

France's 2013 Report
to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

France's actions to support Holocaust remembrance
and combat antisemitism and holocaust denial

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Introduction

The French Government is particularly committed to the principles and aims of the Stockholm Declaration and is determined to constantly develop and enhance its approach to education, remembrance and research into the Holocaust. As home to Europe's largest Jewish community, France is particularly involved in remembrance work, as well as in combating every form of antisemitism nationally and internationally.

France supports all efforts aimed at combating Holocaust denial, which encourages modern antisemitism, and emphasizes the singularity of the genocide of the Jewish people as well as the universality of the lessons to be learnt from it to reveal, understand and prevent recurrent human mechanisms that, together, culminated in it. Since 1999, France has been a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, previously known as the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. It considers that this is a useful, necessary platform to promote debate, discussion and collective initiatives in the field. In a world marked by an obsession with identity and racist and extremist temptations, and in a general context of certain limits becoming destabilized, it does indeed appear essential to promote remembrance of the Holocaust – the worst of experiences – as a strong, shared point of reference to understand the present and remain vigilant.

1. General activities

In 1995, during a major speech delivered for the commemorations of the Vél' d'Hiv (Vélodrome d'Hiver) round-up, Jacques Chirac, then President of the French Republic, recognized the crimes perpetrated under the authority of the Vichy regime and France's historic responsibility in the deportation of the Jewish people. More recently, during the 2012 commemoration of that event, François Hollande, the President of the Republic, gave a speech describing it as a crime “committed in France, by France”.

Other **major public speeches** were also made in 2012, including by then Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault, during the inauguration of the Camp des Milles memorial, as well as by then Minister of the Interior Manuel Valls. Moreover, the annual dinner hosted by the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF) is always an opportunity to reaffirm France's unwavering commitment to Holocaust remembrance and combating antisemitism.

In addition to recognizing this historic responsibility, **France has particularly emphasized the preservation of historical sites linked to the Holocaust and public access to them.**

To cite but a few recent examples, President Hollande inaugurated in September 2013 a new annex to the Drancy Holocaust Memorial, situated on the former site of the **Drancy Internment Camp**, which, under the occupation, centralized deported persons destined for the concentration camps of Eastern Europe.

This Memorial presents certain specific historic and memorial aspects and notably allows visitors to approach historic buildings and a display of objects belonging to people who had transited via the camp.

Also in September 2012, Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault inaugurated a museum Memorial at the **Camp des Milles**, a former internment and deportation camp that has the specificity of being located near Aix-en-Provence, part of the “*zone libre*” during the Second World War. The Camp des Milles is a historic monument listed by the Ministry of Culture and Communication and is one of the nine principal remembrance sites catalogued by the Ministry of Defence. The museum hosts the first permanent remembrance exhibition, which is innovative and multidisciplinary, aimed at promoting a scientific explanation of the Holocaust. The exhibition presents historic aspects (both in France and more generally in Europe) and memorial aspects and aims to be thought-provoking. In addition to accessing historical buildings, visitors are encouraged to consider individual and collective responsibility and spiralling events that can transform ordinary people into mass murderers and accomplices in such atrocities. Visitors to the Camp des Milles thus receive keys to understanding the resistible mechanisms that did and could once again lead to escalation from antisemitism and racism to genocides. (www.campdesmilles.org).

France is also active in the restitution and compensation of property looted during the Second World War, with the creation of the *Commission for the Compensation of Victims of Spoliation Resulting from the Anti-Semitic Legislation in Force during the Occupation (CIVS)*. The CIVS was created in 2000 at the recommendation of the Mattéoli report. It is responsible for reviewing individual applications submitted by victims or their legal successors with a view to receiving compensation for the damages following spoliation resulting from the antisemitic legislation in force during the occupation by the occupying authorities or the Vichy government. The Commission, which is not a court, is responsible for drawing up and making appropriate reparation and compensation proposals. It can make any suitable recommendation, including in the area of compensation. These recommendations are then submitted to the Secretary-General of the Government.

The CIVS has published many research pieces on the spoliation of the Jewish people, including:

- *The General Report submitted to the Prime Minister by the Study Mission on the Spoliation of Jews in France, 2000;*
- *The persecution of Jews in France (1940-1944) and the re-establishment of Republican law: Collection of official documents (1940-1999), Study Mission on the Spoliation of Jews in France;*
- *Pillaging of Art in France during the Occupation and the Status of 2,000 artworks entrusted to the National Museums, 2000;*
- *Property & Assets of Internees in the Camps of Drancy, Pithiviers and Beaune-la-Rolande, 2000.*

The research carried out by the Commission have been scaled back in proportion to its effective activities. The level of restitution and compensation measures has indeed fallen since 2000, as its last report explains.

By extending the jurisdiction of the CIVS, France participates in international conferences aimed at identifying and tracking the restitution of property looted from Holocaust victims.

France is conscious of the challenges encountered by Holocaust remembrance and the fight against antisemitism at this time. The shared priority of France and the remembrance institutions is to raise the awareness of an increasingly large audience, and particularly the younger generations. Indeed, as the generation that saw the camps and the reality of the Holocaust dwindles, the younger generations need to shoulder responsibility for its remembrance, heritage and transmission to future generations. **It is vital to conserve precise teaching of these historical events and the specificity of the Holocaust.** More generally, France is very keen to emphasize the universality of the Holocaust in order to arouse consideration of its philosophical aspects and prevent any future crimes. The main challenge is to avoid an inaccurate approach in teaching this subject and competition between remembrances, every genocide encompassing similar phenomena that can help avoid the worst if detected in time.

2. Holocaust research

Regarding **public archives**, the French Prime Minister published a circular in 1997 affirming that it was the Republic's duty to maintain the memory of these events. In this respect, he recalled that historic research was essential and that the works and publications of researchers were an effective weapon in combating forgetting, historical revisionism and alteration of memory, thus contributing to making the memory conserved from this period alive and true. This text thus guarantees easy access to the archives, particularly concerning events that occurred in France between 1940 and 1945. This access does however come with certain restrictions for documents "which cannot be communicated until after a period of 60 years because they contain information that could damage privacy or because they have been catalogued as relating to State security or national defence." In 1995, the National Archives published a "Guide to Sources Conserved in France, 1939-1945" (*Guide des sources conservées en France, 1939-1945*). A decree published on 13 May 1988 by the Ministry of Culture opened up the collections of the General Commissariat for Jewish Affairs, as well as other National Archives collections.

The Shoah Memorial, in collaboration with the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem, is working to **digitize archives with the local authorities** responsible for their own archives. Almost **40 French administrative Departments have now digitized their archives**. The digitization of those of the remaining Departments should be complete within two years.

Concerning **private archives** conserved by public archives, their access is guaranteed legally with only the restrictions placed upon it by the donor with regard to their preservation and communication. In 2012 for example, the SNCF, France's national rail operator, offered a fully digitized copy of its archives to the Shoah Memorial, to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and to the Yad Vashem Institute.

The **Shoah Memorial**, France's main Holocaust museum, focuses in particular on teaching the history of the Holocaust and notably hosts the Centre for Contemporary Jewish Documentation (CDJC), one of the largest archives in Europe. The Memorial aims to collect and facilitate access to the archives as far as is possible, using a historical, educational and popular approach.

The Memorial is primarily supported by the **Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah** (FMS). This Foundation is an example of fruitful cooperation between government institutions and civil society, financed by the restitution of funds that were unjustly looted from Jewish people during the Second World War. In collaboration with the Memorial, the FMS encourages research and studies into the Holocaust. The Foundation funds grant and university programmes in France and abroad.

Research into themes related to the Holocaust is strongly encouraged and covers a wide range of academic fields, from history to philosophy. A large part of the work is dedicated to factual study of the Holocaust, although there is an overall increase in work aimed at exploring new avenues, such as "Holocaust remembrance and constructing a European identity". Certain exploratory works are published in the *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah* (Holocaust History Review) which is the only European journal focused on the extermination of the Jewish people of Europe. It contains articles from researchers and academics and is published twice a year.

The Shoah Memorial also promotes new approaches to research and is particularly interested in drawing up new perspectives. With this in mind, it has launched two-year **seminars** on the themes of "The Holocaust in western culture" and "Those who saw and those who knew: memories and conscience". It also offers various **academic programmes** (summer schools, etc.) for researchers, linked to their disciplines, and organizes international events aimed at supporting cooperation between European researchers.

Moreover, the scientific content of the **Memorial Site of the Camp des Milles** are themselves the result of research work over a decade. This was carried out to design its permanent exhibitions and educational activities in cooperation with the University of Aix-Marseille and the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), under the aegis of a multidisciplinary international scientific Council chaired by the Head of the Aix-Marseille Local Education Authority. The research teams have thus progressed both to collate the relevant existing scientific results with the goal of presenting them to the public and to produce new results to feed into the "thought-provoking" part of the Memorial Site, dedicated to the resistible individual, collective and institutional mechanisms that led to the Holocaust and which can still lead to genocides. This work, based on the history of the Holocaust, has been validated by analysis – and presentation at the Memorial Site – of genocides against the Armenians, the Gypsies and the Tutsis of Rwanda. The approach developed is presented as a solid foundation for a "convergence of remembrances" on the recurrent human processes and mechanisms that are seen in the major genocides.

Yahad-In Unum ("together" in Hebrew and Latin, www.yahadinunum.org) is a Paris-based organization founded by Father Patrick Desbois in 2004 to hear testimony from non-Jewish witnesses on the mass executions of Jews by Nazi mobile killing units in Eastern Europe during World War II, to systematically identify the execution sites and to provide evidence.

YIU conducts its research in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Moldova, Lithuania and Romania. It has interviewed over 3,600 direct witnesses of the executions of Jewish victims and has identified over 1,400 execution sites.

The aims of the YIU are to (1) research the “Holocaust by Bullets”, the murder of Jewish victims outside of concentration camps in Eastern Europe, (2) provide evidence of these thousands of execution sites in order to disprove those who deny the Holocaust now and will in the future, (3) pay appropriate respect to the victims’ mass graves and enable them to be preserved, and (4) spread and help to apply universal lessons on genocide which can be learnt from the work of the YIU.

The priorities and core aims of the project are currently to:

- Step up the work to identify the execution sites where Jewish victims were massacred, gather evidence of the executions and interview the witnesses to these murders;

- Organize international workshops and graduate-level seminars, in particular in partnership with the Sorbonne, New York University and in collaboration with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in order to increase knowledge on the history of the Holocaust by Bullets and the genocide in general;

- Promote education and information on the Holocaust by Bullets by maintaining a research and archives centre in Paris, accessible to museums and research centres from around the world, as well as to historians, students and relatives of the victims;

Studying the specificities of the Holocaust will help other societies to tackle violence and work on their own history. Yahad-In Unum is applying its methodology in order to study other massacres and genocides in different parts of the world.

Taken as a whole, these efforts show France's steadfast commitment to transparency and the opening of archives. They result from a long process begun at the initiative of the French public authorities and which continues to be enhanced through progress in archive access.

3. Holocaust education

National initiatives

Particular attention has been paid within the education system to the **compulsory teaching of the Holocaust and its remembrance**. This theme is included in history and civic education classes. The aim of these classes is to raise awareness of the singularity of the genocide of the Jewish people and teach the stages that can lead to such crimes so as to avoid any repeat. A specific website has been set up to assist and train educational staff in teaching the history of the Holocaust (www.enseigner-histoire-shoah.org). This site offers a wide range of resources, including access to a database naming the children deported from France, created by the Shoah Memorial, as well as bibliographies and filmographies and other educational materials.

Teaching of the Holocaust is part of the curriculum in history, art history and literature in primary schools. The aim is to provide chronological and geographical reference points in order to highlight the European dimension of the Holocaust and the truly industrial nature of its organization.

Special attention is also dedicated to the Vichy regime laws and the pillaging of Jewish property. Pupils are thus helped to apprehend the concepts of a "crime against humanity" and universal human rights. This study is also an opportunity to look at the issue of individual and collective responsibility and is thus a crucial aspect of **civic and moral education** for pupils.

In secondary schools, history classes look in greater depth at the Holocaust and its victims, including systematic dehumanization through a legal discriminatory process, planning and industrialization of death in all occupied territories and lastly extermination in camps.

These lessons are generally supplemented with an **educational approach based on visits to local or regional places of remembrance**. Similarly, a plate has been installed in all Parisian State schools in homage to the deported children who had attended the school.

The anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, 27 January, is dedicated to the memory of genocides and the prevention of crimes against humanity. It is an important time of remembrance in schools and a teaching guide has been drawn up and provided to help teachers in this task.

Each year, a **national competition** focused on the resistance and deportation is organized for secondary schools. It offers participating pupils an opportunity to deepen their knowledge of these issues, to visit museums dedicated to the history of the Holocaust and to collect a series of materials which may go beyond those that are presented in class. The goal of the competition is for pupils to prepare in-depth presentations on a specific aspect of the deportation or the resistance of their choice.

Holocaust education is also provided by other social and professional bodies. For example, the Shoah Memorial organizes annual seminars for personnel including police officers, judges and doctors with distinct approaches depending on the profession concerned.

For its part, the Memorial Site of the Camp des Milles offers continuous training programmes for adults in positions of authority, particularly looking at "thought-provoking" content from its permanent exhibition, with a special focus on "understanding to better combat antisemitism and forms of racism" and responsibility in positions of authority, in addition to modules on the history of the Holocaust and the camp.

Moreover, the French Government has decided that places of remembrance and cultural sites will be used systematically as anchor points for education, in order to raise awareness of modern antisemitism and racism and the need to maintain real vigilance. The interministerial delegate is currently working on the implementation of these efforts with the partners concerned. The aim is to offer more pupils the opportunity to visit places of remembrance, to encourage them to think about racism and antisemitism and to raise their awareness of their individual responsibility. Similarly, French museums are encouraged to organize remembrance trails, some specifically covering the Holocaust. Research projects will document the reactions of pupils to visiting these places, notably using popular cultural media such as books, television and film.

International initiatives

In addition to its membership of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, France also participates in other bodies fostering international debate on Holocaust remembrance, as well as research in this area. As such, France actively supports the Aladin Project, which was launched by UNESCO in 2009. This initiative aims to make the essential works on the Holocaust accessible to Arab-, Turkish- and Farsi- speaking countries in order to combat Holocaust denial and highlight the singularity of the genocide of the Jewish people, notably through the translation of texts by Primo Levi and Anne Frank. Moreover, French embassies around the world organize regular events with this organization, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa region. They promote local Holocaust research and the sharing of knowledge at international level.

France also supports the work of the Council of Europe to combat antisemitism and participates in OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) programmes to promote tolerance and non-discrimination, focused on training, education and the prevention of racist and antisemitic stereotypes.

Lastly, memorial sites such as the Shoah Memorial and the Camp des Milles have forged partnerships with many European countries and with the Yad Vashem Memorial in order to organize joint training and awareness seminars.

4. Holocaust remembrance

Historic and memorial sites

Given the profound impact the Second World War had on France's territory, there are important historical sites across the whole country that are used for commemoration. Most of these sites result from partnerships between local, regional and national authorities and private foundations recognized as in the public interest. These partnerships are essential to mobilize local populations.

One example is the 2013 inauguration of a **museum in Chambon-sur-Lignon**, rendering homage to the region's inhabitants who were engaged to a remarkable extent in saving Jewish people during the Second World War. Chambon-sur-Lignon is one of only two European villages to have been declared "Righteous among the Nations" by the Israeli State.

Indeed, part of Holocaust remembrance involves highlighting the "Righteous among the Nations". Homage was rendered to them with the installation in 2007 of a commemorative plate in the Pantheon (national sanctuary where eminent French citizens are buried) and the creation of a Wall of the Righteous close to the Shoah Memorial.

Holocaust remembrance is also strengthened through regular exhibitions and various presentations on historic events, biographies and photo-essays.

A permanent national exhibition is presented in the Camp des Milles museum, curated by Serge Klarsfeld and supported by the Association of Sons and Daughters of Jewish Deportees from France. The exhibition, *1942-1944: 11,000 Jewish children deported from France to Auschwitz*, focuses on deported Jewish children.

A **dedicated website for the discovery of memorials** (www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr) was launched in 2012 in the framework of the remembrance policy and measures implemented by the Ministry of Defence (Directorate of Memory, Heritage and Archives, DMPA) to strengthen historical and memorial heritage. Made up of more than 10,000 pages, the website catalogues French historical sites linked to the Holocaust, including internment camps, memorials and museums. The “Cultural News” section of the website contains a list of seminars, commemorations and exhibitions, such as “The Pillaging of the Jews: a Government policy, 1940-1944” at the Paris Shoah Memorial until September 2013, “1942, the Time of Round-Ups in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Belgium” at the Saint-Omer Centre of History and Remembrance in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais until September 2013.

Culture of remembrance

Since 1954, **the last Sunday of April, the day of remembrance for the victims of the Holocaust and the heroes of the Jewish Resistance during the Second World War (Yom HaShoah), has been dedicated to public reading by political, civil and religious authorities of the names of the 76,000 Jewish deportees from France.** Since 2000, **16 July has been the national day for remembrance of the racist and antisemitic crimes of the “French State”** (official name of the Vichy regime established between 1940 and 1944 which is not to be confused with the “French Republic”). It is also an opportunity to pay homage to the Righteous of France. There are also **other official ceremonies and commemorations** dedicated for example to remembrance of wars.

The largest Nazi death camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau was freed by Soviet forces on **27 January 1945**. Since 2003 therefore, France has chosen **27 January as Day of Holocaust Remembrance and Prevention of Crimes against Humanity**, with this example being followed by the United Nations General Assembly, which in 2005 enshrined 27 January as International Holocaust Remembrance Day under resolution 60/07. Commemoration events, including ceremonies and exhibitions, are organized jointly by France and institutions involved in Holocaust remembrance and by UNESCO.

Up to the highest State levels, the French authorities are determined to remind the younger generations of the duty of remembrance, so that the crimes committed in France and Europe are not forgotten. France recognizes the links between the First World War and its consequences and the Second World War, which is why it is very committed to the construction and continuous strengthening of the European Union.

5. France's efforts to combat antisemitism and Holocaust denial

France considers that racism and antisemitism are an unacceptable attack on the values of democracy. France has the world's third largest Jewish community and combats all forms of antisemitism with the greatest determination.

The year 2013 culminated with a marked reduction in antisemitic acts compared to the previous year (-31%, with 423 acts for 615 in 2012), which was marked by the murders in a private Jewish school in Toulouse and a rise in antisemitic violence after three consecutive years of reduction. This is the context in which the French authorities reacted with determination and reaffirmed their determination to combat antisemitism.

The President of the Republic emphasized the political mobilization of the French authorities at the highest level during his speech to the Knesset on 21 November: *"Here, at this podium, I hereby reaffirm France's commitment to ensure, under all circumstances, the security and integrity of the Jewish community in France."*

France has a particularly severe longstanding legal and regulatory arsenal to suppress racist and antisemitic acts and Holocaust denial:

- the principle of equality is enshrined in Article 1 of the Constitution;
- the laws and courts are particularly severe when hearing antisemitism cases. Similarly, the antisemitic nature of an act is considered an aggravating factor in criminal cases;
- apology and denial of crimes against humanity are criminal offences;
- The Gayssot Act, promulgated on 13 July 1990, criminalizes the denial of the existence or scale of the category of crimes against humanity as defined by the London Charter of 1945. Based on that Charter, Nazi leaders and other perpetrators of such crimes have been found guilty by the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal in 1945-1946 and by other French or international courts. The Gayssot Act also asks the French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CICDH) to publish an annual report on the racism and antisemitism situation in France.

In addition, a recent instruction by the Ministry of the Interior to the Prefects reminds them that they can ban shows whose racist and antisemitic content constitutes an infringement of human dignity.

In February 2012, France adopted a **2012-2014 National Action Plan** which reviews the national legal arsenal, France's participation in international bodies combating antisemitism, and societal efforts aimed at raising the population's awareness of the reality of antisemitism in France.

Prefect Régis Guyot has been appointed Interministerial Delegate for the Fight against Racism and Antisemitism in order to prepare and implement a **new comprehensive strategic programme of actions covering the 2013-2017 period**. This programme is based on awareness-raising, education and training, with a key focus on the construction of stereotypes and prejudices that can lead to rejection of others and sometime racial hatred.

It establishes systematic training for public sector staff in combating antisemitic prejudice, enhanced awareness-raising for young people in the school, university and sport frameworks, and support for victims of antisemitic acts, all as part of a long-term multidisciplinary strategy.

The need to better assess the reality of antisemitic violence led in 2005 and 2010 to **reforms of statistical systems** at the Ministries of the Interior and of Justice. In December 2010, the Minister of the Interior and the International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism (LICRA) signed an agreement aimed at **raising police force awareness of violence and antisemitic trends** through the organization of joint initiatives including dedicated training.

The PHAROS platform, dedicated to combating racism and antisemitism, was created in 2007 to record **antisemitic content on the Internet** detected by users, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and NGOs. The Internet and social media in particular, are sometimes used as forums to spread hate speech, Holocaust denial and antisemitic references. A recent case of antisemitic speech on Twitter led to the first legal proceedings concerning this sort of abuse on social networks. The Government's programme of actions tackles antisemitic content online and on social networks with a three-fold strategy of toughening policies combating antisemitic content on the Internet; developing cooperation between the Government, Internet operators and associations combating hate speech; and determination to give Internet users the tools they need to better confront this problem online.