

Bad Arolsen:
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Arolsen Archives **International Center on Nazi Persecution**

The Arolsen Archives are an international center on Nazi persecution with the world's most comprehensive archive on the victims and survivors of National Socialism. The Arolsen Archives provide a broad base of knowledge about Nazi persecution, forced labor, the Holocaust, and the consequences of discrimination and racial hatred. Founded in 1947 by the Allies, the institution has spent decades collecting documents on all the victim groups targeted by the Hitler regime.

The collection has information on about 17.5 million people and belongs to UNESCO's Memory of the World. It is an important source of knowledge for society today. The Arolsen Archives provide the foundation for research and education, which are enhanced through collaboration with other international memorials, archives, and research institutions.

The collection of the Arolsen Archives focuses on three key themes:

- Documents from National Socialist concentration camps, ghettos, and penal institutions
- Documents about forced laborers
- Documents from the early post-war period about Displaced Persons, mainly Holocaust survivors, former concentration camp prisoners, and forced laborers. Added to this were people who had fled the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union for political reasons.

The principal tasks of the Arolsen Archives include the following:

- to clarify the fate of persons persecuted under Nazi rule and to search for their family members,
- to supply information to survivors and family members of Nazi victims,
- to carry out research and education and to support commemoration,
- as well as to preserve and conserve the documents and to make them accessible worldwide.

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The Arolsen Archives in numbers:

- 17.5 million names are documented in the archives
- 30 million historical documents
- 26 million documents online
- Over three million files on the fates of individual victims
- 16,000 inquiries are received every year about more than 23,000 individuals
- Every year, the Arolsen Archives receive inquiries from 70 different countries
- Documentation can be provided in response to 51% of inquiries

Comprehensive online archive

In 2019 the Arolsen Archives published a new online archive in partnership with the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, Yad Vashem. People from all over the world can now conduct research online to discover the fates of victims of National Socialist persecution. The database contains many millions of documents from concentration camps, including prisoner cards and death notices. It also has large holdings on Displaced Persons. In its first eight months only, half a million people accessed our online archive.

The online archive is available in English and German. You can find it here:
collections.arolsen-archives.org

In 2020 the Arolsen Archives received Europe's highest award in the field of cultural heritage, the European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award, for their online archive.

Quote:

»Our archive bears testimony to the atrocities perpetrated by the National Socialists. Soon there won't be any survivors left to tell us about them. That is why it is so important that the original documents can speak to coming generations in their place.«

Floriane Azoulay, Director of the Arolsen Archives, uses these words to describe the significance of the online archive.

Additional information

Expanding the online archive

Preparations are currently underway to publish all the documents and the names of all the victims documented in the archive by 2025. The collections are currently being prepared for publication to include a description of their contents which is easy to understand and to provide basic searchability. The last holdings that have not yet been digitized will be scanned in parallel in order to make the complete archive available online in a few years' time.

For relatives

Every year, many thousands of people get in touch with the Arolsen Archives to find out more about the fate of their relatives. The inquiries come from all over the world because the crimes of National Socialist Germany tore families apart.

If the archive contains pertinent documents, copies are given to the person who submitted the inquiry. Even when very little information is available, the Arolsen Archives can still provide relatives with important answers: How many days passed between an individual's deportation and their murder? What do the documents tell us about conditions in the camp? Sometimes the documents and information from the archive provide clues as to where the relatives can carry out further research.

For researchers

The collections of the Arolsen Archives offer great potential for researching Nazi crimes and their aftermath, and people come to us with very different questions and approaches. Our users range from committed local historians to academic researchers working with digital humanities methods, for example.

The greatest opportunities for innovative research are offered by the key themes of the holdings of the Arolsen Archives, which are very comprehensive and include the history of concentration camps and of concentration camp prisoners in particular, forced labor under the National Socialists, the emigration and later lives of survivors as well as the question of compensation.

The Arolsen Archives organize tailor-made research seminars for students as well as seminars and workshops for young academics. They also give lectures presenting the archive and its work at conferences and colloquiums. The aim behind all of these

activities is to inspire interest in trying out new methodological approaches and exploring the potential of the archive.

For educators

We develop educational offerings as well as supporting teachers and other educators in the work they do. Our approach centers on historico-political learning, multi-perspective education and cultivating a vibrant culture of remembrance.

In the area of education, the Arolsen Archives offer:

- Workshops for educators
- Teaching materials
- Supervision for learning groups
- Advice and support for educational projects and memorial initiatives from an archive educational perspective

#StolenMemory: a campaign and exhibition

In the Arolsen Archives, there are nearly 2,500 personal effects from concentration camps: pocket watches and wristwatches, rings, wallets, family photos, everyday items such as combs, powder compacts or razors, etc. Often they were the last remaining belongings of the victims of Nazi persecution, the things they had with them at the time of their arrest by the National Socialists. They belonged to people from more than 30 countries — many of them from Poland and the former Soviet Union.

In 2016, the Archives launched a campaign to return these stolen memories to as many relatives as possible. The #StolenMemory exhibition uses large posters to convey what it really means to return personal possessions to families, and at the same time it also appeals for people to help. Since then, more than 400 families have had the personal belongings of their loved ones returned to them — along with their memories of the victims of Nazi persecution.

The “Every Name Counts” Crowdsourcing project

Kommentiert [KK1]: Bitte übersetzen

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The history of the Arolsen Archives

Under the Nazi dictatorship from 1933 to 1945, millions of people were deported and murdered. In order to search for missing persons and clarify their fates, one of the largest archives on Nazi crimes was founded: In January 1946, the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) moved the Central Tracing Office to Arolsen. On July 1, 1947, the mandate was handed over to the IRO (International Refugee Organization). The name of the bureau was changed to "International Tracing Service" on January 1, 1948. While the Allies had monitored the work of the ITS in the first few years, this mandate was taken over by an International Commission in 1955. On behalf of the Commission, the ITS was managed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) until December 2012.

In 2013, Prof. Dr. Rebecca Boehling, a US American historian, was the first Director appointed by the International Commission. As of January 2016, the director is Floriane Azoulay, a French native and human rights expert.

Research, education, and the preservation of the documents for future generations: these are new tasks that have been added through the years. Coinciding with the publication of the new online archive in the spring of 2019, the institution changed its name from International Tracing Service to Arolsen Archives – International Center on Nazi Persecution.

The work of the institution is financed by the Federal Republic of Germany. The International Commission still oversees the work of the Arolsen Archives on behalf of former victims of persecution today. It is made up of government representatives from the eleven member states: Belgium, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, United States of America.