

## NEWS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Hungary's Response to Herzog Collection Lawsuit Avoids the Case's Merits**

*Country Continues to Circumvent Justice by Opposing the Lawsuit*

**Washington, DC; February 17, 2011** -- Hungary has responded to the complaint filed against it and its museums for artworks looted from the Herzog family with an attempt to avoid a review of the merits of the family's complaint by the U.S. District Court. Without denying the family's assertion that it never voluntarily parted with its art collection, Hungary would have the court dismiss the lawsuit on technical grounds and a wholly false assertion, already rejected by the Hungarian Supreme Court, that the claim was settled by the U.S. government and also that compensation was paid to the family.

Hungary agreed with 47 other nations in 2009 at an international conference on Holocaust looted property that claims should be decided on the merits and not on technical grounds such as those it has now raised in court. Although Hungary relinquished any right to property from Holocaust victims in its 1947 Peace Treaty with the Allies following World War II, it has never honored its agreement to return the property to the Jews from whom it was stolen, such as the Herzog family. Hungary, following the examples of Russia and Poland, continues to refuse to honor its obligations under international law and restitute art looted from Jews in the course of Hungary's attempt at their genocide, which was declared a crime against humanity by the charter of the Nuremberg Tribunal.

Michael Shuster, counsel to the Herzog family, will urge the court to reach an independent decision on the merits of the family's claim and disregard the technical roadblocks once more being raised by Hungary.

"The U.S. is not a communist or post communist country," said Shuster. "The Hungarian government must justify its looting from the Jews that it murdered and not hide behind a wall of lies. Other countries, such as Austria, Germany, France, The Netherlands, and Great Britain, refuse to allow technical arguments to defeat claims for restitution. Hungary, now holding the Presidency of the European Union, should comply with its ethical and legal obligations and honor its commitments to the resolutions of the European Council, the Washington Principles, and the Terezin Declaration."

Heirs to the Herzog Collection filed suit in July 2010 to seek the return of artworks illegally held by Hungary since the Holocaust. In their lawsuit, the heirs also demand a full and transparent inventory of looted art from the Herzog Collection held by Hungary. The lawsuit seeks the return of over 40 artworks with a combined value of over \$100 million, including masterworks

by El Greco, Francisco de Zurbarán, and Lucas Cranach the Elder. The works come from the collection of Baron Mór Lipót Herzog, a passionate Jewish art collector. Hungary, a WWII-era ally of Nazi Germany, has held the artworks since the genocide of its Jewish population and continues to circumvent justice by refusing to restitute the artworks.

Additional materials, including a copy of the publicly filed complaint and photos of the artwork are available online at <http://www.hungarylootedart.com/>.

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