

# Edinburgh MP encourages you to remember Holocaust Memorial Day



by Mark Lazarowicz, MP for Edinburgh North & Leith.

As every year I will be supporting Holocaust Memorial Day by signing the Book of Commitment at the House of Commons and reaffirming my determination to fight discrimination and bigotry in our own society today.

Holocaust Memorial Day marks the liberation of Auschwitz on 27 January 1945, and as the number of survivors decreases further each year the responsibility for us to keep alive the memory of what they suffered grows ever greater.

This year's theme is **Speak Up, Speak Out** and asks us to reflect on our duty to speak up when we see or hear something which we believe to be wrong. In doing so we can learn from the Holocaust and other genocides over the last century and draw inspiration from those who had the courage take a stand against injustice and hatred in the past.

Extermination camps like Auschwitz where people were systematically murdered were set up after 1940, but the persecution of German Jews began as soon as the Nazis came to power.

Jewish people were forced to wear a yellow star, forced out of their jobs and their children excluded from mixed schools, their businesses were expropriated or picketed by Nazis, and marriages between Jews and Non-Jews were made illegal.

It wasn't only Jews though that the Nazis targeted: political opponents, Roma, homosexuals, and the disabled were all persecuted. The German Protestant pastor, Martin Niemoller, famously said:-

"First they came for the Communists, but I was not a Communist so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Socialists and the Trade Unionists, but I was neither, so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Jews, but I was not a Jew so I did not speak out. And when they came for me, there was no one left to speak out for me."

Of course, those who must be held primarily responsible for crimes against humanity are those who commit them, and the existence of the International Criminal Court is thankfully now beginning to ensure that they do not escape justice.

We often use terms like the 'international community' but that is composed of any number of individuals in government offices or in the field faced with decisions on which many people's lives depend. Standing up against prejudice or persecution is not easy whoever we are, but unless we do the danger is that it can lead to the terror and slaughter of the Holocaust.

Survivors now in their 80s and 90s still have to live with

terrible memories of lost loved ones and the brutality to which they were subjected. They cannot forget and for their sake we must ensure that the world does not either.

It took the form of forcing Jewish people to wear a yellow star, barring Jewish children from mixed schools, expropriating Jewish businesses and making marriages between Jews and Non-Jews illegal. Books were burned and the Nazis relentlessly produced anti-semitic propaganda.

I would urge you to find out more about this subject by reading for example [Jonathan Freedland's article 'Safe House' in The Guardian.](#)