



## Nuremberg – A City Faces Its History

In the course of its history of nearly one thousand years, Nuremberg went through epochs of flourishing and wealth, but also of disaster. In its heyday, the city was a radiant metropolis of wide renown, but for the last 50 years, the name of Nuremberg, more than that of any other German city, has been linked with National Socialism and its crimes. The special part that Nuremberg was assigned during the National Socialist reign of terror resulted in a historic responsibility for human rights. The city therefore feels committed in a very special way to making an active contribution to peace and the implementation of human rights.

City of Nuremberg

Lord Mayor's Office

### The Darkest Chapter in Nuremberg's History

Shortly after the National Socialists seized power in 1933, Adolf Hitler declared the former city of imperial diets to be the future "City of Party Rallies". Hitler started a gigantic construction programme for this mass spectacle of National Socialist self-promotion: the monumental buildings of the Party Rally Grounds in the south eastern districts of the city.

During the "Party Rally of Freedom" in 1935, two laws were adopted which for millions of people marked the starting point of the road to the gas chambers in the extermination camps. The so-called "Law for the Protection of German Blood" prohibited marriages between Jews and Germans (a fatal distinction!), and from this derived the criminal offence of "Rassenschande" (the Nazi term for sexual relations with "non-Aryans"). The "Law of German Citizenship" only granted civil rights to members of "German or related blood". Jews and other minorities were thus deprived of their civil rights. The laws were adopted on September 15, 1935, by the Reichstag summoned to Nuremberg, and to this day they have been known under the short title "Nuremberg Laws".

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### The "Nuremberg Trials" – a Milestone of International Law

After the end of World War II and the total collapse of the *German Reich*, the trial of the main war criminals started in the Nuremberg palace of justice, on November 20, 1945. 21 prominent National Socialists were tried, one was tried in absentia. The trial lasted for 10 months; 240 witnesses were heard and 16,000 pages of protocol taken down. The verdicts were returned on September 30, and October 1, 1946: twelve death sentences, three life and four long-term prison sentences, as well as four acquittals. Following the main trial, twelve follow-up trials were held between 1946 and 1949, when the American prosecution indicted 188 high-ranking representatives of the Nazi regime. The trials of the International Military Tribunal were a milestone in international jurisdiction and made Nuremberg a symbol for the rigorous prosecution of war crimes.

### The Nuremberg Principles – Central Elements of International Criminal Law

In December 1946, the legal principles underpinning the verdict in the main war criminals' trial were adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations and went down in history as "Nuremberg Principles". They have had a considerable influence on the development of international law

Nuremberg  
City of Peace and  
Human Rights



and played an important role when international criminal courts were established to try those responsible for major violations of international humanitarian law in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. They were also incorporated in the statutes of the newly created (permanent) International Criminal Court.

## **Against Forgetting – Dealing with the Nazi Past**

Nuremberg never negated or ignored the role it played during the National Socialist era, but actively addressed the part it played during that time. Numerous projects initiated by the city and its citizens tried to look at the reasons why Nuremberg was involved in the National Socialist system of injustice. In 1985, the exhibition "Fascination and Terror" in the Zeppelin Grandstand was a first attempt at dealing with the history of the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds and of Nuremberg during the Nazi era.

### **1993 The Way of Human Rights – a Memorial to Human Dignity**

Whatever can be achieved by a work of art, has certainly been achieved by the row of pillars and its creator: the "Way of Human Rights" has set a new spiritual, political and social accent in Nuremberg. 27 white pillars, two slabs in the ground, a cypress oak tree and an arch are both an indictment of the crimes against humanity and an admonition carved in stone to all people reminding them that human rights are universal and indivisible.

[https://www.nuernberg.de/internet/menschenrechte\\_e/im\\_stadtbild\\_strasse\\_der\\_menschrechte\\_en.html](https://www.nuernberg.de/internet/menschenrechte_e/im_stadtbild_strasse_der_menschrechte_en.html)

### **1995 Nuremberg International Human Rights Award**

Since 1995 the City of Nuremberg has awarded the biennial "Nuremberg International Human Rights Award". It is Nuremberg's answer to the horrible crimes against humanity of the national socialist years. The award honors individuals or groups who have, in an exemplary manner, committed themselves to the respect of Human Rights, sometimes at considerable personal risk. The decision on the awardees is made by an international jury comprising outstanding personalities from all over the world.

[https://www.nuernberg.de/internet/menschenrechte\\_e/menschenrechtspreis\\_e.html](https://www.nuernberg.de/internet/menschenrechte_e/menschenrechtspreis_e.html)

### **1997 Human Rights Office**

In 1997, the City of Nuremberg established a special Human Rights Office within the Lord Mayor's Office. Its tasks are planning, organising and co-ordinating the city's human rights activities at an international, European, national and local level.

For all the commitment and the activities the city was awarded with the UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education (now Bilbao Prize) in 2000.

[https://www.nuernberg.de/internet/menschenrechte\\_e/](https://www.nuernberg.de/internet/menschenrechte_e/)

**2001 Documentation Centre Party Rally Grounds**

The north wing of the unfinished Congress Hall on the former Nazi Party Rally grounds is now houses the Documentation Centre. Covering 13,000 square metres, the permanent exhibition "Fascination and Terror" looks at the causes, the context and the consequences of the National Socialist regime of terror. The exhibition is supplemented by an educational programme and special exhibitions.

<http://www.museums.nuremberg.de/documentation-centre/index.html>

**2007 Street of Children's Rights**

The "Street of Children's Rights" is intended to tell children more about their rights in a playful manner suitable for them. So far, seven colourful and inviting stations have been created: Tortoise, Play Lane, Amphitheatre, Equality Figures, Letter Tree, Parent Sculptures and Advertising Pillar.

[https://www.nuernberg.de/internet/menschenrechte\\_e/im\\_stadtbild\\_strasse\\_der\\_kinderrechte\\_en.html](https://www.nuernberg.de/internet/menschenrechte_e/im_stadtbild_strasse_der_kinderrechte_en.html)

**2010 Memorium Nuremberg Trials**

In 1945 – 46, world history was written in the courtroom 600 of the Nuremberg Palace of Justice. This is where leaders of the Nazi regime had to answer for their crimes before an International Military Tribunal. The trials had an enormous influence on the development of international criminal law right up to the present. Now, an information and documentation center, the Nuremberg Trials Memorial ("Memorium Nürnberger Prozesse"), is located on the top floor of the Courthouse. It provides insights about the defendants and their crimes, the Subsequent Nuremberg Trials of 1946-49, and the impact of the Nuremberg Trials up to the present.

<http://www.memorium-nuremberg.de/project/project-history.html>

**2015 International Nuremberg Principles Academy**

The academy is dedicated to the promotion of international criminal justice and human rights. Conscious of historic heritage, the Nuremberg Academy supports the fight against impunity for universally recognized international core crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression. The Nuremberg Academy promotes sustainable peace through justice, the Nuremberg Principles and the rule of law, by supporting worldwide enforcement of international criminal law, furthering knowledge, and building capacities at the national level to investigate and prosecute these crimes.

<http://www.nurembergacademy.org/>

