

CIVIL SOCIETY UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE FAR RIGHT IN POLAND



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Rafal Pankowski reports from Warsaw

The situation in Poland has sharply deteriorated in the last years and months, with rising far right activity as well as pressures on civil society, and is worsening.

On 26 July, a demonstration was organised by three notorious extreme-right groups: the ONR (National-Radical Camp), MW (All-Polish Youth), and RN (Nationalist Movement) in front of the European Commission's office in Warsaw.

It was directed against alleged "foreign interference" in Poland and specifically against NGOs which are allegedly "sponsored from abroad" (by the EU and the Hungarian billionaire George Soros).

According to media reports, three NGOs were named in the speech by Robert Winnicki MP, the leader of the RN: Krytyka Polityczna (a left-wing magazine and publishing house), the Batory Foundation (the Polish representative of the Open Society Institute), and the anti-racist NEVER AGAIN Association.

Winnicki announced he would propose legislation aimed against the above-mentioned NGOs. Some time ago Winnicki spoke attacked NEVER AGAIN (NA) in a parliamentary speech but NA is not sponsored by the EU nor Soros and the only "foreign" grant awarded to it this year is for an anti-racist football activity. Most of NA's activity is voluntary. Clearly, the three NGOs were selected as representing an ideological threat to the far right.

The demonstration was attended by a few hundred nationalists.

As illustrated on the photo, the demonstrators were holding signs with crossed-out images of George Soros, Donald Tusk (the president of the European Council), Hans Timmermans (vice-president of the European Commission), and a crossed out logo of the NEVER AGAIN Association.

Several brave counter-demonstrators were physically attacked by supporters of the extreme-right.

These events seem to reflect the growing problems faced by the Polish anti-racists in an increasingly difficult environment.

Under such circumstances international solidarity will be absolutely vital to the continued existence of the anti-racist, anti-fascist movement in Poland.

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