

JOSEPH WILF
820 Morris Turnpike
Suite 301
Short Hills, New Jersey 07078
Phone: (973) 467-5000/Fax (973) 467-0550

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Board of Directors
Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, Inc.
15 East 26th Street, Rm. 906
New York, NY 10010

Dear Friends,

In the following lines I wish to lay forth my thoughts regarding a topic that will be discussed at the upcoming board meeting of the Claims Conference, i.e. the manner in which Claims Conference funds are apportioned, specifically the ratio between funds allocated for the welfare of survivors and funding for Holocaust commemoration.

As a Holocaust survivor, it is important for me to stress that the commitments that the Claims Conference has taken upon itself – caring for the welfare of needy Holocaust survivors and preserving the memory of the Holocaust – are both moral responsibilities of the highest order, and we as members of the board must make sure ourselves that we are fulfilling both of these duties.

The obligation to care for needy survivors is an obligation incumbent on society in general, an obligation incumbent on the Jewish People, and certainly when dealing with funds relating to the Holocaust, it is both important and proper to utilize these funds for the welfare of survivors.

Recently, and in light of the growing need, I was pleased to learn that additional reparation funds have been allocated for the welfare of survivors (whether through the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims or by way of additional reparation payments from Germany and others).

The second commitment, to preserve the memory of the Holocaust, is not simply an obligation, it is the last will of the owners of these **Holocaust era funds** – the victims. Holocaust remembrance is in essence a memorial stone for the victims, most of whom have no grave.

On their behalf, and if you will allow me, on our behalf – the survivors, we must ensure remembrance of the Shoah and its lessons for eternity. We must document what happened, record the names of the victims, the communities and their heritage. The coming

generations must be taught about what happened in all its aspects, and thus ensure as much as possible that such phenomena will not recur.

This is not only a commitment to those who perished, but also to ourselves – the living.

The execution of these two obligations by the Claims Conference is today in a delicate (and proper) balance. The majority of the funds are designated for the welfare of survivors, and the remainder (20%) is allocated for Shoah remembrance through education, research, documentation and commemoration.

We should not, my friends, create a conflict between these two duties. We should not harm one in preference of the other. We should maintain the current balance, as I sense that any change is liable to cause substantial damage to the matter itself.

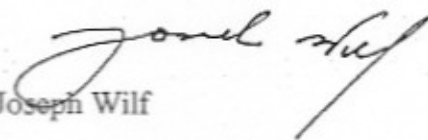
Cuts in funding for Shoah remembrance, or a temporary funding freeze, will not only seriously impair and even endanger the existence of bodies, projects and initiatives active in Holocaust commemoration, but will also send a dangerous message – that we, the Jews, are downplaying the importance of remembrance and are prepared to harm it.

I must point out that, in my opinion, if any change in the present ratio should take place, it should be in the direction of strengthening support for Holocaust remembrance and not, my friends, weakening our moral responsibilities to the victims, to the coming generations and to ourselves.

Allow me to conclude with an excerpt from the testament of Elkhanan Elkes, leader of the Kovno Jewish community, who perished in the Shoah:

“Remember, both of you, that which Amalek did to us; remember everything, do not forget for the rest of your lives and pass on as a holy testament to the coming generations that the Germans killed, slaughtered and murdered us...”

Sincerely yours,



Joseph Wilf

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