

World Jewish Congress (WJC)

International Jewish organization officially founded in 1932, but actually operative from 1936. The WJC was closely linked to the American Jewish Congress (AJC), both of which were headed by the American rabbi and Zionist, Stephen S. Wise. Both congresses were among the first organizations to actively oppose Nazism.

After World War II broke out, the WJC moved its offices from Europe to the United States. However, the WJC's aid and relief efforts were hindered by the US government's refusal to allow them to send money or food to Nazi-occupied countries. In addition, the WJC's funds were rather limited. Despite this, the WJC and the AJC repeatedly organized mass demonstrations and lobbied the US government and the Allied embassies to take action and provide relief for the Jews in Europe. In August 1942 the WJC representative in Geneva, Dr. Gerhart Riegner, sent a cable to Rabbi Wise describing the Nazis' plans for the "Final Solution"—the extermination of all the Jews in Europe. Known as the Riegner Cable, this telegram finally made American Jewry much more aware of what was happening to their brethren. As a result, Rabbi Wise helped spur Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau to action, who in turn was instrumental in the creation of the US government's War Refugee Board.