

June 29, 2021

Dr. Alexandru Florian
Director
Elie Wiesel National Institute for Study of the Holocaust in Romania
Bucharest
ROMANIA

Dear Dr. Florian:

I am writing to congratulate you and to express appreciation on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum for the effort that has gone into the creation of the exhibition that you are opening today at the former Police Headquarters of the city of Iasi.

This permanent exhibition on the Iasi Pogrom will serve as a solemn memorial to the Jewish citizens of Iasi who were murdered on the streets of the city or were concentrated in the courtyard of the Police Headquarters at the end of June 1941, where they were beaten, shot at, and in many cases killed on this very spot. It is no wonder that the word “Chestura” continues to resonate today, a reminder of the persecution and horrors that the Romanian state authorities of the Antonescu regime inflicted on the Jews of Romania—not only in Iasi, but elsewhere in the Regat, in Bessarabia and Bukovina, and in Transnistria as well.

The survivors of the “Chestura” killings were then forced onto sealed death trains where, without air and water, moving slowly toward Calarasi to the south and Podul Iloaie to the west, additional hundreds died. I know that your father was on one of those trains, and that members of his family died on one of those trains.

Some scholars note that the Iasi Pogrom constituted the first major massacre of Jews anywhere that took place in the heart of a major city during the Holocaust. It provided a signal to German political and military authorities, at the very beginning of the war against the Soviet Union, that mass killing within view of local civilian bystanders, which had been considered unacceptable in the West, was possible in the East. The tragic results played out in hundreds of cities and towns that fell under the control of German, Romanian, and other Axis forces.

For all of these reasons it is essential that what took place in Iasi eighty years ago be remembered, in the hope that such tragedies can be avoided in the future. The support that you have received from Romanian central authorities, from the City of Iasi, and from the Romanian Jewish community, whose representatives are with you today, is truly appreciated.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was honored to play a role, in partnership with the Wiesel Institute, in designing the content and the concept of the exhibition. But the real credit goes to you and your Romanian colleagues, to whom I extend my very best regards and congratulations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sara J. Bloomfield". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and 'B'.

Sara J. Bloomfield