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Israeli man who spat at Polish ambassador convicted of assault

Arik Lederman didn't know Magierowski was the man he harassed; plea bargain sees charge that he threatened the envoy dropped

By TOI STAFF

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Poland's ambassador to Israel, Marek Magierowski. (Poland Embassy photo)

An Israeli man was convicted on Sunday of spitting on the [Polish ambassador to Israel](#) in an incident earlier this year that came at the height of a round of tensions between Jerusalem and Poland over the latter's role during the Holocaust.





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Arik Lederman, 65, agreed to a plea deal that saw the indictment against him amended to consist only of an assault charge, while a charge of threatening the ambassador was dropped.

According to the indictment, Lederman blocked Ambassador Marek Magierowski's car outside the Polish embassy in Tel Aviv in May and banged on its roof. The ambassador then rolled down the window to photograph Lederman, who opened the door and spat at Magierowski twice.

The indictment stated that Lederman thought that embassy employees were inside the car he stopped and was unaware that Magierowski himself was inside.

Magierowski said all he could make out from Lederman's shouting was "Polish, Polish."

Lederman apologized for the incident during a hearing at the Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court after police arrested him.

Lederman's attorney told the court at the hearing that he had gone to the Polish embassy to inquire about Jewish property abandoned after the Holocaust. He said the embassy guard addressed him with an anti-Jewish slur, calling him a "Zhid," and refused him entry.

It was not clear whether Lederman speaks Polish. He said the guard "said a long sentence in Polish" at the end of which he heard the word "Zhid."

Magierowski has rejected the claim as "bizarre."

Justice Alaa Masarwe characterized the incident as a "road dispute" and not a politically motivated assault. While Masarwe said spitting at a



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diplomatic official in Israel was contemptible and embarrassing, he added that the suspect wouldn't have been arrested had the Polish envoy not been involved.

At court Lederman said: "I want to express my apology for the incident that happened last night. My family suffered the hardships of the Holocaust in Poland and I came to the embassy on the issue of restitution. During that I was subjected to derogatory treatment by one of the embassy employees who called me a 'Zhid' in Polish. That remark offended me very much."

He said he then left the embassy and was walking on the road because the sidewalks were in bad shape, when "a vehicle came from behind me and honked at me loudly, frightening me. I expressed my anger in a way that I regret."

After the court hearing, Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement condemning the altercation, saying "any such acts directed against diplomatic agents deserve unequivocal condemnation."



Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki arrives at the informal EU summit in Salzburg, Austria, September 20, 2018. (AP Photo/Kerstin Joensson)

Meanwhile Poland's President Andrzej Duda called the incident "an anti-Polish act" and said he expected Israeli explanations.

The incident came amid a bitter standoff between Poland and Israel over how to remember the Holocaust and over demands that Poland pay reparations for former Jewish properties that were seized by Nazi Germany and later nationalized by Poland's communist regime.





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Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki condemned the attack in a tweet, calling it “racist” and “xenophobic.”



Poland’s foreign ministry summoned the Israeli ambassador in Warsaw, Anna Azari, at the time to explain why the ambassador was assaulted.

Jewish groups — including the World Jewish Congress and Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, the president of the Conference of European Rabbis and chief rabbi of Moscow — also condemned the incident.

Israel and Poland have had fractious relations over the past few years, with the issue of Polish complicity in the Holocaust becoming a major sticking point in bilateral relations after the Polish government [passed a law in 2018](#) prohibiting the ascribing of any responsibility for the genocide to the Polish nation.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-man-convicted-of-assault-for-spitting-at-polish-ambassador/>

