

May 8, 2025

May, 8th declaration: „For us, remembrance will never be over“

German businesses mutually commemorate the end of World War II 80 years ago

On the occasion of the end of World War II 80 years ago, 49 German businesses, amongst them being Bayer, BASF, Evonik, Siemens and also the Düsseldorf based Rheinmetall AG, the companies reminisce the crimes of Nazi Germany. In a mutual declaration, the CEOs personally acknowledge the historic responsibility of their companies and set a clear boundary against hate, exclusion and antisemitism.

The alliance of business leaders calls for taking collective responsibility, to conserve the lessons learnt from history and invigorate the fundamental values of democracy. More companies are kindly invited to be part of this declaration.

The declaration, which will be published on 8 May 2025 in major supra-regional newspapers (Die Zeit, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung) is quoted as follows:

“Eighty years ago today, on May 8, 1945, World War II ended in Europe. This is a day of remembrance for all those who were persecuted and murdered, for the crimes and destruction, and for the more than 60 million people who died worldwide.

Today, we must reflect upon how this could have happened. The takeover of power by the National Socialists in 1933 would have been unthinkable without the failure of the political, military, judicial, and economic decision-makers of the time. German companies contributed to consolidating the rule of the National Socialists. Many companies and leaders at the time became complicit by prioritizing their own interests.

Today, as German companies, we bear responsibility for keeping the memory of the crimes of the Nazi era alive. These crimes remind us to always recognize the fragility of democracy. Together, we stand up against hatred, exclusion, and antisemitism. For us, remembrance will never be over.

The Allied victory over the Nazis gave hope to an entire continent and to the whole world. European cohesion, the rule of law, and the freedom achieved with the end of the Cold War are achievements that we must protect together. Democracy thrives on participation—and on dissent. It requires conviction and courage. In 1933 and thereafter, too many people remained silent, looked away, and said nothing. This gives rise to our responsibility—for the past, the present, and the future.”

The signatories:

- Armin Papperger, CEO, Rheinmetall AG
- Bjørn Gulden, CEO, adidas AG
- Oliver Bäte, CEO, Allianz SE

► Key facts

- ▷ Commemorating May, 8th
- ▷ Businesses acknowledge their responsibility
- ▷ Mutual stance against hate, exclusion and antisemitism
- ▷ Declaration published in supra-regional newspapers

► Contact

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- Martin Babilas, CEO, Altana AG
- Markus Kamieth, CEO, BASF SE
- Bill Anderson, CEO, Bayer AG
- Vincent Warnery, CEO, Beiersdorf AG
- Oliver Zipse, CEO, BMW Group AG
- Christian Kohlpaintner, CEO, Brenntag SE
- Bettina Orlopp, CEO, Commerzbank AG
- Nikolai Setzer, CEO, Continental AG
- Karin Rådström, CEO, Daimler Truck AG
- Richard Lutz, CEO, Deutsche Bahn AG
- Christian Sewing, CEO, Deutsche Bank AG
- Stephan Leithner, CEO, Deutsche Börse AG
- Tim Höttges, CEO, Deutsche Telekom AG
- Tobias Meyer, CEO, DHL Group
- Carl Oetker, persönlich haftender Gesellschafter der Dr. August Oetker KG
- Leo Birnbaum, CEO, E.ON SE
- Christian Kullmann, CEO, Evonik Industries AG
- Stefan Klebert, CEO, GEA Group AG
- Clemens Jungsthöfel, CEO, Hannover Rück SE
- Dominik von Achten, CEO, Heidelberg Materials AG
- Carsten Knobel, CEO, Henkel AG & Co. KGaA
- Daniel Grieder, CEO, HUGO BOSS AG
- Klaus Rinnerberger, CEO, LEONI AG
- Carsten Spohr, CEO, Lufthansa Group
- Alexander Vlaskamp, CEO, MAN Truck & Bus SE
- Ola Källenius, CEO, Mercedes-Benz AG
- Belén Garijo, CEO, Merck KGaA
- Lars Wagner, CEO, MTU Aero Engines AG
- Joachim Wenning, CEO, Munich Re AG
- Lionel Souque, CEO, REWE Group
- Stefan Hartung, Vorsitzender der Geschäftsführung, Robert Bosch GmbH
- Norbert Rollinger, CEO, R+V Versicherung AG
- Markus Krebber, CEO, RWE AG
- Klaus Rosenfeld, CEO, Schaeffler AG
- Torsten Derr, CEO, Schott AG
- Roland Busch, CEO, Siemens AG
- Christian Bruch, CEO, Siemens Energy AG
- Bernd Montag, CEO, Siemens Healthineers AG
- Jochen Burg, CEO, SMS group GmbH
- Miguel Ángel López Borrego, CEO, thyssenkrupp AG
- Nicola Leibinger-Kammüller, CEO, TRUMPF SE + Co. KG
- Michael Lewis, CEO, Uniper SE
- Oliver Blume, CEO Volkswagen AG und Porsche AG
- Rolf Buch, CEO, Vonovia AG
- Christian Hartel, CEO, Wacker Chemie AG