

Holocaust memorial app launches in Germany

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A person walks past concrete steles at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, on January 31, 2012

Smartphones in Germany are now delivering messages from the past, with a new app launched Wednesday that shows the names and pictures of Holocaust victims to people walking by their former homes.

"What we envision is a virtual, floating museum over Munich," Martina Bachmann, spokeswoman for the [app](#) development company based in

the southern German city, told AFP.

"We want to put the fate of Nazi victims into the open, give the victims a face and a biography."

For several years in dozens of European cities, pedestrians have been literally stumbling over the names of Nazi-era victims, in small plaques embedded in the street in front of their last known addresses.

The "Stolpersteine Muenchen" app is a virtual version of these memorials, a "digital monument against forgetting", the company says.

When smartphone users approach a building where a Holocaust victim lived, a photo, birth and death dates, and other biographical details appear on the screen.

The app was fashioned after the "Stolpersteine" project started by Cologne sculptor Gunther Demnig in 1996 as a way to memorialise the genocidal acts of the Nazi regime on a human scale.

"Stolpersteine"—literally "stumbling blocks"—were envisioned as a more personal tribute than large Holocaust memorials.

By the end of this year, more than 43,500 blocks will be installed in roughly 1,000 locations across Europe, according to the project's website.

In Munich, though, the blocks are conspicuously absent.

The project met with resistance from Munich authorities and leaders of the local Jewish community, who argued victims' memories would be desecrated once more as passers-by walked on the blocks.

The app currently contains biographies of 200 victims whose loved ones have commissioned stumbling blocks. The physical memorials now sit in storage, or have been installed on private property, due to the controversy.

Bachmann hopes someday the app will complement the physical memorials in Munich.

"People see something visual, and they remember, 'Oh, there's an app,' and they get more information," Bachmann said.

"Just to recognise, here was Mrs. Muller, she lived here with three daughters, it makes it so real," Bachmann said. "It fills you with emotion."

Bachmann's company pARtcours hopes to expand the project to include thousands of names of Roma, Sinti, gay and political victims of the Nazi era.

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