

26 March 2014

Our reference: MIN/62602/2014



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

The Baroness Deech QC (Hon)  
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*From the Secretary of State*

Thank you for your letter of 21 February sent on behalf of 50 distinguished Parliamentarians from both Houses about property restitution for victims of the Holocaust in Central and Eastern Europe, and particularly in Poland.

I attach great importance to supporting the many families so tragically affected by the Holocaust. As you rightly highlight, with the passing of time the urgency of delivering appropriate and satisfactory resolution to them intensifies. I know that it is a matter that generates the interest of members on all sides of both Houses, as demonstrated by the many passionate and moving interventions when the Lords discussed the issue last month. I pay tribute to your tireless and determined campaigning on the issue.

The issue of restitution is important to the UK, as Lord Ahmad informed noble Lords during the debate. As you know, Sir Andrew Burns leads the Government's work in this area as my envoy for post-Holocaust issues. Part of Sir Andrew's mandate is to discuss concerns with governments in countries such as Poland about compensation and redress for victims. He raised this and other Holocaust related points on his visit to Warsaw in January, and will continue to do so at every opportunity.

The Terezin Declaration of 2009 set out guidelines and best practice for the restitution and compensation for assets wrongly seized during the Holocaust era. The British Government is committed to working with international partners to encourage the implementation of the Declaration. The Declaration is a non-binding but moral commitment to bringing some form of long delayed justice to Holocaust survivors and their families. The Czech government established the European Shoah Legacy Institute (ESLI) in 2010 to pursue progress on achieving the provisions of the Terezin Declaration and convened a Review Conference on property restitution in 2012. We have expressed concerns that ESLI had been slow to get off the ground but we have nevertheless actively engaged with the Institute and other key countries to try and achieve progress with the implementation of the Declaration.

The British Embassy in Warsaw has on a number of occasions raised with the appropriate authorities the need to improve Poland's law in the area of property restitution on behalf of all British citizens with claims. We have a strong bilateral relationship with Poland, including working closely at such a crucial time to support Ukraine. I agree with the comments of Lord Finklestein in the debate concerning the emergence of Poland as a 'great European power'. A proper and full resolution of

these claims would serve to underline their national determination to play a leading role in Europe.

We remain hopeful that the Polish government will revive legislation and will continue to encourage them to do so – including through our Embassy in Warsaw. More broadly, the UK will continue to press for due recognition for victims in countries such as Poland where more can be done.

*Yours  
Bill Hague*

**WILLIAM HAGUE**