



**PRESS STATEMENT**

**New Federal Military Rabbi Zsolt Balla Solemnly Inaugurated into Office**

The new Federal Military Rabbi Zsolt Balla was inaugurated in a solemn ceremony. The ceremony, which took place at the synagogue in Leipzig on Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021, was attended by the Federal Minister of Defence Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, numerous high-ranking politicians, members of the Bundeswehr (Federal Armed Forces) as well as church representatives.

In his speech, the President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Dr. Josef Schuster, expressed joy and gratitude that some 75 years after the end of the Second World War, Jewish military chaplains are taking up their duties in the Bundeswehr. He said this was also an important step in combating antisemitism. "This will reduce alienness towards Judaism, so that – I am convinced – prejudice will not occur, or will be nipped in the bud", Dr. Schuster said and added: "The Jewish community accepts responsibility. Responsibility for our democracy. And that includes an army living these democratic values. An army, where there is no place for political extremism and intolerance."

Speeches were given by Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, the Catholic Military Bishop Dr. Franz-Josef Overbeck and the Protestant Military Bishop Dr. Bernhard Felmberg as well as Rabbi Prof. Andreas Nachama and Rabbi Avichai Apel for the Rabbinical Conferences. The President of the Central Council of Jews inaugurated Rabbi Balla into his new office by handing over the certificate of appointment. Dr. Schuster also presented him with the gift of a Torah coat for the future military rabbi's travelling Torah.

In addition to his new task as federal military rabbi, Rabbi Balla remains community rabbi of Leipzig, as well as state rabbi of Saxony. In the following months, up to ten military rabbis will be appointed, as provided for in the military chaplaincy contract.

For more information, speech manuscripts and photos, please see the digital press kit: [www.zentralratderjuden.de](http://www.zentralratderjuden.de).

Leipzig, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 / 11<sup>th</sup> Tamus 5781