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Provisional edition

Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing

Resolution 1522 (2006)¹

1. During the recent history of Europe, millions of people have been forcibly expelled, transferred or exchanged by reason of their ethnicity or political and religious beliefs, as a result of the delimitation of new state borders or to solve the question of ethnic minorities or, again, on the basis of deliberate policies of ethnic cleansing. Mass deportations have been used to punish some national, ethnic or social groups for their imputed political opinion and hundreds of thousands of people have felt compelled to leave their homeland for fear of being persecuted by oppressive regimes or within new state borders.
2. In the first half of the twentieth century, forced migration was a collective European experience. 60 to 80 Million Europeans were forced to leave their homeland, many of them never to return again. In Central and Eastern Europe hardly any nation or region was exempted from this tragedy. In recent years millions of people have been forcibly displaced in the Balkans and the Caucasus due to conflicts in these regions.
3. For a long time in history, the international community has acquiesced in and sometimes even encouraged population displacements and transfers as a means to bring durable peace to a region. Nowadays, deportation and forced population transfers could, under the statutes of a number of international tribunals, including the International Criminal Court, be

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prosecuted as crimes against humanity. In addition, it is widely recognized that they entail numerous and serious human rights violations.

4. As these crimes imply numerous and serious human rights violations they do not only concern the populations who had to endure them but all the peoples of Europe. Therefore it is the task of the Council of Europe, as a pan-European organisation with the aim of achieving a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage, to commemorate the victims of such acts to ensure that history is not repeated.

5. To this end, the Council of Europe member states should establish a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing to remind Europeans of their history of forced migration, to favour reconciliation, to act as an instrument of conflict prevention and to sensitize public opinion to the personal tragedy of individuals who, as part of a group, had to leave the countries or regions where they were settled due to fear of persecution or because they were physically removed.

6. A European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing should have some physical premises, however small, to be better perceived as a symbol of a common collective European memory. This centre will be principally aiming at educating young generations by teaching and promoting a common European memory in order to overcome the divisions of the past and contribute to a Europe where cultural and religious differences are seen as a benefit and not as a threat.

7. The Assembly, therefore, recommends that the Council of Europe member states:

7.1 take action for the establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing (herewith 'the Centre'), under the auspices of the Council of Europe, according to the following guidelines:

7.1.1. the aims of the Centre should be to:

7.1.1.1. favour reconciliation by promoting impartial studies of history and contributing to the creation of a common European memory, overcoming the divisions of the past;

7.1.1.2. act as an instrument of conflict prevention by promoting the respect of human rights and the rights of persons belonging to national minorities; and

7.1.1.3. combat racism and xenophobia by sensitizing European public opinion to the human and human rights aspects of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing, in co-operation with the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI);

7.1.2. the mandate should cover forced movements of populations or groups, including those connected with policies or practices of ethnic cleansing which affected, affect or will affect the geographical area of the Council of Europe member states, with a particular focus on the 20th Century, whether they take place within the borders of one state or between two or more states. Due to its unique character, the mandate should not cover the deportation of Jews during the Second World War; the numerous initiatives as well as the various centres established to commemorate the victims of the Shoah should however be used as valuable sources of inspiration for the creation and activities of the Centre to be established;

7.1.3. the functions should include, amongst others:

7.1.3.1. conducting or promoting research on the history of forced population movements as well as on relevant international and human rights law;

7.1.3.2. supporting the elaboration of educational materials for history teaching;

7.1.3.3. acting as a permanent forum of public and academic analysis and discussion, with the purpose of applying the lessons of the past to meeting the challenges of today and of the future;

7.1.3.4. organising conferences, seminars, exhibitions and other events; and

7.1.3.5. funding and supporting cross-border NGO initiatives in this field;

7.1.4. the Centre should not be concerned with the issue of compensation for the loss of property resulting from forced population movements;

7.2. as a legal basis for the establishment of the Centre and in order to assure funding outside the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe, consider drawing up an Agreement or a Partial Agreement, as set out in Statutory Resolution (93)28 of the Committee of Ministers, open to signature by member states, with a view to its implementation on the occasion of the Council of Europe's 60th Anniversary;

7.3. develop activities in this field and set up appropriate national centres, only under the auspices of the Council of Europe;

7.4. use the Council of Europe as a catalyst and co-ordinator for the creation of a Centre and use the Council of Europe to foster a European network so as to enhance European co-operation in this field.

¹*Assembly debate* on 5 October 2006 (30th Sitting) (see [Doc.10925](#)rev, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, rapporteur: Mr Mats Einarsson). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 5 October 2006 (30th Sitting).