

Idea of 'homogenous' Polish culture is a myth: UN human rights expert

An independent UN rights expert has accused the Polish Government of disseminating the "myth" of a "homogenous" Polish culture, in a statement released on Friday.

The UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, [Karima Bennoune](#), speaking at the end of a 12-day visit to the country, said it was a view that needed to be challenged.

Ms. Bennoune said Poland was currently experiencing political and cultural polarization, with a Government trying to promote cultural expressions which reflect its worldview. She described the effort as "regressive cultural engineering" and criticised the use of the term "anti-Polish", where it was being applied to those whose viewpoints differ from that of the Government.

The Special Rapporteur testified to the vibrant and diverse cultural life she experienced during her visit, adding that "Polish identity does not belong to any one group, or any one opinion bloc alone, but to all the citizens of Poland."

Some far-right nationalist groups, Christian fundamentalist groups and media outlets, she said, are becoming increasingly prominent and aggressive: she also expressed concern about the apparent normalization of these views, with some government officials expressing them without suffering any consequences.

The statement noted survey data indicating that an increase in hate speech of an open and public nature, in particular of an anti-semitic nature, may be attributed to amendments to Poland's Law on the Institute of National Remembrance, in February 2018.

"In view of the upcoming 100th anniversary of Polish independence in November 2018, an event about which many Poles have understandably strong feelings of pride, I call on the Government to take steps to ensure that this significant event is marked in ways that include, rather than exclude, and that do not equate discrimination with patriotism," Bennoune said.

Other areas of concern noted by the Special Rapporteur were, she said, the reaffirmation of "stereotypical cultural attitudes" towards women seen during the national debate over changing the abortion law, and the lack of specific legal protection for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender persons (LGBT).

Although Poland has a strong record of ratifying international human rights and culture accords, she said, more needs to be done to effectively implement such standards in practice.

Ms. Bennoune is to present a comprehensive report, and recommendations, to a future session of the [UN Human Rights Council](#).