

Restitution of immovable property in Latvia

Since the restoration of its independence in 1991 Latvia has addressed, with the greatest possible political responsibility, the issue of restitution to its rightful owners of immovable property confiscated and nationalised during and after the World War II.

It is important to note in connection with the “*Guidelines and Best Practices for the Restitution and Compensation of Immovable (Real) Property Confiscated or Otherwise Wrongfully Seized by the Nazis, Fascists and Their Collaborators during the Holocaust (Shoah) Era*” that all immovable property, including that belonging to the Latvian Jewish community, in Latvia’s case was confiscated by the Soviet regime in (1940-1941), then taken over by Nazi regime (1941-45), and seized again by Soviet authorities (1945-1991).

Latvia’s restitution legislation is liberal and the legal framework ensures the restitution of real estate properties regardless of the current citizenship and place of residence of a previous owner or heir. The restitution process under existing legislation has been accomplished.

The land reform and renewal of land property rights are regulated by the following legislation of the Republic of Latvia:

- *On Land Reform in the Cities of the Republic of Latvia*
- *On Land Reform in the Rural Areas of the Republic of Latvia*
- *On the Completion of Land Reform in Cities*
- *On the Completion of Land Reform in Rural Areas*
- *On Land Privatisation in Rural Areas*

The denationalisation of building properties is regulated by the following laws:

- *On the Denationalisation of Building Properties in the Republic of Latvia;*
- *On the Return of Building Properties to Rightful Owners.*

The renewal of property rights to religious organisations is regulated by the law *On the Return of Properties to Religious Organisations.*

According to the restitution-related legislation, properties were returned to all persons with a rightful claim, without any discrimination and without singling out any ethnic or social group. Therefore, the determination of the exact numbers on the property returned to private claimants of Jewish origin is impossible. However, it is a credible assumption that a significant part of the private property claims and decisions on the return of property involved claimants of Jewish origin from all around the world.

Furthermore, acknowledging the immeasurable damage inflicted by the Nazi regime on Jewish individuals and communities during the Holocaust Era, the government maintains regular dialogue with the Jewish community of Latvia regarding the last and most complicated phase of the process, namely, on possible solutions regarding the restitution of heirless communal property, that has not been resolved in the framework of the denationalisation process.

Taking into the account these specific historic and legal circumstances Latvia will make every sensible effort to implement the recommendations given in the *“Guidelines and Best Practices for the Restitution and Compensation of Immovable (Real) Property Confiscated or Otherwise Wrongfully Seized by the Nazis, Fascists and Their Collaborators during the Holocaust (Shoah) Era”* with due regard for relevant national laws and regulations as well as international agreements.