

The Holocaust in Romania

Before the war, Romanian authorities pursued a policy of harsh, persecutory antisemitism —particularly against Jews living in eastern borderlands, who were falsely associated with Soviet communism. Right-wing social revolutionary movements, like the fascist Iron Guard, found significant popular support and some official sympathy for their demand that the Jews of Romania be removed from alleged places of power and then expelled from Romania.

In September 1940, King Carol II was forced to abdicate. A coalition government of radical right-wing military officers came to power and requested the dispatch of a German military mission to Romania. On November 20, 1940, Romania formally joined the Axis alliance (Germany, Italy, and Japan). The government quickly promulgated a number of restrictive measures against the Jews of Romania. In addition, Iron Guard thugs arbitrarily robbed or seized Jewish-owned businesses. They assaulted, and sometimes killed, Jewish citizens in the streets.

Romania participated fully in the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Within days of the invasion, Romanian authorities staged pogroms against the Jewish population in the newly occupied-cities. Both in support of German SS and police units and on their own initiative, Romanian army and gendarmerie (police) personnel massacred thousands of Jews. The pogrom perpetrated on June 27, 1941 by the Romanians in the city of Iași left more than 13 000 Jews dead. Romanian authorities also established ghettos and concentration camps. Very few prisoners interned in these camps were able to survive.

At least 270,000 Romanian Jews were killed or died from mistreatment during the Holocaust. The government signed an armistice with the Soviet Union on August 23, 1944.

Text adapted by the Montreal Holocaust Museum

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