

Shalom, I am Anna,

As a preparation for this year abroad in Israel I went to Poland to visit Auschwitz 1 and 2. I went on the 4 days trip with the organisation „begegnen.nrw“ (Meeting). During these 4 days we also visited other places in Oswiecim and Krakau to learn about Jewish history, the holocaust and Jewish life nowadays in Poland.

We were a group of 20 people all between the ages of 18 and 83. I was the youngest and most of them were much older than I am. Also I've never seen any of them before.

Before joining the group I didn't really think of that. I wanted to go to Poland to learn and not to make friends.

In the end it was the best decision I could have made. There was no option to stay in my „bubble“. Apart from that I liked the idea of quota places for Muslims and Jews. We ended up being very much mixed in age, realities of life, reason to go to holocaust memorial, social backgrounds, religion, nationality and relation to the holocaust.

For some of us it was learning about our countries history, for some it was learning that they had lost family members in Auschwitz and for others it was confronting their Nazi-Family history.

After each long day packed with very emotionally challenging impression we sat down together and shared our thought and emotions. It was very intimate and often people were crying, ranting, praying or just confused. I loved the group of people and their trust and honesty.

As I said: I was there to learn. Looking back that attitude was just a joke, because you can learn about history in books, to make it more touching look at pictures. But what I didn't realise was that it's not only history. I mean there are still eyewitnesses living. It's also not just history because there are still people suffering from it in many different ways.

People still or finally feel the need to talk about it and confront their own history. It's not only history because we all bear great great responsibility for what happened and that it never happens again.

This responsibility starts by questioning position (maybe privilege), your opportunities to make change and by questioning if you even know enough. (Vielleicht gibt es hier eine besserer Formulierung)

It is a hard task to talk about the memorials because when you are there, there is this heavy heavy weight on your shoulders. It is not imaginable that the holocaust has happened – happened right where you are standing right then. Millions of humans have suffered and lost their lives and you are just standing there as if nothing has ever happened. It's hard to describe. I think everybody who can emotionally deal with it should definitely go to a memorial as Auschwitz.

Eventhrough it's hard to describe I want to share a special moment with you.

On our last day we went to birkenau and decided to pray for all the people who have suffered. We prayed in Arabic to Allah, in German to Gott and in Hebrew and ___ we prayed to Yahweh and sang. That was the most beautiful, heartbreaking and reliving thing at the same time. We sat some stones down and stayed quiet. I think a lot of us cried. About what happened and what could happen again. But also because we all realised it was not the end of dealing with the holocaust but much more the beginning of processing this emotionally overwhelming trip and relating our history to ourselves.

There is a documentation on the trip: