

## **Mission Statement of the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory**

The Estonian Institute of Historical Memory (EIHM) was established in 2008 in order to provide the citizens of Estonia as an unbiased as possible account of the status of human rights during the Soviet occupation period in Estonia.

The Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity, which investigated crimes against humanity committed in Estonia, completed its mission in 2008 with the publication of its second collection of findings. The EIHM picks up where the International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity left off, cataloguing and investigating human rights violations in the Soviet period, which do not fall under the legal definition of crimes against humanity.

In order to study this period it is necessary to use an objective and generally recognized normative standard to ask inter-related research questions, carry out research and draw conclusions regarding “what happened in Estonia during the Soviet period?” One must ask further: What happened with respect to or in comparison to which standards? The most obvious candidate for such a normative standard or compass is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. The Universal Declaration shall serve as the basis for evaluating research topics as well as any conclusions arrived at.

The goal of the EIHM is not to demonstrate that human rights were violated in Soviet Estonia. There is no question of this. Detailed historical research is needed, however, to answer *how* and to what extent human rights were violated. This needs to be done absent ideological biases. Violations and proscriptions of human rights need to be researched so that they can be understood in the broader context of European history of the 20th Century, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, as an obligation to the citizens of Estonia, so that they can better understand what they or their parents endured in the Soviet period.

The EIHM is not a judicial body. No legal consequences follow from its findings. Rather, its goal is to establish facts and circumstances, particularly with regard to human rights violations during the period in question. The results of the Institute's research and international debate will create a reliable basis for a broader understanding of developments during the Soviet era in Estonia, which could also be helpful in recognising their ramifications in the context of modern Estonia and the whole of Eastern Europe.

The work of the EIHM is supervised by an international committee of experts with broad experience in the history of Europe, human rights and political repressions. The International Committee will approve research topics as well as procedures. The research of the Institute will be carried out on the basis of grants awarded to scholars, based on the academic merit of their applications, their qualifications and experience in the area under study, regardless of nationality. The International Committee will make the final decisions regarding approval of research grants. The Committee will draw its own final conclusions based on the research they have approved

The International Committee will meet formally twice a year to discuss research progress; grant approvals will be processed electronically.

Once approved by the Committee, research papers will be published on the homepage of the Institute. Authors of research papers will be responsible for the contents of their work.