



# MEMORIA

MEMORY • HISTORY • EDUCATION



## HOLOCAUST NAME MONUMENT IN AMSTERDAM

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# KL PLASZOW. AN INTERVIEW ABOUT THE NEW SPACE OF MEMORY IN CRACOW

"Museum – Memorial Site of KL Plaszow in Kraków. German Nazi Labour and Concentration Camp (1942-1945) (in organization)" is the official name of the institution that takes care of the former Plaszow camp remains. Paweł Sawicki spoke to Marta Śmiertana from the KL Plaszow Museum about the changes in the area of memory, and about the plans of the new institution.

**When one thinks of the Plaszow Memorial Site of the former German camp, one should probably talk about two issues – the history of the site and the memory history of the site. How has the division between these two spaces progressed so far?**

It is one of the issues quite often addressed when talking about a forgotten place, a forgotten history. If we look at it in terms of the fact that KL Plaszow has not been commemorated holistically, then we can talk about oblivion. However, if we look at the area more carefully, there are seven signs of remembrance – seven monuments erected at Plaszow from 1946 to the XXI century. Each of these monuments is the result of efforts made to preserve the memory of this space. It just so happened that these actions undertaken by individuals and institutions or associations – sometimes created ad hoc – did not have the clout to create a museum, that is, to appoint a single custodian who would carry out commemorative and educational actions in a targeted manner. This site was remembered but, as a result of various circumstances, it was not until 2021 that it received comprehensive, homogeneous care.

**During this period of fragmentary memory, has any specific symbol of the camp's memory been created?**

No. It is a challenge that lies ahead of us. I have recently been thinking about the issue of intangible heritage. There is no living and persistent memory in this space. There are separate memories that can be seen by looking at monuments, which are signs of certain processes, and were organised by different

groups. The best known of these, the 1964 Monument to the Victims of Fascism by Witold Cęckiewicz – was a manifestation characteristic of similar memorials but was not as firmly rooted in the survivors need to remember the site. The monuments do not create a coherent picture. They are signs of separate memorials, which of course, fit into that single image, but those who produced them had no such intention.

**For several years we have been able to observe activities aimed at linking the memory of Płaszow with the site. A significant change took place in 2017 when an agreement was signed to create the Museum – KL Plaszow Memorial. What does this transformation look like?**

They are primarily institutional because the institution usually has the power to steer a process for years. Such a process began at the Museum of Krakow, within the divisions that dealt with the city's history during World War II. It includes, above all, the Pharmacy under the Eagle: part of the old exhibition was the history of KL Plaszow; it is, to some extent, an exhibition at Pomorska Street and the Oskar Schindler Enamel Factory. The signing of the letter of intent in 2017 was an outcome of efforts that had been ongoing for several years earlier in the space related to the commemoration. In 2015, the Cracow Museum applied to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage to conduct research and commemoration work associated with the former Plaszow labour and concentration camp. The implementation of the application began in 2016. Three similar grants were implemented between 2016 and 2020. It provided the foundation that led to the idea of establishing a new institution. I worked as part



Jewish community cemetery in Podgórze on the grounds of the KL Plaszow memorial site. Photo: K. Bednarczyk 2021 (MKLP)

of the KL Plaszow Memorial Museum Workshop at the Cracow Museum – it was a unit responsible for research and commemoration activities. We visited archives, collected scattered resources related to the history of this site, which served as the basis for a Digital Archive of KL Plaszow, and carried out invasive and non-invasive archaeological research of the area, during which we acquired artefacts related to the history of the camp. A commemoration scenario has also been created. Everything that transpired within the structures of a single museum was linked with the intention of our current organisers, the Municipality of Krakow and the Ministry of Culture, National Heritage and Sport, to bring about the appointment of a guardian for the site. The first step was the intention, expressed in the 2017 agreement, that the owners of the land on which the memorial is situated, the Municipality of Cracow and the Jewish Community, would consent to the establishment of a museum there in the future. It was followed by further formal steps, resulting in the establishment of the KL Plaszow Museum in early 2021.

**The Memorial is being built on a vast site amidst complex natural, historical and social conditions. These are activities carried out under the motto “respect for the past and the present”. What does it involve?**

Our situation is specific. In terms of commemorations, we most closely identify with Flossenbürg because here, too, the commemoration came about late. However, the difference is most evident when confronted with such memorials as Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek. We are creating something that is, in a sense, slightly unfamiliar to local memory and very many years from the events to which we refer. Over this time, the area has lived a life of its own. The area that now forms the memorial is half of the historic site of the camp. After the war, the former owners returned, and new buildings were constructed. This process took many years and had it not been that the former camp area was listed as a historic monument in 2002, the property development process would have siphoned off yet another piece of that space that had survived undeveloped. It created another natural context, the green character of



Relics of the preburial hall and the Grey House. Photo: K. Bednarczyk 2021 (MKLP)

the space, its functioning in the consciousness of inhabitants of Cracow as a park area four kilometres from the main square. It is attractive, especially now, as our need to commemorate overlaps with the ecological need, an essential requirement. For this reason, the modified architectural design of the memorial envisages no interference in the almost 40 hectares of former camp grounds. When we think about the authenticity of this space, we observe two norms to which we want to refer. The first is respect for history, not creating any reconstructions, relying on what we have, supporting ourselves with the tools of advancement of civilisation, such as non-invasive archaeological research. The second is that it will all remain green, without a fence, and provided the rules and regulations are observed, we will not restrict access to those who wish to reflect and walk around with a sense of respect for the space. We try to reconcile these two factors while being aware that any regulation may be demanding. The area has been without a caretaker for many years, so there seem to be fewer standards there today, than in any public square within Cracow. We are talking about people who walk their dogs there, spend time

recreationally – sunbathing or organising barbecues, although the latter – with the emergence of the narrative in public discussion that this is a historical site – has reduced somewhat. However, the lack of clear standards for this place means that introducing any regulation will be a multi-year, long education process. Speaking of respect, we try to clarify and explain to Cracow residents why it is important to respect this space.

**You mentioned the archaeological research being carried out. How many elements of the authentic camp space have survived to this day?**

From an aerial perspective, we can see the shape of the 80 hectares of the entire camp area. Today, 40 hectares of the former camp area are under the care of the conservator. Comparing the modern shape of the site with the period of the camp's operation, we can see the exact route of the roads, which is also the pre-war route. The levelling of the ground for the construction of the barracks, relics of masonry buildings – remains of the pre-burial hall of the new Jewish cemetery, foundations of the industrial barracks

– remains of the pre-burial hall of the new Jewish cemetery, foundations of the industrial barracks in the farm area have survived to this day – they are most legible when the vegetation is not too lush. The only historic building that survived is the Grey House, which was built in 1925 as the administrative building of the Jewish Community Cemetery in Cracow. It also served as an administration building during the camp's existence, and its basement housed a jail and prison. The walls of the cells bear inscriptions left by those imprisoned there. This will also pose a challenge to us because visitors to the place will assume the inscriptions must have been left by prisoners. However, only one of the inscriptions was made during the camp's operation; the rest were made after 19 January 1945, when the Red Army was stationed there. This building shows how the memory of this place accumulates. Also preserved are the remains of fire ponds dug following the insurance company's recommendation and the grave chambers of the older of the two cemeteries on the site – the Podgórze community cemetery. They were unveiled in the early XX century by the Jewish Community in Cracow, with the help of volunteers. It is a very visible vestige of the site's pre-war past and is described in the camp's history during the tour with a guide who tells the visitor that these graves were the area on which the first barracks were erected, that burials were still taking place in the cemetery in 1942, the same year the construction of the camp began.

#### **How then do you plan to commemorate the former KL Plaszow space? What are the main elements of the planned memorial?**

The KL Plaszow Museum, but before that, the Cracow Museum, within which the scenario was conceived, came into reality when the architectural design for the space was already in place. It was created in previous years. The project was modified on the basis of the scenario. It is important because it shows that we have not been operating without a concept. It was not the realisation of a pure vision, which perhaps is also an advantage. The entire commemoration is divided into three parts, pillars. The first – and most important – is the terrain. We describe it as the most significant witness to the death and suffering of the victims. Interference in this area will be minimal

and involve the erection of plaques to indicate the main tour route and the key points in the site's history. They will be smaller than the current board exhibition we created there a few years ago. They will facilitate the work of the educator but also help individual visitors. Other sites relevant to the history of KL Plaszow will be marked just next to the surface and will be read mainly in combination with the audio guide. The area will not be fenced – a clear sign in the space will mark entrances. The permanent exhibition will be housed in two locations. The first is the Grey House, where prisoners' accounts will be crucial to the journey through KL Plaszow's history. However, a new building will be erected beyond the historical camp site, named Memorial by the designers, which will primarily house a permanent exhibition recounted in chronological order. There will also be a car park next to the building, primarily for coaches. What the project does not address is space for educational activities. We have plans for a third building – a ruin of a building that we could renovate. It is located near the historic main gate of the camp. We want this facility to be an educational centre that will also be an essential part of the infrastructure during the winter when it is difficult to work for long hours in the open space. So, the key is the grounds, the permanent exhibition and the space for educational activities.

An additional and intangible component of the commemoration will be a Sound Monument – a kind of musical composition to be made available to visitors via headphones. It will be created from historical accounts of musical pieces or compositions performed at the camp, based on sounds conveyed by the land where this history took place. History and nature will form the reference points for composers who join the project. The whole will become a coherent sound map providing a different level of experience of the area. The whole area will be sound-mapped, and the final shape of the entire piece will depend on the route taken by the visitor. We will only suggest which way to go to get the most recommended composition. It will be an innovative activity, and its primary role is to serve the history and present reality of the memorial site. Sound walks are realised in many places, but no one has executed such a composition yet.

## **What will happen in the near future, and when will the KL Plaszow Memorial be built in its final form?**

Currently, our activities consist of two elements: conducting and completing investments and statutory activities. The KL Plaszow Museum was established in January this year, and in line with the investment schedule, the process of its creation is to take five years. We hope it will be feasible to keep to the assumptions of the schedule, although some of the decisions were made before the pandemic. We are aware that a lot has changed recently. However, funds are in place for both investment and day-to-day operations. We now have nine employees and a sense that we are slowly building a committed team that understands the subject. The museum's creation will be a multi-year process, but we are on the right track in our perspective.

### **What activities are you currently focusing on?**

We were founded during the pandemic, so our activity has been bipartite from the beginning – activities carried out live and in the virtual space. We have started and are carrying out a series of online meetings called "Let's talk. Regular meetings in KL Plaszow Museum". Our main goal is to show that the memorial space deserves respect because it is a cemetery. We continue to organise guided tours of the site, and a significant portion of these activities involves working with school students from the Podgórze district of Cracow. They are our closest neighbours. We were also looking for a solution that would permit a one-off commemoration of this space. One problem we had was that no date in the camp's history would be shared by different groups. So, we focused on the process. We organised a meeting – because it was intentionally not a ceremony with official guests – which we called "Memory – Zachor". The double name, Polish and Hebrew, refers to two groups of prisoners, Poles and Jews. During the meeting, we read the accounts of the survivors. We did it in August because that was when the six-month process of liquidating the camp began.





# HOLOCAUST NAME MONUMENT IN AMSTERDAM

**More than 75 years after World War II, a memorial dedicated to the over 102,000 Dutch victims of the Holocaust without a grave was finally unveiled in the Netherlands. On September 19 his Majesty the King Willem-Alexander, together with Jacques Grishaver, chairman of the Dutch Auschwitz Committee, unveiled the new Holocaust Names Memorial in Amsterdam listing 102,163 victims.**

"It's a black page in the history of our country", Prime Minister Mark Rutte said. "It forces us to question whether more should have been done to prevent it and to realise that even these days anti-Semitism is never far away."

"This name monument says 102,163 times: 'No, we will not forget you. No, we won't accept that your name is erased. No, evil does not have the last word,'" he said. "Every one of them was somebody and today they get back their names."

Designed by the Polish-American architect Daniël Libeskind, the memorial is located on Weesperstraat in Amsterdam.

The 1,550 square meter memorial incorporates four volumes that represent the letters in the Hebrew word meaning "In Memory of". The volumes are arranged in a rectilinear configuration on the north-south axis of the main thoroughfare Weesperstraat and the Hoftuin pavilion to the East.

As visitors enter the memorial they encounter a labyrinth of passages articulated by two-meter-high brick walls carrying the message of Remembrance. Each of the four volumes is crafted from mirror-finished stainless steel that hovers above the walls of individually stacked bricks. 102,000 bricks will each be inscribed with a name, giving a tangible quantification to the many casualties, as well as leaving 1000 blank bricks that will memorialize the unknown victims.

The official unveiling came a year after Jacqueline van Maarsen, a friend of Anne Frank, laid the first stone, which bear the name of Dina Frankenhuys, who was murdered in the

extermination camp at Sobibor. Brick is a building material used throughout the Netherlands and western Europe. In combination with the highly reflective geometric forms of the steel letters, the brickwork connects Amsterdam's past and present. A narrow void at the point where the brick walls meet the metal forms makes it appear that the steel letters float, symbolizing the interruption in the history and culture of the Dutch people.

The Weesperstraat site is located on the eastern side of Amsterdam city centre, very close to Jonas Daniël Meijerplein, on the edge of the Plantage and Weesper districts. The history of this area is closely linked to the history of Jews in Amsterdam. Located within walking distance of the site are monuments and notable buildings that, each in its own way, illuminate some aspect of Jewish history. Before the Second World War, practically everybody who lived on Weesperstraat was Jewish.

Old photographs show a bustling, chaotic and vibrant street of homes and shops. This was the thriving heart of the old Jewish quarter. After the liberation in 1945 this once so busy and prosperous street was left deserted and neglected. The city council drew up redevelopment plans. Homes were demolished, new buildings erected, and a busy traffic artery constructed. A green verge between Nieuwe Herengracht and Nieuwe Keizersgracht remained open, however. And this is now the site earmarked by Amsterdam city council for the National Holocaust Memorial of Names, a site at the centre of the once so bustling, chaotic, thriving Jewish quarter.



# MODERN INFRASTRUCTURE FROM ORANGE FOR THE AUSCHWITZ MUSEUM

**Thanks to the technological support of Orange Polska, the Auschwitz Museum will have modern infrastructure, providing high-speed, efficient internet access (5G/4G, fiber optic internet, and wireless) at the entire area of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. This way, the facility will become even more accessible, also to those who cannot visit it in person. An agreement regarding this matter was signed on September 14 by Orange, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation.**

Thanks to that, remote education on the history of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp from the authentic site of the Memorial offered to the entire world will be possible on an even larger scale.

"The essence of remembering is the big question about the future. For Europe and the entire world, Auschwitz-Birkenau as the Memorial became a reference point, a key to understand our experience and to build the vision of the 21st century free of antisemitism, racism, xenophobia, and other ideologies based on hatred", said Director of the Museum, Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński.

"Without knowledge of the past, the world will be incomplete, deprived of tools that shape valuable ideas and behavior in people. That is why it is our duty to guard this knowledge, regardless of the country and place on the map. And technology has great power – it crosses borders. We are proud to participate in a project of such great, global significance. We support it because we assume responsibility for the future", said Stéphane Richard, CEO Orange Group.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial is the most visited museum of this type in the world. In the last year before the outbreak of the pandemic, it was visited by more than 2.3 million people from all around the world. In 2020, due to the pandemic and a long lockdown, the number of visitors dropped by five times. This is why the Museum and the Auschwitz-

Birkenau Foundation, in cooperation with Israeli-based company AppsFlyer, will develop innovative tools that will offer millions of people access to education via, among others, virtual visits. Thanks to that, the Memorial and Museum and its heritage will become available to those who could not otherwise participate in such an experience.

"The Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation was established to protect the authenticity of the Auschwitz Memorial. This mission is supported by dozens of countries, local governments, companies, and private donors from all around the world. However, the pandemic showed how important it is to develop technologies that support the educational mission of the Museum at the global level", said Wojciech Soczewica, Director General of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation.

"That is why, together with the leaders of modern mobile solutions, Appsflyer and Diskin, we have been working on appropriate tools for twelve months. However, if they are to work properly, there is a need for efficient internet access. I am glad that thanks to the partnership with Orange, we will be able to achieve this goal and show that remembering about this heritage, in its darkest hour, remains the responsibility of our generation", he added.

Orange Polska will provide modern and efficient infrastructure (5G/4G, fiber optic internet, and wireless) at the entire area of the Auschwitz Memorial.



internet, and wireless) at the entire area of the Auschwitz Memorial.

"I am proud that Orange Polska is a partner of this important project. Thanks to the activity of the Museum and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation we can face and learn from this very painful chapter of history. We will work together to provide the best technology to this valuable initiative", said Julien Ducarroz, Orange Polska CEO. "The pandemic that inspired this initiative also revealed inequality in the access to digital tools. We realize that as network number 1 in Poland, we can achieve a lot so we do our best to prevent exclusion. For me, this project represents exactly these values, respect, and inclusivity", Julien Ducarroz emphasized.

The educational mission of the Museum is implemented by the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust.

The main area of activity of the Center are educational programs, based on the history and experience of Auschwitz, that are to raise awareness and shape attitudes of responsibility in the contemporary world. Most visitors get to know the history of Auschwitz thanks to guides-educators of the Museum who speak over 20 languages. Such a big choice of languages is a unique thing on a global scale. Visiting with an educator offers the chance to get to know the authentic post-camp space and the fate of its victims to the fullest possible extent.

Preservation of the authenticity of the Memorial and Museum has been supported by the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation since 2009. Its job is to create and manage the Perpetual Fund whose proceeds help finance the conservation of all Auschwitz remains for future generations.

# BABYN YAR WILL BE A MEMORIAL OF 2.5 MILLION JEWS SHOT BY BULLETS

In 2008, Father Patrick Desbois coined the phrase "Holocaust by Bullets", to describe the systematic mass execution of about 2.5 million Jews at the hands of the Nazis in fields and ravines near their homes across Eastern Europe. Desbois' painstaking efforts in interviewing over 8,500 witnesses across Eastern Europe to piece together the full extent of these crimes, is a major contribution to the field of Holocaust studies and commemoration. There is no more powerful example than Babyn Yar. On the 29th and 30th of September 1941, the Nazis rounded up the Jews of Kyiv and led them to the Babyn Yar ravine, where close to 34,000 people were systematically shot dead. In just 48 hours, the city's Jewish community was decimated.

Babyn Yar is a symbol for a missing part of Holocaust education and remembrance. Further west, camps such as Auschwitz, Dachau, Bergen Belsen and what they represented have been etched into human consciousness, in part since they have been preserved to one degree or another. Visitors can walk the prison barracks, witness the remnants of the crematoria, and see the canisters of chemical poison in the showers.

The totality of the genocide is tangible with these physical focal points, but the concentration camps are only part of the history of the Holocaust. The murder of 2.5 million Jews in Eastern Europe in mass shootings has too often been overlooked.

Their story was different, but no less tragic. As the Nazis conquered Soviet territory during Operation Barbarossa, they routinely marched Jews from their homes in cities, towns and villages and shot them dead in nearby forests, ravines, and empty fields. Many Jewish communities were wiped out by bullets.

In fact, the Jewish victims of massacres such as Babyn Yar were killed twice over. They were physically murdered by the Nazis and then their memory was effectively obliterated by the Soviet Union. The particular suffering of minorities including Jews, did not conform with the universalist

Soviet narrative. As a result, throughout Soviet Eastern Europe nothing was done to document or commemorate these mass executions. In many cases, the Soviets actively attempted to destroy evidence of these awful crimes.

At Babyn Yar, the site was leveled. Soviet authorities turned the immediate area into a waste site and built housing and motorways. A sports stadium was planned to be built on the site. The only evidence of the horrors which had taken place, was a modest, amorphous monument erected in 1976, to the Soviet victims of Nazism. No mention of Jews. Things began to change in 1991 with an independent Ukraine, when authorities erected a monument commemorating the systematic murder of Jews.

As we approach the 80th anniversary of the Babyn Yar massacre, there are still challenges to the commemoration of the 'Holocaust by bullets.' Babyn Yar is the largest mass grave in Europe, and the single mass shooting event of Jews, but it is still just one of many many sites.

What makes the 'Holocaust by bullets' so haunting is the fact that so many were killed so close to their homes. Neighbors, colleagues and friends would have seen the victims being led to their deaths. Of course, these witnesses are fast dwindling and so the challenge of memory is more acute



German soldiers rummage through the belongings of Jews shot in the Babyn Yar tract. Photo: Archives of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research

the challenge of memory is more acute today than ever before.

Therefore, the work of the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center (BYHMC) to commemorate and educate about the event is so important, comprising a dedicated complex of memory and education about this angle of the Nazi genocide.

BYHMC is investing into new archival work which has helped identify more than 1,400 new names of previously unknown victims, bringing the total number of known names to more than 28,500. Innovative 3D technology has pinpointed the exact location of the massacre, while a groundbreaking educational concept, the RED DOT project, will increase knowledge through user contributions. Meanwhile, new archival video materials were uncovered and weaved into a Cannes award winning film Babyn Yar. Context by Sergei Loznitsa. Importantly, efforts must also be made to physically commemorate those who were rounded up and shot. In Germany, France and elsewhere, the points of deportation are routinely given the respect of a memorial. Similarly, many cities in Western Europe

feature 'Stolperstein' stepping stones, marking where Jewish Holocaust victims once lived. By contrast, mass graves where thousands upon thousands were murdered in Eastern Europe, have remained unmarked. Babyn Yar provides an example in rectifying this, where efforts are being made to fittingly remember those murdered there. During the past year, BYHMC has unveiled a series of installation memorials and a symbolic synagogue.

Some of these installations include the 'Glance into the Past', monuments utilizing photography which invite the visitors to take a peek into the built-in lenses and see pictures taken in the past from the very spot of the monument. These installations stand on the very spots where a number of historical photographs of Babyn Yar were taken. Looking through the lenses, which are mounted on rocks, visitors see pictures after the massacre taken in early October 1941.

Another installation is the 'Mirror Field', made entirely of stainless steel, the structure features a podium in the form of a mirror disk with a diameter of about 40



meters, with 10 6-meter-high columns installed on it. The columns and the disk were shot through by bullets of the same caliber that the Nazis used during execution in Babyn Yar.

The names of victims sound at the installation around the clock. During the day, the sky is reflected in it. At night, light and sounds of memory pass through the bullet holes, while rays from the tops of the columns illuminate the sky.



Soviet prisoners of war under the protection of German soldiers bury the bodies of Jews shot on September 29-30, 1941 in Babyn Yar.  
Photo: Archives of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research

Additional powerful memorials will be unveiled later this year to mark the massacre's 80th anniversary. Visitors will have no doubt about the exact death that took place there. "Never Again" demands bringing tragedies such as Babyn Yar to greater academic and

public attention. The work of BYHMC provides real insight into how the challenges of Holocaust remembrance can be overcome, despite decades of attempted suppression of the horrors.

# REPORT: TEACHERS IN THE UK FAILING PUPILS IN SHOAH EDUCATION

**One-in-five educators tasked with teaching about the Holocaust in secondary school have not had formal training in the subject, research by UCL's Centre for Holocaust Education has found. There's "widespread misunderstanding" about the Holocaust among secondary school teachers, a major new report revealed.**

Research by the University College London's Centre for Holocaust Education found there has been "improved subject knowledge" over the last ten years, but there was "a number of significant gaps and common confusions".

The report, based on answers by almost 1,000 teachers, says nearly "one fifth of those with recent experience of teaching about the Holocaust had received no formal specialist training at all".

It warns "many teachers still appear to share a number of widespread misunderstandings, enduring misconceptions and common historical inaccuracies all of which have potentially profound consequence for the teaching and learning of this important history."

The study flagged major gaps, saying "fewer than half of all teachers were able to correctly identify that Jews comprised less than 1% of the pre-war population of Germany or that systematic mass murder of Jewish people began with the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941".

Dr Andy Pearce, Associate Professor in Holocaust and History Education said the findings "clearly indicate that formal specialist training.. makes a significant impact on teachers' subject knowledge of the Holocaust and its history."

While praising the reported improvement in the last decade, he said many teachers "do not appear to have the subject knowledge

required to combat myths and misconceptions that are prevalent in wider society and which we know are held by many young people.

"Not having this knowledge has profound repercussions. It means that teachers are less likely to be able to identify misconceptions among their students, it increases the risk that misunderstandings will be perpetuated, and it undermines the notion that by learning about the Holocaust young people will be able to better understand and respond to persecution and atrocity.

"It is troubling that such myths and misconceptions as these remain among large sections of the teaching profession."

A spokesperson for the Holocaust Educational Trust said it "has always believed that it is vitally important that educators are equipped with the best tools to teach this difficult subject effectively and with sensitivity in the classroom. This important study from UCL confirms that the route to high quality impact is high quality training. That is why we, alongside others in the sector, place huge emphasis on teacher training but of course there is always more work to be done."

Teaching about the Holocaust has been a compulsory component of the national curriculum at secondary level since 1991.



# SLOVAKIA COMMEMORATES THE MEMORIAL DAY FOR VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST AND OF RACIAL VIOLENCE

On 9 September 2021, Slovakia commemorated the Memorial Day for Victims of the Holocaust and of Racial Violence. Established in 2000 by the Slovak Parliament, the day marks the date in 1941 when the Slovak government issued a decree on the legal status of Jews, the so-called the Jewish Codex. The Codex led to deportations which resulted in the murder of approximately 70,000 Slovak Jews.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of this tragic event. The Jewish Codex contained some of the strictest anti-Jewish measures in all of Europe.

"In 1940 and 1941, degrading measures arrived. I think there wasn't a day when a new one wasn't issued. They drove us out of schools. They forced us to wear a yellow star. We children folded our coats like our father did, so that the yellow star would be obscured in its folds. We weren't allowed to go to cinemas. We were prohibited from leaving our homes in the evening," said Holocaust survivor Eli Vago regarding these cruel measures.

## Slovak government issues historic apology

The day before the Memorial Day for Victims of the Holocaust and of Racial Violence, on 8 September 2021, the Slovak government adopted a public apology for the Jewish Codex. In the public declaration, it stated: "Today, the Slovak Government feels a moral responsibility to publicly express sorrow over the crimes committed by the government of the day, especially over the fact that on 9

September 1941 it passed a shameful decree restricting the basic human rights and freedoms of citizens of Jewish origin."

## Commemoration events held throughout Slovakia

The commemoration ceremony on 9 September 2021 on the grounds of the Sered' Holocaust Museum was attended by Holocaust survivors, the Slovak president Zuzana Čaputová, members of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, members of the Slovak government, and many other esteemed guests. Many of the Holocaust survivors had also passed through the former labor and concentration camp in Sered'.

As every year on this occasion, many events were held in towns throughout Slovakia, including commemorations, exhibitions, conferences, seminars, lectures, and cultural and educational events in schools, libraries, and institutions. Established tradition is the "Reading of the names of the victims of the Holocaust", that this year was held in almost 70 towns in Slovakia.





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**PUBLISHER**

Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

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