

On **APRIL 18, 2023**, an intercontinental delegation of chiefs of police and sheriffs pledged to never allow history to repeat itself after joining the International March of the Living in Poland. Here is their story.

OPERATIONALIZING 'Never Again'

BY SARAH CALAMS, POLICE1 SENIOR EDITOR

The role of police in the Holocaust spurs an international group of law enforcement leaders to create hate crime and bias training



TAP, CRUNCH, TAP, CRUNCH.
Tap, crunch, tap, crunch.
Tap, crunch, tap, crunch.

Pieces of gravel become upheaved as a handful of dress shoes strike the pavement. The black oxfords are glossy – some new, some old – but all of them are in tip-top condition. In years past, worn-down clogs with wooden soles and linen straps – always old, never new – dragged against the gravel.

The visitors don uniforms made from dark wool, most wearing a dress coat with an assigned insignia, a pressed uniform shirt, pants and a formal hat. A stark contrast between those who once traveled the same path in trousers, jackets and caps made of blue and white striped cotton ticking.

Beside the path are railway tracks. Now rusted and vacant, these tracks were once used to transport tens of thousands to red brick buildings. The entrance has three words inscribed above it: "ARBEIT MACHT FREI." In English, this translates to: "Work sets you free."

For most, it wouldn't.

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE

Auschwitz-Birkenau, the former German Nazi concentration camp, housed more than 40 red brick buildings that served as concentration and extermination camps. The camps, separated by electric barbed-wire fences, operated as slave-labor camps.

From 1942 until 1944, freight trains delivered 1.3 million people to Auschwitz. A total of 1.1 million people – largely those of Jewish faith – were murdered, including 865,000 Jews who were sent to the gas chambers upon arrival. For those men, wo-

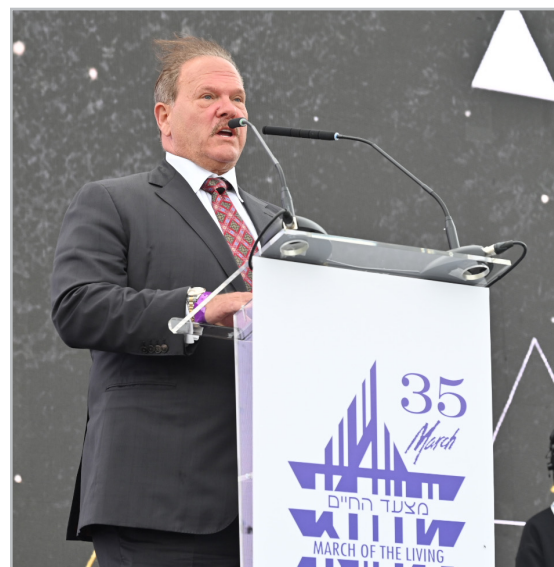
men and children who were not sent to the gas chambers, they died from exhaustion, starvation or disease.

Today, the camps, seemingly untouched since they were liberated in 1945, are visited by millions each year to learn about the history of the Holocaust, the camps and the horrors prisoners faced.

On April 18, 2023, an intercontinental delegation of chiefs of police and sheriffs joined the camp's visitors list by participating in the International March of the Living for the first time since the organization's inception in 1988. Marching alongside 10,000 others, including 42 Holocaust survivors, 16 members of the police delegation, hailing from six different nations across North America and Europe, walked the nearly two-mile path from Auschwitz I to Auschwitz II, or Auschwitz-Birkenau, on Holocaust Remembrance Day.

At the end of the march, nine police executives from the delegation, including Paul Goldenberg, chief policy advisor to the Rutgers Miller Center on Policing, Colonel Patrick Callahan, superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, Marvin Haiman, chief of staff at the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police Department and First Commissioner Karl Heeren, chief of external and international relations and protocol at the Antwerp (Belgium) Police Department, read a signed declaration in support of the event.

Other members of the delegation on stage during the event included Newport News (Va.) Sheriff Gabriel Morgan, who represented the National Sheriffs' Association, Chief Peter Lambrinakos from VIA Canada Rail, Chief Police Advisor Danijela Petkovic, with the Croatian Ministry of the Internal Affairs,



Paul Goldenberg addresses the audience at the March of the Living.

Photo courtesy of Paul Goldenberg



Nine police executives from the delegation read a signed declaration in support of the event.

Photo courtesy of Paul Goldenberg

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“The true power of the mission and the training that we’re going to be involved in lies in a call to action: Never again.”

General Jozsef Boda from the Hungarian Ministry of Interior, Sgt. Chris Hill (ret.), board chair of the National Association of Police Athletic/Activities Leagues, and Dirk Allaerts, human rights officer for Europol.

While on stage, the police delegation pledged its commitment to developing a trans-national training program for law enforcement executives. The program, spearheaded by the Miller Center at Rutgers University, the Global Consortium of Law Enforcement Training Executives, the University of Ottawa, the Metropolitan Police Department, the New Jersey State Police, Europol and the Antwerp Police Department, will combine best practices for both Holocaust and hate crime training for law enforcement.

A CALL TO ACTION

Before reading the signed declaration, Goldenberg, an American law enforcement veteran of Jewish faith, recapped a story about Police Battalion 101, composed mostly of middle-aged, working-class men from Hamburg, Germany, stationed in occupied Poland in July 1942. The battalion had gathered outside the town of Józefów at dawn while the residents slept.

“Major Wilhelm Trapp, with tears in his eyes, handed down the order of the day: ‘Separate the healthy men for work. Shoot everyone else.’ He allowed any of these police officers to opt-out. Only 12 out of 500 officers opted out. The rest stood up and executed the Jews. Seventeen hours later, the Jews of Józefów were no more,” Goldenberg read aloud to the audience.

“For the police executives who joined, that will change, forevermore, the way that they think of what hatred and bigotry can do if police ever choose to be on the wrong side of history,” Goldenberg explained. “Too

many, unfortunately, did choose to be on the wrong side of history during the Holocaust. It’s really the consequences of police complicity. The true power of the mission and the training that we’re going to be involved in lies in a call to action: Never again. But we must operationalize that phrase.”

The training, he says, will become the first comprehensive professional development training that addresses the impact of the Holocaust, as well as provide better understanding on the impact of bias and hatred on vulnerable communities.

“The core of our work is building capacity between vulnerable communities. If the community is under attack, what we want to do is make sure that the police understand the concerns of the community, and that the community understands and demystifies who and what the police do and what they represent,” Goldenberg said.

FROM ‘FLASH TO BANG’

A key training focus is on the impact of social media and how it amplifies and accelerates hatred and bigotry.

“The fact that when many of these hate crime training programs were first developed, even by myself, we were dealing with cemetery desecrations and graffiti on the facades of religious institutions,” Goldenberg said. “Now, we’re dealing with armed terrorists in full military regalia with automatic weapons entering houses of worship and slaughtering people of faith in the United States and elsewhere. The transformation has been unprecedented and we need to figure out how.”

To better understand the social media piece, the delegation is partnering with a group out of Rutgers – the Network Contagion Research Institute (NCRI). NCRI inges-

A watchtower is seen behind barbed wire fencing.

Photo courtesy of Paul Goldenberg





ts social media posts so communities can better understand what its constituents are thinking and, in turn, that information can be shared with the police.

“Police must transition to better understand the needs, desires, concerns and fears of their community,” Goldenberg said. “Working with groups like NCRI will help police better understand why and how people go from what I call ‘flash to bang,’ how people are engaging in extremism so fast and what police executives need to understand as far as what their communities are thinking.”

The training will be tailored to the needs and experiences of each country.

“For the police chiefs and police executives, we need them to understand: How did we get to a Holocaust? Where were the police? What’s the impact if something like this happens again? And why it’s so important that the police are not politicized.”

‘I SOBBED’

Patrick Callahan, a 30-year police veteran who was appointed as the 14th colonel of the New Jersey State Police nearly six years ago, is still processing his time spent at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Seeing thousands of shoes, pieces of luggage, glasses and strands of hair – representing those who didn’t make it out – didn’t just leave him in tears: “I sobbed. The magnitude of it all was heartbreaking. I am forever changed.”

Once he arrived back stateside, Callahan switched gears to babysitting his two-

-month-old granddaughter for a three-day weekend. This time, he was having a difficult time just holding her.

“I kept thinking about how babies were murdered. How could that happen? It was hard.”

What Callahan did next speaks volumes: he reached out for help.

“I called one of my pastors, who’s also a chaplain. I said, ‘I’m struggling with processing this.’ I didn’t even know that his mother was a survivor of the concentration camps and I’ve known him for years. And he just so happened to be the person I decided to call. I just had it in my heart to call him.”

The images and visuals at the camp were haunting, but he also struggled with being in a police uniform while on the premises: “To be there and to be in uniform ... it was not easy. We had kids thinking we were SS officers or Nazi soldiers. To see my own shadow on those cobblestone streets of Auschwitz was unnerving. It was uncomfortable.”

It was a reminder for Callahan that a police uniform shouldn’t strike fear in people – it should fill them with a sense of calm and resolve: “I want people to see the New Jersey State Police uniform and know that a compassionate trooper has come to their aid.”

Shortly after his trip, Callahan spoke to a class of recently promoted lieutenants, the future leaders of the state police, about his trip and involvement in the march.

“I’m not going to be here forever. I wanted to pass that baton of compassion and understanding onto them. We have to talk

New Jersey State Police Col. Patrick Callahan, left, stands in front of barbed wire fencing at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Photo courtesy of Paul Goldenberg

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“The magnitude of it all was heartbreaking. I am forever changed.”



People gather to participate in the annual March of the Living.

Photo courtesy of Paul Goldenberg

about what our role is in 2023. Eighty years isn't all that long ago. You'll see some people will follow their leader down into some pretty dark places. But the same can be said that they'll also follow you to higher ground, and to brighter spots and places. Having the right leaders, with the right mindset and vision in place, is critical."

'IT HAS TO DO MORE THAN JUST CRUSH ME SPIRITUALLY'

The fear in vulnerable communities is not rooted in nonsense.

At the end of last year, New Jersey and New York City increased its police presence in Jewish communities, sites and synagogues in response to a rash of antisemitic hate crimes. And according to a recent FBI report, reported hate crimes rose by more than 11% from 2020 to 2021. California reported the highest total offenses with 1,872, followed by New York with 810 and New Jersey with 786.

"Right now, antisemitism is at an all-time high," Callahan noted. "If nothing positive comes of this, then the trip was in vain. It has to do more than just crush me spiritually. We are all being pushed to action by it."

And to put it in terms any police leader or executive would understand: Callahan compared the Holocaust to the "ultimate active bystandership example."

"Law enforcement stood by and did nothing, or even worse, participated in the atrocities. You think to yourself: 'Where was the moral compass of law enforcement back then and how could they participate?' We need to give those survivors and their families the assurance that we're going to leave our communities better protected and well-served because of this type of training."

THE ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT IN THE HOLOCAUST

The term "active bystandership" is something Marvin Haiman is quite familiar with as chief of staff at the Metropolitan (D.C.) Police Department.

At the department, each member, including every new hire, goes through a one-day program at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum during their initial training to study the Holocaust and understand active bystandership, the impact of hate crimes and genocide, and the role of law enforcement in many of those actions. The Law Enforcement and

Society: Lessons of the Holocaust program is provided thanks to a partnership between the museum and the Anti-Defamation League.

"In the program, we talk about active bystandership and police legitimacy. It's a very impactful program for people to go through," Haiman added.

While going through the program yields an experience of its own, visiting the camps in person, Haiman said, was beyond surreal.

"I've been to the Holocaust Memorial Museum many times ... dozens and dozens of times. But to stand on the grounds where at least 1.1 million people lost their lives ... and just to reflect and think, while I was standing there in uniform, of what that symbolized then and what that symbolizes now. It was profoundly impactful."

Before the march began, Haiman had a heart-dropping moment as a family, who was representing dozens of their family members who were deported and murdered in Auschwitz, gathered near him.

"They had over 50 family members who were deported and murdered. When we got lined up to do the march, they were all wearing a jacket that said 'Haiman Construction.' That's my last name. That visual was triggering. I was standing in line ... marching right in front of people who all have the same last name as mine ... who had family murdered in Auschwitz. It's not a common last name."

Even months later, it's difficult for Haiman to vocalize the impact of the sights, sounds and feelings he experienced at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

"The scale of these facilities was harrowing – with a singular objective, to eliminate those who were not satisfactory to the state. On this march, I was reminded how fragile democracy is, how we must always find commonality and why hatred must not be tolerated. And the role of bystanders, often trapped not knowing how or being empowered to act."

Standing in his reserve police uniform, Haiman couldn't help but feel stunned as he heard about how German men who were too old to serve in the military were drafted into the reserve police. Their function? To help with the orderly deportation of Jewish people or those deemed necessary for destruction.

As Nazi Germany expanded, the Antwerp (Belgium) Police Department was eventually taken over by the Gestapo.

"They were ordered to assist with the deportation of individuals for destruction and those officers who refused were either

"The scale of these facilities was harrowing – with a singular objective, to eliminate those who were not satisfactory to the state."



Marvin Haiman, chief of staff with the Metropolitan Police Department, stands in front of the Auschwitz-Birkenau entrance with the inscription "Arbeit Macht Frei" (Work sets you free).

Photo courtesy of Paul Goldenberg

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“I have been a patrol officer for many years. I’ve seen a lot. I will never forget what I saw over there. Never.”

themselves sent for destruction or summarily executed,” Haiman said. “This was too difficult for their agency to talk about up to the last 20 years since people knew people who were directly affected. Like us, they are educating their officers on the role of bystanders and the Holocaust.”

Metropolitan Police Department Lt. Gavin Nelson, who toured the Dachau Concentration Camp, one of the first concentration camps built and the longest running one, said he walked away with a sentiment similar to Haiman’s.

“We must recognize that law enforcement was critical to the Nazi regime’s success and how history can repeat itself even in a democracy like ours,” Nelson said. “As we become further divided and unable to talk to one another based on actual or perceived political beliefs, this reality becomes more possible. Restoring commonality, denouncing politicians that seek to divide us for their own gain and ensuring foreign destabilization efforts are unsuccessful are paramount.”

‘A TERRIBLE, DARK ERA’

Karl Heeren has been with the Antwerp (Belgium) Police Department since 1995. He became the youngest police commissioner in Belgium in 2002, a role he has now held for 21 years.

Heeren never lost anyone in his family due to the occupation by the Germans, but he may have never been born if his grandfather, who was considered cripple, had been captured and deported.

“When my grandfather was 16, he was hit on the knee by a soccer ball playing with other kids in the streets. And at that time, doctors couldn’t do what they can now. They had to choose to either cut his leg off or stabilize it so it couldn’t bend anymore,” he described.

If the occupation had continued, Heeren’s grandfather would have eventually been arrested and deported.

“He was not targeted for a hate crime originally because he wasn’t Jewish, he wasn’t Roma, he wasn’t homosexual. But they would have found another reason, another group of people – disabled people. Hate crimes can take many different shapes and forms. You can never be sure you are not the next victim,” Heeren said.

During the course of the second World War from 1940 to 1944, it was a “terrible, dark era” for the organization, Heeren said. August 15, 1942 was a particularly dark day for the department.

On that day, 400 Antwerp officers were ordered to arrest and deport 3,000 people of Jewish faith. “They were put on trains, and we never saw any of those people again,” Heeren said.

A week later, a similar order arrived at headquarters. This time, the Nazis ordered officers to arrest 5,000 people. But by this time, the officers knew what was happening and many refused the order. Senior executives from the department were shot, arrested or put on a deportation train for a similar fate.

The following week, a third raid was ordered by the Nazis. None of the officers complied and they eventually sabotaged the raid.

Karl Heeren, far left, police commissioner with the Antwerp Police Department, speaks after the march with Paul Goldenberg, center, and Marvin Haiman, far right.

Photo courtesy of Paul Goldenberg



As a historian, Heeren is committed to telling the story of the Antwerp Police Department from its founding in 1831 to today. In its new police headquarters, an over 860,000 square-foot building made possible due to a \$315 million budget, both current and new Antwerp officers will learn about the department's history in its heritage center. The headquarters will house about 2,200 officers and the building, according to Heeren, will be future proof for the next 40 to 50 years.

"I am struck by the responsibility the officers took in 1942, eventually realizing that they would be deported themselves just by standing up to a regime. It's important our recruits know what a regime can generate and why we must stand up and say it's not OK. It takes a lot of courage to go against what everybody thinks is right, but these are choices every officer must make," Heeren said. "I hope I never have to make the choice. By educating officers throughout organizations worldwide with this training, we can only hope that we'll never have to face an issue like that again."

Unlike some of the other police executives in attendance, this was not Heeren's first time participating in the march: "It changes your life. It changed mine." Bringing officers together and educating his staff, Heeren says, is of the utmost importance – he would rather have 100 new recruits join the March of the Living next year than buy two patrol cars.

"Childrens shoes are everywhere. Most teeth were taken out of people's mouths. It strikes you. And believe me, I have been a patrol officer for many years. I've seen a lot. I will never forget what I saw over there. Never."

NEVER AGAIN

While walking down the rusted and vacant railway track, an image stood out to each officer in attendance: a uniformed officer, just like them, once stood at the end of the rail line. That officer was responsible for deciding whether an individual was to be queued for the gas chambers or forced into labor until they were no longer useful.

Officers like Haiman, Callahan and Heeren were repeatedly asked by younger marchers at the event if their uniforms represented a SS uniform. The marchers saw a perceived resemblance to the harrowing photos they were seeing as they toured building after building.

"This stood out as an immediate and real connection to the role of law enforcement in our societies," Haiman said.

Since 1988, more than 300,000 people from 50 countries have marched the path from Auschwitz to Birkenau as a tribute to victims of the Holocaust.

"It's my profound wish that it will be millions of people in the next few years," Heeren said. "People from all different backgrounds, ethnic origins and religions should be there. History repeats itself and this is something we all need to be aware of, so it won't happen again."

Haiman agreed, saying he walked away from the experience firm in his commitment that "there is no room for intolerance, hate or disrespect toward each other within an organization or externally with the communities that officers serve."

"When you're there with 42 people who survived the Holocaust, who are marching in front of you with numbers tattooed on their arms, you realize this isn't something that happened in the 13th century that you can only read in the history book," Haiman

added. "These are people living in our communities who are directly impacted by this today. It's a story to be told, and told again, and continually told. It's the only way to ensure these horrors never happen again."

The training the police delegation is currently working on is a way for police executives to learn from history – the good, the bad and the ugly. Goldenberg hopes to announce the completion of the training at the March of the Living in 2024.

"I have no doubt that this is an experience that I'll reflect on for the next 20 years of my career," Haiman said. "I will try to center back to that as I think about disenfranchised and underserved communities, impoverished areas ... just ways that law enforcement can better serve those that we protect and how we have to have less tolerance within law enforcement for those that do anything to cause disrespect to the communities we serve."

The police delegation's work will set expectations and transform law enforcement in 2023 and beyond.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Calams is the senior editor of Police1.com and Corrections1.com. In addition to her regular editing duties, Sarah delves deep into the people and issues that make up the public safety industry to bring insights and lessons learned to first responders everywhere.

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Gates and barbed wire fence, German concentration camp Auschwitz II, Poland.

Photo courtesy of LabateDesign/Envato