**Attachment No. 1 to the announcement of the competition for the position of Manager of the Extraneous Branch of the Witold Pilecki Institute of Solidarity and Valor in Berlin**

The mission of the Pilecki Institute (September 18, 2025)

The report from Auschwitz penned by “Witold” – Cavalry Captain Witold Pilecki – is one of the most important testimonies to the calculated and systematic atrocities of the Nazi German totalitarian state. Its author lost his life as a victim of a judicial crime committed by the apparatus of a Communist totalitarian state. The Institute named after Witold Pilecki conducts research on totalitarian systems, collects and makes available historical sources concerning totalitarian crimes, honors people who – when faced with these systems – displayed valor and solidarity with the victims, and disseminates knowledge related to the above. The Institute conducts its activities both in Poland and abroad. Its mission is the elaboration of the tasks set forward in the Act of 9 November 2017 on the Witold Pilecki Institute of Solidarity and Valor.

The Pilecki Institute’s academic activity is aimed at researching and broadening knowledge about totalitarian systems, including Nazi and Communist crimes committed in the 20th century. We devote our attention not only to totalitarian states and various forms of resistance against them, but also to the matters of punishment and redress for crimes and persecution. We are fully aware that also today, in the 21st century, these atrocities are often relativized or even presented as a positive reference point. Therefore, the Institute focuses on the implementation of interdisciplinary research projects devoted to the issues of totalitarianism and authoritarianism in the 20th century. The work is conducted by the Institute’s academic department – the Center for Totalitarian Studies, but we also welcome contributions from external scholars. We provide access to a well-equipped library and a thematic digital archive, where we have gathered millions of copies of documents from both Polish and foreign archival collections. As part of the “Chronicles of Terror” and “Witnesses to the Age” projects, we collect and make available accounts that expand and supplement our knowledge of the destructive power of totalitarian and authoritarian systems. An important part of our research is the publication of its results in the form of monographs, collective works, critical editions of sources, and journals. Our translation program makes the findings in global humanities available to Polish readers.

In recent years, the eyes of the world have turned to Central and Eastern Europe, especially Ukraine. The war waged by Russia proves that the issue of totalitarian crimes is still relevant today. The activities of the Lemkin Center focus on documenting contemporary war crimes targeting mostly civilians. The published reports are not only an invaluable testimony to these atrocities, but also a warning and a call for justice. They clearly confirm that the tools developed by 20th-century totalitarian regimes are still being used today.

The commemorative efforts of the Institute seek to honor people who, despite falling victim to 20th-century totalitarian regimes, retained their humanity. They either displayed valor and solidarity with the persecuted and those threatened with repression, or they preserve and promote memory of such individuals. Our activities in this regard comprise preparing motions for the bestowal of the Virtus et Fraternitas Medal, which is awarded by the President of the Republic of Poland as a token of remembrance and gratitude to those who aided Polish citizens in difficult times. Among the medal recipients are foreigners who foster the memory of Polish victims of totalitarian regimes in their homelands. There is also the “Called by Name” program dedicated to commemorating citizens of the Second Polish Republic who were murdered for helping Jews during the Second World War. The name of the program is a reference to Zbigniew Herbert’s poem Mr. Cogito on the Need for Precision. During the commemoration ceremonies, we “call by name” – i.e. honor with a special monument – those people who were murdered for helping Jews. The Jews who usually perished alongside their helpers are commemorated in the same manner. The program brings often completely forgotten figures back from oblivion, which can prove instrumental in developing local identity.

In order to ensure that our research and commemorative activities reach wider audiences, we complement them with educational efforts, aimed at both schools and other communities. Our exhibitions and educational offerings – workshops, lectures, and urban games – create a program that explores the difficult topics of 20th-century history and is an important element of the public dialogue on war and peace. We are active on the Internet, where we present among other things some of our archival collections and numerous films. A sizeable part of our offer is available also in English. The Augustów Roundup Memorial House in Augustów plays a significant role in our educational and commemorative efforts.

Many of our activities are aimed at foreign audiences. Accordingly, the Pilecki Institute has opened a branch in Berlin with a permanent exhibition devoted to Witold Pilecki, as well as subsidiaries in Rapperswil and New York. We also offer scholarships for researchers from Poland and abroad. The results of their work are intended to bring increased attention to the topics explored by the Institute in accordance with its mission and to encourage further in-depth research. Every year, the most important books in the fields of interest to the Institute are honored with the Witold Pilecki International Book Award. Eligible for the award are publications that have appeared in various countries and several languages. The Institute’s books are also sold in foreign markets.

As employees of the Pilecki Institute, we seek to ensure that the memory of the age of totalitarianisms serves a warning for the future, and that their victims are never forgotten. Our activities are also a tribute to Witold Pilecki and other individuals who, during “times of contempt”, had the strength to resist evil.