

We are sorry to inform the Honorable Helsinki Commission that there is nothing positive to report regarding the property restitution in Poland. The Honorable Ambassador Bell briefing will confirm this statement.

In fact since our testimony before the Commission in July 2002 the situation of restitution in Poland has deteriorated . Set forth below are recent developments:

1. Last year the Polish Prime Minister, Mr. Miler and the Polish Minister of Foreign affairs, Mr. Tsimoczewicz, committed before the Jewish leadership here in New York to have a restitution law in place by the beginning of 2003. In spite of this commitment there is no restitution law in Poland and this subject has been all but ignored and abandoned by the Polish authorities.
2. The Polish Government continues and even has intensified the sale of Jewish properties to private investors without even offering the right of first refusal to the legal owners of those assets. This action of the Polish authorities makes the recovery of those assets in Court impossible.
3. A very close friendship between the United States and Poland has developed since the war in Iraq. Unfortunately, the Polish Government is giving a wrong interpretation to this friendship by believing that it gives them the right to continue to violate the basic human right of private property.
4. As a result of this wrong interpretation, the Polish authorities do not even answer letters of the Helsinki Commission, Congressmen, Senators and Jewish leaders.

We think that this close friendship between the governments of the United states and Poland should be used to help our cause of human rights. The United States has the necessary leverage to convince Poland that taking away the homes of Holocaust survivors is unacceptable violation of human rights that has to be corrected.

We therefore respectfully request that the Helsinki Commission should take the following steps on this subject:

1. Initiate a meeting with high-ranking White House and State Department staff and ask them to intercede on our behalf.
2. Escalate this issue to a hearing and resolution in Congress and Senate.
3. Continue the contacts with the EU parliaments and governments and ask for their support to correct this terrible injustice in Poland.