

# Israel disturbed by Polish treatment of anti-racism activist

Mar. 28, 2018



JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel’s Foreign Ministry said Wednesday that it is “very disturbed” by online attacks on an anti-racism activist in Poland that followed criticism by a government official.

Rafal Pankowski, head of the Never Again association, gave a presentation last week at the Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism in Jerusalem in which he described examples of anti-Semitic rhetoric in Poland that have accompanied a controversial new Holocaust speech law.

Afterward, Andrzej Pawluszek, an adviser to Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, said on Twitter that Pankowski had “attacked his own country.” Pankowski has since been denounced as a traitor and threatened in online comments.

Israel’s Foreign Ministry was “very disturbed to see the anti-Semitic attacks on Rafal in Poland, following the tweet by the Adviser of Poland’s PM,” spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon tweeted Wednesday. “This is not the way to deal with anti-Semitism — in Poland or anywhere!”

Pawluszek told The Associated Press that he was saddened by Nahshon’s response. He said he had commented on Pankowski from his private Twitter account and not in any official capacity. He also said he should not be held responsible for the behavior of “crazy anti-Semites on the Internet.”

“I did not attack Mr. Pankowski,” Pawluszek said. “I just pointed out that I was shocked that he attacks his own country and also made such a strong statement without providing any statistics.”

Pankowski denied attacking his country.

“In order to combat anti-Semitism, we need to have a frank and open debate about it,” Pankowski said. “As a Polish patriot, I believe anti-Semitism should be called out and to say that is not attacking Poland. It is defending an important part of the Polish multicultural heritage.”

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