



AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM, INC.

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Established 1981

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August 2, 2023
15 Av 5783

Dani Dayan
Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate
Yad Vashem P.O.B.
3477 Jerusalem 9103401 Israel

Dear Dani,

We at the American Society for Yad Vashem were shocked and disturbed to receive your letter of July 30th. We do not believe that disaffiliation is appropriate or warranted, and we hope that upon reflection, you will recognize that this step is counterproductive to the essential work to which we have all dedicated so much of our time, energy, and resources.

ASYV has worked in close collaboration with Yad Vashem since ASYV's founding in 1981. The two organizations have had a warm and highly productive operational and professional relationship over the course of the last four decades, always working – through changing times and administrations – to further the joint goal of Holocaust remembrance.

ASYV, founded by survivors and children of survivors, has always been a stalwart partner of Yad Vashem, working tirelessly to ensure that Yad Vashem can continue to serve its vital mission of honoring the memory of those who were murdered. ASYV's careful guardianship of that mission is evident in the diligent and unstinting work of its board, staff, and supporters, and in the \$200 million that ASYV has provided to support Yad Vashem's ongoing work over the past 15 years alone (and dramatically more since our inception 43 years ago).

ASYV's work is primarily carried out by its unpaid Board, skeleton staff and army of volunteers, and ASYV has always striven to operate as efficiently as possible to ensure the maximum charitable and educational impact of the funds it raises. ASYV's five-star Charity Navigator rating is a testament to the success of this approach, and reflects ASYV's ongoing commitment to transparency, good governance, and fulfillment of fiduciary obligations. ASYV's work includes fundraising, but it also encompasses important educational programming, such as lectures, parlor meetings, publications, newsletters, conferences, missions, exhibitions, book clubs, social media content, corporate and similar events, intended to raise Yad Vashem's profile, teach diverse audiences about the lessons of the Holocaust and educate and train future

**Of Blessed Memory*

educators and future leaders. Just five months ago, for example, ASYV produced a sold-out symphony at Carnegie Hall (with over 1,500 attendees, including sponsors, diplomats and media), which significantly raised the profile of Yad Vashem in the United States while educating the public about the heroic actions of Righteous Among the Nations awardee Chiune Sugihara. As you know, the original symphony itself was commissioned and funded by ASYV and is now being played to audiences around the globe in the name of Yad Vashem.

ASYV recognizes that the task of remembrance is unending and has worked to fulfill its mission with an eye to the future. In addition to cultivating a significant donor base, ASYV has built a vibrant and fast-growing Young Leadership group made up of 21- to 40-year-old supporters who share a strong commitment to the advancement of Yad Vashem's work. Hundreds of young professionals regularly attend their well-run events. At a time when antisemitism is on the rise in the United States and 79% of Yad Vashem's donations come from only 1% of donors, ASYV has been acutely focusing on diversifying and expanding the universe of supporters invested in Yad Vashem's continued success and the achievement of its essential mission. These efforts should not be undermined.

ASYV's efforts to raise and grow its endowment, which was created at the written behest of the chairs of both ASYV and Yad Vashem (and approved by their Boards in 2007), has been an extraordinary success. Our predecessors had the foresight to create a vehicle for significant and perpetual income support for Yad Vashem, which is especially important as we are forced to transition away from the Survivor generation. The principal of the endowment is similarly available as a backstop to Yad Vashem in the case of emergencies (e.g. a natural disaster or other major damage), as evidenced by the multi-million-dollar transfers that were made to Yad Vashem during the COVID pandemic directly from the endowment. In fact, over the past 5 years alone, despite the significant fundraising and logistical challenges of the COVID period, ASYV has granted \$78 million to Yad Vashem (and, as noted above, \$200 million to Yad Vashem during the simultaneous period of building the endowment). Through both boom years and trying economic times, ASYV's support for Yad Vashem's work has been unwavering, and its commitment to responsibly stewarding and distributing the funds it raises has been a key component underlying Yad Vashem's ability to continue this work at the high standard required for a mission of such gravity.

The leadership of ASYV have been operating our organization professionally and collaboratively with Yad Vashem for decades in accordance with executed agreements with Yad Vashem. ASYV's board members include some of the most significant Jewish philanthropists of our generation, with impeccable reputations and strategically important relationships in both the United States and Israel. The breadth and depth of their experience in nonprofit service has helped to make ASYV a respected and trusted partner in undertaking the mission of Holocaust education. Further, their generosity is unparalleled: since its founding, ASYV's board members have themselves been the very largest of contributors of funds to Yad Vashem. The very construction of the Yad Vashem museum itself was overseen personally by parents of our Board members and the family names of our leadership are affixed to nearly every installation on the Jerusalem campus as their largest sponsors. It is from this group that you are now aggressively seeking to disaffiliate.

ASYV's relationship with Yad Vashem has always been productive, constructive, and mutually respectful, even in instances of disagreement. Only with the arrival of a new Yad Vashem leadership has the spirit of collaboration, partnership and mutual respect no longer served as the bedrock for our interactions. Key supporters have become frustrated and alienated. We have been making every effort to persuade you, in both word and action, to restore our decades-long atmosphere of goodwill and mutual focus on shared mission. That you should now unilaterally declare a need to disaffiliate from ASYV is deeply disturbing.

In an era when the overall relationship between Israel and the American Jewish diaspora has become increasingly polarized, in a context where support for Holocaust education has historically been a unifying mission for the Jewish people, at a time of rising antisemitism in the United States, during a period when ASYV remains the largest non-governmental source of financial support for Yad Vashem and when we are collectively facing an uncertain future of fundraising challenges in a post-Survivor world, we firmly believe that Yad Vashem should be building on the relationships, expertise, commitment, and passion of its American partners, not separating from them. Our strongest hope is that our two organizations can continue to work together – as they have done, cooperatively and successfully, for so many years – to further the cause that is so important to us all. We respectfully encourage Yad Vashem to immediately reconsider its decision before severe and irrevocable damage is done to the organization that we all cherish and seek to support.

Sincerely,

Adina Burian, Lawrence Burian, Andrew Groveman, David Halpern, Jeremy Halpern, Barry Levine, Caroline Massel, Mark Moskowitz, Barry Rubenstein, Leonard Wilf, Mark Wilf, Fred Zeidman

CC: Yad Vashem Directorate