

# Two minutes of silence across nations sound importance of Holocaust Remembrance March

“

Andrzej Duda of Poland”

Sirens wailed for two minutes across continents as millions joined in a moment of silence during the shrill wailing to remember the six million Jews who died during the Holocaust and the world watched as Presidents from several countries stood together in a day of remembrance. Fewer and fewer survivors from the Holocaust are still living making it imperative that nations remember the horror inflicted on Jews during World War II.



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Auschwitz and Birkenau, hoping to put recent tensions behind them. (file photo – Associated Press)

The presidents of Israel and Poland joined thousands of others Thursday for a Holocaust remembrance event at the former Nazi death camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau, hoping to put recent tensions behind them.

Presidents Reuven Rivlin of Israel and Andrzej Duda of Poland lit candles, bowed their heads and pressed their hands on the Death Wall, a site at Auschwitz where inmates, chiefly Polish resistance fighters, were executed by Nazi German forces during World War II.

In Jerusalem, Israelis stood still for a full two minutes on Thursday for a nationwide moment of silence in remembrance of the 6 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust, as a two-minute siren wailed across the country and the nation paid respects to those systematically killed by Nazi Germany and its collaborators in World War II.

As every year on Holocaust Remembrance Day, buses and cars halted on streets and highways and Israelis stepped out of their vehicles, standing with heads bowed in solemn remembrance, however, there are those who worry that the horror of the Holocaust is fading from the memories of the living as those who directly experienced the genocide.

“Never forget,” has been the rallying cry for seven decades of the Holocaust Remembrance Movement, but a [survey released on Thursday by the Claims Conference](#), found a significant loss of basic knowledge about the Holocaust in the United States, especially in the demographic of Millennials. “Only 51% of Millennials could name one of the 40,000 camps or ghettos that were formed during the Holocaust... even though the majority of the Americans surveyed believed that something as

The survey found there are critical gaps both in awareness of basic facts as well as detailed knowledge of the Holocaust, and there is a broad-based consensus that schools must be responsible for providing comprehensive Holocaust education. In addition, a significant majority of American adults believe that fewer people care about the Holocaust today than they used to, and more than half of Americans believe that the Holocaust could happen again.



Pictured: Hungarian Jews on the selection ramp at Auschwitz. Those who were not deemed "fit for work" were immediately sent to the gas chambers. Photo: Yad Vashem, from the Auschwitz Album

**Major findings of the survey include:**

- Seven out of ten Americans (70 percent) say fewer people seem to care about the Holocaust than they used to
- A majority of Americans (58 percent) believe something like the Holocaust could happen again

A task force led by Claims Conference Board was comprised of Holocaust survivors as well as representatives from museums, educational institutions, and leading nonprofits in the field of Holocaust education such as: Yad Vashem, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Claims Conference, American Jewish Committee, the Jewish Agency and George Washington University.

The presidents were led by thousands, including many young Jews from around the world, in the March of the Living, which takes place each year on Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day. The solemn march began at the main gate of Auschwitz and ended 3 kilometers (2 miles) away at Birkenau, where Jews from across Europe were transported by train and murdered in gas chambers. The Jews of Europe and ethnic Poles were two of the groups who suffered most during the German wartime occupation, with Jews targeted for total elimination and Poles considered a slave race. Many Poles were killed, tortured or forced into slave labor. The somber day is also marked by ceremonies and

memorials at schools and community centers. Restaurants and cafes in the ordinarily bustling streets of Tel Aviv shutter, and TV and radio stations play Holocaust-themed programs. Dignitaries laid wreaths at Yad Vashem, the national Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem.

A third of the world's Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. Israel was established afterward in 1948, and hundreds of thousands of survivors fled to the Jewish state. On Wednesday evening, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke at a Holocaust memorial ceremony at Yad Vashem and warned that archenemy Iran should not test Israel amid rising tensions in Syria.

At Birkenau, the leaders paid tribute to the immense suffering that Germany inflicted both on Jews and Poles.

Nazi Germany killed some 1.1 million people in the Auschwitz and Birkenau camps. The victims were mostly Jews, but also included Poles, Roma and Soviet POWs.

"The issue is not that people deny the Holocaust; the issue is just that it is receding from the memory," said Greg Schneider, executive president of the Claims Conference which negotiates restitution for Holocaust victims and their heirs. "People may not know the details themselves, but they still think it is important."

We as a community must continue to say, "never forget." for those we that should never be forgotten.