

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 10, 2019

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Ahead of President Andrzej Duda's visit to the White House on June 12th, we write as long-time supporters of a strong relationship between the United States who are concerned about actions by the Polish government that undermine democratic institutions and the free press.

We greatly appreciate Poland as a critical ally which contributes substantially to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and to broader transatlantic security. Poland has contributed to military operations in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, and plays a key role in pushing back against Russian aggression. We hope that you will use your strong relationship with President Duda to underscore the continued strength of the bilateral relationship, but also to press the Polish government to better support our shared democratic values.

Since 2015, the ruling Law and Justice party has taken unprecedented steps to consolidate its power at the expense of democratic institutions, including by taking control of courts, installing party loyalists in influential positions in the military and powerful public companies, and undermining independent media outlets. We are particularly concerned about the independence of the judiciary in Poland, as the ruling party has tried to force out large numbers of Polish Supreme Court justices and harassed judges who oppose government-supported initiatives. The same methods have been used by President Duda and Defense Minister Antoni Macierewicz to purge the military and intelligence apparatuses of suspected dissidents and replace them with party loyalists, sullyng the non-partisan nature of the military.

Furthermore, we are concerned by decreasing press freedom in Poland. The government has enforced restrictions, including on speech regarding difficult aspects of Polish history. Independent media outlets in Poland, including some partially owned by U.S. investors, are confronting increasing threats to their business and their ability to deliver independent, objective, and fact-based news. As a result, Poland has fallen to its all-time low ranking since it became a free nation in the Reporters Without Borders' 2018 World Press Freedom Index.

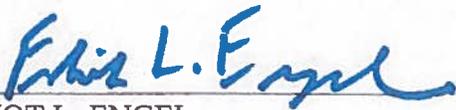
Finally, we are concerned about the recent breakdown in talks between Poland and Israel over restitution for private property taken from Polish Jews during the Holocaust. Secretary

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Pompeo has already expressed the Administration's support for this dialogue, and we encourage you to use your relationship to continue to press President Duda on this matter.

We encourage you to raise these serious concerns during President Duda's visit. While the United States and Poland will remain close allies – indeed, because we are the closest of friends – it is critical that you speak honestly with Polish leaders about the importance of standing up for democratic values.

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs



WILLIAM R. KEATING
Chairman
Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia,
Energy, and the Environment



BRAD SHERMAN
Member of Congress



GREGORY W. MEEKS
Member of Congress



ALBIO SIRES
Member of Congress



JOAQUIN CASTRO
Member of Congress



JAMIE RASKIN
Member of Congress



DINA TITUS
Member of Congress



ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
Member of Congress



SUSAN WILD
Member of Congress



TOM MALINOWSKI
Member of Congress



DAVID TRONE
Member of Congress



ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress