

# BISHOPS EQUATE ISRAEL'S ACTIONS TO HOLOCAUST

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*Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: I was in Israel, at the Yad Vashem memorial, at the same time as these Catholic Bishops. There were about two dozen of them listening to a tour guide as she explained the various displays about the Holocaust against the Jewish people. I was surprised they were there since the Catholic Church did very little or nothing to try and stop the Holocaust and I felt like asking them, "Where was your Pope when all this was happening?" But I decided not to because many had translation headphones on and I thought I would not be understood by the one I would ask. After reading this article, I greatly regret that I did not confront them with the question.*



Hours after historic visit to Jerusalem Holocaust museum, a group of German bishops touring Palestinian Authority areas, say Israel behaving like Nazis.

"This morning we saw pictures of the Warsaw ghetto at Yad Vashem and this evening we are going to the Ramallah ghetto." Several hours earlier on Sunday you probably would not have heard German Bishop Gregor Maria Franz Hanke choose such a divisive analogy.

But then on Sunday morning he was still in Israel and the rhetoric was considerably different than the one elected by the German Bishops' Conference once they crossed over in to the Palestinian Authority on Sunday evening.

The visit of 27 members of the German Bishops' Conference to Israel included a historic first-time visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial museum in Jerusalem as well as guided tours of sites holy to Christianity and meetings with Christian congregations in Israel and in the Palestinian Authority.

During their time in Israel the bishops uniformly made moderate and balanced statements, but once in the PA they provided German reporters accompanying them with a plethora of harsh proclamations against Israel. Their criticism received widespread coverage in the German media on Monday.

While crossing one of the checkpoints into East Jerusalem the Archbishop of

Cologne, Cardinal Joachim Meisner, told reporters: "This is something that is done to animals, not people." Meisner, a resident of eastern Germany, said that the fence reminded him of the Berlin Wall and that in his lifetime he did not believe he would see such a thing again. As the Berlin Wall was brought down so will this wall be brought down, he said, adding that the fence served no purpose.

The delegation's visit to Ramallah took place several hours after their visit to Yad Vashem and several of the bishops chose to equate the situation in the Palestinian Authority with the Holocaust.

"Cages in the image of ghettos," said the Bishop of Augsburg of the territories. Augsburg was once under the spiritual leadership of Pope Benedict XVI, who was Archbishop of the Munich-Freising Archdiocese and his brother Monsignor Georg Ratzinger still resides there.

"Israel has, of course, the right to exist, but this right cannot be realized in such a brutal manner," said Bishop Hanke, who later stated that he intends to amend this year's Easter message to German churches so as to include the delegation's political impressions from their visit to the territories and a demand to change the situation.