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Contact: Noam Neusner
Neusner Communications
V. 202 903 2463
Noam@Neusner.com

Memorial to Massacre of Holocaust Survivors to be Unveiled July 4th

Washington, DC (June 30, 2006) – On July 4th, a memorial to Holocaust survivors killed and wounded in Kielce, Poland on July 4th, 1946 -- a year after the end of the Holocaust -- will be unveiled in the Polish city. The memorial, built with funds from the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad and with the support of the city, is a stirring reminder of the brutal attacks and the necessity to fight anti-Semitism.

In prepared remarks, U.S. Commission Chairman Warren L. Miller said the memorial "will serve as a constant reminder of the terrible events of the Kielce Pogrom, and an eternal tribute to its victims." He added that, "The pogrom has special significance because of what happened, and because of when it happened."

Others expected to participate in the unveiling are: Poland's Foreign Minister, Anna Fotyga; Poland's Deputy Prime Minister, Ludwik Dorn; Kielce City President Wojciech Lubawski; Israel's ambassador to Poland, David Peleg; and the Chairman of Poland's Union of Jewish Congregations, Piotr Kadlcik.

Miller praised Poland's efforts to support Holocaust memorials and museums and to confront anti-Semitism. "We are not only memorializing the past, we are recognizing a brighter future for Poland, and for all people who truthfully remember the past and learn from it."

The pogrom of July 4, 1946 was a seminal event for the Jews who had survived the Holocaust. It convinced many that it was not safe to return their communities in Eastern Europe, and that they should move to what is now Israel, the United States, and other countries.

The memorial, which is located near the center of the city, is an artwork of New York artist Jack Sal, the son of Holocaust survivors. It includes a large number seven lying on its side, referring the location of most of the killings, 7-9 Planty Street. The sculpture is surrounded by 800 cement blocks, 42 of which are covered with lead, representing the at least 42 Jews killed in the Pogrom.

The U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad is an independent federal agency established to protect and preserve sites in Central and Eastern Europe associated with the cultural heritage of U.S. citizens.

NOTE TO EDITORS: A copy of Miller's planned remarks at the ceremony -- embargoed until 2 PM July 4th -- follow.

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**Remarks of the Honorable Warren L. Miller, Chairman
U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad
Dedication Ceremony of a Memorial Commemorating the Victims of the
Kielce Pogrom
Kielce, Poland, July 4, 2006**

President Kaczynski, President Lubawski, Foreign Minister Fotyga, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Dorn, Under Secretary Ziomecka, Israeli Ambassador Peleg, members of the diplomatic corps, Chief Rabbi Schudrich, fellow Commission Member and Chief Rabbi of Galicia Edgar Gluck, special guests – I am honored to join you here today.

I want to thank President Lubawski, and the city council, the Commission's partners, for encouraging and supporting the implementation of this memorial. It has been a privilege working with you.

And, of course, I would like to recognize Jack Sal. The thought-provoking memorial that we dedicate here today is a credit to Jack's vision and creativity.

This memorial will serve as a constant reminder of the terrible events of the Kielce Pogrom, and an eternal tribute to its victims.

Today, we memorialize those victims. We also reflect on the positive path taken by the Polish people since that terrible day 60 years ago. And we take to heart why these memorials are critical to the history of all mankind, and to the purpose of all free nations.

Today we meet in a peaceful place and a peaceful time for Poland. But on this day 60 years ago, Kielce was not peaceful. At the now-infamous 7/9 Planty Street, on trains leaving Kielce, at the train station, and elsewhere in Kielce, more than forty Jews were murdered in cold blood and many others wounded. Regina Fisz and her son were forcibly taken from their home and murdered in the woods. Her son Abram, was shot in the head by a policeman – he was three weeks old.

Those events – together known as the Kielce Pogrom – are remembered not only in Jewish history, not only in Polish history, but in the history of all mankind. The pogrom has special significance because of what happened, and because of when it happened.

Before the Nazi invasion, 21,000 Jews lived in Kielce. Most were killed in Treblinka.

A year after the Holocaust ended when the few survivors returned to their homes, they hoped to find their loved ones and rebuild their lives. Instead, they were confronted by vicious mobs. Savage beatings, unimaginable cruelties, and

murder were perpetrated upon defenseless and innocent Jews by citizens, soldiers, and police. A false rumor that the Jews had held a Christian boy at the building on Planty Street ignited a frenzy of hate.

The news of the Kielce pogrom caused the Jews that had survived the Holocaust to realize it was not safe to return to Poland. Their lives would have to be restarted elsewhere – and many eventually emigrated to America and Israel.

Fortunately, the Poland of 1946 is not the same as the Poland of 2006. Today, we recognize the path taken by the Polish people towards remembrance and respect.

Poland was once considered by many as hopelessly anti-Semitic. But the actions of a free and democratic Polish government show the opposite. Poland encourages and supports efforts to preserve Jewish cemeteries and synagogues ... it staffs state Holocaust museums with outstanding scholars and experts ... it has created an inspiring memorial at Belzec ... and it is establishing a Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

All these actions, and today's ceremony, surely teach us a valuable lesson: That history has many examples of evil, but it also has examples of goodness. Here in Kielce we had an example of evil, and now, with this memorial, we have an example of goodness.

So, today we not only memorialize the past. We also recognize a brighter future for Poland, and for all people who truthfully remember the past and learn from it.

We also note with sadness that the anti-Semitism and ethnic hatred that found willing believers six decades ago in Kielce has found new believers today in countries across the globe. Anti-Semitism is an irrational hatred based upon lies and ignorance and is the enemy of all free nations. So as anti-Semitism is embraced yet again, so it must be confronted again ... and it must be defeated.

I applaud the leaders and the people of Poland for supporting efforts to defeat anti-Semitism here and around the world.

The spirit of this day is fitting, because today is America's birthday. 230 years ago on this day, the fathers of American democracy declared America's independence. They based their declaration on freedom of religion and other principles that are universal – that all men are created equal, and all are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The people of Poland know the value of freedom. During the past century they suffered subjugation, mass murder, intolerance, and tyranny.

The grip of such a tragic history is difficult to overcome, yet Poland is overcoming it.

I commend Poland for remembering not only the pain it suffered – but also the suffering it inflicted on others. By your actions, you honor history, you honor truth, and you honor freedom.

Thank you.