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TVP Krakow

Tombstones Used to Build a Fence Moved to Cemetery

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Matzevas - Jewish tombstones which were used to build a wall around the former high school in Olkusz - were dismantled Tuesday by volunteers from Poland and US. 15 fragments of tombstones were sent to the Jewish cemetery in Olkusz, and the demolished part of the wall was filled with concrete.

Volunteers dismantled Tuesday only part of the wall; the other two pieces will be removed at other times. As it turned out, the gravestones are also located in the courtyard of the building under asphalt. They also will be excavated and transported to the cemetery.

The campaign was carried out under The Matzeva Project, implemented by an organization operating in Poland, Israel, and the US called "From The Depths". The aim of the project is to restore the memory of more than 1,200 million Jewish cemeteries and tombstones.

Volunteers come equipped with basic tools as well as a jackhammer and a generator. Part of the tombstones were removed during an earlier action, when the organization arrived for the first time Olkusz. Other tombstones, still strongly connected with the wall, were removed on Tuesday.

"As part of our project we have been moving tombstones, used as a building material, to cemeteries. We were informed by volunteers that in Olkusz a school used the gravestones as building material. We have the permission of the current owner of the building, which once housed a school, then a learning center for drivers, and now stands abandoned. With the help of volunteers from the Poland and the US, Jews and non-Jews, we will remove the gravestones and transport them to the new cemetery in Olkusz. The holes will be filled with concrete," - said program coordinator Lena Klaudel.

One and a half years into the project, they have already moved several thousand fragments of gravestones back to Jewish cemeteries in Poland. "We always cooperate with local authorities and volunteers, because it is not just the Jewish heritage, it is a story that concerns us all" stressed the coordinator of the project.