

HOLOCAUST TASK FORCE CALLS FOR CONCRETE STEPS TO OPEN THE HOLOCAUST ERA ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE IN BAD AROlsen, GERMANY

TRIESTE, ITALY, December 16, 2004

At their plenary meeting in Trieste on December 16, 2004, the member countries of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research called for immediate steps to be taken to inform the public about the Holocaust related archives of the International Tracing Service (ITS) of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and to open the archives for research.

In June 2004, the Task Force commended the ITS and the ICRC for the commitment they made in Jerusalem to open the archives by the end of this year. Since that time, however, the initiative to open the records in timely fashion at the ITS headquarters has failed. In addition, the delegation of Task Force member countries that traveled to Bad Arolsen in October was refused access to inventories and was unable to obtain responses to any of its inquiries regarding the content and organization of the archives or the archives digitisation project undertaken several years ago.

Based on their commitment to the Stockholm Declaration of 2000, which calls for open research access to all archival records relating to the Holocaust, the Task Force calls on the ITS and the ICRC to immediately release information regarding the content of the ITS archives, specifically:

- A complete list of all the archival collections reposing at ITS, including both the original deposits made in the 1950s and the annual accessions of new documents assembled by ITS since 1955.
- Descriptions of the organizational units in which documents are held, the approximate amount of documentary material in each unit, and a description of the finding aids, shelf lists, guides, etc. that exists for each unit.
- Information on the archival materials that have already been digitised or are already in microfilm or microfiche form, including a detailed list showing the name/designation of every archival collection, including the central card file, that has been digitised or duplicated.

The Task Force also calls for immediate research access to the holdings of the ITS archives to be made available via the deposit of digitised or microform copies of the archives at major international centers of Holocaust research, where access to the documentation could be provided in accordance with the relevant national laws and archival practices of the country where each such center is located.

The Task Force calls on countries represented on the International Commission of the ITS to support and facilitate achievement of these goals.

Further information on this issue is available from the Chairman of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research or from Task Force member delegations.

(Link to Task Force Chair)