



POLISH LEAGUE AGAINST DEFAMATION

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NEMESIO RODRÍGUEZ
Presidente
Federación de Asociaciones de Periodistas
de España

Dear Sir,

The Spanish media and communications website Playgroundmag.net has twice used the phrase “Polish concentration camp” in its articles. This phrase contradicts historical facts and is extremely unfair to Poland, being a victim of Nazi Germany. It should not be used, as the victim cannot be deemed the torturer. Despite the interventions of the Polish League Against Defamation and several thousand Internet users, the phrase has not been altered. On the contrary, Playgorundmag.net is insistently holding onto its own “version” of history, maintaining the thesis about the existence of “Polish concentration camps.” All requests for correcting the inappropriate phrasing have been considered to be attempted censorship and a “harassment campaign,” whereas the Polish League Against Defamation and our supporters have been described as “ultra-nationalistic.”

Our activities, which we have been conducting for several years, have demonstrated that many a time the foreign mass media, including the Spanish ones, have agreed with our arguments, and corrected any inappropriate wording. All the more, we are surprised and concerned about the reaction of the Playgroundmag.net website.

The two articles available on https://www.playgroundmag.net/now/Francia-investiga-asesinato-una-anciana-judia-como-crimen-antisemita_28668751.html and on https://www.playgroundmag.net/now/Ex-guardia-de-Auschwitz-de-94-anos-acaba-de-ser-acusado-de-ayudar-a-matar-a-13-335-personas_29078667.html contain the false phrase “Polish concentration camp.” Despite the request for correction made first by the Polish League Against Defamation and then by 3 600 Internet users, the website openly professes to propagating what is a false version of history which defames Poland, thereby accusing the Polish nation of crimes it did not commit. In addition, it calls the supporters of an easily verifiable and true version of history to be “ultra-nationalistic.”

The response of the Playgroundmag.net website to the sending campaign has come down to accusations of censorship, as if disagreement with an undisguised falsehood were censorship

and not a demand for truth. An indication of error and a request for correcting it are openly called censorship.

That is why we would like to ask you whether the Playgroundmag.net website does not apply censorship towards Poland and Polish history by maintaining that it was the Poles who were the perpetrators of the Holocaust, since concentration camps were “Polish camps”? Calling a campaign aimed at drawing attention to a factual error in an article on history to be censorship is, in our opinion, a misunderstanding of the concept of censorship. However, we are drawing your attention to the fact that, if Spain were ascribed crimes committed by another country, any request for writing the truth would not be referred to in such terms.

Therefore, we would like to remind once more that

1. The concentration camps on the territory of Poland under occupation during World War II were German, and it is Germany which is accountable for them. The official name of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, acknowledged by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, is *Auschwitz-Birkenau: the German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945)*. Contradicting UNESCO's interpretation is, in our opinion, a negation of the world's heritage, and the German camp is an important part of that heritage.
2. In early February 2018, the most important German politicians once more publically acknowledged that it was Germans who were fully responsible for the Holocaust (and therefore, also for the concentration camps in which Jews and Poles, among others, were murdered). The German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel stated *“Poland can be sure that we will explicitly and strongly reject any attempt to falsify history, as in the case of the phrase ‘Polish concentration camps.’ There is no doubt who was responsible for concentration camps. The organised mass murder was committed by our nation and no one else. If there had been any individual collaborators, they would not change anything in this respect.”* This was confirmed also by the German ambassador in Poland, who said *“The intention of Nazi Germany was to murder Jews and Poles as well as destroy their cultures. We have to take full responsibility for that. The crimes of individual people who were not German do not change that.”* German Chancellor Angela Merkel said *“As Germany, we are responsible for what happened during the Holocaust. The responsibility for concentration camps rests on Germans. This responsibility is not ceasing and is being taken over by subsequent governments.”* Chancellor Merkel added that only on such a basis could one create a good and shared future with Poland, Europe, and the world.
3. Recognised figures from the world of culture and politics, not only Poles, but also Jews and Germans, have no doubt about who built and administered the concentration camps on the territory of Poland under occupation. Shevah Weiss, a former Chairman of the Knesset, and a former Ambassador of Israel in Poland, stressed explicitly in an interview *“There have never been any Polish extermination camps, never.”* Similarly, the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, has no doubts on this matter, as he said, *“There are no ‘Polish extermination camps’ - this is a*

falsification of history. Did the Polish Government cooperate with the Nazi Government? Absolutely not.”

4. Who the perpetrator of the Extermination was and whose the camps really were is common knowledge, including in Spain. In an article by historian Jorge Vilches published in *La Razon* and entitled “*The concentration camps were not Polish*” (“*Los campos de exterminio no eran polacos*”) (link: <https://www.larazon.es/cultura/los-campos-de-exterminio-no-eran-polacos-NG17661950>), there is a sentence which clearly explains the matter. “*Los resultados no dejan lugar a la duda: el hablar de ‘campamentos polacos’ no solo es un error histórico, sino una injusticia porque Polonia no fue agresora, sino víctima de la barbarie*” (a working translation “*As a result, there is no doubt: talking about ‘Polish concentration camps’ is not only a historical error, but also an injustice, because Poland was not the aggressor, but the victim of barbarity.*”).
5. In 2017 Polish and German courts delivered a final and binding judgment which ordered the public German TV station ZDF to apologise to Karol Tendera, a former prisoner of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, for using the term “Polish extermination camps.” The sentence was issued before the passing of the amended Act on the Institute of National Remembrance in Poland, which introduces sanctions for using the phrase “a Polish camp.”

Poland carries out informational activities related to extermination camps (e.g. websites in several languages have been launched, such as “Truth About Camps” and “German Death Camps Not Polish”). We kindly ask that you acquaint yourself with the materials. Similar measures are being taken by the diplomacy, social organisations, and Internet users.

It would seem that the Spanish, being so sensitive about history and the camps during the civil war (e.g. Campo de concentracion de Miranda de Ebro, Campo de concentracion de Castuera, Campo de concentracion La Isleta <<Gran Canaria>>), are more likely to be reliable in sharing information about German concentration camps existing in Poland under occupation during World War II.

In respect of the foregoing, we request that you talk to journalists from the Playgroundmag.net website with a view to their removing the false and defamatory phrase as regards Poland and Poles.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Mira Wszelaka
Chairperson
Polish League Against Defamation

The Foundation “Good Name Redoubt - the Polish League Against Defamation” is involved in initiating and supporting actions aimed at straightening out any untrue information related to Polish history, with special emphasis placed on World War II and Polish participation in it, as well as Poles’ attitudes towards Jews. Our activity is also based on the propagation of knowledge about Polish history and culture.