



General Settlement Fund

09 Sep 2004

The 9th session of the Claims Committee of the General Settlement Fund has been taking place since 7 September 2004.

Chaired by Sir Franklin Berman, since 2001 Rules of Procedure and, in particular, guidelines for case processing have been issued in order to guarantee an expeditious processing of the applications. An agreement could also be concluded with the ICHEIC (International Commission of Holocaust Era Insurance Claims), which enables the transfer of applications for insurance claims that had been filed with other organizations in error.

In this week's session, Prof. Rosenstock, the Committee Member appointed by the US government was discharged as he is retiring. He will receive the Great Golden Medal of Honor for Services to the Republic of Austria. His successor on the Claims Committee will be Prof. Vivian Curran, Professor of Comparative Law at the University of Pittsburgh.

The Claims Committee reached an important milestone in the fulfilment of the tasks of the General Settlement Fund during this session by commencing its decisions on the individual applications. Several hundred applications have been decided in this initial phase, and the Claims Committee expects to be able to expedite the progress of its work.

In this regard the General Settlement Fund will take special care to ensure that the applications of the oldest applicants are dealt with as swiftly as possibly.

However, it will not be possible to make any payments until all of the applications have been examined and decided on. This necessarily results from the overall structure of the compensation agreement concluded by the governments of the Republic of Austria and the United States of America.

The General Settlement Fund will be endowed with a total sum of 210 million US Dollars, which will be made available at the latest 30 days after the dismissal of the two class action lawsuits still pending in the USA.

In September of this year the General Settlement Fund will employ an additional 22 staff and move into the new office space for the General Settlement Fund and the National Fund, and a central archive will be established for both Funds. This will lead to a further increase in the speed of the application processing.

In total, 23 legal staffers are now processing the 20,000 applications received by the Fund. A team of 12 historians and 15 additional freelancers are carrying out research for these applications in order to be able to substantiate the applicants' losses with the relevant documentation. These applications contain up to ten different individual claims of the same aggrieved person.

The Claims Committee of the General Settlement Fund is comprised of the following Members:

Chairman: Sir Franklin Berman, KCMG QC

Hofrat Dr. Kurt Hofmann, Vice President of the Supreme Court i.R. Prof. Robert Rosenstock (retired)

Prof. Dr. Vivian Curran (soon to be appointed)

Secretary General: Mag. Hannah M. Lessing