



Montreal marks International Holocaust Remembrance Day

Description

The city is host to several institutions on genocide and human rights

By **Byron Toben**

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January 27 was set up by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005 as **International Holocaust Remembrance Day**.

Montreal became the 3rd largest recipient after New York and Israel of **WWII Holocaust survivors**, wherein 6 million Jews were systematically murdered by the Nazi regime as well as many Roma (gypsies), communists, socialists, handicapped and homosexuals. About 9,000 survivors settled in Montreal, of which only a few are still alive, the oldest being 98.

As part of the commemoration, Montreal's Olympic stadium and Champlain Bridge were bathed in yellow light (Jews were forced to wear yellow star of David badges for rapid identification).

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Montreal has hosted a [Holocaust Museum](#) since 1979. It is the only such in Canada and is planned to move into a new \$90 million structure in 2025. The museum has been at the forefront of educating the public in general and young students in particular about the Holocaust. Jews have often been compared to the canary in the coal mine where anti-Semitism is often the precursor to the persecution of others. Live interviews with survivors have proven to be an effective way to educate people as to the dangers of racism and genocide and to combat holocaust deniers.



Montreal Holocaust Museum display – Image: courtesy of the Montreal Holocaust Museum

[Montreal's Foundation for Genocide Education](#) has developed an educational kit to help teachers explain nine other genocides of the 20th century.

Concordia University's [Montreal Institute For Genocide and Human Rights Studies \(MIGS\)](#) is Canada's leading think tank for those areas.

The [Raoul Wallenberg Centre For Human Rights](#), named for the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Hungarian Jews, is based in Montreal.



Frame from documentary *Dark Lullabies*

Montreal's [DLI Productions](#) independent film documents has produced ***Dark Lullabies*** (listed among the 100 best of all time), wherein children of holocaust survivors meet children of concentration camp officials and recently, ***First To Stand***, wherein **Irwin Cotler**, former Attorney General of Canada, emphasizes the need to speak out early against injustices to head them off.

In the United States, there are 23 Holocaust “museums” and worldwide about 12 more. These numbers are about doubled by a plethora of “memorials,” markers and parks.

Featured image: Hakan Erenler, Pexels

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Byron Toben, a past president of *The Montreal Press Club*, has been *WestmountMag.ca*'s theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites *Rover Arts* and *Charlebois Post*, print weekly *The Downtowner* and print monthly *The Senior Times*. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for Canadians.

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1. History

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1. Byron Toben
2. International Holocaust Remembrance Day
3. montreal

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