

18 April 2023

Statement 01/2023: Against all anti-Semitism in the Deaf community!

Recently, there was an anti-Semitic posting by a Deaf woman on the platform Instagram that made big waves and despite multiple reports as hate speech by Deaf and sign language users was not deleted by the operator of the platform, Meta. The chair of the German Federation of the Deaf therefore wants to take a clear stand.

Deaf Jews are a part of the diverse Deaf community. Before the Nazi era, they were an integral part of developing and founding the German Deaf associations and held important positions and contributed greatly to our development. In view of current anti-Semitic incidents on Instagram it is therefore necessary for the chair to make it clear once again:

We as a Deaf community are against any form of anti-Semitism! The persecution and murder of the Jews during the Nazi era is a terrible chapter of German history that must never be repeated!

The promotion of prejudice against Jewish people, as is currently happening on Instagram, are not only an expression of anti-Semitism, they promote hostility towards Jews and are not acceptable. Such statements have no place in our community. This is as true for Deaf people as it is for hearing people.

We are very grateful for the comments of former Israeli Deaf Knesset Member Shirly Pinto, who spoke out on Instagram about the Deaf woman's anti-Semitic postings. We would also like to thank those in our community who have raised awareness on this matter. We will continue to work to make each other in the German Deaf community more aware of and to recognise and combat anti-Semitism.

Furthermore, we will continue to fight against any hateful comments and make sure that the internet is not a lawless space in German Sign Language. There is actually a legal precedent with the Network Enforcement Act, but the fact that the responsible authorities do not understand and take into account German sign language creates a legal loophole that must be closed.

The German Federation of the Deaf will contact the responsible federal ministries and discuss the matter.

[Addendum 20.04.23 - Clarification. To clear up misunderstandings in the comments on social media: the above statement refers to a video posted on Instagram by a deaf woman in a story on 14.04.23 at around 14:30 that trivialised the Holocaust. The posting shocked many people. In our video statement on this, the President of the German Deaf Federation described the dangerous spread of prejudice and blame against Jews.

We are aware that the Middle East conflict is a very sensitive and complex issue. However, the Middle East conflict is not the subject of this statement. It is about anti-Semitism as an attitude that is subliminally widespread here, in Germany. That is why we firmly reject accusations that we "care about other countries first" and "ignore Germany". It is important for us to send a signal that no one should be excluded from

our deaf community - this includes deaf Jews. Because of the history of our country, the German Deaf Association has a special responsibility to show that anti-Semitism has no place in our society.]

About the German Federation of the Deaf

The German Federation of the Deaf (Deutscher Gehörlosen-Bund e. V.) sees itself as a social and health policy, cultural and professional representation of the interests of the sign language community, i.e. the Deaf and other people with hearing disabilities, who are currently united in 26 member associations with about 28,000 members, including 16 regional associations and 10 nationwide professional associations. In total, this includes more than 600 associations.

Our goal is the continuous improvement of the living situation of Deaf people by removing communicative barriers and safeguarding rights in order to enable equal participation in society.

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