

Welcome address by the Head of Criminal Investigation Oliver Tschirner

Dear Mrs Nastasja Kwasnik,

Dear Mrs Gabriela Kwasnik,

Dear Mr Lutz Kwasnik,

Dear participants in the preparation and organization of today's laying of the Stolpersteine,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

First of all, I would like to introduce myself shortly. My name is Oliver Tschirner. As the Head of Criminal Investigation, I am in charge of the Central Criminal Investigation Service of the Göttingen police station.

Today, I have the privilege of welcoming you at the third laying site, here on Wöhlerstraße 6, in place of all members of the Göttingen Police.

At this point, I consider myself fortunate that we, the Göttingen Police, are allowed to take on the responsibility for the Stolpersteine in memory of Margarte Meyerstein, Lucie Meyerstein and her husband Kurt Meininger.

"What should not be repeated must never be forgotten" – with these words uttered only recently by Federal President Frank Walter Steinmeier during a visit to the former concentration camp Bergen Belsen – he points out that the Shoah is a "painful part of German history [that] belongs to us, which we cannot deny [...] and which we must never forget."

Even today, 77 years after the de facto end of the "Third Reich" in the year 1945, the numbers that are supposed to objectively illustrate the consequences and balances of the National Socialist dictatorship are admittedly omnipresent – but still seem inconceivable: approximately six million Jews died in prisons, euthanasia institutions, ghettos, concentration and extermination camps, were executed in brought daylight by the National Socialists or driven to suicide. The Shoah, with its more than six million deaths, is sadly a profound turning point in history – a cruel turning point for many Jewish families worldwide.

The siblings Margarte and Lucie Meyerstein as well as Kurt Meininger they were people – people like you and me. People who laughed who loved and who cried. People who had hopes and dreams, who made friends and took part in public life.

But they were also the ones who experienced in the most brutal way what atrocities human beings are capable of. Due to deliberate attributions by the National Socialists, they were declared enemies and degraded to numbers. They were not only harassed, dispossessed and concentrated at close quarters but also persecuted, expelled, tortured, deported and finally murdered. Indescribable harm was inflicted on them. The harm occurred is beyond the imagination of us all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

80 years after the first mass deportation of Jews from Göttingen to the Warsaw Ghetto, we are today assembled here. Together we would like to remember the victims who were at the mercy of the injustice and brutality of the National Socialists.

We, the Göttingen police, are aware of the fact that these state crimes against millions of innocent people also took place with the involvement of the police in the "Third Reich".

For this reason, we stand here together as one to show you that we will not forget these crimes and that they will always remain a memorial for us – a memorial to the darkest years of German history.

By taking on the responsibility for the three Stolpersteine, we would like to make our contribution to an active and lively culture of commemoration, too.

The victims – they must never be forgotten! The victims, they were neighbours, friends and residents in our beautiful city of Göttingen.

The darkest times have shown us painfully that exclusion, discrimination and racism are a social poison. At the same time, they must remind us of mutual exchange, appreciation and tolerance.

We, in society as a whole, must consequently confront the anti-Semitism and right-wing extremism still existing that is the greatest threat to our liberal democratic basic order.

We are aware that, as part of the executive branch, the police have a special responsibility in this regard.

Headlines about right-wing chat groups within the police, about accusations of racism and police violence are contrary to this responsibility and can mean a considerable loss of trust in our work. And this is why I can say on behalf of all colleagues that each of these headlines hurts and is one too many!

For this reason, I take pride in so many colleagues being here so as to set an example together with you. A sign for our liberal democracy, for the constitutional state and for an open and pluralistic society where there is no place for exclusion, discrimination or racism.

Dear Kwasnik family,

We are very grateful to you for agreeing to the laying of the Stolpersteine in remembrance of your family members. Your consent was a constitutive prerequisite for the laying of the Stolpersteine here and for enabling us to take on the responsibility for them.

On his website, Gunter Demig quotes the Talmud: "An individual is forgotten not until his name is forgotten".

Lucie Meyerstein, Margarte Meyerstein and Kurt Meininger – their names are and will remain unforgotten!