations with its immediate neighbors, signing friendship treaties with Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia.

In recent years, relations with Russia have worsened. Poland's criticism of Russian actions in the 2008 Georgia war, the annexation of Crimea, the ongoing crisis in Eastern Ukraine, and Poland's pro-Western orientation have contributed to tense diplomatic relations with Russia. Poland strongly supports EU sanctions against Russia. Poland has declared that it will never recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Poland consistently supports Ukraine. However, attempts by Ukrainians to glorify the World War II-era Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), who were reportedly responsible for massacre of Poles in 1940s in Ukraine, meet fierce criticism in Poland.

Poland's Civic Platform Party-led government voted in September 2015 to approve the EU's relocation plan for 120,000 migrants, agreeing to take in more than 4,000 migrants. Following the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015, the new Polish government indicated that it would not implement the plan.

Wary of any increased powers for Brussels, Poland has been lobbying for an overhaul of the EU's fundamental treaties, to return some power to member states. The Eurosceptic government of the Law and Justice Party (PiS) appears more cautious of late over EU matters, signaling it wants to improve ties with Germany and France that have been strained by questions of reform.

Poland is a host country for NATO troops. With the United States leading efforts, Croatia, Romania, and the United Kingdom have all supported the troop presence in Poland.

Relations with the United States:

The United States first formally established diplomatic relations with Poland in 1919. Since 1989, Poland has been one of the United States' strongest partners in Europe. The U.S. and Poland cooperate closely in fostering transatlantic security and prosperity and promoting democracy in Eastern Europe. Areas of bilateral focus include NATO capabilities, counterterrorism, nuclear proliferation, missile defense, human rights, economic growth, energy security, and regional cooperation.

In December 2010, President Bronisław Komorowski met with President Barack Obama in Washington to discuss economic, military, and technology cooperation issues. President Obama visited Poland in May 2011, and met with Prime Minister Donald Tusk, President Komorowski, and other officials.

In March 2016, new Polish President Andrzej Duda visited Washington for the Nuclear Security Summit and met with President Obama.

In July 2017, President Donald Trump visited Poland on his second official international trip. He praised Poland as a defender of Western values and democracy. During the trip, he met with President of Poland Andrzej Duda in Warsaw. The presidents discussed bilateral energy projects, and their vision of further strengthening the North Atlantic Alliance. They agreed that NATO allies have a duty to spend at least 2% of their GDP on defense. Cooperation in the area of security and defense, which is the foundation of strategic cooperation between Poland and the United States, is being increasingly supplemented by initiatives in other areas.

In January 2018, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson visited Warsaw to strengthen the strategic partnership with Poland. He also attended a commemoration marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

Poland is the leading trade partner for the United States in East Central Europe; in April 2019, U.S. imports from Poland reached an all-time high of \$13.4 billion. The United States and Poland have signed a double taxation treaty, an agreement pursuant to the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), and a bilateral treaty on business and economic relations which includes an investor-state dispute mechanism. The United States and Poland have a robust Science and Technology (S&T) relationship, and in April 2018 renewed a bilateral S&T Agreement. In 2019, Stanford University hosted the 17th annual U.S.-Poland S&T Symposium.

In February 2022, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken hosted Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau in Washington, DC regarding the countries' strategic dialogue. Blinken and Rau discussed their shared support for Ukraine, clean energy opportunities, democratic values, and regional and security issues. They met again in December of the same year.

In April 2022, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin visited Poland on their way to Kyiv.

In July 2022, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry travelled to Warsaw to discuss security and renewable energy opportunities.

In February 2023, President Biden visited Poland on route to his surprise trip to Ukraine. While there, he met with President Andrzej Duda. In this symbolic trip, President Biden reaffirmed the United States' strong commitment to the Polish people and to the eastern flank of NATO. Biden also announced a new strategic partnership with Poland to strengthen their energy security; these measures include building new nuclear power plants for the country.

Relations with Israel:

Poland was one of the first countries to recognize the State of Israel and to establish diplomatic relations in May 1948.

Relations deteriorated during the Cold War and were severed completely after the Six-Day War in 1967. In March 1968, Polish authorities cracked down on the country's dissident movement and increased their persecution of Polish Jews, accusing them of "dual loyalty" to Poland and Israel, and urging immediate emigration. As a result, an estimated 13,000-30,000 Jews left Poland between 1968 and 1972, losing their Polish citizenship in the process.

In 1986, partial diplomatic relations were restored and in February 1990, diplomatic relations between Israel and Poland officially resumed. In May 1991, Polish President Lech Wałęsa visited Israel, and outlined a new approach to Polish-Jewish relations in a speech at the Knesset. Official visits between the countries have been frequent since then.

After talks between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk in Warsaw in January 2010, the two leaders pledged to deepen Polish-Israeli relations. In 2010, the Israel Council on Foreign Relations and the Polish Institute of International Affairs marked 20 years of bilateral relations between the countries with a Foreign Policy Conference held in Jerusalem.

In June 2016, Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski held talks with Israel's Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman during a visit to Israel. Waszczykowski and Lieberman discussed the situation in the Middle East and the NATO summit in Warsaw.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hosted Polish President Andrzej Duda at his residence in Jerusalem in January 2017. During the visit, Duda remarked that unlike in France or other parts of Western Europe, Jews in Poland can openly wear religious garb safely. However, Duda equivocated about Polish involvement in the atrocities of the Holocaust, saying Poles also suffered under the Nazi regime.

In late December and early January 2017, members of Poland's 'NEVER AGAIN' Association participated in meetings in Israel, including an international educators conference on 'The Shoah and Jewish identity' at the Yad Vashem Institute.

In February 2018, Polish-Israeli relations entered an ongoing period of tension as a result of the Poland's new law that criminalized blaming Poland for crimes committed during the Holocaust. That month, Poland cancelled a visit by Israeli education minister Naftali Bennett amid uproar over his remarks regarding the Polish legislation. A year later, in February 2019, Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Yisrael Katz stated that Poles collaborated with Nazi Germany during the Holocaust and "suckled anti-Semitism with their mother's milk." Katz's statement led Poland to cancel its participation in the 2019 February Visegrad summit in Jerusalem, which Prime Minister Netanyahu was to host. The leaders of the other members of the Visegrad Group—Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia—still traveled to Israel and met with Netanyahu.

In March 2019, Poland accepted Israel's request to ban noted Holocaust-denier David Irving from entering the country. Irving had planned a nine-day tour of several concentration and extermination camps around the country. The countries also continue to view each other as important security partners. In November 2019, Poland's Military Attaché in Israel Col. Adam Gryzmkowski referred to Israel as a main ally of NATO, and therefore of Poland.

In September 2019, Polish President Andrzej Duda blamed Israel for rising anti-Semitism in his country in a meeting this week with American Jewish leaders, according to a new report. Jewish Insider, citing several sources who attended a New York meeting with top community officials, said Duda claimed offensive comments by Israel's foreign minister had caused an increase in anti-Semitism in Poland.

In January 2020, Polish President Andrzej Duda said he had declined an Israeli invitation to attend a Holocaust memorial event this month as organizers would not allow him to speak there, even though others including Russian President Vladimir Putin would. He added that he does not approve of the fact that representatives of Russia, France, Britain, Germany, and the United States will be able to speak at the event while Poland won't be able to. The Jewish Community of the country supported President's decision.

In March 2023, Israel and Poland agreed to restart Holocaust trips after a 3 year pause due to the Polish government moved to minimize their role in the Holocaust. They also agreed to reinstate their ambassador to Israel after a 2-year pause. Trying to continue to fix their strained relationship, a Polish delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Pawel Jablonski visited Israel in June 2023.

Jewish Community

Jewish presence in Poland was first recorded in the 11th century. After suffering great losses in the Mongol invasion, the country encouraged immigration in the 13th century, and Jews flocked to Poland from Bohemia-Moravia, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Crimea.

By the mid-16th century, about 80% of world Jewry had settled in Poland. During the 16th to 18th centuries, a Jewish Parliament known as the Council of Four Lands (Va'ad Arba Aratsot) was the governing body for Polish Jews.

Much of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's Jewish community became part of the Russian Empire following the partition of the country at the end of the 18th century. The Russian government designated part of the territory as a "Pale of Settlement" in which the Jews of the Empire would be confined.

In the Pale of Settlement, the majority of Jews lived in shtetls or within major population centers like Warsaw and Kraków. However, Russian authorities restricted Jewish economic development in the region through anti-Semitic policies that prohibited Jews from joining many professions.

Toward the end of the 19th century, a great wave of Jewish emigration from Poland occurred. Many Polish Jews travelled to the United States, Canada, Argentina, Germany, France, and the British Mandate for Palestine (now Israel), as Jews continued to be subject to anti-Semitism under the tsars and in Poland.

During the interwar period of the early 20th century, Polish Jews were *de jure* protected under the Treaty of Versailles. In reality, their legal rights were sometimes not honored by Poland and many Jews were massacred in pogroms. The Jewish community in Poland remained strong,

however. In many urban centers of the Polish republic, Jews formed a strong minority of the population and operated numerous major factories and businesses.

Since the fall of Communism in Poland, Jewish communal life has been undergoing a revival. Poland's government has implemented legal provisions to combat anti-Semitism and contributed to rebuilding Jewish cultural, social, and religious life. Approximately 10,000-20,000 Jews currently live in Poland. Warsaw has Poland's largest Jewish community. Smaller communities are located in Kraków, Łódź, Szczecin, Gdańsk, Katowice, and Wrocław.

The Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture and the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation sponsor many projects and programs focused on advocacy, education, and the rebuilding of Jewish community life in Poland.

The Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland (UJRCP) is the umbrella organization of Jewish communities across the country, providing educational activities and social aid for Holocaust survivors, operating kosher cafeterias, renovating derelict buildings, and maintaining Jewish cemeteries.

Some of the synagogues are historic monuments, such as the Remu Synagogue, the Tempel Synagogue, and the Nozyk Synagogue. The 14th-century Stara Synagogue is the oldest in Poland. Before the German invasion of Poland, the Stara Synagogue was the main religious and social center of the Kraków Jewish community. It currently operates as a museum.

The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews is a cultural and educational center on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto. The Museum opened in April 2013, and the core exhibition opened in October 2014, depicting the thousand-year history of Polish Jewry. The core exhibition, occupying 43,000 square feet, consists of eight galleries.

In April 2023, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising commemorated its 80th anniversary. The initiative began by the museum in 2013 and continues to take place annually.

The Krakow Jewish community hosted its Jewish Cultural Festival from June 29-July 2, 2023, in the city's historical Jewish district of Kazimierz. The event promotes Israel and educates participants on the community's traditions. The festival is seen as a symbol of tolerance, pluralism, and celebration of Jewish culture.

Restitution, Jewish Memory, and Holocaust Issues

When the World War II began, some 3,300,000 Jews lived in the country, making Poland home to the world's second-largest Jewish community. Poland's Jewish population after the Holocaust was approximately 200,000 Jews. Nearly 85% of Polish Jewry perished in the Holocaust, and many Jews from other countries were deported to Poland and killed in Nazi extermination camps. At the war's end, many survivors refused to return to or remain in Poland.

During anti-Jewish riots, ethnic Poles murdered hundreds of Jews in Poland in 1944-1946. From 1945 to 1959 more than 150,000 Jewish Poles emigrated, mostly to the United States and Israel, to escape rising anti-Semitism and Communism. The last mass emigration took place in 1968, following the 1967 Six-Day War between Israel and Arab states, during a forceful anti-Jewish campaign by Polish authorities.

In June 2023, Poland's deputy Foreign Minister Pawel Jablonksi said that there was no need to make a distinction between Jews killed in the Holocaust and Christian Poles because both had suffered. He continued, arguing that "...this is a race over who was the bigger victim."

There is currently no law in Poland on Jewish property restitution, and Poland is the only EU nation and former Soviet bloc country that has not passed a law on the restitution of private property. After numerous repeated appeals from Jewish organizations, draft legislation has been completed, calling for 15% of the properties' current value to be returned to family heirs. The only recourse to restitution in Poland has been longstanding provisions in Polish law, rather than any specific legislation designed to help Jewish communities. Polish authorities refer to this law as evidence of their inability to advance the issue of restitution further.

In May 2019, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki vowed that his country will never pay restitution for Jewish properties stolen during the Holocaust, saying that such a move would be a "victory for Hitler." Morawiecki said paying restitution "violates international law and would also be a posthumous victory for Hitler, which is why we will never allow it." Poland is the only country in the European Union that has not passed comprehensive national legislation to return, or provide compensation for, private property confiscated by the Nazis or nationalized by the communist regime. That year, Poland canceled a visit by Israeli officials who intended to raise the issue of the restitution of Jewish properties seized during the Holocaust.

In June 2023, the Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich condemned the eastern Polish town of Kazimierz Dolny for holding a children's bubble party on former Jewish cemetery grounds, where many are still buried. Bartlomiej Godlewka, Kazimierz Dolny's deputy mayor public made a public statement, saying that he regrets his decision and that this was a "human error."

Developments in Polish Jewish Relations

The Polish government works to commemorate the country's Jewish history and support the revival of Jewish cultural life. Its efforts have included improving Holocaust education in schools, recognizing the contribution of Polish Jews to the nation's culture, and providing financial support to Jewish organizations.

In December 2017, the Polish government pledged \$28 million to restore the Warsaw Jewish Cemetery, making the preservation project one of the largest of its kind in Europe. The measure passed Poland's lower house of parliament, the Sejm, by a vote of 400-4.

In May 2018, a 120-member delegation of Israeli police officers, along with members of the Polish government, commemorated the victims of the 1946 Kielce Pogrom. The Deputy Mayor of Kielce welcomed the visit of the Israeli police officers and stressed the open cooperation between his town and its Israeli partners.

In February 2018, members of the Polish government spoke out against the creation of a “Polocaust” museum dedicated to the non-Jewish victims of the Nazis. Deputy Culture Minister Jaroslaw Sellin argued that the initiative “would hurt Jewish sensitivity and unnecessarily provoke more tension between our nations. The Polocaust museum will not be built.”

In August 2018, authorities in Warsaw allocated \$41 million to adapt a five-story building into a new home for the Warsaw Jewish Theater. A Warsaw City Council member called the theater “one of the most important guardians of Jewish culture in Warsaw, and all over Poland.”

In November 2018, the Polish parliament adopted a resolution commemorating Yiddish novelist Isaac Bashevis Singer, who 40 years ago received the Nobel Prize for Literature. The resolution stressed that Singer’s work – in Yiddish – is an integral part of Polish cultural heritage.

Polish and Israeli tourism has also improved. In 2017, travel from Israel to Poland increased from 139,000 the previous year to 250,000, according to Israel’s ambassador to Poland. During the same period, almost 100,000 Poles visited Israel. In first ten months of 2018 alone, 123,000 tourists from Poland have arrived in Israel. The Polish government has also worked with the Israeli government on cross-cultural events, including holding a 70th anniversary commemorative reopening of the Israeli Embassy in Warsaw.

Every year, more than 10,000 Jewish and non-Jewish youth from 40 countries, along with dozens of Holocaust survivors and dignitaries from around the world, participate in the International March of the Living, the three-kilometer march from Auschwitz to Birkenau, to pay tribute to the victims of the Nazi genocide and call for an end to anti-Semitism. In 2023, Polish President Andrzej Duda, Israeli President Issac Herzog, and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier participated in the annual commemoration event.

The Polish MFA organizes an annual trip to Poland for members of American Jewish Organizations. The goal of the trip is to provide a more comprehensive picture of Jewish history in Poland. Poland has a fraught history with Holocaust remembrance. The Polish government tends to emphasize a more Polish centric narrative of this time, one where the government was in exile. However, this undermines the full story of the Holocaust, including the part where individual Poles were either directly or indirectly responsible the deaths of Jews.

With the 2023 agreement between Israel and Poland, Israeli youth groups are returning to Poland, allowing them to visit memorial sites, learn about Polish history, and the long-standing Polish-Jewish relations.

Anti-Semitism

There is no state discrimination against the Jewish community. The Jewish community has good relations with the government and other religious groups. However, direct attacks are rare. Anti-Semitic incidents continue to occur, and often involve desecration of Jewish sites.

Anti-Semitic incidents have occurred during sporting events. During a September 2013 soccer match in Poznan, fans of the local club shouted anti-Semitic slogans at the visiting Łódź team and its fans. Prosecutors failed to identify the fans who shouted these slogans, and shortly discontinued the investigation. In October 2013, a Warsaw district court found 17 soccer fans guilty of hate speech for chanting in German “Hamas, Hamas... Jews to the gas [chambers]” during a 2011 soccer match between the Łódź and Warsaw teams.

In 2013, the Białystok district prosecutor initiated a procedure to dismiss the head of the Białystok-North prosecutor’s office. After reviewing almost 30 cases involving xenophobia or racism that occurred in Białystok between May 20 and June 26, the district prosecutor determined that the local prosecutor’s office made mistakes in eight of the cases by discontinuing them or refusing to initiate an investigation.

In 2015, a judge in Poland called Jews a “despicable, filthy nation” in an online forum. arosław Dudzicz was promoted in 2017 to the president of the court in Gorzów Wielkopolski by Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro. However, he was not charged because as a judge he has immunity.

In July 2016, a Polish lawmaker from the Modern Party, which has a strong anti-racism agenda, said party leader Ryszard Petru had received a handwritten, anti-Semitic death threat whose author signed it “Sniper.”

Another issue is denial by some Polish officials of individual Poles’ responsibility for massacres of Jews during and after World War II. In July 2016, Polish Education Minister Anna Zalewska came under fire for remarks appearing to deny Polish responsibility for the Jedwabne massacre of 1941 and the Kielce massacre in 1946. Polish President Andrzej Duda holds opposing views to the minister and has openly admitted that ordinary Polish citizens participated in the Jedwabne massacre.

In July 2017, the prosecutor’s office in the western Poland city of Wrocław indicted former priest Jacek Międlar for “public incitement to hatred based on religious and national differences.” In November 2016, during Polish Independence Day, Wrocław hosted a “March of Patriots.” According to the prosecutor’s office, in his speech to the march, “under the guise of promoting patriotic attitudes,” Międlar publicly called for hatred against Jews and Ukrainians. Międlar pled not guilty and said that he was defending the good name of Poles, whom he said the Jews call “worms.” In April 2016, Międlar in a sermon referred to Jews as a “cancer which swept Poland.” The Prosecutor’s Office in Białystok later found that no hate crime had been

committed. He has twice been banned from entering the United Kingdom to take part in anti-immigrant marches.

In August 2017, the museum at Auschwitz criticized a right-wing television station in Warsaw that adapted the infamous “Arbeit macht frei” sign above the gates of the Nazi death camp into an illustration for a story about German reparations. The story on Republika TV, about the call by some Polish lawmakers for Germany to compensate Poland for its losses in World War II, changed the signs’ words from “Work sets you free” to “Reparations set you free.” Following complaints, Republika removed the graphic from its Twitter account but not from its website.

In August 2017, President of the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland Leslaw Piszewski and Warsaw community head Anna Chipczynska sent an open letter to Jaroslaw Kaczynski, a founder of the ruling right-wing Law and Justice Party. The co-authors wrote that they are “appalled by recent events and fearful for our [communities’] security as the situation in our country is becoming more dangerous.”

On January 26, 2018, members of the Polish parliament passed an amendment to the country’s 1998 Act on the Institute of National Remembrance that that has since been dubbed “the ‘Polish death camp’ law” or the “Holocaust Law”. The amendment to the law, which was established in 1998 to maintain World War II-era archives, made it a crime, punishable by fine or imprisonment for up to three years, to accuse the Polish state or nation of responsibility or complicity in Nazi atrocities during World War II. It also gave the country’s Institute for National Remembrance power to bring charges against anyone who defames or tarnishes the reputation of Poland or the Polish people. On February 6, 2018, following an international outcry, Polish President Andrzej Duda expressed concern that some provisions of the bill might violate Poland’s constitution. However, instead of vetoing the bill, he signed it into law and referred the provision regarding criminal penalties to the country’s Constitutional Tribunal for evaluation. In June 2018, the Polish government removed the criminal punishments, though prosecutors can still issue financial fines.

In April 2018, Polish nationalists protested in front of the U.S. Embassy against the restitution of Jewish property. Protest was held under the slogan “Stop Jewish property claims” and was related to a new U.S. law on restitution.

On November 11, 2018, Polish authorities held a march in Warsaw commemorating the 100th anniversary of the country’s independence. Polish President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki walked in the front of the march. Far-right groups from Poland and around the world joined the celebration despite a ban by the Polish government. Participants in the March included the National Radical Camp, which has engaged in Holocaust denial, as well as the Independence March Association, whose leader recently called Polish Jews a “fifth column.” Self-avowed fascist groups from other European countries were also present.

Amid tensions between Israel and Poland over Israeli Foreign Minister Yisrael Katz’s statement that Poles collaborated with Germany in perpetrating the Holocaust, another Jewish cemetery

was vandalized. Vandals wrote "Jesus is King" on the side of the fence. Even though authorities removed it, vandals reposted the graffiti once again hours later.

In September 2019, Several Israelis were brutally assaulted in Poland after the assailants asked where they were from.

In March 2019, a Polish right-wing newspaper appeared in the Polish parliament as part of the daily press kit with the front page headline "how to recognize a Jew," which included a picture of Holocaust historian Jan Gross.

In April 2019, a figure represented Judas, looked like a stereotypical Jew being hanged, burned, and beaten on Good Friday. It happened in Pruchnik, in southeast Poland. The leader of the Polish Catholic Church denounced this act.

In May 2019, the Israeli politician Yair Lapid said in an interview with Polish website that "Poles cooperated in creating and running extermination camps. Poles handed over Jews to the Germans and thus sent them to death." The Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum in Poland responded with critics Lapid's statements.

In October 2019, a swastika and other graffiti were painted on the wall of the former ghetto in Krakow. "Whores Jews, get the f*** out of Poland" alongside the swastika were discovered drawn with a tar-like substance on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Municipal services painted over the graffiti on the same day.

In December 2019, Polish authorities arrested the far-right leader Jacek Miedlar, and planned to charge him with public incitement of hatred against Jews, officials said. Miedlar is considered one of the most controversial and recognizable members of the extreme right in Poland and has a history of spreading anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

According to the 2023 ADL Global 100 report, Poland has a 25% index score, meaning nearly 11 million out to their 31 million adult population have anti-Semitic views. 62% say that Jews are more loyal to Israel than Poland and 57% say that Jews talk too much about the Holocaust. In addition, the Czulent Jewish Association noted that anti-Semitic attacks have quadrupled in the 2021-2023 period.