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## **POLISH VETO BLOCKS EU ON RIGHTS OF GAYS AND JEWS**

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Poland has vetoed an EU human rights statement on the grounds that it covered gay people but not Christians and Jews.

"We proposed that recognising the need to protect Christians and Jews against religious discrimination be put on an equal footing with protecting the rights of people with a different sexual orientation, migrant children, or women," the Polish justice ministry said on Thursday (11 October).

"Our .. proposal was not accepted by other delegations, so Poland decided to vote against the [EU] conclusions," it said.

The Polish veto, at a meeting of justice ministers in Luxembourg, meant the EU did not adopt conclusions on "the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in 2017" - a yearly statement.

The Austrian EU presidency instead published its own draft of the text "to take stock of the current debate".

The draft mentioned gay rights, migrant children, and women.

It also denounced "discrimination against ... religious groups", but it did not include the proposed Polish amendment: "especially Christians and Jews".

"LGBTI-equality should not be swept under the rug. The EU must stand for fundamental rights, today as well as any other day," Ferd Grapperhaus, the Dutch justice minister, told media.

Lukasz Piebiak, Poland's deputy justice minister, said Christians and Jews had been killed because of their religion in Europe.

To have left them out would have made the text "nonsense" and Poland could not allow the EU to "lie about the reality of the situation", he said.

The Polish justice ministry also said: "Poland, as a member of the European 'union of values' considers itself a guardian of the rights and freedoms included in the Charter of Fundamental Rights".

The Polish claims of moral high ground came amid EU complaints on the behaviour of its ruling

Law and Justice (PiS) party, however.

The European Commission has launched a sanctions procedure against Poland over PiS meddling in judicial independence.

It has also cited Poland in the EU court for its boycott of migrant-sharing quotas.

And PiS, which is known for its homophobic, racist, and sexist rhetoric, has paid a price in terms of EU co-operation.

## **EU price**

Ireland and the Netherlands have declined to honour Polish European Arrest Warrants.

Belgium, France, Germany, and the UK have also disregarded a Polish EU visa ban on a PiS critic from Ukraine.

The Polish minister for humanitarian aid, Beata Kempa, said its EU migrant-sharing boycott would stay in place, despite the backlash, however.

"Our position from 2015 is the same," she told Polish media on Friday morning, amid EU talks on asylum law reform.

"Mass intake of migrants by EU states brings negative consequences ... you can see it in the example of Germany, France, Italy, and Greece," she said.

"Multiculturalism" was "bankrupt", she said.

Poland and Hungary boycotted the outcome of a vote on migrant quotas in the EU Council two years ago.

But they have also pledged to veto the EU commission's sanctions process against each other, posing questions on how to enforce the rules of the EU club on members who violated them.

"We [Poland] and Hungary are forerunners [in the EU] on many issues," Kempa said.

## **Gay rights**

The Polish EU charter veto came one day before the Polish Supreme Court, on Friday, made history in Poland by giving the lesbian parents of a boy, who was born in London, the right to register him as their child in Poland, where same-sex unions are not recognised in law.

"This ruling will open up new legal possibilities for gay parents," Pawel Knut, a lawyer at Campaign Against Homophobia, a Polish NGO, told the Reuters news agency.

Rulings like that could be a thing of the past if PiS-loyalist Supreme Court judges were to take a more conservative line in future.

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