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Polish Legislation, Holocaust Centre of New Zealand's Response

The Holocaust Centre of New Zealand is concerned by legislation recently passed by the Polish Senate criminalising any reference to Poles "*being responsible or complicit in the Nazi crimes committed by the Third German Reich.*"

This law is liable to blur historical truths due to limitations it places on expressions regarding the complicity of segments of the Polish population in crimes against Jews committed by its own people, either directly or indirectly, in Poland during the Holocaust.

The Holocaust Centre of New Zealand, reiterates and emphasizes that the term "Polish death camps" is erroneous. The concentration and extermination camps were built and operated by the Germans in Nazi-occupied Poland with the express purpose of murdering and annihilating the Jews of Europe within the framework of the "Final Solution."

The correct way to combat these historical misrepresentations is not by criminalizing these statements but by reinforcing educational activities and to encourage free and open discussion. We need to continue research and discussion that explores the truth of the Polish/Jewish relations during the Holocaust.

We fully acknowledge that thousands of Poles actively helped the Jews - including many who risked their own lives, such as Irene Sendler in saving Jewish children. The Centre will honour Irene on the 15th of February for her courage and decency.

Legislation of this kind serves to fuel the broader Holocaust Denial movement - by preventing and suppressing historical testimony, academic research, and open discussion of the key messages and legacy of World War II.