

Press release

Mainz, 23 May 2023

How can democracy be defended? Victim protection and support experts from all over the world to meet in Berlin

WEISSER RING to host the international conference

Victim protection and crime experts from around the world will meet in Berlin from 7 to 9 June to discuss the rising number of attacks on democracy. Under the banner “Protecting Fundamental Freedoms, a Victim’s Perspective”, specialists from different organisations, such as the FBI, the European Jewish Congress and the German Körber-Stiftung, will discuss topics that include hate crimes, repressive measures against journalists or the protection of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers from Ukraine and Russia.

The conference is being organised by Victim Support Europe (VSE), the umbrella organisation of European victim support organisations, and will be hosted by WEISSER RING, Germany’s largest aid organisation for crime victims. The VSE conference takes place once a year; the last time it was in Germany was in 2010. It is one of the largest and most important events in the field of victim support worldwide.

This year’s conference focuses on the major issues of our time in that democracies are increasingly being targeted by populists and extremists, fanatics are attacking fundamental values of freedom, and hundreds of thousands of people have become victims of war and displacement. Given such global challenges, the community of victim supporters would like to provide answers to questions such as: “Why are democracy and fundamental freedoms important for victims’ rights?”

With a view to finding some answers, WEISSER RING together with Victim Support Europe have invited experts from around the world, including the following:

- **Staci Beers** is the specialist in working with victims of crime at the American FBI and will present innovative approaches to planning and preparing victim support.
- **Ahmad Mansour**, psychologist and CEO of MIND Prevention, will demonstrate the key role that religious organisations can play in helping victims in their recovery and violence prevention.
- **Jochen Kopelke**, the Federal President of the Police Trade Union, will speak about equality, inclusion and respect.
- **Tom De Bruyne**, founder of the Behavioural Design Academy, will address the phenomenon of populism that is spreading around the world.
- **Lauren Walker** from “The Brussels Times” will explore the role of journalism in a modern democracy and the special responsibility involved in reporting on victims of violent crime.

- **Anna-Lena von Hodenberg**, journalist and one of the founders of HateAid, will report on what support is most effective in helping victims of hate crimes.
- **Astrid Passin**, spokesperson for the bereaved and those affected by the attack on Breitscheidplatz in Berlin, will relate how it feels when life is thrown off course by a terrorist attack.
- **Hila Shvoron** will speak about “Sharing Knowledge – Shared Trauma: Scaling Knowledge from Israel to Ukraine”. The Israeli organisation NATAL’s specialist focus is on war and terror-related trauma.

Looking at the alarming developments of the last few years shows just how important the issues to be addressed at the conference really are. “Increasingly, those people who help to make our liberal democratic system work end up becoming victims,” states Bianca Biwer, National Executive Director of WEISSER RING. “Our fundamental values are challenged every time a journalist is attacked, every time a politician is threatened, every time an NGO is intimidated.” This is why it is all the more important to WEISSER RING and Victim Support Europe that the event is also open to non-members. “The conference isn’t a closed event – quite the opposite, in fact. We’d be really pleased if a lot of people took part, especially representatives from politics, the press or civil society,” emphasises Biwer. “At this conference, Europe is united – that’s really special.”

The programme starts in the morning with presentations and discussions; in the afternoon various complementary workshops will take place. Day tickets are also available for the conference.

The programme overview and other important information such as admission prices can be found on the event website: <https://2023.vse-conference.eu/>

Interested parties can register here:

<https://vse-form.typeform.com/to/nSrtnr9c?typeform-source=victim-support.eu>

For press registrations please use this link:

<https://vse-form.typeform.com/to/TEFm080X?typeform-source=2023.vse-conference.eu>

The conference language is English, simultaneous translation into German will be provided for the plenary sessions.

WEISSER RING was founded in Mainz in 1976 as a registered “Non-profit Association to Support Victims of Crime and Prevent Criminal Offences”. It is Germany’s largest charity for victims of crime. The association has a network of approximately 3,000 professionally trained voluntary victim supporters in 400 local branches all over Germany, on a victim support hotline and providing online counselling. WEISSER RING has around 100,000 supporters and is divided into 18 regional associations. The organisation is an expert and recognised partner for politics, the judiciary, administration, science, and media on all questions involving victim support and protection of victims. The association exclusively finances its activities from member fees, donations and testamentary bequests, and from fines imposed by courts and public prosecution offices. WEISSER RING receives no state funding.



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