

## How to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day

### Planning a Holocaust Memorial Day Event

On 27th January 2000, representatives from 46 governments around the world met in Stockholm to discuss Holocaust education, remembrance and research. All attendees signed a declaration committing to preserving the memory of those murdered in the Holocaust. In the UK, a statement of commitment was created after the Stockholm Declaration, pledging to remember all victims of Nazi persecution and subsequent genocides. This statement recognises that genocide, antisemitism, racism, xenophobia and discrimination continue, and we have a shared responsibility to fight them. Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) is the national day of commemoration for those who suffered at the hands of the Nazis and in subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. It occurs annually on 27th January, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Soviets in 1945.

2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp by Soviet Forces on 27 January 1945 and Bergen-Belsen concentration camp being liberated by British Forces on 15 April 1945. This is a significant milestone made particularly poignant by the dwindling numbers of survivors who are able to share their anniversary. Thus, we need to ensure that their testimonies continue to live on, and the Holocaust is never forgotten, showing the importance of Holocaust Memorial Day.

Identifying what sort of event you would like to run to mark HMD is very important. You can run as many or as few as you want. We want you to really push the boat out, because no one person has the same meaning or connection to the Holocaust. As it is so personal, we want you to be as creative as possible, and this next section will explain the factors you should be aware of when creating your event.

We're here to help every step of the way, and if you have any questions, or even just want to bounce ideas off us, get in touch with Lauren ([lauren1@ujis.org.uk](mailto:lauren1@ujis.org.uk)) or Daniel ([danielk@ujis.org.uk](mailto:danielk@ujis.org.uk)).



*Holocaust Memorial Day speaker event in Liverpool with Joanna Milian 2018*

## Why

When organising an event, it is important you consider the reasons for doing so. HMD events should be sombre occasions but with the opportunity to deepen understanding and emphasise with the victims of the Holocaust. However, the form and content of your events are entirely up to you. As a result, the reasons for organising your HMD event may be different to others. When working with different groups on campus (see below for groups to contact), talk to the students to understand their reasons for commemoration. Involve them in your plans and implementation of your event to make sure that it is carried out respectfully and appropriately.

## With Whom

The Holocaust transcends normal cultural and political boundaries. The Holocaust, in short, affects every one of us irrespective of our identity. Holocaust Memorial Day events on campus are usually organised by Jewish students due to their close and emotional connection to it. We want to encourage more students to get involved, and you can do this by working with different societies and interest groups on campus to highlight the fact that the Holocaust affects us all.

Other societies to consider working with are: BME Network, Christian Union, Disabled Students Network, Eastern European Societies, German Society, History Society, Islamic Society, Jehovah's Witness Society, Jewish Society, LGBTQ+ Society/Network, Philosophy Society, Religion and Theology Society, Sociology Society, and more.

*Holocaust Memorial Conference  
at Exeter University 2019*



## When

Events are planned, both locally and on a national scale, on 27th January, both in the UK and around the world. However, you should note that HMD events occur in the time leading up to and following 27th January, so don't worry if you can't hold your event on HMD itself. HMD events take place throughout the whole of January and even February. However, if possible, you should try and organise your event for as close to 27th January as you can.

Subsequently, you can also host speakers around Yom Hashoah, which is the internal Jewish communal day of commemoration for the Holocaust. This year it falls on the 21st April, which due to the high demand of speaker requests, it may be a more plausible time to host Holocaust Survivor Speakers.

The Jewish Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday and ends at sunset on Saturday, so if there is a Jewish Society on your campus that you are working with, remember that the Sabbath will finish at around 5.30 pm. There are various Jewish laws about activities you can and cannot do on the Sabbath, so bear this in mind if planning an event on a Friday. In order to make the event accessible for all students, contact the Jewish Society or UJS!

## Where

Location is entirely dependent on the type of event you wish to organise as well as the facilities available on your campus. For example, if you want to organise a film screening you will need to find a large enough room with a projector, whereas for a memorial service you may wish to hold the event outside or in a large hall or theatre, and might want to use a microphone for readings. Make sure the room is also accessible to all students, for example by ensuring there is a lift if being held upstairs.

## Resources and Funding

When planning your event, think about what resources you might need. Do you need technological equipment like a projector, microphone and speakers? If you're running a memorial service, do you need candles or lanterns?

The most powerful resources are words and images. Some poems and testimonies are included at the back of this guide, but there are many more out there that you can easily find online.

For help with resources, contact the Holocaust Education Trust at <https://www.het.org.uk/>

You can also visit the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust website to order a resource pack at <https://www.hmd.org.uk/>

## Evaluation

After your event, it is always important to evaluate it. In order to improve in the following years, you need to know what went well, and what did not go according to plan. This will also be useful for those who organise the event next year, so they can see what to change or keep the same for the future, so clearly write up details about your event with ideas of how to improve it.

## Checklist

When planning your event, you should try and keep this checklist in mind to ensure you have everything in place.

- When will your event be?
- Where will you have your event?
- Why are you doing your event – Have you spoken to different student societies?
- Have you secured funding for your event in time?
- Do you need any resources for your event and have you sourced them early enough?
- Have you signed up on the HMDT website and ordered an activity pack?
- Have you publicised and marketed your event? – If you are advertising it to the entire student body, make sure you do this in good time. If appropriate, take photos during the event as well. This could include a livestream.
- After the event, have you evaluated your event?

*Students in Coventry commemorate  
Holocaust Memorial Day*



## Hearing a Survivor's Testimony



*John Dobai, Holocaust Survivor Speaker, at Reading University for Holocaust Memorial Day 2018*

Hearing a survivor's story is a powerful and effective part of education by putting a human face to history. Every survivor has a unique story and hearing an individual's experience can help people to understand the atrocities that occurred. By sharing their testimonies, survivors help to ensure that the world never forgets what happened.

By December, applying for speakers to come to campus is no longer possible, however there are alternative ways to understand and hear the importance of a Survivor's testimony. However, if you wish to host a Speaker for Yom HaShoah, which is the internal Jewish communal day of commemoration for the Holocaust, you should put in your requests as soon as possible. For help with coordinating a survivor visit, contact the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET): <https://www.het.org.uk/education/outreach-programme> Live webcast

### Live Webcast

From 10am on Friday 24th January 2020, Susan Pollack MBE will be sharing her testimony live from a London school – and you can sign in to watch.

HET's survivor webcast marking Holocaust Memorial Day 2020 will feature Susan Pollack MBE who will share her remarkable story of survival. Susan was born in Hungary and survived Auschwitz-Birkenau and Bergen-Belsen before being liberated by British forces.

You will also have the opportunity to ask Susan online questions on the day, just as if she was there with you. To register your interest, please visit <https://www.het.org.uk/survivor-testimony-webcast>

## How to Run a Memorial Service

A memorial service can be an excellent way of increasing awareness of Holocaust Memorial Day. Memorial services provide an opportunity for introspection and reflection on the Holocaust and its significance to individuals.

## Where and When to do your Memorial Service

Memorial Services are generally held outdoors for a variety of reasons; the most important being health and safety requirements because of the candles, and make sure to check with your university if there are any rules regarding the use of candles. However, you should be prepared for bad weather and may want to consider holding the service inside, which could help to create an intimate environment for remembrance.

On HMD, it usually gets dark around 18:00, however you will need to ensure that you choose a time when people are out of lectures so you can provide more people with the opportunity to attend.

*A Holocaust survivor speaks at a ceremony at York cathedral in 2016*



## Candles

Make sure you have enough candles for the number of anticipated attendees. White tea-lights work well for memorial services, but make sure you put them in something if being carried. The wind can be problematic if holding the event outside, so you may want to consider lanterns or electric candles. Don't worry if they do blow out, as the reason behind the memorial service is to gather people and remember, the candles are simply a way of doing that.

In Judaism, candles are lit to remember those who have passed away, and if working with the Jewish Society they may want to have a Yahrzeit (memorial) candle. The candle is believed to represent the soul of the departed which is never forgotten. The prayer said over this candle is called 'Kaddish' and is a praise and sanctification of God.

## Speakers and Readings

When planning your memorial service, you should designate someone to speak and lead the event so as to ensure that the memorial service runs smoothly. This person should welcome everyone to the event as well as explaining the running order to your audience. If you choose to have more than one person do a reading, then this person can also introduce them.

The options for external speakers is very broad. You can invite religious leaders (such as Rabbis, Priests or Imams), political leaders (including your local MP), faculty staff (for example your Vice Chancellor), or student leaders (such as the president of your students' union or other sabbatical officers). Sometimes you can leave the content of the reading to the speaker themselves, other times you may wish to direct the discussion.

Readings can include:

- Informative topics, such as historical accounts or commentary;
- Memorials and experiences, for example stories from Holocaust survivors;
- Poetry or prose; and
- Prayers, ensuring that they are read in English as well as any other language.

## Educational Room on Campus

Renting a Room on Campus and hosting a place for people to learn about the Holocaust creates a space to commemorate, as well as a place for reflection and to ask questions. It is ideal that there are people present to facilitate discussion and education in the room. Within this, a charity pot could be collected to raise money for a charity of your choice that stands up against racism and prejudice.

To help put this together, you can take different books out from your library to provide information and use resources from HET (<https://www.het.org.uk/>) and HMDT (<https://www.hmd.org.uk/>). You may also want to access some recordings, so people can listen to a speaker in the room, or a selection of pictures. As part of this you could have a book or a whiteboard, where people can write why they believe it is important to commemorate the Holocaust.

There are many other things that you can add to create a powerful educational tool. Remember who your target audience is in the room as different people will want different information and material.

Ensure that you have thought of all these aspects as well as the different information in this booklet before putting the room together. You must also take sensitivities into consideration when choosing imagery and text for the room, so please use trigger warnings if appropriate.



*A Holocaust Memorial Day Speaker event in Kent 2017*



*Liron Velleman (UJS Campaigns Manager 2018-2019), Shakira Martin (NUS President), Mala Tribich (Holocaust survivor), Izzy Lenga (NUS VP Welfare 2018-2019) at the launch of Our Living Memory at NUS Zones Conference 2017*

## How to Put on a Film Screening

Film screenings can provide a great opportunity to actively engage with the Holocaust as well as educating about its contemporary relevance. You can simply show the film and allow people to contemplate themselves after, or, depending on the size of your group, you can open it up to discussion following the screening.

## Choosing your film

Each film about the Holocaust raises different questions and focuses on vastly different elements of the Holocaust itself. *Schindler's List*, for example, centres on the work of one man in saving 1,200 Jews from Nazi persecution and death.

Your choice of film will depend on your preference as well as your intended audience. If you wish to organise a film screening for history students, you may wish to use a more analytical rather than descriptive film. Either way, you will need to think about your audience when choosing the film.



*Students at Bristol watch 'Surviving the Holocaust: Freddie Knoller's War'*

Additionally, some films are sometimes overplayed and you may wish to consider using a film that some people have not seen before or perhaps centres on more contemporary discussions of the Holocaust.

Check your university library to see if they have copies of the films, but they can all be easily found online.

## Holding a Stall on Campus

By having a stall up on campus about Holocaust Memorial Day, you can easily gain student's attention and encourage them to learn and get involved. You can have your stall up for however long you like – this might be for a few hours on Holocaust Memorial Day itself, the whole day, or even the week leading up to it.

Where to place your stall Think about where students often pass and where the stall will be seen. This might be the library, the Students' Union or a department building. We would recommend having someone to run the stall, but don't worry, you don't need to know everything! The person at the stall is to guide students to ways to educate themselves, and this may be directing them to websites, or simply having a conversation and encouraging them to research for themselves.

The aim of having a stall on campus is to gain students' attention and get them thinking. There are a number of different things you can do at your stall – here are a few ideas but come up with your own ideas as well!

- Have stories and testimonies out on the table for people to read (you can find these stories online – look at <https://www.het.org.uk/education/outreach-programme/survivor-stories>)
- Involve people in commemorating the victims of the Holocaust and other genocides by making the stall interactive: - Ask students to answer questions such as 'Why is it important to commemorate victims of genocide?' or 'What lessons can we learn from the Holocaust and subsequent genocides?' - You can write these answers on a whiteboard and post photos online, or write them on cards and make an exhibition on campus. - If you post them online, make sure to tag NUS, UJS and HET with the hashtag #OurLivingMemory