

## UPF Parndorf, Austria Honors Local Holocaust Victims Of National Socialism

Johann Rechberger  
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Parndorf, Austria—UPF representatives attended two ceremonies held to remember the local victims of National Socialism.

The town of Parndorf in the Austrian state of Burgenland dedicated a memorial to Holocaust victims at the entrance to the town cemetery. On April 2, 2023, the memorial was solemnly blessed and officially opened.



This was followed on the same day by the opening of an exhibition titled “Lights in the Dark – Women during the Holocaust.” The exhibition, held in the Parndorf Elementary School, was organized by UPF of Burgenland together with the Municipality of Parndorf.

A total of about 120 people attended the ceremonies.

The memorial at the cemetery is intended not only to commemorate Holocaust victims but also to act as a reminder so that such atrocities will never be repeated.



Daniel Bucur, a well-known wood artist from the town of Gols, designed the memorial, which consists of two wooden sculptures supplemented by information boards naming the Parndorf residents who were killed by the Nazi regime because of their Jewish religion, their political views, or mental or physical disabilities.



Because there are only a few remaining witnesses who can report on the time of National Socialism, memorials are all the more important. **Professor Dr. Herbert Brettl**, a historian, said: "Memorials help us to remember so that mistakes are not repeated, because we are responsible for ensuring that this does not happen again."



The following persons were invited by the municipality of Parndorf to bless the memorial:

**Mag. Johannes Reiss** from the Austrian Jewish Museum in Eisenstadt;

**Dr. Robert Jonischkeit**, Protestant superintendent A.B. Burgenland;

**Dr. Ägidius J. Zsifkovics**, bishop of Eisenstadt;

**Pastor Mag. Franz Borenitsch** from the parish of St. Ladislaus, Parndorf;

**Ibrahim Bilir**, Mosques Establishment Association MEEV, Parndorf.

Representatives of the Burgenland government and other prominent guests also were present.

Due to increasing rain, after a short speech by Parndorf Mayor **Wolfgang Kovacs**, who is also a UPF Ambassador for Peace, and the blessing of the memorial, the ceremony was moved to the school assembly hall, seamlessly transitioning into the opening event of the exhibition on the Holocaust.

The exhibition originally had been scheduled to open three years earlier, to mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp, but was delayed twice because of Corona restrictions.

**Dr. Christa Wendelin** spoke as a representative of the working group for the construction of the memorial, and **Elisabeth Böhm**, the mayor of Neusiedl am See, spoke on behalf of the Burgenland government.

There was also a very moving musical contribution by **Daniela Rechberger**.

At the opening of the exhibition, Professor Dr. Herbert Brettl spoke about the culture of remembrance.



**Johann Rechberger** from UPF-Burgenland explained how he worked with the Yad Vashem Memorial in Israel to bring its “traveling exhibition” to Parndorf.

He said that the exhibition “should be a sign of peaceful coexistence, cooperation, mutual appreciation and charity” and called for a reconciliation process in Austria to deal with the past history of National Socialism.

“This reconciliation process would be absolutely necessary if we want to learn from history and not repeat it!” Mr. Rechberger said. “A process of reconciliation involves love, empathy, forgiveness and repentance.”

He spoke about the love that we learn in the family. “When affection, trust and empathy prevail, then there is no need to justify oneself, but one can trust without fear to find understanding and forgiveness. Such an atmosphere is enormously important for personal development. The family is enormously important to learn to love.

“A life for the benefit of others is the most important thing, and the school for this is the family!”