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Farewell to Gideon Eckhaus

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Gideon Eckhaus, founder and long-standing chairman of the Central Committee of Jews from Austria in Israel and of the Association of Pensioners from Austria in Israel, has passed away. "The news of Gideon Eckhaus' death fills me with great sadness", said the Secretary General of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism. "Gideon Eckhaus, the great warrior for the concerns of Holocaust survivors, was, with his tireless strength, always a role model for me. With his passing, Austria has lost an eloquent contemporary witness who warned us against forgetting the horrors of National Socialism. The Grand Decoration of Honor for Services to the Republic of Austria, which was awarded to him in 2013, was just a small expression of gratitude."

Gideon Eckhaus was born in Vienna on 3 July 1923 to the merchant Karl Eckhaus and his wife Sabine. His mother died young. After the "Anschluss" of Austria to the German Reich, Gideon fled to Trieste and in 1939 onward to Palestine by ship. His father's business was "liquidated" and his father murdered in Auschwitz. In Israel, Gideon played a key part in the construction of the State in many different roles.

After his retirement, he and Leo Luster founded the Central Committee of Jews from Austria in Israel and the Association of Pensioners from Austria in Israel. The dedication with which he supported Austrian-born survivors in Israel – be it in socially, in the form of meetings in the small clubhouse in Tel Aviv, or by helping them to apply for compensation or pensions from Austria – will be keenly remembered.

Over the years, Gideon Eckhaus was an important partner and companion to the National Fund. On the National Fund's 20th anniversary, he stated: "Our hope is that the National Fund will continue with its previous work and, in addition, keep the memory alive for the descendants of the victims through exchanges with both youth and pensioner groups and through organizations worldwide, in order to prevent with all its might a repetition of history. NEVER AGAIN!!!"

A legacy that must be passed on, says Hannah Lessing.

Links

- Video interview with Gideon Eckhaus 2015