

Descendants of Holocaust Survivors Excluded for Defending the Universal Legacy of Mauthausen concentration camp

How descendants of Holocaust survivors were censored and an Austrian civil society organization was excluded from future Mauthausen commemorations after invoking the universal legacy of the concentration camp's survivors.

Overview of the events

On 16 May 1945, just eleven days after the liberation of the Mauthausen concentration camp, the survivors of the camp pledged to "create a new world that is free and just for all." Their declaration became known as the Mauthausen Oath.

Eighty-one years later, on 10 May 2026, descendants of Holocaust survivors returned to Mauthausen, convinced that this promise remains as binding today as it was in 1945.

Among them was Professor Haim Bresheeth-Žabner, the son of Arie Leib Žabner, a survivor of Auschwitz, Mauthausen, and Gusen II a notorious subcamp of Mauthausen. Together with descendants of Jewish resistance fighters, Austrian Jews whose families had been expelled by the Nazi regime, and a Palestinian participant, he attended the International Liberation Ceremony as part of the delegation of Solidarwerkstatt Österreich. The delegation carried a Palestinian flag, while Professor Bresheeth-Žabner wore a Palestinian keffiyeh as an expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people and of his commitment to the universal principles of the Mauthausen Oath.

Even before the commemorative ceremony began, Professor Bresheeth-Žabner was removed from the view of the television cameras after putting on the keffiyeh. At that moment, the event was being broadcast live on ORF III - a channel of Austria's public broadcaster.

Later, members of the Solidarwerkstatt delegation were stopped on their way to the historic roll-call square by Willi Mernyi, Chair of the Mauthausen Committee Austria (Mauthausen Komitee Österreich, MKÖ). Mernyi told the delegation that carrying a Palestinian flag violated the Committee's site regulations and would dishonour the memory of the concentration camp survivors. He warned that, unless the flag was put away, he would call the police to remove the delegation. The delegation nevertheless insisted on carrying the flag into the former concentration camp, accepting the threatened consequences. After a prolonged standoff, Willy Mernyi ultimately allowed them to proceed, and the delegation entered the memorial grounds peacefully with the flag. But the incident did not end there.

Three weeks later, the Mauthausen Committee Austria officially excluded Solidarwerkstatt Österreich from all future International Liberation Ceremonies because of the conduct of its delegation.

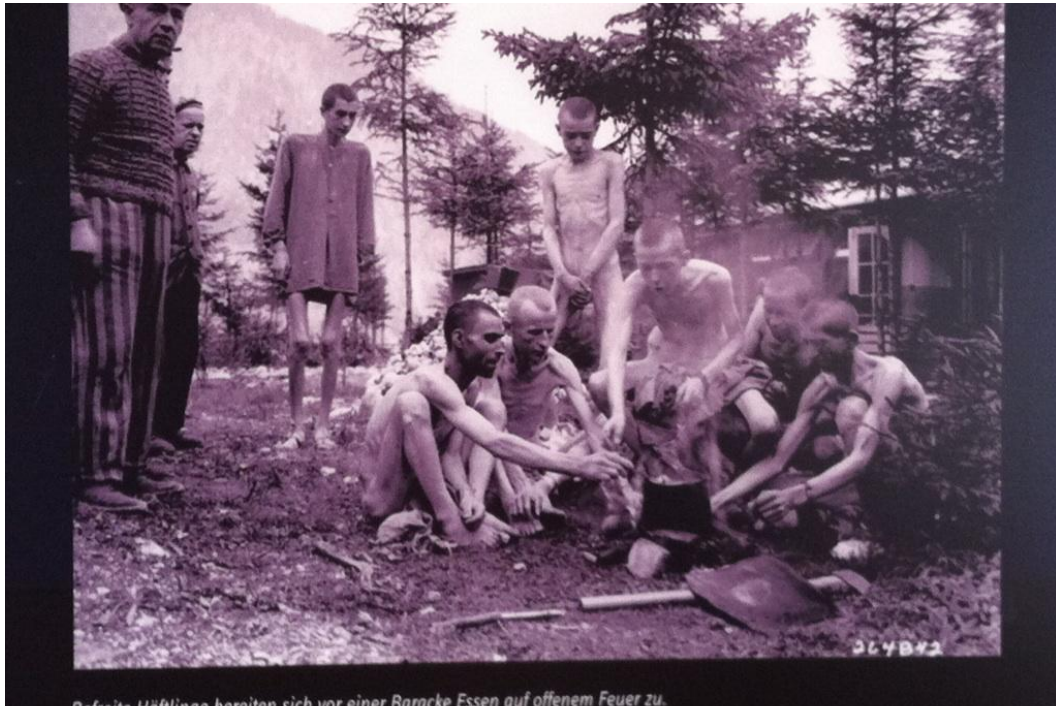
In response, Solidarwerkstatt published an open letter firmly rejecting the Committee's allegations. Professor Haim Bresheeth-Žabner also addressed an open letter to the Committee, accusing it of betraying the universal principles of the Mauthausen Oath.

Background and Chronology

In Memory of Arie Leib Žabner

Arie Leib Žabner survived Auschwitz, Mauthausen, and Gusen II. In January 1945, he was forced on a death march. Upon arriving at Mauthausen, he was transferred to the Gusen II subcamp. He was liberated on **8 May 1945** in Ebensee.

A photograph taken by the **U.S. Army Signal Corps** on the day of liberation shows him alongside other survivors. For many years, this image was displayed at the entrance to the permanent exhibition at the **Mauthausen Memorial**.



Arie Leib Žabner (second from left) with fellow survivors around a campfire following the liberation of Ebensee concentration camp, 8 May 1945.

For Arie Leib Žabner, the Mauthausen Oath was a deeply personal commitment.

After arriving in Israel in 1948, he refused compulsory military service on pacifist grounds. As a result, he was imprisoned before eventually agreeing to serve exclusively as an unarmed military medic.

His son, **Professor Haim Bresheeth-Žabner**, attended the 2026 International Liberation Ceremony at Mauthausen as a guest of honour, in memory of his father and in the conviction that the universal principles proclaimed in the Mauthausen Oath remain just as relevant today as they were in 1945.

The International Liberation Ceremony

On **10 May 2026**, around **15,000 people from across the world** gathered at the **Mauthausen Memorial** to commemorate the victims and survivors of the Nazi concentration camp.

The delegation of **Solidarwerkstatt Österreich** included **Professor Haim Bresheeth-Žabner**, **Ernst Wolrab**, the grandson of a Jewish resistance fighter murdered in the Groß-Rosen concentration camp, **Dalia Sarig**, whose family was persecuted and expelled by the Nazi regime, and **Roba Darwish**, whose family, as Palestinians, lives under Israeli military occupation in the West Bank.

Professor Haim Bresheeth-Žabner attended the Liberation Ceremony as a **guest of honour**. He had been invited as the son of **Arie Leib Žabner**, a survivor of the Mauthausen and Gusen II concentration camps.

Before the official commemorative ceremony began, Professor Bresheeth-Žabner put on a Palestinian **keffiyeh**. For him, it was an expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people and of his conviction that the universal principles proclaimed in the **Mauthausen Oath** apply to all people.

As the ceremony was being broadcast live on **ORF III**, the cultural and public affairs channel of Austria's public broadcaster, staff members of the **Mauthausen Committee Austria** escorted Professor Bresheeth-Žabner out of the television cameras' field of view. One staff member was heard telling a cameraman:

"The keffiyeh must not be shown."

Threat of Police Intervention Over Carrying a Palestinian Flag



Roba Darwish and Professor Haim Bresheeth-Žabner paying tribute to the victims.

During the commemorative ceremony, Professor Haim Bresheeth-Žabner joined the delegation of Solidarwerkstatt Österreich as it took part in the international procession to the historic roll-call square.

Together, they carried a **Palestinian flag** as an expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people and of their conviction that the universal principles proclaimed in the **Mauthausen Oath** apply to all people.

Shortly before reaching the roll-call square, the delegation was stopped by **Willi Mernyi, Chair of the Mauthausen Committee Austria (MKÖ)**.

Mernyi stated that carrying the Palestinian flag violated the rules governing the Liberation Ceremony and instructed the delegation to put the flag away. He warned that if they refused to comply, he would call the police.

The delegation declined to do so. They maintained that the Palestinian flag is the symbol of a people and that their peaceful act of remembrance in no way undermined the dignity or purpose of the Liberation Ceremony.

After a lengthy discussion, the delegation continued its procession and entered the historic roll-call square carrying the Palestinian flag.

Exclusion of Solidarwerkstatt Österreich

On **3 June 2026**, less than one month after the International Liberation Ceremony, the **Mauthausen Committee Austria (MKÖ)** informed **Solidarwerkstatt Österreich** that it would no longer be welcome at future International Liberation Ceremonies.

The Committee justified its decision by stating that the delegation had violated the rules governing the commemorative event by carrying a **Palestinian flag** onto the historic roll-call square.

In its letter, the Committee further described the Palestinian flag as "**disrespectful**," "**inappropriate**," and "**a deliberate provocation**." It argued that the official commemoration should not be used to draw attention to what it called "**highly controversial current conflicts**."

Notably, the Committee also stated that, following the delegation's entry with the Palestinian flag, it had come under considerable pressure and faced extensive criticism from the **Jewish Community of Vienna (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien – IKG)** and several other organizations.

For the members of the delegation, however, the exclusion of Solidarwerkstatt represented far more than a response to an alleged breach of the event's regulations. In their view, it meant that one of Austria's oldest anti-fascist organizations had been excluded because its delegation insisted that the promise of "**Never Again**" must also apply to the Palestinian people.

The full text of the Mauthausen Committee's letter is reproduced in the appendix.

In response, **Solidarwerkstatt Österreich** published an open letter firmly rejecting the Committee's allegations.

The organization argued that carrying Palestinian symbols at Mauthausen was not an act of provocation but an expression of the universal principles proclaimed in the **Mauthausen Oath**.

It further stated that accepting a ban on Palestinian symbols would mean participating in an attempt to erase the Palestinian people, their identity, and their national symbols from the public sphere.

Solidarwerkstatt also rejected the Committee's position that the Liberation Ceremony should not address present-day conflicts. It argued that the **Mauthausen Oath** is not merely a remembrance of past crimes but a commitment to preventing comparable crimes in the present.

For this reason, the organization wrote, it is contrary to the spirit of the Oath to commemorate the victims of National Socialism while remaining silent about atrocities taking place today.

The letter concludes by announcing that Solidarwerkstatt intends to return to the International Liberation Ceremony in **2027**, together with Jewish and Palestinian participants—not as an act of provocation, but out of a sense of responsibility toward the legacy of Mauthausen.

The full text of Solidarwerkstatt's response is included in the appendix.

"They Can No Longer Speak – But I Can."

Following the exchange of letters between the **Mauthausen Committee Austria** and **Solidarwerkstatt Österreich**, **Professor Haim Bresheeth-Žabner** addressed an open letter to the Committee.

As the son of a survivor of **Mauthausen and Gusen II**, he recalls his father's imprisonment, the murder of most of his family during the Holocaust, and the lifelong significance that the **Mauthausen Oath** held for his father.

In his letter, Bresheeth-Žabner argues that the Mauthausen Oath is a universal commitment to freedom, justice, and international solidarity that cannot be separated from present-day atrocities. He condemns the decision to suppress peaceful expressions of solidarity with the Palestinian people during the Liberation Ceremony, describing it as a betrayal of the principles proclaimed by the survivors in 1945.

He also recounts that he was prevented from laying flowers in memory of his father and asks why descendants of Holocaust survivors were treated as a threat when they had come solely to honour the victims of National Socialism in a peaceful manner.

In the concluding section of his letter, Bresheeth-Žabner argues that the Committee's conduct was itself antisemitic because, it treated all Jews as supporters of the genocide in Gaza, rather than recognizing the diversity of Jewish political and moral convictions. He rejects any equation of Jewish identity with support for Israel's actions in Gaza and argues that such collective attribution constitutes a form of antisemitism.

His letter concludes with a powerful appeal to uphold the universal promise of the **Mauthausen Oath** and to ensure that "**Never Again**" truly applies to all people.

The full text of Professor Haim Bresheeth-Žabner's open letter is reproduced in the appendix.

The Promise

For the **Mauthausen Committee Austria**, the Palestinian flag was incompatible with the official Liberation Ceremony.

For the members of the **Solidarwerkstatt Österreich** delegation, however, it symbolized the very universal principles proclaimed in the **Mauthausen Oath**: freedom, justice, and international solidarity for all peoples.

For **Professor Haim Bresheeth-Žabner**, the son of a survivor of Auschwitz, Mauthausen, and Gusen II, the Mauthausen Oath is a moral commitment that cannot end where present-day injustice begins.

The events at Mauthausen therefore raise a fundamental question for all institutions dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust:

Do the universal principles proclaimed by the survivors in 1945 still apply without exception today?

The survivors had pledged to:

- eradicate **Nazism and fascism** in all their forms,
- build **a new world based on freedom, justice, peace, and international solidarity**,
- ensure that the crimes they had experienced would **never happen again**.

They concluded the Mauthausen Oath with an appeal that remains as urgent today as it was eighty-one years ago:

**"We appeal to the whole world: Help us in this task!
Long live international solidarity!
Long live freedom!"**

Appendix A

The Mauthausen Oath

Official English Translation, 16 May 1945

16 May 1945

"The gates to one of the worst and most bloody concentration camps are being opened: those of Mauthausen. We are about to return to our countries that have been liberated from Fascism, which had spread itself in every direction. The liberated prisoners, just as long ago as yesterday, menaced with death by the hands of the executioner of the Nazi beast, give thanks, from the bottom of their hearts for the liberation made possible by the victorious allied nations, and greet people of every nation with the cry of freedom attained once again.

The permanence in the camp, lasting years, has reinforced in our minds the knowledge of the value of brotherhood among the people of all nations. True to these ideals, we make a solemn oath to continue to fight, firm and united, against imperialism and against the instigation of hatred between peoples. Just as the common effort of all of the peoples of the world was able to liberate us from the menace of the prepotency of Hitler, we must consider the liberty obtained with struggle as a common source for every people.

Peace and freedom are the only guarantees for the happiness of people of every nation, and the reconstruction of the world on a new basis of social and national justice is the only way towards the pacific collaboration between states and peoples. After having obtained our coveted freedom and after our nations have obtained freedom with armed struggle, we wish to conserve the international solidarity of the camp in our memories and to derive from it the necessary lessons; follow a common path; the one of freedom – indispensable for every population, of reciprocal respect, of collaboration in the great work of constructing a new world that is free and just for all. We will forever remember the many terrible sacrifices that the conquest of this new world has cost for every nation.

In memory of the blood shed by all peoples, in memory of the millions of brothers assassinated by Nazi-Fascism, we solemnly swear to never abandon this path. We want to erect the most beautiful monument that one could dedicate to the soldiers who have fallen for the cause of freedom of the international community on a secure basis:

A WORLD OF FREE MEN!

We direct ourselves to the entire world, shouting: help us in this work!

Long live international solidarity!

Long live freedom!

Appendix B

Letter from the Mauthausen Committee Austria to Solidarwerkstatt Österreich followed by the translation into English



Herr Andreas Schütz BA Vorsitzender
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office@solidarwerkstatt.at

Wien, 3. Juni 2026

Sehr geehrter Vorsitzender! Sehr geehrte Kolleginnen und Kollegen!

Während der diesjährigen Internationalen Befreiungsfeier in der KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen wurde unser Vorsitzender Willi Mernyi darüber informiert, dass sich Ihre Gruppe mit einer Palästina-Fahne in der Aufstellung vor dem Appellplatz eingefunden hat.

Willi Mernyi hat daraufhin das Gespräch mit Ihrer Gruppe gesucht und darauf hingewiesen, dass es laut Platzordnung untersagt ist, eine Palästina-Fahne mitzutragen. Begründung: Die Befreiungsfeier dient dem würdigen Gedenken an die KZ-Opfer, das nicht für sehr kontroverse aktuelle Konflikte instrumentalisiert und missbraucht werden soll. Gegen eine anderweitige Verwendung der Palästina-Fahne gibt es vom Mauthausen Komitee natürlich keinen Einwand.

Im Gespräch wurde Willi Mernyi mitgeteilt, dass die Platzordnung nicht bekannt sei. Daraufhin schlug er dem Sprecher Ihrer Gruppe (Person auf dem Foto ganz links) vor, die Palästina-Fahne bis zum Tor zu tragen, jedoch nicht auf den Appellplatz. Unserer Geschäftsführerin Christa Bauer und unserem Vorsitzenden Willi Mernyi wurde dies von Ihrer Seite ausdrücklich zugesagt, sogar mit Handschlag zwischen Ihrem Sprecher und Mernyi.

In der Folge wurde Willi Mernyi dann aber informiert, dass Sie Ihre ausdrückliche Zusage nicht eingehalten und die Palästina-Fahne auch am Appellplatz mitgetragen haben.

Unser Vorsitzender hat Sie noch einmal darauf hingewiesen, dass dies zu unterlassen ist und dass Sie ihm ein Versprechen gegeben haben. Daraufhin wurde von Ihrem Sprecher gesagt, das sei egal, er selbst trage die Fahne ja nicht.

Zusammengefasst heißt das: Ihre Gruppe hat sich nicht an die Platzordnung des Veranstalters (Mauthausen Komitee Österreich, Comité International de Mauthausen) gehalten. Und Sie haben ein dem Veranstalter gegebenes Versprechen bewusst gebrochen.

Aufgrund Ihres Einzugs mit der Palästina-Fahne hatten wir eine Fülle von Diskussionen mit der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde und anderen Organisationen, die dieses Verhalten während des Gedenkens an die KZ-Opfer ebenso wie wir als pietätlos, unpassend und als gezielte Provokation empfunden haben.

Wer an einer Kundgebung teilnimmt, hat die Regeln des Veranstalters zu befolgen. Wer ein Versprechen gibt, hat es einzuhalten.

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In Anbetracht dessen, dass Sie unsere Regeln missachtet und Ihr Wort gebrochen haben, haben wir beschlossen, die Solidarwerkstatt von kommenden Befreiungsfeiern bis auf Weiteres auszuladen. Sie sind wegen Ihres geschilderten Verhaltens bei den Befreiungsfeiern nicht willkommen und wir fordern Sie auf, nicht daran teilzunehmen.

Mit antifaschistischen Grüßen,

Mauthausen Komitee Österreich

Translation into English

Vienna, 3 June 2026

Dear Chair, Dear Colleagues,

During this year's International Liberation Ceremony at the Mauthausen Memorial, our Chair, **Willi Mernyi**, was informed that your group had assembled in the procession leading to the historic roll-call square carrying a **Palestinian flag**.

Mr. Mernyi then approached your group and explained that, under the event regulations, carrying a Palestinian flag was not permitted. The reason given was that the Liberation Ceremony is intended to provide a dignified commemoration of the victims of the concentration camps and should not be instrumentalized or misused to draw attention to highly controversial current conflicts. The Mauthausen Committee has no objection to the Palestinian flag being used in other contexts.

During the conversation, Mr. Mernyi was told that your group had not been aware of the event regulations. He therefore proposed to your spokesperson (the person on the far left in the photograph) that the Palestinian flag could be carried as far as the entrance gate, but not onto the historic roll-call square. According to our Managing Director, **Christa Bauer**, and our Chair, **Willi Mernyi**, this proposal was explicitly accepted by your representative and confirmed with a handshake.

Mr. Mernyi was subsequently informed that, despite this explicit commitment, your group had carried the Palestinian flag onto the roll-call square.

Our Chair again reminded your group that this was not permitted and pointed out that you had given him your word. Your spokesperson reportedly replied that this did not matter because he himself was not carrying the flag.

In summary, your group failed to comply with the event regulations established by the organizers —the **Mauthausen Committee Austria** and the **Comité International de Mauthausen**—and deliberately broke a promise made to the organizers.

As a result of your group's entry carrying the Palestinian flag, we were confronted with extensive discussions and criticism from the **Jewish Community of Vienna (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde – IKG)** and other organizations, all of whom, like ourselves, regarded this conduct during the commemoration of the victims of the concentration camps as **disrespectful, inappropriate, and a deliberate provocation**.

Anyone participating in an event is required to comply with the rules established by its organizers. Anyone who gives their word is expected to keep it.

In view of the fact that your organization disregarded our rules and broke its promise, we have decided to withdraw our invitation to **Solidarwerkstatt Österreich** for future International Liberation Ceremonies until further notice. Because of the conduct described above, your organization is no longer welcome at these commemorations, and we request that you refrain from attending them.

With antifascist greetings,

Mauthausen Committee Austria

Appendix C

Solidarwerkstatt Österreich's Open Response Letter followed by the translation into English

Solidarwerkstatt Österreich

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Linz, im Juni 2026

Mauthausen Komitee Österreich

Obere Donaustraße 97-99/4/5

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Offenes Antwortschreiben zu Eurem Brief vom 3. Juni 2026, mit dem ihr versucht, der Solidarwerkstatt Österreich die weitere Teilnahme an der Internationalen Befreiungsfeier in Mauthausen zu verwehren.

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

werte Kolleginnen und Kollegen.

Hiermit bestätigen wir Euer Schreiben vom 3. Juni 2026 erhalten zu haben und nehmen dazu wie folgt Stellung:

Zunächst zum Sachverhalt: Es gab nie eine, es gibt keine und es wird nie eine Vereinbarung zwischen dem Mauthausen Komitee Österreich und der Solidarwerkstatt Österreich geben, Symbole Palästinas bei der Internationalen Befreiungsfeier nicht mitzutragen oder vor dem Appellplatz zu entfernen. Das würde uns zu Kollaboranten bei den Versuchen machen, die Menschen Palästinas, ihre Symbole, ihr Land zum Verschwinden zu bringen. Daran werden wir niemals mitwirken.

Auch gab es keinen Handschlag zwischen unserem Vorsitzenden, Andreas Schütz, und eurem Vorsitzenden, Willi Mernyi. Richtig ist, dass Willi Mernyi auf unsere Delegation zugegangen war, und auf den jungen Mann, der die Palästinafahne getragen hatte, eingeredet hatte. Er hatte diesen jungen Mann in Dealmakermanier zu einem Handschlag mehr oder weniger genötigt. Dieser Teilnehmer ist nicht Mitglied unserer Organisation und war auch nicht berufen für unsere Delegation zu sprechen. Dieser junge Mann hat dann in weiterer Folge auch die Palästinafahne abgegeben. Wir wissen, wer dieser junge Mann war, werden aber dessen Namen nicht bekanntgeben. Er hat es nicht verdient, jetzt beschämt zu werden und zudem ist es in der Sache selbst völlig bedeutungslos.

In den Gesprächen vor dem Appellplatz wurde immer wieder auf eine Platzordnung verwiesen und kein einziges Mal inhaltlich begründet, warum das Tragen von Symbolen Palästinas unzulässig wäre. Für uns steht fest, die Internationale Gedenkstätte Mauthausen ist nicht irgendein Platz und das Mauthausen Komitee Österreich ist nicht dessen Platzwart. Die Gedenkstätte Mauthausen ist ein Erbe der Menschheit und Österreich ist aufgrund des Staatsvertrags verpflichtet, dieses Erbe würdig zu erhalten und zu verwalten. Jeder Mensch auf dieser Erde hat das Recht, die Gedenkstätte zu besuchen, der Opfer dieser Todesfabrik

auf dieser Erde hat das Recht, die Gedenkstätte zu besuchen, der Opfer dieser Todesfabrik zu gedenken und seine Schlüsse für sein Leben und sein Handeln aus dieser Erfahrung zu ziehen. Klarerweise auch Menschen aus Palästina.

Gerade angesichts der aktuellen Ereignisse in Palästina ist die Mahnung geboten, die Verbrechen des Staates Israel nicht unseren jüdischen Mitmenschen anzulasten. Die Solidarwerkstatt Österreich fühlt sich voll und ganz diesem Auftrag verpflichtet. Deshalb war es für uns eine Ehre heuer in unserer Delegation, einen jüdischen Nachfahren eines Überlebenden des KZ Gusen und Menschen mit palästinensischer Herkunft begrüßen zu dürfen. Gemeinsam haben wir würdig der Opfer der nationalsozialistischen Verbrechen gedacht und gemäß dem Mauthausenschwur unsere Haltung: „Nie wieder gilt für alle Menschen!“ zum Ausdruck gebracht.

Wir denken, dass dies eigentlich auch der Auftrag an das Mauthausenkomitee Österreich ist. Es wäre seine Aufgabe auch offizielle Vertreter Palästinas zur Internationalen Befreiungsfeier in Mauthausen einzuladen. Wie ihr stattdessen zur Denunziation gelangt, unser Auftreten wäre „pietätlos, unpassend und (eine) gezielte Provokation“ gewesen, bleibt uns ein Rätsel.

Eure Feststellung, das würdige Gedenken an die KZ-Opfer, dürfe nicht „für sehr kontroverielle aktuelle Konflikte instrumentalisiert und missbraucht werden“ ist zum einen kontrafaktisch – es wird alljährlich bei der Befreiungsfeier auf aktuelle „Konflikte“, welche ein Euphemismus!, verwiesen - zum anderen steht sie in völligem Widerspruch zum Mauthausenschwur. Das Gedenken an die Opfer der Verbrechen in Mauthausen findet in der Mahnung, derartige Verbrechen NIE WIEDER geschehen zu lassen, seinen tiefen Sinn.

Abschließend stellen wir fest, dass wir auch 2027 gemeinsam mit unseren jüdischen und palästinensischen Geschwistern an der Internationalen Befreiungsfeier in Mauthausen teilnehmen werden. Nicht weil es uns um Provokation geht, nicht weil es unser Recht ist, sondern weil es unserer Verantwortung entspricht.

Wir ersuchen um Eure geschätzte Kenntnisnahme!

Der Vorstand:

Norbert Bauer, Boris Lechthaler, Gerald Oberansmayr, Rudolf Schober, Elfriede Schoitsch, Andreas Schütz, Eveline Steinbacher, David Stockinger

Linz, June 2026

To the Mauthausen Committee Austria

**Open Response to Your Letter of 3 June 2026, in Which You Seek to Prevent
Solidarwerkstatt Österreich from Participating in Future International Liberation
Ceremonies at Mauthausen**

Dear Sir or Madam,
Dear Colleagues,

We acknowledge receipt of your letter of 3 June 2026 and wish to respond as follows:

First, regarding the facts of the matter:

There has never been, there is not, and there never will be any agreement between the Mauthausen Committee Austria and Solidarwerkstatt Österreich not to carry Palestinian symbols during the International Liberation Ceremony or to remove them before entering the historic roll-call square. Accepting such a demand would make us collaborators in attempts to erase the Palestinian people, their symbols, and their homeland. We will never participate in such efforts.

Nor was there ever a handshake between our Chair, **Andreas Schütz**, and your Chair, **Willi Mernyi**.

What did happen is that Willi Mernyi approached our delegation and repeatedly tried to persuade the young man carrying the Palestinian flag. In the manner of someone attempting to broker a deal, he more or less pressured him into a handshake. That participant is **not a member of our organization** and was **not authorized to speak on behalf of our delegation**. He subsequently handed over the Palestinian flag. We know who he is but will not disclose his identity. He does not deserve to be publicly shamed, and, in any event, this is entirely irrelevant to the substance of the matter.

During the discussions before entering the roll-call square, reference was repeatedly made to the event regulations. At no point, however, was any substantive explanation given as to why Palestinian symbols should be prohibited.

For us, the Mauthausen Memorial is not just another venue, and the Mauthausen Committee Austria is not its caretaker. The Mauthausen Memorial is part of the common heritage of humanity, and under the Austrian State Treaty Austria has an obligation to preserve and administer this heritage with dignity. Every person in the world has the right to visit the memorial, to commemorate the victims of this factory of death, and to draw lessons for their own lives and actions from this history. This naturally includes the people of Palestine.

Especially in light of the current events in Palestine, it is essential to emphasize that the crimes committed by the State of Israel must **not** be attributed to our Jewish fellow citizens. Solidarwerkstatt Österreich is fully committed to this principle.

For that reason, it was an honour for us to welcome this year, within our delegation, a Jewish descendant of a survivor of Gusen concentration camp as well as participants of Palestinian origin. Together, we commemorated the victims of National Socialist crimes with dignity and expressed, in the spirit of the **Mauthausen Oath**, our conviction that:

"Never Again applies to all people."

We believe that this should also be the mission of the Mauthausen Committee Austria. Rather than excluding Palestinian symbols, it should invite official Palestinian representatives to participate in the International Liberation Ceremony.

How you came to characterize our participation as "**disrespectful**," "**inappropriate**," and "**a deliberate provocation**" remains incomprehensible to us.

Your assertion that the dignified commemoration of concentration camp victims must not be "instrumentalized or misused for highly controversial current conflicts" is, first, contrary to the facts—references to current events are made every year during the Liberation Ceremony—and, second, fundamentally contradicts the **Mauthausen Oath** itself.

The true meaning of commemorating the victims of Mauthausen lies in the commitment to ensure that such crimes **never happen again**.

Finally, we wish to state that in **2027** we will once again participate in the International Liberation Ceremony together with our Jewish and Palestinian brothers and sisters.

Not because we seek to provoke.
Not because it is our right.
But because it is our responsibility.

We respectfully ask you to take note of our position.

The Executive Board

Norbert Bauer
Boris Lechthaler
Gerald Oberansmayr
Rudolf Schober
Elfriede Schoitsch
Andreas Schütz
Eveline Steinbacher
David Stockinger

Appendix D

Open Letter by Professor Haim Bresheeth-Žabner to the Mauthausen Committee Austria

Mauthausen Committee Austria
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24 Juni, 2026

Dear members of the Mauthausen Committee,

I have read your letter to the Solidarwerkstatt Österreich with interest. It seems to me that you are making a serious error by not taking into account the historical Mauthausen Oath signed by all the survivors, in their important call to humanity. My late father, Arie Leib Žabner, who was an inmate at Mauthausen and Gusen II, starting in early February 1945, was freed on May 8, 1945, in Ebensee, by the US Army. I have attached an image of him and some other survivors from that date below. As a survivor of both camps, my father is one of the people who supported the Mauthausen Oath.

Both my parents were held in Auschwitz until January 15, 1945. My father was taken by the SS on a Fußmarsch to Mauthausen, and my mother was taken on a Fußmarsch to Bergen Belsen. She was freed there by the British Army in April 1945. I was born on August 6, 1946, to him and my mother, Machla Zilberberg-Žabner. We came to Israel by boat in early June 1948, and my father, true to the Mauthausen Oath, refused the draft into the Israeli army as a pacifist. He was put in jail, and after four weeks, he agreed to serve as an unarmed medic, which he did until the end of the war in early 1949. I wish to remind you of the wording of the final part of the Oath, in case you have forgotten it:

"After having obtained our coveted freedom and after our nations have obtained freedom with armed struggle, we wish to:

Conserve the international solidarity of the camp in our memories and to derive from it the necessary lessons; follow a common path, the one of freedom, indispensable for every population, of reciprocal respect, of collaboration in the great work of constructing a new world that is free and just for all. We will forever remember the many terrible sacrifices that the conquest of this new world has cost for every nation. In memory of the blood shed by all peoples, in memory of the millions of brothers assassinated by Nazi-Fascism, we solemnly swear to never abandon this path. We want to erect the most beautiful monument that one could dedicate to the soldiers who have fallen for the cause of freedom of the international community on a secure basis: A WORLD OF FREE MEN!

"We direct ourselves to the entire world, shouting: help us in this work!

"Long live international solidarity!

"Long live freedom!"

When we marched into the roll call area with a Palestinian flag and wore keffiyas, we wanted to remind the Committee, and the 15,000 guests at the commemoration, of the historic Oath taken by the survivors of this terrible camp - they are clearly stating what they learnt from their awful ordeal, one in which the soldiers of Germany and Austria played the crucial part of genocidares: They called for universal freedom, suggesting humanity should:

“...follow a common path; the one of freedom - indispensable for every population, of reciprocal respect, of collaboration in the great work of constructing a new world that is free and just for all.

This Oath is sacred to me, due to the fate of my parents. All other members of our facility perished in the various camps in Poland: Auschwitz, Belzec, Treblinka and Majdanek. They cannot speak today, but I can and speak for them. You have no right to censor me or silence me when I honour the Mauthausen Oath by speaking not just about the genocide which took place before my birth and yours, but about the genocide taking place NOW, as we all can see every day online.

That Jews, in the so-called Jewish state, commit genocide against the indigenous people of Palestine, is really terrible beyond description. That you take upon yourself to censor and silence us when we point this out silently and respectfully by carrying the flag of those who were murdered in Gaza is a gross violation of our human rights and theirs. You have acted as a thought police by deciding that the Palestinian flag - the flag of those martyred, murdered and persecuted by Israel, is not welcome in Mauthausen, at the same time that the flag of Israel, the genocidal nation, is honoured by the Committee.

As such, this is an atrocity against the survivors of Mauthausen, and their families, as well as against all Palestinian victims, that I am amazed you have not thought about this yourselves. After all, you have certain links to those who committed the genocide more than 80 years ago. Why do you think it is acceptable for you to disregard an extant genocide? Is this in line with the Oath, do you believe? Is it in line with the Oath to allow the flag of the Israeli genocidares as victims? Do you think it was correct for you to stop me and my wife, Prof. Yosefa Loshitzky, a Holocaust and Genocide Studies scholar, from laying flowers at the commemoration? Why did you not allow me the simple satisfaction of commemorating my father and his family, as if I were a criminal to be blocked from this simple personal act? Family members of the genocidares blocking family members of the victims from paying their respect?

As a historian, I call you out for your mistaken and offensive act - you have broken the sacred Oath by the survivors, made it into useless words, by your attempt to hide the current genocide. I condemn you in the name of my parents, in the name of the Holocaust victims, in the name of the hundreds of thousands murdered by Israel in Gaza. You have brought shame onto the memory of the victims of the genocide you say you honour - you betrayed the memory of the survivors who took the Oath.

Your letter to the **Solidarwerkstatt Österreich** is a document of shame and betrayal, and history will judge you severely. I think you should send an apology to the **Solidarwerkstatt Österreich** group, invite them to join as an official part of the commemoration next year, and also make sure that a Palestinian delegation is also invited to join the event. I laid a wreath, together with my Palestinian colleague, Ms Darwish, to honour the victims of the Holocaust and the Gaza genocide. This is what we need to do if the Mauthausen Oath is to be honoured and followed. I believe that my wife and I, whose families perished in the Holocaust, were treated shamefully by your officials, and are due an official apology also. You are treating all Jews as supporters of the Gaza genocide, which is why you treat us as enemies, because we refuse to fit into this scheme, which is itself antisemitic – treating Jews not as individuals with views, but as a mass without distinctions. Are you surprised that as family members of Holocaust survivors, we refuse to support a genocide by Jews?

Genocide is something that no Jew should ever be involved in, that no human being should be involved in!

By turning us away, you are not helping anyone, apart from the current genocidaires in Gaza. So, in the words of the Oath, I wish to call out to you:

"We direct ourselves to the entire world, shouting: help us in this work!

"Long live international solidarity!

"Long live freedom!"

Yours sincerely,



Prof. Haim Bresheeth-Žabner

NB: I am attaching here the picture taken of my father and few other survivors on May 8, 1945, taken by the US Signal Corps, which used to be displayed on the entrance to the Mauthausen exhibition hall. I also attach here a link to a short documentary by Dorf TV, shot at Gusen II, with me answering questions about my father.

<https://dorftv.at/video/48420>

