

Statement of Mark Weitzman (Simon Wiesenthal Center) at Balint Homan seminar

The Simon Wiesenthal Center strongly condemns the proposed statue of Balint Homan.

We believe that it is especially hypocritical that this statue is being built on public land and with public funds while Hungary is the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The attempt to build the proposed statue is directly in contradiction to IHRA's "Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion" which includes "Intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact... of collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany".

The historical record is clear. Balint Homan was an antisemite, fascist cheerleader and Nazi collaborator whose actions helped create the framework that led directly to the murder of almost 600,000 Jews.

We also believe that it is no coincidence that one of the leaders of the foundation that is pushing this memorial has a Facebook page with an email address that includes the numbers "88", which is a frequently used code by neo-Nazis for Heil Hitler (since 8 is the eighth letter of the alphabet it is used a substitute for the letter "H" itself).

Efforts to rehabilitate Homan have been going on since 2001, when three ministers of a previous government attended his reburial. This proposed statue is just the latest in a series of controversial steps by the government of Hungary that distort Hungary's history during the holocaust period. These include, but are not limited to the erection of a statue in Budapest that casts Hungary as an innocent victim of Nazi oppression and the inclusion of antisemitic writers from that time into the national curriculum. While a curriculum can be a discussion that explores the full historical record of these writers, including their antisemitism and its impact, a statue is a closed statement to almost all who see it. For most it will be seen as it is intended to be, a memorial to the positive achievements of the figure it represents.

At the same time it must be acknowledged that Hungary has made some positive steps, such as stopping the highly flawed proposed exhibit of the new Holocaust museum, the House of Fates. In its role as Chair of the IHRA, it recently co-sponsored an important conference in Budapest on "The Holocaust in Public Discourse" and led efforts to ensure that access to World War II era archives remain open in the midst of the European Union's directives on data protection.

Clearly the Government of Hungary knows right from wrong. Supporting this statue is simply the wrong action, the wrong symbol, the wrong lesson. It can do nothing but stain Hungary's reputation internationally. If statues should be built, then they should be built to those who resisted antisemitism and the Nazis, not to those who encouraged the persecution and helped allow the murder of Hungary's

Jews. Balint Homan needs to be remembered not as a positive role model, but for the evil that he did. .
It is time that the government of Prime Minister Orbán makes the right decision and stops this
hypocritical and dangerous rewriting of history.