

Top Polish soccer referee blasted for offensive rant about Jews

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Senior referee responds to program combating anti-Semitism in soccer with rant that plays on offensive stereotypes.

A top Polish soccer referee has caused outrage after claiming a campaign to combat anti-Semitism in European soccer stadiums was “just another utter balderdash spun by Jewish centres and milieus – one knows very well for what purpose.”

According to the UK Jewish News, Lukasz Araszkiwicz, who has refereed for FIFA for 17 years, made the remark in an the email in response to an invitation by the Never Again Association to participate in an online discussion about how to combat anti-Semitism taking place in soccer stadiums.

“As a referee with seventeen years of experience refereeing at various levels, I have never witnessed anti-Semitic behaviour; [but] racism – quite the contrary,” said an October 4 email from Araszkiwicz, the Jewish News reported.

The Never Again Association is the group behind the “Let’s kick racism out of the stadiums” program.

The email went on to say: “This is just another utter balderdash spun by Jewish centres and milieus – one knows very well for what purpose.”

“Please do not send me such invitations anymore because I do not agree with it at all,” Araszkiwicz wrote. “Jews are not a chosen people despite that eternal hubris of theirs... and portraying Poles as anti-Semites and talking about Polish concentration camps is the biggest Jewish f***** despicable thing since World War 2.”

The referee’s email outraged the Never Again Association, who have asked FIFA President Gianni Infantino to take a “principled position on this matter. ”

In a letter addressed to Infantino, Never Again Association president Rafal Pankowski and representatives of the American Jewish Committee – Central Europe wrote: “Xenophobia and anti-Semitism are difficult topics for Polish and international football, therefore we did not expect only praise for our initiative. However, one of the responses to the event clearly went beyond what is called difference of opinion or acceptable criticism.”

They added: “Unfortunately, the words of Mr. Araszkiwicz show that the use of negative stereotypes about Jews is a phenomenon that is still present also in the world of football.”

The letter urged Infantino to take action and also cited FIFA’s code of conduct in regard to racism and discrimination.

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