

# Holocaust & Human Rights

2025 at Kazerne Dossin



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## Dear reader,

2025 was a year in which many certainties were under pressure, with increasing unease about justice, about the role of experts and about whose story really matters. The world we live in is changing fundamentally. Our trust in the facts that we share with one another has become more fragile, whilst 'us-versus-them' thinking is on the rise. This affects us all: from our guides, volunteers and employees to the partners we collaborate with to enter into dialogue.

Our operations at Kazerne Dossin are defined by the tension between past and present, between thinking and commemorating, between knowledge and responsibility. This tension was more pronounced than usual this year and was a recurring theme throughout the working year. The Dutch historian Frank van Vree formulated it as a paradox: the greater the political and moral significance attributed to historical events, the stronger the tendency to shy away from their complexity. Collective memory, he argued, is mainly fuelled by developments in society rather than by historical knowledge.

For Kazerne Dossin this development acts as a confrontational but necessary mirror. Our work is at the heart of this field of tension. The Holocaust is a constant presence in our society. People often use its history as a starting point for comparison or as an argument. 'Lessons learnt' from the Holocaust are presented as a moral compass. The danger in this respect is that complex, historical reality is traded for a simplified picture that is convenient at the time. As far as we are concerned, opposing this oversimplification is not a matter of pure scientific rigour. It is at the heart of our task as a public institution, i.e., to do justice to the historical facts, however complicated they may sometimes be.

We enlighten students about the persecution of Jewish civilians during World War II and the role of resistance. We acknowledge the forgotten genocide of Sinti and Roma. Our exhibition entitled *Sports and sportspeople in KL Auschwitz* explores how humiliation and resilience simultaneously become perceptible in extreme circumstances. We research the fate of deportees and ask visitors to reflect on these personal stories. All of these are examples of the different ways in which Kazerne Dossin unlocks the past and keeps it relevant for a diverse public.

What do our operations mean to those who come into contact with them?



Photograph: Tim Dirven

We are happy to let others have their say in this respect. Visitors, partners and stakeholders explain what Kazerne Dossin means to them. Their voices – varied in tone, but united in seriousness – act as a mirror for our own mission. We would like to invite you to look into this mirror with us via this magazine and join us in reflecting on the power of history in today's world.

**Marleen Vanderpoorten,**  
**Chairperson Kazerne Dossin**

# International Holocaust Remembrance Day

The Dossin Barracks, the location in Mechelen, Belgium, is sometimes referred to as the 'waiting room of Auschwitz'. It reminds us of the unimaginable suffering inflicted upon thousands of people - Jews, Sinti and Roma - who were deported from here to Auschwitz-Birkenau, often never to return.

'Never again.' These are powerful words. They are not just a slogan. They are a promise. A duty. A call to action for all of us, today and every day. The history of the Dossin Barracks shows how vulnerable humanity becomes when hatred, indifference and discrimination prevail.

*However, 'never again' also means being aware of the here and now. The lessons of what happened here continue to resonate. They urge us to preserve our humanity, to use our voice when others are silenced and to stand up for justice and respect.*




Photograph: Tim Dirven

Excerpt from Claude Marinower's speech at the ceremony marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January 2025.



Photograph: Jeroen Van Looy



# Dialogue about the Holocaust and human rights

**As a memorial, museum and research centre, Kazerne Dossin preserves the memory of the Holocaust and the persecution of Jews, Sinti and Roma. It fosters a respectful and thoughtful engagement with this past. The institution highlights mechanisms of dehumanisation and advocates for respect for human rights. How can Kazerne Dossin engage with current events while remaining true to these principles?**

The Holocaust is not an easy subject to address, nor are contemporary war crimes, crimes against humanity or acts of genocide. Outrage can spark social resistance and activism, but also provokes backlash from those who view it as selective or lacking nuance. The result is a public space where emotions collide. At the museum, socially relevant topics are explored.

In a museum that engages with Jewish victimhood and resistance, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is a particularly sensitive subject. For many, Israel holds a critical place within Jewish religion and culture. The history of the Holocaust marks a key moment in the Jewish aspiration to live in a state of safety.

After the Second World War, the Holocaust marked a turning point in the development of international law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1948 Genocide Convention were initiatives intended to replace the rule of force with the rule of law. This led to the unconditional protection of human rights for all, regardless of who violates them or who suffers their consequences. In this context, communities sometimes need protection from state actors such as governments and public authorities. Today, billions of people live under the jurisdiction of nearly 195 states. Yet responsibility for respecting – or enforcing – human rights lies not only with states, but also with the international community and individual citizens. The unbearable tension between responsibility and human vulnerability gives rise to indignation.

## **Recognising current events**

As a museum devoted to the Holocaust and human rights, we acknowledge both the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the universal mechanisms it reveals. Patterns of dehumanisation, exclusion and systematic violence that once targeted Jews, Sinti and Roma have since reappeared in other contexts – from Rwanda, Srebrenica and Kosovo to Ukraine and Darfur, and more recently, one might think of the Yazidis, Rohingya, Uyghurs, Palestinians and Israelis. Kazerne Dossin deliberately chooses not to shy away from current events, but to acknowledge the tensions and polarisation they may evoke during a visit.

At Kazerne Dossin, visitors are invited to enter into dialogue about the contemporary issues that concern them, including war, refugees, discrimination,

dehumanisation and genocide. Our work also acknowledges the impact of present-day racism and anti-Semitism. The memory we preserve of the Holocaust's victims is not an 'argument' in current conflicts, but a point of reference – a warning against dehumanisation and the failure of international protection.

Our historical lens can deepen the conversation. We begin from history, make space for questions, refrain from drawing simplistic parallels, and are cautious with comparisons that obscure essential differences. We see history not as a weapon or exclusive truth, but as a resource for understanding the present – a starting point for thinking about what matters today and tomorrow.

## **Dialogue about the Holocaust and human rights**

The language we use – and how we use it – matters. A conversation is not best held through a megaphone. But neither do we remain silent: we choose dialogue. The urge to monologue often makes genuine exchange impossible. We invite visitors to explore multiple perspectives, even if they are ones that are uncomfortable or confrontational. Our aim is to give all visitors – whatever their background – the space to feel both safe and intellectually challenged, without the museum imposing a vision on their behalf.

Kazerne Dossin seeks to foster an open and thoughtful dialogue about the Holocaust and human rights, grounded in facts and integrity. The past is actively brought into conversation with the present – not as a closed narrative with a moralising tone, but as a horizon for reflection and dialogue, free of prescribed lessons. By offering multiple voices, context and space for discussion, Kazerne Dossin aims to help visitors recognise patterns, perceive differences, and reflect critically on both past and present, in a way that is open to perspectives – but not to the relativisation of facts or fundamental rights.

# Key moments for Kazerne Dossin in 2025

26.01

## I Silenti

Kazerne Dossin thanked its supporters with a memorable concert, *I Silenti*. Tcha Limberger and Fabrizio Cassol's arrangement of Monteverdi's madrigals provided a poignant and symbolic listening experience at this historic memorial site.



Photograph: Jeroen Van Looy



27.01

## International Holocaust Remembrance Day

In addition to a solemn ceremony for politicians and delegates at the historic site in Mechelen, Kazerne Dossin organises an annual public event in conjunction with Vredescentrum Antwerpen (Peace Centre Antwerp). This year, we presented a film entitled 'De laatste Joodse zomer' (The Last Jewish Summer), which was introduced by its director, Thom Vander Beken.

02.02-28.02

## Stolen Jewish Legacies guest exhibition

This guest exhibition about Hugo and Elisabeth Andriessse showed how the art collection of this Jewish couple, who fled to New York, was looted by the Nazis in 1941. The project is a collaboration between the JDCRP Foundation, Kazerne Dossin, the Jewish Museum of Belgium and the FPS Economy.



Lou Andriessse Collection

20.03-10.12

## Temporary exhibition Sports and sportspeople in KL Auschwitz

The temporary exhibition, curated by the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and includes Belgian stories supplied by Kazerne Dossin, highlighted the little-known story of sports and sportspeople in the Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp.

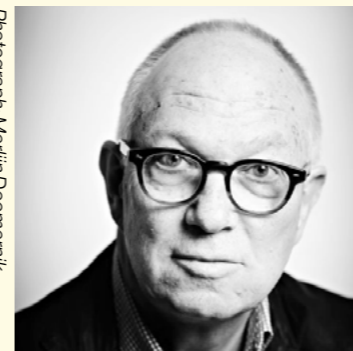


Photograph: Tadeusz Teddy Pietrzykowski © Eleonora Szafrań Collection

22.04

## Annual public lecture The new anti-Semitism by Ian Buruma

During a lecture held in conjunction with the Institute of Jewish Studies (University of Antwerp), Ian Buruma reflected on the Holocaust as a universal moral myth in our secular age. He warned of the risks associated with the political use of historical victimhood in shaping collective identity.



Photograph: Merlijn Doornik

05.09

## Polarisation Impact Day

How do we deal with social polarisation? A joint initiative with the Wij-Zij (Us-versus-Them) network focused on three different topics: the relationship between citizens and government, young people and the police, and the world of online polarisation. It was a valuable meeting between theory and practice.



Photograph: Jeroen Van Looy

Photograph: Joris Herregods



08.09

## Flemish Government quality label

Many years of investment in professional collection management and sustainable, high-quality operations were awarded the official quality label for museums by the Flemish government. The label confirms that the museum complies with all established quality criteria.



04.10

## Two years of Every name matters

After two years more than 70% of the 25,843 names for the *Every name matters* project have been recorded. On the occasion of this anniversary, An Lemmens volunteered to host participants.

27.11

## Thirteenth Portrait Ceremony

Kazerne Dossin added newly discovered photographs to the memorial wall. Thanks to research and donations, 136 portraits gained a physical presence and, together with 67 photographs of Jews deported via Drancy, were included in the digital Image Databank. 21,162 of the 25,843 deportees from the Dossin Barracks have now been given a face.



Photograph: Ruchel Goldman - received from Charles Spira

# Remembering, commemorating, understanding and questioning

Essay by Tomas Baum

General Director Kazerne Dossin

**Those who think that past events are entirely behind us are mistaken. The past is not a closed chapter, not a yellowed page we can turn. It is an undercurrent in the present – sometimes whispered, sometimes shouted – that indicates where we are coming from and imperceptibly gives direction to where we are going.**

We do not deal with the past carelessly. We have to examine and dissect it using the tools of science. We remember it, in stories passed down from parent to child. We commemorate it, in rituals that give structure to silence and direct meaning. And we teach it to ensure that, in addition to factual knowledge, younger generations develop the ability to deal with moral friction, responsibility and the fragility of living in harmony.

What matters to us is not just what happened, but how we deal this past today. Historiography can illuminate as well as harden attitudes. It can connect yet also divide, when deployed as a weapon or unwavering truth. By connecting remembrance, commemoration, historiography and education, we provide scope for reflection and contradiction. Rather than chiselling the past in stone, we need to keep it flexible: as a source of insight, a training ground for multiperspectivity and a horizon for shared citizenship.

History is about facts. These will only become meaningful through a process of questioning. The historian does not simply believe, but weighs, compares and questions. This slow, careful work is behind the legitimate use of history: to understand rather than condemn, to nuance rather than simplify, to learn rather than confirm what we had already assumed. However, as soon as history is used as a rallying cry, as a moral cudgel or exclusive truth, it loses its scientific integrity and becomes propaganda.

Memory is less detached, less unflappable than the discipline of history. Remembering starts from a personal testimony, a voice that says: "This is what I have seen, this is what I have endured." But it doesn't end there. It shifts from the individual to the community; it wants to give and receive meaning. Communities remember loss, victory, humiliation, liberation. Even when the direct witnesses disappear, their legacy continues to circulate in stories, photographs, objects and meaningful places. Children and grandchildren often carry the silent weight of trauma as well as the strength of resilience. Memory is at once fragile and persistent.

Remembrance, on the other hand, is memory enveloped in a ceremonial costume. It is organised, directed and orchestrated. It deliberately keeps the past present in the here and now but does so on the basis of protocol. Whereas a memory sometimes strikes us spontaneously, commemoration is planned and enshrined in rituals. And that is precisely where tension occurs: each commemoration represents a choice. We elevate what we are commemorating to give it meaning; elements we do not commemorate are pushed to the edge of the collective consciousness. Commemoration will rarely tolerate overt controversy. It calls for togetherness, for shared silence and participation. This ritual creates a sense of belonging but at the same time excludes memories.

At the intersection of past and present, we connect history education to citizenship. Because those who truly scrutinise fraught histories in more detail are inevitably faced with questions that go beyond facts: questions about good and evil, responsibility and complicity, exclusion and solidarity, power and powerlessness. These are uncomfortable questions that touch on contemporary tensions and beliefs that still vex. That is precisely why this confrontation is significant. It doesn't teach students what to think, but to think for themselves: critically, carefully and in dialogue with one another.

As a science, history offers insights into causes, processes and consequences. It unravels how events occur, how they unfold and what they leave behind. This is how history helps communities and individuals situate themselves in time and tradition: not to pat themselves on the back, but to comprehend where they stand and where they come from. It sharpens critical thinking, examines the preconditions of what happened and imposes nuance. It provides scope for public debate and political awareness. Sometimes,

when we look closely, it reveals mechanisms that could be repeated: as a point of attention rather than a prediction.

History can illuminate or blind. When it conceals more than it explains, it derails. When this happens facts are selected and used to confirm political myths, and uncomfortable aspects of the past are brushed under the carpet. In that case victimhood and heroism are instrumentalised: not to understand, but to gain moral credit. It legitimises power and injustice by masquerading as unwavering tradition. In its darkest guise, it demonises the other: it creates enemy images, nurtures them and gives them an aura of historical inevitability.

This is precisely the field of tension in which our operations take place: between the scientific rigour of research, the vulnerability of testimony, the protocol of commemoration and the openness of education. This layering is not a weakness, but a prerequisite for authenticity. For those who take the past seriously also recognise how easily it is misunderstood. How Hitler comparisons – fleeting and eagerly deployed – do not interpret the past but erode it. How heroes are magnified in memory, whilst collaborators gradually fade into a collective amnesia. How the colonial legacy is managed as a dossier that keeps falling just short of wide-ranging recognition.

Our handling of this past requires more than just knowledge alone; it requires attitude. The ability to differentiate without fragmenting, to recognise without annexing and to compare without levelling.

***“Those who take the past seriously also recognise how easily it is distorted.”***

Photograph: Halim Kaghlat



# New in the archive

**Kazerne Dossin receives donations every year that enrich the collection and enhance insights. The new acquisitions range from personal documents and correspondence to unique objects and photographic material. Each donation is carefully inventoried, preserved and accessed by the archivists. Join us to take a look at a selection of these special acquisitions.**



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

## 1. Jackie Mandelovits & Ella Meislik

A printed New Year's card from Ignac 'Jackie' Mandelovits and Chaja Ela 'Ella' Meislik. On 31 October 1942, they were deported from the SS-Sammellager Mecheln (Dossin Barracks) on Transport XVII to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they were murdered. This card is part of a donation by Marcel Apsel with original photographs and documents.

Source: Kazerne Dossin - Coll. Mandelovits-Meislik (KD\_01056)

## 2. Salomon 'Sam' Meljado

Footballer Sam Meljado signed this photograph for his cousin-in-law Raymond Noydens. It dates to March 1938. Four years later, in July 1942, Sam was assigned to the Les Mazures labour camp as a forced labourer. In October of that year, he was deported on Transport XV to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Following punishing forced labour in the mines of the Jawischowitz sub-camp, he was murdered there in January 1943. The photograph was part of a donation by his granddaughter Norma Meljado, on the occasion of the temporary exhibition Sports and sportspeople in KL Auschwitz.

Source: Kazerne Dossin - Coll. Sam Meljado (KD\_01045)

## 3. Abraham Jakob (Jacques) Biron

This 1928 holiday snapshot shows Abraham Jakob (Jacques) Biron with his children Herman Samuel (left) and Frieda Rachel (right). After eight months of confinement in the Dossin Barracks, Abraham was released in May 1943 because of his mixed marriage to Josephine Dierick, who was a Catholic. He was later arrested again for resistance activities. Having been imprisoned in Antwerp, he was deported to Buchenwald, where he was killed. Because of their mixed parentage, Herman and Frieda were exempt from anti-Jewish regulations; they survived the war along with their mother. This photograph, along with other documents, was donated to Kazerne Dossin in 2025 by a relative, Jean-Jacques Speyer.

Source: Kazerne Dossin - Coll. Abraham Jakob Biron (KD\_01055)

## 4. Besamim box

This besamim box (spice holder) and accompanying bowl were used during the Havdalah ceremony marking the end of the Jewish Sabbath. The tower-shaped box contained fragrant spices such as cloves or cinnamon. The bowl is adorned with decorative motifs and Hebrew inscriptions: בּוֹט לְטוֹב (Mazal Tov - "Congratulations") and עֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל (Eretz Yisrael - "Land of Israel").

This set was owned by an unknown Jewish family in Brussels. The family was taken away during an overnight raid. The next morning, Bert Decorte, an official at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, found the ritual objects in the abandoned house. He decided to keep them safe despite the fact that he never knew the original owners. His daughter, Ilse De Corte, donated the original objects to Kazerne Dossin.

Source: Kazerne Dossin - Coll. Besamim holder and bowl (KD\_01071)

## 5. Salomon (Samy) Rubinstein

In 1942, 15-year-old Samy went into hiding at the Château de Bassines, where he developed his artistic talent with limited resources. Following a raid on 25 October 1943, he was detained at the Fort de Huy in Liège and then transferred to the Dossin Barracks. Thanks to his chess skills he was repeatedly removed from transport lists and assigned to forced labour at the SS-Schule in Schoten. He was liberated on 4 September 1944; his family also survived the war. Rubinstein subsequently painted these portraits of fellow prisoners in the Dossin Barracks from memory. René Rousseau donated the original objects to Kazerne Dossin in 2025.

Source: Kazerne Dossin - Coll. Salomon Rubinstein (KD\_01235)  
Material: oil on wood

# Behind the scenes of the campaign Every name matters

To give the remembrance project *Every name matters* extra impetus Kazerne Dossin launched a communication campaign in the autumn of 2025. The objective was clear: to encourage new participants to come and read a name.

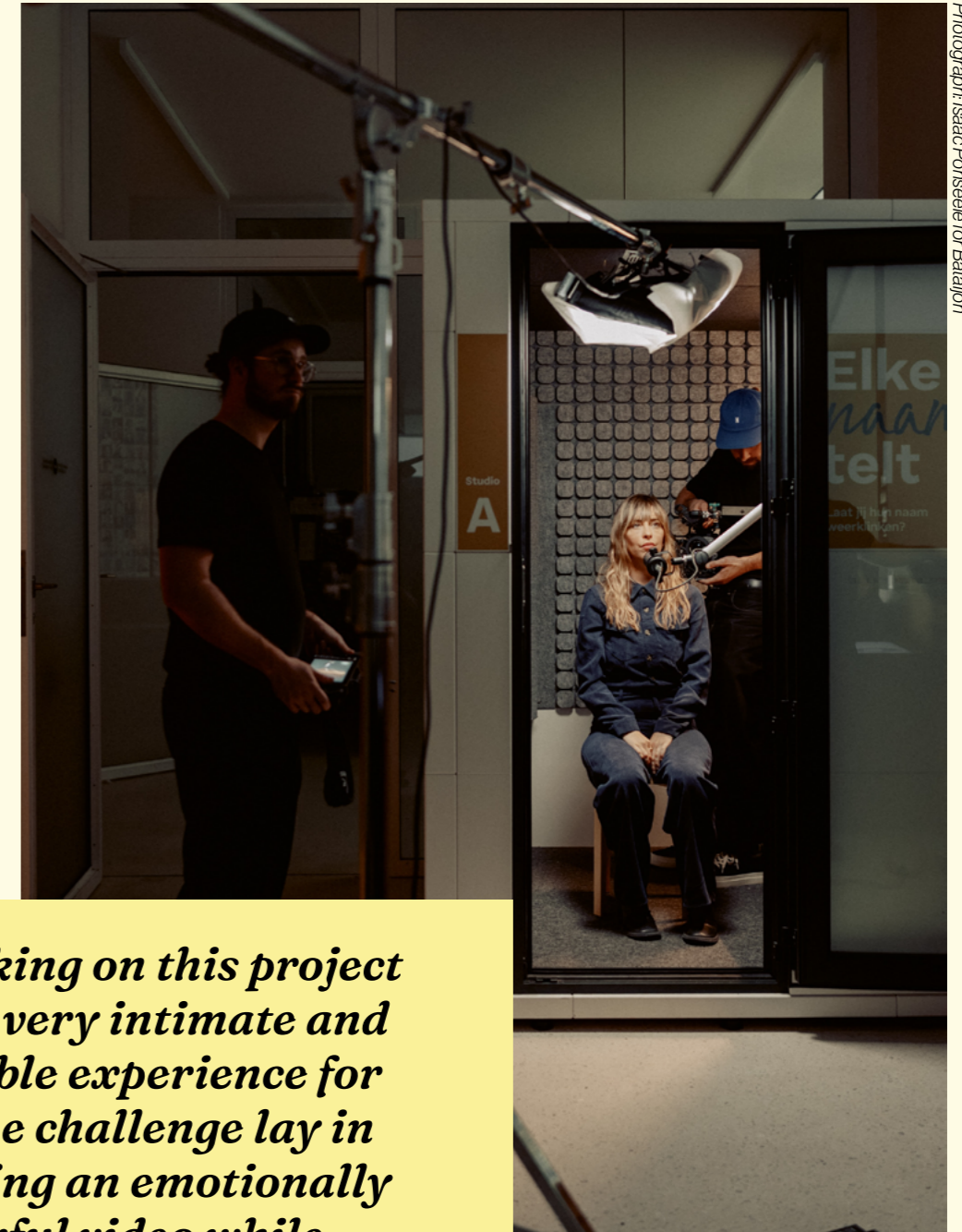
To compile the promotional video we joined forces with the Bataljon production company. They converted our briefing into a creative scenario focusing on the participant's experience. Shooting days were a hive of activity, not only at the museum itself but also in the beautiful setting of Het Predikheren (The Preachers public library).

We closely monitored our campaign face and the Bataljon crew as they captured the essence of the project – returning one's name at the location where it was taken away – on camera.

The results were impressive. The video was widely circulated on social media and even appeared on screen at three Lumière cinemas. These efforts paid off: during the Christmas holidays and the weeks thereafter, we recorded a huge increase in the number of registrations. We are well on our way to completing this collective monument together in 2026.



Photograph: Isaac Ponseel for Bataljon



Photograph: Isaac Ponseel for Bataljon

***“Working on this project was a very intimate and valuable experience for us. The challenge lay in creating an emotionally powerful video while showing full respect for the victims and their families. We also recorded a name in the booth ourselves, and it’s only then that you truly realize what it means to give someone their name back.”***

- Mathieu Stevens, Bataljon

# Confrontation with victims of racism and hate

**Kazerne Dossin offers educational programs as an alternative measure for those involved in incidents concerning racism or discrimination. For the newspaper Trouw, Annelies Bontjes investigated what such a program looks like in practice. She interviewed a participant, a supervisor, and director Tomas Baum.**

Upon entering Kazerne Dossin, visitors often briefly linger in silence in front of the portrait wall. It is an endless row of faces of Jews, Sinti and Roma who were deported from here to extermination and concentration camps during World War II. Each portrait represents a different life, but all these lives were cut short or marked forever. The people on the wall were no longer seen as people; they were reduced to just one aspect of their identity.

The learning pathways, which Kazerne Dossin has been offering since 2021, explore the dynamics behind this. Anyone who has been legally charged for racism, discrimination or hate crimes has the opportunity here to immerse themselves in the history of the Holocaust. They are confronted by the destructive power of prejudice and are invited to reflect on the impact of their actions.



***Incidentalists are confronted by the destructive power of prejudice and are invited to reflect on the impact of their actions.***

Museum director Tomas Baum compares this to people who have driven while under the influence of alcohol. “They too have to attend a course in some cases,” he stated. “However, the threshold for conviction for hate crimes is high because of freedom of expression. This approach offers a solution for cases that were often dismissed.”

A learning pathway is imposed by a judge. It consists of a tour of the museum, followed by an in-depth discussion with the guide, and a reflection report written by both the participant and the guide. The Public Prosecutor may then issue a new advice on the basis thereof and a decision will be made as to whether the individual in question will be prosecuted. A follow-up interview will take place six months later.

However, assuming that people arrive with bad ideas and leave with good ideas is to simplify the matter, Baum added. “The aim is to create a kind of ‘aha-moment’, i.e. to find an opportunity for new insight and reflection.” However, these pathways are rather time consuming as they are always tailored to the individual. “For example, if someone made a racist comment ‘as a joke’, we will focus on the impact of humour and caricature. Was peer pressure the context? If so, we zoom in on that. As a museum, it is our social duty to inform. I believe in sound education rather than punishment.”

Dozens of people have now followed these learning programs, including Dries Van Langenhove, the founder of the far-right youth movement Schild & Vrienden. But he would no longer be welcome now, Baum explained. “It doesn’t make sense to welcome people who are part of a far-right movement that does not tolerate alternative thinking.” People who have been involved in violence are not welcome either. “We have to be able to guarantee the safety of other visitors.”

Kazerne Dossin collaborates with various professional groups, ranging from police officers to prison officers and prosecutors. “In football, there is clearly a problem with racism and anti-Semitism,” Baum commented. “It is endemic. In sport, it is often about naming the enemy, using the most offensive language. Group pressure also plays a part.”

Photograph: Jeroen Van Looy

"Initially we were asked if we could host people as an alternative to a stadium ban. However, we don't want to react exclusively to incidents, which led to a partnership with the Pro League. All first and second division clubs pay us a visit here with their players and supporters."

The question, though, is whether compulsory museum visits have the desired effect. Is someone who is forced to attend open to the message? Director Baum stressed that it is not quite so black and white. "People still have to report to us themselves. Obviously, the threat of a harsher punishment comes into play if they refuse, but that does not mean they are necessarily ignoring what they are told here."

According to Baum, it is important to see the visit as an opportunity rather than as a punishment. "A museum visit does not force anyone to change their mind, but it does offer new insights. In that sense, it tends to be a reward rather than a punishment. Moreover, what is the alternative? Is it more effective to lock someone up or to fine them? Our approach offers something that a prison sentence or a fine cannot: a confrontation with history and the impact of hatred and exclusion."

Although the impact of the learning trajectory is difficult to measure, a quote from a reflection report shows that it can have considerable potential. This participant, writing about his educational program, explained that "I regularly think back to my visit and try to apply the knowledge I gained about human rights within my own environment. I now engage in voluntary work with people in a vulnerable position."

***"People often say: 'I am not a racist'. But if you make a racist comment, you are racist in that moment. And I never want to be that person again."***

- Cassandra, participant

### **What impact does this alternative measure have?**

**Participant Cassandra shares her story.**

It started as an ordinary night out. Cassandra and her boyfriend had a few drinks together and then took a taxi into town. But the driver went the wrong way. Cassandra commented on this.

"And then it escalated and the police got involved."

Soon after she received a complaint about racism. She allegedly had verbally attacked the driver. The message really hit home for her. "I knew that what I had said was not OK, but racism... that was never my intention." She agreed to join a learning pathway at Kazerne Dossin, which she completed in December 2025.

"I am someone who wants to reflect on past mistakes, so I felt it was the right thing to do. The Kazerne Dossin staff member reassured me during our initial conversation that: I should consider it an opportunity to learn something about myself rather than a punishment." Cassandra started the course without expectations.

"It was totally different from what I learnt at school. I was aware Jews were victims, but not how random it all was. That really affected me. The images, the stories and the photograph of the railway track, the route to the final destination."

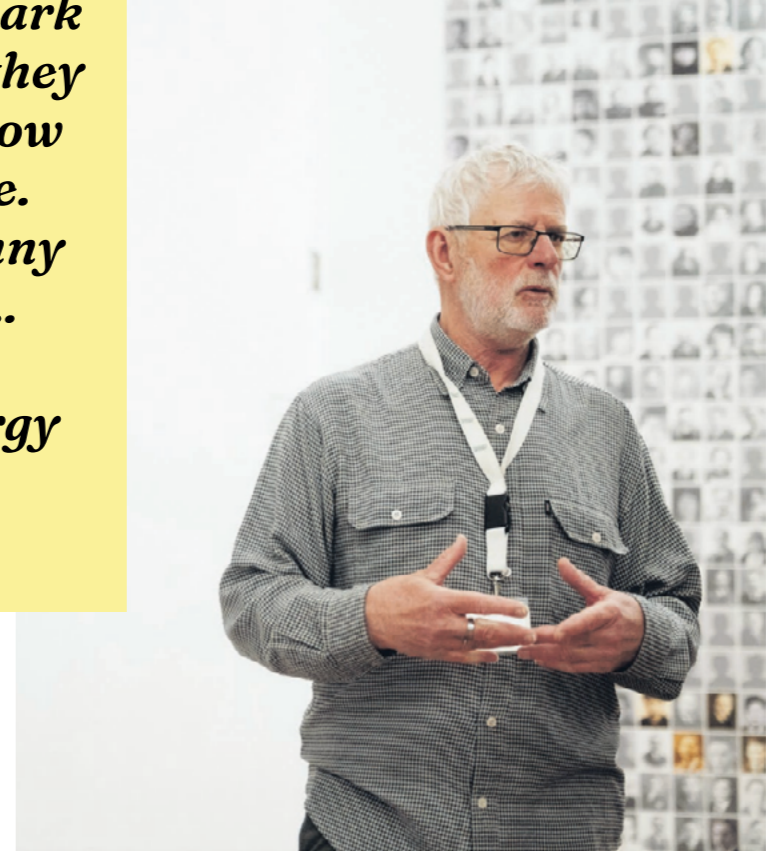
The course had an impact. "I did not feel that I was regarded as someone who had done something wrong. It was about understanding and learning, not condemning." She also talked about the program with

friends. "Many people don't think about the impact of their statements. Some friends considered this measure to be tough. But I was happy about the fact that my statement was taken seriously. If this was the same for everyone, racism would perhaps be less prevalent."

***"Sometimes participants remark at the start that they don't actually know why they are here. But when the penny drops at the end... yes, that's what gives me the energy to do this work."***

- Bruno, educator

Photograph: Tessa Kraan



### **What motivates the educator of these educational programs?**

**Educator Bruno explains.**

Bruno Neuville (71) has been a volunteer educator with educational programs for six years. "We all try to find our place in society, which is easier for some than for others. I am particularly interested in the difficulties people are faced with."

Listening is the core aspect of his work. "For many people our current society has become too complex. They need somewhere where they can tell their story." Neuville has also observed that politics are becoming increasingly confrontational. "I am thinking not only about Trump, but also about inappropriate discourse closer to us. It is a signal. We need to maintain a dialogue with each other out of mutual respect."

During the guided tours Neuville links the past to the present. One example is a 1934 poster with a caricature of Jewish men turning into insects

alongside a statement that there is a 'plague of locusts'. "That is pre-genocidal language. I recently heard the Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán state that all opposition parties are insects. It is the same rhetoric. The only way out of this dynamic is to understand where it is going."

His approach ties in with the views of the Dutch philosopher Bart Brandsma. "Brandsma argues that tackling polarisation must start with civil society: the large group of people between the two extremes. It is a diverse group of nuanced, easily guided or indifferent people you cannot afford to lose. If we are not careful democracy will disappear. That is my driving force and my commitment."

The impact of the pathway motivates him. "Sometimes participants remark at the start that they don't actually know why they are here. But when the penny drops at the end... yes, that's what gives me the energy to do this work."

# Human rights: a minimum

**The history we preserve shows what happens when human dignity is systematically denied. This same history is at the origin of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: an understanding by the world community that every human being counts, that dignity is inalienable and that rights should not depend on power, origin or belief.**



Photograph: Eleanor Roosevelt presents the (English version of) the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in New York, November 1949. Public domain via FDR Presidential Library & Museum.

Human rights are not merely a belief. They are a shared norm, a commonality that makes coexistence possible. Today, human rights are under pressure worldwide. In many countries citizens are not protected. Groups are excluded. Regimes prefer to rely on propaganda rather than on truth. Warring factions take civilians to task.

In conversations about current conflicts the question often arises as to whether human rights can be truly universal. It is hard to resist the temptation to consider them selectively. However, human rights lose their meaning as soon as they become instruments used by one side. As an institution, we start from the opposite principle: human rights apply to everyone, regardless of who violates and who is affected. They protect against arbitrariness. Against dehumanisation. Against the dangerous idea that some people might be less human than others. Human Rights give us the language and framework to name injustice and vulnerability, without falling into the 'us versus them' trap.

It can be difficult to hold on to these shared norms when images of violence stir emotions. Anger, sadness, fear and solidarity push people in different directions. This is precisely when it becomes apparent that human rights are more than just a legal framework. They remind us of what it means to remain human even in challenging circumstances.

The Holocaust reminds us of the consequences of structural disregard for human dignity. This recognition is not just a historical reference point: it acts as a warning against mechanisms that are manifesting themselves again. It makes human rights into a compass that allows us to read the present, not by imposing comparisons, but by recognising patterns of dehumanisation and vulnerability.

This has a dual impact. On the one hand, history shows what goes wrong when rights are absent. On the other hand, human rights define what is needed to protect humanity.

When discussing this, it is preferable not to start from the question of who has it right, but rather to consider what respect for human dignity requires from us in this instance. This question cuts through, rather than avoids, the logic of conflict. It invites us to open up room for facts, for nuance and for recognition of suffering, without instrumentalising the historical integrity of the Holocaust in the debate.

Human rights are thus the common ground where differences can exist without losing sight of humanity. They invite us to speak with due care and attention and to realise that recognition of other people's humanity also affirms our own.

Tomas Baum,  
General Director Kazerne Dossin

# Holocaust and detention?

A look behind the scenes of Kazerne Dossin and the prison system.

**Kazerne Dossin and the prison system set up a structural partnership in 2022. We talked to Isabelle Diependaele (seconded to Kazerne Dossin by the Federal Police) and Iris Naert (Learning & Development advisor at the FPS Justice) about the *Holocaust, polarisation and detention* project, which they are successfully managing together.**

**Many will already be familiar with the long-running police project at Kazerne Dossin. Is this the ‘prison variant’?**

**Isabelle:** “It is partly inspired by the *Holocaust, Police and Human Rights* project. We start from the same idea, i.e., to reflect on professional integrity today on the basis of the Belgian Holocaust narrative.”

**Iris:** “What makes this project unique is the way in which historical insights are linked to the everyday reality of the prison system. Prison staff operate within a challenging environment in which it is necessary to stand firm and follow your moral compass. Their training supports them in this by creating awareness and providing professional guidance.”

**What exactly does the project entail?**

**Isabelle:** “Every week we host trainee prison staff during a training day at the museum. In the morning, participants will focus on the history, with deprivation of freedom and the stages leading to the persecution of Jews, Sinti and Roma during World War II as a common thread. In the afternoon the focus shifts to human rights and ethical dilemmas.”

**Iris:** “Referring back to historical cases, participants gain an insight into topics such as authority, margin of action, power dynamics and peer pressure – themes that are inextricably linked to a hierarchical organisation such as the prison system.”



Photograph: Tim Dirven

**“Through the Belgian case study of the Holocaust, we reflect on the professional integrity of prison staff today.”**

- Isabelle Diependaele



Photograph: Everbeeld

**Linking history to daily practice in prisons does not seem an obvious task for instructors. How do they do it?**

**Iris:** “A major bonus is that we work with trainers who are totally familiar with the prison context. They can relate historical examples to actual situations from current professional practice. It makes the training highly relatable and immediately applicable.”

**Isabelle:** “To this end, the instructors attended intensive training focused on Holocaust history and human rights, guiding skills and dilemma training. We are now able to rely on the services of about 20 enthusiastic instructors.”

**How do you assess the impact of the training?**

**Isabelle:** “The number of participants is increasing year by year. In 2022 we started with 120 participants. In 2025 we ended with no fewer than 663 participants.”

**Iris:** “The feedback has been positive. Both supervisory and non-supervisory staff experience the training as a valuable opportunity to reflect on their own actions. Participants state that it makes them reflect on their position of power and its impact on detainees. It makes them aware of their responsibility. These are exactly the aspects we want to focus on with the project.”

**“Prison staff work in a challenging context where it is essential to stand your ground and follow your moral compass.”**

- Iris Naert





# A family story of rescue, resistance and survival

Every year Kazerne Dossin welcomes families of deportees who bring with them stories and questions. This year, for example, Charles Spira visited us with his family from the United States. Their journey took them via Antwerp, where Charles was born in 1938, and Nazareth, where he spent two years as a child in hiding with his mother, Fanny, and sister, Annette.

Although Charles's mother, Fanny, realised early on that they were in danger and went into hiding with both her children, her father, Salomon Frey, felt safe in Belgium. He was a man of distinction: in 1904 he co-founded the Antwerp Diamond Bourse. Even when he fled to the Netherlands during World War I, he remained loyal to the diamond trade by establishing a new exchange in Scheveningen.

Because of his enormous contribution to the economy, the Belgian authorities personally asked him to return to Antwerp after the war. As vice-president of the Diamond Bourse, he featured prominently in the press and became a Knight of the Order of the Crown on the 25th anniversary of the Diamond Bourse in 1929.

When World War II broke out, Salomon trusted that his significant achievements on behalf of the country would protect him. But he was mistaken. Salomon Frey and his wife, Ruchel Goldman, were deported from the Dossin Barracks on 15 January 1943. Their sons, Max and Hendrik, followed on 20 September 1943. None of them returned.



Article about diamond bourse in De Stad Antwerpen weekly, 07/07/1929



Charles visited Kazerne Dossin in 2025 and proclaimed the name of his grandfather Salomon. Thanks to the visit we received portraits of the four family members, which were given a permanent place on our portrait wall.

Charles Spira in the recording studio of Every name matters

# Memorable moments

## Personal highlights from 2025

### Most poignant moment

Digna, board member



On 27 January 2025 I attended the commemoration ceremony of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The ceremony took place in a marquee spanning the entrance gate to the camp. Even more than the emotionally charged environment and site, I was deeply touched by the testimonies of the last survivors, including Tova Friedman. My thoughts were with the Jewish residents of my home village who were killed at this site. In that moment this horrific history came compellingly close. Representing our organisation at such an emotionally charged location was the most poignant moment of the year for me.

### Most gripping moment

Greet, volunteer with *Every name matters*

During a recording day I was surprised when a visitor decided to take a short walk after leaving the booth to proclaim a name. He needed time to process the moment before we looked for additional information. He told me he had celebrated his birthday the past weekend and was now reading the name of a man with the exact same birthday and age. The realisation that he still had a future while that of his contemporary had been taken away visibly affected him. This interaction stayed with me because for a brief moment history came very close. It shows how a name on a list suddenly turns into a tangible human life, giving direct personal meaning to the past for the visitor.



### The most striking reaction during a tour,

An, museum guide



As a guide, I always try to bridge the gap between facts and human experience. At the display case with the yellow stars, I talked about the impact of public stigmatisation during the occupation. A special needs education pupil responded very quickly with an honest confession: he prefers not to wear his school jersey whilst out on the street or in the metro because he does not want people to immediately pigeonhole him. This comment struck a chord with the entire group. For me, it was the highlight of the year because it goes right to the heart of what we do at Kazerne Dossin: to give young people the means to talk about their own experiences of exclusion. It proves that history is a mirror in which they keenly and painfully recognise themselves, despite decades of time difference..



### Most rewarding meeting

Jarno, archivist

I met Sven De Ridder following his performance of *Barber of the resistance*. It tells the story of his great-grandfather who kept three Jewish children in hiding in his barber shop for more than two years. I provided him with more details about the children and their parents, Majer Walzer and Ettel Hass.



### Most haunting book

Hendrik, museum shop manager

For me the most haunting book was *The Forgotten Children* by Nadja Van Sever. Despite the fact that it is a children's book, the story affected me deeply. In an accessible but poignant way, Van Sever tells the story of Jewish children in a home in Wezembeek-Oppem. Following a raid the children ended up in the Dossin Barracks, where they were rescued by Jewish teenagers.

During the book presentation the audience was noticeably engaged and curious. The children listened attentively and responded with interest. The most memorable moment was the live video link from the United States with one of the survivors from the story. His personal testimony added an extra dimension to the story and took history beyond the written word. Because of this touching moment, the book will stay with me for a long time.

### The most rewarding project

Kyra, educational assistant

My first project as an educational assistant revolved around 'Play during wartime', a museum trail for children aged 10 to 14. Not an obvious topic at Kazerne Dossin, I initially thought, but I soon discovered that many stories and objects connected to it: from the puppets created in the barracks by Léon Landau to the teddy bear Norbert Vos received from his sister in hiding. Even in the most difficult of circumstances people looked for silver linings.

I attended a course that encouraged me to try out creative ideas. For example, in addition to the rag doll that Charlotte Hamburger smuggled to her daughter in a laundry basket, we included a real laundry basket in which parents could hide a note for their children. Play connects people. This trail was also developed in close collaboration with the different teams, something I look back on with pleasure.

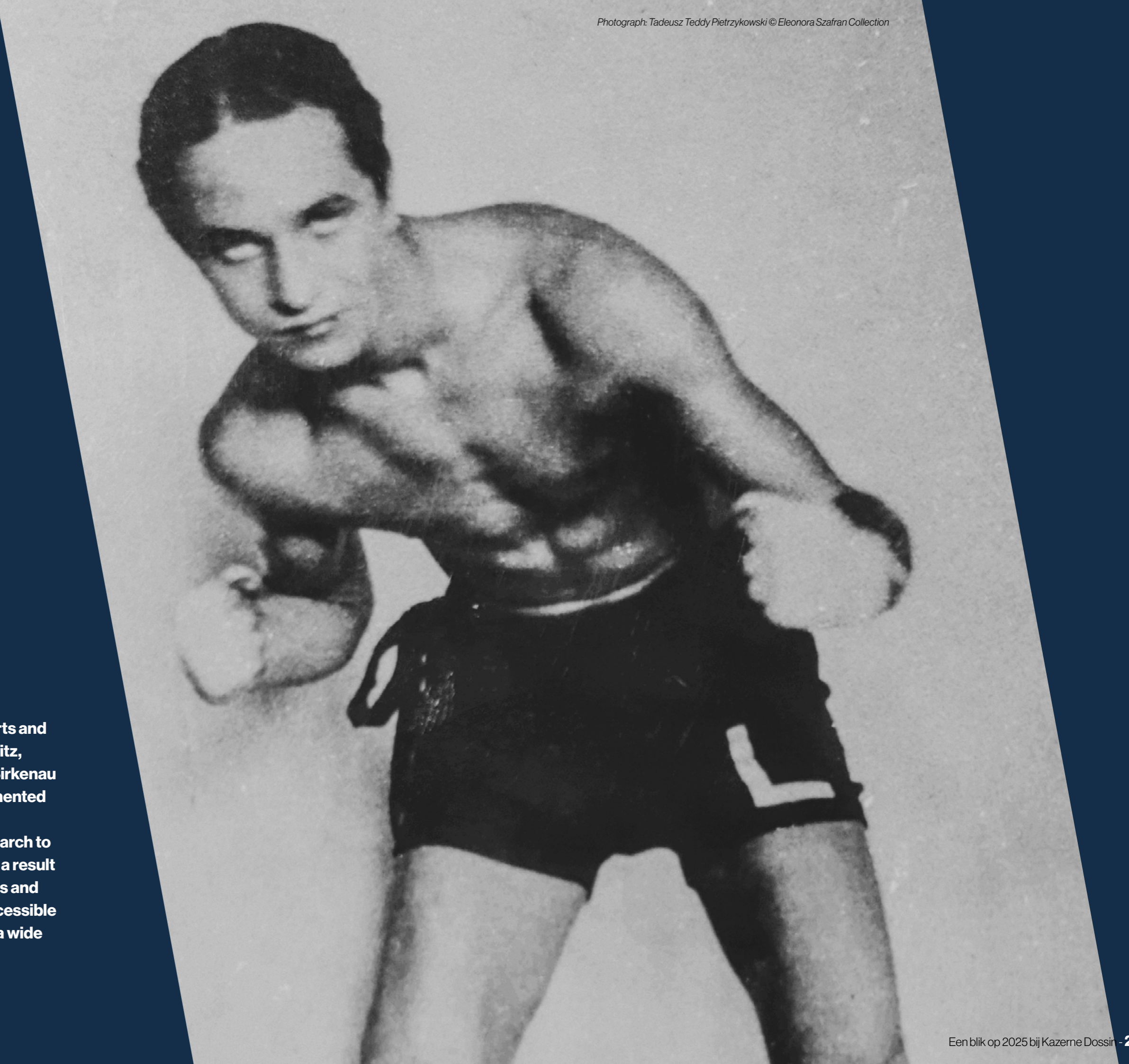
Sven was visibly touched and learnt new facts from our research centre. He pinpointed the location on our map of hiding places, paused at the portrait wall and looked at the locations associated with the Walzers' lives. Reflecting on things near the railway wagon, he stressed the importance of never becoming indifferent.

For me, helping people with information about their family or connected stories is always particularly rewarding. It gives me great satisfaction to turn the detective work in the archives into an actual story that can be passed on.



## Sports in Auschwitz: oppression versus resilience

The exhibition entitled **Sports and sportspeople in KL Auschwitz**, curated by the **Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum** and supplemented with **Belgian narratives** by **Kazerne Dossin**, ran from **March to December**. It was staged as a result of **worthwhile collaborations and extensive research**. The **accessible theme resonated amongst a wide audience**.



Photographs: Stijn Swinnen



### Supporting remembrance and education

"We have been supporting Kazerne Dossin for many years because we believe in the power of remembrance and education. This project underlined the importance of continuing to tell stories of courage, humanity and perseverance, even during the darkest hours of our history. As a loyal partner we felt a strong sense of responsibility to help make this exhibition possible, to ensure that sport is not merely a chapter in this story but becomes a symbol of freedom and belonging. Because those who understand where we are coming from are helping to create a better future."

— Jannie Haek, managing director of the National Lottery, supporting partner of the exhibition.

### In search of meaning

"Auschwitz-Birkenau – the Nazi German concentration camp and extermination centre – is mainly associated with notions such as genocide, death, barbed wire, bunk beds, kapos, barracks and much more, which makes the concept of sport within this context all the more remarkable. How is this possible and what does it mean? The exhibition teaches us how this concept can be interpreted within the context of Auschwitz: hope of survival, an escape from the reality of the camp, a reminder of youth and freedom, but above all a particularly effective means of torture at the hands of the SS guards. It is a symbol of the staggering hypocrisy of this place, referred to as 'hell on earth' and the 'factory of death' by the victims."

— Andrzej Kacorzyk, deputy director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, where the exhibition was developed.



### Rules in an abnormal world

"All prisoners were held in the same circumstances and yet some among them managed to increase their chances of survival through sport. It was part of the tragedy and injustice. The Italian writer Primo Levi later wrote: survivors were often burdened with guilt afterwards. Sportspeople were considered to be different because they escaped fate through their sport. This sense of guilt must have been difficult to cope with by the survivors. The exhibition puts it in a context that makes it easier to understand: sport implied rules and a kind of retention of freedom, but within a totally abnormal context."

— Kurt Deswert, sports historian and content partner, commenting on the exhibition at Kazerne Dossin during the Voorproevers (Sneak Previews) Radio 1 broadcast.



Photograph: Adriaan Baccaert



### Traces of a Belgian sporting family

Each exhibition is preceded by many years of archival research. The story of the Antwerp sports family Borisewitz provides a striking example. What started as a conversation with the son of Holocaust survivor Félicie Gruszow-Bloc in 2019 led to an exceptional addition to the collection. The research team uncovered an impressive collection, ranging from pre-war family photographs to love letters. This unique Belgian story was given a central place in the exhibition as a result.



### The granddaughter and the medal

The presence of Katarzyna, granddaughter of Antoni 'Kajtek' Czortek (1915-2004), gave the opening a profound, personal meaning. Antoni, a Polish boxing legend and Olympian, was deported to Auschwitz in 1943, where he was forced to partake in boxing matches for the amusement of the SS. Czortek survived the camps and remained a sports icon even after the war. The family agreed to loan his 1938 medal, won during an international match against Nazi Germany, specifically for the exhibition. The object symbolises an international career interrupted by the war.



### Tribute and donation

Salomon 'Sam' Meljado (1905-1943) was one of the best central midfielders of his generation, but his career ended abruptly as a result of his deportation to Auschwitz. His granddaughter, Noa Meljado, donated the medals and tokens he won between 1928 and 1932 to Kazerne Dossin. The items were included in the changing display case, adjacent to the exhibition. The tribute to the grandfather Noa never knew made the opening ceremony an emotional moment.



### Boxing to survive

The exhibition paid special attention to the Dutch boxing champion Leen Sanders, who fought in the ring and trained his fellow prisoners in Auschwitz. Sanders survived the camps and resumed his sporting career after the war. NOS Sport investigated his story and visited the exhibition together with former boxer Arnold Vanderlyde.

*“It touches my soul and my heart. What he experienced in Auschwitz, in captivity. Where he had to box to survive... He probably faced opponents he could easily beat and who he had to knock out.”*

— Arnold Vanderlyde, three-time Olympic bronze medallist, during the NOS Sport report.



Photograph: NOS Sport



### Another dimension of sport

To complement the exhibition Kazerne Dossin organised a study day entitled *Sports and Resilience* for education, youth work and sports professionals. A keynote by Aagje Vanwalleghem, a panel discussion and targeted workshops linked an inspiring programme to the theme of the exhibition. Vanwalleghem attended a guided visit to the exhibition and was visibly affected by it.

*“The stories of prisoners volunteering to play sports in the hope of extra food really moved me. As a former top athlete as well as a human being, I know that sport can be very important in someone’s life, but when you see the impact sport had on prisoners in the concentration camps, it adds another dimension to the significance of sport within society.”*

— Aagje Vanwalleghem, former top gymnast, during the *Sport and Resilience* study day.

### Dialogue and critical thinking

*“A temporary exhibition such as this adds a unique angle, making the complex history of the Holocaust more tangible for the many school groups. At the same time, we wanted them to adopt a wider approach to the underlying mechanisms. Sport served as a survival strategy in the camp but was equally an instrument of systematic repression.”*

We added an interactive layer to our guided tours. Using five ‘talking points’ at strategic locations, our guides provoked a philosophical dialogue. The questions challenged visitors to look beyond historical facts and to adopt a critical approach. It also turned the exhibition into an exercise in social reflection.”

Photograph: Tim Dirven



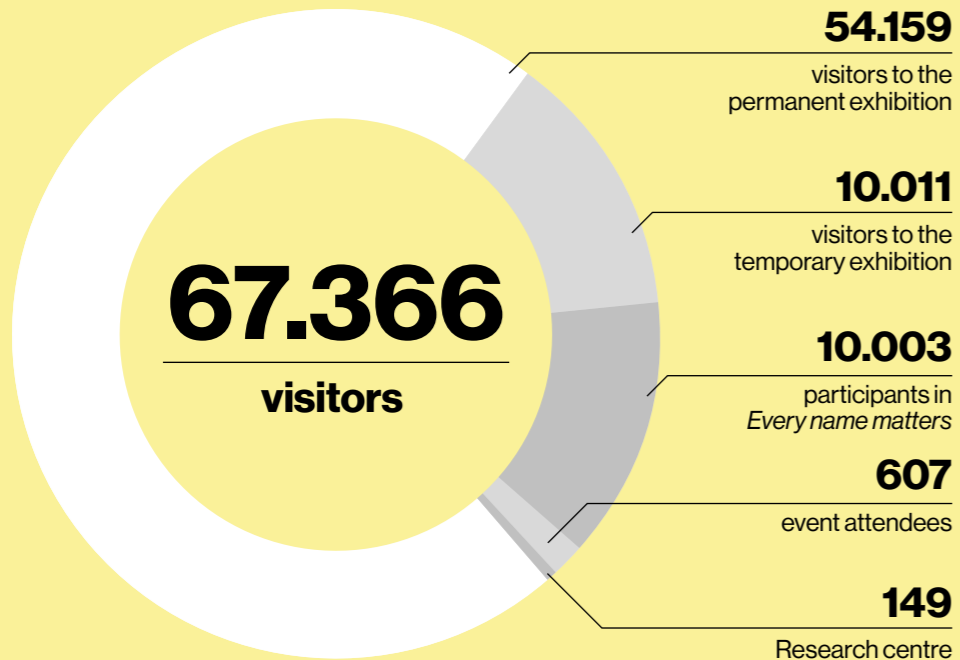
*“Is sport still sport if it is used as punishment?”*

— Adriaan Baccaert, project coordinator and public and education coordinator.



Photograph: Sifin Swinnen

# 2025 statistics



15 full-time employees

**29**  
employees

12 part-time employees

**59**  
guides

2 seconded employees

**39**  
volunteers



Photographs: Evenbeeld



**34**  
donations  
to the archive

**19**  
publications

**136**  
new portraits  
added to the  
portrait wall



# Arielle Margaux interview

**Arielle Margaux is a member of the executive board of the CCOJB (Coordinating Committee of Jewish Organisations in Belgium), where she holds the position of Representative for Holocaust Memory.**

**Your title at CCOJB is “Representative for Holocaust Memory.” It is a rather unusual phrasing. What exactly does it mean?**

This position did not exist before; it was created because we felt that the framework for remembrance within our community urgently needed to be reviewed. The CCOJB coordinates some 40 Jewish associations, including several remembrance organisations. My role is to guide the transfer of this heritage to future generations whilst building bridges between the community and external institutions in order to ensure continuity.

I never perceived the title as a heavy responsibility because remembrance has a unifying effect. It is an essential part of our identity as well as an educational tool: a way of bringing people together around universal values.

**The way in which we remember has changed considerably. What is the most significant challenge today?**

There is a palpable tension. On the one hand, existing associations need to be able to fully disseminate their own operations. I totally understand this. On the other hand, remembrance needs to become more accessible and contemporary so that it appeals to today's society.

It is essential to develop new projects in collaboration with established institutions to ensure that transmission and education are anchored in the tangible and in irrefutable truth. It is the only credible response to revisionist tendencies.

What worries me is the fragmentation. There are many valuable volunteer projects in place in Belgium, but structural initiatives are scarce. How will these projects survive the individuals that are running them today? That is the question that concerns me most.

**Is there an image or moment you cannot forget?**

For a long time I felt that the Holocaust was someone else's story. I come from a family where this hardship was hardly mentioned. Over the years – and particularly when my children discovered the history of the Holocaust – my outlook changed. Today, I accompany young people in Poland searching for traces of this past.

Gradually, I understood that part of my own family had been deported. I felt the impact of the silence prevalent in so many Jewish families, i.e., 'not facing up to the facts' in order to survive. It is an intense form of resilience.

What strikes me is our relationship with history and what we do with it in our own lives. After all, we also shape ourselves via history. In 2024 I visited Morocco, Andalusia and Poland within the space of one year. In any Moroccan or Andalusian city you notice the Jewish presence in stones, neighbourhoods and names, even if

there is no longer a community there. These are traces that have survived absence. That is the strength of our heritage. We do not know what will become of our communities, but we have the opportunity to record our history and memory today for future generations.

**Who are you addressing when you talk about the Holocaust?**

Today, my first interlocutor is the Jewish community itself. But it is more ambitious than that: it is about developing a common identity through an educational commemoration programme, in collaboration with existing institutions. We want to provide tools for understanding and pass on our own memory of the Holocaust: with the seriousness and embodiment assigned to it by the Jewish community.

The political world and civil society are increasingly demanding guidance and tangible content to address these issues. It is up to us to respond to it with care: the transmission of this heritage is our duty.

What strongly motivates me is the story of the children in hiding and those recognised as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem. It resonates directly with young people: you can resist reprehensible authority, you can protect others, you can refuse. These are humanistic and common-sense values that are needed more than ever.

**What can an institution such as Kazerne Dossin do?**

Kazerne Dossin is crucial. The site where memory is anchored and will not disappear; where history is tangible. At a time when the voices of witnesses are falling silent, the continued presence of a place like this is critical. It embodies a past: stable, irrefutable and necessary.

My message to Kazerne Dossin is: 'Make contact with the outside world.' You have the legitimacy and the knowledge; share it. Reach out to the public, to young people and to those who wouldn't find their way to the museum naturally. Memories should not only be preserved, but also made accessible, kept alive and transmitted.

*“There is a palpable tension. On the one hand, existing associations need to be able to fully disseminate their own operations. I totally understand this. On the other hand, remembrance needs to become more accessible and contemporary so that it appeals to today's society.”*

**What would you like people to understand about remembrance activities?**

War, and in particular the Holocaust, cannot be reduced to numbers or geopolitical analyses. More than anything it is a story of people who did not ask for this and to whom we must return their dignity: a face, a voice, a life story. Moreover, we must not forget those who helped, rescued or resisted.

Passing on these life stories is a form of resistance in itself. It is a victory over the dehumanisation that the Nazis sought to impose. History is made by individuals, by destiny and by human choices. We are tasked with keeping their stories alive, passing on the memories and giving them a face.

Big history is the sum of many small stories

# 80 years of peace

8 May 1945: Victory in Europe Day. The day on which the Nazis surrendered to the Allies and World War II officially came to an end. 80 years later, we looked back, together with Radio 1. Ruth Joos welcomed several interesting guests for an in-depth round table discussion at the museum. Tomas Baum, Wim Opbrouck, Inge Vrancken and Christophe Busch shared their visions and reflections on 80 years of peace. They reflected on the impact of the world war on our society today and tried to identify solutions and definitions for peace in an unstable world.



Photograph: VRT Radio 1

***“I do struggle sometimes when we say that times are bad now. Times have never really been hopeful. Sadly, human beings are not inclined by nature to keep the peace. This has been the case since the dawn of mankind.”***

- Wim Opbrouck, Radio 1-special 80 years of peace



# Post-war tracing forms: a poignant source for new photographs

In searching for images for the impressive portrait wall, Kazerne Dossin collaborates with the State Archives in Belgium, in particular the War Victims Archive Department. Together we have been exploring an exceptional resource since 2024: the Belgian Repatriation Commission's index cards that were compiled for people still missing after the liberation.

## Large-scale search

To understand the historical value of this archive, we have to go back eighty years. The Commission launched a national appeal with notices in the weekend papers of 29 and 30 September 1945. Along with instructions broadcast on radio, citizens were asked to submit an index card for loved ones who had been deported abroad as a result of the war and had not yet returned. The message was compelling: "Only people for whom a questionnaire has been completed will be traced." The Commission was inundated with submissions.

To gather information about all the people for whom an index card had been submitted, the Commission organised a travelling exhibition to be viewed throughout Belgium. Following the opening in Brussels on 6 June 1946, the exhibition visited the provincial capitals and made several additional stops in regions where there had been relatively high numbers of deportees. These large-scale activities were initial stages in an ongoing search that would continue for many years.

## The search for loved ones

Abraham-David Zajdman completed an index card hoping to obtain information about his young niece, Irène Finkelstein. The Commission set up a file for every missing person, with a photograph if one was available. Because Abraham had sent a photograph of Irène, we were able to add it to the portrait wall in 2025.

Thirty-year-old Aron Gratvol was being traced by his brother Philippe. Most of the photographs on the portrait wall originate from foreigner dossiers for which all foreigners aged 15 or over were required to provide a photograph. Paradoxically, it is thus often more difficult to find a photograph of a Belgian deportee than a photograph of someone who had a foreigner's dossier. The Commission's dossiers provide a solution here: they supply new images, as is the case with Aron, who was Belgian.

In 2025 we added 126 photographs from these dossiers to the portrait wall. The ongoing research in these archives promises to deliver many more results, which will enable us to put a face to more deportees in 2026.

1. N° d'ordre : 17.985  
 2. Catégorie : P.P.  
 3. Nom et prénoms : FINKELSTEIN Irène  
 4. Nationalité : Polonaise  
 5. Lieu de domicile : ANVERS  
 6. Date de naissance : 22/7/39  
 7. N° matricule :  
 8. Date et lieu des dernières nouvelles : MALINES XXI Transport  
 9. Observations :  
 Opmerkingen :

File based on the index card filled out by Zajdman.

COMMISSARIAT BELGE AU RAPATRIEMENT  
 Fiche de Recherche de Disparus  
 à remplir pour toute personne ayant été envoyée à l'étranger le fait de guerre et qui n'en est pas encore rentrée.  
 UN SEUL QUESTIONNAIRE PAR DISPARU. UN SEUL DISPARU. UN SEUL QUESTIONNAIRE. REMPLIR EN CARACTÈRES D'IMPRIMERIE. CULES, CRAYON ANILINE SI POSSIBLE.  
 Ce questionnaire, dûment rempli, suivant les indications données à la radio belge le dimanche 30 sept., à 13 et 22 h., 1er octobre, à 20 heures, et le mardi 2 octobre, à 22 heures, découpé et renvoyé immédiatement, SOUS ENVELOPPE FERMÉE AFFRANCHIE À L'ADRESSE RAPATRIEMENT - BRUXELLES A. POSSIBLE, UNE PHOTO DU DISPARU.  
 Les envois ne seront plus acceptés après le 3 octobre.  
 A DÉCOUPER

17985  
 DEMANDE DE RENSEIGNEMENTS  
 OU DE RAPATRIEMENT CONCERNANT :  
 1. Nom : Zajdman  
 Prénoms : Abraham David  
 Né le : 22/7/39 à Anvers  
 Nationalité : Polonaise  
 Nom(s) d'emprunt éventuel(s) :  
 2. Dernière adresse en Belgique : ANVERS  
 32, rue Jacob Jacobs  
 3. Dernières nouvelles reçues de Malines XXI transport  
 le sous le n° matricule  
 Transmises par  
 3a. Si décès, annoncé par qui ?  
 Preuves éventuelles  
 4. Catégorie (biffer les mentions inutiles) : Prisonnier politique  
 Cette demande est formulée par :  
 1. Nom : Zajdman  
 Prénoms : Abraham David  
 Nationalité : Belge  
 2. Adresse : 21, Boule. Leopold, 11, Bruxelles  
 3. Par rapport au disparu vous êtes : Oncle  
 Signature

Index card filled out by Abraham-David Zajdman, seeking information about his niece Irène.

BELGISCH COMMISSARIAAT VOOR REPATRIERING  
 STEEKKAART  
 voor het opzoeken der Vermisten  
 in te vullen voor iedereen persoon die, ingevolge den oorlog, naar het buitenland werd gezonden en nog niet naar het vaderland is teruggekeerd.  
 Alleen de personen voor dewelke een vragenlijst ingevuld werd, zullen opgespoord worden.  
 EEN ENKELE VRAGENLIJST PER VERMISTE. — EEN ENKELE VERMISTE PER VRAGENLIJST. — INVULLEN IN GEDRUKTE HOOFDLETTERS, ZOOG MOGELIJK MET ANILINEPOTLOOD.  
 Deze vragenlijst, behoorlijk ingevuld volgens de aanduidingen, die langs de Belgische radio zullen gegeven worden op Zondag, 30 September, te 13 en 19 uur, Maandag, 1 October, te 7 uur en Dinsdag, 2 October, te 22 uur, moet uitgeknipt en onmiddellijk teruggestuurd worden, ONDER NIET GEFRANKERD GESLOTEN OMSLAG AAN VOLGEND ADRES: REPATRIERING - BRUSSEL, met INDIEN HET MOGELIJK IS, EEN FOTO VAN DEN VERMISTE.  
 De verzendingen worden na den 3n October niet meer aangenomen.  
 UIT TE SNIJDEN  
 Aanvraag voor inlichtingen of tot repatriering van :  
 1. Naam :  
 Voornamen : te  
 Geboren den Nationaliteit  
 Gebeurlijk aangenomen naam (namen) :  
 2. Laatste adres in België :  
 3. Laatste bekomen inlichtingen van den onder stamnummer  
 Overgemaakt door  
 3.a Indien overlijden, door wie(n) gemeld ?  
 Gebeurlijke bewijzen  
 4. Categorie (de onnoodige vermeldingen doorhalen) :  
 1) Krijgsgevangene ; 2) Politieke gevangene ; 3) Vrijwillige arbeider ; 4) Weggevoerde arbeider ; 5) Vrijwillige uitgewekene.  
 Deze aanvraag is ingediend door :  
 1. Naam :  
 Voornamen :  
 Nationaliteit  
 2. Adres :  
 3. In verhouding tot den Vermiste is U  
 Handteekening :

Index card in the weekend papers of Gazet van Mechelen, 29-30 September 1945.

1. N° d'ordre : 20023  
 2. Catégorie : P.P. (Juif)  
 3. Nom et prénoms : GRATVOL ARON DE RENE  
 4. Nationalité : Belge  
 5. Lieu de domicile : Bruxelles  
 Woonplaats : Chaussée de Forest, 331  
 6. Date de naissance : 7.1.1913  
 7. N° matricule :  
 8. Date et lieu des dernières nouvelles : août 1943 de Malines  
 9. Observations :  
 Opmerkingen :

File based on the index card filled out by Philippe Gratvol.

Interview with curator Aleksandra Janus

# Landscape Archive: an artistic journey through Holocaust sites in Poland.

**In May and June 2025, the guest exhibition *Landscape Archive* was on display at Kazerne Dossin. The exhibition is an artistic translation of the research of the Zapomniane project, which seeks to identify and mark so far hidden places of burial within the Polish landscape.**

Photograph: Antoine Rassart

## **What is the Zapomniane Foundation?**

### **Since when does it exist and what is its mission?**

The Zapomniane Foundation was established in 2014 in Warsaw to deal with the forgotten legacy of the Holocaust. There are over 1,000 unmarked burial sites of victims killed outside the camps and dispersed in forests and fields scattered across Poland. These are the resting places of European Jews whose fates and names are often forgotten. So far, the Foundation has located about 300 of them, marked 100 of them, and permanently commemorated over a dozen. We also collect stories and testimonies, and preserve the memory of each of them through documentation of our field research.

### **How do you carry out this work in practice?**

Local non-Jewish Polish communities who have knowledge about the burials of Holocaust victims in their towns and villages notify us, and in response, we carry out our investigations. To avoid disturbing the burials and respect the rules of Jewish religious law, Halakha, we combine non-invasive archaeological and forensic research with collecting oral histories,



Photograph: Antoine Rassart

archival queries, and historical expertise that allow us to precisely locate and secure the burial sites in question. To engage various stakeholders in the commemorative processes, we work with artists, academics and activists. The knowledge we gather is shared through our online archive, as well as through exhibitions, publications, and collaboration on artistic projects.

**When did the idea to make an exhibition come up? What sparked the idea?**

Aleksander Schwarz, a member of our research team, who is also a photographer and who collects most of the Foundation's visual documentation, came up with the idea. After investigating hundreds of sites, he highlighted the role of landscape as an archive combined with vernacular memory in the type of forensic investigations we conduct.

Landscape is not only scenery where history happens, but it also stores evidence that can be an important source of knowledge for researchers of the past. Places that seem empty can in fact be full of traces of events from years ago. Similarly, events that may have very little or no trace in the archives can be part of local, vernacular memory that is transmitted from one generation to another.

**Why did you choose to showcase this exhibition at Kazerne Dossin? What is the message you wish to convey with it, and to whom?**

The term Holocaust immediately evokes the image of extermination camps. However, the region of Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland, is covered with forgotten burial sites of Jews murdered outside the camps. Showcasing this exhibition at Kazerne Dossin was an opportunity to talk about the diversity of experiences of the Holocaust across the continent and to bring attention to the material legacies of that violence that persists in the landscape, often still awaiting commemoration. Knowing that so many Jews in Belgium originated from Poland and had family who perished there, it was important to us to make this connection.



***“Guest exhibitions and activities such as yours bring new and interesting initiatives to the fore. We are very honoured to have been able to showcase this important work on Holocaust remembrance at Kazerne Dossin”***

- Veerle Vanden Daelen, curator at Kazerne Dossin



# Visitor impressions

*“Thank you for the poignant memory of all these senselessly lost lives ...”*

- From the guest book of *Every name matters*

*“It really felt like I was walking through history.”*

- Feedback from a student who participated in a guided tour.

*“The way in which the guide started his tour was truly impressive. What has stayed with me the most is that people who neither opposed nor cooperated were able to continue to live freely.”*

- Feedback from a pupil who participated in a guided tour

**“A poignant and unforgettable setting. Kazerne Dossin deals with the horror of the Holocaust in a human way – each face, each story touches a nerve. This is no ordinary museum, but a warning and a lesson that everyone should experience at one time or another.”**

- Google Review

***“I found it interesting because I gained access to methods demonstrating how to raise difficult topics in class. Also on the best way to deal with this as a teacher.”***

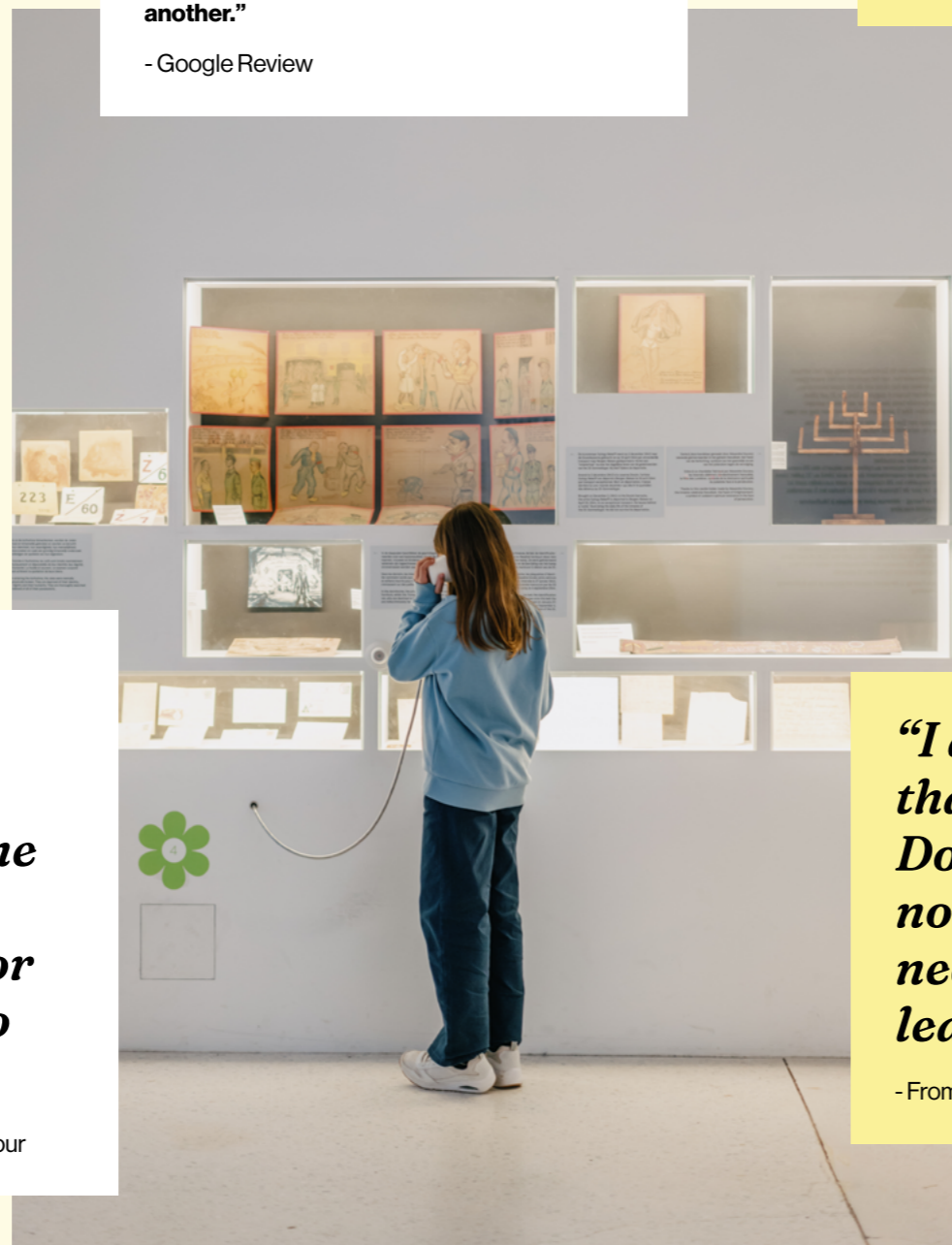
- Feedback from a teacher after a training session

***“the information was particularly poignant. I also found it touching that several names of deportees recurred several times throughout the visit. This made the holocaust feel even more personal and less abstract to me.”***

- Answer from the Sentomus visitor survey

***“I am genuinely pleased that I visited the Kazerne Dossin Barracks. It was not an easy visit, but a necessary and valuable learning process.”***

- From the report of a participant in the educational program



Photograph: Evenbeeld

## Colophon

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### Support our operations

Kazerne Dossin commemorates the victims of the Holocaust in Belgium in a composed and serene manner. It also draws attention to current injustices. To initiate new, worthwhile projects Kazerne Dossin needs your financial support. Read more about this on the website. [www.kazernedossin.eu/en/support](http://www.kazernedossin.eu/en/support)

### Word of thanks

Kazerne Dossin would like to thank the many staff members and volunteers who make our daily operations possible. We also express our gratitude to the Flemish Government, the City of Mechelen, and the players of the National Lottery for their indispensable support.



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