

Holocaust Remembrance in Argentina: The State and Local Jewish Communities

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In the mid-1990s, as countries in the Southern Cone were grappling with the legacies of State terror in the region, the Holocaust progressively became a paradigmatic case, a sort of template or global prism that inspired local memory practices. At the same time, countries in the region began to develop policies aimed at remembering the Holocaust by itself. In this framework, Argentina constitutes a singular case.

Firstly, Argentina has a large and diverse Jewish community, which includes a high number of Holocaust survivors and descendants. Secondly, the country has suffered the most criminal military regime (1976-1983) in the region, infamous for the systematic disappearance of people and the development of clandestine detention centers. In the wake of these events, both grassroots organizations, as well as later the state, developed a rich array of memory practices, including memorials, museums, and commemorations. In 2000, Argentina became part of the International Task Force for Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research (now IHRA). Since then, successive Argentine governments representing different political leanings have ratified their commitment to Holocaust commemoration and education. The present study seeks to analyze and contextualize the politics of memory in a country that did not have an immediate connection with the events of the Holocaust, and yet has built squares, memorials, museums, testimony collection centers, pedagogical teaching materials, and even incorporated Holocaust education in public schools. Bearing in mind that Holocaust memorialization had been initially an internal affair of the Argentine Jewish community, this paper focuses on the current prominent role of State as it coalesces and diverges with the communal initiatives.