

Statement



Council decision in Heidenau

Stolpersteine Heppenheim criticises the decision and demands commemoration in-situ

Heppenheim, 5th October 2026. At the end of September, the city council in Heidenau, Saxony, decided that no more “Stolpersteine” (stumbling stones) commemorating displaced and murdered Jewish people would be installed in the future. The cross-party motion was introduced by the AfD, the CDU, and a local voters’ association. This decision, which was made by secret ballot, has sparked outrage throughout Germany. Sabine Fraune, the chair of the “Stolpersteine Heppenheim – Erinnern für die Zukunft” association, comments on the matter:

“The discussion about appropriate ways to commemorate the injustices, persecution, expulsion, and murder of Jewish people during the Nazi dictatorship is, in principle, to be welcomed. The decision by the Heidenau town council to ban the laying of Stolpersteine has appalled our entire committee. With clearly dubious arguments they are trying to hide the victims and hence also the NS crimes themselves from view. This is a case of the reversal of historical memory that the AfD are openly promoting. That representatives of democratic parties should also be willing to go along with this is horrifying.

The decision to relocate the memorial to a Christian cemetery strikes us as particularly ignorant of history. Jewish cemeteries were desecrated during the Nazi era. The Jewish population was thus deprived of its burial grounds.

With just a few words and dates, the Stolpersteine reflect the fate of persecuted people. Death, persecution, and flight tore families apart. Children, parents, and the elderly were left defenceless against their persecutors. It happened right here in the midst of us. The Stolpersteine make these crimes visible and invite us to remember.

As the board of “Stolpersteine Heppenheim – Erinnern für die Zukunft” we are therefore very pleased that there is broad support for the installation of Stolpersteine in Heppenheim. All political parties represented in the city council have endorsed this since a resolution passed jointly in 2013.

Together with our Jewish guests—descendants of the Jewish women and men of Heppenheim—we experienced the laying of the Stolpersteine as deeply moving moments. John, for example, who had travelled from Arizona with his daughters, spoke of a “healing experience.” Time and again during the ceremonies, the Kaddish—the Jewish prayer for the dead—was recited. We are convinced that the Stolpersteine, in particular, contribute to these unifying encounters. And in everyday life, the Stolpersteine encourage people to pause and bend down to read them. The madness and monstrosity of the Holocaust thus become a little more tangible through individual fates and in everyday life. That is why, on November 9, during the circle of silence commemorating the pogroms, we will once again read the poem ‘Every Person Has a Name’.”