

H. Res. 854

In the House of Representatives, U. S.,

March 11, 2008.

Whereas for the past 62 years, until their ultimate release on November 28, 2007, the International Tracing Service (“ITS”) archives located in Bad Arolsen, Germany remained the largest closed Holocaust-era archives in the world;

Whereas while Holocaust survivors and their descendants have had limited access to individual records at Bad Arolsen, reports suggest that they faced long delays, incomplete information, and even unresponsiveness;

Whereas until the archives’ recent release, the materials remained inaccessible to researchers and research institutions;

Whereas the 1955 Bonn Accords established an International Commission of 11 member countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom, the United States) responsible for overseeing the administration of the ITS Holocaust archives which contain 17,500,000 individual names and 50,000,000 documents;

Whereas the new International Committee of the Red Cross (“ICRC”) and the Director of the ITS, who is an ICRC

employee, oversee the daily operations of the ITS and report to the Commission at its annual meetings;

Whereas the new ICRC leadership at the ITS should be commended for their commitment to providing expedited and comprehensive responses to Holocaust survivor requests for information, and for their efforts to complete the digitization of all archives as soon as possible;

Whereas since the inception of the ITS, the German government has financed its operations;

Whereas beginning in the late 1990s, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (“Holocaust Museum”), Holocaust survivor organizations, and others began exerting pressure on International Commission members to allow unfettered access to the ITS archives;

Whereas following years of delay, in May 2006 in Luxembourg, the International Commission of the ITS agreed upon amendments to the Bonn Accords which would grant researchers access to the archives and would allow each Commission member country to receive a digitized copy of the archives and make the copy available to researchers under their own country’s respective archival and privacy laws and practices;

Whereas the first 3 Commission member countries to ratify the amendments to the Bonn Accords were the United States, Israel, and Poland, all 3 home to hundreds of thousands of survivors of Nazi brutality;

Whereas the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has worked to ensure the timely release of the Bad Arolsen archives to survivors, researchers, and the public;

Whereas the United States Department of State engaged in diplomatic efforts with other Commission member countries to provide open access to the archives;

Whereas the United States House of Representatives unanimously passed H. Res. 240 on April 25, 2007 and the United States Senate passed S. Res. 141 on May 1, 2007, urging all member countries of the International Commission of the ITS who have yet to ratify the May 2006 Amendments to the 1955 Bonn Accords Treaty, to expedite the ratification process to allow for open access to the Holocaust archives located at Bad Arolsen, Germany;

Whereas on May 15, 2007, the International Commission voted in favor of a United States proposal to allow a transfer of a digital copy of archived materials to any of the 11 member States that have adopted the May 2006 amendments to the Bonn Accords; thereafter, transfer of materials to both the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Israel, was initiated;

Whereas while it is not possible to provide meaningful compensation to Holocaust survivors for the pain, suffering and loss of life they have experienced, it is a moral and justifiable imperative for Holocaust survivors and their families to be offered expedited open access to these archives;

Whereas with respect to the release of the materials, time is of the essence in order for Holocaust researchers to access the archives while Holocaust survivor eyewitnesses to the horrific atrocities of Nazi Germany are still alive;

Whereas opening the historic record is a vital contribution to the world's collective memory and understanding of the Holocaust and to ensure that unchecked anti-Semitism and complete disrespect for the value of human life, including the crimes committed against non-Jewish victims which made such horrors possible, is never again permitted to take hold;

Whereas despite overwhelming international recognition of the unconscionable horrors of the Holocaust and its devastating impact on World Jewry, there has been a sharp increase in global anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial in recent years; and

Whereas it is critical that the international community continue to heed the lessons of the Holocaust, one of the darkest periods in the history of humankind, and take immediate and decisive measures to combat the scourge of anti-Semitism: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its appreciation to all countries that ratified the amendments to the Bonn Accords allowing for open access to the Holocaust Archives located in Bad Arolsen, Germany;

(2) congratulates the dedication, commitment, and collaborative efforts of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Department of State, and the International Committee of the Red Cross to open the archives;

(3) encourages the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the International Committee of the

Red Cross to act with all possible urgency to create appropriate conditions to ensure survivors, their families, and researchers have direct access to the archives, and are offered effective assistance in navigating and interpreting these archives;

(4) remembers and pays tribute to the murder of 6,000,000 innocent Jews and more than 5,000,000 other innocent victims during the Holocaust committed by Nazi perpetrators and their collaborators; and

(5) must remain vigilant in combating global anti-Semitism, intolerance, and bigotry.

Attest:

Clerk.