

Re: Germany Agrees to Holocaust Payment

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BERLIN (AP) -- After months of talks, Germany and the Jewish Claims Conference have reached agreement on compensating Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe, a newspaper reported Saturday.

Under pressure from the United States and Jewish groups, German officials resumed talks in August on compensating the survivors as restitution for suffering in ghettos and slave labor camps under the Nazis.

According to the Berlin-based Tagesspiegel newspaper, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's chief of staff, Friedrich Bohl, and representatives of the claims conference reached an agreement earlier this week in Bonn.

A government spokesman in Bonn would not comment on the report, saying only that an official announcement was expected Monday.

Attempts to contact a claims conference spokesman by telephone were unsuccessful.

Citing informed sources, Tagesspiegel said that starting in 1999 and running through the year 2002, Germany is to pay \$27.6 million annually into a claims conference fund to compensate an estimated 18,000 eligible Eastern European survivors.

Conditions for the restitution include that those receiving payments have not previously been compensated; are determined to be financially needy; and were incarcerated in a ghetto or concentration camp for a minimum period of time, the newspaper said. The report said the monthly payments would be about \$138, about half of what Holocaust survivors from Western Europe are compensated.

Germany has already paid some \$55 billion to Holocaust survivors in the West, but those living in the former Soviet bloc were unable to apply for compensation during the Cold War.

After Germany reunited and communism collapsed, Bonn offered one-time payments to Holocaust survivors in Russia and parts of Eastern Europe, but Jewish groups and the U.S. government said more needed to be done and the German government promised to find a solution.