

THE WHITE HOUSE
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FACT SHEET: U.S.-Polish Efforts to Advance Democracy Worldwide

Advancing democracy is the oldest of the three pillars (democracy, economic, security) of our bilateral relationship. Poland and the United States have strong traditions of supporting democracy and human rights around the world and cooperate closely on these issues in the OSCE, Community of Democracies, and UN, where both are currently serving on the Human Rights Council. Through a multitude of initiatives, Polish and U.S. nongovernmental organizations cooperate closely to promote good governance, democratization and civil society, particularly in Eastern Europe. In March, the United States and Poland launched a Democracy Dialogue to expand our joint efforts to strengthen democracy and civil society around the world. We also applaud Poland's decision to establish an International Solidarity Fund for democracy assistance, modeled on and supported by the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy.

In Warsaw, President Obama and President Komorowski met with Polish democracy activists to discuss strengthening U.S.-Polish cooperation in democracy promotion. President Obama was briefed on their recent efforts in Tunisia, and Foreign Minister Sikorski described Polish actions to promote democracy and civil society in Eastern Europe and North Africa. President Obama welcomed Polish support for political transition in Libya and for the Libyan opposition's Transitional National Council, which is seen as a legitimate and credible interlocutor for the Libyan people. President Obama and Prime Minister Tusk recommitted their governments to continue these essential endeavors, with a specific focus on the following actions:

Tunisia Joint Mentorship Initiative - helping Tunisia learn from Central Europe

The United States and Poland plan to send additional Polish democracy activists and transition experts to Tunisia to support political reform, party building, civil society, and elections.

Continuing Joint Efforts to Pressure the Belarus Regime and Support Civil Society

President Obama took the opportunity of his visit to commend Polish leadership on Belarus. Poland has been a driving force behind the EU's condemnation of the Lukashenka regime's post-elections crackdown on opposition leaders, civil society, and independent media, and has worked hard to ensure a coordinated U.S.-EU approach to tougher sanctions.

- The United States welcomes Poland's leadership in pressing for tough measures by the EU against Lukashenka and those responsible for the crackdown in Belarus. Unless Lukashenka frees all political prisoners and detainees, stops the intimidation of civil society and democratic forces, and allows for a freer media environment, the United States will impose additional sanctions on Belarusian firms connected to those responsible, and calls upon the EU to do the same.
- We continue our joint efforts to support civil society in Belarus. At Poland's International Donors' Conference on "Solidarity with Belarus" in February, the United States announced an additional \$4 million in democracy assistance for Belarus. These additional funds will help address some of the urgent humanitarian and legal needs of those being repressed in Belarus, support monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation, and help the Belarusian people create and expand space for free expression, a free media, and an engaged civil society. A portion of this additional assistance we hope to use to establish pilot projects in Belarus with the newly created Polish International Solidarity Fund. Poland and the U.S. are also collaborating to expand the Kirkland and Kalinowski Scholarships for Belarusian youth and young leaders, giving them access to education in open societies. The United States Broadcasting Board of Governors will also work with Poland's BelSat television station to develop content and programming on democracy education.

Moldova - Taking up the Democracy Partnership Challenge

The Community of Democracies' Democracy Partnership Challenge looks to leverage resources and expertise from around the world to encourage reform in emerging democracies. Poland and the United States have agreed to support this effort by co-chairing the international task force responsible for assistance to Moldova, one of the participants in this year's Challenge.

Standing up the Lifeline NGO Fund

In Krakow last July, Secretary Clinton announced the creation of a new international Lifeline Fund to support embattled NGOs around the world. The U.S. and Poland are founding contributors to this effort.