

RABBI MICHAEL SCHUDRICH

Michael Schudrich was born in New York City, and grew up in Patchogue, New York, where his father served as a pulpit rabbi at a Conservative synagogue. His grandparents emigrated to the United States from Baligród, Poland, before World War II. Educated in Jewish day schools in the New York area, he was graduated from the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1977 with a Religious Studies major and earned an MA in History from Columbia University in 1982. Ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America as a Conservative rabbi, he later received Orthodox *semichah* from Rabbi Moshe Tendler at Yeshiva University. He served as rabbi of the Jewish Community of Japan from 1983 to 1989.

After leading Jewish groups on numerous trips to Europe, Schudrich began working for the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation and resided in Warsaw, Poland, from 1992 to 1998. He returned to Poland in June 2000 as Rabbi of Warsaw and Łódź, and in December 2004 was appointed Chief Rabbi of Poland. Schudrich has played a central role in the "Jewish Renaissance" in Eastern Europe. Schudrich is a member of the Rabbinical Council of America and the Conference of European Rabbis. In Kashrut he cooperates with the Orthodox Union, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and other Kashrut organizations. Schudrich has been a Polish citizen since November 3, 2005, and now holds both American and Polish citizenship.

Rabbi Schudrich serves on behalf of Poland's Jewish community as the official interlocutor with both the Polish government and the Catholic Church. He accompanied the president of Poland on his recent trip to Israel and to the funeral of Pope John Paul II. Rabbi Schudrich is credited with arranging a special blessing by Pope Benedict for righteous gentiles who gathered for the Pope's visit to Poland.

Rabbi Schudrich is especially proud of the time he spends counseling Poles who have recently discovered their Jewish identity. In his role as chief rabbi, Schudrich oversees five rabbis and numerous Jewish day schools and summer camps. In addition, he works to protect and preserve mass gravesites, including more than 1,400 cemeteries and the six concentration camps in Poland from World War II. Rabbi Schudrich advises the Taube Foundation on priorities for religious and communal life in Poland.

On May 27, 2006, Schudrich was assaulted with what appeared to be pepper spray in central Warsaw by a 33-year-old man. According to the police, the perpetrator had ties to "Nazi organizations" and a history of football-related hooliganism. Schudrich hit back, and the attack on him brought condemnation from Polish media and politicians.

Rabbi Schudrich had been invited to travel on the aircraft that crashed on 10 April 2010, killing 96 people including the Polish president. He refused to travel as it would have violated the Jewish Sabbath, a decision which saved his life.

In February 2018, Rabbi Schudrich entered discussion with the Polish parliament with the hope of amending a proposed animal-rights law that would restrict kosher slaughter in Poland. During the same month he implored with Jewish leaders to refrain from boycotting Poland over the "Holocaust law", which criminalizes any public statements that the Polish nation was complicit in Nazi war crimes. In the last several years he has played a pivotal role in finding asylum in Poland for refugees fleeing the conflict in neighboring Ukraine.