

Poland: Braun's hate - a new report on Polish MP who attacked the Hanukkah

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The 'NEVER AGAIN' Association has prepared a special REPORT that documents several dozen examples of hateful actions and statements of Grzegorz Braun, Member of Polish Parliament from the far-right Konfederacja (Confederation) party. The hatred expressed by Braun did not start with the infamous 12 December 2023 attack on the Hanukkah in the Parliament, using a fire extinguisher. In fact, the Konfederacja MP has for years promoted conspiracy theories about Jews taking over Poland, mocked the victims of Nazi camps, called for violence against LGBT people, and boasted about tearing down Ukrainian flags.

- 'We call on social media platforms to remove the hateful content produced by Grzegorz Braun. He has been propagating hatred against minorities with impunity for many years. His videos on YouTube and entries on Facebook and X (Twitter) promote aggression towards Jews, Muslims, refugees and LGBT people,' says Lukasz Jakubowski from the NEVER AGAIN Association.

The broad reach of Braun's hateful propaganda is evidenced by the number of views of his materials online (e.g. some videos featuring him have over one million views) and the huge amounts of money collected in his fundraising campaigns (for example, on 18 December he received 200,000 PLN, which is more than 50,400 USD, through one of Polish fundraising websites). His actions have a direct impact, too: on 14 December, five perpetrators (minors) tried to destroy a Hanukkah menorah in Wrocław. They also set fire to an Israeli flag they had brought with them and filmed the entire incident. They were detained and their case has been brought to family court.

Thanks to the intervention of the 'NEVER AGAIN' Association, the Allegro and OLX internet marketplace platforms removed several dozen offers of gadgets expressing support for the antisemitic act of violence committed by Braun in the Parliament. The deleted items included mugs and t-shirts with an image of a fire extinguisher facing a Jewish candelabra.

Braun's statements have been repeatedly reported by the 'NEVER AGAIN' Association to YouTube, Facebook, and X (Twitter) for promoting hatred. However, these platforms - contrary to their own terms of use - are reluctant to remove this type of content. As a result, Braun can conduct his aggressive campaign without any obstacles.

Examples of statements and incidents documented in the publication of the 'NEVER AGAIN' Association entitled 'Braun's Hate':

- On 2 April 2019, in an interview published on the YouTube channel of wRealu24, online TV, Grzegorz Braun demanded penalties for homosexuality. He said, 'Let's negotiate not the boundaries of tolerance, but of penalisation. [...] If someone comes up with a liberal bill introducing whipping of homosexuals, then we can discuss how to implement it - whether through European Parliament or Warsaw's Parliament.'
- On 9 April 2020, in an interview for the Panta Rhei channel on YouTube, Braun presented

xenophobic conspiracy theories about the origins of COVID-19, 'Might it be simply an act of biological warfare? [...] Who might benefit from it? The Chinese, Americans, Muscovites, Jews, or all of them at once?'

- On 14 December 2021, during a demonstration that was held in front of the Sejm (lower chamber of Polish Parliament) MPs from Konfederacja, including Braun, spoke and posed against the background of a banner with an inscription 'Vaccination makes you free' which was designed to resemble the sign above the gate of the former Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp: 'Arbeit macht frei' ('Work makes you free').

- On 24 February 2022, a few hours after the start of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, Braun posted a comment on Twitter in which he called for Poles not to help those fleeing war-torn Ukraine, 'The humanitarian imperative: DO NOT leave the territory of the Republic of Poland wide open, do not create demand for the migration of refugees/invaders.'

- On 14 March 2022, referring to xenophobic and antisemitic conspiracy theories, Braun condemned the display of Ukrainian flags as a sign of solidarity with the victims of the war. He posted on Twitter, 'Do we already have Ukro-Polin here? Who is the host here?' [Polin means Poland in Hebrew, in this case Braun referred to an antisemitic conspiracy theory according to which 'Ukro-Polin', a Jewish-Ukrainian state, would be formed after overtaking Poland]<

- On 25 June 2022, during a demonstration in Warsaw, Braun expressed publicly his thanks to extreme-right activists and YouTube broadcasters Wojciech Olszanski and Marcin Osadowski for their 'very strong voice for Poland. And I repeat it - death to the enemies of the fatherland'. At that time legal proceedings were in progress against Olszanski and Osadowski for issuing death threats to Members of Parliament.

- On 21 November 2022, Braun enthusiastically welcomed the news that a South African court decided to release on parole Janusz Walus - the racist killer who shot Chris Hani, a South African anti-apartheid leader, in 1993. Braun posted on Twitter, 'LIVE: South Africa's Constitutional Court takes its decision to RELEASE Mr. Janusz Walus from prison. Thank heavens!'

- On 27 January 2023, in the Regional Court building in Krakow, Braun destroyed a Christmas tree which was displayed by an association of judges. The tree was decorated with baubles with Ukrainian flags, European Union flags, and the letters 'LGBT' in rainbow colours.

- On 30 May 2023, at the German Historical Institute in Warsaw, Braun disrupted the lecture of Professor Jan Grabowski about Holocaust memory. He moved towards the lecturer, shouting 'Enough of this!', ripped out the microphone from the stand, smashed it against the lectern, and knocked over the loudspeaker.

- On 12 December 2023, in the building of the Sejm Braun disrupted a ceremony on the occasion of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. He burst in with a fire extinguisher and used it to put out the candles burning on the nine-branched candelabra (hanukkiyah). One of the ceremony participants, Magdalena Gudzińska-Adamczyk, tried to stop Braun, but she was attacked by him and sprayed with the fire extinguisher.

- On 14 December 2023, on Leszek Szymowski's YouTube channel Braun encouraged people to repeat the aggressive act he had committed during Hanukkah celebrations, 'At this time next year, I will be on the lookout for all those who believe that it is necessary to professionally extinguish fires started in public spaces [this is how Braun described his attack]. I applaud all forms of protest and attempts to put an end to such activities.'

In January 2023, the 'NEVER AGAIN' Association published a report on hate speech as well as antisemitic and anti-Ukrainian conspiracy theories propagated on the Media Narodowe (National Media) online TV channel. Upon the publication the channel was removed by YouTube. In August 2022, thanks to cooperation with the 'NEVER AGAIN' Association, the YouTube platform removed the far-right channel wRealu24.<

The 'NEVER AGAIN' Association is an independent anti-racist organisation founded in Warsaw in 1996. It has campaigned against antisemitism and xenophobia, for peace, intercultural dialogue and human rights both in Poland and internationally. It has actively participated in international civil society networks, including the Global Alliance Against Digital Hate and Extremism (GAADHE) and the International Network Against Cyber Hate (INACH). It takes part in international projects to counter hate speech, Get The Trolls Out and SafeNet.

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