

Ljubljana, 29 July 2025

Letter of support to the *Peršman Museum and Memorial Site*

The ICOM Slovenia Association, part of the International Council of Museums (ICOM*), has joined the many voices expressing support for the *Peršman Museum and Memorial Site*, its employees, volunteers and camp participants, who were subjected to unjustified raid by Austrian police on Sunday 27 July.

The Peršman Museum and Memorial Site bears witness to a traumatic chapter in history. Just a few days before the end of the Second World War, Nazi forces committed an atrocious, senseless crime at this remote homestead – brutally murdering 11 members of the Sadovnik and Kogoj families. Among the victims were women, men, and seven children. To this day, those responsible have never been brought to justice.

Over the decades, the memorial site has become a vital place for commemorating Slovenian victims of the Nazi regime. In 1982, a museum was established at the site. Its recently renovated permanent exhibition offers a contemporary interpretation of the Nazification process in Austria and its devastating impact on the Slovenian-speaking minority in Carinthia. The museum shares personal stories of the massacre's victims, as well as broader accounts of Nazi persecution of Carinthian Slovenians. By addressing these difficult topics, the museum's team works to foster a deeper understanding of the past and to promote democratic values and tolerance – so that such atrocities are never repeated.

The *Peršman Museum and Memorial Site* operates to a high professional standard, in full accordance with the guidelines of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). As contemporary institutions, museums play a crucial role in promoting democratic processes and resisting totalitarian ideologies. By fostering community engagement, museums help spread tolerance and democratic values, contributing to a more peaceful society. This mission is at the heart of the Peršman Museum's activities – particularly through its educational work with young people at its anti-fascist camp.

It is deeply troubling that a repressive police raid occurred at the very site of a documented Nazi atrocity. This incident took place in the year we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War – the deadliest conflict in human history, which claimed an estimated 50 to 70 million lives.

At ICOM Slovenia, we strongly condemn the armed police intervention at this place of remembrance and democratic engagement. We affirm that the *Peršman Museum and Memorial Site* has acted in accordance with the highest professional and ethical standards in museum practice. We view this incident with serious concern and call for a transparent public explanation, as well as legal accountability for those responsible for infringing upon the civil rights of the museum's staff and camp participants.

With this letter, we stand in solidarity with the *Peršman Museum and Memorial Site* and offer our full support in these troubling times.

Jana Babšek, President

Natalija Polenec, Vice President

Executive Committee Members: Tina Fortič Jakopič, Irena Marušič, Petra Stipančič

ICOM Association – International Council of Museums – Slovenian Committee

*ICOM is a global organization representing over 57,000 museum professionals. As a partner of UNESCO and the United Nations, it promotes sustainable development goals, including efforts to advance democracy and peace. The latest ICOM museum definition establishes new ethical and professional standards for museums worldwide.

"A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing."