

# National Days of Remembrance

## Frequently Asked Questions About Days of Remembrance

### What is Days of Remembrance?

The U.S. Congress established Days of Remembrance as the nation's annual commemoration of the Holocaust and created the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as a permanent living memorial to the victims. In accordance with its congressional mandate, the Museum is responsible for leading the nation in commemorating Days of Remembrance and for encouraging appropriate observances throughout the United States.

### What is the Holocaust? Who are we remembering?

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims—six million were murdered; Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), people with mental and physical disabilities, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi Germany.

### Why is Days of Remembrance observed in the United States?

In 1980, Congress unanimously passed legislation to establish the [United States Holocaust Memorial Council](#), which oversees the Museum. The Council, which succeeded the [President's Commission on the Holocaust](#), was charged with carrying out the following recommendations:

- That a living memorial be established to honor the victims and survivors of the Holocaust and to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust will be taught in perpetuity
- That an educational foundation be established to stimulate and support research in the teaching of the Holocaust
- That a Committee on Conscience be established to collect information on and alert the national conscience regarding reports of actual or potential outbreaks of genocide throughout the world
- That a national day of remembrance of victims of the Holocaust be established in perpetuity and be held annually

## **What is the significance of the Days of Remembrance theme?**

Choosing a theme for commemoration can help narrow the vast historical subject of the Holocaust. Each year a new theme is set for the observance year. For specific details on themes please visit the museum's page on [Commemoration Themes](#).

## **Why do the Days of Remembrance dates change from year to year?**

The Israeli Parliament (Knesset) established Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom Hashoah), to be observed on the 27th day of Nisan of the Hebrew calendar. The Hebrew calendar is a lunar calendar so the date changes each year in the United States. Observances and remembrance activities occur throughout the Week of Remembrance, which runs from the Sunday before Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom Hashoah) through the following Sunday. Please view the [Museum's Remembrance Day calendar](#) for future dates.

## **How can I participate in Days of Remembrance?**

Every year during Days of Remembrance, ceremonies and activities are held throughout the United States—in local communities; at state and local government offices; on military bases; and in workplaces, schools, and religious institutions. You may be able to take part in a commemoration already planned in your community, or if such a community-wide event is not currently planned, you may encourage your local and state officials to issue a proclamation indicating their support for commemorating these events. For information about the many other ways to get involved see [More Ways to Remember](#).

## **When planning a commemoration, what are appropriate and inappropriate approaches/activities?**

Because Days of Remembrance is meant to memorialize the millions of victims of persecution and mass murder, it is important to organize [commemoration activities](#) that show respect for the victims and survivors and that recognize the scope and scale of the Holocaust. Such activities may include remembrance ceremonies, names readings of the victims of the Holocaust, creating displays, inviting a Holocaust survivor to speak, or even organizing book clubs or film series focused on some aspect of Holocaust history. Simulations (e.g., asking participants to wear a yellow star to create a sense of solidarity with Jewish victims, etc.) are not appropriate. Even when great care is taken to make such activities seem solemn, they can often be perceived by survivors and others as a trivialization of the history. To learn more, see our [Guidelines for Teaching about the Holocaust](#).

## **Should refreshments be served at a Days of Remembrance commemoration?**

Days of Remembrance is about memorialization and gathering as a community. Refreshments may be served but are not necessary. Theme-specific food is not appropriate.

## **We are planning a Names Reading ceremony in my community. How do we find lists of names?**

The Museum has a list of 5,000 names of victims of the Holocaust on its website on the [Resources at a Glance](#) page.

## **Can we participate in Days of Remembrance events at the Museum or the U.S. Capitol?**

The National Days of Remembrance Ceremony held at the U.S. Capitol Rotunda is closed to the public, but the museum encourages public participation Names Reading. This weeklong ceremony takes place in the Museum's Hall of Remembrance throughout Holocaust Remembrance week.

## **Why is the date of Days of Remembrance different from the date of International Holocaust Remembrance Day?**

In 2005, the United Nations established January 27 as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. January 27, 1945, was the day that Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated by Soviet troops. Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom Hashoah) was established in 1951 by the Israeli Parliament (Knesset). The date was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and with the liberation of the concentration camps in western Europe.

## **Where can I find more resources for a Days of Remembrance commemoration or general information on the Holocaust?**

Please visit [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)