

Does any of this sound familiar?



The Holocaust (1933–1945) was the systematic, **state-sponsored** persecution and murder of six million European Jews by the Nazi German regime and its allies and collaborators.

When they came to power in Germany, the Nazis did not immediately start to carry out mass murder. However, they quickly began **using the government** to target and exclude Jews from German society. Among other anti-Semitic measures, the Nazi German regime enacted **discriminatory laws** and **organized violence**.

The Nazis falsely accused Jews of causing Germany's **social, economic, political, and cultural problems**. Some Germans were **receptive to these Nazi claims**.

Germany's instability under the Weimar Republic (1918–1933), the fear of communism, and the **economic shocks** of the Great Depression also made many **Germans more open to Nazi ideas**, including anti-Semitism.

These new forms included **economic, nationalist, and racial anti-Semitism**.

Throughout German-controlled and aligned territories, the persecution of Jews took a variety of forms:

- **Legal discrimination**
- **Public identification and exclusion; propaganda, boycotts of businesses, public humiliation, and obligatory markings** (such as the Jewish star badge worn as an armband or on clothing).
- **Organized violence**. (including violent riots).
- **Physical Displacement; forced emigration, resettlement**
- **Internment**; where many died from starvation, disease, and other inhumane conditions.
- **Widespread theft and plunder**. The confiscation of property, personal belongings, and valuables

The Nazi "Final Solution" was the deliberate and systematic **mass murder** of European Jews.

It was the last stage of the Holocaust

Who was responsible?

At the highest level, Adolf Hitler inspired, ordered, approved, and supported the genocide of Europe's Jews. However, Hitler **did not act alone**.

Millions of Germans and other Europeans participated in the Holocaust. **Without their involvement**, the genocide of the Jewish people in Europe would not have been possible.

Leaders relied upon German institutions and organizations; local bureaucracies and institutions; and individuals.

Once the war began, the SS and its **police affiliates** became **especially deadly**. Members of the Sicherheitsdienst (the SD), the Gestapo, the **Criminal Police** (Kripo), and the Order Police played **particularly active and deadly roles**

Other German institutions involved in carrying out the Final Solution included **the German military; the German national railway and healthcare systems; the German civil service and criminal justice systems; and German businesses, insurance companies, and banks.**

German soldiers, **policemen**, civil servants, **lawyers, judges**, businessmen, engineers, and **doctors and nurses** chose to implement the regime's policies. **Ordinary Germans also participated** in the Holocaust in a variety of ways

Many Germans bought, took, or looted their Jewish neighbours' belongings and property. These Germans' participation in the Holocaust was motivated by enthusiasm, **careerism, fear, greed, self-interest, anti-Semitism, and political ideals**, among other factors.

One of the deadliest things that neighbours, acquaintances, colleagues, and even friends could do was **denounce Jews to Nazi German authorities**.

Most often individuals contributed to the Holocaust through inaction and indifference: these individuals are called **bystanders**.

The Holocaust specifically refers to the **systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder** of six million Jews. However, there were also **millions of other victims**.

- Other groups **targeted as threats to the health, unity, and security** of the German people were: Political opponents, members of other political parties and trade union activists.
- Germans whose activities were deemed harmful to German society. (men accused of homosexuality, persons accused of being professional or habitual criminals, and so-called asocials - vagabonds, beggars, prostitutes, pimps, and alcoholics).
- The regime also **forcibly sterilized** and persecuted Afro-Germans.
- **People with disabilities**, especially those **living in institutions**, were considered both a **genetic and a financial burden**. These people were **targeted for murder in the so-called Euthanasia Program**.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the world has struggled to come to terms with the horrors of the genocide, to remember the victims, and to hold perpetrators responsible. These important efforts remain on-going.

Facts courtesy of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC

These were people just like you and me. How can a human contemplate such atrocities? The Holocaust is a time-period in history that stands as an example of the atrocities humans can inflict on each other when intolerance and indifference take hold of people's souls. Remembering what happened is essential to avoiding such carnage from **ever happening again**.

Almost 80 years on, have we not learnt anything?

