

## Polish Foreign Minister with History of Homophobic Remarks Addresses Polish-British Forum

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The Belvedere Forum invited Zbigniew Rau to speak alongside UK politicians, despite him referring to LGBTIQ rights as creating a “civilisation of death”.

Polish politician who ran election adverts on Facebook opposing the European “civilisation of death” gave the ministerial opening address at the Belvedere Forum – a prestigious event hosted in partnership between Chatham House and the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM).

The event has been taking place this month, on 15-16 September.

During the 2019 Polish Parliamentary campaign, Zbigniew Rau, now Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Law and Justice (PiS) Party, paid for a promoted Facebook advert directed at people living in Łódź province in which he railed against “what Europe has come to”. His bizarre campaign demanded an end to “gender ideology” – a catch-all term referring to feminism and LGBTIQ rights.

The post, for which Rau paid zł1,000 and which reached 50,000 people, also reflected on the legalisation of cannibalism and zoophilia (sexual attraction to a non-human animal) – two criminal acts which he claimed that the LGBTIQ movement promotes.

Alongside LGBTIQ rights, Rau also spread disinformation about abortion, inaccurately proposing that Europe was legalising the procedure up to the end of pregnancy. While in some countries this is legal in certain circumstances, it is understood that his source was an article regarding abortion law in New York.

Rau co-signed the US-sponsored anti-abortion Geneva Consensus last year, which declared that there is no international right to abortion.

Climate change policy was also in Rau’s sights. He wrote: “Under the guise of climate protection, you want to reduce a person not only to a sex toy, but an ordinary meal.” The “ordinary meal” is a suggestion that countries will legalise cannibalism in order to reduce the climate impact of intensive meat farming.

Condemning what he called Europe’s “civilisation of death”, Rau promised voters that “Law and Justice is the last barrier that protects us and our families from the chaos that the left wants to treat us”.

He added: “We must equip ourselves with a shield that will protect the rights of parents and children, Christian values and lifestyle.”

Writing in December 2019, journalist Anna Mierzyńska called the Facebook post “the most drastic example of disinformation” in the electoral campaign.

Speaking alongside Rau at the Belvedere Forum is co-chair Sir Malcolm Rifkind, the former Foreign Secretary under John Major. Other speakers include Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Minister Wendy Morton and Labour MP Rupa Huq.

Dr Rafal Pankowski of anti-racist organisation Never Again told Byline Times: “Of course, the event with Rau as the main speaker can be seen as legitimising the authoritarian tendency and vilification of minorities in Polish and global politics.”

## **Far Right Alliances**

Law and Justice (PiS) has been much-criticised on the international stage for its anti-LGBTIQ policies, including a ban on gay couples adopting children. The controversial “LGBT free zones” declared around the country have led to the European Union threatening to withdraw funding.

During the 2019 presidential campaign, the winning candidate Andrzej Duda made anti-LGBTIQ rhetoric the cornerstone of his messaging.

PiS has also been condemned for its attacks on the independent judiciary in Poland and the undermining of the free press, which culminated in a ban on non-European Economic Community companies owning stakes in Polish media companies. The ban was believed to be an attack on the independent TVN broadcaster, owned by US company Discovery.

Despite all of this, PiS remains as a sister party to the UK Conservative Party.

Members of both parties sit on the the European Conservatives and Democratic Alliance, a right-wing group in the Council of Europe – an organisation founded after World War Two to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. The group was co-founded by PiS and is chaired by Conservative MP Ian Liddell-Granger.

Other members of the group include politicians from the far-right Alternative fur Deutschland Party in Germany, Brothers of Italy, Austria’s Freedom Party, and far-right politicians from Bulgaria, Estonia, the Netherlands and other countries.

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