

Debunking Myths about Calls for a Denationalization Law

By Gideon Taylor, Chair of Operations, World Jewish Restitution Organization

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki's remarks on May 18 in opposition to property restitution in which he said that "it would be an abuse of all of the basic principles of international law and would also be Hitler's posthumous victory," were deeply insensitive to Holocaust survivors. These recent comments are the latest in a series of unfortunate statements from public figures and others in Poland that has brought anti-Semitism to the streets of Warsaw, criticism of the United States and Israel, both stalwart allies of Poland, and distortions of the history of the long and important Jewish-Polish relationship.

Recent statements have brought to the fore a range of falsehoods about the quest for justice by elderly Holocaust survivors and others. What are those myths?

Myth #1. Claimants are asking Poland to provide compensation for property the Germans took.

No they are not. Poland was a victim of terrible atrocities by the Nazis. The Nazis targeted Polish Jews for extinction, and inflicted great suffering on many Polish non-Jews as well. But we are speaking here about property that was taken by Poland after the war. Jews have lived in Poland for a thousand years. They had lives and homes and properties.

After the devastation of the Holocaust, their property was taken from them by the Communist government. Just as property was taken from non-Jews.

For example, the family of Lea Evron owned a building in Zywiec in south central Poland. Lea is today age 85. More than 60 members of her family including her father and sister were killed during the Holocaust in Poland. Lea and her mother survived but after WWII,