

Welcoming speech von Anja Krause, Kulturdezernentin
Stolpersteinverlegung am 20. November 2023

Dear Cooper family,
dear Mrs. Andrew,
dear Mrs. Frankel,
dear Mr. Luick
dear Mr. Tyrasa,
dear Mr. Siebert,
dear Mrs. Ochse,
dear Prof. Tolan,
dear Prof. Göske,
dear Prof. Aufgebauer,
dear Mrs. Heling-Hitzemann,
dear Dr. Rhode,

Ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Anja Krause. I am Head of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of Göttingen and today I have the honour of welcoming you to the laying of the Stumbling Stones on behalf of the City of Göttingen.

The “Stumbling Stones” art project by Gunter Demnig, who unfortunately cannot be here in person today, has been in existence for 30 years. The Stumbling Stones commemorate the victims of the Nazi era by placing small brass memorial plaques in the pavement in front of their former places of residence or work. As of this year, there are over 100,000 Stumbling Stones in Europe.

Today, in cooperation with the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation and the Göttingen Historical Society, we will lay nine Stumbling Stones at two locations. This is a very estimable cooperation.

We will start at Münchhausenstraße 17, where five Stumbling Stones for the Fränkel family will be laid in the pavement. Robert Cooper, a great-grandson of Hermann Ferdinand Fränkel, and Mrs. Ochse will introduce the Fränkel family to us.

Afterwards, four Stumbling Stones for the Löwenherz family are set into the pavement at Friedländer Weg 26. Dr. Rhode will introduce the family to us.

The Stumbling Stones are a very special art project because they challenge us to remember – to question our past, present and future. We do not want to forget, we want and we must keep the memory alive!

How important it is to remember the victims of National Socialism, especially those who fell victim to National Socialism because of their Jewish faith, can be seen in the news every day. Publicly practised anti-Semitism is more present than ever. The cruel attack by Hamas terrorists on Israel has caused an unimaginable escalation of the Middle East conflict. Innocent civilians, defenceless citizens, including children and infants, are victims of the brutal terror. We condemn this action in the strongest possible terms. Numerous hostages are still abducted and their fate is uncertain. It is almost impossible to imagine the fear, distress and despair of their relatives and friends.

This conflict is also being played out in Germany. The media show how a part of our population makes anti-Semitic statements, calls for violence against Jewish fellow citizens or glorifies it. These images are intolerable and it is up to us to make a firm stand against them.

Our Chancellor Olaf Scholz already made it clear during his visit to Israel on 17 October 2023: “Anti-Semitism has no place in Germany. Glorifying and celebrating violence is inhumane and abhorrent (...) Jewish life in Germany is a gift. We will protect Jewish institutions.”

Unfortunately, this does not seem to be a matter of course for everyone, which makes it even more important to reappraise our past, to be aware of our history and to recognise the responsibility we bear today: to ensure that the victims of the Nazi regime are not forgotten, that we remember their names.

Remembering the Göttingen victims of National Socialism and their murder is a central component of our culture of remembrance in Göttingen. Step by step, we are coming to terms with our past. I would like to give you an example of this: in 1973, we inaugurated the Synagogue Memorial on Platz der Synagoge. Since then, we have held annual commemorations on 9 November to remember the destruction of both the synagogue and a number of shops belonging to Jewish residents during the Reichspogromnacht of 1938. Despite the frightening current situation for all Jewish citizens, this year the commemoration took place once again. Especially in times like these, it is an important signal that together we remember the German past and our responsibility arising from the Holocaust. It is particularly important in these times that we stand together and – whenever necessary – stand up for our fellow Jewish citizens. They are not alone! You are not alone!

I would now like to thank once again all those who have made today's laying of the Stumbling Stones possible and who are taking part in this event. Together, we are setting an example of remembrance and against anti-Semitism. I am very pleased to invite you to a small reception at the Municipal Museum on Ritterplan after the laying of the Stumbling Stones and to continue our dialogue.