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Elizabeth Silkes

May 23, 2017

Dr. Mikhail Borisovich Piotrovsky  
President of the Union of Russian Museums  
General Director of the State Hermitage Museum  
2 Palace Square  
St. Petersburg  
Russia

Dear Dr. Piotrovsky,

On the website of the Union of Russian Museums appeared information stating that the "Memorial complex of political repressions (known until 2014 as the 'Perm-36'), a survivor of the 2014 difficult period of transformation, which threatened to degenerate into a close, now saved and successfully developing thanks to the consolidated support of the museum and the historic Russian community...[and]... in December 2016 the Perm Memorial complex of political repressions was admitted to the Union of Russian Museums, which means a recognition of the professionalism of its staff and decent standard of scientific expositions."

The Memorial complex in question was created by the Memorial Center of history of political repression "Perm-36," which is a member and one of the founders of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and the head of the Russian Network of Sites of Conscience. In 2014, buildings and facilities of the former camp, recovered and restored by the efforts of the "Perm-36," were transferred by the administration of Perm Krai to state agency, adopted today in the Union of Russian Museums. But, in addition, the state property transferred to the agency all the property of the Memorial Centre "Perm-36", located on the territory of the museum, including museum collections, archives, research library, expositions and exhibitions.

Dear Dr. Piotrovsky, Memorial Complex "Perm-36" was created with the intellectual and financial support of a large number of partners, including our Coalition and its individual members. Many of its partners and donors have expressed confusion and concern in connection with the situation, including matters related to property and copyright.

Currently Memorial Centre "Perm-36," with the support of our Coalition, continues a series of international projects, such as, for example, the Summer International School of Museology, the creation of the large-scale exhibition "Political prisoners and the Perm political camp," and the GULAG museum on the Internet.

Memorial Center "Perm-36" is recognized far beyond the borders of the Russian Federation. Its exhibitions have been presented in different countries. The large-scale exhibition "Russian labor camp and the struggle for freedom" was exhibited in the most famous museums in the United States, including the Marist College and Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site in New York and the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta, where the exhibition was opened by the 39th US President, Nobel Peace Prize winner James Earl Carter.

I hope, Dr. Piotrovsky, the Union of Russian Museums, which you lead, will help the "Memorial complex of political repressions" and the Memorial Center "Perm-36" solve the controversial copyright and property issues.

With deep respect,

Elizabeth Silkes  
Executive Director