

STALEMATE

Red Cross museum tries to return tobacco money

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Admitting “a lack of vigilance,” the Geneva-based International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum has refused a controversial donation offered to it by Japan Tobacco International (JTI). However, JTI says it won’t take the money back.

Last November, a host of international anti-smoking and health advocacy groups protested the museum’s decision to accept a donation from JTI, citing it as a poor move for an organisation whose mission is “to protect life and health and respect human beings”.

On February 19, museum director Roger Moyet admitted his organisation had made a mistake in accepting tobacco industry money for their \$20 million (CHF18.6) renovation. JTI had pledged \$150,000 to the project.

However, according to Saturday’s issue of the Tribune de Genève newspaper, JTI said in a statement that it refused to take back the donated money, leaving the museum in an awkward position.

JTI said it “does not accept this unilateral termination or repayment of the amount allocated for the construction of the new museum, amount given and accepted in good faith and at the express request of the Museum Foundation”.

The funds are currently blocked in an account overseen by the museum’s lawyer, and the museum has formally ended its partnership with JTI, which has its international headquarters in Geneva.

For its part, the Geneva Red Cross, which had also accepted funding from JTI, saw no reason to “discriminate against a perfectly legal organisation” when the controversy began in November.

However, its president Guy Mettan told the Tribune de Genève on February 22 that the organisation was considering terminating its partnership with JTI, “but we’ll take the time to find other sources of funding in order not to have to lay off staff.”

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International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum in Geneva is currently undergoing renovations (Keystone)

SMOKING FUNDS

Outrage over tobacco funds for Red Cross



Campaigners are fuming over donations made by Japanese Tobacco International (JTI) to the Geneva-based International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum and to the Geneva Red Cross. Red Cross officials, however, downplay the controversy. [...]

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