

## When did the American press first report on the "Final Solution"?

The American press reported Nazi violence toward Jews as early as 1933, and by 1938, published reports of anti-Jewish measures such as the Nuremberg Laws, along with other incidents of antisemitic violence, had multiplied dramatically. In 1941, as the magnitude of anti-Jewish violence increased, newspapers began running descriptions of the Nazi mass murder of Jews, some even using the word "extermination" to refer to these large-scale killings. However, it wasn't until late 1942 that the American public received official confirmation of these reports. On November 24 of that year, Rabbi Stephen Wise disclosed in a press conference that the State Department had investigated and confirmed reports about the Nazis' extermination campaign against European Jews. A few weeks later, on December 17, the United States, Britain, and ten Allied governments released a formal declaration confirming and condemning Hitler's extermination policy toward the Jews. Despite the official status of these announcements, most major dailies in the United States minimized their importance by burying them on inner pages. The *New York Times*, for example, allocated space on the front page for only the latter of these official reports, relegating Wise's press conference to page ten.

Sources: Deborah Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews* (New York: The New York Press, 1998).

"Wise Gets Confirmation: Checks with State Department on Nazis' 'Extermination Campaign,'" *New York Times*, 25 November 1942, p. 10.

"11 Allies Condemn Nazi War on Jews: United Nations Issue Joint Declaration of Protest on 'Cold-Blooded Extermination,'" *New York Times*, 18 December 1942, p. 1, 10.

## When did the United States government learn of the Nazis' systematic attempts to kill all of European Jewry?

Though intelligence data and news reports revealed Nazi violence against Jews as early as 1933, and a dramatic increase in that violence in 1941, scholars generally agree that the United States government did not receive reliable confirmation of the full scope of the Nazis' "Final Solution" until August, 1942.

On August 1, 1942, Gerhart Riegner, a representative of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland, received information from a German source regarding a Nazi plan to exterminate all the Jews in Europe. Due to the shocking and somewhat unbelievable nature of the report, Riegner refrained from passing on this information until he investigated its source. One week later, satisfied with the reliability of the informant - though unable to confirm the news itself - Riegner requested that the American consulate in Geneva cable this information to the American and other Allied governments, along with Rabbi Stephen Wise, president of the World Jewish Congress in New York. However, given the unsubstantiated nature of Riegner's report, the State Department chose not to forward it to Rabbi Wise and instead suppressed it.

In the months that followed, as reports of massacres of Jews steadily increased, a pile of evidence grew validating the idea that the Nazis were carrying out a plan to destroy the Jews of Europe. Finally, on November 24, 1942, Rabbi Wise held a press conference to announce news of the Nazis' "extermination campaign." A few weeks later, on December 17, 1942, the United States, Britain, and ten other allied governments made this news official, feeling confident enough in the evidence to publicly reveal their knowledge of the Nazis' plan to systematically kill all of Europe's Jews.

Sources: Walter Lacquer, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth About Hitler's Final Solution* (New York: H. Holt, 1998). David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews* (New York: The New York Press, 1998).

David S. Wyman, *America and the Holocaust: A Thirteen-Volume Set Documenting the Editor's Book The Abandonment of the Jews* (New York: Garland, 1989-1991).

<http://www.ushmm.org/research/library/faq/details.php?lang=en&topic=01#05>

