



UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM, WASHINGTON, DC, U.S.

The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its allies and collaborators. Holocaust is a word of Greek origin meaning "sacrifice by fire." The Nazis, who came to power in Germany in January 1933, believed that Germans were "racially superior" and that the Jews, deemed "inferior," were an alien threat to the so-called German racial community.

During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived racial and biological inferiority: Roma (Gypsies), people with disabilities, some of the Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, and others), Soviet prisoners of war, and Black people. Other groups were persecuted on political, ideological, and behavioral grounds, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and homosexuals.

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The Holocaust was unprecedented genocide, total and systematic, perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its collaborators, with the aim of annihilating the Jewish people. The primary motivation was the Nazis' antisemitic racist ideology. Between 1933 and 1941, Nazi Germany pursued a policy that dispossessed the Jews of their rights and their property, followed by the branding and concentration of the Jewish population. This policy gained broad support in Germany and much of occupied Europe. In 1941, following the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Nazis and their collaborators launched the systematic mass murder of the Jews. By 1945, nearly six million Jews had been murdered.

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM, LONDON, UK

The Holocaust was the systematic murder of Europe's Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Second World War. For the first time in history, industrial methods were used for the mass extermination of a whole people.

Between 1933 and 1945, Jews were targeted for discrimination, segregation and extermination. On coming to power in 1933, the Nazis began to actively persecute the Jews of Germany with the introduction of discriminatory legislation accompanied by vicious antisemitic propaganda. With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the process escalated and Jews throughout Nazi-controlled Europe came under the threat of death.

The Nazis enslaved and murdered millions of others as well. Political opponents, Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), homosexuals, prisoners of conscience, people with physical and mental disabilities, Poles, Soviet prisoners of war and others were killed or died in camps as a result of neglect, starvation or disease.

Definitions excerpted from:

U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Introduction to the Holocaust." <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/introduction-to-the-holocaust>.

Yad Vashem. "What was the Holocaust?" <https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about.html>.

Brosnan, Matt. "What was the Holocaust?" Imperial War Museum, June 12, 2018. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-was-the-holocaust>.