

Bucharest

Capital of Romania. In 1941, 102,018 Jews lived in Bucharest. In addition, many Jewish refugees sought shelter in the city throughout the war years.

In the late 1930s, the Jews' situation in Bucharest deteriorated. In 1938, Jewish workers were excluded from the chamber of commerce and trade unions. When Ion Antonescu took power in Romania in September 1940, the Iron Guard terrorized the city's Jews. During the three-day Iron Guard rebellion against the Antonescu government in January 1941, 127 Jews were murdered, and many wounded. Jewish homes and businesses were destroyed by furious mobs.

After Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, Antonescu continued to persecute Bucharest's Jews. Recent arrivals to Bucharest were banished. Some 395 Jews were sent to Transnistria and murdered. Harsh taxes were exacted from the Jews, and almost 30,000 were made to do forced labor. Those who evaded forced labor were deported to Transnistria. The Jews were also told to wear the Jewish badge, but Romanian Jewish leader Wilhelm Filderman managed to get the decree canceled (see also badge, Jewish).

Bucharest's Jews were saved from extermination in August 1944 when the king arrested Antonescu and broke off Romania's alliance with Germany. Adolf Eichmann, who had intended to visit Bucharest to begin deportation preparations, was forced to cancel his trip—sparing the lives of the city's Jews.