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Compensation for the victims of the Nazis – Now!

On the 10th of June of 1944 218 people – men, women and children – from the Greek village of Distomo were assassinated by soldiers of the II Company of the VII regiment of the SS Polizeigrenadier. The German assassins were never brought to justice and no compensation has ever been paid to the victims. The German state has successfully protected itself from demands of compensation concerning crimes against humanity committed during the war, first by invoking the London Treaty on debts, and afterwards by invoking the prescription of the crimes. In 1995, when the Greek government demanded the payment of compensations, the response of Bonn, 50 years after the war, the answer was: “The question of the compensation is not relevant anymore”.

At the same time a judicial procedure for the compensation of more than 300 survivors and families of Distomo has been successful in Greece. In May 2000, the highest instance of Greek courts, the Areopago, confirmed that Germany had to disburse more than 28 millions Euro to the victims. In Greece, the sentence has not been executed due to the political pressure of Germany. In 2002, a sentence of the International Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg established the possibility of executing the sentence on German state property, for example in Italy. In May 2008, the *Corte Suprema di Cassazione* (the highest court in Italy) has recognized the Greek victims their right to execute the sentence in Italy: Villa Vigoni on the Como Lake has been mortgaged and since March 2009 all the profits from the sale *Deutsche Bahn* (German Railway) train tickets from Italy to Germany go to the benefit of the compensation payments.

During the Trieste summit of 18/11/2008 Italy and Germany agreed to render ineffective the decisions of the *Corte di Cassazione*. To avoid the execution of the sentence and any further compensation claims of Nazi victims the German government has initiated in December 2008 a legal procedure in the International Court of Justice in The Hague (this court is the juridical body of the United Nations) and Italy has not opposed it. With this procedure Germany wishes to protect itself from the demands of the victims, nullifying the decisions of the Italian justice. This affects Italian victims as well, like Luigi Ferrini who was forced to hard labour, who have sought to begin legal procedures against Germany in Italy. All legal procedures initiated in Italy for Nazi crimes would end and their execution hindered.



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The news of the Italian decree n. 63 of the 28th the April 2010 has caused great perplexity amongst the victims of the Greek trial demanding German compensation for war crimes committed in the Greek village of Distomo. This decree suspends the seizure of German goods until the end of the procedure in the International Court in the Hague – showing a sense of blind obedience to Germany and denying the victims once more of justice, justice they have been waiting for the last 65 years.

The lawyers of the Greek victims have demanded in April 2010 their right to participate in the juridical procedure, but the International Court of Justice in the Hague only accepts States as parties in trial. The decree n. 63 of the Italian government proves that Italy, even more than Germany, is not interested in the rights of the victims: it is about politics of power and the attempt to hinder definitively the claims of the victims.

The Association of the European Democratic Lawyers therefore demands:

The end to state impunity for Nazi war crimes.

The cooperation between Germany and Italy to compensate the victims of Nazi terror, and not to hinder their rights.

Compensation Now!

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AED – European Democratic Lawyers

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