

Rep. Christopher H. Smith, *New Jersey*  
Chairman

Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin, *Maryland*  
Co-Chairman



May 19, 2011

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As Members of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, we urge you to raise the matter of unresolved property claims when you meet with Polish officials at the end of this month. Although over two decades have passed since the fall of communism in Poland, victims of Nazi persecution and communist crimes still have not received even a small measure of justice for the theft of their property.

Every major political party in Poland has supported the goal of passing a general private property compensation law and successive Polish governments have pledged to address this issue, but none has marshaled the political will to pass good intentions into law. Now, unfortunately, there is cause to be further dismayed, as Polish Prime Minister Tusk recently stated that his government has suspended working on a draft bill which would have provided some compensation for property wrongfully seized during the Nazi and Communist eras. While we understand that economic circumstances might make such legislation difficult, this issue has dragged on for years – through good economic times and bad. At its core, this is not a matter of finances, but of moral justice.

Mr. President, Poland played a singular role in bringing an end to Communist domination and stands beside us today as one of our closest allies. We deeply value the historic ties between our countries that go to the very founding of our own nation. At the same time, Poland's failure – alone in Central Europe – to adopt a general restitution or compensation law for stolen property undermines our important bilateral relationship.

For most victims of wrongful property confiscation, the seizure of their homes or other property was inextricably part of the religious or political persecution they suffered. Thousands of these victims, now American citizens, still wait for some measure of justice. We request that you, on behalf of these individuals, press Polish officials to make meaningful progress on this longstanding and painful issue.

Sincerely,

Christopher H. Smith, M.C.  
Chairman

Benjamin L. Cardin, U.S.S.  
Co-Chairman