

Norway

A country in Scandinavia. Right before World War II broke out in 1939, Norway, along with the rest of Scandinavia, proclaimed itself strictly neutral in the event of war. Nonetheless, Germany invaded Norway on April 9, 1940. At that time, about 1,700 Jews were living in Norway, including about 200 Jewish refugees from Central Europe. Most of Norway's Jews lived in the capital, Oslo, and about 300 lived in the city of Trondheim.

The Germans proved much stronger than the Norwegians who were forced to surrender on June 9. King Haakon VII, his family, and staff escaped to London, where they established a government-in-exile. A Norwegian collaborator named Vidkun Quisling of the National Unity Party declared himself prime minister, but his government lasted only six days. The Germans then appointed Josef Terboven Reich Commissioner of occupied Norway. He did not pass any official laws against the Jews, but began to place restrictions on them and their property.

As the Germans began preparing in early 1941 to invade the Soviet Union, the Jews of Norway began to suffer more arrests and imprisonment. Four Jews were shot in Trondheim in March 1941, and in April the Germans expropriated the Trondheim synagogue. In June, 60 Jews were imprisoned in the camp of Grini. Although the Jews of Oslo were less affected, nine of its Jews were arrested in August 1942. In addition, by early 1942 Jewish identity papers had to be stamped with the word "Jew."

By that time, Quisling was once again prime minister; he and Reich Commissioner Terboven launched the main persecution of Norwegian Jewry in the fall of 1942. In early October, all Jewish males in Trondheim were arrested; on October 26--27, 260 male Jews were arrested in Oslo. Additionally, Jewish property was confiscated. A month later, the rest of Oslo's Jews were arrested by the Norwegian police and SS units. Some were able to escape after being warned by policemen and the underground. However, all those who had been arrested were deported to Auschwitz.

The Nazis carried out the deportation of the Jews in spite of strenuous protests made by the rest of the Norwegian population, led by their church

leaders. On November 11, 1942 the bishops of Norway, along with other Protestant congregations, sent a letter to Prime Minister Quisling objecting to his treatment of their country's Jews. On December 6 and 13, the letter was read aloud by clergy in all religious establishments; the congregations stood in support. The letter was also quoted in the official New Year message broadcast by the church. These protests, however, had no effect on the Nazi regime. Less than two months later, another 158 Norwegian Jews were deported to Auschwitz.

A total of 763 Norwegian Jews were deported. Of that number, 739 were killed (including 101 of those Jewish refugees who had fled to Norway in the hope of finding a safe haven). Only 24 survived to return to Norway after the war. In Norway itself, 23 Jews died at the hands of the Nazis. About 900 Jews were able to escape to Sweden with the help of the Norwegian underground. Fifty Jews who had family in Sweden were taken in by the Swedish consul, Claes Adolf Hjalmar Westring, and were sent to Sweden in February 1943.

More than 5,000 non-Jewish Norwegians were also deported to concentration camps; 649 died there. Most were saved through the efforts of Count Folk Bernadotte and his Red Cross activities. In addition, about 50,000 Norwegians escaped to Sweden.

The Germans gave up their control over Norway in May 1945. Soon after, King Haakon VII returned after five years in exile.