

# German association apologizes to deaf Jews



Breaking News

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The German Association for the Deaf has officially apologized to deaf Jews for the injustices done to them during the Nazi period.

In a statement issued at last week's German Cultural Festival of the Deaf in Cologne, Alexander von Meyenn, president of the DGB, spoke with shame of the rejection and expulsion of its Jewish members, many of whom perished in the Holocaust.

"We would like to officially express our deep sorrow for the suffering caused to so many deaf Jews," the letter read in part. "We are aware of the union's failures and therefore ask you for forgiveness."

Its own members were also persecuted by the Nazi regime, which tried to rid society of all lives it considered "unworthy." Deaf people of all faiths were routinely sterilized in keeping with Nazi theories of so-called racial purity. Reportedly, there were at least 17,000 such sterilizations in Germany from 1933 to 1945. But deaf Jews who did not manage to flee Europe or to hide met the same fate as any Jews caught in the Nazi occupation: deportation to concentration camps and death camps.

Mark Zaurov, president of the Association of Deaf Jews in Germany, told JTA that he had struggled for a decade for the recognition of this dark chapter of the past. He had publicly called for this at the 6th Deaf History International Conference, which he coordinated in Berlin in 2006, Zaurov said.

That conference, which drew participants from across the globe, including the United States and Israel, focused on the history of persecution of the deaf during the Nazi period. Zaurov brought together Jewish and non-Jewish deaf people who recalled their fears and had been subjected to persecution due to their hearing impairment.

Doron Levy, president of the Israeli Association for the Deaf, told the "Taubenschlag" online magazine for the deaf that he would share news of the apology with 92-year-old Moshe Bamberger, one of the deaf refugees who co-founded the Israeli association in 1944.

"I am sure that he and the rest of the deaf refugees and Holocaust survivors will see this issue as having come full circle," Levy said.