Jewish police

(*Juedischer Ordnungsdienst*), Jewish police units set up on German orders in certain locations within German-occupied areas. The *Judenraete* in Eastern Europe were commanded to organize these police units, generally as a prerequisite to the establishment of ghettos in their areas.

The duties of the Jewish police included collecting ransom payments, personal possessions, and taxes from their fellow Jews; gathering Jews for forced labor quotas; guarding the ghetto; and accompanying labor crews that worked outside the ghetto. Early on, the Jewish police also carried out public welfare duties, such as giving out food rations and aid to the poor and dealing with sanitary conditions.

The Germans set guidelines regarding the type of person to be recruited for the police: someone who was physically fit, and had both military experience and an academic degree. However, these guidelines were not actually observed. The Jewish police was officially part of the *Judenrat,* but many *Judenraete* regarded the police suspiciously: they feared that the Germans would have direct control over the police and make them carry out their dastardly policies. Indeed, the German authorities often made sure to appoint Jewish police heads who would follow their orders without question. Thus, many Jews in the ghettos considered the Jewish police to be a danger to the rest of the ghetto population. In addition, many youth Movements and Jewish political parties forbid their members from joining the police forces.

As time went on, the Jewish policemen were strongly affected by the mass deportations to extermination camps. Many decided to quit the force, rather than participate in the rounding up of their fellow Jews (most of these policemen were then themselves deported). Other policemen stayed in their posts, following German orders to the very end. This type of behavior came under serious investigation by survivor groups after the war. In Munich, 40 Jewish policemen were found guilty of improper behavior and ostracized by the Jewish community; in Israel several policemen were charged, but most were acquitted, based on the terrible context in which they had to function during the war.