

Towards Reconciliation
*Confronting the Past and Accepting
Accountability in the International Arena
Call for Papers*

*Tel Aviv University
2-4 June 2015*

Co-organizers:

Wiener Library for the Study of the Nazi Era and the Holocaust (Sourasky Central Library), TAU

Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, TAU

Minerva Center for Human Rights, TAU

Minerva Institute for German History, TAU

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Israel

"Abysses are flung open by events; bridges are built by goodwill. Bridges are needed to pass over abysses; they are constructed; they are the product of conscious thinking and willing...Is there not a light that burns in this darkness, the light of repentance?"

Gershom Scholem, "Jews and Germans", Brussels, August 1966

Since the end of World War II and particularly in the last three decades, accountability and apology for historical misdeeds have become common phenomena in the international arena. In some cases, accountability has been a culmination of a long and painstaking domestic process, a reflection of political social and cultural changes. In other cases, however, apology and even compensations were merely opportunistic and artificial gestures, resulting mainly from external pressure and political constraints.

Political reconciliation between states and rapprochement between peoples and groups are interrelated processes, but not identical. Official penitence serves as an initial step towards peaceful and stable relations between states. It may reduce mistrust and elevate cooperation. At the same time however, genuine reconciliation between peoples and groups, particularly between perpetrators and former victims, requires a profound confrontation with the past, accepting accountability and efforts to overcome deep-rooted animosity. This type of reconciliation process raises complex philosophical, theological, judiciary and ethical issues such as the essence of forgiveness, collective guilt/responsibility, historical accountability as well as principled objections to reconciliation and forgiveness.

The aim of the conference is to discuss the significance of promoting accountability for past crimes for establishing constructive relations between states and rapprochement between peoples. It will be held on the 50th anniversary of the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and Germany.

The case of Israel-German relations and the complex rapprochement process between Jews and Germans will serve as a point of departure for general and comparative analyses on

related case studies and principled universalistic issues concerning accountability and reconciliation.

The organizers call for proposals, which focus on various states and aspects of accountability and reconciliation between peoples and groups. We seek to analyze the social and cultural backgrounds and the political circumstances that led some states to accept demands for apology for past crimes, express remorse and pay compensations, while others were led to deny accusations and not accept historical responsibility. In this framework, we would also like to discuss moments of denial and resistance in the procedures of reconciliation, and to deal with dialectics of forgiveness. Moreover, comparing between various cases is important in order to explore whether or not apology, contrition, searching for truth and legal accountability are always essential factors in the reconciliation process. Discussions should illuminate questions of historical accountability and reconciliation from various angles, involving disciplines such as: history, political science and international relations, law, philosophy, theology, literature and education.

The conference will be conducted in English and each of the speakers will have exactly twenty minutes to present his or her paper in order to allow sufficient time for discussion. Proposals for individual papers and panels will be considered. The deadline for the submission of proposals is December 30, 2014. All proposals should include a 300-500 words abstract, contact information, and a short bio.

Suggested topics include, but are not limited to:

- Historical Accountability and Realpolitik - Examination of opposing policies of former perpetrator states and of governments whose peoples have been victims of atrocities.
- Interstate Reconciliation and Domestic Developments - Exploring the impact of political, social and cultural developments within the culpable country on the leadership's decision to accept or to avoid accountability.
- Reparations as a Means for Reconciliation - Examining historically and critically the profound transformations that the concept of reparations has undergone in recent years.
- The Role of History in the Search for Truth and Reconciliation - Critically examine the relationship between establishing historical truth and reconciliation commissions.
- Reconciliation and the Question of Literature – The role of literature in opening and signifying ways and sites of human encounter and resistance that can be interpreted as moments of reconciliation between members of collective groups.
- Is Reconciliation Possible? Philosophical/Theological Views – Discussing the theological implications of forgiveness, reconciliation, and deal with the philosophical aspects of these concepts, that are applied in political, historical and juristic cases.

Please send your proposal to:

WienerConf@post.tau.ac.il

Lodging and partial subsidy of travel cost may be available

We would be grateful if you would circulate this CFP among potentially interested junior and senior scholars.

Sincerely,

Dr. Roni Stauber

Conference Organizer

Academic Director, Wiener Library

Program Committee:

Prof. Dina Porat (TAU), Prof. Leora Bilsky (TAU), Prof. Galli Shahar (TAU), Dr. Roni Stauber (TAU), Ms. Judith Stelmach (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Israel)

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