

The Holocaust in Germany

According to the census of June 1933, Jews represented less than one percent of the total German population. Most Jews in Germany were well integrated into society. Eighty percent of them held German citizenship. The remainder were mostly Jews of Polish citizenship, many of whom were born in Germany and who had permanent resident status there.

Hitler and the Nazis came to power in 1933. In the years between 1933 and 1939, the Nazi regime brought radical and daunting social, economic, and communal changes to the German Jewish community. Six years of Nazi-sponsored legislation had marginalized and disenfranchised Germany's Jewish citizenry and had expelled Jews from their professions and from commercial life.

Following the outbreak of the war on September 1, 1939, the government imposed new restrictions on Jews remaining in Germany. One of the first wartime ordinances imposed a strict curfew on Jewish individuals and prohibited Jews from entering designated areas in many German cities. Once a general food rationing began, Jews received reduced rations. German authorities also demanded that Jews relinquish property "essential to the war effort," such as radios, cameras, bicycles, electrical appliances, and other valuables, to local officials. In September 1941, a decree prohibited Jews from using public transportation. In the same month came the notorious edict requiring Jews over the age of six to wear a yellow Jewish Star on their outermost garment. While ghettos were generally not established in Germany, strict residence regulations forced Jews to live in designated areas of German cities. German authorities also issued ordinances requiring Jews fit for work to perform compulsory forced labour.

German authorities began systematic deportations of Jews from Germany in October 1941. In 1941 and 1942, the Nazis deported tens of thousands of Jews from the so-called Greater German Reich to ghettos in the east. After late October 1942, the German authorities deported the majority of Jews remaining in Germany directly to Auschwitz-Birkenau or to the camp-ghetto of Theresienstadt. In May 1943, Nazi German authorities reported that the Reich was *judenrein* ("free of Jews"). In total, the Germans and their collaborators killed between 160,000 and 180,000 German Jews.

Text adapted by the Montreal Holocaust Museum

Source: USHMM articles about Germany:

<https://www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007687>

<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005469>