

Holocaust Memorial Day 2017

UCU commemorates Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) observed annually on 27 January. It does so in memory of the millions who were murdered in the Holocaust and subsequent genocides in Bosnia, Cambodia, Darfur and Rwanda in order to challenge hatred and persecution in the UK today. UCU is committed to combatting all forms of workplace discrimination and harassment including anti-Semitism at work and wider society.

In the context of commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day and subsequent genocides, we are faced with challenging questions for individuals, communities and nations – especially in the current climate. The theme for 2017 is *'How can life go on?'* (decided each year by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust¹), asks us to think about what happens after genocide and of our own responsibilities in the wake of such a crimes.

Events you hold to commemorate HMD could include a seminar, meeting, joint event with your institution, sister unions and/or local community groups, film screenings etc. Branches are also reminded of their employers' legal duties toward ALL employees, ensuring that they work in safe and healthy conditions without discrimination or harassment.

Exploring the theme:

Theme areas	To consider....
Trauma and coming to terms with the past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider how individuals and nations who have survived the horrors of genocide can begin to come to terms with the trauma and their past. ▪ How can you gain a better understanding of trauma? ▪ How can we support survivors of trauma? ▪ Do you work with organisations to support survivors in rebuilding their lives?
Displacement and refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Where do displaced people go? ▪ What is our responsibility to those fleeing persecution? ▪ What are the parallels between the Holocaust and the debate today over migrants and refugees?
Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is there such as thing as justice after genocide? ▪ What does the concept of justice mean? ▪ Who gets to decide and what form does it take?
Rebuilding communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider how communities can rebuild when whole sections are missing or when survivors and perpetrators live side-by-side? ▪ How can we support communities to be rebuilt or celebrated today?
Reconciliation and forgiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is true reconciliation and forgiveness possible or even desirable? ▪ Whose place is it to forgive such crimes?
Remembering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Why is remembering important to helping life go on? ▪ How do we remember when there is nobody left to tell the story?
Facing hate denial and trivialisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Should Holocaust denial be placed on the statute books in the UK?
Facing hate today	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How can we help people to consider individual, organisational, community and governmental responsibilities for protecting the rights of marginalised communities?
Teach us about living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What can you do to help those who have survived genocide, as well as all those from persecuted groups ensure that life goes on? ▪ Do we have an individual and collective responsibility to create safe environments without division and hate?

¹ www.hmd.org.uk

An increase in hate crime

'A Hate Incident is any incident which the victim, or anyone else, thinks is based on someone's prejudice towards them because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or because they are transgender.'

Source: Crown Prosecution Service

The Community Security Trust (CST) amongst many other organisations have reported an increase of 11% (557 anti-Semitic incidents) in the first half of 2016 in comparison with the same period in 2015. This increase was higher during April, May and June – a time of heightened campaigning around the EU Referendum. The language used during the EU referendum has fostered an unnecessary division of 'them and us' which has created an environment of fear for some groups. With very little political leadership against hate crime, this division is becoming mainstream affecting all areas of society.

"The rise in reported anti-Semitism comes at a time when division, intolerance and prejudice appear to be deepening within our society".

CST Chief Executive, David Delew

UCU members' are encouraged to report any incident of hate crime and/or harassment in public spaces. The following offers as a guide. We also advise that should any such incident occur in the workplace, that you follow your institutional policies and bring it immediately to the attention of your local branch and to Chris Nicholas, Equality Support Official at cnicholas@ucu.org.uk.

HOPE not hate have issued the following guidance:

Speak Up

This is usually the best. Say something like 'that is unacceptable'. Remember, a) often the perpetrator will know what they're doing is wrong, and b) they will more than likely be in a minority in the immediate environment. In making your decision through try not to escalate the situation.

However, there may well be occasions when intervening isn't safe as some individuals can be rather intimidating. No-one should feel they should have to put themselves in danger – especially if you are from a marginalised community yourself. There's plenty of other things you can do if the situation isn't right to directly intervene.

Support

If any form of hate, is directed against a person, stand with them. Provide reassurance and talk to them calmly and directly. Physically standing next to the victim not only demonstrates solidarity but may give others the confidence to take stand as well.

Perpetrators often assume that silence means assent, so drawing others in to express their position and support the victimised person gives a clear message that the perpetrators are in the minority. If the incident is occurring on public transport or other kinds of public space (e.g. shops, cafes, etc.) then also engage relevant staff.

Contact Authorities

Telephone the police. Call 999 for an emergency and 101 to report an incident that isn't on-going. Leave your contact details and offer to be a witness.

Film the Perpetrator

These days, most of us have access to a camera phone with video-recording capabilities. This can be used as evidence to bring a charge against someone committing a hate crime.

Just the action of pulling out a camera might make the perpetrator stop. Make sure you get footage of the perpetrator's face and ensure that any defining characteristics of the surrounding area are captured to ensure that the incident can be correctly located.

Other Organisations

There are several organisations operating in Britain who work to document hate crime and support victims. These organisations can also provide you with information as to what constitutes hate crime, and how to go about reporting it:

- CST – (Jewish Help Group) www.cst.org.uk
- True Vision (online reporting portal) www.report-it.org.uk/home
- Tell Mama – Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks www.tellmamauk.org

Source: HOPE not hate (www.hopenothate.org.uk)

Genocide

The crime of genocide is defined in international law in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide.

Article II: In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- a. Killing members of the group
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

Article III: The following acts shall be punishable:

- a. Genocide
- b. Conspiracy to commit genocide
- c. Direct and public incitement to commit genocide
- d. Attempt to commit genocide
- e. Complicity in genocide

Eight Stages of Genocide

Gregory H Stanton, President of Genocide Watch developed the Eight Stages of Genocide which explains how genocide occurs. At each of the earlier stages there is the opportunity offered to members of the community or by the international community to halt the stages and stop genocide before it happens

Classification: The differences between people are not respected. There's a division of 'us' and 'them'. This can be carried out through the use of stereotypes, or excluding people who are perceived to be different.

Symbolisation: This is a visual manifestation of hatred. Jews in Nazi Europe were forced to wear yellow stars to show that they were 'different'.

Dehumanisation: Those who are perceived as different are treated with no form of human right or personal dignity. During the Rwandan genocide Tutsis were referred to as 'cockroaches'; the Nazis referred to Jews as 'vermin'.

Organisation: Genocides are always planned. Regimes of hatred often train those who are to carry out the destruction of a people such as the training of the Janjaweed militia in Darfur.

Polarisation: Propaganda begins to be spread by hate groups. The Nazis used the newspaper Der Stürmer to spread and incite messages of hate about Jewish people.

Preparation: Victims are identified based on their differences. At the beginning of the Cambodian genocide, the Khmer Rouge separated out those who lived in the cities and did not work in the fields. Jews in Nazi Europe were forced to live in Ghettos.

Extermination: The hate group murders their identified victims in a deliberate and systematic campaign of violence. Millions of lives have been destroyed or changed beyond recognition through genocide.

Denial: The perpetrators or later generations deny the existence of any crime.

Genocides

ARMENIA 1915 – 1918

Between 1915 and 1918, the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire were systematically persecuted, deported from their homes and murdered. Following the Balkan War and start of the First World War, Armenian men, women and children were expelled and exterminated in an attempt to destroy their very existence. The campaign was waged against Armenians following a period of deterioration in relations between ethnic groups in the Empire and a number of political and financial upheavals. It is estimated that the Ottoman policies resulted in the deaths of up to 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children.

THE HOLOCAUST 1933 – 1945

Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazis attempted to annihilate all of Europe's Jews. It is this event which we now refer to as The Holocaust or the Shoah, a variation on a Hebrew word.

The Nazis spread their hatred through the use of propaganda and legislation designed to deny human rights to Jews and used centuries of anti-Semitism as their foundation. By the end of the Holocaust, six million Jewish men, women and children had been murdered in ghettos, mass-shootings, in concentration and extermination camps, and many millions more were affected by the Nazis' extreme policies.

As soon as the Nazis came to power, they introduced laws and legislation intended to deny Jews the freedom of movement, work and other basic rights. Boycotts of Jewish doctors, lawyers and shops began in 1933 and by 1935 Jews were not allowed to join the civil service or the army. The introduction of the Nuremberg laws in September 1935 further increased Jewish marginalisation. Jews were banned from marrying non-Jews and their citizenship was removed including their right to vote. As time progressed, more restrictions were brought in and Jews were barred from all professional occupations and Jewish children were prohibited from attending public schools. In 1938, further laws decreed that men must take the middle name 'Israel' and women 'Sarah'; all German Jews would have their passports marked with a 'J'.

On 9 November 1938 the Nazis initiated pogroms (an organised persecution of a particular group) against the Jews in all Nazi territories. It was a night of vandalism, violence and persecution that many have since described as 'the beginning of the Holocaust'. 91 Jews were murdered, 30,000 were arrested and 191 synagogues were destroyed. This night became known as 'Kristallnacht' – the night of broken glass, so called because of the smashed glass which covered the streets from the shops which were looted.

CAMBODIA 1975 – 1979

The fate of Cambodia shocked the world when the radical communist Khmer Rouge, under their leader Pol Pot, seized power in April 1975 after years of guerrilla warfare. The Khmer Rouge ruthlessly imposed an extremist programme to reconstruct Cambodia (now under its Khmer name Kampuchea) on the communist model of Mao's China – creating 'Year Zero'. The population was made to work as labourers in one huge federation of collective farms. The inhabitants of towns and cities were forced to leave. The ill, disabled, old, and very young were driven out, regardless of their physical condition. No one was spared the exodus. People who refused to leave were killed, so were those who did not leave fast enough and those who would not obey orders.

Factories, schools, and universities were shut down, so were hospitals. Lawyers, doctors, teachers, engineers, scientists and professional people in any field were murdered together with their extended families. It was possible for people to be shot simply for knowing a foreign language, wearing glasses, laughing or crying. One Khmer slogan ran, 'to spare you is no profit, to destroy you is no loss.'

BOSNIA 1992 – 1995

In 1980, the population of Bosnia consisted of Bosnian Serbs, (Bosnian Muslims), and Bosnian Croats. In the turmoil following the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Bosnia declared independence (1992). This was resisted by the Bosnian Serb population who saw their future as part of 'Greater Serbia'.

Bosnia became the victim of the Bosnian Serbs' determined wish for political domination which it was prepared to achieve by isolating ethnic groups and, if necessary, exterminating them.

With the backdrop of the ongoing civil war, in July 1995, Bosnian Serb troops and paramilitaries led by Ratko Mladic descended on Srebrenica and began shelling it. Despite being declared a safe zone by the United Nations, Bosnian Serb forces prevailed. Women and children were forced onto trucks and buses, men and boys remained.

The deportation of Srebrenica's population took four days. Concentration camps such as that in Omarska were established. Inhumane conditions, suffocation from overcrowding, systematic rape and starvation, were regular dangers to prisoners.

At least 7,500 men and boys over 13 years old were killed in Srebrenica. Up to 3,000, many in the act of trying to escape, were shot or decapitated in the fields. Mladic sent out written orders to 'block, crush and destroy the straggling parts of the Muslim group' – it was carried out. 1,500 were locked in a warehouse and sprayed with machine gun fire and grenades. Others were murdered in their thousands on farms, football fields and school playgrounds. The whole action was carried out with military efficiency.

RWANDA 1994

In 100 days in 1994 approximately one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered in the Rwandan genocide. On 6 April 1994 the plane carrying Rwanda's President was shot down. Tutsis were accused of killing the President, and Hutu civilians were told by radio and word of mouth, that it was their duty to wipe out the Tutsis. First moderate Hutus who weren't anti-Tutsi should be killed. So should Tutsi wives or husbands. Although on a large scale, this genocide was carried out entirely by hand, often using machetes and clubs. The men who'd been trained to massacre were members of civilian death squads, the Interahamwe. The State provided supporting organisation – politicians, officials, intellectuals – and professional soldiers incited the killers to do their work. Local officials assisted in rounding up victims and making suitable places available for slaughter.

Tutsi men, women, children and babies were killed in thousands in schools and churches. The victims, in their last moments alive, were also faced by another appalling fact, their cold-blooded killers were people they knew – neighbours, workmates, former friends, sometimes even relatives through marriage.

DARFUR 2003 –

In 2003, a civil war began in the region between the sedentary population of farmers, who mainly see themselves as Africans, and the nomadic population who regard themselves as Arabic and who have been supported by the Sudanese Government. This civil war has led to the deaths of between 200,000 and 400,000 civilians, although reporting varies greatly, as it is difficult for the International peacekeepers to keep accurate records. Despite the creation of South Sudan in July 2011, up to 2.5 million people are still displaced in Darfur. They have been forced to flee their homes to makeshift refugee camps in Darfur or Chad run by international aid agencies.

Further resources:

University and College Union <https://www.ucu.org.uk/hmd>
Holocaust Memorial Day Trust <http://hmd.org.uk/>