**Remembering The Holocaust**

**The Holocaust was the murder of approximately six million Jewish men, women and children by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during the Second World War.**

The History of Jews in Europe

Jewish people had lived in Europe for thousands of years. Initially, they lived in communities in the Greek and later Roman dominions around the Mediterranean. For many varied reasons, Jewish settlement had spread over the centuries and, by the early twentieth century, there were Jews living in every country in Europe. Whilst many Jews lived in eastern Europe, small communities could be found even on the outskirts on the continent, in countries such as Ireland and Norway – where Jews had only settled some 80 years before the Second World War.

The largest Jewish community in Europe before the war was in Poland, where some 3.5 million Jews made up approximately 10% of the country’s population. By contrast, Germany, the country we probably immediately associate with the Holocaust, with a history of Jewish settlement spanning over 1,600 years, had a Jewish population of around 300,000 Jews – a mere 0.7% of its total population. And, like all of Europe, Britain had Jewish communities that, by the start of the Second World War totalled approximately 350,000.

Each of these Jewish communities, spread across Europe – of which there were thousands – had a different background, a different, history, a different culture. They followed different political ideologies - from Zionists: who believed that Jews should inhabit their own nation state, to Bundists: A Jewish socialist movement which believed that Jews everywhere should be treated equally. Jews could be found in every industry and wealth category.

Across the continent, Jews spoke a range of languages, followed a range of religious practices, and had varying levels of assimilation or integration with their non-Jewish neighbours. Some Jewish communities followed more orthodox traditions, others were assimilated and would not be recognisable as Jews based on their appearance, language, or any other superficial factors.

And, of course, with all this diversity, came a wide range of ways in which Jewish individuals identified. There were Jews in the pre-war years who did not consider themselves religious at all and who did not consider their Jewish-ness to be central to their identity. Some Jews chose to identify by nationality, some identified by religion, some identified through their politics, and so on – just like today where you and I may identify with any number of personal preferences, so too did Jewish people in pre-war Europe choose to identify in a personal way. The Nazis, as we will explore throughout this course, did not take that into account. To them being Jewish was a racial identity – something that could not be altered.

Oswiecim is the name of the town in Poland that would be renamed in German to ‘Auschwitz’ by the Nazis when they invaded the country in 1939. The camp, which would become ‘Auschwitz I’, was formerly a Polish Army barracks, located on the outskirts of the town.

The Herz Hotel stands proudly in the centre of Oswiecim and is just 3km from Auschwitz-Birkenau. Built in the 19th century, it was the centre of cultural and political life in the town, visited by Christians and Jews alike. Political meetings of various organisations, including Zionist groups were held there. Theatrical performances, balls, charity events, and lectures were also held at the hotel; many Jewish theatre groups visited Oswiecim. It was a melting pot of culture, politics and the arts, and its doors were open to people from all walks of life, both Jewish and Christian individuals and communities alike. During the occupation the Germans remodelled the building; some of the added features such as the windows and corner arcades still remain. Today, a plaque commemorates the Jewish residents of Oswiecim murdered during the Holocaust.

From 1900 to 1939 the Chief Rabbis of Oswiecim were members of the Bombach family, who lived at (today’s) No. 4 on the square. Eliyahu Bombach moved to No.10 and, like his father, was a member of a branch of Hasidism (a certain kind of Orthodox Judaism). He was also friends with the local priest, Father Skarbek, who is thought to have been a guest at Rabbi Bombach’s daughter’s wedding. In 1941, Eliyahu Bombach was deported to the Nazi-constructed ghetto in nearby Sosnowiec, and from there sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau where he was murdered.

Before the outbreak of war, there was a large Jewish population in Oswiecim. In fact, Jews made up 58% of the population. In this activity you are going to focus on how the Jewish population of Oswiecim lived alongside the non-Jewish population. The life of the town had revolved around the central market square for many years. This was a place where communities came together to trade and socialise. Whilst this is a case study of one town and we know that every town had its own unique story, we can make some inferences from this case study about the wider story of Jewish life in Poland and beyond.

Jewish Life Case Studies: Under Occupation

**Kaunas, Lithuania:** When Germany occupied Lithuania in June 1941, the Nazis set about rounding up and murdering Jews almost immediately. The majority of Lithuanian Jews were shot in 1941; almost all others were shot in 1942 or 1943. Although the murders were organised by German forces, many of the shootings were actually carried out by Lithuanian nationalists who had volunteered to work for the Nazis. By the end of the war 95% of Lithuania’s Jewish population had been murdered.

**Corfu, Greece:** Corfu was occupied by Italy in April 1941, with the Germans taking over in September 1943 following Italy’s surrender to the Allies. From then on, things changed rapidly for the island’s Jews. In 1944 they were rounded up and sent on boats to the Greek mainland, before being put on trains to Auschwitz. The Nazis murdered more than 90% of the Jews of Greece.

**Paris, France:** Following invasion in May 1940, France was split into two regions. Germany controlled the north and a pro-Nazi French government was set up in the south (known as the Vichy regime). The Vichy government introduced anti-Jewish laws (which applied across both zones of France), and Jews were forced to wear the yellow star in public. From July 1942 onwards, tens of thousands of French Jews were arrested by the French police and held in transit camps in France before being deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau or Sobi Following invasion in May 1940, France was split into two regions. Germany controlled the north and a pro-Nazi French government was set up in the south (known as the Vichy regime). The Vichy government introduced anti-Jewish laws (which applied across both zones of France), and Jews were forced to wear the yellow star in public. From July 1942 onwards, tens of thousands of French Jews were arrested by the French police and held in transit camps in France before being deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau or Sobibór extermination camps.

**Krakow, Poland:** Following the invasion of Poland on 1st September 1939, the Nazis subjected Polish Jews to violence, slave labour and many discriminatory laws. For example, Polish Jews were the first to be forced to wear special badges in public that identified them as being Jewish. Between 1939 and 1942, ghettos were created in many towns and cities, where Jews were forced to live in squalid, overcrowded conditions. By early 1942, the Nazis had decided on a policy of complete extermination, which was carried out through systematic murder in extermination camps or mass shootings. Jews were also used as slave labour while subjected to starvation and disease.  By the end of the war, over 90% of the Jews of Poland (more than 2,970,000 people) had been murdered.

**Szeged, Hungary:** Hungary was ruled by a right-wing nationalist dictatorship which was an ally of Nazi Germany. The German alliance enabled Hungary to annex territory from other countries, which increased its Jewish population to more than 800,000 by 1941. The Hungarian government was antisemitic, persecuting the Jews under its control and causing the deaths of tens of thousands of them. However, it refused to hand over all of its Jewish population to the Nazis for deportation. This changed when Germany invaded Hungary in March 1944 after it tried to leave the war. In just six weeks, with the cooperation of the Hungarian government and police, between May and July 1944, some 437,000 Hungarian Jews were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau and murdered. Fewer than 200,000 of the Jews who lived within Hungary’s pre-war borders survived – and of those who lived in the territories Hungary had conquered, only around 60,000 survived.

Auschwitz-Birkenau

The word Auschwitz has become synonymous with the Holocaust. Approximately 6 million Jewish people were killed in the Holocaust. Of the 1.3 million people sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1.1 million were murdered here. Approximately 960,000 of these were Jews from all over Europe’s Nazi occupied territories. In addition, 74,000 Poles, 21,000 Roma or Sinti (often referred to as ‘Gypsies’), 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war and some 15,000 others from across Europe would die at Auschwitz.

Today it is a giant cemetery and a world heritage site designated to preserve the memory of those who suffered and died there, for the rest of humanity to learn what can happen when antisemitism, racism and hatred go unchecked. Auschwitz wasn’t just one place; it was a system of camps built around a central space. There were around 49 camps and subcamps, including a large labour camp operated by the German company I. G. Farben called Monowitz.

This huge complex was not originally designed with mass murder in mind. In fact, when the camp was built the Nazis had not yet made the decision to murder every Jew in Europe. Auschwitz I was instead a camp designed and built to house primarily Polish ‘political’ prisoners and Soviet Prisoners of War.

The first arrival of Poles came from the overcrowded Tarnow prison, in southern Poland on June 14th, 1940. Following the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the camp also became a location for Soviet prisoners of war to also be held. Eventually, people from a range of backgrounds were held at Auschwitz I, including so called “criminals” (a broad category for people who didn’t fit the Nazi ideal), gay men, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Jews. Prisoners were categorised and wore coloured triangular patches representing their alleged status on their uniforms. This would affect their treatment, work duties and any supposed privileges they might receive in the camp.

Development of the Camp structure

Sitting at the heart of occupied Europe, Auschwitz had good transport links from across the continent, and was also an area of agricultural and industrial potential. Therefore, the decision was made in 1941 to expand the camp to provide slave labour for planned new factories and farms. This would include the creation of a massive new camp, known as Auschwitz II or Birkenau, which was intended to hold tens of thousands of Soviet prisoners of war. Construction of Birkenau began over the winter of 1941-42 but most of the Soviet prisoners of war never arrived – they died of disease and starvation in other Nazi camps over the same winter. Instead, the camp was to be put to a different use from 1942 onwards.

Mass killings of Jews in the Soviet Union began in the summer of 1941 and by the end of that year the Nazi leadership had decided on the ‘Final Solution’ (the plan to murder every Jew in Europe.) Auschwitz-Birkenau was not initially involved in this process, which was mainly carried out through mass shootings and the creation of purpose-built extermination camps elsewhere in German-occupied Poland. However, as the ‘Final Solution’ developed and accelerated in the spring of 1942, Auschwitz-Birkenau’s location at the heart of the European rail network made it an obvious site to the SS leadership for use in the murder of Europe’s Jews. Between the spring of 1942 and the autumn of 1944, Jews were deported to the camp by train from countries across the continent.

Upon arrival Jews went through a ‘selection’ process where SS doctors would decide who could work as forced labourers. On average, just 1 in 10 Jews were selected for work. The remainder would be condemned to death in the gas chambers. It must be said that the selection was not a life-or-death decision. Rather the SS were deciding if the person was to face death now, or death later. After all, the Nazis policy – the so called ‘Final Solution’ resolved to murder every last Jew that they could capture. For those selected to work on average the life span would be between 6 weeks and 3 months with very few exceptions. For those selected for immediate death, it would be a matter of hours and minutes.

The conditions in the camp were hardly imaginable. Prisoners were separated by sex, had all their worldly possessions taken from them, their name was replaced with a number tattooed on the forearm and they were given a prisoner uniform. This process was designed to strip every prisoner of their individuality. Prisoners were packed into barracks that were deeply unsanitary and overcrowded. Work duties lasted from dawn until dusk (and beyond), starvation rations were administered and the treatment inmates faced from guards was relentlessly brutal. The slightest mistake could be met with the harshest of punishments and it wasn’t uncommon for prisoners to be beaten and killed without good reason, whilst selections from within the camp also regularly took place. Those weakened through these conditions were sent to the gas chambers, to be replaced by incoming prisoners. At its height Birkenau held some 90,000 inmates living in these conditions.

1 in 10 Jews were selected for forced labour, but the remaining 9 of 10 were selected for immediate death. In Auschwitz I tests had taken place using a product called Zyklon B to murder large numbers of people in one go – mostly Soviet prisoners of war. Zyklon B pellets would be poured into the room. On meeting the warm air in the room, the pellets would effervesce and give of hydrogen cyanide – a deadly chemical in the form of a gas which would kill all those in the room within 20-30 minutes. A gas chamber was built at Auschwitz I to use this technique and operated from August 1940.

Gas chambers at Birkenau followed. From 1942, two buildings outside the perimeter fence, known as the ‘Red House’ and the ‘white house’ were sealed and used to murder Jews who were not selected for work. To increase the efficiency of the camp four new gas chambers were built and operational from early 1943. By this time, the camp at Birkenau was populated mostly by Jews.

Aside from Jews there was a subcamp within Birkenau for Roma and Sinti people (often referred to as the outdated and sometimes offensive Gypsies), a group also considered sub-human by the Nazis, but for which no specific policy of systematic extermination existed. However, in the autumn of 1944 this group was also murdered. Additionally, some Polish and Soviet prisoners of war were held at Birkenau.

The camp was liberated by Soviet forces on January 27th, 1945. The Nazis had tens of thousands of inmates back into Germany on what were known as death marches. These were brutal as prisoners were forced to march for up to 35 miles in the freezing cold to trains that would transport them to locations inside Germany. The SS would summarily execute prisoners who could not keep up, and for many, they reached destinations such as Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where they were simply left to die.

On their arrival, the Soviets found some 5,000 people locked inside a deserted Birkenau. Whilst this was the end of their incarceration, the journey to discover what was left of their homes and families would take some months.

Transport

The first transport of Jews to Birkenau arrived from Slovakia on March 26th, 1942. From then on, Jews from every corner of Europe were rounded up and sent on what would be a one-way journey, the destination of which was unknown to them. The journey to Birkenau was an horrific ordeal. The fear and uncertainty combined with the often-appalling conditions of the wagons. The Nazis had no interest in the comfort of their prisoners. Decisions about how transport were based entirely on economic considerations. The humanity of their cargo was not their concern.

This operation - moving some 11 million Jews across Europe - required a huge infrastructure and a great deal of planning. Every train needed to be booked, paid for, fuelled, driven hundreds of miles by multiple drivers and guarded by SS men.

The SS brokered deals with Albert Genzenmuller, the man responsible for the railway system across Nazi occupied Europe. To keep costs as low as possible, pricing systems were set up so that the SS would pay standard third-class prices for adult Jews, whilst the cost for children under ten would be half the price. Children under four would not incur any cost.

Where more than 400 people were going to be on board, train tickets were specially discounted to half price so the SS aimed to get as many people onto every train as they possibly could, often using freight trains to keep the prices even lower. The SS only had to pay for return tickets for guards. The journeys for the Jews were only one way.

When we think about Auschwitz, it is easy to think about a sanitised, industrial process. But it involved the involvement of so many individuals. To help understand the human involvement needed for the Holocaust to take place, I want to tell you about one community’s journey to Auschwitz.

On 14th June 1944, some 1800 Jews were deported from the island of Corfu, off the coast of Greece. The women from the group were sent overland to Larissa whilst the men went by sea to Athens where they boarded trains to Auschwitz.

A significant sized bureaucracy was necessary to oversee this operation. Addresses and lists needed to be co‐ordinated, ships and trains needed to be ordered, tickets needed to be paid for. The ship’s crews and railway staff needed to be given orders, salaries paid, and signals confirmed.

Upon arriving on the Greek mainland, the route to Auschwitz went through Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Slovakia and Germany before reaching the Polish railway system and the route to Auschwitz. The journey lasted nine days. In each of those countries, on each of those nine days, the trains had to be driven, and the prisoners had to be guarded.

Arrival

When Birkenau was first established, transports of Jews and others got off the train at a platform outside of the camp. They would then walk into the camp from this platform. This was known as the ‘Judenrampe’ or Jewish platform.

In 1944 a new ‘Judenrampe’ was constructed that allowed trains to pull up right in the heart of the camp. The Nazis were already planning how they would process the massive increase in arrivals, with the imminent transports of Hungary’s Jews set to begin in May 1944. In around 6 weeks, approximately 437,000 Hungarian Jews were transported to Birkenau and arrived at this ramp. Most of these people were immediately murdered in the gas chambers.

When trains arrived at Birkenau the guards worked quickly to organise the prisoners as they disembarked. Jews were told to leave their luggage behind, lied to that they would get their luggage after disinfection, and gather in two groups. Men on one side, and women and children on the other. Then a selection would happen. An SS doctor would stand at the front of the line and assess each individual as they approached – the whole process lasted seconds. Those considered fit for work would be sent one way, and those who weren’t were sent the other – these people were escorted directly to the gas chambers. Both men and women could be selected for work, but children under the age of 14 would almost always be sent to the gas immediately.

The Nazis also used prisoners to help with organising new arrivals. Sometimes, these prisoners would manage to whisper to children that they should say they were older to give them a chance of surviving the selection.

Living Conditions

The living conditions at Auschwitz-Birkenau defied imagination. The camp held up to 90,000 prisoners at its height, in cramped and unspeakable conditions. There was minimal food and drink, rations consisted of small amounts of bread, a watery soup, and ‘ersatz’ (substitute coffee.) The prisoners’ daily calorie intake was around 600 calories a day, well below the recommended daily amount for adults (2500 for men and 2000 for women.)

All prisoners were expected to work. Work duties were often outdoors or in dirty environments. The work was often backbreaking, which on such small rations only added to the challenges facing prisoners for survival. The camp was filthy, and personal hygiene was impossible to maintain. Prisoners often suffered with illnesses such as typhus and dysentery – which caused severe diarrhoea among other things.

With only two designated toilet breaks per day prisoners could often not avoid soiling themselves which made conditions even worse in these confined spaces. With thousands of people are crammed together with no sanitation to speak of and these kinds of illnesses, the barracks were foul places where cleanliness was impossible.

Barracks were hostile places. Prisoners had to look after themselves for fear of having their hat or food bowl stolen – infractions punishable by death -, or just bearing the brunt of the wrath of stronger or disgruntled prisoners who used violence to secure their own status within the barracks.

The toilets were nothing more than concrete holes over a ditch. The stench this would create would be almost overpowering for prisoners. Prisoners would have to go to the toilet in front of each other and would not be able to clean themselves effectively, making the entire process a humiliating experience. Plans to build in effective plumbing to remove the waste were never put into practice, so it fell to prisoners to clear the pits by emptying them manually on a daily basis. This job, in almost any other situation, would be considered one of the worst jobs imaginable. However, within Birkenau being a part of the ‘Scheisskomando’ was in some ways considered privileged work as the guards would never enter these places, so the opportunity to ‘organise’ (to share information, barter and conspire with other prisoners) was possible.

Gas Chambers and Crematoria

For 9 out of every 10 Jews that were transported to Auschwitz there was no life here. Here at Birkenau, the gas chambers and crematoria were the site of one of the greatest mass murders in human history, they were the place where approximately 1.1 million people were murdered. As you learnt earlier, approximately 960,000 of those victims were Jews, brought here with only one intention – to die. Thousands of other victims including Roma and Sinti, Poles and Soviets were murdered in the same way. We cannot know the exact figures of those murdered this way as no registration was done for those deemed unfit for labour. They were simply taken directly to the gas chambers and murdered.

The gas chambers and crematoria were situated at the end of the tracks – only a short distance from where Jews arrived from right across Europe. After the selection process, for those sent immediately to their death there was a walk of approximately six minutes from the unloading ramp to the gas chambers.

The gas chambers were next to the crematoria, and in this area, there was one very particular group of prisoners – the ‘Sonderkommando’ – who were forced to undertake work beyond anything we can comprehend. They were forced to accompany Jews down the stairs towards the gas chamber and assist them as they were ordered to undress. While this happened, the Nazis would tell prisoners that they were heading towards showers, even telling them to hang their clothes up and to remember their peg number so that they could retrieve clothes later – a lie designed to maintain order and avoid panic. Once undressed, the Jews would be forced into the gas chamber, and once inside a Nazi would drop a chemical called hydrogen cyanide, but known by its trade name - Zyklon B. These ‘Zyklon B pellets, on meeting the warm air in the chamber would effervesce and produce a poisonous gas, that would murder everyone within.

Once everyone in the chamber had been murdered, the Nazis forced the ‘Sonderkommando’ to clear the chamber and dispose of the bodies – which had to be burned in the crematoria. This was an incredibly grisly process which rarely ran smoothly. Frequently the ovens were overloaded and failed to work. The number of people that could be murdered was greater than the speed at which bodies could be disposed of. As a result, pyres were built near the gas chambers and bodies would be burned on open fires. The smell was putrid and would envelop the camp and its surrounding area.

Destruction of the Crematoria

Today all that is left of the crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau are ruins. All four of the crematoria at Birkenau were destroyed before the Soviets liberated the camp on January 27th, 1945, but the circumstances of that destruction require further investigation.

The gas chambers were dismantled and destroyed over the winter of 1944-45, with Crematoria II and III being blown up on January 20th, 1945, and Crematorium V being destroyed on January 23rd. As we consider the destruction of these crematoria, I want you to consider a speech given by Heinrich Himmler in Poznan in 1943 where he stated that the actions of the Holocaust were ‘an unwritten and never to be written page of glory in our history’.

What could he have meant by this? Why, if this were such a glorious endeavour, would Himmler want the gas chambers destroyed? The answer is two-fold.

Firstly, when Himmler stated that this was to ‘never be written’ what he meant was that murdering every Jew, in itself, was not enough – in fact the aim was to wipe all trace of the Jews from history. Once the gas chambers had served their murderous purpose, they should be destroyed because they provided evidence of Jewish existence. To truly erase the memory of the Jewish existence, the tools of murder must be destroyed, and nothing must ever be written that could lead back to Jewish existence. They hoped that people would never even know the Jews had existed.

Secondly, and further to this, by the end of 1944, the Nazis knew that defeat was inevitable, and whilst they may have considered the Holocaust a glorious achievement, they were aware that the rest of humankind would not, and others would seek justice. The destruction of the gas chambers was a means of hiding a crime for which they did not wish to pay the price.

So, we know the gas chambers and some crematoria were destroyed by the Nazis, and there are a number of reasons we think they did that. But the story of how Crematorium IV was destroyed was an entirely different. On October 7th, 1944, the most unlikely event possible took place within the grounds of Crematorium IV. The Sonderkommando – those prisoners tasked with burning the bodies in the crematoria - launched a violent uprising and escape attempt. The Crematorium IV building was set on fire and some 200 members of the Sonderkommando attempted escape into the surrounding area.

The uprising came as a complete shock to the Nazis but had been a long time in the making amongst prisoners. As we know, the ‘Sonderkommando’ workers knew the full extent of the Nazi’s crimes - and of course, as such, the Nazis did not want any of them to survive. In fact, periodically, members of the ‘Sonderkommando’ would be gassed themselves and new workers brought in to carry on their work ensuring the reality of what took place in the crematoria would never be found out.

Despite facing such a horrific daily struggle, and despite the constant fear, the Sonderkommando resistance movement had been working towards an uprising for many months in the lead up to October. It was incredibly risky and difficult to coordinate. As was the case across the camp, the Sonderkommando was made up of hundreds of people from different countries who had different views and personalities, therefore trust would be hard to gain amongst the group. However, despite the challenges, a group was formed in the autumn of 1943, and began to plot ways in which they could acquire the means to revolt against their captors. The Sonderkommando secretly collected items such as containers of flammable liquids, small axes and knives. They managed to collaborate with female prisoners working elsewhere in the camp who found and delivered gunpowder to them which was used to make a few dozen primitive grenades.

On Saturday October 7th, 1944, the prisoners of the Sonderkommando were called to assemble in the square in front of crematorium IV. The SS began reading the prisoner numbers of prisoners who were being selected for gassing. One of the prisoners, hearing his number, and knowing he had nothing to lose, attacked a guard with a hammer. From this moment utter chaos ensued. Prisoners attacked guards, set the Crematorium on fire, broke through the fence and attempted escape. The shocked SS began shooting into the Sonderkommando indiscriminately.

The fire that raged through crematorium IV was intended to also act as a signal to members of the resistance at the other crematoria buildings. Chaos from crematorium IV spilled into crematorium V as Sonderkommando ran towards it in panic. The Sonderkommando of crematorium II followed the lead of those at crematorium IV and broke through the perimeter fence to escape to the south of the camp. At crematorium III, the decision was made not to join in the revolt as it was considered impossible to succeed.

Within a matter of a few hours the revolt was over. The SS scrambled the guards from their barracks and rounded up the resistance fighters and escapees. After counting all the prisoners, the SS men concluded that of the almost 660 prisoners, 450 were killed during the revolt Those women who helped with the provision of gunpowder also paid with their lives for their heroic attempt to support the uprising. Three SS guards were killed and a dozen more injured.

The contrast between the Sonderkommando uprising and the destruction of the remaining gas chambers by the Nazis couldn’t be greater. The Sonderkommando showed unimaginable courage to organise and attempt an uprising, albeit without success, whilst the Nazis showed their cowardice by destroying the evidence of their crimes before they left the camp.

Why does the Holocaust matter today? It’s a big question, and one that generates a variety of responses, the fact of the matter is that each and every one of you will have a slightly different answer. Really, it’s a personal question, there is no single correct answer. Even though it is over 75 years since the end of the Holocaust, this episode in history has had a global impact, and that impact is felt in many ways even today. Below are some examples of ways we continue to remember the Holocaust and the people affected by it:

Example 1: Holocaust Survivors

There are only around 3000 Holocaust survivors left today living in the UK. Most of these 3,000 survivors made their homes in the UK, raised families, and made significant contributions to British society. Many survivors have chosen to share their experiences with young people. They share their stories with thousands of young people every year, ensuring that future generations know the truth of what happened during the Holocaust.

Example 2: Remembrance and Commemoration

People across the world continue to remember and commemorate the six million Jewish men, women and children who were murdered during the Holocaust. For the sake of each of them, we must preserve the memory of the Holocaust. In the UK, work is underway to create a ‘striking and prominent’ new national Holocaust memorial, which is planned to sit next to the Houses of Parliament in London.

Example 3: Antisemitism Today

Antisemitism did not disappear with the end of the Holocaust. It is still a very real problem, here in the UK and across the world. In the UK, Jews make up approximately 0.5% of the population (around 284,000 people). The Community Security Trust (CST) recorded 1,668 antisemitic incidents across the United Kingdom in 2020, the third-highest figure that CST has ever recorded in a single calendar year. This followed 1,813 reported incidents in 2019, and 1,866 reported incidents in 2018, these being the highest figures since 1984.

Example 4: Racism, Hatred, & Religious Intolerance

Across the globe there has been a growth of violent acts based on extremist views, relating to race, religion and culture. An article from 2020 highlights that since the start of the Coronavirus lockdowns, there have been a rise in the number of hate crimes reported on London buses. A spokesperson for Tell MAMA (a UK-based campaign group and reporting service for victims of Islamophobic hate crime) said: “These figures are concerning since they show that prejudice against people of colour and of perceived different faiths rose. This underlines the fact that some in our society easily blame others for issues that affect us all and that sadly, prejudice is still alive and well and it shows its head when we are in crisis collectively as a society.”

Example 5: Persecution of Uyghur Communities

China is facing growing criticism from across the globe for its treatment of the mostly Muslim Uyghur population, living in the Xinjiang region of north-western China. Reports coming out of the region have described scenes of prisoners forced on to trains and over one million people incarcerated in ‘re-education’ camps. Reports have also been released that tell of 13 tonnes of human hair being forcibly shaved from Uyghur women in China.