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New York Jewish Community Appeal Regarding the Draft Polish Institute of National Remembrance Legislation

February 5, 2018

Consul General Maciej Golubiewski
Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York
233 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Dear Consul General Golubiewski,

We, the undersigned, are deeply disturbed by draft legislation concerning the penalization of those who claim that Poland or the Polish nation bore responsibility for the Holocaust, which passed the *Sejm* (lower house) on Friday, January 26, 2018 and the *Senat* (upper house) on Thursday, February 1, 2018. If enacted, individuals who publicly claim “that the Polish Nation or the Republic of Poland is responsible or co-responsible for Nazi crimes...shall be liable to a fine or imprisonment for up to three years.”

There is no doubt that Nazi Germany engineered and perpetrated the murder of six million European Jews - nearly half of them Polish Jews - largely by establishing extermination camps on occupied Polish soil. There is also no doubt that Poland suffered immense losses under the Nazi and Soviet occupations, and the Polish people showed undeniable bravery in fighting the occupiers. We remember that there were many righteous Poles who provided assistance to their Jewish neighbors and friends, but we are also obliged to remember that there were those who committed crimes against Jews during the Second World War.

The legal prohibition of such acknowledgement might lead to historical inaccuracies in how the Holocaust is discussed and taught. If passed, the legislation may also handicap Holocaust research in Poland, even as research seems to be exempt from the law, as the lines between research and free expression to publicize findings are sometimes thin.

We hope that your government can understand the uproar that the draft legislation has caused. We understand that the usage of the most unfortunate term “Polish concentration camp” is deeply troubling to the Polish people but we hope your government will consider other ways of making sure it is not widely used. We hope it can be done while allowing full freedom to discuss and examine all aspects of war-time Jewish experience, even those that are so painful to acknowledge.

Signatories:

1. Jewish Community Relations Council of New York
2. American Jewish Committee (AJC) NY

3. Anti-Defamation League New York
4. Jewish National Fund
5. National Council of Jewish Women New York
6. Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America
7. The New York Board of Rabbis
8. National Council of Young Israel
9. Orthodox Union
10. United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism - METNY District
11. Union for Reform Judaism Ameinu
12. AMIT Children
13. Bnai Zion Foundation
14. Emunah of America
15. The Jewish Education Project
16. Religious Zionists of America
17. B'nai B'rith International, Metronorth Region
18. Bronx Jewish Community Relations Council
19. Council of Jewish Organizations of Staten Island - COJO
20. Hillel at Baruch College
21. Hillel at City College
22. Hillel at John Jay College
23. Hillel at the College of Staten Island
24. Tanger Hillel at Brooklyn College
25. JCC Brooklyn
26. Jewish Community Council of Canarsie
27. Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney Island
28. Jewish Community Council of Washington Heights and Inwood
29. Jewish Community Council Pelham Parkway, INC.
30. Queens Jewish Community Council
31. Kings Bay Y
32. The Workmen's Circle
33. United Hebrew Trades – New York Jewish Labor Committee
34. Westchester Jewish Council
35. WIZO New York
36. A Wider Bridge
37. Alpha Omega International Dental Fraternity
38. American Zionist Movement
39. JOFA
40. National Association of Jewish Legislators
41. World Confederation of United Zionists
42. Holocaust, Genocide, and Interfaith Education Center at Manhattan College
43. StandWithUs New York

