

Adam Bodnar  
Commissioner for Human Rights  
Office of the Commissioner for Human  
Rights of the Republic of Poland  
Al. Solidarnosci 77  
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Our ref: DI/442Bodnar

20 September 2016

Dear Commissioner,

### **Incidents against Polish nationals in the UK**

Thank you for your letter of 2 September about the deeply troubling increase in racist incidents and hate crimes against Polish citizens and others in the UK following the recent EU referendum. You drew my attention in particular to the tragic murder of Mr Arkadiusz J.

I and the rest of the Commission share your deep concern about these disturbing developments. It appears that a racist minority are using the result of the referendum to legitimise hate and racism and to spread this corrosive poison more widely in our society. We in the UK must stand together with colleagues abroad to resist and tackle this. The Commission is absolutely committed to playing its part.

We acted swiftly as these developments came to light, drawing together a coalition of British business organisations to ask employers to show leadership in challenging intolerance and to ensure their employees who may be experiencing racism in or outside the workplace feel supported. Our joint campaign provided advice on employees' rights in and outside work, and gave important information about where people can go for help and how to report race hate incidents. We used our social media channels to disseminate information in English, Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian about how to report racist incidents, reaching over 90,000 people in total and with the Polish version reaching at least 12,000 people on Facebook and Twitter.

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We have also been in touch with foreign embassies and consulates to seek their advice on how best we can ensure that people in relevant communities living in Britain understand how the law protects them and what to do if they become the victim of a hate incident. I wrote to the Polish Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Witold Sobkow, on 4 July on this subject.

The Commission's remit does not extend to dealing with individual hate incidents, which are criminal offences and therefore a matter for the police. I regret that we are therefore unable to monitor the investigation into the murder of Mr Arkadiusz J as you request. However, I understand that the police are investigating this as a hate crime and have arrested suspects.

Nonetheless, we do undertake work to tackle identity-based violence in all its forms, working with criminal justice agencies and other regulators to identify ways of improving the prevention, reporting and responses to hate crimes. We also engage on hate crime regularly with European and international human rights bodies, including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and Equinet (European Network of National Equality Bodies). In our recent submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, we called on UK Governments to:

- Carry out a full-scale review of the operation and effectiveness of the sentencing for hate crimes in England and Wales, including the ability to increase sentencing for crimes motivated by hate.
- Provide stronger evidence to prove their hate crime strategies are working.
- Work with criminal justice agencies to understand what drives perpetrators to commit hate crime and to use that evidence to develop new preventative measures.

I hope that my response gives you confidence that the Commission takes this issue very seriously. I would be happy to discuss our work further with you or your officials, if that would be beneficial.

Yours sincerely,



**David Isaac**

Chair

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