

Night of broken glass still haunts Germany

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Violence and vandalism: 267 synagogues were destroyed and 7,000 Jewish businesses were torn down on Kristallnacht.

Are we living in a pre-war age? It has been 85 years since the Nazi regime instigated a violent antisemitic outburst that changed the course of history. Almost a century on, some fear that tensions could spill over once again.

What's happening?

Kristallnacht, or the "Night of Broken Glass", was an outburst of violence against Germany's Jewish community on the night of the 9th November 1938. Nearly 100 Jews were killed and far more injured. Many lost their livelihoods.

There has been a sharp increase in **antisemitic** violence in the past week. Some fear that we are returning to a dark past where war loomed.

Find out more

Survivors of that night all have one thing in common: they have never forgotten.

"My whole life, I've never been able to get those pictures out of my head," says Charlotte Knobloch. "The **pogrom** night took away my childhood," says Ruth Winkelmann.

It is easy to understand why. The memories they have are traumatising. Buildings were burned to the ground, Jewish-owned businesses were destroyed, and even their homes were robbed.

Many fear that antisemitism in Europe is on the rise once again. The Community Security Trust reports that antisemitic incidents in Britain increased by more than 300% last week. Some think that it is a sign that we are inching towards conflict.

Are we living in a pre-war age?

Some say

Yes! There are many similarities between how society is now and how it was before the wars of the 20th Century.

Others think

No! There is always violence and persecution. We should stand against **prejudice** in all its forms, but there is no sign it will lead to war.

Some people say

"Racism may indeed carry out the doom of the Western world and, for that matter, of the whole of human civilisation."

Hannah Arendt (1906 – 1975), German-American historian and political philosopher

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Did you know about Kristallnacht before reading this article?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: What caused Kristallnacht?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Write a list of what you think causes wars.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - Imagine that the prime minister asks you how to reduce prejudice in society. What would you say?

5. Express

What do others believe? - In a small group, find out three facts about Kristallnacht.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - You are a time traveller who has been sent to the year 2030. You find yourself in the middle of World War Three. Write a story about your experiences travelling through time.

Glossary

Antisemitic - Hostile to or prejudiced against Jewish people.

Pogrom - A violent riot with the aim of massacring or forcing out an ethnic group, particularly Jewish people.

Prejudice - An idea about something, especially a group of people, that is not based on reality.