

# Holocaust Memorial Day 2024

The Fragility of Freedom



Mayfield



*Barbed wire fences at Auschwitz-Birkenau*

## The Holocaust and Holocaust Memorial Day

Registration



## The Fragility of Freedom

Period 1



## Eroding Freedom – Part 1

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relevant Period for direct access

# The Holocaust and Holocaust Memorial Day

Registration




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# The Holocaust: A (very) Brief History

- The Holocaust (The Shoah in Hebrew) was the attempt by the Nazis and their collaborators to murder all the Jews in Europe. From the time they assumed power in Germany in 1933, the Nazis used propaganda, persecution, and legislation to deny human and civil rights to German Jews. They used centuries of antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred) as their foundation.
- With the outbreak of World War Two in 1939 Germany invaded Poland, subjecting around 2 million Polish Jews to violence and forced labour. Thousands of Jews were murdered in the first months of the occupation. Shortly after the occupation Polish Jews were confined to particular neighbourhoods that came to be known as 'ghettos'. Living conditions in these ghettos were appalling – a deliberate attempt by the Nazis to cause the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Jews. This approach was repeated across Eastern Europe in other countries occupied by the Nazis.
- In 1941, the systematic murder of Europe's Jews began – a plan known by the Nazis as 'The Final Solution to the Jewish Problem'. Death squads called *Einsatzgruppen* swept Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, killing Jews by firing squad. By the end of 1941 the first death camp, Chelmno in Poland, had been established, giving the Nazis their method to continue murdering on a giant scale between 1941 and 1945.
- By the end of the Holocaust, 6 million Jewish men, women and children had been murdered in ghettos, mass-shootings, in concentration camps and death camps.



# What is Holocaust Memorial Day?

Image credit: Bill Hunt

# Prayer

To mark HMD 2020, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Senior Imam Qari Asim came together and wrote a special prayer:

*Loving God, we come to you with heavy hearts, remembering the six million Jewish souls murdered during the Holocaust.*

*In the horrors of that history, when so many groups were targeted because of their identity, and in genocides which followed, we recognise destructive prejudices that drive people apart.*

*Forgive us when we give space to fear, negativity and hatred of others, simply because they are different from us.*

*In the light of God, we see everyone as equally precious manifestations of the Divine, and can know the courage to face the darkness.*

*Through our prayers and actions, help us to stand together with those who are suffering, so that light may banish all darkness, love will prevail over hate and good will triumph over evil.*

*Amen*

# The Fragility of Freedom

Period 1



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# Fragility of Freedom

Fragility of Freedom is the theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2024.

*That is when the trouble started for the Jews. Our freedom was severely restricted by a series of anti-Jewish decrees.*

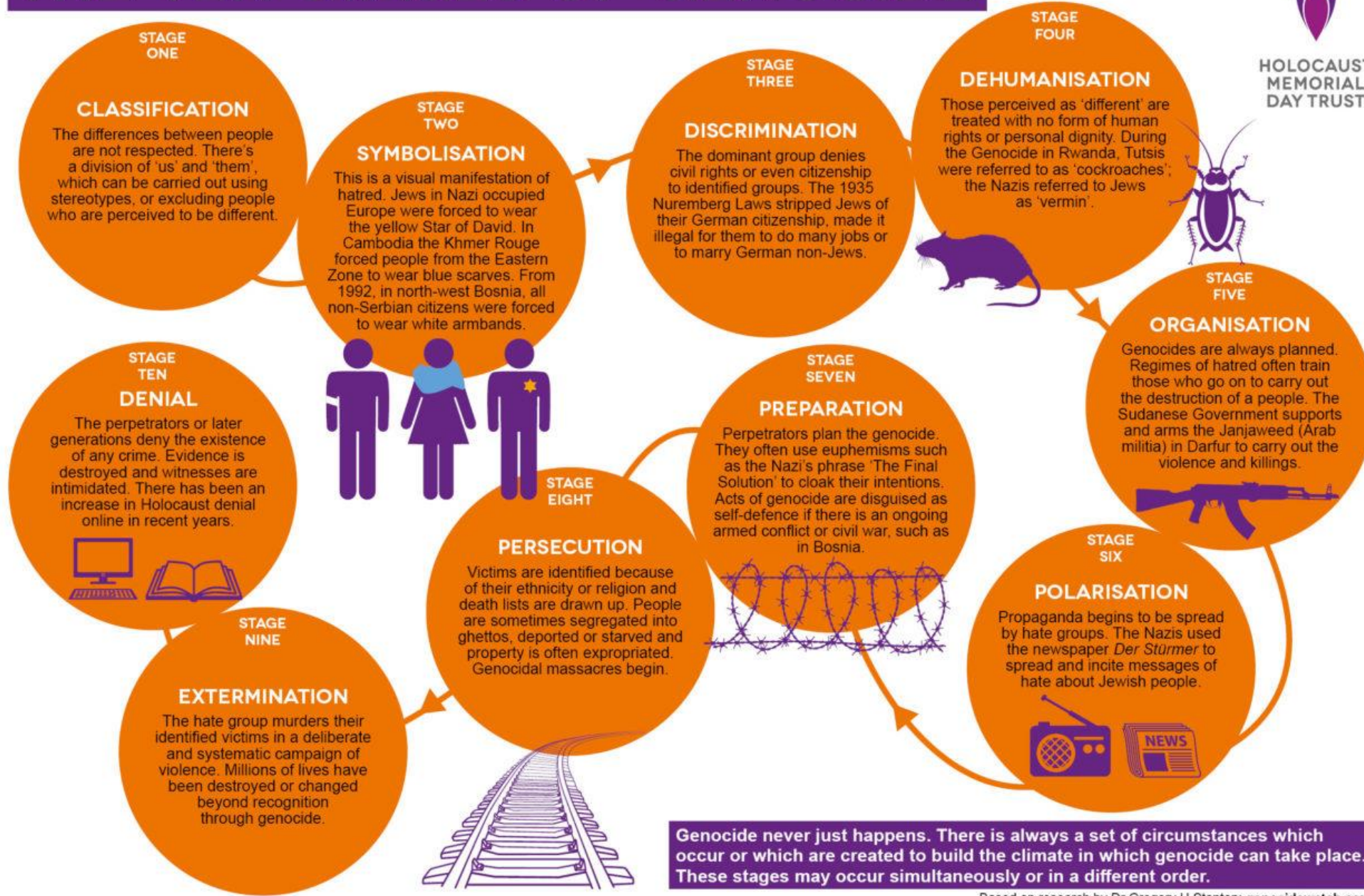
Anne Frank, diary entry, Saturday 20 June, 1942 –  
reflecting back on May 1940 when the Germans arrived in  
the Netherlands

- Freedom means different things to different people. What is clear is that in every genocide that has taken place, those who are targeted for persecution have had their freedom restricted and removed, before many of them are murdered. This is often a subtle, slow process. The ten stages of genocide, (next slide), demonstrate that genocide never just happens. There is always a set of circumstances which occur, or which are created, to build the climate in which genocide can take place and in which perpetrator regimes can remove the freedoms of those they are targeting.
- Not only do perpetrator regimes erode the freedom of the people they are targeting, demonstrating how fragile freedom is, they also restrict the freedoms of others around them, to prevent people from challenging the regime. Despite this, in every genocide there are those who risk their own freedom to help others, to preserve others' freedom or to stand up to the regime.
- Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) 2024 marks the 30th anniversary of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. 49 years after the Holocaust ended, 19 years after the genocide in Cambodia, the world stood by as Hutu extremists shattered the fragile freedom in Rwanda, following decades of tension and violence, culminating in the murder of over one million Tutsis in just one hundred days.

# THE TEN STAGES OF GENOCIDE



HOLOCAUST  
MEMORIAL  
DAY TRUST



# Eroding Freedom – Part 1

Period 2



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# Eroding Freedom – Part 1

Freedom is fragile and it cannot be taken for granted. In Periods 2, 3 and 4 you will see some examples of ways in which the freedoms of people targeted during genocide are restricted, showing how fragile freedom is and how we must not be complacent about it.



Jewish shops and businesses were destroyed during The Night of Broken Glass in 1938



## Freedom of religion and freedom to self-identify

- In 1933 the Nazis came to power in Germany, and life became increasingly difficult for German Jews. Anti-Jewish laws were passed, which denied Jews many freedoms and restricted their rights, starting with removing them from certain professions and schools and universities. The Nuremberg Laws in 1935 restricted who Jews could marry, and went further than that: they defined anyone who had three or four Jewish grandparents as a Jew, regardless of whether or not that person saw themselves as Jewish. Thus the Nuremberg laws took away people's freedom of religion and freedom to self-identify. On 9 November 1938, Jewish shops and businesses in Nazi territories were attacked and destroyed. The night became known as The Night of Broken Glass. Jewish people were banned from cinemas, theatres and sports facilities.
- As the German army swept through and started occupying European countries, Jewish people in those countries often had many of their freedoms taken away: they were forced into ghettos, living in cramped conditions and often doing hard labour for the Nazis or for German industries; they were deported to concentration or death camps. Being imprisoned or enslaved is the very antithesis of freedom. And this was simply because they were Jewish.

After the arrival of the Germans in the Netherlands, Anne Frank wrote in her diary:

*That is when the trouble started for the Jews. Our freedom was severely restricted by a series of anti-Jewish decrees: Jews were required to wear a yellow star; Jews were required to turn in their bicycles; Jews were forbidden to use trams; Jews were forbidden to ride in cars, even their own; Jews were required to do their shopping between 3.00 and 5.00p.m.; Jews were required to frequent only Jewish-owned barbershops and beauty salons; Jews were forbidden to be out on the streets between 8.00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m.; Jews were forbidden to go to theatres, cinemas or any other forms of entertainments; Jews were forbidden to use swimming pools, tennis courts, hockey fields or any other athletic fields; Jews were forbidden to go rowing; Jews were forbidden to take part in any athletic activity in public; Jews were forbidden to sit in their gardens or those of their friends after 8.00 p.m.; Jews were forbidden to visit Christians in their homes; Jews were required to attend Jewish schools, etc. You couldn't do this and you couldn't do that, but life went on.*

Anne and her family went into hiding, but they were betrayed and Anne died in Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp, just three months short of her 16th birthday.



# Eroding Freedom – Part 2

Period 3

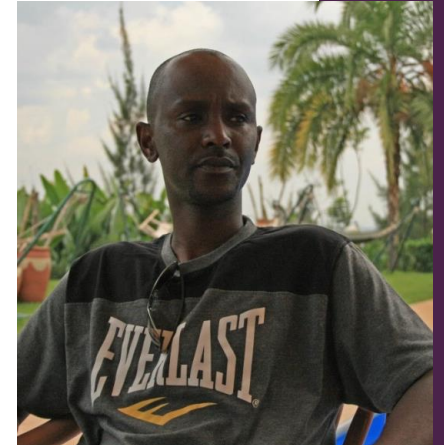


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# Eroding Freedom – Part 2

## Freedom of Movement

- In the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, Eric Murangwa Eugène's freedom of movement was shattered after the plane carrying the President of Rwanda was shot down on 6 April 1994. Radio broadcasts demanded people stay in their homes while soldiers crashed down their front doors to find those they deemed 'responsible'. Demanding people to stay home enabled perpetrators to find their target groups.
- In 1992, Kemal Pervanić was one of many Bosnian Muslim men incarcerated in the notorious Omarska Concentration Camp. One of his former schoolteachers became his camp guard. Kemal's freedoms were lost: every aspect of his life was controlled, living conditions were appalling and he suffered beatings and deprivations.



## False Freedom

- Perpetrator regimes often deliberately conceal their genocidal actions and mislead those they are targeting, to keep them calm, for example, and to prevent revolts, creating a sense of false freedom among those who are persecuted. The gates at several concentration camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau, welcomed prisoners with the now infamous slogan 'Arbeit Macht Frei', literally meaning 'work gives you freedom', but this was far from the reality.
- In 1981, having survived the genocide in Cambodia, Var Ashe Houston learned in a letter from a friend that her husband, Virak Phong, had flown back to Phnom Penh in early 1976 with several hundred other Khmer intellectuals. The group had been told that the communist regime led by Pol Pot could use their skills to rebuild the country, but this was not true. In reality, they were imprisoned upon arrival in Phnom Penh. Virak Phong died in prison that year.





## Fleeing to Freedom

- There are often limited options available to people attempting to flee persecution as their freedoms are restricted. Jewish people trying to leave Germany in the 1930s had to pay an increasingly heavy emigration tax, for example, and securing a visa became progressively difficult.
- El Sadiq 'Debay' Mahmoud Manees fled persecution in Sudan, choosing 'to go across the Mediterranean Sea – hoping either to be able to live in peace, or to die.' This was not an easy decision to make, but if Debay had stayed in Sudan, he would almost certainly have been murdered. Debay was luckier than many others who attempted the journey. He was rescued and taken to Italy, where he slept rough. He had a long and difficult journey through Europe, unable to find work or safety, until he eventually reached the UK where he claimed asylum. Today, Debay lives in the UK, and was a key worker during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. He is grateful to be safe, but his freedom feels incomplete because he cannot be with his family in Sudan. He says:
  - *Still my heart is in my village and the refugee camps with those I left in Darfur.*



# Eroding Freedom – Part 3

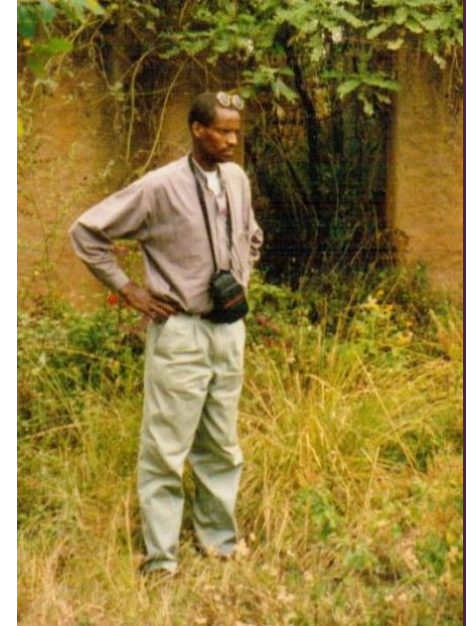
Period 4



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## Freedom of Expression

- Often in genocides, people's freedom of expression is limited and restricted, with state-controlled media ensuring propaganda is fed to the general population. Those who speak out are often imprisoned or murdered. Jean Baptiste Kayigamba, a survivor of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, now living in the UK said:
- *The infamous hate Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines was spewing its venom against the Tutsis, blaming them for assassinating the president.*
- Even after genocides have ended and societies are rebuilt, survivors making new lives in different countries may not be allowed to express themselves freely as new regimes make accommodations with the past, and when relatives in the home country may still face danger.



## **Freedom to Live**

Genocide is the ultimate manifestation of violence ending freedom to live. During the Holocaust, six million Jewish people – men, women, children and babies – were brutally murdered in fields, ghettos, concentration camps and death camps. In more recent genocides, vast numbers of people have been murdered purely because of their faith, ethnicity, or other form of identity.





*The Holocaust Memorial in Berlin*



# Liberated but not Completely Free

Period 5



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## Liberated but not completely free

- It is a misconception that liberation from the perpetrator regime means the end of suffering and the start of a free life. Whilst allied liberators freed Holocaust survivors from the physical imprisonment of concentration camps, and dreadful conditions, the prisoners then found themselves alone, often unable to return home, and having to move to a new country, learn a new language and rebuild their lives from scratch. They had to rebuild new lives with the painful absence of family members and friends. Many have described the years post-liberation as 'being physically free, but not mentally free.'
- Holocaust survivor Esther Brunstein said:
- *The first few days after liberation were joyous and yet sad, confusing and bewildering. I did not know how to cope with freedom after years of painful imprisonment.*



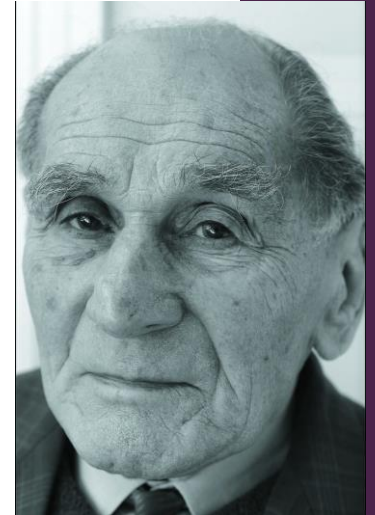
- As Otto Rosenberg who was persecuted by the Nazis because he was Sinti noted, it was hard to enjoy freedom knowing his family members had been murdered:
- *They say: "you have your freedom now, be happy". There was no way I could be all joyful, because I missed my brothers and sisters, always, to this very day. When the holidays came and people celebrated, or the families sat together, that was when this inner thing, this nervous strain came. That was very hard.*
- Indeed, gay men who were imprisoned by the Nazis did not find the freedom they had hoped for as they were still regarded as criminals after liberation and it wasn't until 1968 when they would be safe from prosecution.



- Just because one person was liberated, it did not mean that the rest of their family were safe. As Sabit Jakupović, a survivor of the genocide in Bosnia explains:
- *And that was one of the very hard moments because I felt safe, and I felt lost. I was in a completely different country, different weather, different language. Then I remembered that I left my brothers behind. Those emotions were tearing me apart, you can't enjoy the freedom and liberty because the war is still happening.*



- For some survivors, post-genocide freedom remains always vulnerable to being snatched away. Denial and distortion follow all genocides, and are on the increase where countries attempt to reshape their past. Holocaust distortion and antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred) have been present since the end of World War Two and remain prevalent today.
- Leon Greenman built a life in the UK after surviving Auschwitz, only to suffer an antisemitic attack on his home in London in the 1990s.
- Antoinette Mutabazi did not feel free to return to her home village after the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda when she heard that a perpetrator had been released from prison and had returned to the village.





# Freedom Today

Period 6



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# Freedom Today

- Today many people in western democracies take freedoms for granted – this Holocaust Memorial Day, we can reflect on how these freedoms need to be valued, and on how many people around the world face restrictions to their freedoms to live, worship, work and love freely.
- For example, Uyghur Muslims in China are facing forced relocation to Xinjiang province, 're-education' that threatens to eradicate the Uyghur culture, and other limits to free expression, free movement and freedom of worship.
- Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims are living in refugee camps in Bangladesh, having escaped religious persecution in Myanmar.
- Conflict is still ongoing in the Darfur region of Sudan. Survivors of the genocide, now safe in the UK, are terrified for the safety of their family members still in Darfur, and scared to speak out publicly in the UK lest their family members' lives are threatened.



Rohingya refugees fleeing violence and religious persecution in Myanmar

- Anne Frank's comment, quoted in Period 2, concludes '*You couldn't do this and you couldn't do that, but life went on*'. But of course, for Anne, and millions of others, life did not go on – they were deliberately murdered. Building upon the multiple restrictions on their freedoms, their freedom of life was destroyed.
- On Holocaust Memorial Day 2024, we can all reflect on how freedom is fragile and vulnerable to abuse. As we come together in communities around the UK, let's pledge not to take our freedoms for granted, and consider what we can do to strengthen freedoms around the world.

# Prayer

*Eternal God, you hold all of our days in your hands.*

*On this day, we come before you to remember the victims of the Holocaust.*

*We lament the loss of the six million Jews who were killed in the Holocaust, the millions of other victims of Nazi persecution, and victims of other genocides.*

*May our minds be clear and attentive to their memory and our hearts be moved to bear witness to their lives.*

*Today, help us to remember and recognise the sanctity of each human life, that all people are made in Your image.*

*One day, we pray that genocide and hatred will be no more, and that love will triumph over evil.*

*In our prayers and in our actions, help us to show this love in the world today.*

*Amen.*



