
What was Auschwitz: an end or a beginning, an apocalyptic consequence of centuries-old bigotry and hatred, or was it the final convulsion of demonic forces in human nature?

Elie Wiesel, survivor of the Holocaust, author, teacher, Nobel laureate, voice of the witness and moral compass for humanity



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Who cares about the Holocaust anymore?

Why should anyone who isn't Jewish have to think about this?

It's not my business what happened in the past, and to a group I don't identify with.

Show Jews no mercy. Jews to the gas.

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From its ideological inception through to its culmination, the Holocaust was the most systematic targeting of a single ethnic group for annihilation in human history.

The horrors that occurred at Auschwitz-Birkenau and over 42,000 concentration, labor and extermination camps throughout Poland, Germany and elsewhere in Europe must not be forgotten or ignored. Commemorating the Holocaust provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon the tragedy of the Jewish genocide and its universal message for all humanity.

There is no parallel to the events that took place and the involvement in and acceptance of whole societies in the Nazi's international agenda to eliminate the Jews. As a society, we must instill the lessons of these tragic events and maintain the memory of those lost. But this is tarnished by attempts to minimize, excuse, misappropriate and deny the history of the Holocaust, which only serves to distort the truth and allow lies to spread.

The ability to hear from those who experienced this nightmare is dwindling, while the world is yet again experiencing a dramatic rise in anti-Jewish hatred, divisive global politics and the animosity of racism. Antisemitic incidents have increased globally following the 7 October 2023 attacks in Israel by Hamas and the subsequent war against terror. Many Jewish communities all over the world are feeling vulnerable, with hostility and suspicion of others rising.

We hope that our carefully curated and designed resources can provide opportunities for people to come together, learn both from and about the past, and take actions to make a better future for all.

We remember so that their past will not become our children's future.

It's our responsibility to educate ourselves and the future generations about the consequences of anti-Jewish racism, to emphasize the universal relevance of Holocaust remembrance, and to bear witness to each genocide for its own sake, understanding our role as witnesses to the future.



WHAT WAS THE HOLOCAUST?

The Holocaust was the extermination of Europe's Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators between 1933-1945. Established under Adolph Hitler and the National Socialist German Workers Party known as the Nazis, persecution of Jewish people included legalized classification through the Nuremberg laws that led to social, political and economic isolation of Jews and others that threatened their fascist ideology and pursuit of racial purity.

Building upon centuries of antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred), Jews were strategically stripped of all civic rights, forced to wear yellow stars as a visual manifestation of their identity as legitimate targets of hatred, imprisonment and execution, which escalated to an intricate system of dehumanization, incarceration, and annihilation by mass murder and gas. Spanning 22 countries with active participation of local governments and citizens, ultimately it led to the extermination of more than 6 million Jewish people amid the echo of a silent world of bystanders.

NEVER AGAIN, NEVER FORGET: ARE WE KEEPING THOSE PROMISES?

Now, more than ever, we are hearing just how much ignorance there is about the Holocaust. Distortion of facts are becoming the norm, and admiration for Nazis and Hitler are on the rise. Only by ensuring everyone understands that hatred and divisiveness were at the foundation of the Holocaust can we overcome ignorance and fulfill our obligation to remember. Please use this resource in team meetings or in a personal capacity to explore elements of the lessons of memory and humanity, and fulfill our personal obligation to remember and ensure history is not denied, distorted or erased.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What was unique about the Holocaust as a genocide?
- What motivated common individuals, academics or committed public servants to enable or excuse the horrors of the Holocaust committed on fellow humans?
- What can we do as individuals to increase understanding and respect for the Holocaust experience as a lesson for humanity?
- How can we thwart the continued denial of facts and evidence in this age of disinformation, and when fewer and fewer survivors remain to share their testimony?
- The Holocaust happened with the implied consent of many non-Jewish individuals who were perfectly happy to look the other way. What commitments can you make to call out racism, prejudice and intolerance wherever you see it?
- How can we avoid cognitive or behavioral apologetics used to increase negative perceptions of Jews on social and mainstream media, and in our educational systems?
- What role does social media and the internet play in perpetuating the sorts of falsehoods and stereotypes that led to the Holocaust? Do they make it easier for prejudice to take hold?
- How else could you utilize the lessons of the Holocaust to fight the growth of modern racism and hate of all kinds?