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Press Release

Use the ghetto pension agreement with Poland for a genuine new start in relations with former ghetto workers! Put an immediate stop to systematically unfair treatment!

“The German-Polish agreement on ghetto pensions due to be ratified in the Bundestag today marks an important milestone in survivors’ fight for justice and dignity. It puts to an end the discrimination of Roma and Jews living in Poland, who were previously excluded from the ghetto pensions under the ZRBG. Yet we cannot rest on our laurels. There are other injustices to be eradicated. The systematically unfair treatment of applicants by German bureaucracy has led to around 15,000 to 25,000 surviving ghetto workers remaining excluded from the pensions”, states Azize Tank, Spokesperson for Social Human Rights and member of the Committee on Labour and Social Affairs on the occasion of today’s ratification of the ‘Agreement of 5 December 2014 between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Poland on the export of benefits for eligible individuals resident in the territory of the Republic of Poland’. Azize Tank goes on to state:

“Final decisions have not been made for numerous applications by former ghetto workers: due to an alleged “lack of participation”. In addition to those in Poland who are affected, there are still some further 15,000 to 25,000 surviving ghetto workers, who are also excluded from these pensions. According to estimates, around 45% of these ghetto survivors are in Israel, 45% in the United States and 10% in Germany and neighbouring EU countries.

The Federal Government confirmed these figures itself in the official preface to the Act amending the Act regarding the conditions for making pensions payable on the basis of employment in a ghetto (*Gesetz zur Zahlbarmachung von Renten aus Beschäftigungen in einem Ghetto – ZRBG*) which was adopted in 2014. This stated that of the approximately 70,000 applications, only around half resulted in a positive decision. These figures match those of the Jewish Claims Conference (JCC).

In practice, this means that thousands of individuals have apparently not even received a formal letter of rejection. That is why these cases do not appear in pension statistics. These very elderly people also often have no legal assistance to support their application for reappraisal. The insertion of section 4 of the Act amending the ZRBG will further exacerbate this situation by making it harder for authorisation to be granted to legal representatives.

A thorough examination of this chapter in German history will only have been achieved once all those who were employed in the ghettos finally have certainty about their applications for ghetto pensions.

The agreement with Poland should herald a genuine new start regarding ghetto pensions.”

Berlin, 26 February 2015