

Hirsch, Otto

(1885--1941), German Jewish leader who chaired the Reich Representation of German Jews, the national organization of Jews in Nazi Germany. Active in Jewish affairs throughout the 1920s, Hirsch promoted Jewish emigration to Palestine and adult Jewish education, and was one of the leaders of the Central Union of German Citizens of Jewish Belief.

The Reich Representation was established in 1933, with Hirsch as its executive director. He also acted as the organization's contact with Jewish aid societies in other countries. Hirsch was arrested for the first time in 1935 because of an anti-Nazi speech that the Reich Representation had written to be read in all German synagogues on the High Holidays. He was arrested again after the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of November 1938, and sent to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp for two weeks. Upon his release, he concentrated his efforts on finding ways for German Jews to escape Germany. One of his main plans was to establish refugee camps in Great Britain and other countries; he traveled to Britain and the United States several times in 1938 and 1939 to meet with government officials.

Hirsch was arrested again in February 1941 and sent to Mauthausen, where he was tortured to death.