

Resolution on Holocaust and Genocide Education

Adopted by the 2019 JCPA Delegates Assembly

As the Holocaust fades further into memory and the number of first-hand witnesses and survivors dwindles year after year, we are confronted with how to preserve the memory of the victims as we again repeat our mantra, “Never Again.” It has been over 70 years since World War II ended and knowledge of the Holocaust is fading. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

A Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany [survey](#) on Holocaust knowledge and awareness in the United States released in April 2018 highlights the dwindling awareness and understanding of the Holocaust.¹ According to the report, 11% of adults and over one-fifth of Millennials (22%) have not heard or are not sure if they have heard of the Holocaust. This lack of knowledge will continue unless Holocaust and genocide education becomes mandatory in every school in the United States. Despite the troubling gaps in awareness, 93% of respondents reported that they believe all students should learn about the Holocaust in school and a majority support improving the quality of Holocaust education.

Over the last several years, there has been a clear rise in hate, bigotry, and violence in our society, much of which is aimed at the Jewish community. Recently, the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) released a report which states a 17% increase in hate crimes in the United States. Of the 1,679 hate crimes motivated by religious bias, 58.1% were anti-Jewish.² Holocaust and genocide education creates more teachable moments in classes that can lead to greater compassion and understanding of the devastating effects of hate.

The time is right for legislators to pass mandatory Holocaust and genocide education in schools and promote a quality curriculum. Legislators and policymakers are alarmed by the rising hate in our society. They see neo-Nazis parading in Charlottesville chanting, “Jews will not replace us.” Recently, in Pittsburgh, the deadliest attack on Jewish people in American

¹ *Holocaust Knowledge & Awareness Study Executive Summary*. Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, April 2018.

² United States Department of Justice. Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Hate Crime Statistics, 2017*. November 2018.

history was perpetrated by a violent anti-Semite who yelled, 'All Jews must die" before opening fire and killing 11 people. Many legislators are also aware of the survey, which highlights the lack of knowledge of basic facts about the Holocaust. In addition, legislators should be made aware that many states have successfully implemented Holocaust and genocide education requirements in schools. In fact, curricula and materials are available online so any local school can implement them easily and for free.

It is not only Holocaust education that needs to be re-emphasized; the study of all modern genocides is lacking nationwide. While the Holocaust is the largest and most well-known and documented genocide in modern times, it is critical to teach the lessons of the Holocaust to help prevent other atrocities like those committed subsequent to the Holocaust, including in Darfur, Rwanda, Armenia,³ Burma (Myanmar), and others. These cases too must be studied comprehensively. Other communities that have been affected by genocide are valuable potential partners in advocating for this legislation.

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs believes that:

- The Jewish people have a special responsibility to preserve the memory of Holocaust victims and survivors and need to ensure that “Never Again” is not just a slogan but a call to action.
- While each state may face its own unique challenges, mandating Holocaust and genocide education at the state level is preferable to recommending it.
- Holocaust education is the most effective way to dispel any form of denial or doubt as to what happened.
- Holocaust education should include all modern genocides and ethnic cleansings.

³ JCPA 2015 Resolution on Armenian Genocide.

- State Holocaust Commissions, Councils, and local boards of education with Holocaust education specialists on staff have greatly contributed to the success of Holocaust education in states and localities where such commissions and specialists exist.

The Jewish community relations field should:

- Support federal legislation that strongly encourages Holocaust and genocide education.
- Advocate for state legislation or school board policy that mandates Holocaust and genocide education in middle and high school. In states where this is not feasible, communities should push for legislation that strongly recommends or encourages Holocaust and genocide education.
- Urge local school systems to adopt competent and comprehensive curricula and provide necessary funds to train educators on teaching this subject.
- Urge states to pass Holocaust and genocide education bills containing language that:
 - Encourages the use of reputable current curricula and materials from nationally-recognized organizations used by other states. These resources are online and free and, therefore, reduce the cost for schools and local municipalities;
 - Places the responsibility for funding on states, but encourages nonprofits and foundations to help raise money for the state to train teachers. This takes much of the cost away from schools and local municipalities; and
 - Measures Holocaust and genocide education by state and federal education standards.
- Advocate to elected officials for the establishment and funding of state Holocaust Commissions or Councils and local Holocaust Resource Centers, which have been an

essential component in the success of Holocaust and genocide education in states where such commissions already exist.