

## **PEACE DECLARATION OF THE CITY OF PEACE LINZ 2019**

**The municipal council of the city of Linz would like to especially emphasize the following positive developments in the peace declaration of 2019:**

### **On the occasion of 100 years of women's suffrage:**

On the interim municipal council of the city of Linz in 1918 there were two female mandataries (Marie Beutlmayr and Juliane Hudetschek). After the first municipal elections in May 1919 the amount increased to seven. This was more than 11%. Today there are 21 women of 61 municipal counselors – this means 34%. At the moment, the city senate of Linz is set up on equal numbers in terms of gender (4 women, 4 men).

Social rolls underlie a societal process. Appropriate measures against the discrimination of women and therefore against old-age and child poverty are being demanded. This is what we want to stand up for.

### **Processing the NS-time in Linz:**

The unanimous decision to set memorial signs for the victims of National Socialism in Linz will deepen the memory of them. Therefore a jury is selecting the artistic design in public spaces. The participation of the population in recollectional pedagogical measures that comes with it is an appropriate form of public proclamation. In this context, we also welcome the selective cutting of street names that refer to persons linked to the NS-time.

**In addition to this, we commemorate the following events:**

- **Opening of the Iron Curtain**

Thirty years ago, a symbol for freedom, peace and human dignity was set in Austria and Europe by the opening of the Iron Curtain. On 11 December 1989, the head of the provincial government of Upper Austria, Josef Ratzenböck, was able to sever the "Iron Curtain" near Wulowitz – Dolní Dvořiště, together with the South Bohemian county chairman Miroslav Šenkyř and in presence of the mayor of Linz during that time, Franz Dobusch.

- **Anti-torture convention**

This convention has been declared by the United Nations 35 years ago and is an agreement against torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatments or punishments of people. Persons seeking protection who are threatened by torture are being protected in and by the city of Linz.

- **World War II – Beginning of the war (1939)**

The beginning of the war 80 years ago on 1 September 1939 is reminding of the catastrophic consequences of a war mentality: 80 million casualties in Europe and the destruction of whole cities and regions. Developments of war can only be prevented if the civil population has a strong awareness that violence does not make anything better. The raising of this awareness is what we want to support.

**The events mentioned above are causing for us to especially highlight the following matters:**

- **Gathering strength against the rearmament in Europe**

The peace project Europe is in danger. The cancellation of the INF-treaty by the United States of America and Russia on 1 and 2 February 2019 is aggravating the nuclear threats. Austria should

use its good relationships to enable new rockets to be made available for international examinations and to keep their amount low. Because of Austria's neutrality and as the City of Peace Linz we want to ask of all Mayors for Peace to raise their voices against the rearmament on European soil.

➤ **Protection of human rights in the EU**

The human rights are part of the European canon of values and therefore ought to be protected as cultural and legal goods. This is also part of the basic consent in Austria. The fountain of human rights at the "Friedensplatz" (Peace Square) in Linz is reminding us about this. We are jointly responsible for every person living in Linz benefiting from human rights. Projects like "City of Respect" are helpful with this.

➤ **The unity of Europe is important for us.**

At the moment we are experiencing a lack of European solidarity and grave societal contradictions. The increase of the poverty gap, the non-aliquot distribution of asylum-seekers, black-and-white strategies like "Brussels versus Austria", national egoism instead of solidarity and development of togetherness – all this is endangering the bonds in Europe. A mutual getting to know each other by exchange of youth, messages of peace between partner cities, raising public awareness for peace activities as well as transparent information and European measures – this is what we want to support and promote.

➤ **Direct democracy and active climate policy**

Direct democracy in the form of citizens taking part in public consultations and referendums is important for us, as well as the anchorage of political parties in environmental impact assessments – with objective arguments and in dialogues. We are standing up for the democratic design of the city of Linz.

Air quality and the increasing particulate matter air pollution should be made more transparent and publicly visible in Linz from now on. The future of the oncoming generations should be a focus: We are taking their worries and fears in terms of climate change and their quality of life seriously. We welcome the autonomous commitment of young people for their future. That is why we offer them a dialogue with the aim to develop concrete measures for climate protection in our city. Free access to clean air and clean water is an important part of climate policy and a vital contribution to the preservation of peace.

➤ **City of Peace Linz for "Active Absence of Violence"**

On the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the city of Linz is hosting a symposium on 27 and 28 September. Gandhi showed that great political changes are also possible without violence: by dealing with fellow people in a determined but always respectful way – even with an opponent. This would have been the alternative to the war in Europe. Since two years there is a memorial for active absence of violence in Linz. The Gandhi symposium in the "Wissensturm" in Linz will focus on the quality of absence of violence. The absence of violence should be promoted on a broader level by a principle of education called "peace education", by exercising and living forms of social coexistence that are based on our basic values, as well as calling a halt to extremist tendencies.

The social relations with others, the societal climate in the city, the recollection of the past (NS-recollection signs), the care for the social weak and the poor, the promotion of participation and codetermination by the citizens and a climate-friendly transportation policy (amongst other things) are the base for a peaceful future in our city.

**The Linz City Council unanimously passed the 2019 Declaration of Peace by the City of Linz during its session on September 26, 2019.**