



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
SCOTT M. STRINGER

July 30, 2015

Ewa Kopacz
Prime Minister
00-583 Warsaw
Al. Ujazdowskie 1/3
Republic of Poland

Dear Prime Minister Kopacz:

The signatories to this letter include elected officials and fiduciaries of some of the largest State and City public pension funds in the United States. We value our country's close relationship with Poland and the deep personal and business ties we share. For years, we have followed the efforts by previous Polish governments to adopt a private property restitution law and were disappointed by your predecessor's decision to cease such efforts. The recent 70th anniversary commemoration of World War II highlights the urgent need to provide restitution to aging Holocaust survivors and their families. We welcome the opportunity to begin a dialogue with you around this effort.

During World War II, three million Polish Jews, or 90 percent of the pre-war Jewish population, were murdered in the Holocaust by the Nazis and another three million Polish citizens died as victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity. In the subsequent years of Communist rule, government expropriation of private property further victimized Polish citizens of all faiths and backgrounds. Despite this tragic history of suffering and loss, Poland is the only member state of the European Union and the only major country in the former Soviet bloc without a law to restore or compensate victims for private property seized by the Nazis or nationalized by Communist governments.

In the decades since the end of Communism, Polish leaders have repeatedly pledged to pass legislation for real property restitution or compensation. In 2009, Poland participated in the European Union's Holocaust Era Assets Conference resulting in the *Terezin Declaration on Holocaust Era Assets and Related Issues*. The declaration urges States "where it has not yet been effectively achieved, to address the private property claims of Holocaust (Shoah) victims concerning immovable (real) property of former owners, heirs or successors, by either in rem restitution or compensation, as may be appropriate, in a fair, comprehensive and nondiscriminatory manner consistent with relevant national law and regulations, as well as international agreements."

The following year, *Guidelines and Best Practices for the Restitution and Compensation of Immovable (Real) Property Confiscated or Otherwise Wrongfully Seized by the Nazis, Fascists and Their Collaborators during the Holocaust (Shoah) Era between 1933–1945, Including the Period of World War II* was adopted by 43 countries and is widely accepted as the international standard regarding how property confiscated by Nazi and Communist authorities should be handled.

Though seventy years have now passed, some modicum of justice can still be served. Now is the time for Poland to fulfill its obligations to these victims. These individuals, including the few remaining Holocaust survivors, deserve to see property restitution in their lifetime. And the heirs of those who have died deserve to benefit from such measures.

We therefore urge you to play a leadership role in providing some degree of compensation for those who endure the continuing injustice of the expropriation of their property.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,



Scott M. Stringer
New York City Comptroller



Thomas P. DiNapoli
New York State Comptroller



John Chiang
California State Treasurer