

# OVERVIEW OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY RESTITUTION/COMPENSATION REGIME – FINLAND (AS OF 13 DECEMBER 2016)

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### A. OVERVIEW

Between 1939 and 1944, Finland fought two separate wars against the Soviet Union. The first took place between 1939 and 1940 and is known as the Winter War. At the end of the Winter War, Finland lost approximately 10% of its territory to the Soviet Union. In 1941, Finland entered World War II aligned with Nazi Germany in its fight against the Soviet Union (also known in Finland as the Continuation War). Finland was never conquered or occupied by Germany, nor were any anti-Semitic laws passed in the country. Instead, democratic governance remained in place during World War II. Finnish Jews and Roma actually fought alongside other Finns on the battlefields against the Soviet Union. Finnish Jews were viewed as an equal part of society.

A total of 12 Jewish refugees in Finland are known to have been handed over to the Gestapo during the war. Of those 12, 9 lost their lives (most of them were sent to the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center in German-occupied Poland,) 2 survived the war in different concentration camps, and the fate of the last Jewish refugee is unknown. The Finnish government also made plans to build concentration camps for the non-combatant Roma in Finland.

On 19 September 1944, Finland signed an [Armistice Agreement](#) (Armistice Agreement between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, on the one hand, and Finland on the other) by which Finland withdrew its support for Germany in World War II. On 10 February 1947, Finland and the Allied powers signed the [Treaty of Peace with Finland](#) (otherwise known as the Paris Peace Treaties). The **Treaty of Peace** returned Finland's borders (with certain exceptions) to those which existed on 1 January 1941. The **Armistice Agreement** and **Treaty of Peace** also confirmed that Finland ceded its eastern region of Karelia to the Soviet Union.

Following the war, Finland entered into lump sum agreements or bilateral indemnification agreements with at least two (2) countries. These agreements pertained to claims belonging to foreign nationals (natural and legal persons) arising out of war damages or property that had been seized by the foreign states during or after WWII (i.e., through nationalization). They included claims settlements reached with: **Austria** on 21 February 1966 and **German Democratic Republic** on 3 October 1984. We are not aware of other agreements.

Finland did not confiscate property belonging to Jews, Roma, or other groups targeted by Nazi Germany during World War II. As a result, Finland does not have any laws that relate to the restitution and/or compensation for immovable property that was confiscated or wrongfully taken during the Holocaust. However, through the **Treaty of Peace**, Finland restored all legal rights and interests of the United Nations and their nationals (including property interests) in Finland. In addition, Finland passed compensation measures for those Finn evacuees from the Karelia region who were resettled within Finland's redefined post-World War II borders.

In 1939, there were approximately **2,500** Jews in Finland. After, World War II in 1948, there were approximately **1,700** Jews living in Finland. Today, Finland's Jewish population is less than **2,000** (the majority of which live in Helsinki). In 1939, there were approximately **6,500** Roma in Finland. As of 2011, Finland's Roma population was estimated to be between **10,000** and **12,000** (most of whom live in cities in south and west Finland).

The main consultative Jewish organization in Finland is the **Central Council of Jewish Communities in Finland**. It is composed of members from the country's two (2) Jewish communities – the [Jewish Community in Helsinki](#) and the Jewish Community in Turku. The main activities of the **Central Council of Jewish Communities in Finland** include the preservation of Jewish heritage.

Finland became a member of the Council of Europe in 1989 and ratified the European Convention on Human Rights in 1990. As a result, suits against Finland claiming violations of the Convention are subject to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Finland became part of the European Union in 1995.

Finland endorsed the Terezin Declaration in 2009 and the Guidelines and Best Practices in 2010.

As part of the European Shoah Legacy Institute's Immovable Property Restitution Study, a Questionnaire covering past and present restitution regimes for private, communal and heirless property was sent to all 47 Terezin Declaration governments in 2015. Finland submitted a response in September 2015.

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