

# Polish PM under fire for Auschwitz speech

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Poland's Prime Minister Beata Szydlo (pictured) is under fire for using a speech at Auschwitz commemorating the first inmates to enter the Nazi death camp as a chance to defend her nationalist anti-migrant policy.

To mark the 77th anniversary of the Auschwitz-Birkenau's opening, Szydlo said that "Auschwitz is a lesson showing that everything needs to be done to protect one's citizens".

Szydlo said it was a key role for politicians to ensure that "such terrible events as those that took place in Auschwitz and other places of martyrdom never happen again".

The speech was widely seen as a justification of Poland's nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party's decision not to accept migrants under a European Union resettlement plan.

Opposition centrist leader Katarzyna Lubnauer claimed Szydlo had "exploited the cruelty of Auschwitz to make Poles afraid of refugees".

The EU this week launched legal action against Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic for refusing to take in their share of migrants under its contentious solidarity plan. The EU programme aims to relocate 160,000 migrants from Italy, Greece and other frontline countries.

Donald Tusk, European Council president and an ex-prime minister of Poland, tweeted: "Such words in such a place should never come out from the mouth of a Polish prime minister."

Szydlo's remarks were initially tweeted by PiS but subsequently removed.

Tomasz Lis, the editor of Polish Newsweek, said: "Szydlo showed today that she has no problems using both living Arabs and dead Jews in her primitive propaganda."

"Auschwitz must remind us of the need to defend universal human rights, not closing borders to refugees," argued Rafal Pankowski, leader of the anti-extremist Never Again group.

Government spokesman Rafal Bochenek urged critics to listen to Szydlo's entire speech. "If someone wants to, they will find bad intentions in any comment," Bochenek tweeted.

Szydlo's government has already been accused of trying to exploit the legacy of the Second World War. Earlier this year, the government won a court battle to take over a new war museum in Gdansk that presented the conflict from a global perspective.

The authorities are planning a museum near Auschwitz to mark Polish resistance to the death camp, honouring Poles who allegedly gave food and medicine to prisoners at Auschwitz and helped escapes.

More than a million people, mainly European Jews, are thought to have been gassed, shot or hanged at Auschwitz or to have died of neglect, starvation or disease during the war before Soviet forces seized the camp in January 1945.

<http://www.eurasiatimes.org/en/16/06/2017/polish-pm-under-fire-for-auschwitz-speech/>