



ארגון יהודי עולמי להשבת רכוש (איל"ר)
WORLD JEWISH RESTITUTION ORGANIZATION
(ע.ר.)

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July 26, 2021

Mr. Moshe Stefansky, CEO
Genazym
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Dear Mr. Stefansky,

On behalf of the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO), I write to express concern regarding the provenance of the Ledger of the Chevra Kadisha of Tomashvar (Timosuara). 1781-1829. (Lot 56) which was set to be auctioned by your company this coming Wednesday, July 28, 2021, at the David Citadel Hotel, 7 David HaMelech Street, Jerusalem, but if we understand correctly has now been taken down from the auction listing. Attached is the information that previously was on the website.

We urge you to halt immediately the sale of this item, and any other similar items, and ensure that they are held and not returned to the consignor until we can do a joint review with you of the provenance and the issue of ownership can be resolved. We also officially request that you inform any potential buyers that there is a challenge to the title of this item or items.

WJRO represents Jews worldwide in seeking the recovery of, or compensation for, property wrongfully taken during the Holocaust and its aftermath. Our fourteen member organizations are major international Jewish organizations and Holocaust survivor organizations in Europe, Israel, and the United States. In Romania and other countries, we work together with the Jewish communities to seek restitution for confiscated, formerly Jewish communal property.

The Jewish Community of Timisoara in Romania was the original owner of the Ledger of the Chevra Kadisha of Tomashvar. This Ledger is one of the oldest Pinkasim of a Jewish Community in Romania and is a handwritten memorial register of the City of Timisoara's Jewish burials. The item was lost to the Community similar to the ways in which the Pinkasim of other Jewish Communities were lost during the Holocaust and are of great historical value to the Jewish Communities. Please note that the US authorities have just recently taken steps to seize similar items.

As you may know, private institutions like Genazym have a responsibility to make certain that claims to recover Nazi-confiscated property are resolved expeditiously. The 1998 Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art, the 2000 Vilnius Forum Declaration on Looted Art, the 2009 Terezin Declaration on Holocaust Era Assets, and the 2010 Guidelines and Best Practices on the Restitution and/or Compensation of Private Property recognize the massive and unprecedented looting and confiscations that occurred during the Holocaust and make clear that looted Jewish property – including looted art, Jewish cultural property, and records of Jewish communities – be returned to their original owners. Notably, these declarations extend to private institutions, who have a responsibility to continue and support intensified systematic provenance research, make the results of this research available, and facilitate just and fair solutions.

WJRO Members: Agudath Israel World Organization; American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Their Descendants; American Jewish Committee; American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee; B'nai B'rith International; Centre of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel; Conference of European Rabbis; Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany; European Council of Jewish Communities; European Jewish Congress; Jewish Agency for Israel; The National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry; World Jewish Congress; World Zionist Organization

Additionally, at the 2006 Review of the Repatriation of Holocaust Art Assets in the United States, then-Administrative Vice President and Counsel of the Art Dealers Association of America (ADAA), Mr. Gilbert S. Edelson, noted that the ADAA had years earlier issued guidelines regarding art looted during the Nazi era, which were being re-issued to Christie's, Sotheby's and auction houses in 2006. The guidelines emphasize that all claims of ownership should be handled promptly and with seriousness and respect, and that if the work is presently being offered for sale, it should be withdrawn until the claim can be resolved.

We know that you and your colleagues share with us, as well as the Jewish communities of Romania, the importance and poignancy of the issue of looted property and the urgency of achieving a timely and just resolution of this matter. We look forward to receiving confirmation from you that the sale of this item has been halted pending resolution of the ownership of this treasure of the Jewish people.

Sincerely,



Gideon Taylor
Chair of Operations
World Jewish Restitution Organization

cc: Ambassador Colette Avital, Secretary General, WJRO
Dr. Wesley Fisher, Director of Research, WJRO