

Rhodes

Island in the Aegean Sea, today a part of Greece. Beginning in 1912, Rhodes was under Italian control. In 1934 some 3,700 Jews lived on the island. In 1938 the Italian authorities introduced anti-Jewish laws to Rhodes; at that point, 55 Jews who had moved there after World War I were expelled, and over the next two years another 1,300 Jews moved away. The Jews that remained were isolated from the general population and the island's well known Rabbinical College was shut down. The Jews' conditions improved somewhat when the antisemitic governor was replaced with a more moderate ruler.

The Allies invaded Italy in September 1943; just days later the German army occupied Rhodes. In June 1944 Anton Burger, one of Adolf Eichmann's assistants, arrived in Rhodes to supervise the deportation of the island's Jews. The Jews were ordered to appear at various assembly centers by mid-July. On July 20 the Jewish males were arrested (only a few avoided arrest and joined the partisans). Accompanied by their wives and children, the prisoners were sent to Athens, and then on to Auschwitz. Upon arrival, 400 of the 1,800 Jews were chosen for hard labor; the rest were executed immediately. Only 150 survived the war. Another 42 Jews from Rhodes were rescued by the Turkish consul, Selahattin Ulkumen.