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Poland's chief rabbi to i24NEWS: 'Holocaust restitution row a matter of domestic politics'

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i24NEWS correspondent Polina Garaev speaks with Poland's chief Rabbi Michael Joseph Schudrich at the Conference of European Rabbis in Antwerp, May 14, 2019.

Restitution of Jewish properties seized during WW2 has become a hot-button issue in Poland

Poland's chief Rabbi Michael Joseph Schudrich told i24NEWS on Tuesday that a row over the issue of restitution for Jewish properties seized during the Holocaust is "absolutely" a matter of domestic politics and is linked to the upcoming European Union elections.





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Warsaw's cancelling of a visit by Israeli officials over their intent to raise the hot button topic thrust into the spotlight an ongoing feud between the two countries over anti-Semitism and Poland's actions during WWII while under Nazi occupation.

Speaking to i24NEWS at the biannual Conference of European Rabbis in Antwerp, Schudrich suggested that the Polish government's firm stance on the Holocaust restitution issue reflects an effort not to isolate the ruling party's more hardline voters ahead of European parliamentary elections.



He said that ongoing diplomacy is needed to overcome the deep rift that has erupted between Poland and Israel since the two sides came to blows last year over a controversial Polish law that makes it illegal to accuse the Polish nation or state of complicity in Nazi German war crimes.

Nazi Germany established the main hubs of their extermination machine in Poland, including the largest concentration camp, Auschwitz, and the three primary extermination camps: Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec and Chelmno.

Poland hosted pre-war Europe's largest Jewish population and there were thousands of reported incidents in which Jews were betrayed by non-Jewish Poles -- including former neighbors and friends -- and where local populations took part in Nazi-led actions to kill Jews.

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