

Ahead of Holocaust Remembrance Day, Israel home to some 200,000 survivors

Some one-third fled to the Jewish state from Nazi-allied parts of the Muslim world; population will shrink to just 53,000 by 2030

By **TOI STAFF**

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A Holocaust survivor shows her number tattoo. (Christopher Furlong/Getty Images)

Israel is home to some 200,000 individuals whose lives were impacted by the Nazi regime, with some one-third of them hailing from the Muslim world, according to official figures published Thursday ahead of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which falls on Sunday.

Nearly two-thirds of those, or 65 percent, hail from Europe, while 35% are from the Muslim world.

The figures are from 2017, the last year for which figures are available. Israeli state agencies define as survivors anyone “exposed” to the Nazi regime, including those who lived in countries conquered by Nazi Germany or were under direct Nazi influence in 1933-1945, as well as refugees who fled those areas due to the Nazis.



The figures published Thursday show an aging population of survivors that is dying off quickly. The Holocaust Survivors Benefits Authority in the Finance Ministry recognized 220,800 people as eligible for survivor benefits at the end of 2016. One year later, at the end of 2017, that figure had dropped by some 8,500 people, to 212,300 survivors.

Using demographic data as a predictor, the State of Israel expects the population of survivors to drop dramatically to 167,000 by next year, to 102,000 by 2025, and to just 53,000 by 2030, all of them over the age of 90.

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Today’s survivors are all over 73 — World War II ended 73 years ago — with the median age for men (as of the end of 2017) is 81.6 years and for women 82.4.



Holocaust survivors dance during a weekly social meeting at the Cafe Europa community and culture center in Ramat Gan, Israel, a day before Israel begins its annual Holocaust Memorial Day, April 10, 2018. (AP Photo/Oded Balilty)

As women generally outlive men, they make up 60% of the survivor population, or 126,600 individuals. The percentage of women rises as each cohort ages.

Some 23% of the survivors were babies during the war, born between 1939 and 1941. Another 29% were born on or before 1932, and were 85 or older in 2017.

Over a third, 38%, of the survivors came to Israel in the first three years after the state’s founding, between 1948 and 1951. These included most of the Jews leaving Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary, as well as Iraq and Libya.

Those from the Muslim world fled Nazi-inspired pogroms, such as the 1941 Farhoud in Iraq, or Nazi-controlled or Nazi-allied territories where they faced restrictions in daily life, such as in Vichy-ruled Morocco and Tunisia.

Another 29% arrived in Israel over the next 38 years, from 1952 to 1989. These included significant waves in the 1950s and 1960s from Morocco and Tunisia.

That period was bookended by the arrival of the final third of Israel’s survivor population, which came in the wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union that began in the early 1990s.

Just 2% of the survivor population, or some 3,800 people, hails from within Nazi Germany, which at the time included Germany and Austria. About two-thirds of them, 65%, came to Israel before the state’s establishment in 1948

The figures were publicized Thursday by the Central Bureau of Statistics using data from the Holocaust Survivors Benefits Authority in the Finance Ministry.

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