

Berlin, 27 April 2022

Statement of the Museum Berlin-Karlshorst

We once again strongly condemn the Russian Federation's war of aggression against sovereign Ukraine, which is contrary to international law and is being waged with numerous crimes against the civilian population. Our compassion and our support goes out to the people affected by the war. That is why we stand in solidarity with all those who are raising their voices against this war, both in Russia and around the world.

Our museum is the only one where former enemies in war commemorate the Second World War together in a continuous dialogue. It is the central place of remembrance to address the German war of annihilation against the Soviet Union. At enormous sacrifice, men and women from the Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Jewish and many other population groups of the Soviet Union fought for victory over National Socialist Germany - together with their British and US allies. This victory was sealed with the surrender of the Wehrmacht in Berlin-Karlshorst on the 8th of May 1945.

The German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, which followed the already criminal warfare and occupation policy in Poland, marked an enormous expansion of German mass crimes. Furthermore, it enabled the transition to the systematic murder of the Jewish population throughout Europe. Never before had there been wartime atrocities and crimes against humanity on such a scale. One of the central tasks of our museum is to remember the victims of the German war of annihilation against the Soviet Union and to classify the German mass crimes on the basis of historical scientific knowledge. This historical-political educational work is of great importance in view of the current situation, as we must take note how the history of the Second World War is being instrumentalised by the Russian Federation to legitimize the current war. We continue to advocate a historical analysis that looks at the events of the past in a scientifically sound, differentiated way and in dialogue. Only in this way can we do justice to our responsibility.

Our museum was founded in 1994 jointly by the Federal Republic of Germany and the Russian Federation in the legal form of an association. The national World War II museums of Ukraine and Belarus joined as members in 1997/98. We would like to emphasize this diversity. Almost 30 years of continuous cooperation with our Eastern European colleagues have made our museum a forum for very different perspectives on our common history. In view of the current war situation, however, it is unclear whether and how we will be able to build on this in the future. The recognition of principles of international law such as state sovereignty and territorial integrity must be the basis of future cooperation.

For a long time now, we have been discussing our name as the "German-Russian Museum". Because this name, although historically grown, does not adequately reflect our actual work. We remember all Soviet victims of the German war of extermination, regardless of their nationality. In future we will use our name "Museum Berlin-Karlshorst", which is registered in the official public records.

The Museum Berlin-Karlshorst with its multinational sponsorship stands in a tradition of dialogue. However, in view of the war of aggression against Ukraine, we do not wish to celebrate 8 May this year with state representatives of the Russian Federation and Belarus. But also in the future it is very important to us to remain in exchange with all people who lived in the Soviet Union as well as their descendants and to remember together with them the end of the war in Europe and to commemorate the 27 million Soviet victims.

The team of the Museum Berlin-Karlshorst