

Why no stumbling stones

One of the purposes of Respect & Remember Europe e.V. is to prevent so-called “Stolpersteine” (stumbling stones), a form of commemoration practiced in Germany and Europe. We are opposed to stumbling stones for many reasons.

The most important ones are:

- A lot of stumbling stones are desecrated and stolen. You cannot protect “stumbling stones” from the dirt on the street, from footsteps, kicks and desecration, this is unavoidable. They are defenseless on a daily basis and at all times.
- People, also Nazis, vandalize willfully, and BDS supporters love stumbling stones. Many stumbling stones have been attacked with acid, tar and paint or swastikas or smeared with words like “liar” or “pigs” – more often than one supposes. Back then, people were humiliated, beaten and killed on the ground by the Nazis, and today their names are again and literally offered up for desecration.
- The short text on the stumbling stones resembles Nazi deportation lists instead of an authentic, loving, informative, individual text at eye level (in public places) such as the Berlin memorial plaques.
- Gunter Demnig, the creator who earned millions of euros (90.000 x 120€/150€ so far) with it, patented the stumbling stones as a brand and said in interviews "it's nice when you walk over the stones, they are polished and shine again". Cleaning stumbling stones is reminiscent of scenes in which Nazis humiliated Jews and other victims by forcing them to scrub the streets. This hurts!
- Comparing stumbling stones to the “Walk of Fame” or grave slabs in churches completely misses the point. Honoring living actors and memorializing murdered victims of the Shoah is not comparable. Churches and cemeteries are protected areas, streets are not.
- A cheap sale of indulgences and a lucrative, commercial business model are not respectful. Sincere commemoration does not take place on the ground in the dirt. Stumbling stone groups hustle and bustle with actionism, while the victims who are supposed to be remembered vanish from view, pushed into the background. This is not honest.

There are other projects of remembrance that are dignified, informative, individual and loving, which do not hurt Shoah survivors, their families, Jews and sensitized non-Jews, and which should finally be implemented.

We are for a dignified remembrance of the Shoah. Therefore, we oppose the “stumbling stone” movement.

We urge our Israeli, American and all other allies, colleagues, friends, and the public to share our skepticism and criticism and please stop supporting this hurtful floor stones.

Empathy and compassion are the most necessary components for remembering the dead with dignity. Jews and non-Jews who are aware of the situation feel that honoring the Jewish majority of Shoah victims as well as others cannot be adequately fulfilled in a text that reduces a person's identity to a minimum and is placed in the ground.

No, not again.