



A CHANGED WORLD

**THE
CONTINUING
IMPACT
OF THE
HOLOCAUST**

UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM ushmm.org



“AFTER AUSCHWITZ,

**THE HUMAN CONDITION
IS NO LONGER
THE SAME.”**

—ELIE WIESEL, Nobel laureate
and Museum founding chairman

THE HOLOCAUST 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.

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 idea of a Jewish homeland gained urgency.
- The movement towards reconciliation between Christians and Jews advanced.

Cover: Jewish girls sheltered at a children’s home in Paris. Only a few escaped deportation to Auschwitz. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Left: Shoes confiscated from prisoners at Majdanek. On loan from the State Museum of Majdanek, Lublin, Poland. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Inside back and back covers: The Museum’s Hall of Witness. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum*

A refugee displaced by the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan waits in the Farchana camp in Chad, 2007. Michael Graham for US Holocaust Memorial Museum



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.

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 are trying government officials for crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Cambodia, among other countries. The International Criminal Court has been established to continue trying such crimes in the future.

Former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic stands trial for war crimes at the International Criminal Tribunal, The Hague, 2001. AP/Wide World, New York



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, intergovernmental bodies, and nongovernmental organizations.

Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor, Nobel laureate, and Museum founding chairman, speaks out on behalf of human rights.
US Holocaust Memorial Museum



Carl Clauberg (far left), a research gynecologist, conducted cruel experiments at Auschwitz, mostly on Jewish prisoners in 1943–44, with the aim of developing an inexpensive method of mass sterilization.

Instytut Pamięci Narodowej—Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Warsaw



THE PRINCIPLE OF “INFORMED CONSENT”

DURING THE HOLOCAUST

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

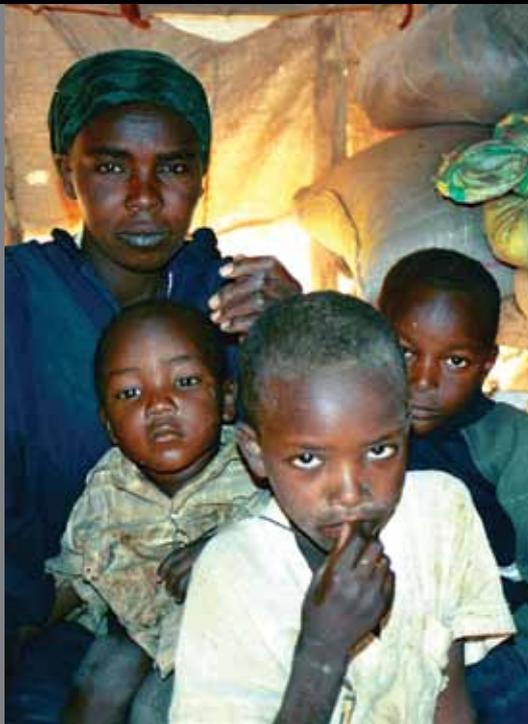
AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

During the postwar trial of Nazi doctors in 1946–47, a US 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 US or German national law codes. The need to fully inform patients of the potential risks of experimental treatments is an ongoing concern, particularly in light of rapid scientific and technological advances.

Hawa Salihdin, a refugee from the genocide in Darfur, waits with her children at the Iridimi camp in Chad, 2004. Militias attacking her village killed her father and brother.
US Holocaust Memorial Museum



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.

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

Under the 1951 UN 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 15 million refugees worldwide remains a challenge.

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.

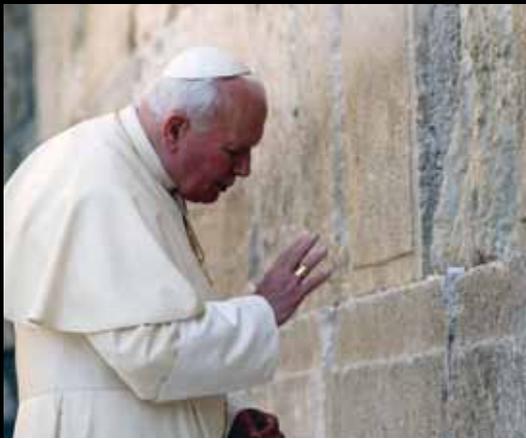
CONTINUING IMPACT

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.

Jewish refugees from Europe aboard the *RMS Mataroa* carry a Zionist flag as their ship legally enters the port of Haifa, July 1945. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Israel Government Press Office*



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"



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. Most Christian churches failed as institutions to protest or systematically oppose Nazi persecution of Jews.

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

Many Christian churches have renounced anti-Jewish teachings. Examples include the 1965 Vatican II declaration *Nostra Aetate* and Pope John Paul II's condemnation in Jerusalem in 2000 of "hatred, acts of persecution, and displays of antisemitism directed against Jews by Christians at any time and in any place." Following a visit by Lutheran leaders to the Museum in 1994, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 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 there has been a significant increase of antisemitic incidents in recent years, particularly in Europe and Islamic countries.

To learn more about the topics introduced in this brochure, please visit ushmm.org/continuingimpact.

First they came for the socialists,
and I did not speak out—
because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists,
and I did not speak out—
because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews,
and I did not speak out—
because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—
and there was no one left
to speak for me.

—Martin Niemöller, a German theologian and pastor who was an early Nazi supporter but was later imprisoned for opposing Hitler's regime

YOU ARE MY WITNESSES

ISAIAH 43:10

A living memorial to the Holocaust, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum inspires citizens and leaders worldwide to confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity. Federal support guarantees the Museum's permanent place on the National Mall, and its far-reaching educational programs and global impact are made possible by generous donors.

Hours: 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m., daily
Closed Yom Kippur and Christmas Day.

For more information, visit ushmm.org or call **202.488.0400**.



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