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Statement

2019

Statement on Center for the Study of the Genocide and Resistance of Lithuania

Committee and working group chairs at the IHRA condemn the Center for the Study of the Genocide and Resistance of Lithuania to justify the wartime actions taken by Jonas Noreika.

“We, the undersigned chairs and recent chairs of expert working groups and committees of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), express our grave concern about the decision of the Center for the Study of the Genocide and Resistance of Lithuania to justify the wartime actions taken by Jonas Noreika in relation to the Jews of that country. The text issued by the Center on 27 March, 2019, is the most recent of a series of attempts to rehabilitate the reputation of Noreika, a man, documentary sources indicate, with a key role in the ghettoization and expropriation of property of Jews in Siauliai district in 1941.

As others have pointed out, the Center’s statement contains a number of paradoxes, including claims that Lithuania at once resisted the Nazis but

saw in the Third Reich an ally against the Soviet Union. It also notes Noreika's role in the ghettoization of the Jews of Siauliai but suggests that this is not indicative of complicity in the Holocaust. It makes the largely unprovable claim that there were fewer collaborators in Lithuania than in other nations occupied by Nazi Germany. More troubling, the Center's document strongly suggests that Noreika was an active rescuer of Jews by noting his association with meritorious individual rescuers while being unable to provide evidence of his direct role in any of their efforts. It is true that Noreika later engaged in Lithuania's anti-Soviet resistance, and the Center's text makes note that Noreika denied under Soviet interrogation any collaboration with the Nazis, but this does not prove innocence during the Holocaust years.

The IHRA Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion identifies attempts to "excuse or minimize the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany" as tantamount to distortion of the Holocaust. We therefore urge the government of Lithuania and the Center to acknowledge and condemn the activities of Jonas Noreika during the German occupation of Lithuania, and we invite them to engage in open dialogue and joint research with other international experts in the future."

Ambassador Georges Santer, Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

Prof. Yehuda Bauer, Honorary Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

Dr. Wichert ten Have, Advisor to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

Deborah Dwork, PhD (Chair, Academic Working Group)

Marc van Berkel, PhD (Chair, Education Working Group)

Olivia Marks-Woldman (Chair, Committee on the Holocaust, Genocide, and Crimes against Humanity)

Oliver von Mengersen (Chair, Committee on the Genocide of the Roma)

Christian Wee (Chair, Memorials and Museums Working Group)

Robert J. Williams, PhD (Chair, Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial)

Alicja Biłocka (former chair, Memorials and Museums Working Group)

Martina Maschke (former chair, Committee on the Genocide of the Roma)

Klaus Mueller, PhD (former chair, Committee on the Holocaust, Genocide, and Crimes against Humanity)

Felicia Waldman, PhD (former chair, Education Working Group)

Mark Weitzman (former chair, Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial)

About the IHRA

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) is an intergovernmental organization with 35 Member Countries.

We were founded in 1998 to address challenges related to the Holocaust and genocide of the Roma.

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