

## Wiesenthal Center urges Nazi-perpetrators to be convicted

"Operation Last Chance" is the name of the search for the last non-convicted Nazi-perpetrators. The operation, coordinated by the Los Angeles based Simon Wiesenthal Center (SWC), has now also started in Austria - especially to search for policemen who took part in dislodging, deporting and killing up to half a million civilians during World War II.

Head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Efraim Zuroff, accused Austria of having done too little to put these Nazi-perpetrators on trial. None of these policemen have been convicted yet in Austria. In Germany, 15 sentences for policemen who were members of these squads have been passed so far.

In the course of these trials in Germany also Austrian policemen were mentioned and accused. Zuroff already handed over a list of 47 alleged members of these police squads to Justice Minister Dieter Böhmdorfer (FPÖ), who has reassured the SWC that the Austrian government will fully cooperate in the search.

Eight police battalions that existed in Austria are accused of taking part in torturing and killing civilians - mostly Jews. According to the German public prosecutors' office, Austrians were also members of the SS-police squad which was deployed in 1943 to the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw where the majority of inhabitants were killed.

"Operation Last Chance" is financed by Aryeh Rubin, representative of the Targum Shlishi foundation. He said that he hoped the last few nights were the last few peaceful ones for the perpetrators which have not been convicted.

The president of the Austrian Jewish Community, Ariel Muzicant, said that it would be a first step if the Austrian government investigated which people still took part in SS-meetings today. He said that Austria has done a lot in banning neo-Nazi-action but that it brought up the rear in Europe when it came to persecuting and convicting Nazi-perpetrators.

### **National Fund honoured**

The Austrian National Fund for victims of the Holocaust was honoured by the Yad Vashem Memorial Place in Jerusalem. Almost 30,000 people have received 5,000 euros and more out of the Fund, State Secretary Franz Morak (ÖVP), said during a visit to Israel last week. He stressed that during the Nazi-regime Austrians were "victims and perpetrators alike".

Payments from the restitution fund of the Austrian government are still frozen because of pending cases in the USA. A US-lawyer now called on the Austrian government to start the payments despite lacking legal security.