

## Jacek Miedlar: Polish Catholic priest „detained at London airport” hours before anti-Islam rally

*By Paul Wright  
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*Anti-racism campaigners had feared 28-year-old's firebrand sermons could radicalise Poles in UK.*

A Catholic priest, who has become an icon for the far-right in Poland, has been prevented from speaking at an anti-Islam rally in Shropshire after being detained by border police at London's Stansted Airport, organisers have said.

Jacek Miedlar, 28, branded a "fanatical hate preacher" by anti-racism campaigners in Poland, was due to march through the town of Telford with Britain First activists on Saturday (25 February).

Jayda Fransen, 30, deputy leader of Britain First, told IBTimes UK he had been detained as his flight landed in London on Saturday morning.

"Jacek has been detained by Border Force officers who are holding him pending further interrogation," she said.

"He won't be speaking at our rally. We are obviously disappointed."

Fransen went on to accuse the British authorities of suppressing free speech, saying the UK had become a "police state".

Several Polish media outlets also reported his detention, saying he had been held by border officials at London Stansted Airport. Polish Radio said he was being questioned on suspicion of hate speech offences.

A Home Office spokesperson told IBTimes UK: "An individual was detained at Stansted Airport at 8.40am GMT this morning by Border Force officers working closely with Essex Police.

"All passengers attempting to enter the UK are subject to checks by Border Force officers against police, security and immigration watch lists. Where we believe someone poses a risk, Border Force officers can – and do – refuse them entry."

It is understood Miedlar was due to speak at other events in the UK this weekend.

The Telford rally – organised by Britain First and said to be against Rotherham-style child sexual exploitation in the area – will still go ahead as planned, Fransen added.

Pictures posted on social media of the protest suggested the turnout was poor.

One journalist attending said on Twitter the march had been postponed for an hour as only about 30 people had turned up.

Miedlar's reported detention comes after anti-racism campaigners in his home country and the UK had warned of his visit to Britain.

The 28-year-old, who is currently suspended by his local Catholic church for his firebrand nationalist sermons, has addressed tens of thousands of people at right-wing revival rallies in Poland.

His critics accuse him of using radical sermon-style speeches to spread anti-Semitism, homophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment.

"Miedlar is a radical nationalist on every front: anti-gay, anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic," Rafal Pankowski, a professor at Warsaw's Collegium Civitas and director of Poland's Never Again anti-racism group, had told IBTimes UK in the run-up to the Telford rally.

"The level of hatred is quite exceptional. He really stands out as a fanatical hate preacher. He appeared on the far-right scene about three years ago, and in those three years he's really made a name for himself as a very outspoken and extreme preacher.

"He has a certain audience among younger Poles in the UK; it's not the first time a Polish far-right speaker has come to the UK [...] but Miedlar stands out. I would put him on the same level as Islamic hate preachers. It's something the British authorities should take seriously."

Hope Not Hate, Britain's most prominent anti-extremism organisation, also warned of Miedlar's visit, saying it would bring "rabid extremism to Telford".

Miedlar, from the city of Wroclaw, west Poland, has attracted numerous headlines in the Polish media over the years.

Last year, Miedlar was accused of calling Jews a "cancer" who had "swept Poland" during an address to crowds at a far-right rally in Bialystok, north-eastern Poland. He was eventually cleared of alleged hate-speech offences linked with the comments.

Miedlar sparked controversy again by then posting a message to his 10,000 Twitter followers saying: "Bialystok investigation discontinued! Zero tolerance for 'Jewish cowardice'. Salut!"

The tweet, later deleted, saw him attach a picture of Poles in Myslenice performing a Nazi-style salute taken on 23 June, 1936 when a group of nationalists took part in an anti-Jewish riot, the Times of Israel reported.

His controversial speeches, to followers of Poland's fascist National Radical Camp (ONR), eventually led him to be suspended from his local Catholic church chapter.

In an interview with IBTimes UK the day before he was due to fly to the UK, Miedlar said he had been unfairly tarnished by "leftist" critics who are simply ideologically opposed to "patriotism".

Denying he was spreading anti-Semitism, Miedlar had told IBTimes UK: "Sadly, we live in times when those with Catholic views, or who support patriotism or Polish nationalism which is in accordance with Catholic doctrine, attracts criticism. That's the stick in the hands of the hated leftists."

He said he accepted Britain First's invitation to speak in the UK to "pool our strength to rebuild a Christian Europe" – a goal he said was endangered by fundamental Islam and immigration.

Britain First – a radical Christian group accused by its critics of stoking up anti-Muslim hatred in towns across the UK – said teaming up with Miedlar was part of the party's attempts to build links with foreign nationalists in preparation for "civil war" with Islam.

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/jacek-miedlar-polish-catholic-priest-detained-london-airport-hours-before-anti-islam-rally-1608560>