

# Get Involved Guide for trade unions



HOLOCAUST  
MEMORIAL  
DAY TRUST

*Learning from genocide -  
for a better future*

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) is held on 27 January each year and thousands of events and activities take place around the country on or around this date. What will your trade union do?

## Your trade union and Holocaust Memorial Day

When Hitler came to power in 1933, trade unionists were amongst the first groups to be targeted for persecution by the Nazi regime. Their values were at odds with the Nazi vision of an authoritarian state, and in May 1933 all German trade unions were shut down. Their leaders were arrested and sent to concentration camps, including Gustav Schiefer, who was imprisoned at Dachau and testified against the Nazis after the war.

Today, trade union members continue to speak out and combat hatred, prejudice and discrimination. Holocaust Memorial Day offers trade unionists a great opportunity to continue to do their part to create a safer, better future by learning the lessons of the past.



*'We bore witness, and still bear witness today, for human dignity and justice.'*

**Gustav Schiefer, former Chairman of the Munich Branch of the German Trade Union Association**

## Example activities



### Wolverhampton

David Cole, President of Wolverhampton, Bilston and District Trades Union Council addresses an HMD event in Wolverhampton.

Image: © Wolverhampton Council

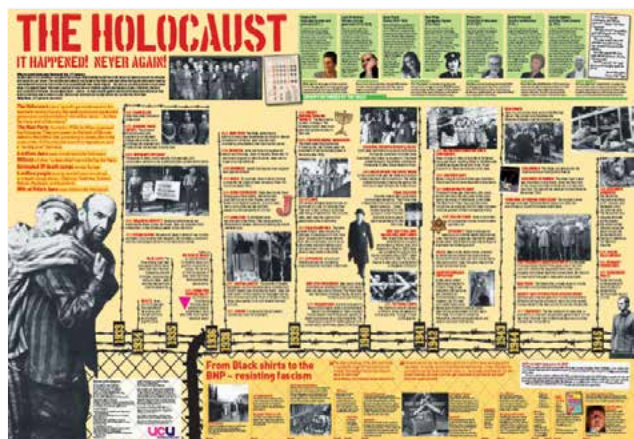
*'Trade unions have a long and proud history of opposing fascism, racism and antisemitism. We must never forget - and will never forget - the evils they have unleashed. Or turn our backs on those who flee from them or who are persecuted for opposing them. As we reflect on this on Holocaust Memorial Day, the trade union movement will also recommit itself to equality, dignity and respect for all working people, from all backgrounds.'*

**Paul Nowak, General Secretary, TUC**

## Ideas and resources

- Large-scale acts of genocide such as those committed by the Nazis during the Holocaust required the control and use of extensive transport and other infrastructure, and the complicity of those who operated it, including railway officials, train guards and civil servants. You may wish to reflect on the way in which the dismantling of organised labour helped pave the way for an authoritarian regime to carry out industrial-scale murder.
- For many trade union members, Holocaust Memorial Day is an opportunity to highlight and celebrate their ongoing antifascist work and other campaigns against hatred and discrimination.
- Invite a speaker to talk about Holocaust or anti-fascist issues to your January branch meeting.
- It is not always possible to invite a survivor to speak at your HMD activity, but you can still include their experiences by reading a life story: [hmd.org.uk/lifestories](http://hmd.org.uk/lifestories), playing a podcast: [hmd.org.uk/podcast](http://hmd.org.uk/podcast) or showing a film of a survivor speaking: [hmd.org.uk/films](http://hmd.org.uk/films). For more information on inviting survivor speakers visit: [hmd.org.uk/speakers](http://hmd.org.uk/speakers).
- Add survivor life stories or other articles from our website, such as Esther Brunstein, whose father was a trade union leader murdered by the Nazis, to your branch website, newsletter or intranet: [hmd.org.uk/estherbrunstein](http://hmd.org.uk/estherbrunstein).
- Forge international links with trade unions in countries affected by genocide.
- Encourage your union to promote HMD to branches and members – PCS, Unison and UCU feature HMD on their websites and encourage members to organise commemorations.
- Create a display in your place of work, perhaps combining the posters and images freely available on our website with your own material to make the link between the Holocaust and contemporary issues of discrimination: [hmd.org.uk/posters](http://hmd.org.uk/posters).
- Order our free 'About HMD' booklets – these handout booklets provide a simple way for individuals to find out more about the Holocaust, genocide and the importance of HMD: [hmd.org.uk/handouts](http://hmd.org.uk/handouts).
- Light up your building in purple to 'light the darkness' on 27 January: [hmd.org.uk/lightthedarkness](http://hmd.org.uk/lightthedarkness)
- Raise the profile of your event by working with or inviting your local MP. Download our template letter here: [hmd.org.uk/mpletter](http://hmd.org.uk/mpletter)

**Tell us about your activity and become part of the bigger picture of HMD across the UK:**  
[hmd.org.uk/letusknow](http://hmd.org.uk/letusknow)



The University and College Union produces resources for HMD like this wallchart © UCU

*'Holocaust Memorial Day is such an important day not only in reminding us of the historical battles against persecution and hatred, but in teaching us that any form of discrimination in society must be challenged and defeated. With the rise in reported hate crimes, as trade unionists, we must lead the way in challenging any form of prejudice and encourage others to speak out and stand for zero tolerance to any kind of racial violence and abuse.'*

**Harish Patel**  
**National Officer for Equalities, Unite**

## Organising an online or hybrid event

Online and hybrid events can provide an opportunity to include a wider range of speakers and to reach people who might not normally attend your event. Things to think about if you are running an online event:

- Download a virtual event platform which has all the features you will need and make sure speakers are familiar with it.
- If your event is hybrid, make sure you have all necessary equipment so online attendees can hear and see speakers clearly.
- Consider audience participation tools, such as Q&A, poll and chat functions and assign a moderator to oversee this.
- For more ideas, look through our **virtual resources** ([hmd.org.uk/virtualresource](https://hmd.org.uk/virtualresource)) and read our detailed guide to running an **online HMD event**.



## Sensitivity guidance

Events and activities exploring the Holocaust and other genocides can be complex and daunting and may cause distress unless handled sensitively. Please remember the following guidelines:

- Do ensure your content is age and audience appropriate.
- Do not use graphic images to shock audiences.
- Do not ask audiences to imagine themselves in the shoes of victims or perpetrators.
- Put relevant personal testimonies at the heart of your activities.

For more information go to [hmd.org.uk/sensitive-content](https://hmd.org.uk/sensitive-content) and [hmd.org.uk/educationguidelines](https://hmd.org.uk/educationguidelines).



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