

Institute of National Remembrance

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Statement by the Institute of National Remembrance in connection with the memorial site of Jewish victims of German terror in Chrzanów

In connection with media reports on the future fate of the national memorial site in Chrzanów, which is a commemoration of the public execution of Jews, citizens of the Republic of Poland, the Institute of National Remembrance - Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation unequivocally stresses that the Polish state considers it to be its duty to take care of all places that commemorate the dramatic fate of victims of totalitarian regimes.

A plaque in Chrzanów in honour of seven Polish citizens of Jewish nationality commemorates victims of a public hanging by the Germans. This crime took place while the town area was incarcerated forcibly into the German Reich. The draconian "provisions of law" introduced by the German occupant made Polish citizens a lower class of people in comparison with the German "master race". Germans treated Jews with particular cruelty. Occupational orders were an unprecedented form of state cruelty in the civilized world, simulating the "rule of law".

The murder of 29 April 1942 was committed for the "illegal" - according to German ordinances - baking of bread and possessing the most basic food products. Germany - in accordance with the practice applied also in other occupied Polish areas - considered this a sufficient reason to hang seven Polish citizens of Jewish origin in public in the city centre: bakers Israel, Chaim and Szymson Gerstner, Szaja Szpangelet, Fajwel Waldman, Israel Frisz and a merchant from Olkusz Derek Erenfryd.

The public execution was carried out in front of Jewish and Polish people who had been herded to this place. Such terrorist actions by the occupant were intended to extinguish any manifestation of opposition to German orders.

The Institute of National Remembrance unambiguously declares that every effort will be made not to allow for the liquidation of the memorial site and the monument commemorating this event in Chrzanów. The preservation of this memorial site is a particularly important duty of the Republic of Poland, due to the fact that the Germans did not allow the families to take away the bodies of their hanged relatives. All the bodies of the murdered were taken to the German KL Auschwitz camp and burnt there. The execution square in Chrzanów is therefore the only place strictly connected with the crime, where the victims' death may be commemorated individually.

In connection with the above, the Institute declares unequivocal support for the actions of municipal and state authorities aimed at preserving this memorial site for future generations.

The preservation of the memory of the innocent victims of German terror is an important duty of the state institutions of the Republic of Poland. Any investment plans for this, and similar locations, should be undertaken with full respect for the memory of victims of the criminal activities of totalitarian systems.

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