

# The Netherlands 80 years on: Unique archive reveals names of nearly half a million Nazi collaborators

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Eighty years after the end of World War II, an archive of Nazi war criminals and collaborators in the Netherlands has opened to the public. On January 1, 2025, the Central Archives of the Special Jurisdiction, or the Centraal Archief Bijzondere Rechtspleging (CABR), the largest and most frequently accessed World War II archive in the Netherlands, was partially made accessible online (see: <https://oorlogvoorderechter.nl/>).

The CABR contains approximately 30 million pages of documents in total that provide valuable insights into the victims of the Holocaust, resistance fighters against Nazi occupation, and efforts by the Dutch working class to protect Jewish residents from deportation. Importantly, the archive identifies the names of 425,000 individuals, nearly 5 percent of the Dutch population at the time, who were suspected and investigated for collaboration with the Nazis during the occupation of the Netherlands from May 1940 to May 1945.

The 3.8 kilometer-long CABR archive was previously only accessible to a limited number of historians, and individuals directly involved during the Nazi occupation and their descendants. Previously, it could only be viewed in person at the National Archives in The Hague. Currently, 8 million pages are available online worldwide, or can be accessed by anyone in person by appointment.

The project, known as Oorlog voor de Rechter (War in Court), was initiated by historians in the late 1990s with the goal of digitising and centralising World War II documents that were previously scattered across regional archives and stored in inadequate conditions. The digitisation of the archive officially began in 2022 and is expected to be completed by 2027.

The archive contains detailed dossiers on Nazi collaborators and war criminals, some of which are hundreds of pages long. These files meticulously document allegations, investigations, and tribunal outcomes, including personal statements, testimonies, and official reports. The accusations range from harbouring Nazi soldiers and exchanging information to direct involvement in Nazi activities during the five-year occupation of the Netherlands.

The index, currently only accessible in Dutch, includes the names, birthdates, and birthplaces of deceased individuals found in the records. However, the accompanying documents—providing the most telling and compelling evidence of the nature of fascism, Nazi networks, operations and atrocities—were withheld from

online publication. The Dutch Data Protection Authority swiftly blocked the release of the full dossiers, citing violations of EU privacy rules.

The archive has since been subjected to a media campaign seeking to undermine and discredit the historical and political significance of its material and backing its online censorship. This has been met with blanket silence from representatives of the entire political establishment, including the nominal left.

The Amsterdam-based NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies, which was part of the War in Court project, has protested against the withholding of documents. In a statement published on January 10, it declared, “NIOD is urging that this situation be rectified quickly and effectively by making the scanned underlying files available online as soon as possible. The restrictions on the disclosure of the CABR should also be lifted as soon as possible.”

There is significant interest among the Dutch population in accessing and studying the documents, as well as the list of names. According to a spokesperson from the National Archives, as quoted by the *Brussels Times*, “the website is experiencing extremely high traffic. This morning, we had a large queue of people wanting to access the reservation module.”

Werner Zonderop, who works at the archive, told the Associated Press, “The interest has been incredible. Slots for the reading room are booked until the end of February. Every day, new appointment times open at midnight and fill up within minutes.”

During the Holocaust, 75 percent of the Jewish population in the Netherlands—most of whom had lived in the country for centuries—were systematically killed. The vast majority perished in concentration and extermination camps such as Auschwitz and Sobibor, marking the highest percentage of Jewish casualties in a single country in Western Europe.

It would be politically shortsighted and false to believe that the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands enjoyed broad support among the Dutch population. While the Dutch bourgeoisie and their royal elite fled across the English Channel to save themselves and their wealth, the Dutch working class has a rich record of bravely resisting Nazi occupation.

One of the most courageous acts of resistance during World War II was the hiding and sheltering of the Jewish population from the Nazis. Approximately 28,000 people went into hiding in the

Netherlands, most of them Jewish refugees from Austria and Germany. More than half remained undetected. Among them was Anne Frank and her family from Frankfurt, who was eventually betrayed, and whose diary written in hiding in the secret annex at Prinsengracht, Amsterdam continues to inspire millions worldwide.

In February 1941, the Dutch working class made history by bravely resisting the Nazi occupation and defending Jewish citizens in what is widely regarded as the first public protest against the Nazis in occupied Europe. On February 17 and 18, Dutch shipyard workers went on strike.

This sparked a widespread strike wave on February 24, initiated by tram drivers and sanitation crews, later joined by dockworkers and much of the industrial working class. Factories, offices, shops, and restaurants were shut down, with an estimated 300,000 people participating in Amsterdam alone. The wave of strikes spread across cities, drawing in a broad cross-section of the working class, including doctors, miners, farmers, university staff, and students.

The opening of the archive provides invaluable insights into a dark period of Dutch history and raises unresolved historical, political, and class questions of the 20th century: the betrayal of the German working class by Social Democracy and Stalinism, which paved the way for fascism and World War II, leading to 80 million deaths, including the annihilation of 6 million Jews.

In March 1933, upon Hitler seizing power, Leon Trotsky, living in exile on the island of Prinkipo, wrote:

There is one common reason for the collapse of democracy: capitalist society has outlived its strength. The national and international antagonisms which break out in it destroy the democratic structure just as world antagonisms are destroying the democratic structure of the League of Nations. Where the progressive class shows itself unable to seize power so as to reconstruct society on the basis of socialism, capitalism in its agony can only preserve its existence by using the most brutal, anti-cultural methods, the extreme expression of which is Fascism. That historic fact appears in Hitler's victory.

The relevance of Trotsky's analysis of Germany in 1933 — and its damning aftermath as glaringly evident in the Dutch archival material — is strikingly applicable to the present-day Netherlands, to the US, Germany and other countries. Like other imperialist powers, the Dutch ruling class is reviving its own infamous colonial traditions, preparing for a new redivision of the globe with ever-increasing war budgets at the expense of social spending, coupled with a vicious attack on refugees and immigrant workers.

The rise of far-right parties, particularly in Europe and the US, is intricately tied to global militarisation and the increasing economic inequality exacerbated by capitalist rule and imperialist policies. Former Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, now NATO Secretary General, is advocating raising defence budgets up to 4 percent of GDP, with the US and Germany pushing for even more significant

risers.

In the Netherlands, military spending will double from €12 billion in 2021 to €24 billion in 2025. The Hague has pledged €10.4 billion in support for Ukraine from 2022 to 2025, with €3.76 billion already spent.

This skyrocketing defence expenditure is at the expense of the meagre social budget, cut under four successive Rutte governments. Now a further €1.2 billion is cut from education, €300 million from healthcare, and €315 million from cultural institutes. Unemployment benefits are being reduced and VAT increases are expected for sectors like culture, media, and sports.

Persistent inflation of around 4 percent has worsened the living conditions of the Dutch working class. Mandatory health insurance has gone up by 6.8 percent, and rents between 5.8 and 8 percent in a single year, while pandemic billionaires and the financial elite continue to reap windfall profits. A recent statistic revealed that within the first week of the new year, 16 Dutch CEOs had already bagged the annual wages of a Dutch worker earning the minimum wage of €14 an hour.

Growing militarisation combined with unprecedented cuts in education, health and housing are escalating class tensions. The answer of the ruling class in the Netherlands, as elsewhere, is to boost the far-right, fan the flames of national chauvinism and scapegoat the poorest sections of the working class such as refugees and immigrant workers for social ills.

It is the right of the Dutch and international working class to have unrestricted access to the full material available in the Dutch national archive to gain the crucial historical understanding of the dynamics of fascistic policies and rule during occupation. This understanding is essential as the European political and financial elites increasingly resemble their class predecessors in the 1930s and 1940s, embracing authoritarian forms of rule, imperialist war, genocide and austerity.

The only viable response to the crisis of capitalism, its oligarchy and the danger of fascism is the revolutionary mobilisation of the working class on a world scale guided by a socialist programme.



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