

Network of Concerned Historians	NCH
<i>Annual Report 2026</i>	https://www.concernedhistorians.org

INTRODUCTION

This **thirty-second *Annual Report*** of the **Network of Concerned Historians (NCH)** documents the censorship of history, the persecution of historians, archivists, and archaeologists, and other cases on the intersection of history and human rights, drawing in particular on reports from human rights organizations and other sources. It covers mainly events of 2025 and 2026 around the world.

Disclaimer. The fact that the NCH presents this news does *not* imply that it shares the views and beliefs of the historians and others mentioned in it.

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								2026	2025
2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995

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POLAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–1998, 2000–2001, 2004–2005, 2007–2011, 2014–2025.

In mid-July 2025, the exhibition “Our Boys – Residents of Gdańsk-Pomerania in the Army of the Third Reich” opened at the Museum of Gdańsk. The exhibition, about the estimated 400,000–450,000 Polish soldiers who fought for the Nazi German Wehrmacht, drew fierce criticism and protests, especially from politicians of the populist-conservative Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS; Law and Justice Party) and affiliated organizations. Former President Andrzej Duda described it as a “moral provocation,” and PiS founder Jarosław Kaczyński as “an attack on the Polish *raison d’état* and a questioning of obvious historical facts.” Under PiS Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki (in office 2017–2021) a “memory law” had been passed making “whoever publicly and contrary to the facts attributes to the Polish Nation or to the Polish State responsibility or co-responsibility for the Nazi crimes committed by the German Third Reich ... liable to a fine” [See NCH *Annual Report 2018*]. The exhibition’s curator Andrzej Hoja, a historian at the Center for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Berlin, received threats and insults.²³⁴

In October 2025, far-right activist Tomasz Sommer filed a defamation lawsuit with the District Court in Warsaw against Rafał Pankowski, a professor of sociology and political science at Civitas University, Warsaw, and co-founder of the anti-racist Nigdy Więcej (Never Again) association, because he had criticized Sommer’s 2023 68-minute documentary “Jedwabne: Historia prawdziwa” (Jedwabne: The True Story), about a pogrom in which at least 340 Jews were killed in Jedwabne on 10 July 1941, and in which Sommer had denied the responsibility of the Polish perpetrators for the massacre. In a comment to the liberal Israeli daily *Haaretz* in August 2023, Pankowski had said that the documentary, partially funded by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, distorted history and that it “allege[d] that accusations against Poles for the pogrom of Jedwabne were invented by a Jewish-led conspiracy,” referring to historian Jan Tomasz Gross and Chief Rabbi Michael Schudrich in particular. Pankowski argued that his comments were justified criticism. Sommer demanded the publication of an apology on *Haaretz*’s website and damages [See NCH *Annual Report 2000*]. The Jedwabne pogrom had been a divisive and polarizing issue since the 2000 publication of Gross’s *Neighbors* [See NCH *Annual Reports 2001, 2014*].

²³⁴ Jakub Knera, “‘Our Boys Were Forced Into the Enemy Army to Save Loved Ones’: The Second World War Exhibition Dividing Poland,” *Guardian* (20 August 2025); Raphael Minder, “The Secret History of Poland’s Wehrmacht Conscripts,” *Financial Times* (27 September 2025); Mark Middel, “Polen zien zichzelf als slachtoffer van de oorlog,” *NRC Handelsblad* (28 May 2026).

In the run-up to 85th anniversary of the pogrom on 10 July 2026, extreme-right protesters placed antisemitic “memorial stones” in Jedwabne and on the day itself organized several counter-commemorations there, during which the responsibility of Polish perpetrators for the massacre was again denied.²³⁵

On 28 November 2025, the Warsaw District Court granted interim legal protection to TVP journalist Dorota Wysocka-Schnepf by prohibiting media figures Krzysztof Stanowski, Robert Mazurek, and YouTube channel *Kanał Zero* from publishing content linking her or her family (especially her late father-in-law) to Communist-era crimes, including references to the Augustów Roundup (a military operation by Soviet troops and Polish communists against an estimated two thousand anti-Communist partisans and sympathizers in Augustów, northeast Poland, in July 1945), and from calling her “the high priestess of propaganda.” The ruling also ordered warning notices to be added to several existing videos and issued financial penalties for further violations. Wysocka-Schnepf was often criticized by populist-conservative figures for what they perceived as her liberal-progressive bias.²³⁶

In December 2025, the Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu (Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation) of the Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (IPN; Institute of National Remembrance), the YouTube channel *Kanał Zero* and the Kulski Foundation launched a campaign against Polish-German historian Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe (1979–) for his book *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust: Besatzung, Verwaltung und Kollaboration* (De Gruyter, 2024; Polish Mayors and the Holocaust: Occupation, Administration and Collaboration), which examined the role of Polish mayors during the Generalgouvernement für die besetzten polnischen Gebiete (1939–1945; General Governorate for the Occupied Polish Region). In an open letter, the Kulski Foundation expressed “strong opposition” to Rossoliński-Liebe’s book and alleged it “damaged” “good Polish-German relations,” because the book cover included a photograph of Warsaw’s wartime mayor, Julian Kulski. At the same time, former Polish Prime Minister for the nationalist-conservative Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS; Law and Justice) party (and historian) Mateusz Morawiecki (in office 2017–2023) and others claimed that the book sought to “blame the Poles for the Holocaust,” a narrative amplifying a 47-page November 2025 IPN book review and later reiterated by Karol Nawrocki, IPN director (2021–2025) and Polish President (2025–), in a post on X. As a result of the campaign, Rossoliński-Liebe faced harassment (including a hostile video by *Kanał Zero*, hate messages, and

²³⁵ Sam Sokol, “[Funded by the Polish Government, This Film Downplays Poland’s Role in the Holocaust](#),” *Haaretz* (14 August 2023); “[Free Speech at Stake in Polish Legal Battle over 1941 Pogrom Truth](#),” *Never Again Association* (25 February 2026); Arnout Le Clercq, “[Waarom de herdenking van de massamoord in Jedwabne het middelpunt is van een bittere strijd in Polen](#),” *Volkskrant* (18 July 2026); Rafał Pankowski, “Met Any Jews Lately?” *Index on Censorship*, 2000, no. 2, 143–148.

²³⁶ “[Journalist Dorota Wysocka-Schnepf and Her Family Targeted with Harassment Campaign](#),” *Mapping Media Freedom* (7 September 2025).

personal threats on social media). His lecture at the Topographie des Terrors (Topography of Terror) in Berlin was reportedly indefinitely postponed after an intervention by the Polish ambassador to Germany.

It was not the first time that Rossoliński-Liebe faced pressure. In February 2012, as a doctoral student at the University of Hamburg, he had written a biography of ultra-nationalist leader Stepan Bandera (1909–1959), the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) and the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army). He had been scheduled to give six lectures in Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Kyiv on Bandera, the OUN, and the UPA upon invitation of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German Embassy, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation. During a first lecture at the embassy under heavy police protection, the radical-right nationalist party Svoboda organized a demonstration of about one hundred protesters in front of the building, with banners calling Rossoliński-Liebe a “liberal fascist,” an “advocate of the Nazis,” a “provocateur,” a “mendacious grandson of Goebbels,” and a “Ukrainophobe.” The other planned lectures were canceled. Rossoliński-Liebe was threatened and had to hide in an anonymous apartment under the protection of the embassy. Some people, including students, received threats for supporting him. Bandera appeared in some nationalist discourses as a “national hero” (he was named so by former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko and was celebrated as such in Western Ukraine), and the OUN and UPA as “liberation movements” [See NCH *Annual Report 2025*, under *Ukraine*].²³⁷

On 4 December 2025, the Internal Security Agency (ABW) detained Russian archaeologist Alexander Butyagin (1971–), head of the Northern Black Sea Region’s Classical Archaeology Sector of the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia, on a Ukrainian warrant. Since 1999, he had overseen research into the site of Myrmekion (an ancient Greek colony founded by the Ionians in the sixth century BCE), near Kerch in Crimea, which Russia had illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014. Claiming sovereignty over Crimea, Ukraine saw any archaeological work there since 2014 as illegal and considered any antiquities taken from the site to be stolen – in line with the 1999 Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict under which Russia’s excavations in Crimea were illegal. In November 2024, Ukraine’s Office of the

²³⁷ Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, personal communication (10 December 2025); Network of Concerned Historians, [Campaign for Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe](#) (14 January 2026); Fundacja Kulskich, [“Over 150 Public Figures Appeal for Historical Truth”](#) (open letter; 8 December 2025); Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, [Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust: Besatzung, Verwaltung und Kollaboration](#) (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024); [“An Open Letter in Defense of Academic Freedom and the Historian Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe”](#) (no date [January 2026]); Scholars Concerned with Academic Freedom and Democracy in Ukraine, [“For Freedom of Speech and Expression in Ukraine”](#) (petition; no date, [March] 2012); Per Anders Rudling & Jared McBride, [“Ukrainian Academic Freedom and Democracy Under Siege,”](#) *The Allgemeiner* (1 March 2012); Jemimah Steinfeld, “No Unflattering Portraits of the Past, Please,” *Index on Censorship*, 2026 no. 1, 82–83.

Prosecutor General had charged Butyagin *in absentia* with illegally excavating and partially looting and destroying Myrmekion since February 2014.

On 18 March 2026, Judge Dariusz Łubowski of the Warsaw district court ruled that Butyagin could be extradited to Ukraine. Butyagin intended to appeal the ruling. A motion to release him on bail was turned down. In Ukraine, he could face a prison term of up to five years if found guilty of plundering artefacts. Meanwhile, Russia's foreign ministry threatened Poland over the arrest, warning that the act would "not go unpunished." In demanding Butyagin's release, the United States-based Committee of Concerned Scientists said that "science must transcend national borders. Injecting territorial disputes into the work of a scientist is highly controversial. The state of war between Russia and Ukraine leaves little chance of a fair trial for Butyagin if he were extradited to Ukraine." On 28 April 2026, Butyagin was released as part of a prisoner swap between Poland and Belarus.²³⁸

On 15 June 2026, Russian artist Robert Kuzovkov, also known as Semyon Skrepetsky, was shot dead in the eastern town of Biała Podlaska. He was known as a staunch critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov. Three days prior, on 12 June (also known as Russia Day, marking the establishment of the Russian Federation in 1990), Kuzovkov had traveled to Berlin to stage a protest showing a caricature of Putin sitting on the lap of Joseph Stalin (1878–1953). Polish police treated the shooting as a political murder.²³⁹

On 19 June 2026, President and historian Karol Nawrocki [See NCH *Annual Report 2020, 2022*, and items above] stripped Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky of the Order of the White Eagle, Poland's highest state order bestowed on him in 2023, after Zelensky had decided in May to name a military unit after the Ukrainianska Povstanska Armii (UPA; Ukrainian Insurgent Army) – a military organization which collaborated with Nazi Germany during World War II and participated in the massacres of Jews, Poles, and Hungarians, including massacres between 1943–1945 in Volhynia (Wołyn, Volyn) and Eastern Galicia, in which up to 100,000 predominantly Polish people were killed (See item below, under Ukraine). In Ukraine, however, UPA soldiers were seen by some as national heroes. Russian President Vladimir Putin had justified the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February

²³⁸ Valerie Hopkins, "[Russia Warns Poland over Arrest of a Researcher Wanted by Ukraine](#)," *New York Times* (11 December 2025); Adam Easton, "[Poland Arrests Russian Archaeologist Wanted in Ukraine](#)," *BBC News* (11 December 2025); Committee of Concerned Scientists, "[Appeal for the Release of Russian Archaeologist Aleksandr Butyagin Detained in Poland](#)" (15 December 2025); "[Moscow Demands Poland Release Russian Archaeologist Wanted by Ukraine](#)," *Notes from Poland* (13 January 2026); Nataliya Vasilyeva, "[Despite Moscow's Threats, Poland Rules to Extradite Archaeologist to Ukraine](#)," *New York Times* (18 March 2026); Grigor Atanesian & Adam Easton, "[Russian Archaeologist Can Be Sent to Ukraine for Trial, Polish Judge Rules](#)," *BBC News* (19 March 2026); Andrew Higgins, Nataliya Vasilyeva & Tomas Dapkus, "[Prisoner Swap in Eastern Europe Frees 10, Including Accused Spies](#)," *New York Times* (28 April 2026).

²³⁹ Piotr Sauer, "[Russian Artist and Critic of Putin and Chechen Leader Shot Dead in Poland](#)," *Guardian* (16 June 2025); Mark Hallam, "[Poland: Arrest after Russian Artist and Putin Critic Killed](#)," *Der Welt* (18 June 2026).

2022 as a fight against “neo-Nazis [and] Banderites,” further complicating the memory of the UPA [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*].²⁴⁰

See also India, Pakistan, Ukraine.

PORTUGAL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2017, 2021, 2025.

See Cabo Verde, Equatorial Guinea.

²⁴⁰ Henry Moore, “[Zelensky Stripped of Highest Polish Honour over WW2 Name of Army Unit](#),” *BBC News* (19 June 2026); Mark Middel, “[Historische gevoeligheid zet de relatie van Oekraïne met grote bondgenoot Polen onder druk](#),” *NRC Handelsblad* (22 June 2026).