

YOU ARE MY WITNESSES

ISAIAH 43:10

A CHANGED WORLD

THE CONTINUING IMPACT OF THE HOLOCAUST

**UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL MUSEUM**

100 RAOUL WALLENBERG PLACE
WASHINGTON, DC 20024-2126
www.ushmm.org

COVER: Ruins of the Great Synagogue on Tomackie Street in Warsaw, blown up by the Germans in May 1943 in a reprisal after the Warsaw ghetto uprising. *USHMM, courtesy of Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*; **INSIDE COVER:** Shoes confiscated from prisoners at Majdanek. *On loan from the State Museum of Majdanek, Lublin, Poland*; **BACK COVER:** The Museum's Hall of Witness.

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**UNITED
STATES
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WASHINGTON, D.C.



THE HOLOCAUST—THE MASS MURDER OF THE

EUROPEAN JEWS—WAS A WATERSHED EVENT

IN HUMAN HISTORY. In the aftermath of

World War II, the world—from individual

nations to the United Nations; from religious

leaders to professionals in fields as diverse

as law, medicine, and science; from presidents

and prime ministers to private citizens—

confronted its legacy. Many of the issues

raised by this cataclysmic event continue

to have an impact on our lives and the world

in which we live.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

IN LIGHT OF THE MORAL FAILURES THAT ALLOWED THE HOLOCAUST TO HAPPEN—

- ▶ NATIONS PLEDGED TO PREVENT AND PUNISH THE CRIME OF “GENOCIDE”?
- ▶ CRIMINAL TRIALS ESTABLISHED THAT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO COMMIT CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY COULD BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE BY INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS?
- ▶ INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS EXPANDED DRAMATICALLY?
- ▶ THE IDEA OF “INFORMED CONSENT” INFLUENCED ETHICAL APPROACHES TO MEDICAL EXPERIMENTATION ON HUMAN BEINGS?
- ▶ PROTECTIONS FOR REFUGEES WERE BROADENED?
- ▶ THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS RECONCILIATION BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND JEWS ADVANCED?
- ▶ THE IDEA OF A JEWISH HOMELAND GAINED URGENCY?

To learn more, go to
www.ushmm.org/continuingimpact



PREVENTING AND PUNISHING THE CRIME OF GENOCIDE

DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Raphael Lemkin, a Jewish refugee from Poland, coined the word *genocide* in 1944 to describe what was happening in German-occupied Europe.

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

In 1948, the United Nations adopted the Genocide Convention, which requires governments to “undertake to prevent and punish the crime of genocide.”

CONTINUING IMPACT

Preventing and responding to genocide remains one of the world’s most perplexing and urgent problems. Genocide has continued to plague the world, from Cambodia to the Balkans, Rwanda, and Sudan.

TO LEARN MORE

Go to www.ushmm.org/continuingimpact.

Visit the Web site of the Museum’s Committee on Conscience.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower visited the newly liberated Ohrdruf concentration camp in April 1945, to witness firsthand the evidence of Nazi atrocities. He urged others to do the same, lest these crimes be forgotten or dismissed as mere ‘propaganda.’
USHMM, courtesy of National Archives



INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

BEFORE THE HOLOCAUST

Individuals were rarely held liable for state policies resulting in mass murder and other crimes against civilians.

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

Prosecution of top Nazi leaders at Nuremberg established the principle that individual officials could be held responsible for “crimes against humanity” and for implementation of policies that violated international law, without being able to rely on their status as government officials as a defense and regardless of whether they were at the scene of the crime.

CONTINUING IMPACT

Tribunals created by the United Nations Security Council are trying government officials for crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, while an International Criminal Tribunal has been initiated to try such crimes in the future.

TO LEARN MORE

Go to www.ushmm.org/continuingimpact.

Visit the Museum’s special focus Web page, “The Nuremberg Trials and Their Legacy.”

Visit the Museum’s online Holocaust Encyclopedia article, “War Crimes Trials.”

Visit the Web site of the Museum’s Committee on Conscience.

Former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic on trial for war crimes at the International Criminal Tribunal, The Hague. AP



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

BEFORE THE HOLOCAUST

Governments were considered to have largely unfettered authority over individuals within their borders, and international efforts to oppose human rights abuses were limited.

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

Recognition that the protection of human rights is an international concern expanded dramatically with the 1948 adoption by the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

CONTINUING IMPACT

Protecting human rights continues to be a worldwide problem and is the focus of efforts by governments, inter-governmental bodies, and nongovernmental organizations.

TO LEARN MORE

Go to www.ushmm.org/continuingimpact.

Visit the Web site of the Museum’s Committee on Conscience.

Speaking out on behalf of human rights is Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace Prize–winner, Holocaust survivor, and Founding Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. USHMM



THE PRINCIPLE OF “INFORMED CONSENT”

DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Nazi doctors conducted life-threatening medical experiments on many concentration camp prisoners.

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

During the postwar trial of Nazi doctors in 1946–47, a U.S. military tribunal issued new guidelines for the ethical use of human subjects in medical studies. The “Nuremberg Code” established that “the voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential.”

CONTINUING IMPACT

The “Nuremberg Code” has influenced numerous international ethics statements but failed to find a place in either the U.S. or German national law codes. The need to fully inform patients of the potential risks of experimental treatments is an ongoing challenge, particularly in light of rapid scientific and technological advances.

TO LEARN MORE

Go to www.ushmm.org/continuingimpact.

See the Museum’s online exhibition *The Doctors Trial*.

Visit the Museum’s online exhibition *Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race*.

Carl Clauberg (*far left*), a research gynecologist, conducted cruel experiments at Auschwitz mostly on Jewish prisoners in 1943–44, aiming to develop an inexpensive method of mass sterilization. *Instytut Pamięci Narodowej—Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Warsaw*

PROTECTIONS FOR REFUGEES

DURING THE NAZI ERA

Jews fleeing the Germans and their collaborators often found that entry to other countries, including the United States, was barred. Some courageous diplomats gave visas to refugees, in spite of their governments’ restrictive policies.

AFTERMATH

Under the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention, governments promised not to return refugees to places where their life or freedom would be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

CONTINUING IMPACT

Protecting and assisting the estimated 14 million refugees worldwide remains a challenge.

TO LEARN MORE

Go to www.ushmm.org/continuingimpact.

View the Committee on Conscience online programs “Contemporary Flight and Rescue: Seeking Refuge in America Today” and “Preventing Future Genocide and Protecting Refugees”.

Visit the Museum’s online exhibition *Voyage of the St. Louis*.

Read the articles “Refugees” and “Varian Fry” in the online Holocaust Encyclopedia.

Hadiya Adam Ahmed, living under a tree after fleeing into Chad from Darfur, Sudan, 2004. She had been shot twice by a Sudanese soldier to prevent her reaching a well. *USHMM, photo by Jerry Fowler*



RECONCILIATION BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

DURING THE NAZI ERA

The Nazis exploited centuries of negative Christian teachings about Jews and Judaism to foment hatred and promote their own racist, antisemitic policies. Mainstream Christian churches—Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox—failed as institutions to protest or systematically oppose Nazi persecution of Jews. While the German government and its collaborators perpetrated the genocide of Jews, millions of Christians remained silent.

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

Christian Churches, particularly the Roman Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), renounced their anti-Jewish teachings and promoted interfaith dialogue. In 1965, the Second Vatican Council adopted the groundbreaking declaration *Nostra Aetate*, and in 2000 during a historic visit to Jerusalem, Pope John Paul II expressed sorrow for “the hatred, acts of persecution, and displays of antisemitism directed against Jews by Christians at any time and in any place.” In 1994, the ELCA repudiated the anti-Jewish writings of Martin Luther.

CONTINUING IMPACT

Many Christian denominations continue to address the role played by centuries of Christian antisemitism in contributing to circumstances that made the Holocaust possible. Yet, antisemitism, which can assume many different forms, did not end with the Holocaust. There has been a significant increase of antisemitic incidents in recent years, particularly in Europe and Islamic countries.

TO LEARN MORE

Go to www.ushmm.org/continuingimpact.

See the Museum’s special focus Web page on the resurgence of antisemitism.

Read “The Interfaith Story behind *Nostra Aetate*” on the Web site of the Museum’s Committee on Church Relations and the Holocaust.

THE IDEA OF A JEWISH HOMELAND

DURING THE NAZI ERA

Most Jews who sought to escape Nazi persecution were trapped in German-occupied Europe because virtually no nation was willing to admit large numbers of Jews, even on a temporary basis.

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

After World War II, the United Nations divided Palestine into two potential states, one for Jews and one for Palestinian Arabs. The State of Israel was founded in 1948 as a homeland where any Jew could become a citizen under any circumstance.

CONTINUING IMPACT

In the decades since the founding of Israel, Jews have fled persecution and hardship in Arab lands, the Soviet Union, Ethiopia, and other places around the globe, for refuge in Israel. Wars and continued violence have created serious obstacles to peace for both Israelis and Palestinians.

TO LEARN MORE

Go to www.ushmm.org/continuingimpact.

Visit the Museum’s online exhibition *Life Reborn: Jewish Displaced Persons 1945–1951*.

Above: Jewish refugees from Europe aboard the *RMS Mataroa* hold a Zionist flag as their ship legally enters the port of Haifa, July 1945. *USHMM, courtesy of Israel Government Press Office*

Previous page: Pope John Paul II places a prayer in the Western Wall in Jerusalem during his historic trip to Israel in 2000. *Photo courtesy of “A Blessing to One Another”*