



Botschaft
der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
Washington

FU 2007 DE

Washington, February 5, 2007

Klaus Scharioth

Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany

Ms. Esther Toporek Finder
President
The Generation After, Inc.
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Ms. Toporek Finder,

Thank you so much for your letter concerning the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen.

I couldn't agree more with you: It is very important that the access to the data of the archives in Bad Arolsen is made easier and faster for survivors and scholars of the Holocaust.

That is why I have made it one of my priorities as Ambassador to the United States to do everything possible to speed up this process. In this we are working very closely together with the Department of State and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. I am happy that - after years of much too slow negotiations - we achieved a breakthrough last summer, making it possible for each member state of the International Tracing Service to attain a digitalized copy of the data, accessible for survivors and scholars under the relevant data protection laws of each individual country.

The process of ratification is already well underway. After the last countries have signed the change of the relevant treaties in the past weeks (Germany was among the first to sign last summer), we were able to start the ratification process this week. We are optimistic that we will be able to complete this process in the first half of 2007, the fastest track possible under German law for international treaties.

This "fast-track-approach" is in the tradition of Germany's well established policy of making publicly accessible the files and data concerning the Holocaust and dictatorship of the NSDAP. Virtually all public archives concerning this period are accessible, including, among others, the files of the "Berlin Document Center", with its records of memberships in the NSDAP, the SS, and the SA.

In the meantime, it is important for survivors and their families to know that the archive is already open for the inquiries. According to the information provided by the ITS, new inquiries can usually expect an answer within eight weeks. I'll attach more detailed information provided by the ITS itself.

Germany works closely together with the International Red Cross and the other ten member countries of the International Tracing Service as well as with survivors, scholars and the relevant institutions to speed up the digitalization of the files and to make access as fast and easy as possible. My embassy is in constant contact with the experts in the Administration and the Holocaust Museum in Washington, because we understand how important a timely solution of this problem is for survivors of the Holocaust and their families.

Every file in the Bad Arolsen bears witness to the fate of those who were murdered. We remain committed to make these witnesses heard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Klaus Hoyer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.