



HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY





THE HOLOCAUST

THE FACTS:

- Nazi persecution of Jews began in 1933 with oppressive laws and propaganda, enabling the systematic and planned attempt to annihilate European Jewry.
- From 1941 the 'Final Solution' was developed. The Nazis and their collaborators murdered six million Jewish people in ghettos, mass shootings, concentration camps and extermination camps. This became known as the Holocaust.

The Rise of the Nazi Party

- The success of Hitler and the Nazi party did not come from nowhere.
- The party developed and established itself in a Germany devastated by defeat in World War One and suffering an economic crisis.
- Antisemitism was present in societies across Europe, and there was a rise in pseudo-scientific ideas of eugenics and 'race theory'.
- Right-wing extremists blamed the country's defeat in World War One on a conspiracy between communists and Jews.

Nazi persecution of the Jews

- Once the Nazis came to power they introduced laws that denied Jews many freedoms and restricted their rights.
- Boycotts of Jewish doctors, lawyers and shops began in 1933 and by 1935 Jews were not allowed to join the civil service or the army.
- The introduction of the Nuremberg laws in September 1935 meant Jews were banned from marrying non-Jews and their citizenship was removed, including their right to vote.
- On 9 November 1938 the Nazis initiated attacks against the Jews. 91 Jews were murdered, 30,000 were arrested and sent to concentration camps and 267 synagogues were destroyed.
- This night became known as Kristallnacht – the 'Night of Broken Glass'.
- These attacks sparked debate in the House of Commons which led to Britain supporting the Kindertransport – a programme that rescued 10,000 children, the majority of whom were Jewish. Damage from Kristallnacht Auschwitz-Birkenau – the largest Nazi death camp.

Ghettos

- Nazi Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939 and as a result, the UK and France declared war.
- In spring 1940, the Nazis established ghettos – segregated parts of the larger towns and cities across Poland where Jews were forced to live.



- The largest ghetto was in Warsaw, where 400,000 Jews were crowded into 1.3 square miles of the city.
- Jews responded to the ghetto restrictions with a variety of resistance efforts.
- Hundreds of thousands of people died in the ghettos, from starvation, disease and executions carried out by the Nazis.

The 'Final Solution'

- In 1941 the Nazis stepped up their persecution of the Jews through murder on an industrial scale.
- This began with mass shootings across eastern Europe, carried out by killing units called the Einsatzgruppen (task forces), after the Nazi invasion of the USSR in June 1941.
- By December 1941 over 1.5 million Jews had been killed by beatings, starvation or mass shootings.
- The Wannsee Conference was held in Berlin on 20 January 1942 and was attended by high ranking Nazis. Here they planned the mass-deportation of European Jews to extermination camps in German-occupied Poland, where they would be murdered.
- This 'Final Solution' aimed to exterminate all Jews in Europe. Deportation on this scale required organisation and coordination from collaborators across Europe.
- The camps The Nazis created more than 40,000 camps throughout German-occupied countries.
- There, inmates were subjected to slave labour, overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions, starvation and cruel treatment, with a high death rate.
- After initial attempts to commit mass murder through shootings proved 'inefficient', the Nazis extended the camp system to include six extermination camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- Their purpose was to carry out genocide using gas chambers.

Liberation

- As Allied troops made progress across Nazi-occupied Europe, they discovered and liberated concentration and extermination camps.
- The camp of Majdanek in Poland was the first to be liberated, in the summer of 1944.
- On 8 May 1945, following the invasion of Germany and Hitler's suicide, Germany surrendered.
- Two thirds of Europe's Jews had been murdered. Justice Many senior Nazi war criminals were never sentenced for their roles during the Holocaust.
- After the war, the Allies brought 22 of the most senior Nazis to trial in Nuremberg, Germany between 1945 and 1946.
- The Nuremberg Trials were one of the most important innovations in the history of international law and helped lead to the establishment of the International Criminal Court over 50 years later, in 2002.



HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) takes place on 27 January each year and is a time to remember the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust, under Nazi Persecution and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

Holocaust Memorial Day is a time when we seek to learn the lessons of the past and recognise that genocide does not just take place on its own – it's a steady process which can begin if discrimination, racism and hatred are not checked and prevented. We're fortunate here in the UK; we are not at immediate risk of genocide. However, discrimination has not ended, nor has the use of the language of hatred or exclusion. There is still much to do to create a safer future and HMD is an opportunity to start this process.

Each year thousands of activities take place for HMD, bringing people from all backgrounds together to learn lessons from the past in creative, reflective and inspiring ways. From schools to libraries, workplaces to local authorities, HMD activities offer a real opportunity to honour the experiences of people affected by the Holocaust and genocide, and challenge ourselves to work for a safer, better future.

Q. What is the focus of the HMD commemoration?

A. Holocaust Memorial Day is about commemorating all of the communities who suffered as a result of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution, and demonstrating that the Holocaust is relevant to everyone in the UK today. The day provides a focus - through the national and local events and activities - for people to think about the continuing repercussions of the Holocaust and more recent genocides on our society. The central focus for Holocaust Memorial Day remains the Holocaust, but it is also an opportunity to reflect on more recent atrocities that raise similar issues.

Q. Does HMD commemorate other genocides/atrocities?

A. A key aim of Holocaust Memorial Day is to reflect on other recent atrocities that raise similar issues and concerns. National ceremonies have referred to the appalling events which have taken place in Cambodia, Rwanda and former Yugoslavia. It is also recognised that these events could happen again anywhere and at any time, unless we ensure that our society is vigilant in opposing racism and victimisation.

Holocaust Memorial Day takes account of more recent genocidal and ethnic cleansing events, including some in which the victims were Muslims such as Bosnia and Kosovo. From its first year, survivors from the Holocaust have shared the stage with those from more recent tragedies, such as Bosnia and Rwanda - Jews, Muslims and Christians together.



Q. How has HMD sought to involve the Muslim community?

A. One of the speakers at the first ever Holocaust Memorial Day national event in 2001 was a Muslim concentration camp victim from Bosnia. There are and always have been many Muslims involved in organising local Holocaust Memorial Day events. The Holocaust Memorial Day literature has always emphasised the lesson that all forms of hatred and prejudice against any minority must be confronted – including anti-Muslim hatred.

There are local HMD events across the country. The link below gives details of the many events being hosted across the UK in January 2022 to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.

<https://www.hmd.org.uk/take-part-in-holocaust-memorial-day/activities/>

The link below is to a map which will help communities across the country learn about their local connections to the Holocaust, Jewish refugees and British responses to Nazism.

<https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/>



HOLOCAUST DENIAL & DISTORTION

Holocaust denial is discourse and propaganda that deny the historical reality and the extent of the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis and their accomplices during World War II, known as the Holocaust or the Shoah. Holocaust denial refers specifically to any attempt to claim that the Holocaust/Shoah did not take place.

Holocaust denial may include:

- Publicly denying or calling into doubt the use of principal mechanisms of destruction (such as gas chambers, mass shooting, starvation and torture) or the intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people.
- Holocaust denial in its various forms is an expression of antisemitism.
- The attempt to deny the genocide of the Jews is an effort to exonerate National Socialism and antisemitism from guilt or responsibility in the genocide of the Jewish people.
- Forms of Holocaust denial also include blaming the Jews for either exaggerating or creating the Shoah for political or financial gain as if the Shoah itself was the result of a conspiracy plotted by the Jews. In this, the goal is to make the Jews culpable and antisemitism once again legitimate.

The goals of Holocaust denial often are the rehabilitation of an explicit antisemitism and the promotion of political ideologies and conditions suitable for the advent of the very type of event it denies.

Distortion of the Holocaust refers, inter alia, to:

- Intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany;
- Gross minimization of the number of the victims of the Holocaust in contradiction to reliable sources;
- Attempts to blame the Jews for causing their own genocide;
- Statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event. Those statements are not Holocaust denial but are closely connected to it as a radical form of antisemitism. They may suggest that the Holocaust did not go far enough in accomplishing its goal of “the Final Solution of the Jewish Question”;
- Attempts to blur the responsibility for the establishment of concentration and death camps devised and operated by Nazi Germany by putting blame on other nations or ethnic groups.

The link below provides a practical toolkit to tackle Holocaust Distortion



<https://againstdistortiontoolkit.holocaustremembrance.com/>

BREAKDOWN OF PEOPLE WHO DIED IN THE HOLOCAUST

- Even the most conservative estimates of the total number of victims of the Holocaust suggest that at least eleven million people died in the Holocaust
- The single biggest target group was Jews, of whom an estimated six million were killed
- 1.9 million Poles were killed
- 250,000 disabled people were killed, and many more sterilised
- 200,000 Roma and Sinti people were killed
- 10-15,000 gay people were sent to concentration camps, and up to 40,000 more were treated brutally in prison
- 2,000 Jehovah's Witnesses were killed
- Black people were subjected to greater hardship than White people
- And an additional three million others (including persons with "Asiatic features," and top political and military leaders) were held in makeshift camps without proper shelter, food, or medicine with the deliberate intent that they die.



RESOURCES

The links below provide further information and resources on the Holocaust and subsequent genocides.

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust

<https://www.hmd.org.uk/what-is-holocaust-memorial-day/>

Holocaust Educational Trust

<https://www.het.org.uk/>

Wiener Holocaust Library

<https://wienerholocaustlibrary.org/>

UK Holocaust Memorial & Learning Centre

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-holocaust-memorial-foundation>

National Holocaust Centre & Museum – Newark, Nottinghamshire

<https://www.holocaust.org.uk/>

The Holocaust Exhibition & Learning Centre -HFSA Huddersfield

<https://holocaustlearning.org.uk/about/>

Learning for the Righteous

<https://learningfromtherighteous.org/>

Jewish Museum London

<https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/>

Manchester Jewish Museum

<https://www.manchesterjewishmuseum.com/>

