



Press release

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Landmark synagogue ruin on Poolstrasse: Hamburg's Jewish heritage needs a future

The Hamburg Reform Jewish Community (LJGH) is very concerned about the future of the former temple on Poolstrasse and is calling for the listed ruins to be restored and made accessible as a public meeting place and place of remembrance.

Right in the heart of Hamburg, on Poolstrasse, are what is left of the very first Jewish Reform temple. Reform Judaism has its roots here and is now a movement of about two million Jews around the world.

'The temple on Poolstrasse is a world-class Jewish heritage site in Hamburg. We cannot and must not allow it to disappear,' says Galina Jarkova from the LJGH Management Board. 'It is a crying shame that nothing has been done for years to protect this important site. Now we fear that the remains will be put at risk by construction work or will be integrated as a mere ornament into a building to which the public will have no access.'

Of the former neo-Gothic edifice with three aisles, dating back to 1844, only the entry portal and the apse remain as wartime ruins and have been protected as landmarks since 2003. The ruins of this architecturally unique synagogue have been included by the Foundation for Jewish Heritage (www.foundationforjewishheritage.com), London, in its 'Top 19 Watchlist' of Jewish European relics most at risk (the list includes a total of 3,318 sites). The condition of the building fabric is extremely critical. As we have now discovered, the site on Poolstrasse is now scheduled for redevelopment.

'We simply cannot allow another Jewish heritage site to disappear. On the contrary: Hamburg urgently needs more visible sites of Jewish history and Jewish life. We want the Poolstrasse site to be turned into a public meeting place and place of remembrance, open and accessible to all. To do this, the ruins of the temple need to be secured, restored and made accessible to the public. We hope with all our hearts that the city will support this project,' says Galina Jarkova.

The Hamburg Reform Jewish Community (LJGH) is one of the internationally widespread successor communities to the 'Neuer Israelitische Tempelverein von 1817' [Hamburg Temple Association], which was founded in Hamburg and whose 200th anniversary was celebrated in 2017 at the Poolstrasse site and attended by guests from around the world. The original temple was co-financed by many of Hamburg's prestigious citizens, including Salomon Heine, while Felix Mendelssohn composed the music for the opening ceremony and Heinrich Heine described it in his epic poem 'Germany. A Winter's Tale'.