

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://eng.ipn.gov.pl/en/news/12559,We-want-to-restore-their-names.html>

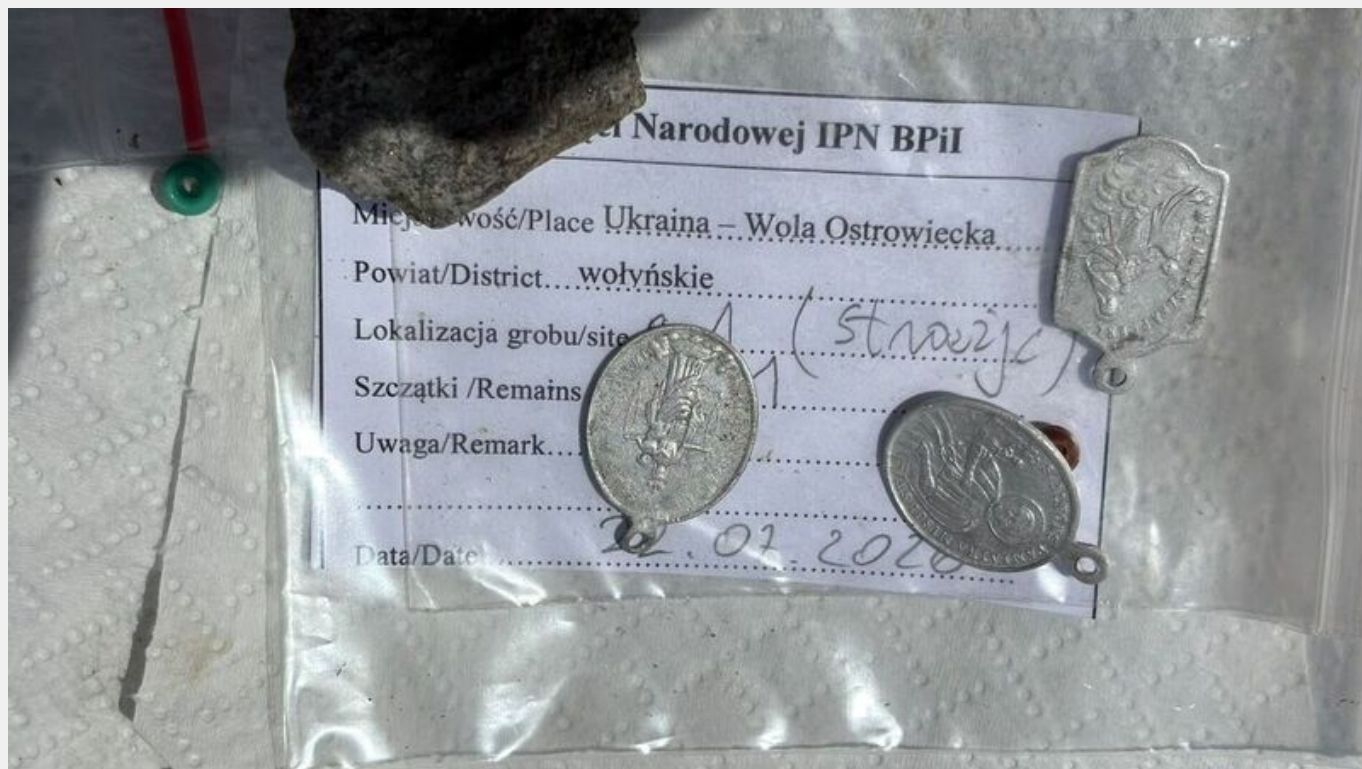
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We want to restore their names















On 28 July 2026, during a press conference in Ostrówki, Ukraine, Deputy President of the Institute of National Remembrance Prof. Karol Polejowski, informed the public about the progress of exhumation works conducted by the Institute.

The conference took place in Ostrówki in Volhynia, where exhumations are being carried out for victims of the crime committed by Ukrainian nationalists in 1943. The Deputy President of the IPN stated that this is the third time the Institute has undertaken exhumation work in Ostrówki and Wola Ostrowiecka. After more than two weeks of operations, the remains of 49 individuals have been discovered, and additional burial sites are being uncovered simultaneously.

“We are planning the funeral ceremonies for 30 August – on the anniversary of the crime committed here by Ukrainian nationalists. We are continuously collecting genetic material from the recovered remains, and I would like to renew our appeal for relatives of families from Ostrówki and Wola Ostrowiecka to come forward and provide DNA samples. Our goal is to identify the victims we have found. We want to restore their names,” appealed Prof. Karol Polejowski.

Prof. Karol Polejowski also emphasized that 14 IPN applications submitted in 2025 for search operations are still awaiting consideration by the Ukrainian authorities. These applications concern victims of the struggle for independence, victims of the 1939 defensive war, victims of German and Soviet crimes, as well as victims of the Volhynian Massacre, and have not yet been reviewed.

He expressed hope that the acceleration of procedures announced by the Ukrainian side will allow for the continuation of work at additional sites. He also noted that the Institute is preparing an application to conduct exhumations in Huta Pieniacka, which—if approved—could begin in the spring of next year.

During the conference, personal belongings found with the victims

were presented.

“Medallions, rosaries, two pairs of shoes—only these items have survived with the recovered remains. These artifacts, taken from the pits of death, are relics to us. We would very much like them to return to the families or be placed in museums in Poland,” added Prof. Karol Polejowski.

The press conference was attended by: Anna Nowakowska, Consul of the Republic of Poland in Lutsk, along with the staff of the Consulate; Lech Parell, Head of the Office for Veterans and Victims of Repression; Prof. Grzegorz Motyka, member of the IPN Council; and Marek Szymaniak, Ph.D., Director of the IPN Branch in Gdańsk and advisor to the President of Poland.

During his speech, the IPN Deputy President thanked the institutions supporting the initiative, including the Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Lutsk, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Ukrainian partners, and local authorities.

Before the conference, a Holy Mass for the victims of the Volhynian Massacre was held at the cemetery in Ostrówki.

On 13 July 2026, exhumation work began in the former villages of

Ostrówki and Wola Ostrowiecka in the former Luboml district in Volhynia.

The exhumations cover three sites where victims' remains were discovered in April this year. The first is a mass grave in Wola Ostrowiecka on the grounds of the former farm of Aleksander Strażyc, where earlier survey work revealed the outline of a burial pit, confirming the mass nature of the grave. Further work is being carried out at the site of a mass grave discovered near the foundations of the former school in Ostrówki, as well as at the site of a single grave located opposite the local cemetery.

The exhumations are being conducted by a team from the IPN Office of Search and Identification, the specialist company "Wołyńskie Starożytności," and Dr. Łukasz Szleszkowski from the Wrocław Medical University.

Observers include representatives of the Polish Consulate in Lutsk, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, and the Lviv-based company DOLA.

The exhumation work is scheduled to continue until 7 August 2026.

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