# Chapter 5.4. Did Britain do enough to help the Jews?

**Resource sheet 5.4.1: Timeline / sorting activity**

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| **November 1938**  Following **Kristallnacht** relief organisations asked the British government to allow German and Austrian Jews into Britain. In total, approximately 80,000 Jewish refugees came to Britain. This was just a fraction of those in need. | **December 1938**  The first **kindertransport** arrived in Britain. This scheme led to a total of 10,000 Jewish children coming to Britain from Nazi controlled countries. |
| **May 1939**  Some Jews wanted to go to the British Mandate of Palestine (much of the region is known as Israel today). This is where Judaism began and where the holiest place is for Jews. Palestine was controlled by the British. To prevent unrest amongst the Arab population there the British government introduced **severe restrictions upon Jewish immigration into Palestine.** These restrictions were not relaxed during or after the war. | **1940**  In early 1940 the war was going badly for Britain. There was increasing anti foreign feeling in Britain, in part fuelled by the press. In this atmosphere the government **imprisoned thousands of Germans and Austrians, including 27,000 Jewish refugees**. Most were released later that year but the experience was a traumatic one for many. |
| **July – August 1941**  **German radio messages were decoded by Bletchley Park**. They gave details of the numbers of people, including Jews, being shot by police and SS troops as they advanced into the Soviet Union. The British Prime Minister Churchill received summaries of this information in daily reports. | **24th August 1941**  **Britain’s Prime Minister Winston Churchill made a speech** which was broadcast by the BBC. He referred to the actions of German police units in the Soviet Union and said *“We are in the presence of a crime without a name.”* |
| **25th June 1942**  **The *Daily Telegraph* published information** that 700,000 Polish Jews had been murdered, naming Chelmno as one of the killing sites. The information came to Britain via the Polish underground. | **August 1942**  The British Foreign Office received a report which became known as the **Riegner telegram**. This informed the British government that the Nazis had a plan to kill millions of European Jews. |
| **17th December 1942**  With increasing knowledge about the murder of Jews in Europe, the government felt that it needed to act. Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, read out a statement in Parliament called the **‘Joint Declaration by Members of the United Nations’** on behalf of both the British and American governments. The statement ended with a pledge that those responsible for these crimes would be punished. | **April 1943**  **The Bermuda Conference** was held between Britain and the USA to discuss possible rescue plans for victims of the Nazis and to make plans for refugees. The conference achieved very little. Not one Jewish person was saved as a result of it. |
| **June 1944**  The British and the Americans received detailed reports about Auschwitz known as the **Auschwitz protocols;** they contained detailed information about the gas chambers and crematoria, based upon information from 4 men who had escaped from Auschwitz. Some argued that the train lines to Auschwitz should be bombed, it was decided that it was best to focus upon winning the war. | **15th April 1945**  **British troops discover the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen**. The discovery of Belsen came as a terrible shock to the liberating British troops. Details of the conditions there were broadcast to the British public via radio, film and newspaper reports |