

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Wexler Urges Rice to Discuss Property Restitution Issue with Polish Prime Minister Tusk during White House Visit

(Washington, DC) Today, Congressman Robert Wexler (D-FL), a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Chairman of the Europe Subcommittee, Congressman Elton Gallegly, Ranking Member of the Europe Subcommittee, and several members of the United States Congress sent a letter earlier today to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, urging her to raise the issue of property restitution during her upcoming meeting with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk in the White House along with President Bush.

The new Polish government led by Prime Minister Tusk has stated publicly its intentions to move forward on passing legislation to provide restitution to individuals who had their property seized or confiscated by Nazis during WWII or subsequent communist governments. Previous Polish governments have made similar statements in support of addressing outstanding property restitution claims but have not passed the necessary legislation.

"We urge President Bush and Secretary Rice to send a strong statement to Polish Prime Minister Tusk in support of resolving outstanding property restitution issues, in order to bring a closure to this painful issue. Holocaust survivors and their families have experienced numerous delays in their efforts to gain restitution, and therefore a timely resolution of this issue is of critical importance" said Congressman Wexler. "Just, fair and comprehensive legislation would provide a measure of justice to those individuals whose property was unlawfully confiscated and would also be a clear demonstration by Prime Minister Tusk and his government of their strong commitment to address outstanding property restitution issues for victims of the Nazis and Communist governments."

President Bush and Secretary Rice will meet with Prime Minister Tusk in the White House on Monday, March 10, 2008. A copy of the letter to Secretary Rice is below.

Congressman Wexler is Chairman of the Europe Subcommittee and a senior member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the House Judiciary Committee; and he also sits on the Financial Services Committee.

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The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
The Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

As Members of Congress strongly committed to bringing closure to painful Holocaust-era issues, we request that you raise the issue of private property restitution during Polish Prime Minister Tusk's upcoming visit to Washington.

As you know the United States has led international efforts to ensure that individuals seeking restitution of property confiscated by the Nazis during the WWII years and by the subsequent communist governments of Central and Eastern Europe receive just and proper compensation. Under your leadership the State Department has played a critical role in encouraging governments in Europe to enact appropriate legislation to address the injustices of seized and confiscated property, and we urge you to continue this effort as the Administration establishes a comprehensive dialogue on issues of mutual concern with Prime Minister Tusk and his government.

Secretary Rice, we strongly believe that swift implementation by the Polish government of just, fair and comprehensive legislation would be an important demonstration by Prime Minister Tusk and his government of their strong commitment to redress outstanding restitution issues. It would also provide a measure of justice to those individuals whose property was unlawfully confiscated.

As you may be aware, Prime Minister Tusk's party has previously supported the enactment of such legislation and Polish government officials have stated their intention to pass legislation regarding this issue by the end of this year. As you speak to Prime Minister Tusk about this issue it is essential to keep in mind that Holocaust survivors are in their waning years and have experienced numerous delays in their efforts to gain restitution, therefore a timely resolution of this issue is of critical importance.

Secretary Rice, we strongly urge you to make property restitution legislation a priority in your discussions with Prime Minister Tusk, and we look forward to continuing our cooperation with you on this important issue.

Rep. Robert Wexler
Rep. Elton Gallegly
Rep. Ackerman
Rep. Berkley
Rep. Berman
Rep. Burton
Rep. Cohen
Rep. Crowley
Rep. Engel
Rep. Hastings
Rep. Kirk
Rep. Klein
Rep. Maloney
Rep. Nadler
Rep. Rohrabacher
Rep. Schakowsky
Rep. Schwartz
Rep. Shays
Rep. Wasserman Schultz
Rep. Waxman
Rep. Weiner

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