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PLEA FOR RECONCILIATION

"Association of the Deaf in the German Reich" (Regede) in the Reichsgauen Vienna, Lower Danube, Upper Danube, Carinthia, Salzburg, Styria and Tyrol-Vorarlberg Predecessor of the Association of the Deaf in Austria (ÖGLB)

Before the rise of the "Third Reich", Deaf Jews were an active part of the Deaf community in Austria. Many of them were members of various organisations of the Deaf, and some even took part in the founding of the Reich Association of the Deaf in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1913. Following the "*Anschluss*" in 1938, an order was issued to expel Jewish members from clubs and associations. Deaf citizens were required to report Deaf Jews, while Deaf people who were classified as "Aryan" under Nazi racial ideology were prohibited from associating with Deaf Jews. As a result, Deaf Jews were excluded from all Deaf clubs and associations and suffered greatly from exclusion and isolation. A large number of Deaf Jews were murdered in concentration camps or forced to flee abroad. Furthermore, Deaf people were persecuted, particularly through forced sterilisation and murder as part of the so-called "euthanasia" programme. These crimes destroyed lives, families and entire sections of the Deaf community.

With this gesture of reconciliation, we wish to express our deep regret for the suffering inflicted upon Deaf people as a result of Nazi persecution measures. The Association of the Deaf in the German Reich (Regede) did not fulfil its original mandate to protect and support all its Deaf members.

We acknowledge the failure of the Association and ask for your forgiveness.

The new Association of the Deaf in Austria (ÖGLB) bears no direct responsibility for the actions of the Regede. Nevertheless, we consider it our responsibility to critically examine these historical continuities.

We also bear the responsibility of ensuring that the Holocaust and the suffering of Deaf people—particularly Deaf Jews, victims of forced sterilisation and the "euthanasia"

crimes—are not forgotten within the Austrian Deaf community in the context of the National Socialist era.

This also means that we must come to terms with the past, with the failures of the predecessor organisation of the Association of the Deaf in Austria during the “Third Reich”, as well as with the question of how individuals implicated in these events were dealt with within the Deaf community after 1945. This also includes the role of Karl H. Brunner as District Federation Inspector for the Ostmark (1938–1940), as Reich Federation Leader (1940–1943), as Regional Association Leader of Vienna and Lower Danube (until 1945) and as President of the ÖGLB (1960–1965).

We hereby wish to express our hope that all Deaf people who suffered persecution, together with their descendants, will once again be regarded as an integral part of the Deaf community and the Association of the Deaf in Austria (ÖGLB). We hope that in this way a process of reconciliation will be set in motion that will ultimately benefit us all.

For the Association of the Deaf in Austria (ÖGLB)
Vienna, 3 November 2026

Helene Jarmer
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