

Kristallnacht testimonies: the pogrom

On the night of 9th–10th November 1938, Jewish communities across Germany and Austria were attacked in an event known as Kristallnacht. At least 91 people were murdered and many others committed suicide. These are the memories of some German and Austrian Jews who experienced Kristallnacht.

Fritz Rodeck, Vienna

There were more than twenty large synagogues in Vienna, not to mention the far more numerous smaller ones. The destruction was the work of a few hours... In the case of each of these synagogue burnings, the fire brigade was called in, but not to put out the fire... [they] were there merely to prevent the fire from spreading to neighbouring buildings.



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Susan Sinclair, Nuremberg

My younger sister and I shared a big room and I saw that her bed was full of glass and that everything had been smashed and the furniture was turned upside down. Then they pulled me out of bed and tore my nightdress to shreds and I was so self-conscious as a fifteen year old... Then they started smashing up the rest of the place... Then they left to smash up somebody else's house. It was then that life as I had known it, stopped

Freddie Knoller, Vienna

Suddenly we heard a woman's shrill voice, a screaming voice, and we heard the glass of a window breaking. We heard a thud in the courtyard. We looked down and saw a body lying there. We didn't know who it was until the woman, Mrs Epstein from the first floor, came running into the courtyard, screaming and going to her husband's body.



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Siegfried Rose, Borna

They broke down the bolted apartment door and threatened us with their revolvers, forcing us to unlock the entrance doors [to the family shop] and open all the shutters and windows. All the display windows were immediately smashed and the goods pulled out. Meanwhile, my uncle and I were held in the store and beaten with a broken chair until we both had bloody heads.

Hedy Epstein, Kippenheim

[At school the next day] the principal walked in and he gave a long talk – ... at some point while he was talking he pointed his finger at me and said, 'Get out you dirty Jew.' I heard what he said but I could not believe it. How could this nice man, this gentle man whose daughter was one of my classmates, how could he have said that?

Testimonies from: Uta Gerhardt & Thomas Karlauf (eds.), *The Night of Broken Glass: Eyewitness Accounts of Kristallnacht* (Polity Press, 2012); Lyn Smith (ed.), *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust* (Ebury Press, 2005); Anthony Read & David Fisher, *Kristallnacht. Unleashing the Holocaust* (Michael Joseph, 1989)



Kristallnacht testimonies: the camps

On the night of 9th–10th November 1938, Jewish communities across Germany and Austria were attacked in an event known as Kristallnacht. More than 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald or Dachau concentration camps and held there for several weeks or months. These are the memories of some of those prisoners.

Karl Schwabe, Buchenwald

We stood there all day for no apparent reason. Always lining up again, being inspected by SS men; old, ill people collapsing; beatings... On that day, we were given nothing to eat or drink. That was my first day in Buchenwald; many similar ones followed. I cannot and do not want to describe all the details. It was a series of endless physical and mental sufferings.



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Stephen Dale, Sachsenhausen

It was no picnic in Sachsenhausen... our clothing was taken and carefully marked with names; then you were given a striped uniform and marched off to a block... When we slept on the floor, each with a blanket, we couldn't lie on our backs, only sideways because there wasn't enough room... There were two roll calls a day and in that cold weather you had to stand for ages.

Kurt Lederer, Buchenwald

Ten thousand distraught, helpless people were being pumped into a camp that was already overcrowded... People were sleeping – no, my God, they couldn't sleep... they lay next to one another, on top of one another, in unfinished shacks. They couldn't wash themselves; they couldn't wash their linen... everyone in the camp got dysentery. I cannot and will not describe how people looked and stank. It was hell.

Carl Hecht, Buchenwald

I saw dead men being carried away every day; in the course of two months about a thousand people died. This was no wonder since neither doctors nor medicines were on hand. The ill were put in a wash house, got pneumonia and died. Others, if they did not die from mistreatment, committed suicide by running into the barbed wire on a daily basis.



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Georg Abraham, Sachsenhausen

Inmates who became sick were very badly treated. There was only one SS camp doctor, and he had his own special way of treating inmates with frozen hands and feet. After standing for hours in front of the sick bay, they were sent away with kicks and got another... punishment: they had to stand for six hours or more at the entrance gate.

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