

For many, the Holocaust is remembered for its violent place in history. It is also remembered because similar organized, mass killings of innocent groups continue today. Specifically, the crimes committed against children and those with physical and mental disabilities in Nazi Germany, are ongoing in present-day North Korea. The need to remember the Holocaust stems from the need to provide relief to those who are currently enslaved, abused, and murdered by their government.

The term Holocaust denotes the genocide of six million Jewish Europeans and several hundred thousand Romas, communists, socialists, and disabled individuals during World War II¹. The Jewish were the primary victims as they posed the greatest "threat" to Nazi Germany. Jewish persecution was not new as anti-Semitism dates back several hundred years. Jewish communities were prejudiced for their different religion and culture. This prejudice only grew more organized and cruel under the Nazi regime.

Two years prior to the Holocaust, Nazi Germany launched its "euthanasia" program. In August 1939, Phillip Bouhler and Karl Brandt laid the foundation for what would evolve into T4 gassing institutions and concentration camps. Under their guidance, all physicians had to record any German infants or toddlers with mental or physical handicaps. These children were taken from their parents and placed in special wards, where many were starved or murdered. Though initially only the young were targeted, the operation quickly expanded to include children and young adults.² The idea of ridding the state of unwanted and "inferior" beings would spiral into the ghettos and labor camps organized under Hitler.

Jewish Ghettos were first organized in 1939 in Poland where "Jew streets" were blocked off by thick, concrete walls and barbed wire. Historically, ghettos were "the

¹ "The Holocaust" [ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org), March 16, 2010, March 26, 2010.
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005143>.

²"The Holocaust" [ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org), March 16, 2010, March 26, 2010.
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005143>, 16.

scene of repeated pogroms and massacres, but it permitted (Jewish) survival."³ Under Nazi Germany, however, the conditions of ghettos were even more tragic. Everyone over ten years of age had to wear yellow badges so that "true" Germans could identify them. Jewish students were prohibited from attending German schools and they remained in their ghettos where malnutrition and diseases were rampant. The Nazis were "uninterested in the physical well-being of its Jewish subjects."⁵ At the end of the war, inhabitants were transported to camps to remove evidence of abuse.

Established in 1933, the Dachau concentration camp initially housed only political prisoners. However, camps, like the euthanasia program and ghettos, would later expand to facilitate the extermination.⁶ Killing Jewish children was a preventative measure to eradicate the Jewish population. When Jewish children were born in death camps, most were murdered right away. Some children were used as medical test subjects and a small lucky few remained undiscovered.

Despite the danger, one organization did try to save the children. Kindertransport, a secret rescue campaign from 1938 to 1940, moved Jewish children to safe havens located in Great Britain. Though it was just one effort to rescue innocents prior to the end of war, Kindertransport is recognized for having saved about 10,000 Jewish children.⁷

³ Katz, Steven T. *The holocaust in Historical Context*, vol 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc, 1994.

⁴ "Holocaust Badges" [iewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://www.iewishvirtuallibrary.org), 2010, March 27, 2010, <http://www.iewishvirtuallibrary.org/Resource/Holocaust/badRes.html>.

⁵ Katz, Steven T. *The holocaust in Historical Context*, vol 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc, 1994. 200

⁶ Florida Center for Instructional Technology, College of Education, University of Florida, "A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust—The Camps," fcit.usf.edu, 2005, March 22, 2010, <http://fcit.usf.edu/HOLOCAUST/TIMELINE/camps.htm>.

⁷ The Kindertransport Association, March 26, 2010, <http://www.kindertransport.org>.

It would not be until after the end of war, that the truth about Nazi atrocities would be made known. The horrific reality of the abuse and murder of minorities would make necessary universal declarations of rights for humans and children.

The young United Nations drafted documents detailing the need for prevention of and punishment for genocide. Lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, pioneered this declaration and further encouraged conventions ensuring rights.⁸ In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly declared the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was motivated by the brutality of the Holocaust; it claimed equal rights for humans despite cultural, gender, racial, religious or national differences⁹ Basic rights for children were also outlined. In 1959, the declaration of children's rights was accepted as the World Child Welfare Charter. In 1989, the U.N. also specified children's rights in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹⁰

Though the international community responded with force at the end and punished those who were most responsible¹¹, there were simply too many victims. The acceptance of these declarations and the understanding that these rights should be protected needs to be reflected upon again. These conventions were inspired by the Holocaust tragedies but they remain relevant today as abuse in North Korea continues.

⁸"Key Writings of Raphael Lemkin on Genocide/"[preventgenocide.org](http://www.preventgenocide.org), November 13, 2002, March 23, 2010, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/lemkin/>.

⁹ United Nations, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights," [un.org](http://www.un.org), March 27, 2010, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.

¹⁰ UNICEF, "Convention on the Rights of the Child," [unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org), August 26, 2008, March 27, 2010. <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

¹¹ Under, Douglas O., "The Nuremberg Trials: Chronology," [Famous Trials](http://www.famous-trials.com), 2010, University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, March 26, 2010, <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/nuremberg/NurembergChronology.html>

The division of Korea was first discussed by the U.S., China, and the Soviet Union at the Cairo Conference in 1943.¹² When Japan was stripped of its colonies, it lost Korea and both the Soviet Union and the U.S. agreed to occupy and prepare it for independence. North Korea was administrated by the Soviet Union and South Korea received aid from the United States. This was the beginning of divergent governments and to the Korean War in 1950, which resulted in little more than a tense stand-off.¹³ While the South has since developed into a global competitor, the North has not. Instead, the North has become an oppressive and impoverished state suffering from food shortages and a paranoid dictator, Jong-Il Kim; it is the world's worst violator of human rights today.¹⁴

Though not much is publicly known about North Korean society, there are accounts of abuse and organized killings that mirror those of the Holocaust. Similar to the concentration camps of Nazi Germany, North Korean camps house "political threats" and "inferior" beings. There is one camp in particular, camp 22, from which reports of gas chambers and human experimentation exist.¹⁵ While difficult to prove that camp 22 is like Auschwitz, it is understood from certain accounts that at minimum, it is comparable to Nazi camps like Buchenwald and Mauthausen.¹⁶

¹² "The Cairo Conference", *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 2009, [Questiaschool.com](http://www.questiaschool.com), March 23, 2010, <http://www.questiaschool.com/read/117009104>, 2009.

¹³ "The Korean War: The Forgotten War", March 25, 2010, <http://library.thinkquest.org/10826/korea.htm>.

¹⁴ Ahn, Byung-Joon, "The Man Who Would be Kim", November 1994, March 27, 2010, <http://www.istor.org/stable/20046931>.

¹⁵ Barnett, Antony, "Revealed: the gas chamber horror of North Korea's gulag", [guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), February 1, 2004, March 20, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/feb/01/northkorea>.

¹⁶ Stanton, Joshua. "North Korea's Largest Concentration Camps on Google Earth," March 28, 2010, <http://freakorea.us/camps>.

Even more disturbing are reports that North Korea uses its handicapped children as tests subjects - The regime supports the use of human test subjects as it is for the purpose of advancing its biochemical weapons program. Witness to several human subject experiments, Sang-hun Kim said that "Human experimentation is a widespread practice," especially on children who are mentally or physically sick.

With reports of concentration camps and human experimentation on those deemed "threatening" and "treasonous" for their different political and religious beliefs, North Korea exercises many of the atrocities of the Nazi regime. Similar to the Nazi extermination of disabled children, the North Korean government fails to acknowledge the value of their lives. Moreover, the use of camps and organized segregation from the rest of society draws additional parallels between the two regimes. The situation in North Korea demands the world's reflection on the horrors of the Holocaust and the purpose of the declarations about universal rights, particularly those of children.

It is imperative that we remember the Holocaust for two reasons. ¹⁷First, we must think of the atrocities allowed by ignorance so that the Holocaust crimes do not occur in the future. Second, we must remember the lessons in order to effectively address the urgent issue of abuse in North Korea. As the North Korean dictatorship remains unchecked, this new generation is witness to atrocities mirroring those of the Holocaust. It is because such horrific acts still exist, that Holocaust remembrance is as important as ever.

Applebaum, Anne, "Auschwitz Under Our Noses", [washinRtonpost.com](http://www.washinRtonpost.com), February 4, 2004, March 28, 2010, <http://www.washinRtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A10791-2004Feb3.html>.

Works Cited

- Ahn, Byung-joon. "The Man Who Would Be Kim." *Council on Foreign Relations Vol. 73, No.6.* (1994): 94-108. Web. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20046931>>.
- Applebaum, Anne. "Auschwitz Under Our Noses". The Washington Post. 4 February. 2004. Web. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/AI0791-2004Feb3.html>>
- Barnett, Antony. "Revealed: the gas chamber horror of North Korea's gulag" *The Observers.* 1 February, 2004. Web. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/feb/01/northkorea>>
- "Cairo Conference." *The Columbia Encyclopedia.* 6th ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. Web. <<http://www.questiaschool.com/read/117009104>>.
- Florida Center for Instructional Technology, college of education. *A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust : The Ghettos.* University of South Carolina, Web. <<http://fcit.usf.edu/HOLOCAUST/TIMELiNE/ghettoes.htm>>.
- Holocaust Memorial Center. *Jewish Virtual Library: Holocaust badges.* MI, Web . <<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/badges.html>>
- Katz, Steven T. *The holocaust in Historical Context,* vol 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc, 1994. Print.
- Linder, Douglas O. *The Nuremburg Trials: Chronology.* University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, Web. <<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/nuremberg/NurembergChronology.html>>
- Prevent Genocide International. *Key Writings of Raphael Lemkin on Genocide,* 23 Oct. 2003. Web. <<http://www.preventgenocide.org/lemkin/>>. Stanton, Joshua. "North Korea's Largest concentration camps on Google Earth". <<http://freekorea.us/camps>>.

"The Holocaust." *Holocaust Encyclopedia*. Washington D.C: United States Memorial Museum,

16 March. 2010. Web. <<http://www.ushmm.org/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=100>

05143>. The Kindertransport Association. Web. <<http://www.kindertransport.org>>.

"The Korean War: The Forgotten War". Web. <<http://library.thinkquest.org/10826/korea.htm>>

UNICEF. Convention on the Rights of the child, 26 August, 2008. Web.

<<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>>. United Nations. The Universal

Declaration of Human Rights, 2010. Web.

<<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>>.