

## Nomination form International Memory of the World Register

### 1.0 Checklist

Nominees may find the following checklist useful before sending the nomination form to the International Memory of the World Secretariat. The information provided in italics on the form is there for guidance only and should be deleted once the sections have been completed.

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Summary completed (section 1)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Nomination and contact details completed (section 2)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Declaration of Authority signed and dated (section 2)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | If this is a joint nomination, section 2 appropriately modified, and <b>all</b> Declarations of Authority obtained  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Documentary heritage identified (sections 3.1 – 3.3)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | History/provenance completed (section 3.4)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bibliography completed (section 3.5)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organizations recorded (section 3.6)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of owner completed (section 4.1)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of custodian – if different from owner – completed (section 4.2)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of legal status completed (section 4.3)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of accessibility completed (section 4.4)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of copyright status completed (section 4.5)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Evidence presented to support fulfilment of the criteria? (section 5)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Additional information provided (section 6)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of consultation with stakeholders completed (section 7)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Assessment of risk completed (section 8)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Summary of Preservation and Access Management Plan completed. If there is no formal Plan attach details about current and/or planned access, storage and custody arrangements (section 9) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other information provided – if applicable (section 10)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Suitable reproduction quality photographs identified to illustrate the documentary heritage. (300dpi, jpg format, full-colour preferred).   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Copyright permissions forms signed and attached. Agreement to propose item(s) for inclusion on the World Digital Library if inscribed   |

# Nomination form

## International Memory of the World Register

*Register Book of visas granted by Portuguese Consul in Bordeaux, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, 1939-1940*

*Livro de Registo de Vistos concedidos pelo Consul de Portugal em Bordéus, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, 1939-1940*

ID Code [2016-33]

### 1.0 Summary (max 200 words)

The *Register Book of visas granted by Portuguese Consul in Bordeaux, Aristides de Sousa Mendes*, who said that "reasons of humanity do not distinguish race or nationality", is a unique testimony of World War II and the drama of thousands of refugees. This record is also an example of an unconditional respect of an individual for human rights and human life, even at the expense of his own well-being. Each name listed in this book tells us about a spared life or, in many cases, an entire family. In the context of the war, when Europe was facing a tremendous disaster, the German occupation prompted tens of thousands of refugees to flee southward in the hope of exiting France via the southern border into Spain and Portugal. From 1939 onwards, the Government of Portugal prohibited further crossings by refugees, especially Jewish, and each visa had to be authorized by the MFA. Thousands of refugees massed in front of the Portuguese Consulate in Bordeaux, and the Portuguese Consul on his own decision and risk opened Portugal's doors at the right moment to those fleeing France. The image of "Portugal, a safe haven" was born then in Bordeaux, and it lasts to this day.

### 2.0 Nominator

#### 2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

Instituto Diplomático – Arquivo Diplomático do Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros  
Diplomatic Institute – Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

#### 2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

Owner of the book and custodial body.

#### 2.3 Contact person(s) (to provide information on nomination)

Margarida Maria Gomes Quintão Lages, Director of The Diplomatic Archives

#### 2.4 Contact details

Name :

Margarida Maria Gomes  
Quintão Lages

Address:

Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Instituto  
Diplomático  
Largo das Necessidades  
1350-215 LISBOA

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Telephone  
0035121 3946164  
0035121 3946305

Facsimile

Email  
*margarida.lages@mne.pt*

### 3.0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage

#### 3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

*Register Book of consular fees regarding visas granted by Portuguese Consul in Bordeaux, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, 1939-1940, Portuguese Consulate in Bordeaux, L.2 ( 69850), Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal*

*Livro de Registo de Emolumentos Consulares relativos a vistos concedidos pelo Cônsul de Portugal em Bordéus, Aristides de Sousa Mendes 1939-1940, Consulado de Portugal em Bordéus, L.2 (69850), Arquivo Diplomático do Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros*

#### 3.4 History/provenance

This registration book is part of the fund of the Portuguese Consulate in Bordeaux, and was intended to record the consular fees for the various administrative acts, including visas. It covers the period from 1939 to 1940. In this book are registered the visas granted by Aristides Sousa Mendes from June 14th to June 21st 1940, when France was invaded by Germany generating a huge wave of refugees. Aristides de Sousa Mendes decided, on his risk, to act against the restrictive instructions he was receiving from his government and to help all those who needed a visa and were arriving at the Portuguese Consulate in Bordeaux. The consequence of this humanitarian action was the expulsion from the Diplomatic career, with many difficulties for his person and familiar life.

### 4.0 Legal information

#### 4.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

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Name	Address
<i>Instituto Diplomático do Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros</i>	Largo das Necessidades 1350-215 LISBOA

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Telephone	Facsimile	Email
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#### 4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner)

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Name	Address
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Telephone	Facsimile	Email
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#### 4.3 Legal status

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Provide details of legal and administrative responsibility for the preservation of the documentary heritage

*Category of ownership*

Public Institution – Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Secretary - General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the legal and administrative responsibility for the preservation of the book.

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#### **4.4 Accessibility**

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Describe how the item(s) / collection may be accessed

Bearing in mind the unique and irreplaceable status of the book and in order to assure its preservation and integrity, the document is made available for reading only on very special occasions. When that proves to be the case, access to it takes place in a dedicated room, after obtaining the reader's identification and under specific and strict specifications of control and surveillance. It is however assured to readers a pro bono and unrestricted access to an electronic copy of the original, which is available on the on-line catalogue of the Portuguese Diplomatic Archive and Library (<http://ahd.mne.pt/nyron/Library/Catalog>). The book has been displayed at significant exhibitions.

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#### **4.5 Copyright status**

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Describe the copyright status of the item(s) / collection

The Diplomatic Archives of the MFA has full copyright of the document.

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### **5.0 Assessment against the selection criteria**

#### **5.1 Authenticity**

The *Register Book of the Portuguese Consulate in Bordeaux* is an original and its authenticity is perfectly established due to his official provenance.

#### **5.2 World significance**

This document has indeed world significance, is unique and irreplaceable having in mind that it is the only testimony of the visas granted by Aristides Sousa Mendes in specific, dramatic, war conditions. The Bordeaux Register of Visas eloquently documents this situation. Between November 1939 and April 1940, about 20 visas were issued every month. In May 1940, this figure rose to 8 visas a day. Up to 10 June, the consulate issued 59 visas.

On the 11th it issued 67; on the 12th, 47; on the 13th, 6, on the 14th, 173; on the 15th, 112 and on the 16th, 40; on the 17th, 247, on the 18th, 216; between the 19th and the 22nd, an average of 350 were written down in the Register of Visas. From then on the concern for maintaining order could no longer be overlooked, names were no longer mentioned and in the end no record was kept. According to some witnesses "It was an assembly-line operation". The fall in numbers on the 13th probably shows the number of authorizations granted from Lisbon; and on the 16th it marks the moment when the consul, exhausted by circumstances, called in sick and must have taken the decision not to wait for the authorizations from Lisbon to give refugees a free passage. There is no record of the visas issued under the authority of Aristides de Sousa Mendes at the Portuguese Consulate in Bayonne, on the street or at the border in Hendaye. We will never know how many visas Aristides de Sousa Mendes issued,

but they were certainly more than 30 000, which is considered as the largest rescue action taken by an individual person.

### **5.3 Comparative criteria:**

***Does the heritage meet any of the following tests? (It must meet at least one of them.)***

#### **1 Time**

This document is of great significance in the framework of World War II, a time of suffering, persecution, and destruction in Europe. The Portuguese Consul in Bordeaux, Aristides de Sousa Mendes witnessed the German invasion of France and the city where he was stationed being flooded with refugees. Portugal's dictator, António de Oliveira Salazar, issued explicit instructions to his diplomatic representatives in Europe forbidding them from granting passports or visas, among others, to "Jews expelled from their countries and stripped of their nationality". Upon witnessing the despair of the refugees, Sousa Mendes decided to do the "diplomatically unthinkable": he rebelled against the inhumane orders of his superiors. In the course of a few days and with the assistance of his family and other volunteers, he issued thousands of Portuguese transit visas to Jewish refugees for entry into his neutral country, saving them from the Nazis.

#### **2 Place**

While many Jews had sought to leave Germany and Austria after the Nazis came to power, the anti-Semitism unleashed in 1938, heightened the sense of despair for thousands of Jews seeking refuge. At the time Bordeaux, beyond which lay the Pyrenees and neutral Spain and Portugal, was an important city for those who were trying to save their lives and leave Europe for a safer place. At the Portuguese Consulate in Bordeaux thousands of people obtained the visa for a new life.

In the last ten days of June, thousands of refugees arrived at the Portuguese border town of Vilar Formoso, mostly as a result of Aristides de Sousa Mendes rescue operation. Refugees who were fortunate to have onward visas or means of support were allowed to live in Lisbon or the adjacent resort towns of Estoril and Sintra. All others were assigned by the Portuguese Political Police (PVDE) to residences in provincial towns throughout the country or left to other continents.

#### **3 People**

The importance of the document is reflected in the duality of human behaviour. On one hand we have a barbaric regression in the values of humanity which culminated in a mass murder of thousands of people, on the other we have unique souls who issued visas, protested against their own governments for their lack of mercy and saved thousands of lives in the process.

The document, and the conditions of his production, are a consequence of political decisions and the subsequent war. This book, those visas, are part of the bright side of an immense darkness of horror and persecution.

#### **4 Subject and theme**

*Does the subject matter of the document represent particular historical or intellectual developments in the natural, social and human sciences? Or in politics, ideology, sport or the arts?*

The subject matter of the document is important for social sciences, political impact and

ideological features associated to the way migrations and in particular the dramatic experiences of refugees are dealt with. The chance to know migrant populations and the possibility of having a register to reunite families set apart by war, as well as the impact of civil disobedience when human values are at stake, does not only have an impact on political formulation but also on ideologically conceiving to rank Freedom and Human Rights at a privileged level.

## **5 Form and style**

In the case of a book of a purely administrative nature - consular fees - the concepts of form and style, aesthetically significant and elaborate, are missing here. However, it is out of this sobriety that emerges from this book that it touches us with the strength of a testimony, of every name, every human being, that we know was saved because it was inscribed in this "book of life".

## **6 Social/ spiritual/ community significance:**

This document has an immense significance for all those who respect and value the integrity of human life, human rights and, particularly, for the survivors and their descendants, namely the Jewish community. Every year, groups of descendants of persons who have escaped death due to the visas granted by Aristides de Sousa Mendes, visit the Diplomatic Archives of the MFA to see the book and search the names of their relatives. Also, 2016 is marked by worldwide tributes to the Consul, since it is commemorated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Day of Conscience (June 17, 1940), the day when he decided to save as many refugees as he could.

The personality of Aristides de Sousa Mendes has also a great significance at a local level, in his home town, Cabanas de Viriato. The *Casa do Passal* - where he was born – has been restored to become a museum and a *Holocaust Remembrance Centre*. It is also nowadays the headquarters of the *Fundação Aristides de Sousa Mendes*. This property is classified as National Heritage and regularly welcomes groups of visitors from other countries who wish to pay tribute to Aristides de Sousa Mendes.

## **6.0 Contextual information**

**6.1 Rarity** - This document is an archive item, a manuscript, as such being one of a kind, and is the only testimony of an humanitarian action that will prevail as a reference of compassion.

**6.2 Integrity** – The document remains intact and complete.

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