

UNESCO inscribes Argentinean ESMA museum as a World Heritage Site



Buenos Aires, September 21 (RHC)-- UNESCO's heritage committee declared Tuesday the museum and memory site of the former Navy Mechanics School (ESMA) in Buenos Aires, Argentina where the largest clandestine detention center operated during the last Argentine dictatorship (1976-1983), as World Heritage.

According to information from UNESCO itself, this is the first nomination approved of the three presented this year of places of memory linked to recent conflicts, since, until now, the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial were the only two sites of this type from the last century inscribed on the list.

In addition to ESMA, UNESCO is expected to discuss the World War I Western Front memorial and funerary center in France and Belgium, as well as sites commemorating the Rwandan genocide. The addition of the museum to the World Heritage list represents the recognition of Argentina's work of denunciation, justice and memory after the civil-military dictatorship that ruled the country between 1976

and 1983.

According to the Argentinean representative to Unesco, Marcela Losardo, "World Heritage is also recognized as a privileged vehicle of the Argentine State's human rights policy."

The 45th Convention of the committee was attended by an Argentine delegation that, in addition to Losardo, included the Secretary of Human Rights, Horacio Pietragalla Corti; the executive director of the ESMA Museum, María Marcela 'Mayki' Gorosito and the general coordinator of the Work Plan for the nomination of the ESMA Memory Site, Mauricio Cohen Salama.

The President of Argentina, Alberto Fernandez, in celebrating the news said that "During the dictatorship, in the former Navy Mechanics School (ESMA) in Buenos Aires, the military government carried out the tortures of horror. There were detainees, tortured, exiled, many disappeared, the death flights.... We are still looking for the remains".

The Argentinean president indicated that this "State terrorism taught the people the horrors" and highlighted the figure of women, grandmothers, mothers, wives searching for children, grandchildren and husbands in this "black chapter" of the history of the country that is now celebrating 40 years of democracy.

"These women never sought revenge, but they demanded justice, truth and reparation and that is what we seek," said Fernandez in reference to the symbolism that ESMA acquires with its inclusion on the World Heritage list.

The World Heritage Committee meets once a year and is made up of representatives of 21 States Parties to the Convention -Argentina is one of them-, elected by its General Assembly. The list of member countries is completed by Belgium, Bulgaria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Mali, Mexico, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Thailand and Zambia.

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