

Polish town shocked by antisemitic mass grave desecration
By The Rabbinical Commission for Matters of Jewish Cemeteries in Poland

Karminowice, Poland - Thursday morning, 6 June 2019, the residents of this small town outside of Lublin woke up to a disturbing site. The tombstone that marked a mass grave from the Holocaust had been defaced with anti-semitic graffiti. "This has broken the hearts of everyone here," said Alex Schwarz an activist with the Zapomniane Foundation, "the students who take care of the site couldn't believe someone could do this."

One year ago the whole town gathered near a bend in the road to Klementowice to dedicate the tombstone to a mass grave that holds 16 Jews murdered during the Shoah. After intensive research done by local memory activists, the Zapomniane Foundation identified the site, documented its history, protected the grave, and finally held a commemoration ceremony last June. In cooperation with the local community and clergy, Fundacja Zapomniane and The Matzevah Foundation dedicated a tombstone as a memorial to the 16 Polish-Jews murdered and unceremoniously dumped and buried there by the Germans. A local stonemason learned how to write Hebrew so he could inscribe the stone and be a part of this project. A Rabbi joined in prayer with the local priest in praying for the dead, an older woman spoke of her friend Rochel, who was buried there. The local elementary school undertook cleaning and maintaining the grave that held the last remains of the Jews of Karmanowice. „This matzeva has given people here the ability to start talking about the past," said Schwarz using the Hebrew term for a tombstone. "What happened yesterday feels to them like a slap in the face, as if someone was countering their act with unbridled hate," he stated.

A consensus has arisen among the community that the only way to fight such acts of vandalism is to engage more effort in protecting the site and the memory of the neighbors they could not save. The Zapomniane Foundation and The Matzevah Foundation - organizations that created the monument together with local activists and authorities strongly support the local community in this difficult time and appreciate all of their efforts thus far.