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Elizabeth Silkes

May 23, 2017

Peter Keller
Director General
International Council of Museums
Maison de l'UNESCO
1 rue Miollis
75732 Paris Cedex 15
France

Dear Mr. Keller,

In 1995, in the Perm region of the Russian Federation, a unique memorial museum of the history of political repression was created in the former camp for political prisoners "Perm-36." The core of this camp is the only surviving camp complex of buildings from Stalin's GULAG era. It was created in the form of public-state partnership by the nonprofit organization "Memorial Center of history of political repression Perm-36" and the government of Perm Krai. For nearly 20 years, the Memorial Centre "Perm-36" not only preserved and restored the dilapidated camp construction, but was engaged in research, collecting, exposition, exhibition and educational activities.

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.

Memorial Center "Perm-36" was one of the founders of our Coalition – the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience – and is still the focal point of the Russian Network of Sites of Conscience. For many years, "Perm-36" facilitated the Summer International School of Museology and regular multi-day seminars for the museums in the Russian Network of Sites of Conscience.

In 2014, with the political changes in Russia and the change of the governor of the Perm region, Memorial Center "Perm 36" was removed from the Museum, which it has founded, and all the buildings and facilities of the former camp, which are state property, were transferred to establish a State institution "Memorial complex of political repression." This institution re-assigned all the property belonging to the Memorial Center "Perm-36", including, above all, museum collections, archives, research library, displays and exhibitions, collected and built with the support of several partners, including the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and its individual members.

Due to the fact that in December 2016 the state institution "The memorial complex of political repression" was accepted into the Union of Museums of Russia, as reported on the website of the Union, I ask you, Mr. Keller, to convince the President of the Union of Russian Museums, Dr. M. Piotrowski, to find a civilized extrajudicial way to solve the problem of copyright and property ownership of the Memorial Center "Perm-36."

With deep respect,

Elizabeth Silkes
Executive Director