

**Appeal to the  
Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, Claudia Roth, and the  
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Annalena Baerbock**

**Advisory board for the new restitution fund at the German Lost Art Foundation**

Dear Madam Minister of State for Culture,  
Dear Madam Foreign Minister,

At its meeting on 16 November 2023, the Budget Committee of the German Bundestag decided to create a restitution fund for the repatriation of ancestral remains at the German Lost Art Foundation. A total of 2.4 million euros has been earmarked for the coming four years.

The undersigned, all variously engaged in academic work on this topic, expressly welcome this decision and look forward to its swift implementation. For many communities in former German colonies and other countries, the repatriation of their ancestors is a top priority. These were often brought to Germany for pseudo-scientific research in a context of racist injustice and colonial violence.

The connection with the ancestors is often a central element of the cosmologies of the peoples abused and robbed by the German colonial regime or academic entrepreneurs. The impossibility of burial rituals due to physical absence is often seen as a perpetual cause of misfortune and misery.

In March 2019, the federal government, federal states and municipal umbrella organisations adopted "Framework Principles" on collections from colonial contexts. It states unequivocally: "Human remains from colonial contexts must be repatriated." Almost five years have passed since then, but the number of cases of repatriation to former colonial territories is absolutely minimal.

The fund to be set up now offers the opportunity to significantly increase the scope and speed of the repatriation processes. It is therefore all the more important that the fund does not focus its decisions exclusively on state authorities in the societies of origin. We therefore propose the creation of an advisory board consisting of German and international representatives of affected communities, academia and other civil society organisations

Preparations for the advisory board should begin immediately so that it can already accompany the set-up phase for the fund. It is essential that sufficient financial resources are allocated to the work of the board so that international members in particular can participate fully in physical and digital consultations.

We recognize that there is already an advisory board at DZK tasked with evaluating applications for provenance research on colonial contexts. We are, however, firmly of the opinion that the new restitution fund should be supported by a separate advisory board exclusively focused on repatriation of ancestral remains. Preferably with a majority of members from the countries of origin and affected communities.

Dear Madam Minister of State for Culture, dear Madam Foreign Minister:

We hope that these suggestions will be of interest to you in the establishment of the restitution fund, which is of enormous importance for the reappraisal of German colonial history. Thank you for your attention and please do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

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First signatories (alphabetical order)

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