

Welcome: Saying no earlier

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Welcome to the Vöhler Synagogue.

Welcome to the commemoration of 9 November 1938, the so-called November pogroms.

On 9 November 1938, synagogues were set on fire throughout Germany, the shops and homes of Jews were stormed, destroyed and looted. 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and taken to the concentration camps Dachau, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen near Berlin. Among them the Vöhler Max Mildenberg, Martin Sternberg and Alfred Rothschild, but also Bruno Frankenthal and the teacher Ferdinand Stern.

9 November is seen as a day when the Germans would have had the opportunity to say no to what they had seen and experienced in terms of antagonisms, disadvantages, discrimination against the Jewish population, and they could have prevented what happened afterwards by saying no. The Germans did not. They did not say no. In retrospect, this day was obviously too late. They should have said no earlier.

In the courtyard of our synagogue we have an ancient stone, which we call the Say-No-Stone. And when I lead pupils through the synagogue or across the courtyard, I tell them in the face of this stone, if in 1933, 1935, more people had said no, then what happened would not have happened.

And what matters today is that you say no at an early stage, that you oppose it early on, if you have the impression that right-wing radicals, right-wing extremists, fascist currents are poisoning the climate. We have also seen in recent years in the Federal Republic and in our neighbouring countries that terrorist acts are happening, that people are being killed. I recall the attack on the synagogue in Halle or the murder of ten people in Hanau only this year.

Today is also dedicated to the commemoration of that time and to these crimes. You will then hear a commemorative speech by The Honorary Chairman of the Hesse State Association in the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge, Mr. Jürgen Damm. Afterwards, the 72 names of the Vöhler victims of the Holocaust are named and a candle is lit for each of them. Sahra Küpfer then presents the Kaddish in Aramaic, which Günter Maier then translates into the German language. Finally, you will hear a small piece of music by Sarah Küpfer.