

11 May 2015

**STATEMENT  
OF THE SPECIAL ENVOYS FOR HOLOCAUST ISSUES AND ANTI-SEMITISM  
ON HOLOCAUST RESTITUTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

The restoration of the Jewish community in Serbia is a testament to the resilience of the community and the support of the Republic of Serbia. The return of confiscated property is essential for the future of the Serbian Jewish community and the ability of Holocaust survivors from Serbia to live their remaining days in dignity.

Countries throughout Europe have recognized restitution of property confiscated by the Nazis and their collaborators, as well as property subsequently nationalized by the Communist regimes, as pivotal for providing a measure of justice to Holocaust victims, and for solidifying democracies and market economies founded on respect of property rights and the rule of law.

In 2009 the Republic of Serbia, along with forty-six other nations, endorsed the Terezin Declaration on Holocaust Era Assets and Related Issues at a conference in Prague. Forty-three countries, including the Republic of Serbia, also endorsed the additional Guidelines and Best Practices for Restitution of Immovable Property in 2010. The Republic of Serbia reaffirmed its commitment to the Terezin Declaration and the Guidelines and Best Practices at the November 2012 Immovable Property Review Conference in Prague.

The Republic of Serbia has taken important initial steps toward meeting its commitments under the Terezin Declaration and Guidelines and Best Practices through the passage of the Law on the Restitution of Property to Churches and Religious Communities (2006) and the Law on Property Restitution and Compensation (2011). Article 5 of the Law on Property Restitution and Compensation provides that the Republic of Serbia shall pass a special law to address the restitution of heirless property. To address fully the restitution of Jewish communal, private, and heirless immovable and movable property plundered during the Holocaust and its aftermath the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, the State Restitution Agency, and Jewish representatives initiated a working group on a proposed Holocaust restitution law that met once in 2014.

The Special Envoys for Holocaust Issues and Anti-Semitism would like to congratulate the government of the Republic of Serbia on the progress made thus far, encourage the government to resume discussions with the Jewish community in Serbia and the World Jewish Restitution Organization on the drafting of legislation, and express hope that the legislation will go a long way to ensuring that the Republic Serbia meets its commitments under the Terezin Declaration and the Guidelines and Best Practices and codifies coherent laws allowing for the fair treatment of future claimants in an open and efficient manner.

The success of this proposed law will ultimately be measured by its results – the restitution of immovable and movable property to dispossessed owners or their descendants or, where this is not possible, appropriate financial compensation and the restitution of heirless property, or appropriate compensation in assisting needy Holocaust survivors from Serbia, as well helping the Serbian Jewish communities and supporting education and commemoration.

The Special Envoys for Holocaust Issues and Anti-Semitism encourage the government of the Republic of Serbia to use all available means - including the support of the European Shoah Legacy Institute - to address the issue of Holocaust-era restitution in Serbia efficiently and effectively. Consistent with the Terezin Declaration and the Guidelines and Best Practices, we urge the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia to enact a law that would



apply to property confiscated, nationalized or otherwise seized during the Holocaust or its aftermath , both individual and collective, located on the territory of the Republic of Serbia.

ENDORSED BY:

**Ambassador Jiří Šitler**, Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues and Combat of Antisemitism, the Czech Republic.

**Ambassador Nicholas J Dean**, Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, Department of State, the United States.

**Ambassador Tibor Shalev-Schlosser**, Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues and Restitution, the State of Israel.

**Ambassador Felix Klein**, Special Representative of the Federal Foreign Office for Relations with Jewish Organizations and Holocaust Issues, the Federal Republic of Germany.

**Ambassador Jovan Tegovski**, IHRA National Coordinator, the Republic of Macedonia.

**Ambassador Patrizianna Sparacino-Thiellay**, Ambassador for Human Rights and Holocaust issues, the French Republic.