

# Take Action – an activity for Holocaust Memorial Day



HOLOCAUST  
MEMORIAL  
DAY TRUST

This activity is suitable for use by **secondary schools, young people** and **HMD activity organisers**.

Read one or more of the case studies provided about people affected by the Holocaust and genocide who took action to make a change. We learn about the Holocaust and genocide because they are important moments in history, and what we learn motivates us to take action today to put an end to prejudice, discrimination, identity-based violence and genocide. By the end of this activity you will have made a plan about what action you and your group can take to make a positive change in your community.

This activity can be run with different groups by making the following adaptations:

## Secondary schools

Discuss one or more of these case studies in a History, RE or Citizenship lesson, or across a series of tutor times. Make a plan of action for your class to take on as a project.

## Young people

Get together a group of people from your school, college, university or youth group and share the case studies. What change can you make in society?

## HMD activity organisers

Share one or more of these case studies at your event. Have break-out sessions or organise a pledge tree for people to plan the action they will take.



## Activity: Take Action

### Introduction to Holocaust Memorial Day

As the activity organiser, explain to your group what HMD is:

Each year on 27 January we mark Holocaust Memorial Day, to remember:

- the six million Jewish people who were systematically persecuted and murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust
- the Nazis' other victims, including Roma and Sinti people, disabled people, gay people, political opponents and many others who faced persecution and death at the hands of the Nazis
- the millions of men, women and children, who have been murdered in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur

In this session we are going to learn more about these events, discover the experiences of people who were affected, and be inspired to take action.

Genocide does not come from nowhere. It is a process that begins with prejudice and discrimination. Genocides are still happening around the world today, and it is up to all of us to stand up against prejudice in our society today, to make the world a safer place for all.

## Step one:

How can people enact real change in their societies? Choose one or more of the case studies at the end of this document to read together.

Learn about:

- The Chug Chaluzi Jewish resistance group through the story of Gad Beck, a young, gay, Jewish man who led a youth resistance movement in Nazi Berlin.
- Kemal Pervanić (pronounced per-van-itch), who was persecuted in Bosnia for being a Muslim, and is now working to bridge ethnic divides that still exist between Bosnia's young people.
- Sudanese peaceful protesters standing up against the genocidal government that has maintained power for 30 years, rejecting years of indoctrination, repression and fear.

**Pronunciation notes:** Both 'ch's in Chug Chaluzi are pronounced as a breathy 'h' sound. The z in Chaluzi is a 'ts' sound, so it is 'Hug Ha-loot-si'.

## Step two:

Discuss the case studies using the questions below as a starting point:

- What motivated this person/these people?
- What change did they want to see?
- What actions did they take?
- What obstacles did/do they face?
- What were the risks of taking action?
- What were the benefits of taking action?
- Were they successful?

## Step three:

Make a plan. What can we do to make the world a better place today? Discuss:

- Who is discriminated against or persecuted because of their identity in British society today?
- Are there any groups in your local community who face prejudice or hatred?
- What practical steps can you take to help? This might include raising awareness, building relationships, finding ways to make people stop and think.

Some ideas of actions you could take:

- Share the life stories you have learnt about on HMD.
- Spread the word about situations at risk of genocide and identity-based violence around the world, in person and online.
- Research situations in the UK and the wider world that need your help – what can you do?  
For example:  
Raise money, promote your cause, do a collection of clothes or toiletries for people in need, sign petitions, write letters, go on or organise a march.

## Step four:

Please tell us about your activity! This helps us to measure the reach of HMD, and evaluate the success of particular resources and projects.

You can do this by emailing [education@hmd.org.uk](mailto:education@hmd.org.uk), or adding your activity to our map – [hmd.org.uk/letusknow](https://hmd.org.uk/letusknow)

If you are taking action on social media, please tag us in your post:



@HMD\_UK



HMD.UK

Find out more...

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust: [hmd.org.uk](https://hmd.org.uk)  
Discover resources for educators and other materials for  
your activities: [hmd.org.uk/resources](https://hmd.org.uk/resources)

## Gad Beck and the Chug Chaluzi resistance group

Despite being both gay and Jewish, Gad Beck managed to survive the entire duration of Nazi rule living in Berlin. He made the decision to actively resist Nazi Persecution, assuming a leading role in the Chug Chaluzi (pronounced Hug Ha-loot-si) Jewish resistance group.

He was born in Berlin in 1923 and had a twin sister called Margot. His father was a Jewish immigrant from Austria and his mother had converted to Judaism.

Gad was nine when the Nazis took power in 1933. Over the next few years he was forced to leave school and his family had to move from their home into a poorer part of the city designated for Jews. The clothes shop Gad worked in was vandalised during *Kristallnacht* – a night of violent attacks on Jewish people, businesses and Synagogues in November 1938.

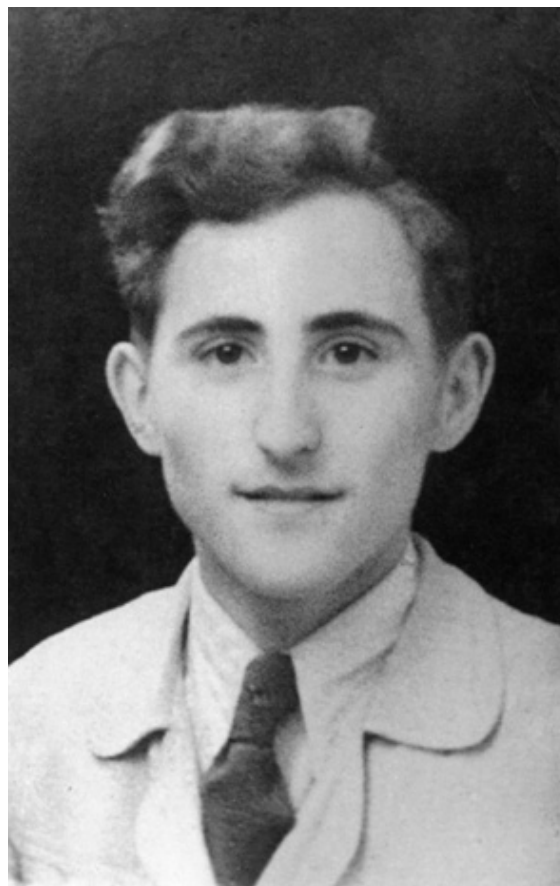
This persecution led Gad to fully embrace his Jewish identity, and he connected with Zionist activists in the city. Through this network, they received warnings from Switzerland not to comply with Nazi orders to 'migrate' on the transports to the east, because this would actually take them to their deaths.

The Nazis began deporting Jewish people from Berlin in September 1941. The Beck family were defined as *mischlinge* (pronounced mish-ling-a) (people with mixed Jewish/ non-Jewish background) so were not targeted at this stage.

Gad had begun a relationship with Manfred Lewin. Both of Manfred's parents were classified as Jewish by the Nazis, and his whole family received the order to be deported in 1942. In a risky attempt to save Manfred, Gad borrowed a Hitler Youth uniform and persuaded the assembly camp commander that he needed Manfred for a short time. The lovers walked out together, but Manfred explained to Gad that he was unable to leave his family. Manfred returned to the detention centre, to deportation, and to death at Auschwitz.

By 1943 most of Berlin's Jews had been deported, and Gad and other *mischlinge* were at risk. Gad was arrested and held at Rosenstrasse (a Jewish community centre occupied by Nazi police) for several days, but escaped deportation thanks to protests by some of the wives and family members of the men held there. Gad stepped up his resistance activities and took a leading role in Chug Chaluzi, a Jewish resistance group. Between 1943–45, the group supported an estimated 50 Jews in hiding. Gad arranged safe houses, delivered money, and assisted Jews in attempts to escape Germany.

Gad was betrayed and arrested by the SS in March 1945. He was liberated from prison by the Red Army on 24 April 1945. His parents and twin sister had also survived the war in Berlin.



© Estate of Gad Beck,  
from gad-beck.de

## Kemal Pervanić and Most Mira

**Kemal was persecuted in Bosnia for being Muslim. In 1992 Bosnian Serb forces imprisoned Kemal and his brother in the notorious Omarska concentration camp. He survived and now runs Most Mira, a charity building bridges between divided communities in rural North West Bosnia.**

Kemal and his family were Muslims who lived in Kevljani in Bosnia. Life was relatively peaceful for Kemal and his family until 1992, when he was 24 years old. The former Yugoslavia began to fall apart, and as this happened political groups began to form which were based on ethnicity.

Kemal's school and community had been made up of Serb and Muslim people who worked and studied together. However, when the new authorities came into power they began targeting the Muslim population. Along with his middle brother Kasim, Kemal was forced to live in a concentration camp in Omarska. His mum was sent to a separate camp and his dad and eldest brother fled to Croatia.



Kemal and Kasim were imprisoned in atrocious conditions with little water or food. The camps had been created for all men and boys over the age of 12 and the guards were made up of the Serb members of the community of the surrounding villages and towns. This meant that some of the guards in the camps were the neighbours and fellow students of Kemal and Kasim.

Kemal and Kasim survived the camps, and they came to the UK shortly after they were released. With the help of the British Red Cross, they were able to bring the rest of their family to the UK and they were all reunited within about 9 months of Kemal's arrival. Kemal has resided in the UK ever since.

In 2008, Kemal established the charity Most Mira, which means 'Bridge of Peace'. It works to bring together children and young people to learn new skills, make friends across ethnicities, and celebrate diversity in the Prijedor area, in northern Bosnia Herzegovina. The Omarska concentration camp was in this area, and there is still widespread denial about what happened there.

Most Mira runs youth arts festivals, theatre workshops and peace building visits and tours. Kemal and the other trustees are committed to address the ethnic segregation of young people in the region, who still go to segregated schools and have few opportunities to meet. They aim to prevent anything like the genocide Kemal lived through from happening again.

## Protesters in Sudan

In mid-December 2018, peaceful protests began against the Sudanese government. The President at the time was Omar Al Bashir, who had been in power for almost 30 years, and had overseen the Genocide in Darfur, and atrocities in other regions of Sudan.

Al Bashir came to power in a military coup in 1989. In 2003 two Darfuri rebel groups launched a rebellion against the Sudanese Government. Al Bashir reacted by arming militia groups – the

*Janjaweed* (which translates as ‘devils on horseback’) – to attack black African people in Darfur who were perceived to be supportive of the rebels. Through the Janjaweed raids thousands of villages were destroyed, hundreds of thousands of people murdered, and millions forced to flee their homes.

On 12 July 2010, the International Criminal Court (the ICC) issued indictments against the President of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir for three counts of genocide. However, he remained at large and in power. Despite saying they would disarm the *Janjaweed* militia, the Sudanese Government have employed them as ‘Rapid Support Forces’ (RSF), and they continue to attack civilians in the Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile regions.

Protests began in December 2018, partly as a result of the atrocities committed but also in response to bad governance, lack of democracy, restriction of people’s human rights, food shortages and rising prices. Over several months they gained momentum and support with the masses calling for justice, equality, peace and freedom. Women and young people joined the movement. For decades women have been repressed in Sudanese society, and denied equal rights with men. Young people have rejected indoctrination they have received throughout their education to protest for a new, fair and just society in Sudan.

Since the protests began, the Sudanese government and their militia have been reportedly responsible for killings, disappearances of people, harassment, sexual violence and detaining peaceful protesters. This did not deter the protesters despite the dangers they faced for simply speaking out.

On 11 April 2019, Omar Al Bashir was removed from the office of President. At the time of writing this resource, the next steps for Sudan are unclear, but protesters are committed to keep fighting until there is a democratically elected, civilian government.



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**‘I believe that all the people in Sudan, no matter their ideology, want a more tolerant community towards different religions, ethnicities, backgrounds, as well as a stronger economy, a more transparent government and peace within the borders.’**

Yasser Awad, 24-year-old protester