

## **Holocaust Memorial Day** (27 Jan 2019)

On Holocaust Memorial Day, we remember the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, as well as those who were persecuted under the **Nazi regime** for their religious or political beliefs, their ethnic background or sexual orientation. We also remember the genocides which occurred later in the twentieth century in **Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur**.

The Holocaust was a terrible and defining episode of the twentieth century, which undoubtedly changed the course of history.

After the Holocaust, the international community adopted a legal definition of the crime of 'genocide'. They wanted to make sure that never again would the crimes of the Holocaust be allowed to happen.

However, in the years following the Holocaust, genocide has continued to be carried out. On Holocaust Memorial Day we remember all those who were murdered or affected by the genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

# The Holocaust

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 as their foundation.

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Germany invaded Poland, subjecting around two 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 extermination 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, six million Jewish men, women and children had been murdered in ghettos, mass-shootings, in concentration camps and extermination camps.



**Einsatzgruppe**

## Concentration Camps

The first concentration camp was established at Dachau (near Munich) on 23 March 1933. As the Nazis captured more territory through wartime invasions, the camp system was greatly expanded.

Between 1933 and 1945 the Nazis created more than 40,000 camps – including forced labour, transit, and extermination camps throughout German-occupied territories.

Camp inmates were often subjected to forced labour, overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions, starvation and cruel treatment, with a high death rate resulting from the poor conditions.

After initial attempts to commit mass murder through shootings and mobile killing units proved 'inefficient', the Nazis extended the camp system to include six extermination camps: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chełmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Their purpose was to carry out genocide – using gas chambers.



**Auschwitz Gas Chamber**



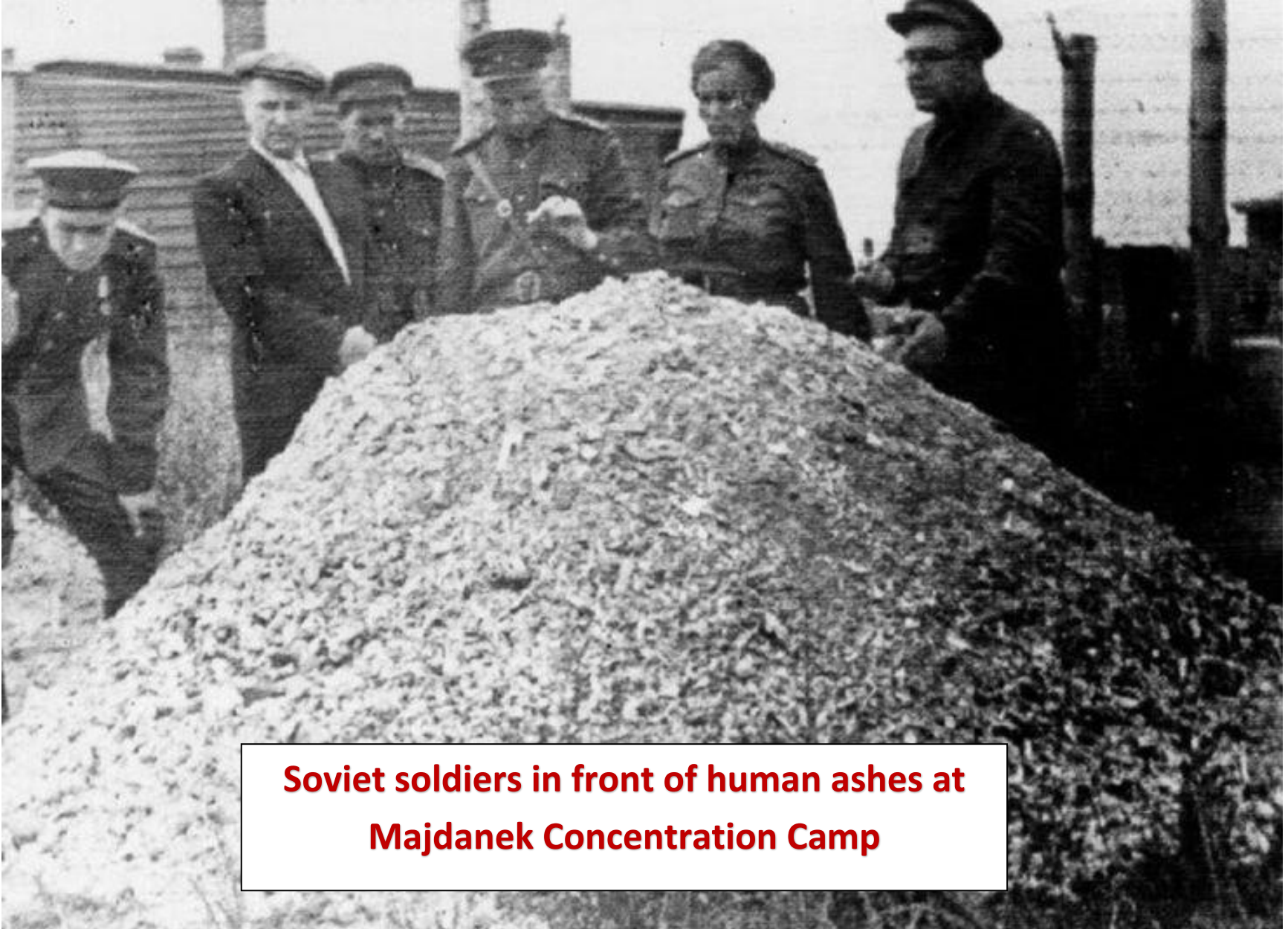
**Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp**



**Belzec Concentration Camp**

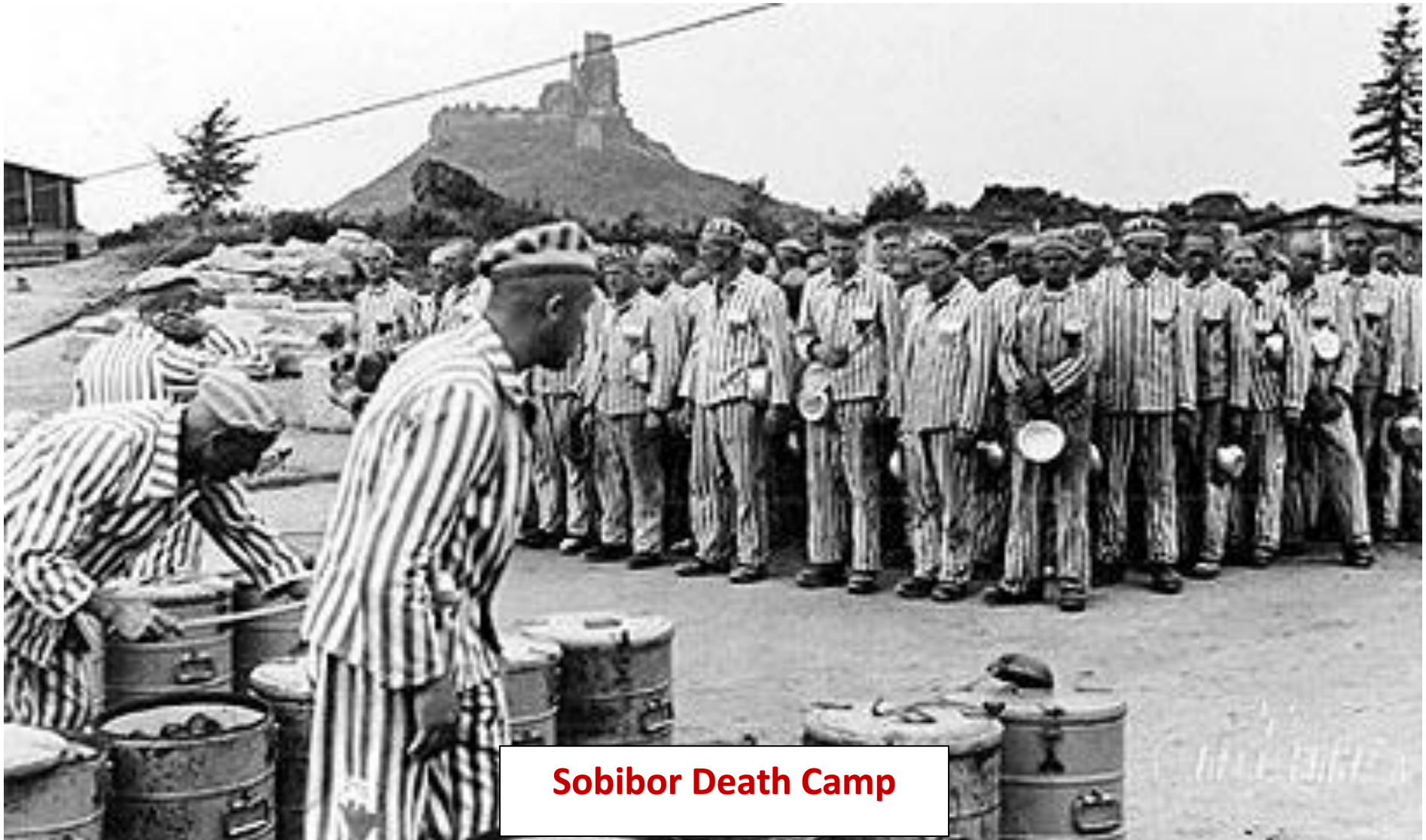


**Jews on their way to Chelmno Concentration Camp**



**Soviet soldiers in front of human ashes at  
Majdanek Concentration Camp**





**Sobibor Death Camp**

## **Nazi Persecution: 1933 – 1945**

In addition to singling out Jews for complete annihilation, the Nazis targeted for discrimination and persecution, anyone they believed threatened their ideal of a 'pure Aryan race'.

Nazi beliefs categorised people by race, and Hitler used the word 'Aryan' for his idea of a 'pure German race'. The Nazis believed Aryan people were superior to all others. Their devotion to what they believed was racial purity and their opposition to racial mixing partly explains their hatred towards Jews, Roma and Sinti people (sometimes referred to as 'Gypsies') and black people. Slavic people, such as those from Poland and Russia, were considered inferior and were targeted because they lived in areas needed for German expansion.

The Nazis wanted to 'improve' the genetic make-up of the population and so persecuted people they deemed to be disabled, either mentally or physically, as well as gay people. Political opponents, primarily communists, trade unionists and social democrats, as well as those whose religious beliefs conflicted with Nazi ideology, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, were also targeted for persecution.

Hundreds of thousands of lives were destroyed because of Nazi persecution, and many groups did not receive acknowledgement of their suffering until years after 1945



# What is genocide?

On 11 December 1946 the *General Assembly of the United Nations* resolved that **genocide** was a crime under international law. This was approved and ratified as a *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* on 9 December 1948. The Convention defines genocide as:

**‘any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group’:**

- killing members of the group
- causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
- deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part
- imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
- forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

From 1946 onwards, the term genocide has been used to recognise the actions of a state-sponsored attempt to destroy a particular group of its people.

# Ten Stages of Genocide

Genocide doesn't just happen, there is always a set of circumstances which occur or which are created so that genocide can take place.

1. Classification

6. Polarisation

2. Symbolism

7. Preparation

3. Discrimination

8. Persecution

4. Dehumanisation

9. Extermination

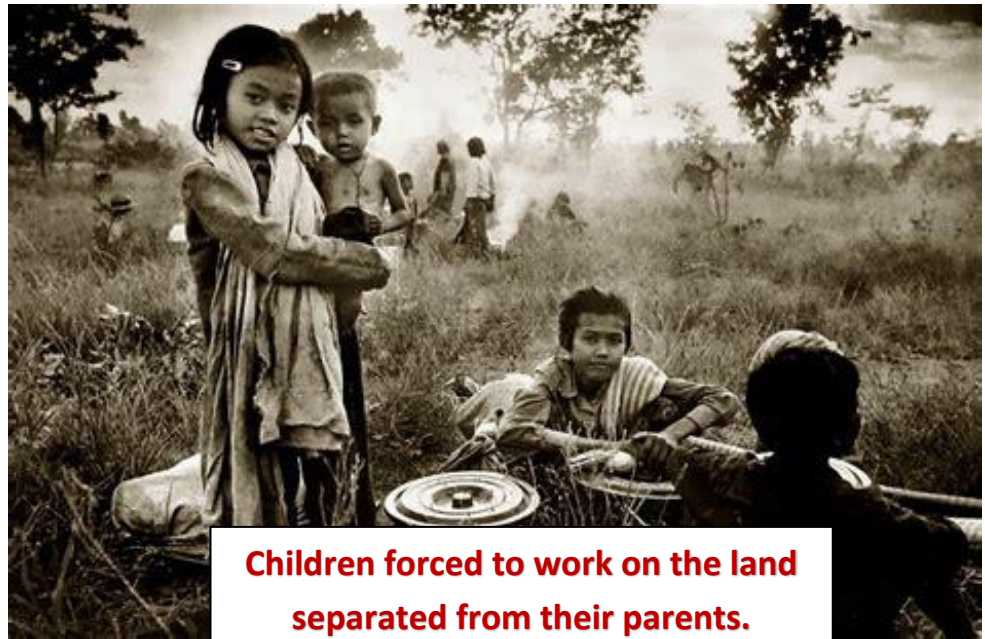
5. Organisation

10. Denial

## Genocides after World War II

Unfortunately genocide has occurred since the end of the war and is still happening today.

In **Cambodia** in 1975, the Khmwe Rouge seized power and imposed an extremist programme. Their aim was to remove social classes and Western influences, and create a 'Year Zero'. They were forced to work as labourers on collective farms; if they refused they were murdered. Religions, political and civil rights were abolished and children were separated from their parents and placed in separate labour camps. Well over two million people were killed during this time.



**Children forced to work on the land separated from their parents.**

In **Rwanda** in 1994 in 100 days approximately one million Tutsis and Hutus were murdered in the genocide. After years of tension between these two groups, on 6<sup>th</sup> April Rwanda's President was killed when his plane was shot down. Extremist Hutu leaders publically accused the Tutsis of killing him. Hutu civilians were informed by radio and word of mouth that it was their duty to wipe out the Tutsis. This genocide was brutal and carried out mostly by hand using machetes and clubs. The State provided the support and organisation to allow it to happen.



**Hutu and Tutsis fighting in Rwanda**

In 1992 **Bosnia** declared its independence from Yugoslavia, but this was resisted by the Bosnian Serbs. The President of Serbia began a campaign of war crimes. 'Ethnic cleansing' and genocide was committed by Bosnian Serb troops .In July 1995 Serb troops captured the town of Srebrenica and deported the women and children and murdered 8,000 men and boys and hid their bodies in mass graves. This was the largest incidence of mass murder since 1945, resulting in around 100,000 deaths.



**Srebrenica Genocide Memorial**

Genocide is still happening today in **Darfur**, Sudan. In 2003 a conflict began between black African farmers and the nomadic Arab population. The Sudanese Government started to persecute the Black Africans. They destroyed hundreds of villages and



**Sudan Refugee Camp**

murdered thousands of people. The conflict has led to 200,000-400,000+ deaths. Up to 2.6 million people have been forced from their homes into refugee camps, some fleeing to neighbouring Chad, and others have sought asylum in the UK.