



Poles, Jews and Germans commemorate Warsaw Ghetto uprising

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21 April 2023. The main commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising took place in front of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes' Memorial. It was attended by the presidents of Poland, Israel and Germany and ambassadors of dozens of countries. There were Holocaust survivors and young people from Poland and Israel, as well as numerous representatives of the Catholic Church and other confessions. The uprising has gone down in history as the greatest act of defiance against the Holocaust.

At the beginning of the ceremony, at 12:00 on 19 April, the bells of the churches of the Warsaw Archdiocese rang. The city's sirens were also activated. The presidents of Poland, Israel and Germany, among others, addressed the gathering. A special message was also read on behalf of the Polish Bishops' Conference.

1000 years of Polish and Jewish history

Polish President Andrzej Duda noted in his speech that before the Second World War, Poland was home to many nations and that Warsaw at the time was the second city with the largest Jewish community after New York. At that time, around 350,000 Polish citizens of Jewish nationality lived there.

The Polish President emphasised: "Let everyone here in Poland and in every smallest place remember: everyone who sows hatred, everyone who tramples on another human being, tramples on the graves of the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, tramples on the graves of the murdered Jews, tramples as well on the graves of all those who helped those persecuted, murdered people at that time," said President Andrzej Duda.

Israeli President of remembers Holocaust victims

"In every country there were Righteous among the Nations, members of resistance movements, among them also Poles, who risked their lives and decided not to stand by," Israeli President Isaac Herzog said at the ceremony.

"Mothers, fathers children, grandfathers and grandmothers succeeded in preserving human morality, mutual responsibility, faith in humanity, love of neighbour. The basic, fundamental Jewish command: love your neighbour as yourself," Herzog said.

The Israeli president stressed: "Most of the fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising did not survive, but the human spirit prevailed here, on this land hallowed by the blood of our heroic brothers."

German President apologises for crimes

"I stand before you today and ask for forgiveness for the crimes that the Germans committed here," said German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at the monument to the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes.

President Steinmeier pointed out that the German Nazis meticulously planned and carried out the Holocaust. "The Germans persecuted, enslaved, murdered the Jews of Europe, the Jews of Warsaw, men and women, in such a cruel and inhumane manner that we are at a loss for words," he said.

"The terrible crimes that the Germans committed here fill me with deep shame. As President of Germany, I bow my head before the brave fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto," - President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said.

Polish Episcopate: you have defended human dignity

"During the terrible days of the Holocaust and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, you defended - and have defended (!) human dignity, the human right to live with dignity, including the right to die with dignity," wrote the chairman of the Polish Bishops' Conference Committee for Dialogue with Judaism, Archbishop Grzegorz Rys, on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Recalling the words of the prayer "Shema Israel", Archbishop Rys wished "that these words would finally warn us and convince us of what every idolatry leads to and what a person who idolises and absolutizes his /or her/ ideology, race, nation, and ultimately oneself, is capable of".

Celebrations accompanying the commemorations

The Polin Museum has been organising the socio-educational action "Daffodils" for 10 years. These flowers are a symbol of respect and remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust, especially those who died as a result of the liquidation of the ghettos and in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

In addition to Warsaw, other Polish cities and institutions have joined the "Daffodils" campaign. The John Paul II Catholic University joined the initiative in Lublin, where the action was coordinated by the Abraham J. Heschel Centre for Catholic-Jewish Relations. Daffodils were given to the rector, students, lecturers and university staff.

On 19 April, a commemoration plaque was unveiled at the Nozyk Synagogue in Warsaw, with the participation of heads of state, to commemorate a visit in 1946. of the then Chief Rabbi of Palestine, the grandfather of the current President of Israel. In the evening on that day, a concert by the Polish-Israeli Symphony Orchestra takes place at the Grand Theatre and the National Opera.

On Sunday 23 April, a March of Prayer will go through the streets of Warsaw, following the Path of the Martyrdom of Jews, Victims of the Holocaust. It will be attended, among others, by Archbishop Grzegorz Rys. The marches have been organised annually by the Polish Council of Christians and Jews since 1993.

Historical background

The ghetto in Warsaw was the largest in Europe. It counted almost half a million people at its peak. From July to September 1942, the German Nazis deported some 300,000 Jews to the Treblinka extermination camp. Many died in the ghetto from starvation and exhaustion. Some were rescued. Those who remained organised an uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto on 19 April 1943. It was the largest urban Jewish uprising against the German occupiers during the Second World War. According to various estimates, between 700 and 2,000 Jewish fighters took part in it. The uprising finally collapsed on 16 May 1943, symbolised by the Germans blowing up the Great Synagogue in Warsaw.

Source: [Vatican News](#).