

# *Jewish Groups Angry at Dutch Railway Company Reparation*

By The Associated Press

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AMSTERDAM — Jewish organizations criticized the Dutch national railway company Monday for not adequately consulting them in discussions to work out a form of recognition for Holocaust victims the company transported to camps in the Netherlands during World War II — from where they were sent to Nazi concentration camps.

The anger came after the railway company, NS, announced Friday that it would donate 5 million euros (\$5.6 million) to four Dutch memorial centers as a gesture of collective recognition.

More than 100,000 Dutch Jews — 70 percent of the Jewish community — did not survive the war. Most were deported, along with Roma and Sinti, and killed in Nazi concentration camps.

Most of the Dutch victims were rounded up in cities and taken by train to camps in the Netherlands before being sent to the border and put on German trains to concentration camps.

Gideon Taylor, Chair of Operations of the World Jewish Restitution Organization, called the decision a major disappointment for Jewish groups.

“This was an opportunity to sit down with the Jewish community and survivors ... to come to terms with a history that led to the death of over 100,000 people,” Taylor said in a telephone interview from New York.

“This is something to be dealt with in discussion, in consultation, in cooperation with representatives of victims and find a way to honor the memory of those who perished,” he added.

NS apologized for its role in the deportations in 2005. A year ago, the company said that an estimated 500 living survivors of the Holocaust who were transported by the company would receive 15,000 euros each. Widows and widowers of victims were eligible to receive 7,500 euros and, if they are no longer alive, the surviving children of victims were to receive 5,000 euros.

In addition, the company pledged to reach a collective form of recognition for those who were not eligible for reparations, including some 20,000 children murdered in the Holocaust, as well as forced laborers and political prisoners.

NS said Friday that it asked the memorial centers to use the donation for educating the young, with a “special focus on discrimination, including anti-Semitism.”

Jewish groups, however, also wanted a donation to help “Holocaust survivors and to support the Dutch Jewish community devastated by the Holocaust,” the World Jewish Restitution Organization said in a statement.

Dutch organization Central Jewish Consultation said the NS decision “rubbed a new load of salt into wounds” of the Dutch Jewish community.

Geert Koolen, a spokesman for NS, said in an email Monday that the company met with Jewish groups as it sought to carry out a commission's advice to make a gesture of recognition.

“In doing so we had to take in account different groups of interest and different angles of perspective — like Jewish victims who are not eligible for the individual compensation, people who fought in the resistance, forced laborers or political prisoners,” he said.

Koolen added that the company regrets the anger of the Jewish groups and said that NS is “always open for the possibility of renewed contact.”

Taylor said he wants NS to reconsider.

“I think this calls for something bigger, wider and more thoughtful,” he said. “I hope they will expand on the decision.”