

# National Days of Remembrance

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

### What is Days of Remembrance?

The U.S. Congress established Days of Remembrance as the nation's annual commemoration of the Holocaust and created the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as a permanent living memorial to the victims. This year, Holocaust Remembrance week is May 1 through May 8, 2011. The Museum designated "Justice and Accountability in the Face of Genocide: What Have We Learned?" as the theme for the 2011 observance. In accordance with its congressional mandate, the Museum is responsible for leading the nation in commemorating Days of Remembrance and for encouraging appropriate observances throughout the United States.

### What is the Holocaust? Who are we remembering?

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims—six million were murdered; Roma (Gypsies), people with disabilities, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi Germany.

### Why is Days of Remembrance observed in the United States?

In 1980, Congress unanimously passed legislation to establish the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, which oversees the Museum. The Council, which succeeded the President's Commission on the Holocaust, was charged with carrying out the following recommendations:

- That a living memorial be established to honor the victims and survivors of the Holocaust and to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust will be taught in perpetuity
- That an educational foundation be established to stimulate and support research in the teaching of the Holocaust
- That a Committee on Conscience be established that would collect information on and alert the national conscience regarding reports of actual or potential outbreaks of genocide throughout the world
- That a national day of remembrance of victims of the Holocaust be established in perpetuity and be held annually

### What is the significance of this year's Days of Remembrance theme?

This year's Days of Remembrance theme, "Justice and Accountability in the Face of Genocide: What Have We Learned?" commemorates the 65th anniversary of the verdicts delivered at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg and the 50th anniversary of the Eichmann trial. The theme marks these anniversaries and encourages reflection on the role of justice in the aftermath of genocide. Both trials set important precedents and raised significant questions about the nature of justice in the face of such enormous crimes. Prior to the International Military Tribunal and subsequent Nuremberg trials, the principle of national sovereignty prevailed; in its aftermath, a new understanding of international responsibility for human rights would emerge as the world began to fully understand the events now called the Holocaust. Adolf Eichmann was a high-ranking SS (Schutzstaffel, or elite

guard of the Nazi party) officer central to the planning and implementation of the murder of six million Jewish men, women, and children. He was captured in Argentina by Israeli agents in 1960 and brought to trial in Israel for what would become known as the “trial of the century.” It was a watershed event televised around the world, refocusing international attention on the murder of Europe’s Jews. The Nuremberg and Eichmann trials strove for justice, but what does justice really mean in the face of a crime like genocide? The trials were an act of public accountability owed to the victims; justice to a great extent was aspirational.

### **Why do the Days of Remembrance dates change from year to year?**

The Israeli Parliament (Knesset) established Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom Hashoah), to be observed on the 27th day of Nisan of the Hebrew calendar. The Hebrew calendar is a lunar calendar so the date changes each year in the United States. Observances and remembrance activities occur throughout the week of Remembrance, which runs from the Sunday before Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom Hashoah) through the following Sunday. Please view the Museum’s Remembrance Day calendar for future dates, [www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor/calendar](http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor/calendar).

### **How can I participate in Days of Remembrance?**

Every year during Days of Remembrance, ceremonies and activities are held throughout the United States—in local communities; at state and local government offices; on military bases; and in workplaces, schools, churches, and synagogues. You may be able to take part in a commemoration already planned in your community, or if such a community-wide event is not currently planned, you may encourage your local and state officials to issue a proclamation indicating their support for commemorating these events. For sample state and city proclamations, visit [www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor/organize](http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor/organize). For information about the many other ways to get involved, please review the materials in the Planning Guide, or visit the Museum’s Web site, [www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor](http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor).

### **Should refreshments be served at a Days of Remembrance commemoration?**

Days of Remembrance is about memorialization and gathering as a community. Refreshments may be served but are not necessary. Theme-specific food is not appropriate.

### **We are planning a Names Reading ceremony in my community. How do we find lists of names?**

The Museum has a list of 5,000 names of victims of the Holocaust on its Web site and available in the Planning Guide. To access the list on the Web site, please visit [www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor](http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor) and click on the link at the bottom of the page that says “Participate in the 2011 Names Reading Ceremony, at the Museum or virtually.” In the Planning Guide, the list is located under the “Materials to Use” tab.

### **Can we participate in Days of Remembrance events at the Museum or the U.S. Capitol?**

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum welcomes attendance at its Names Reading ceremony, which takes place in the Museum’s Hall of Remembrance throughout Holocaust Remembrance week. The National Days of Remembrance Ceremony held at the U.S. Capitol Rotunda can be viewed live on the Museum’s Web site, [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org).

### **Why is the date of Days of Remembrance different from the date of International Holocaust Remembrance Day?**

In 2005, the United Nations established January 27 as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. January 27, 1945, was the day that Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated by Soviet troops. Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom Hashoah) was established in 1951 by the Israeli Parliament (Knesset). The date was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising and with the liberation of the concentration camps in western Europe.

### **Where can I find more resources for a Days of Remembrance commemoration or general information on the Holocaust?**

Please visit [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org).