

Glossary

Algeria African country that was the site of a long-standing civil war and conflict, ending in 1996, where over 100,000 people died. Before the civil war, there was a vicious war of liberation from French colonial rule.

Auschwitz-Birkenau Auschwitz-Birkenau was the largest death camp built by the Nazis to efficiently imprison and murder Jews and other targets of the Nazi regime. Birkenau was a section of the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz, located in German-occupied Poland. More than one million people were killed in Auschwitz-Birkenau, at least 90% of them Jews.

Commandant An officer in charge of a concentration camp.

Concentration Camp Facilities where people are confined because of their identities, behavior, or beliefs. Jews, gypsies, political prisoners, homosexuals, asocials, and repeat criminals were among the many groups confined. Most Nazi concentration camps served as centers for forced labor and the mass murder of civilian populations. Some camps, like Auschwitz-Birkenau, also functioned as death camps.

Dachau One of the first concentration camps to be established by the Nazis, located near Munich, Germany. Medical experiments on human subjects were conducted there.

Genocide The systematic killing of a group of people based on ethnicity, nationality, or religion. It was originally defined in the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention. Genocide is usually a government-planned and -supported attempt to exterminate a people and its culture.

Ghetto During World War II, sections of towns that the German authorities used to concentrate, control, exploit, and starve regional Jewish populations. For the Jews, living conditions were increasingly miserable, and the duration of their stay was unknown.

Heil Hitler Greeting In Nazi Germany, the standard greeting between Germans was a raised right hand and an exchange of the words, "Heil Hitler." This exchange usually occurred at the beginning or end of a conversation or business transaction, or as a casual greeting.

Holocaust The term Holocaust refers to the state-sponsored or government-sanctioned persecution of the Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators, which began in 1933. From 1941-1945 the persecution escalated into the systematic mass murder of Jews and other targeted groups throughout Europe.

Jehovah's Witness A Christian denomination that allows its members to swear allegiance to God's kingdom and prohibits them from swearing allegiance to any country or leader. This belief was in direct opposition to the requirements of the Nazi Party and therefore made them a target of Nazi persecution.

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Jew A person who observes the practices and beliefs of Judaism. Judaism is a monotheistic religion that follows the teachings of Moses as written in the Torah and the other writings of the Hebrew Bible. The history of Judaism in Europe includes antisemitism or the hatred of Jews.

Prejudice The passing of judgment or the formation of an opinion on someone or something without knowledge or examination of true facts. Such feelings cause irrational suspicion or hatred of a particular group, religion, or race.

Rabbi The leader of a Jewish congregation, or the chief religious official of a synagogue (the place of worship and communal center of a Jewish congregation).

Rwanda African country where in 1994 the country's majority Hutus massacred the minority Tutsi people. An estimated 500,000 to one million people are believed to have been murdered, and millions of others were made refugees by the violence.

Theresienstadt A town in former Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic) that was walled in 1941 by the Germans in order to create a ghetto. Theresienstadt also became a concentration and transit camp for German, Czech and Western European Jews who were eventually deported to Auschwitz. Over 140,000 Jews were sent to Theresienstadt; it is said that only 19,000 survived.

Underground Group Active networks of partisans and resisters who smuggled food, clothing, and medicine into ghettos and camps. Against the most overwhelming odds, underground organizations also participated in armed resistance in the ghettos and camps. One of the largest of these uprisings was the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Warsaw Ghetto The Warsaw Ghetto, formed in Poland in 1940, was the largest of the ghettos in both area and population. On April 19, 1943, German troops and police entered the ghetto to deport its inhabitants to death camps. A revolt ensued, known as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. This was the most famous attempt by Jews to resist the Germans in armed fighting. The uprising ended on May 16, 1943.

Yellow Star The Nazi government of Germany and its collaborators forced Jews to wear an armband or patch on their clothing, known as the Yellow Star, Jewish Star, or Jewish Badge, to identify them and distinguish them from non-Jews.