

Confirm your email address to get six free articles a month

Validate Email



Ad By Sponsor

Click Here f

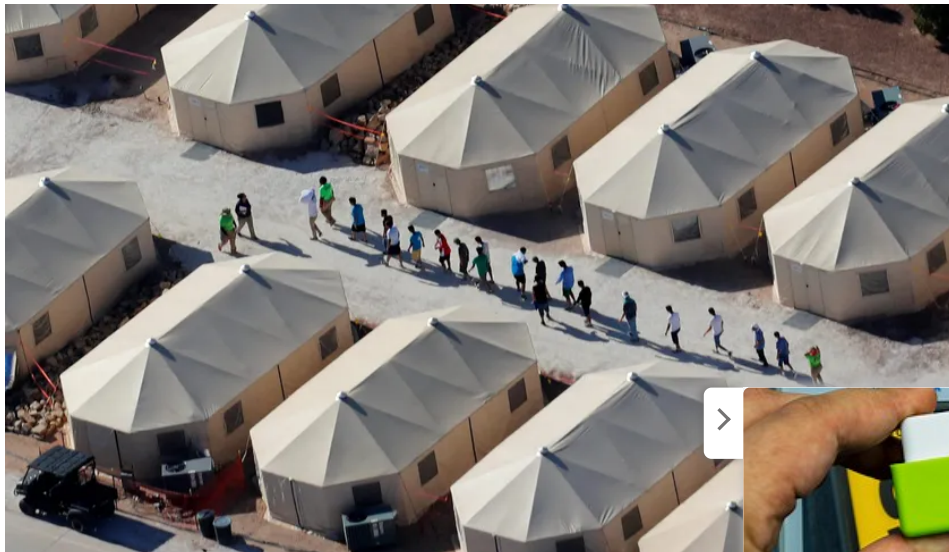
Don't miss this

Haaretz | World News

Opinion | Donald Trump Is Still Setting Up Concentration Camps on American Soil

It is an earlier incarnation of Auschwitz, a place of indefinite detention for a vilified minority, that we saw on our border this week. The president's executive order offers no evidence this will change

Andrea Pitzer Jun 24, 2019 [Follow](#)



Immigrant children in a tent encampment under the new 'zero tolerance' policy by the Trump administration walking single file at a facility near the Mexican border. Tornillo, 2018 Credit: \ MIKE BLAKE/ REUTERS



Smart Lifestyle Trends

Who Has The Best Car Insurance Prices in 2024?



Listen to this article now

06:17

Powered by **Trinity Audio**

Search

**HAARETZ**

@alexodus777

SUBSCRIBE NOW

amid an on-going debate on whether or not Trump administration detention facilities should be called "concentration camps."

Andrea Pitzer@andreapitzer · **Follow**

Yes, of course they're concentration camps. They aren't the unique subset of death camps that were invented by the Nazis for genocide, or even Arctic Gulag camps built for hard labor. But they're camps created to punish a whole class of civilians via mass detention without trial. x.com/alixchristie/...

Alix Christie @alixchristie@andreapitzer are you weighing in on this? x.com/SethAbramson/s...

8:45 AM · Jun 17, 2018

**10.2K****Reply****Copy link****Read 82 replies**

When news came in recent days of the U.S. separating parents from children at the border and holding minors in a dedicated tent city in Texas, the phrase "concentration camp" began to appear in descriptions of the new facility. I was one of the people who used the term.

- Advertisement -





On Wednesday, President [Donald Trump](#) signed an [executive order](#) that may end up shifting the way families are processed, but as various journalists have [noted](#), it is not yet clear that there will be any improvement.



President Donald Trump gives the pen he used to sign the executive order to end family separations at the border to Homeland Security Sec. Kirstjen Nielsen. White House, Washington D.C. June 20, 2018 Credit: Pablo Martinez Monsivais/AP

For now, I will continue to use "concentration camp" for any internment of families clearly designed to punish > indefinite detention, whether children and parents or apart.

Israel At War: Get a daily summary directly to your inbox

Email *

thefinalexodus777@gmail.com

Please enter a valid email address

What qualifies as a concentration camp? It's a fraught question, because the story of the camps is such agonizing history. Writing an account of concentration camps from the point more than 100 years ago when the phrase was first used for civilian detention right up to the present, I found that when asked what a concentration camp is, people almost always answer: "Auschwitz."

Bill Maher: It Will Be Hard to Beat Trump With 'Concentration Camps and Reparations'

Ocasio-Cortez Claps Back at Steve King After King Urged Her to Go to Auschwitz

Bernie Sanders Distances Himself From AOC's 'Concentration Camps' Comparison

Auschwitz-Birkenau became the most infamous of the Nazi death camps because more than one million individuals were murdered there, some 900,000 of them the Jews of Europe, carried in on railroad tracks with the genocidal intent to end their lives. The grief of the individual losses, the devastation of a people, the stain on humanity, and especially the suffering of those who had to endure, whether they survived or not, means that Auschwitz *should* be the first thing that comes to mind when people hear the phrase "concentration camp."



And after writing my book, I believe that Auschwitz should be not only the first but also the second camp that comes to mind when hearing that phrase, because Auschwitz was not just one camp. As the millions who have visited the camp already know, Auschwitz had multiple incarnations. Its earliest incarnation points backward in time to reveal its evolution and stands as a warning sign today.

- Advertisement -

Before mass extermination began mid-war not far away at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the original main camp was already open. Auschwitz I was a functioning cog in the vast *Konzentrationslager*, the Nazi detention camp system that had existed for several years at that point.

The earliest days of the *Konzentrationslager* stretch back to arrests made in the weeks after Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany in January 1933. At that point, the phrase "concentration camp" did not yet mean the things we think of today.

The term referred to early colonial camps detaining Boer women and children in southern Africa at the turn of the century, with death tolls reaching into the tens of thousands. It meant the camps of the First World War, which ended up interning hundreds of thousands of enemy aliens around the real purpose.



The latter system did not have the fatalities of the first camps, but taught people to register, to turn themselves in, to go calmly to detention when instructed to, and to wait out their time in detention as national pariahs.

- Advertisement -

The *Konzentrationslager* system did not emerge from a vacuum. It rose in the wake of all of these prior camps and held reflections of smaller, informal camps that

everywhere in Europe at the time, including some for "Gypsies" (the people we now call Roma or Sinti) in the Weimar Republic. Across nearly four decades before the Nazis seized power, the term concentration camp was used for all of these.

Even half a century later, it can be hard to understand the turn toward death camps and the horrors of Auschwitz-Birkenau. But it is much easier to discern the origins of Auschwitz I. It rose from the early Nazi system, which drew on the awareness of the many camps that already existed in the world. Hitler himself directly referenced the Boer camps and the camps of the First World War.



A Mexican woman holds a doll next to children at the Paso Del Norte Port of Entry, in the US-Mexico border in Chihuahua state, Mexico on June 20, 2018 Credit: HERIKA MARTINEZ/AFP

While reports from the latest U.S. camps carry strange echoes of death camps (such as [talk of fictitious showers](#)), it is the earlier camp tradition that has been unfolding in more concrete ways on the border this week.

Years of the rhetoric of [infestation](#) and [dehumanization](#) from the President and administration officials culminated in the creation of a tent city for children. Civilians sit confined like criminals, corralled in pens or cages like animals, and policies (not laws) that place asylum-seekers outside the legal process. It is clear that this was planned months ago to punish a vilified minority.

Auschwitz as a whole served as not just the end point of the abyss but also the bridge that marked the transition

comprehensible horrors of prior camps to the unfathomable. We can see the growing parallels today in the blame that is cast on refugees and the expensive machinations that misallocate scarce resources and goad a fevered public into embracing authoritarian impulses.

What the U.S. has been operating this week are not death camps – those existed in only one historical moment. But these new sites are concentration camps, and their insidious presence opens the door for worse versions, even if they never enter the same tragic universe as the Shoah. We do not need to believe we would arrive at the same endpoint in order to know that we should not set foot on that bridge.

Andrea Pitzer is the author of One Long Night: A Global History of Concentration Camps. She has written for The Washington Post, Vox, Slate, and USA Today and McSweeney's. She studied at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and MIT, and at Harvard as an affiliate of the Nieman Foundation for Journalism. Twitter: [@andreapitzer](#)

Click the alert icon to follow topics:

 Donald Trump  Auschwitz  Holocaust

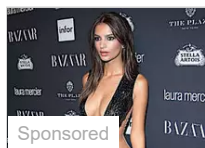
You Might Also Like



What frightens Ezra Klein most about Israel becoming a pariah state



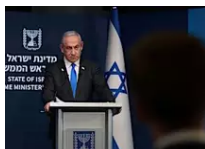
What Ta-Nehesi Coates gets wrong – and right – about Israel in 'The...



WackoJaco // [Photos] Her Dress At The Oscars Will Be Spoken About For Centuries



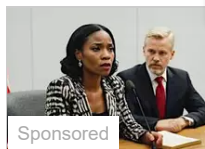
BeenVerified.com // What Does Your Name Mean?



Leaked Hamas documents, aimed at aiding Netanyahu,



139 East Jerusalem residents discover their land is



Finance Wall et // Michigan Launches New Policy For Cars

reveal his Oct.
7...

registered to
the...

Used Less
Than 50
Miles/Day

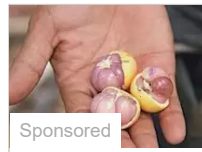
A Barrel Of
Whisky



Art meets a
'new
catastrophe':
How a new
Israeli
exhibition
grapples with...



Iranian
reports: At
least five
explosions
heard in
Tehran and
nearby city...



Sponsored

**wellnessguid
e104.com //**
Urologist:
Many Men
With an
Enlarged
Prostate
Don't Know
About This
Simple...



Sponsored

**Health Inside
Journal //**
Neuropathy
Breakthrough:
Why
Grounding
Technology Is
Turning
Heads

Comments

Name

Enter the commenter display name

Comment

By adding a comment, I agree to this site's [Terms of use](#)

Send



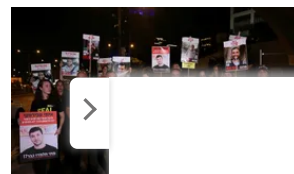
In the News



In First, Netanyahu
Not Invited to Biggest
Jewish-American
Confab of the Year



Israel at War, Day 400:
Qatar Withdraws as
Mediator in Israel-
 Hamas Cease-fire
Talks



Thousa
the Rele
Hostage



**What Netanyahu's
New U.S. Envoy Tells
Us About His Plans for
Trump, Gaza and the
Saudis**



**A Young Palestinian
Hangs Out at a Café.
Moments Later He Is
Shot Dead by Israeli
Troops**



**Learn How to
Optimize Your Home
Solar System**

ⓘ Paid by Sela
Infrastructures LTD

- Advertisement -



haircubed.com

**Official Web -
HairCubed® - Order N**

— Advertisement —

[Subscribe](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Terms and conditions](#) |
[Privacy policy](#) | [Cancellation of digital subscriptions](#) |
[Editorial](#) | [Newsletters](#) | [Accessibility](#) |
[Advertise on Haaretz.com](#) | [About Haaretz](#) | [Jobs](#)



Haaretz.com, the online English edition of Haaretz Newspaper in Israel, gives you breaking news, analyses and opinions about Israel, the Middle East and the Jewish World.
© Haaretz Daily Newspaper Ltd. All Rights Reserved

