



Simon Wiesenthal Center
Snider Social Action Institute

מרכז שמעון ויזנטל
מכון סניידר למעורבות ציבורית

Israel Office:
1 Mendele Street Jerusalem 92147
Tel: (02) 563.1273/4/5 Fax: (02) 563.1276
Dr. Efraim Zuroff, Director
Israel office and Eastern European Affairs

המשרד בישראל:
רח' מנדלי 1, ירושלים 92147
טל: 02.563.1273/4/5 פקס: 02.563.1276
דר' אפרים זורוף, מנהל

Rabbi Marvin Hier, Dean
Rabbi Abraham Cooper, Associate Dean
Rabbi Meyer H. May, Executive Director

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H.E. President Sauli Niinistö
Tasavallan presidentin kanslia
Mariankatu 2
00170 Helsinki FINLAND

Dear President Niinistö,

I am writing to you in the wake of recent research by Dr. Andre Swanström, the Chairman of the Finnish Society of Church History, which revealed that Finnish SS volunteers who served in the Viking Division of the Waffen-SS participated in the murder of Jews in Ukraine during the Holocaust. For additional details please see his article of October 11, 2017 in Snomen kirkkohistoriallinen seura (<http://www.skhs.fi/suomalaiset-ss-miehet-ja-sotarikokset>) and his interview on Finnish television (<https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9868903>).

I am certain that you would agree that such revelations require a forthright response by the Finnish authorities and appropriate measures to investigate this matter.

You might recall that in a similar situation in November 2003, President Halonen immediately initiated the establishment of a commission of inquiry to examine the deportation from Finland of approximately 3,000 foreigners to Nazi Germany, among them Soviet political officers and Jewish prisoners of war, who were thereby sentenced to almost certain death.

During the past month, the German authorities have indicted eleven men and women who served in the Auschwitz, Stutthof, Mauthausen, Ravensbrueck and Buchenwald concentration camps. This is a stark reminder that the passage of time in no way diminishes the guilt of the killers and that old age should under no circumstances provide immunity for those who committed such heinous crimes.

I hope that you fully understand the gravity of the research by Dr. Swanström and recognize the importance of a serious investigation of his findings. While the initiation of such an inquiry will no doubt be a painful step for Finnish society, it is only by honestly and courageously facing past mistakes that such unfortunate crimes can be prevented in the future.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Efraim Zuroff
Director