



# Grzegorz Braun's Actions and the Fire Extinguisher: A Symbol of Antisemitism

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Screenshot from Sky titled "Far-right Polish politician uses fire extinguisher on Hanukkah candles in parliament"

## **Who is Grzegorz Braun?**

Grzegorz Braun is a Polish politician who is known for his radical views and targeting of various minorities.

Braun serves as a member of the Parliament (Sejm) of the Republic of Poland and is chairman of the Confederation of the Polish Crown, a far-right political party in Poland. This group is a part of a broader far-right alliance, known as "Konfederacja" (Confederation), which represents far-right and nationalist ideologies. The Confederation has gained 18 seats in the 15 October 2023 parliamentary elections, reflecting a strong base of support amongst a section of Polish voters.

The Confederation has faced numerous controversies, particularly involving Grzegorz Braun. On December 12, 2023, Braun extinguished Hanukkah candles with a fire extinguisher in the Polish parliament and physically attacked a Jewish woman at the ceremony. This antisemitic act outraged Poland's Jewish community as well as the general public. Despite numerous figures condemning the incident, Braun has not apologised and instead praised his actions in subsequent YouTube videos and social media posts. Unfortunately, this is not Braun's first antisemitic incident. In June 2023, he disrupted a Holocaust lecture by destroying the microphone and speakers. He has also called Jews "enemies of Poland," claiming they plan to take over Polish land and put ethnic Poles into reservations.

Grzegorz Braun's actions and rhetoric are deeply inflammatory and dangerous to the Jewish community. As a Polish parliament's representative, his behaviour undermines democratic values of respect and tolerance, fostering fear and hostility. Such actions exacerbate antisemitism and threaten the safety of Jewish individuals. Political leaders must promote unity and understanding to protect all communities.

### **Braun's Act of Antisemitism and How it Impacts the Jewish Community**

On December 12, 2023, Grzegorz Braun extinguished the candles in a Hannukah menorah in the Polish parliament with a fire extinguisher. After extinguishing the candles, the politician described Hanukkah as "satanic" and said he was restoring "normality". He later said that "those who take part in acts of satanic worship should be ashamed". The Hanukkah menorah is a sacred symbol in Judaism because it symbolises a miracle where oil lasted for eight days instead of one in the Temple. By extinguishing the candles with a fire extinguisher, Braun not only showed disrespect for the religious practices of Jewish people but also desecrated a symbol central to their faith.

Additionally, Braun not only disrespected a significant religious ceremony but branding the holiday as "satanic" is profoundly disturbing and antisemitic. Labelling Hanukkah as "satanic" is an age-old antisemitic trope that has been historically used to demonise and marginalise Jewish religious practices. Accusations of satanic worship have been employed throughout history as a tool of persecution against Jewish communities, contributing to harmful stereotypes and discrimination.

Furthermore, Braun's rhetoric about restoring "normality" and suggesting that those who participate in Hanukkah celebrations should be ashamed, promotes division and hatred within society. Such rhetoric fuels antisemitic sentiments and contributes to an atmosphere of intolerance and discrimination.

In addition to Grzegorz Braun's disrespectful actions towards the Hanukkah menorah and his antisemitic remarks, the subsequent physical attack on a Jewish woman present at the ceremony further highlights the severity of the situation. Attacking someone based on their religious identity is intolerable and shows dangerous levels of bigotry. This assault not only violates principles of respect and decency but also instils fear within the Jewish community, perpetuating a cycle of discrimination and hatred. It's vital to condemn such incidents, stand with those affected, and advocate for a society where everyone can practice their beliefs without fear of violence or persecution.

Overall, his actions and statements represent a clear instance of antisemitism and underscore the importance of combating bigotry and promoting respect for religious diversity.

### **Analysing Braun's YouTube Video: Mobilne studio wyborcze! Odcinek 1. Grzegorz Braun ('Mobile election studio! Episode 1. Grzegorz Braun')**

On 13 May 2024 Grzegorz Braun released another problematic 11-minute video on his YouTube channel. In the video, Braun states *'How do we measure efficiency of our election meetings? I think they are measured by the number of fire extinguishers that were autographed. There were already hundreds of them. [...] It is a symbol, a sign of agreement beyond what divides us. All those who want Poland to be Polish understand what the fire extinguisher emblem means.'*

Braun's characterisation of the fire extinguisher incident as a symbol of unity for those who "want Poland to be Polish" is deeply concerning as it aligns with far-right nationalist ideology, which often seeks to exclude or marginalise minority groups, in this case, the Jewish community. White nationalists and antisemites have adopted the fire extinguisher incident as a symbol of "resistance to Jews," reinforcing Braun's hateful agenda. This incident has inspired a wave of memes and merchandise on social media. Rafal Pankowski, head of the Polish anti-racist group NEVER AGAIN Association, explains that the spread of these memes exemplifies the globalisation of hateful extremism. The use of memes is particularly problematic because they quickly and effectively disseminate antisemitic messages, normalising hate and fostering a dangerous sense of unity among extremists.

In conclusion, Grzegorz Braun's video should be removed from YouTube because it spreads harmful and divisive messages. The video promotes antisemitism and fuels hate through the spread of offensive memes. Taking it down would help stop the spread of this harmful rhetoric and promote a more respectful public dialogue.

## **Reactions and Repercussions**

Grzegorz Braun's antisemitic actions on December 12, 2023, provoked widespread outrage in Poland, prompting condemnation from significant figures. The U.S. ambassador to Poland, Mark Brzezinski, described Braun's behaviour as a "nasty anti-Semitic act.". Despite previous fines, Braun now faces criminal charges after his parliamentary immunity was revoked, with prosecutors having charged him for offenses including property destruction and insulting religious objects. Notably, all parties except Braun's Confederation party voted to strip him of immunity, signalling a unified stance against antisemitism and hate speech in Poland.

In addition to widespread condemnation, Lukasz Jakubowski of the 'NEVER AGAIN' Association called for social media platforms to remove Braun's hateful content, emphasising his persistent propagation of hatred against minorities, especially Jews. Furthermore, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews released a statement condemning Braun's antisemitic behaviour, with numerous representatives of Jewish organisations and leaders in Poland endorsing the statement. This collective response underscores the gravity of Braun's actions and reflects a united front against antisemitism in Poland.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Grzegorz Braun's actions on December 12, 2023, and his subsequent remarks were deeply hurtful and offensive to the Jewish community. By extinguishing the Hanukkah menorah and making derogatory statements about the holiday, he not only disrespected a sacred symbol but also perpetuated harmful stereotypes. His attempt to use the fire extinguisher incident as a symbol of unity for nationalists is concerning and divisive.

However, the strong condemnation from various quarters, including political figures, organisations, and leaders, both within Poland and beyond, reflects a collective rejection of antisemitism and hate speech. Going forward, it is crucial to remain vigilant against such acts of bigotry and to promote inclusivity, tolerance, and respect for all religious and cultural backgrounds. Together, we can work towards a society where such incidents are not only condemned but actively prevented, fostering a more harmonious and understanding world.

Explore our collection of resources on combating antisemitism available on the *Get The Trolls Out!* Website, and dive deeper into the subject with the comprehensive report from the 'NEVER AGAIN' Association titled ["Braun's Hate - A New Report on Polish MP Who Attacked the Hanukkah."](#)

"Grzegorz Braun's Actions and the Fire Extinguisher: A Symbol of Antisemitism". GetTheTrollsOut.org, 7.06.2024. <https://getthetrollsout.org/articles/grzegorz-brauns-actions-and-the-fire-extinguishernbsp-a-symbol-of-antisemitismnbspnbspnbsp>