

## **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liberation of the Dachau Concentration Camp, 29 April 2020**

### **Video message by Dr. Gabriele Hammermann, Director of the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site**

Dear Survivors, dear families, ladies and gentlemen,

It is with sadness that we look at the many letters of survivors and liberators who had confirmed their participation in the commemorative events on the occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the Dachau Concentration Camp. Overall we were expecting participation in the ceremonies by 72 survivors of the Dachau Concentration Camp and its sub-camps as well as 19 veterans of the US Army, who on April 29, 1945 had liberated thousands of sick and exhausted prisoners of the Dachau Concentration Camp. Many of the elderly guests from over 20 countries wanted to return to this former place of terror and suffering – some of them for the first time after 75 years – in order to share their experiences with us and remember their fellow prisoners who were murdered.

The survivors are the last witnesses:

- Jewish prisoners, who were deported to the Dachau sub-camps of Kaufering, Mühldorf and Allach.

They are the last witnesses:

- Political prisoners, persecuted because of the diverse forms of European resistance against National Socialism.

They are the last witnesses of forced labor, last minute crimes and death marches.

All of them are alarmed by rising nationalism and right-wing radicalism. In their view, society as well as politics have a duty to support memory of Nazi crimes as an inherent part of long-term political and social action. To this day, their commemoration is acting as a seismograph against all forms of anti-democratic development. This commemoration has promoted peace and reconciliation for decades. The survivors wanted to recount their fate on the “Day of Remembrance”, when witness testimony and discussions had been planned throughout the Memorial Site. Due to the Corona crisis, however, this large-scale event cannot take place this year either. The survivors, their families, and all of us are deeply disappointed.

In facing the parting of many witnesses, more than ever before successive generations of the survivors feel the duty to fight for commemoration, to take a stand against trivialization and oblivion and to get more closely in touch in this calling.

We too take the plea of many survivor to preserve a living memory of their history at this place very seriously. With this in mind, the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site has developed a comprehensive redesign concept which is to be implemented in the next few years.

I thank all those who have so energetically endeavored to prepare the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary events during the last twelve months: The staff of the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site, the many enthusiastic cooperation partners in victim associations, society, politics and churches, the overwhelmingly dedicated volunteers. I also thank our federal and state funders for the comprehensive funding, which if possible will benefit the organization of the 76<sup>th</sup> commemoration day in 2021, as well as the many private companies and institutions who were willing to donate.

Therefore my greatest wish is, that you all remain healthy and we see each other next year in order to catch up on the dialogue and the many meetings, which were not possible this year.