

Israel's Lapid Denounces 'Shocking' Antisemitic Rally in Poland

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Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid condemned a “horrific” far-right rally in Poland last week that featured antisemitic invective, calling for action against those behind the display.

Shouting slogans that included “Death to the Jews” and “LGBT, pedophiles, Zionists — enemies of Poland,” hundreds of ultra-nationalists took over the center of Kalisz, a city of 100,000 in central Poland, on Thursday.

The centerpiece of the demonstration was the ceremonial burning of a statute issued in Kalisz in 1264 that granted legal protections to Jews in the historic Duchy of Greater Poland.

“The horrific antisemitic incident in Poland reminds every Jew in the world of the strength of hatred that exists in the world,” Lapid, the son of Holocaust survivors, wrote on Twitter on Saturday.

“The unequivocal condemnation by Polish officials is important and necessary,” he added. “I welcome their condemnation and expect the Polish government to act uncompromisingly against those who took part in this shocking display of hate.”

Polish President Andrzej Duda forcefully denounced the incident on Sunday, saying, “I strongly condemn all acts of antisemitism. The barbarism perpetrated by a group of hooligans in Kalisz runs counter to the values on which the Republic of Poland is based ... it is even an act of treason.”

Other politicians and local figures also expressed disgust at the demonstration. Foreign ministry spokesperson Lukasz Jasina said Saturday that Poland's independence day had been “used to promote hatred, antisemitism, xenophobia and religious intolerance.”

“It is outrageous and opposes Poland's many years of struggle for independence and freedom,” he continued. “This is against the history of Poland, the history of Kalisz, and the basic values on which our country is built. The prosecutor's office has been notified.”

The scenes at Thursday's demonstration had shocked even veteran observers of the Polish far-right. “They were chanting ‘Death, Death, Death’ and ‘Death to the Jews,’” Rafal Pankowski — executive director of the “Never Again” Association, a Polish anti-racist NGO — told *The Algemeiner* on Friday.

“In more than 25 years of monitoring antisemitism in Poland, I have never seen anything like this,” he added.