

# Internationale Gedenkstätten-Charta verabschiedet

Von den beiden im Bereich von Gedenkstätten seit vielen Jahren bestehenden internationalen Organisationen sind Grundsätze für die professionelle und ethische Arbeit von Gedenkstätten verabschiedet worden. Die Gedenkstätten- und Museums-Arbeitsgruppe der »International Task Force for Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research« – die sich Ende 2012 in International Holocaust Remembrance Association« (IHRA) umbenannt hat, und das »International Committee for Memorial Museums for Victims of Public Crimes« (IC MEMO) haben dieses Papier auf der Expertenebene ausgearbeitet und sich auf eine gemeinsame Fassung verständigt.

Mit der Verabschiedung des Papiers während der Plenumsitzung der IHRA im Dezember 2012 in Lüttich haben sich die Vertretungen der 31 Mitgliedsnationen verbindlich dazu bekannt, diese Charta bei der Behandlung der Gedenkstätten in ihren Ländern zugrunde zu legen.

Die Charta ist eine Reaktion der Gedenkstätten auf das Vermächtnis<sup>1</sup>, das anlässlich des Gedenktags für alle Opfer des NS-Regimes im Januar 2009 durch die Präsidentinnen und Präsidenten von zehn internationalen Verbänden der Überlebenden von Konzentrationslagern an Bundestagspräsident Lammert und in der Folge in vielen Ländern an die Politik und Öffentlichkeit übergeben wurde.

Nachdem die Überlebenden der NS-Verfolgung ihre Erwartungen hinsichtlich der zukünftigen Erinnerung an die Nazi-Verbrechen formuliert hatten, haben die Gedenkstätten Grundsätze vereinbart, nach denen sie dieses Vermächtnis in ihrer Arbeit umzusetzen gedenken.

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Im Folgenden ist die Charta im englischen Originaltext abgedruckt:

## **International Memorial Museums Charter**

### **Introduction**

Memorial museums are responsible to protect the dignity of the victims from all forms of exploitation and to ensure, beyond conventional history lessons, that the interpretation of political events inspires critical, independent thinking about the past. This is why it is time that the memorial museums, as a unique form of contemporary history museums, should reach an understanding for cooperation with each other on a national and international level.

An organizational framework needed for an international consortium has already been created. The mission of the International Task Force for Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research is to support institutions that commemorate Nazi-victims and support the preservation of the historic sites, sources, and artifacts in the spirit and purpose of the Stockholm Declaration.

The mission of the International Committee of Memorial Museums (IC MEMO) through its integration into the International Council of Museums (ICOM) honoring the UN Charter's universal ethical and political principles, is to universal human and civil

rights and the careful preservation of cultural assets. The IC MEMO functions as an umbrella organization for many very different memorial museums located in Europe, Africa, America and Asia that are dedicated to victims of state tyranny.

### **Charter**

This is an international memorial museums charter that is oriented both towards the UN declaration of Human Rights and the ethical principles of ICOM. General principles of commemoration in memorial museums are:

- 1** A joint culture of remembrance cannot and must not be dictated by decree. Given the very different historical experiences, memorial museums should accept the co-existence of different commemorative imperatives that are aimed at pluralistic cultures of remembrance. Institutions should be designed for cooperation instead of encouraging competition which can create a struggle for dominance. Should this be a practical venture, a joint culture of remembrance could develop gradually out of a multitude of decentralized initiatives.
- 2** A pluralistic culture of remembrance also requires a shared set of positive values. These already exist in the universal declaration of human and civil rights.
- 3** Memorial museums as contemporary history museums are involved mostly in remembering public crimes committed against minorities. This is why current states, governments, and local communities bear a great responsibility to memorial museums and should safeguard their collections and assure them the highest degree of independence from political directives. At the same time the memorial museums have to anchor themselves broadly within civil society and make a special effort to integrate minorities.
- 4** Modern memorial museums are contemporary history museums with a special obligation to humanitarian and civic education. The memorial museums will only be able to assert themselves against political interests and lobbyists if they have achieved a high level of quality work, infrastructure, and personal organization.
- 5** Fundamental decisions in the memorial museums concerning content, education and design should be made mostly on the basis of an open, non-hierarchical pluralistic discussion with survivors, scholars, educators, lobbyists, and committed social groups. The work of memorial museums is principally science based. State-run institutions and private sponsors have to accept this.
- 6** Information conveyed in exhibitions, publications and educational projects about historical events should evoke empathy with the victims as individual humans and groups which were specifically targeted for persecution. Interpretation should avoid commemoration in the form of revenge, hate and resentments between different groups of victims.
- 7** Historical experiences have to be integrated into historical contexts without minimizing the personal suffering of individuals. The integration of historical events should

take place on the level of modern contemporary historical research and honor the scholarly principles of discourse and multiple perspectives.

**8** The perspective of the perpetrators who committed the crimes has to be addressed. The perpetrators should not be demonized, but rather their ideology, aims and motives should be used to explain their actions. This includes the institutional and social mechanism as well as the individual biographies of perpetrators. The ability to question one's own perspective also takes into account the inclusion of one's own crimes and self-images into the presentation of the "other." The broad and very diverse group of bystanders should be handled in the same manner.

**9** Memorial museums located at historically authentic sites where crimes were committed provide an immense opportunity for conducting historical and civic education, but there are also big risks involved. This is why memorial museums need to orient their educational work less towards an agreement about the content and more towards universal principles. These demand that the visitors are not overwhelmed or indoctrinated, that the subjective view of individuals be respected, and that controversial subjects be treated as controversial.

**10** Memorial museums as contemporary history museums are always engaged in self-criticism of their own history, and have to embed it in a history of their respective remembrance culture. Cognizant of current trends of thinking, they should gear their presentations towards current interpretations of the past, while being anchored to the actual historical events.

1 Das Vermächtnis der Überlebenden ist in verschiedenen Sprachen zu finden unter anderem im Internet auf der Homepage »gedenkstaettenforum.de«, der Internet-Seite des Internationalen Auschwitz-Komitees sowie zahlreicher Gedenkstätten.