

Press release

International Initiative Launched to Protect Holocaust Mass Grave Sites

Paris - January 25, 2010 – A growing movement to protect the mass graves of Nazi victims executed in Eastern Europe during World War II gained new momentum with last week's launch of an international initiative by a coalition of Holocaust remembrance groups.



“A war does not end until all the dead are buried,” said Father Patrick Desbois, founder of Yahad – In Unum, the world's leading research organization investigating the mass executions of Jews, Roma and Soviet communists in Eastern Europe and member of the coalition. Desbois said it was imperative that the grave sites of Jewish Holocaust victims in Eastern Europe be protected and sealed adding, *“it is difficult for Europe to have credibility in solving international conflicts if it cannot find the means to bury its own dead.”*

Desbois made his comments at a press conference hosted by the American Jewish Committee and Lee Ramer Institute on German-Jewish Relations in Berlin that brought together leading Jewish and non-Jewish non-governmental organizations.

The groups called on governments to take action to seal and memorialize the graves calling it *“an open wound on the landscape of Europe.”* Yahad – In Unum has researched and documented hundreds of mass graves in Ukraine. Today these graves are open, exposed to the natural elements and desecrated by grave diggers seeking items of value. *“After six years of investigations into these sites, we at Yahad – In Unum are encouraged that attention is finally turning toward this disgraceful situation,”* said Desbois. *“The time for completing the sacred task of protecting, sealing and memorializing these mass graves is long overdue.”*

The press conference took place one week before the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Following are the organizations represented at the press conference:

- Father Patrick Desbois, Yahad-In Unum, Paris
- Stephan J. Kramer, Central Council of Jews in Germany, Berlin
- Reinhard Führer, German War Graves Commission, Berlin
- Philip Carmel, Lo Tishkach, Brussels
- Rabbi Andrew Baker, American Jewish Committee, Washington, D.C.
- Deidre Berger, AJC Ramer Institute of German-Jewish Relations, Berlin

- Ambassador Christian Kennedy, Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, U.S. Department of State
- Jiri Cisteky, Shoa Legacy Institute, Prague
- U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.
- International Task Force for Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, Berlin

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Yahad-In Unum [yahad - in unum](http://yahad-in-unum.org) is the world's leading research organization investigating the mass executions of Jews and Roma/Gypsy people in Eastern Europe, sometimes referred to as "The Holocaust by Bullets," the title of a book written by Father Patrick Desbois. During the past six years, the association has confirmed the location of numerous mass graves, many previously unknown, and interviewed over 1,200 Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian witnesses who witnessed the executions. The association's research has been accelerated in recent months as investigators race to locate as many of the graves as possible while remaining witnesses are still alive.