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Platform draws attention to large mass grave of victims of totalitarianism in Prague

Press release

Prague, 23 February 2015. With the approaching 70th anniversary of the end of WWII, the Platform of European Memory and Conscience called on the Czech Prime Minister to urgently attend the issue of a mass grave in Prague containing the remains of victims of Nazism and Communism, including fighters of the resistance and children. The grave should be opened, the remains identified and given a dignified burial, the crimes investigated and the site declared a national memorial. The Prime Minister has responded.

On 10 December 2014, the Human Rights Day, the Platform together with its Czech Member organisations sent a letter to Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka asking for special attention to the site at the cemetery in Prague-Ďáblice where the remains of at least 2,800 people are buried in a mass grave. Among them are members of the anti-Nazi and anti-Communist resistance and victims tortured to death or executed by the Nazis and the Communists between 1943-1961. The people were buried in 70 pits containing 40 coffins each, stacked in four layers, some coffins containing multiple bodies.

According to records, at least 100 executed political prisoners of Communism and 90 victims who died in Communist prisons are buried here. The grave most likely contains the remains of the heroes of WWII resistance who carried out the assassination attack on Reinhard Heydrich. Dozens of babies of female political prisoners of Communism are also among the victims.

"It is hard to imagine that not only the opponents of Communism, but that even the Czechoslovak fighters who assassinated Heydrich – perhaps the bravest resistance act of WWII – are lying today in a mass grave. Everywhere in Europe, we need to establish an honest culture of memory. It should be a priority for all of us to respect and honour those who resisted totalitarianism and paid with their lives for the ideals of freedom and democracy," says Platform President Göran Lindblad.

The Prime Minister has responded and the police have started investigations. The Platform will continue to work on the issue.

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The Platform of European Memory and Conscience brings together 48 public and private institutions and organisations from 13 EU Member States, Ukraine, Moldova, Iceland, Canada and the USA working in the field of coming to terms with the legacy of totalitarianism on European soil. We represent about 200,000 Europeans and over 1,100,000 North American citizens with European roots.

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