

## Struma

Boat that attempted to bring Jewish refugees to Palestine in late 1941.

On December 12, 1941, 769 Jews boarded the *Struma* in the Romanian port of Constanta. They had been witness to the massacre of Jews in Bessarabia and Bukovina, and were desperately trying to escape Europe. The *Struma's* first stop was to be Istanbul, Turkey---despite the fact that the passengers had no visas for Turkey. The boat was hardly seaworthy, and barely reached Istanbul. When it finally arrived, the passengers were not allowed to disembark. For ten weeks, they were restricted to the boat. The Turks refused to transfer them to a transit camp on land, even though the camp would have been funded in complete by Jewish organizations. In addition, nothing could convince the British authorities to admit these refugees into Palestine, because they did not want to set a precedent for similar escapes.

On February 23, 1942 the Turkish authorities took matters into their own hands: they towed the old ship to the open sea, without fuel, food, or water. Within hours, the ship was torpedoed, most probably by a Soviet submarine that mistook it for an enemy German ship. All but one refugee drowned. (see also *Aliya Bet*.)