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Center for Medicine after the Holocaust to Recognize International Holocaust Remembrance Day with Webinar on Dealing with Human Remains from the Holocaust

Webinar on January 29 will feature leading international scholars and will discuss recent discoveries of Holocaust-era human remains, as well as ethical and religious issues in their use and disposal

January 24, 2018 (Houston) – Center for Medicine after the Holocaust (CMATH) today announced that it will recognize International Holocaust Remembrance Day, an annual event created by the United Nations to honor victims of the Holocaust, by presenting a webinar titled “The Vienna Protocol: Ethical Issues in Dealing with Human Remains from the Holocaust.”

The webinar, which is free but requires [advance registration](#), will be held at 12:30 p.m. on Monday, January 29. The material presented will include a new international protocol that prescribes appropriate steps for properly dealing with Holocaust-era human remains. It is unique in that it not only considers medical ethics but also a religious basis for its recommendations.

The [set of recommendations](#) for dealing with Holocaust-era human remains came out of a 2017 symposium at Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center. The recommendations are the product of a scholarly deliberation by a group of international experts in response to the discovery on the Dahlem campus of the Free University (FreieUniversität - FU) of Berlin of human skeletal remains from possible victims of experiments carried out by Dr. Josef Mengele at the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Three leading scholars in medicine and the Holocaust, who were participants in the symposium, will be presenting in the CMATH webinar. The webinar will be moderated by CMATH President Barbara Hales, associate professor of history and humanities at University of Houston, Clear Lake.

William Seidelman, M.D., emeritus professor of the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Toronto, who will be joining the webinar from Israel, has been a leading scholar on medicine and the Holocaust for almost 40 years. He chaired the 2017 symposium at Yad Vashem on dealing with Holocaust-era human remains. He will be joined by Sabine Hildebrandt, M.D., assistant professor of pediatrics at Boston Children’s Hospital and anatomist at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Hildebrandt is the author of the first comprehensive study of anatomy in Nazi Germany, *The*

Anatomy of Murder: Ethical Transgressions and anatomical Science during the Third Reich (Berghahn, 2016).

The third webinar panelist will be Rabbi Joseph Polak, who is Chief Justice of the Rabbinical Court of Massachusetts and assistant professor of health law at the Boston University School of Public Health. In addition to participating in the Yad Vashem symposium, he authored the "Vienna Protocol," a response to the question of how to deal with possibly Jewish human remains. It includes an opinion on the use of images from the Pernkopf Atlas of Human Anatomy, many of which are believed to be based on the dissection of Nazi victims in Vienna.

Rabbi Polak, with input from Boston University Professor Michael Grodin, addressed in the Vienna Protocol the issue of how one deals, in Jewish tradition, with human remains of Nazi victims who are believed to be Jews. Neither of these questions regarding the use of the images and the discovered remains had ever received a thorough religious and ethical expert analysis. The document is widely applicable not only in the Jewish context, but also in all other investigations of human remains from victims of human rights abuses.

"This webinar's content is of great importance to those in the medical field, as well as others who may encounter these human remains," said CMATH Executive Director Sheldon Rubinfeld, M.D.

The Center for Medicine after the Holocaust (CMATH) provides programs for healthcare students, professionals and educators to learn about medicine and the Holocaust. It challenges them to apply that history to contemporary medical education, practice, research and healthcare policy. To learn more about CMATH, visit medicineaftertheholocaust.org.

Registration for the CMATH webinar on dealing with Holocaust-era human remains is open until the webinar begins on January 29. It will also be streamed live via the [CMATH Facebook page](#).

The basis document that contains the full text of the Vienna Protocol and recommendations for dealing with Holocaust-era human remains can be found in the Elie Weisel Center for Jewish Studies section of the [Boston University website](#).