

75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Dachau Concentration Camp, April 29, 2020

Video message by Cherrie Daniels, Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, United States Department of State

The Dachau Concentration Camp was opened in 1933, just weeks after the Nazis' rise to power in Germany. Dachau was the first camp to open, and one of the last to be liberated in the closing days of the war in Europe. It was the longest-running camp, and a training center for SS concentration camp guards.

It was among the 40,000 Nazi sites of persecution throughout Europe that claimed the lives of millions of men, women, and children – including six million Jews.

On April 29, 1945, Infantry Divisions of the U.S. Seventh Army liberated Dachau, one week before the end of the war in Europe. The troops had been through months of combat before they arrived in Dachau. What the soldiers witnessed that day was commensurate with or worse than anything they had seen on the battlefield, according to participants.

Earlier that same month, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the commanding general of the victorious forces in Europe, visited a much smaller camp that had just been liberated. Confronted by the stark evidence of Nazi atrocities, he, too, was horrified, shocked, and sickened. “The American soldier,” he said, “might not have known what he was fighting for, but after seeing the concentration camps, he knew what he was fighting against.”

Seventy-five years later, we continue working to ensure that the horrors of those times are not forgotten. Today's Germany is a strong partner in those efforts. It has faced its history and has forthrightly assumed responsibility for bearing witness. The Dachau Memorial Site near Munich is just one example of that commitment.

The resurgence of anti-Semitism around the world is a reality that we cannot and must not ignore. As President Trump stated in his 2020 Proclamation of the Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust, “We must never forget the abhorrent anti-Semitism, racial hatred, and discrimination stoked by the Nazi regime and its accomplices that sent countless people to ghettos, concentration camps, killing fields, and death camps...”.

This requires our governments and our citizens to speak up and confront vile hatred and to combat all forms of intolerance, discrimination, and prejudice. We owe that to the victims and the survivors of the Holocaust, and to all victims of Nazi persecution. It is in that spirit that we remember today what happened, as we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Dachau.