

Press Conference on the Tragic Event at Faculty of Arts, Charles University

The Management of Charles University (CU) and CU FA provides the latest summary of the situation and coming steps over the course of January in the recording of a meeting with media in Patriotic Hall in Charles University's Carolinum on 4 January 2024.

Main building

The main building of CU FA on Jan Palach Square **will remain closed until at least the end of January 2024**. The reasons are mainly technical condition of the building after the tragedy, including the police intervention to secure the site. There was damage to equipment, the destruction of more than 130 doors and there is a need to secure administrative materials and internal documents. This means it is not yet possible to resume normal operations. Many repairs also require a specific technical approach. The Management of CU FA, in cooperation with CU management, has already initiated the necessary repairs or preparations to commission major repairs. **A gradual (partial) re-opening of the building is expected with the start of the summer semester.**

Classes

Classes at CU FA are cancelled until the end of the fall semester, i.e., 12 January 2024. The summer semester at the faculty will start according to the original schedule of the academic year on 19 February 2024. It is possible that some classes will be partially (especially initially) replaced by

individual or online meetings. However, it is envisaged that teaching will be distributed in the summer semester to all buildings used by the Faculty of Arts, including the main building. Here, the process may be phased according to the accessibility of the spaces undergoing renovation. **The exception will be the 4th floor of the main building, which is likely to remain closed for the entire summer semester.** The opening of this floor is planned for the beginning of the new academic year 2024/2025. A permanent memorial is being considered for this floor.

CU FA will be **accommodating to students in fulfilling their study obligations**, e.g., in terms of deadlines for fulfilling study obligations, who will also be able to use individual study plans. Specific information will be provided to students by the lecturers and/or the management of the relevant department or institute of CU FA.

Security, now and into the future

Charles University did not and does not take security conditions lightly. In 2020, a security analysis was launched covering a total of 189 buildings belonging to the university – i.e., its faculties, dormitories, canteens, and other university buildings. This was completed in 2022. Appropriate individual recommendations were gradually implemented, but wider and faster implementation was – and is – entirely dependent on available funding. For universities (as opposed to regional education), there was and is no subsidy related to the protection of soft targets. Nevertheless, CU will try to implement other appropriate measures in 2024, within the limits of possibility, e.g., an expansion of the early warning system, extension of training on behaviour of persons in crisis situations, strengthening of the central security line, revision of staffing in buildings or deepening cooperation with the emergency services and other organisations, especially in the field of security.

Helpline

From 5 January 2024, the so-called **CU Security Department line at +420 771 275 564** has also been strengthened in case of possible incidents.

Counselling services

In addition to the existing offer of professional psychological and spiritual assistance, Counselling services – Centrum Carolina, CU FA is introducing, after consultation with experts, so-called pedagogical-psychological instruction for employees (i.e., teachers and other staff) who are and will be in regular contact with students. The briefing will provide guidelines for handling situations during meetings or attestations etc., and will take place on Friday, 5 January 2024 and Monday, 8 January 2024 online. Further dates for the briefing or follow-up training will be announced by the faculty as required. The Management of CU FA, in cooperation with the heads of departments and institutes, announces that it will make every effort to ensure that lecturers are in regular contact with their learners and are available to them beyond the centrally circulated information.

Crisis line to be replaced by CU Point Information Line

The crisis line of the CU Central Staff will be replaced by the so-called CU Point Information Line as of 5 January 2024. **The +420 800 100 790 telephone number will not only offer extensive support to callers every working day from 9 am to 5 pm, but will also answer questions about the issue of personal belongings left in the main building of CU FA.** Outside these hours, it will of course be possible to leave a message on this line. **The picking-up of personal belongings** will take place throughout January 2024 every Thursday from 8 am to 4 pm and every Tuesday from 11 am to 6 pm at CU POINT, Celetná 13, Prague 1 (specifically on 4 January; 9 January; 11 January; 16 January; 18 January; 23 January; 25 January and 30 January

2024). We kindly ask all those who did not find their personal belongings at the drop-off point complete or at all to contact the Czech Police Crisis Line directly: +420 974 823 158. Thank you for your understanding.

From 5 January 2024, CU FA will also launch an information e-mail address info@ff.cuni.cz for questions and suggestions.

Continuing support

As of 4 January 2024, the Charles University Endowment Fund and the *Znesnáze* collection had received financial aid worth **CZK 73 million**. These funds will be distributed in several phases. The first phase, so-called acute support, is already currently being directed to help the families of the victims and survivors. Charles University is also in contact with most of the families of the injured, whom the university also intends to help. CU understandably envisages that the financial support in both cases will be longer term. The third part of the support will be directed towards psychological and therapeutic assistance.

The return of academic life and the restoration of Jan Palach Square as the home of CU FA is an essential part of the process of reconciliation with the tragic event. The launch was marked by a commemorative procession from the memorial site at the Carolinum to the main building of CU FA. A commemorative flame was also lit on Jan Palach Square, which will stay lit throughout the month of January.

On 5 January 2024 at 10 am, candles and other objects will be removed from the current memorial site in front of the Carolinum building. The plan is to use the items to create a new memorial, a concept to be developed as part of the Four Weeks for the Faculty of Arts, Charles University activities. The Four Weeks for the Faculty of Arts, Charles University initiative will also include a commemoration of the first month since the tragic events of 21 December 2023.

We are hurt, but we are not broken. We give thanks that members of the academic community have entered the new year with heads held high.

The Management of Charles University and the Management of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University

(Prague, 4 January 2024, 6:30 pm)