

Ferramonti Di Tarsia

Internment camp for Jews in southern Italy. Ferramonti, officially a concentration camp, was the largest of 15 internment camps established by Italian Fascist leader, Benito Mussolini, during the summer of 1940.

The Italians began building Ferramonti on June 4, less than a week before Italy entered World War II. The arrest of Jews began on June 15, and prisoners began arriving at the camp on June 20. From 1940--1943, over 3,800 Jews were imprisoned at the camp: 3,682 were foreign-born Jews, and 141 were Italians. In general, Italian-born Jews were not imprisoned unless they participated in anti-Fascist activities.

At first, the physical conditions at the camp were not that bad. However, as the situation of the Jews went downhill, so did the living conditions. Despite all this, Ferramonti was never a concentration camp like those that the Nazis ran: the relationship between the prisoners and camp staff was rather peaceful, the prisoners were not tortured or executed, and they were allowed to receive packages of food, visit sick relatives, and participate in cultural activities. In fact, four couples got married at the camp and 21 children were born.

The prisoners at Ferramonti were released on September 4, 1943, six weeks after Mussolini was overthrown by his own Fascist Grand Council.