

The committee for equitable Holocaust property loss compensation from Austria

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Ambassador Helmut Tichy

Legal Advisor

Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs

Elfriede.VILSSON-RUINER@bmeia.gv.at

Dear Mr. Tichy,

We wish to thank you for your detailed and courteous letter.

However we believe that it does not address the issues which we raised in our letter to Foreign Minister Spindelegger.

We hold in high regard the measures Austria is carrying out in helping social hardship cases regarding Holocaust survivors, such as those you mentioned in your letter. We also appreciate the In Rem restitution, where the rightful owners of properties receive them back.

However your letter does not deal with the quantitative aspects of the property compensation. The GSF recognized losses amounting to 1.5 billion U.S. Dollars (this sum, of course, constitutes only a fraction of Jewish property losses during WWII). The losses were revaluated with no real interest, despite the passage of over 70 years. The apprehension of the recipients emanates mainly from the size of the compensation, and only to a small extent from the delay in the receipt of the closing

payments. The problem does not lie in the number of heirs, but in the fact that losses of billions of dollars are compensated with only \$210 million.

The ceiling which was decided is paltry and cannot stand.

In our letter we requested an addition of only 1% real interest, because we think that this is a realistic compromise. A 4% real interest, which was implemented in other Holocaust property compensation schemes, would result in a sum exceeding \$20 billion.

We believe that the current outcome is inequitable and that the sum allotted has to be increased. Apparently the sum of \$210 million was decided due to the underestimation of the extent of the property loss by both parties to the agreement. In fact the agreement deals with the possibility that the sum will exceed the compensation.

Please be advised, and inform Foreign Minister Spindelegger, that we are approaching Israeli Government agencies to advance this proposition.

It is of course legitimate that we hold opposing views. It is essential that such questions are discussed through a dialogue, like this exchange of letters.

Please convey to Foreign Minister Spindelegger our wish that he recommend to your Government to review the property compensation policy in line with our request. We believe that an Austrian initiative to redress the current outcome will be highly appreciated both domestically and internationally. We are only asking for the return of property to its legal owners through compensation.

Yours sincerely,

Yehudith Huebner - Ambassador (Retired)

Dr. Haim Galon

Yohanan Neeman

Avi Shoket - Ambassador (Retired)

Adv. Doron Weissbrod

Adv. Martha Raviv