

FCO Press Release: Wednesday 14 December 2011

International Holocaust Archive to be available in the UK for the first time

50 million digital records from the Holocaust, covering 17.5 million people, will soon be available to the British public for the first time. The International Tracing Service (ITS) archive contains records from concentration, slave labour and displaced persons' camps from the Nazi-era, the Second World War and the ten years that followed.

The UK public will soon be able to access the digital archive, free of charge, at [The Wiener Library](#) in London - the world's oldest Holocaust memorial institution. The Library already hosts the UK's largest collection of personal papers and testimonies of refugees and Holocaust survivors.

On 14 December, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will jointly host a reception with the UK ITS Stakeholder Group to mark the arrival in the UK of the digital archive. The Stakeholder Group comprises the leading UK scholars on Nazi Germany as well as the major groups and institutions from across the UK engaged with the Holocaust and its aftermath.

Speaking ahead of the UK launch of the Archive, the Foreign Secretary said:

"The International Tracing Service archive is hugely significant. Allowing the British public access to the Archive in the UK for the first time will enable Holocaust survivors, refugees and their descendants to obtain information about the fate of their relatives who suffered at the hands of the Nazis. It will also provide an invaluable collection of primary source material for UK based academic researchers and students, and is further proof of the UK's active approach to preserving the memory of the Holocaust."

Anne Webber, the Chair of the UK ITS Stakeholder Group said:

"The Stakeholder Group was created to ensure a copy of the Archive was made available in the UK as soon as possible and we are very pleased that the Government responded positively to our initiative. It has long been an urgent humanitarian need for people in the UK to have the opportunity to discover the fate of their loved ones, even at this late hour. Since the Archive has opened, brothers have found sisters, sons have found mothers, each of whom had never known the other had survived. This is the foremost collection of material on the Holocaust and its aftermath, and having a copy of the

Archive in the UK will provide scholars and educators with a vital resource to research, study and teach one of the defining episodes in human history.”

Ben Barkow, the Director of The Wiener Library said:

“The arrival of the digitised archives of the International Tracing Service in the UK, supported by the huge scholarly and humanitarian resources of The Wiener Library, is very exciting. We are grateful to the Foreign Secretary and Government officials as well as to our partners in the Stakeholder Group for getting us this far. We all – inside and outside Government – look forward to seeing the archive opened up to survivors, their descendants and those concerned with Holocaust education and research once the funding arrangements are in place.”

Note for Editors:

- More information about the ITS archive can be found at <http://www.its-arolsen.org/en/homepage/index.html>. The Archive was created as a result of a remarkable initiative dating to 1943 when the British Red Cross set up a Tracing Bureau whose purpose to ensure that those millions of people displaced and missing during the Second World War could trace and be traced by their families. In 1944 the Bureau became the International Tracing Bureau, and in 1947 the International Tracing Service. Britain has remained at the forefront ever since, both in gathering up records during and after the Second World War and as part of the International Commission governing the Archive since it was deposited at Bad Arolsen, Germany, in 1945.
- Digital copies of the archive are currently only available in the United States, Israel, Belgium, Luxembourg and Poland.
- As a member of the inter-governmental body which oversees the original archive, HM Government is entitled to take a copy. HMG has facilitated the transfer of the material to The Wiener Library in London. The Wiener Library will hold and manage the material on behalf of the HM Government. Access to the material is free, but administration costs, such as photocopying and postage, will be passed onto users.
- On 14 December, the FCO and ITS Stakeholder Group will jointly host a reception for Holocaust survivors and their families, historians and researchers, educators and others from across the UK. The Foreign Secretary and the UK Envoy for Post-Holocaust issues, Sir Andrew Burns, will address the event, as will Anne Webber, Chair of the UK ITS Stakeholder Group, Holocaust survivors and the Director of the ITS.
- The Stakeholder Group’s membership includes: the Association of Jewish Refugees, The Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Camp and Ghetto Survivors Committee of the Holocaust Survivors Centre, the Commission for Looted Art in Europe, the Federation of Poles of Great Britain, the Gypsy Council, the Holocaust Education Development Programme, the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, the AJR Kindertransport Committee, the UK Umbrella Group of Holocaust Survivors and Refugee Organisations, The Wiener Library, and leading UK scholars and academics, including Professor David Cesarani, Richard Evans and Sir Martin Gilbert.

