

Press Release

Crowdsourcing initiative invites volunteers to digitize Ukrainian postcards from the Nazi era

To mark Ukraine's Independence Day on August 24, the Arolsen Archives are calling on volunteers to help digitize postcards written by Ukrainian forced laborers during the Nazi era. By participating in the crowdsourcing initiative #everynamecounts, volunteers can help make these unique source documents publicly available for research, education, and remembrance. In the process, they also bear witness to the importance of remembrance – even as Russia is deliberately destroying Ukraine's history and cultural heritage in its war of aggression.

- Volunteers from around the world can help digitize the information on the postcards – no knowledge of the Ukrainian language or the Cyrillic alphabet is required.
- The project involves approximately 13,000 historical postcards from the Nazi era, written by Ukrainian forced laborers to their relatives – many of them were never delivered to their intended recipients.
- Since 2022, the Arolsen Archives have been supporting endangered archives in Ukraine that are at risk due to the Russian war of aggression.

Background information about the postcards

During the Second World War, almost five million people were deported from the Soviet Union to Nazi Germany – about half of them from Ukraine. Among them were men, women, and young people deported to perform forced labor. They were allowed to write postcards to their families, but had to follow strict rules.

“These postcards from the State Archive of the Vinnytsia Oblast are silent witnesses to a violent past. By working together to make them available online, we are giving these people their voices back and preserving their stories for posterity,” explains Hanna Lehun, Research Associate and Archivist at the Arolsen Archives.

Why the postcards were never delivered

The forced laborers were allowed to write home twice a month at most and had to use specially printed postcards with a reply form. Each card was inspected by the Foreign Letter Censorship Office (Auslandsbriefprüfstelle / ABP) in Berlin. After the war, Soviet authorities collected postcards that had been confiscated or remained undelivered. They were not released until decades later, when they were transferred to regional state archives.

A r o l s e n A r c h i v e s

International Center
on Nazi Persecution

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Working together to provide access to historical documents

The Arolsen Archives are collaborating on this project with the NGO Kyiv Educational Center TolerSpace and students of Eastern European history at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf. These partners are helping to recruit volunteers and digitize the post-cards.

Get involved in #everynamecounts

It is very easy to take part: Anyone with a computer, access to the internet, and a few minutes to spare can visit the [#everynamecounts portal](#) and contribute to the digital memorial honoring the victims and survivors of the Nazi era.

About the Arolsen Archives

The Arolsen Archives are the world's largest archive on the victims and survivors of Nazi persecution. The collection has information on about 17.5 million people and belongs to UNESCO's Memory of the World. It contains documents on the various victim groups targeted by the Nazi regime and is an important source of knowledge for society today.

arolsen-archives.org/en everynamecounts.arolsen-archives.org/en

Contact: Dr. Julia Dombrowski

pr@arolsen-archives.org

+ 49 5691 629390

Press photos:

https://media.arolsen-archives.org/fotoweb/albums/aJs9NnL5Blpj9x_O/

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