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Kreuz**

# Press release

Missing persons of the Second World War

## **GRC call: File requests with the Tracing Service by the end of 2021**

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**75 years after the end of the Second World War, the German Red Cross is calling on the population to make inquiries about relatives missing during the war in the near future and no later than December 31, 2021. The whereabouts of missing Wehrmacht soldiers, civilians, prisoners of war, civilian internees or children who have been separated from their families due to flight and expulsion are often uncertain to this day. The GRC Tracing Service can also provide information on prisoners in Soviet special camps in the former Soviet occupation zone and the GDR. "At the end of 2023, the GRC Tracing Service will end this task, which is financed by the Federal Government, in accordance with an agreement with the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI). Therefore, inquiries should be made to the Munich office of the GRC Tracing Service within the next one and a half years," says GRC President Gerda Hasselfeldt.**

In the scope of a data transfer, the GRC Tracing Service has received around two million prisoner-of-war and internee files from Russian archives since 1992, as well as around five million index cards of the so-called prisoner-of-war index from the Russian State Military Archives. Their evaluation could still lead to new findings when searching for relatives today, says Hasselfeldt. Last year, 10,091 people made inquiries to the GRC Tracing Service in connection with the Second World War; the year before there were about 9,000. "We assume that in the context of the 75th anniversary of the end of the war, interest in this topic is increasing and that in many families the need to finally clarify the fate of missing relatives is growing. However, this interest will level off again due to demographic developments," says Hasselfeldt. In 23 percent of all cases, the GRC Tracing Service can provide information about the whereabouts of a missing relative; in the case of German prisoners of war in the former Soviet Union, this often includes information about the date of death and last place of residence.

Since 1953, the GRC Tracing Service has been institutionally supported by the BMI. Its work is both historically significant and timelessly topical. Last year, the GRC Tracing Service received 2,083 (previous year: 2,291) tracing requests from refugees who have lost contact with their relatives. International tracing will continue after 2023. In addition, the GRC Tracing Service provided advice in a total of 20,966 cases on family reunification nationwide in 2019.

**More information about the GRC Tracing Service and online forms for tracing requests: [www.drk-suchdienst.de](http://www.drk-suchdienst.de)**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the largest humanitarian organisation in the world with national societies in 192 countries.

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