

JOINT STATEMENT ON HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY 2023

By AMSA Austria, bvmd Germany, and SloMSA
Slovakia, 27.01.2023

On the 27th of January 2023 we mark the 78th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi Concentration Camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. On this day, as members of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA), we join people from nations around the world to commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day by remembering the genocide of 6 million European Jews and 220 000 - 500 000 Roma and Sinti¹ as well as the mass murder of Slavs, disabled persons, LGBTQ+ individuals, and many others, who were persecuted aside from Shoah and Porajmos. The term Shoah, from the Hebrew שואה meaning calamity or destruction, refers specifically to the murder of European Jews by the Nazis. Porajmos, from Romani "devouring", refers to the Romani genocide during the holocaust era.²

As future doctors we have a special responsibility to make sure we never forget what happened. Healthcare professionals were complicit in the murder and persecution, provided justification and the skills needed to carry out the mass murder.

Gas chamber technology was first developed by physicians in hospitals during the *Aktion T4* Euthanasia programme. Medical professionals also conducted "studies" on prisoners in concentration camps for scientific purposes such as the physiological impact of high altitude, freezing temperatures, drinking seawater, vaccinations against typhus and infectious jaundice and the development of sterilisation techniques, thereby

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¹ <https://www.mdr.de/geschichte/ns-zeit/zweiter-weltkrieg/voelkermord-holocaust-sinti-roma-zigeunerlager-auschwitz-porajmos-100.html>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_the_Holocaust

maiming and killing thousands of their “subjects” with extreme cruelty. A lot of medical knowledge, that we still draw on today, was gained from unethical and atrocious methods.³

Unfortunately, those events are not as long-past as we would like them to be. Holocaust denial, racism and antisemitism are gaining popularity all over the world. In many countries far-right parties are winning elections. Once again, people are using pseudo-scientific claims to back up their antisemitic and racist opinions, often denying evidence-based medicine, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the efficacy of vaccines. Doctors and medical staff also fall victim to these conspiracy theories, thereby giving them further credibility.

Hence, it is ever more important to address antisemitism, racism and pseudoscience in the medical curricula. We are no less vulnerable to the same prejudices than we were in 1933. Doctors are often unaware of the difficulties that people from different marginalised communities face and this can affect our work. If we want to ensure that Jewish people, Roma and Sinti and all other marginalised groups can live in peace and prosperity we need to be mindful of their specific concerns and their history with the medical community.

We honour and mourn all lives that were lost during the Holocaust and fights to make sure something like this will never happen again. We commend all NMOs around the world for participating in the fight against racism and antisemitism and keeping the memory alive. We urge all of our fellow IFMSA members to reflect on ways in which we can individually and collectively do our part and stand up against all forms of discrimination. It is the responsibility of all of us to prevent abominations like these from happening again and to preserve the memory of all those affected.

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³ <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/why-we-must-teach-medical-students-about-role-physicians-during-holocaust>