

## **GERMANY AND CLAIMS CONFERENCE AGREE ON CONTINUED PAYMENTS, HOMECARE FOR HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS TO MARK 60 YEARS OF COMPENSATION AGREEMENTS**

### ***Minister of Finance Hosts Ceremony to Commemorate 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Luxembourg Agreements***

The government of Germany committed today, through an agreement signed with the Claims Conference, to continue compensation payments to eligible Holocaust survivors and providing funding for homecare for elderly victims.

At today's ceremony in Berlin, German Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schäuble hosted a ceremony at which an agreement was signed that will continue to govern the Claims Conference's compensation programs and the provision of homecare funding by the German government.

These agreements come 60 years after the historic first agreements were signed in September 1952 that pledged West Germany to providing payments for certain Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Those first agreements, called the Luxembourg Agreements, have been followed in the ensuing decades with numerous other funds and programs to provide payments and assistance to Holocaust victims, established through ongoing negotiations between the Claims Conference and the government of Germany.

Through the rise and fall of Communism, the reunification of Germany and subsequent German governments, the Claims Conference has continued to work with the German Ministry of Finance to ensure that Holocaust survivors obtain a small measure of justice. These 60 years of negotiations to provide acknowledgement to Holocaust survivors has been an unparalleled historic endeavor.

"Our work has never been about the money. It has always been about the recognition, the validation, the acknowledgement of Holocaust victims," said Chairman Julius Berman. "Our work for them is not done. Not yet. Together, we owe it to these heroes of the Jewish people to make their last years more dignified and comforting than their youth. Survivors were abandoned by the world once -- we continue to work to make sure that they will never be abandoned again."

Special Negotiator Amb. Stuart Eizenstat spoke of Germany's continued commitment to fulfilling its historic obligation to Holocaust victims, and of the work that is still to be done. "All is not finished. The Claims Conference and the international Jewish community call upon Germany to finish out this critical process. After enduring the worst that humanity could devise, these elderly victims – many frail, many more destitute – deserve in their final years to receive the best that humanity can provide," he said. "We are inspired that Germany has committed to ensure that Holocaust survivors, in their final years, can be confident that we are endeavoring to help them live in dignity, after their early life was filled with such tragedy and trauma. Let us help them not to be forgotten again."

Roman Kent, Treasurer and Chairman of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, opened his speech with a famous German poem by Heinrich Heine, "The Lorelei," and linked it to the fate of the victims and the memories of survivors that persist. "Of course, reciting the phrase 'legend of bygone ages' ('aus alten Zeiten'), which Heine speaks about in his poetry, to me is the 'bygone age of the Holocaust' because it was such an overwhelming, devastating part of my early life. Although the horrific experiences that I and other survivors endured in the

concentration camps took place in a 'bygone age', the tragic memories are constantly present in my daily life still today," he said. "Symbolically, the Luxembourg Agreement signed sixty years ago was the start of the healing process for both the German nation and the Holocaust survivors. It was an official acknowledgement of responsibility by the Germans, and a willingness to recompense the Jewish people in some small part, with a compensation system that would help those who survived. As imperfect and inadequate as it was, it offered some assistance in our fight to rebuild our lives."

Amb. Reuven Merhav, Chairman of the Executive Committee, spoke of his discussion with German President Joachim Gauck in Israel last May. "I described my natural commitment to the Claims Conference in its sustained endeavors to secure a small measure of justice for over 800,000 Holocaust survivors and Nazi victims as well as upholding the Shoah legacy in a longstanding and honest partnership with the Bundesrepublik, in every realm. Consequently the Claims Conference has become omnipresent in Jewish life, particularly so in Israel, home to the largest number of Holocaust survivors and Nazi victims, where Shoah memory and legacy are active witnesses in daily life," he said.

Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schäuble spoke of the historic relationship that has developed between the Claims Conference and the government of Germany, evolving from the first formal, chilly greetings exchanged at the beginning of the 1952 talks to an ongoing, mutual commitment to victims – and to history. "My particular special thanks to the Jewish Claims Conference. For 60 years the Claims Conference has been the partner of Germany in the organization of help for the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Since the Luxembourg Agreement and far beyond it has been the Claims Conference which has very closely followed the legislation regarding compensation and the corresponding application of the law, carried out payment and not least has referred again and again to where there exists a need for reform," he said.

"Sixty years of the Luxembourg agreements are a reason to look back with a certain pride at what has been achieved together for the survivors. 60 years of the Luxembourg agreements also stand for 60 years of confidence-inspiring partnership and co-operation of all participants," said Minister Schäuble. "In this work for the victims of persecution it is evident to all that the gruesome history in the National Socialist period, the suffering and injustice that was brought for millions of people, cannot be undone. No compensation can change anything in that. And even with all the efforts, most suffering can at best be eased somewhat."

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