

# World war ii the holocaust



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## **Introduction**

The holocaust is a Hebrew term that describes the systematic annihilation of six million Jews in Europe during World War II by the German Nazis. Jews in Europe faced harsh prosecution from the Nazis causing the death of at least six million Jews. These Jews were the victims of the deliberate and systematic attempt to annihilate the Jewish population in Europe. The master planner of the Holocaust was Adolf Hitler who clearly outlined his intentions in the plan called the " Final Solution". The term is also used to refer to the murder of other groups exterminated in the same circumstances as the Jews. These groups include the ethnic Roma and Gypsies, political dissidents, communists, homosexuals, mental patients, Jehovah' witnesses, Russians and Poles. The total number of victims of the Nazis was between ten and fourteen million civilians.

### Why the Jews

It was after Germany's defeat in World War and its humiliation in the Versailles Treaty that the country suffered from economic instability, which was worsened by the 1929 depression. Massive inflation and high unemployment resulted in political differences. Hitler's plan sought to spread the propaganda that the Jews were responsible for Germany's failures. This plan combined racial theories and the ideas of Charles Darwin in justifying the harsh treatment to the Jews. The Germans were seen as the strongest and fittest destined to rule while the Jews were viewed as weak and destined to extinction. Hitler's dream of a racially " pure" empire would not tolerate the Jews, resulting in the banning of intermarriage with the Jews, closing

many professions for the Jews and even displaying shops' signs reading, "NO JEWS ALLOWED".

The Nazi Holocaust mass killings were conducted in a systematic way in that detailed lists of present and future potential victims were found and records of the killings made. Further, efficient means of killing more people were sought by conducting the killings by carbon monoxide poisoning in the Aktion Reinhard death camps of Sobibor, use of Zyklon - B in Majdanek and Auschwitz and use of gas vans full of carbon monoxide for mass killings in the Chelmno death camp. The Auschwitz camp is popularly known for the systematic termination and slave labor to the Jews. Notably, prisoners upon arrival were separated on the basis of the weak for work and the strong. The first group was immediately murdered in gas chambers and their bodies burnt, while the latter group was used for slave labor in factories and industries in the camp. These slaves worked from dawn to dark without adequate shelter or even basic food. Most of them literally died. Some of the prisoners' work involved the removal of corpses for harvesting important body elements. These included gold teeth and women's hair which was recycled to produce materials such as rugs and socks (Finkelstein, 2003).

The Nazis were also notorious in conducting various experiments with prisoners, who even included children. Inmates at Auschwitz referred to Dr. Josef Mengele a Nazi as the " Angel of Death".

### Statistics

Statistics show that about 6. 1 million Jews, 6 million Slavic civilians, 1. 5 million political dissidents, 800, 000 Roma and Gypsies, 300, 000

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handicapped, 250, 000 homosexuals and 2000 Jehovah Witnesses were exterminated.