

Invitational Letter for Gathering at Auschwitz-Birkenau May 29 – June 3, 2023

Updated: March 6, 2023

Dear Friends,

Frank De Waele Roshi and I, warmly invite you to join us at an Interfaith Gathering at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Poland, **MAY 29 – JUNE 3, 2023**

This gathering is to remember all those who suffered &/or died during the Shoah and war and genocides since then. It is inspired by Ginni's desire to celebrate what would have been her father's 101st birthday & what will be the 78th commemoration of the liberation of the camps. May 5th was the day Ginni's dad, Victor Nathan (Stauber) Stern, chose as his birthday because it was his liberation day from Buchenwald KZ.

*(Please note, this gathering is inspired by,
but is NOT a Zen Peacemaker offering.)*

We will gather on the grounds of Auschwitz-Birkenau for 5 days. Birkenau is where Ginni's father, extended family and his entire shtetl community from a small mountain village in Romania, disembarked the cattle car - knee deep in mud and shit - where they suffered and where all, but Ginni's dad, perished.

Originally planned to take place May 2020, covid-rescheduled it twice, but with caution, now feels like an auspicious time to gather on those sacred grounds to practice the Zen Peacemaker's Three Tenets: **Not-Knowing;**

Bearing Witness;

Action that emerges from Not-Knowing & Bearing Witness.

During this 2023 Auschwitz Gathering, there will be periods of meditation/prayer on the grounds of Auschwitz-Birkenau. We will share our inner experiences and reflections in morning Councils (small groups). There will also be whole-retreat-Councils (sharing circles) in the evenings. We have also scheduled in a free morning, for those who choose, to wander the grounds of the concentration camp in solitude or to do research in the Auschwitz Museum Archives.

Below are the steps needed to Participate & Pay for the **Auschwitz Gathering, May 29 – June 3, 2023**. Probably wise to read this letter slowly and carefully, with a calendar beside you. Lots of details here. Ginni is available to answer any questions: ginnistern@hotmail.com

STEP 1 – Register to Participate

Please take your time filling out this **Participation Form**. Your retreat will begin now. Please submit your Participation Form as soon as you can.

If you are registered from 2020, please fill out and submit this form - it's new.

Link for Reg Form:

<https://forms.gle/cPGyKoqb244VAwqR9>

Please don't hesitate to let Ginni know if you have any questions.

STEP 2 – Payment

Please pay to reserve your place in the **Auschwitz Gathering, May 29-June 3, 2023**.

Participation Fee for the May/June 2023, Auschwitz Gathering:

US\$940 or 880€ EURO

~ If you already paid for the pre-covid-rescheduled 2020 retreat, Ginni will be in touch, regarding the cost difference and how to pay it.

~ If needed and if you live & work in **Poland**, please contact to Ginni for information about the special reduced fee for Polish citizens. ginnistern@hotmail.com

The Participation Fee includes everything starting after breakfast, Monday morning, May 29th: transport from Krakow to Auschwitz, room, linens, towels, early morning coffee/tea, 3 meals a day including a Special Shabbat Dinner and an early continental breakfast Saturday morning, June 3, 2023 before we board our morning bus back to Krakow.

Stefanie Geiler-Czerwonka, in Europe & Serge Goldberg in the states, have graciously offered to manage the finances for our **2023 Auschwitz Gathering**.

There are now 4 ways to pay your Participation Fee:

IF YOU ARE IN EUROPE:

Payment Method #1 - PayPal-Account:

send payment via your PayPal to Stefanie Geiler-Czerwonka's PayPal account as a "friend or gift" Email: stefanie9.1@gmx.de

* Please add US\$44. transaction fee if transferring from your **bank via PayPal**

* Please add US\$95. transaction fee if transferring from your **credit card via PayPal**

~ OR ~

Payment Method #2 - Bank-Account: WIRE TRANSFER from your bank account to:

Stefanie Geiler-Czerwonka

ING-DiBa AG

IBAN: DE76500105175429216091

BIC: INGDDEFFXXX

* Please add any bank fees to the US\$940 or 875 € Gathering Participation Fee. Apparently, different banks charge different fees for money transfers.

* We will let you know if the bank charges are correct once the funds get to Steffi's or Serge's account.

IF YOU ARE IN THE USA:

Payment Method #3 - Personal Check: please pay to the order of:
SERGE GOLDBERG, write **“2023 Auschwitz Gathering”** in memo line.
 Mail your personal bank check via USPS for the full amount to:

Serge Goldberg
3893 Promontory Court
Boulder, CO. 80304 USA

(please let Ginni know the check is in the mail)

~ OR ~

Payment Method #4 - PAYPAL: please send full amount as a **GIFT** to:
 Serge Goldberg sergemgoldberg@gmail.com or 303-819-4493

Please note, if you are able to contribute more than the US\$940 / 880 Euro, we will begin a scholarship fund to assist those who want to join us, but cannot afford the registration fee or travel & Krakow expenses. If you add a contribution to the Scholarship Fund, please note how much so we can distinguish between a donation, the bank-transfer-fees or Memorial Candle donations. Thank you!

*** Whether you can easily afford the Participation Fee or not, if you would like information about ways to fund your participation and/or the **Participation Fee for someone in need for the 2023 Auschwitz Gathering by raising a Mala**, Ginni will send you the **“Mala Practice Guidelines”**. Please ask.

“Mala Practice” is an empowering way to invite family, sangha and community support, to help fund this special spiritual sojourn for yourself or others who cannot fund it themselves. Cast your net wide...

*** If you need a receipt for payment, please let Ginni know – I’m happy to email you one. *Steffi & Serge will forward all payment confirmations via email to me, so I will keep track that way. Please allow 1 week for this process.*

Polish Zloty’s Cash on hand: There is a bookstore at the Auschwitz Museum and a Café at the Center for Dialogue & Prayer, where if you desire, you can purchase books, water, coffee and snacks - cash money in Polish Zloty’s is probably best for these optional purchases.

Cancellation Reimbursement Policy:

Before April 17, 2023 – all but 10% will be returned

Cancellation after April 17, 2023 – 50% will be returned

Cancellation after May 15, 2023 – 25% will be returned

Cancellation after May 22, 2023 – no refunds

Cancellation due to a positive COVID-19 test, please see **GUIDELINES FOR COVID SAFETY** which you will receive after you register.

STEP 3 – Travel

Frank Roshi & Ginni, with assistance of our medical advisors, will determine the health & safety of travel & gathering along the way. At this time we are moving forward and encourage **Registration & Securing Travel Tickets**. Please see **GUIDELINES FOR COVID SAFETY** which you will receive after you register.

Please arrange your travel to arrive in Krakow between May 27th & 28th 2023 – or earlier. This will give you time to explore Krakow and let jet-lag fade before plunging into the intensity of Auschwitz.

Sunday, May 28, 2023, there will be an *optional* day-long walking tour of Kazimierz, the Old Jewish Quarter of Krakow. This tour will start at the **Wyspianski Hotel** after breakfast. See notices posted in the **Wyspianski Hotel** lobby.

The Tour Fee will probably cost about US\$30 – US\$40 which you can pay Ginni when you arrive at the **Wyspianski Hotel** or that morning at breakfast. (*cash only – this Tour Fee & tip for the Guide are not included in your Participation Fee*). There will be a lunch-stop at a restaurant in Kazimierz which is not included in the **Tour Fee**.

This is a very worthwhile day-long walking tour with local Polish academic historians – highly recommended.

You may reserve a place for the Kazimierz Tour anytime by emailing Ginni or noting it on your Participation (registration) Form.

We will also have a sign-up sheet posted at the **Wyspianski Hotel lobby**. But please let Ginni know - the sooner the better - so we can have an estimated count and have an idea how many tour-guides we'll need.

Sunday, May 28, 2023, between 5pm - 6:30pm we will have your **“Gathering Packets”** ready for you to pick-up at the **Wyspianski Hotel**. We will also request everyone take a Covid-test at this time. Please see **GUIDELINES FOR COVID SAFETY** which you will receive after you register.

The Gathering Packets will have your nametags, retreat schedule and other information you will need for our time at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Please make time in your schedule to stop by for your packet and say hello!

Return travel – Saturday, June 3, 2023:

On, Saturday, June 3rd, our chartered bus will depart Auschwitz in the morning and make 3 stops: at the Airport in Krakow; the main Krakow train station; and near the Wyspianski Hotel.

Please arrange your return travel for Saturday late-morning / afternoon, **June 3, 2023**, if possible.

If you are serving on staff, we will have a de-briefing meeting on Saturday afternoon at the **Wyspianski Hotel** in Krakow, so please arrange your travel accordingly.

If you need to take a taxi to the airport because our bus won't get you there in time for your flight, the taxi or bus cost is on your own.

Passports:

Please double-check your Passports! Be sure your **Passport Expiration Date** is at least **6 months AFTER YOUR RETURN HOME FLIGHT**.

Please make color copies of the 1st page of your passport. Leave a copy with someone at home (your emergency contact), put an extra copy in your luggage, backpack and/or carry-on, and **please email a copy to Ginni**. This helps things resolve quicker if your passport is lost or stolen.

Your Travel Itinerary:

When your travel tickets are confirmed, please send your **arrival day/time** in Krakow to Ginni - I don't need your entire itinerary: ginnistern@hotmail.com

STEP 4 - Reserve Hotel In Krakow**Wyspianski Hotel – Krakow** near the Old Town "Stare Miasto" (a UNESCO Site)

Westerplatte 15, Krakow, Poland

Phone nbr: +48 12 429 60 28

Reception Contact: Joanna Przepolska, wyspianski@janpol.com.pl

<https://www.hotel-wyspianski.pl/en/>

DATES: our block of rooms at the **Wyspianski Hotel** are reserved for:

May 22 - May 29, 2023 & June 3 - 7, 2023

Travel, meals and hotel accommodations before and after the **Auschwitz Gathering** are not included in the Gathering Participation Fee.

Hotel Group-Rate Code is: **MFP23** (meditation for peace '23)

PRICES: of our Discounted Rates at the **Wyspianski Hotel**:

(@ exchange rate February 2023)

Single room: 340,00 PLN / 72.Euro / US\$78. per night including breakfast

Twin room: 420,00 PLN / 89.Euro / US\$96. per night including breakfast

Triple room: 520,00 PLN / 110.Euro / US\$119. per night including breakfast

To help share expenses, if you choose, Ginni will try to help you find a roommate (from our group) to share your **Wyspianski Hotel** room.

Please let Ginni know preferred gender of rmmt: ginnistern@hotmail.com

As soon as you suspect you know your Krakow arrival dates, please make your hotel reservation directly, with the **Wyspianski Hotel**.

Here is how:

Please reserve your own **Wyspianski Hotel** room:

1- Go to: <https://www.hotel-wyspianski.pl/en/>

2- Choose English version (if Polish pops up)

3- Click "reserve online tab" - right side of the website

4- Select your Booking dates

5- Enter the code **MFP23** in the upper right corner of the tab

Wyspianski Hotel discount will no longer be available after May 1, 2023.

On **May 1, 2023**, any remaining rooms in our reserved discounted block of rooms at the **Wyspianski Hotel** will be **released**. But you may still contact the **Wyspianski Hotel** to see if they have any rooms available at their regular rate.

~ You may cancel or change your **Wyspianski Hotel** dates for **NO CHARGE** until May 1, 2023.

~ After May 1, 2023, **NO Wyspianski Hotel REFUNDS** for cancellations or changes.

Of course, you may stay anywhere in Krakow you desire. There are many Hostels for less expense & other hotels for more expense in the area. If you decide to stay in a Hostel or another hotel, please choose one as close as possible to the **Wyspianski Hotel** and let Ginni know where you'll be staying.

All optional group activities in Krakow (before and after the 'Gathering at Auschwitz') will meet at the **Wyspianski Hotel** lobby and **our whole group will be departing for Auschwitz from there, the early morning of Monday, May 29, 2023**.

Lastly, if you would like to volunteer with Ukrainian Refugees after we return from Auschwitz, we have made tentative arrangements with the JCC-Krakow (Jewish Community Center-Krakow). There is a place on your Participation Form to indicate interest or email Ginni.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

In Peace,
Frank De Waele Roshi &
Ginni Myoshin Stern,
Serving the One

*"I greet you from the other side of sorrow and despair
with a love so vast and shattered it will reach you everywhere."*

~ Leonard Cohen