



# „COMMUNISM IS PRISON“ EXHIBITION IN PATAREI PRISON

OR HOW OUR HEARTS ALMOST BROKE  
FROM ALL THE PAIN, BEAUTY AND PRIDE.



# CHALLENGE

How do we get people to understand what the crimes of the communist regimes were, and how do we reinforce the notion that these crimes were timeless and that by remembering them we can prevent them from happening again? How to design an exhibition, that would treat a 200 year old building complex with respect (and keep the National Heritage Board happy)? How to create imposing display in a space, that doesn't give mercy to the visitors and the exhibit itself with its dampness and cool temperatures?

Yes, you got it right, that's exactly a Velvet-kind-of-challenge! When the excellent people from Estonian Institute of Memory invited us to a journey to create an opening exhibition to the International Museum of Communist Crimes, we didn't think twice. And we do not regret that decision.

UTION! Install in one direction  
(metallic colors only)



# GUITAR

4 OUDUSTE  
HELPS  
DOM

ATAREJ

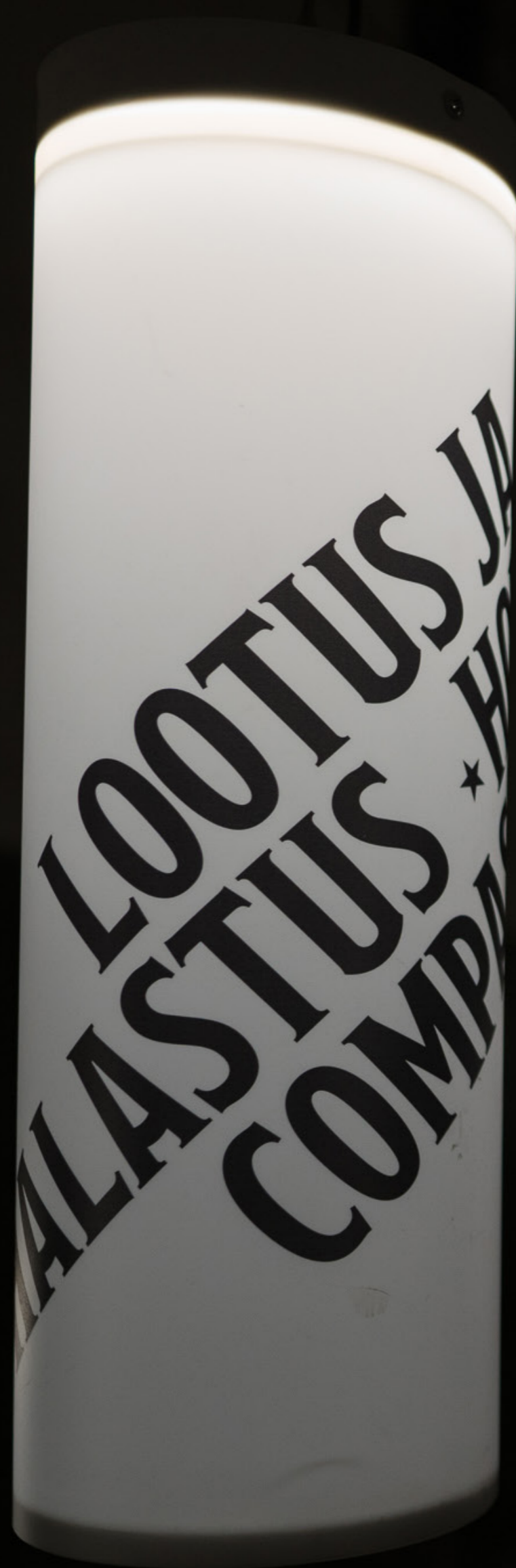
JUST STAGE, MIS  
ARRESTED TEL

TELL US WHY YOU  
THINK YOU WERE  
ARRESTED?

58-14

58-11

LIGHTBOX



## SOLUTION

We based the whole content and form of the exhibition on a concept „Communism is Prison“, drawing parallels between the ideology, regime and the physical prison environment. The exhibition is designed to the finest to be an emotional journey, with exact doses of hope and hopelessness, fear and light, freedom and distress. We decided to respect the building at its natural state and use only a subtle exhibition layer. The exhibition is built up on two contrasting shapes - red spikes symbolise communism and white fragile fabrics are the victims, their human soul. You can't find the modern digital interactions in this exhibition. Visitors relate to the story by experiencing the room first-hand, taking the roles of the prisoners, interrogators and as people condemned to death.





**KOMMUNISM  
ON VANGLA**

**COMMUNISM  
IS A PRISON**

A large crowd of people is gathered outside a building with a red banner that reads "JALUTUSBOKSID WALKING CURRICULUM". The crowd is diverse, including men, women, and children. Some are taking photos with cameras. The building has a white brick wall and a large window with a metal grid. The ground is paved with cobblestones.

# OPENING

The opening of the exhibition became an event of national importance, which was honoured by the presence of the Chancellor of Justice and several state ministers. The opening was broadcast live in the online publication of the largest daily newspaper in Estonia, Postimees. The exhibition has been well received by the public. During the first 3 months after opening, nearly 25 000 people have visited it and over 2000 people decided to visit Patarei on Museum Night alone. There was no heart left untouched. The people of the Estonian Institute of Memory have heard heartfelt thanks from the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, have received handshakes from former repressed ones, for whom it is very important that their lives do not fall into oblivion. And seen the tears flowing from visitors eyes and heard the words “It is incredible what you have gone through and what you have survived.”

# HUKKUNUD RIIGITI DEATHS BY COUNTRY

IDA-EUROOPA RIIGID  
EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES  
-1 000 000

NSV LIIT - SOVIET UNION  
-20 000 000

HIINA - CHINA  
-65 000 000

PÕHJA-KOREA  
NORTH KOREA  
-2 000 000

VIETNAM  
-1000 000

AFGANISTAN  
AFGHANISTAN  
-1 000 000

KAMBODŽA  
CAMBODIA  
-2 000 000

AFRIKA MAHNER  
AFRICAN CONTINENT  
-1 700 000

Inimese ja ühiskonna vägivaldset  
ümberkorjandamist nõudnud Karl  
Marx ja Friedrich Engelsi  
„Kommunistliku partei manifest“ sündis  
1848ndatel aastatel.

Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Hô Chi Minh ja  
teised kommunistlikud juhid - kokku ligi  
viiskümne riigis - viisid seda ellu 20. ja  
21. sajandil.

Maailmas on praegu neli  
kommunistliku partei poolt juhitud riiki -  
Hiina, Kuba, Laos ja Vietnam.

The Manifesto of the Communist Party  
by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels,  
which demanded the violent reshaping of  
human beings and society, was born in the  
1840s.

Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Hô Chi Minh and  
other communist leaders - overall in nearly  
50 countries - were implementing it during  
the 20th and 21st centuries.

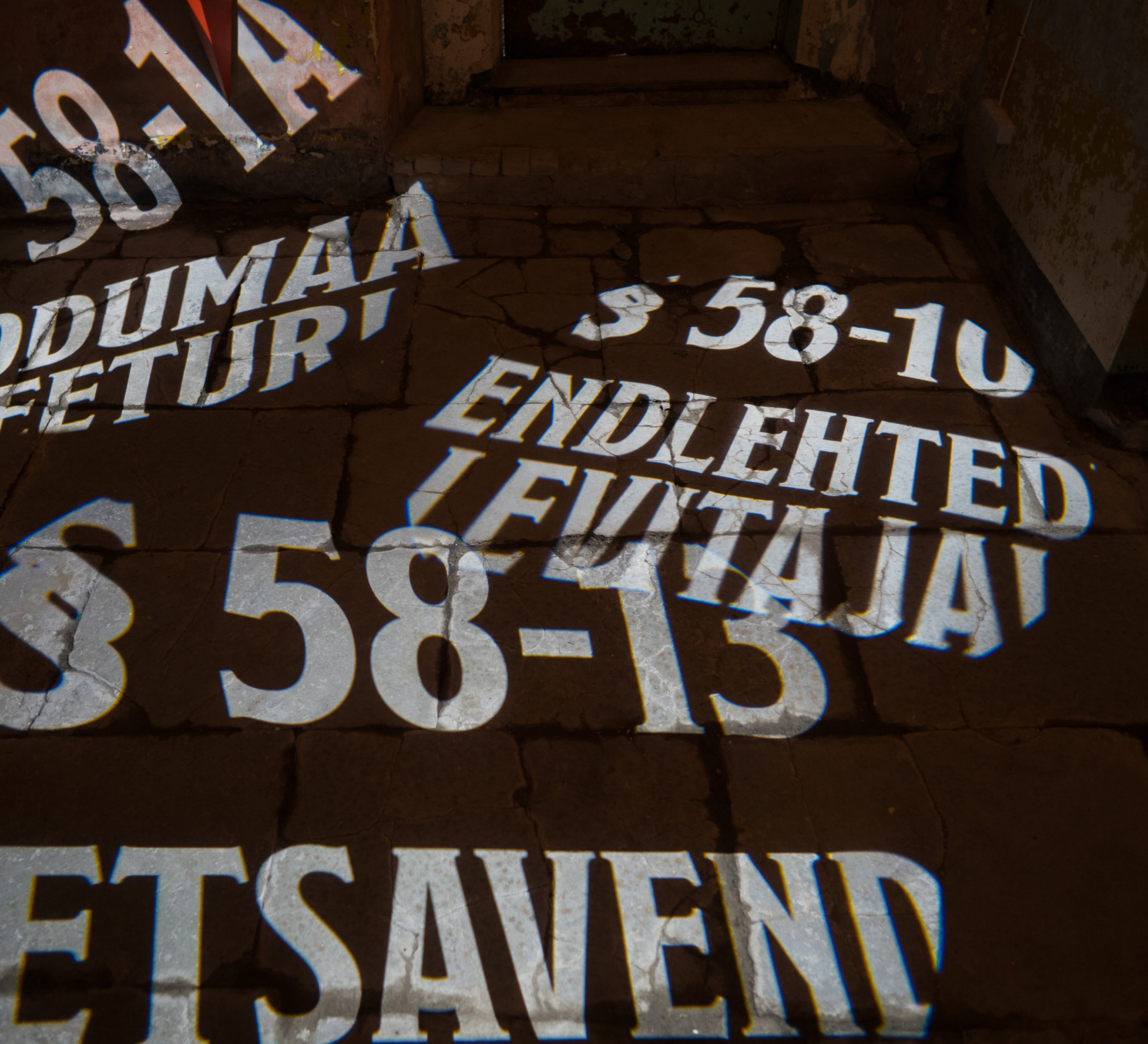
Currently there are four  
countries in the world that are led by a  
communist party - China, Cuba, Laos and  
Vietnam.



# KORIDOR CORRIDOR

Valvurite töö ei olnud üksnes vangide põgenemist vältida, vaid valvata ka kambrites toimuva järele. Selleks olid nii [redacted] kongidel kui ka kongustel [redacted] väikesed pihuaugud. Piki koridore olid maas valbad, mis summutasid valvurite sammud, nii, et kongides olijad aru ei saanud, kui neid jälgima tuldi. Viies vange ülekuulamisele või [redacted] vanglast ära, tuli valvuritel jälgida, et vangid üksteist ei näeks ja veelgi enam – omavahel sõnumeid ei vahetaks. See oli muuhulgas üks põhjustest, miks pesuruume, koridore ja käimlaid ning [redacted] muid ruume tihti üle lubjati või värviti – nii kaeti vangide sinna kraabitud nimesid ja daatumeid.





## GOOSEBUMPS

We were and still are extremely proud and grateful to be able to call ourselves one of the authors of this exhibition. We still get goosebumps every single time we see the video introducing the exhibition. Special thanks Alexander Heifets and Taiga.film for this.