

## Fact Sheet

### International Tracing Service records available through the Red Cross

- Since its inception in 1990, the Holocaust and War Victims Tracing Center has documented the fates of more than 12,000 victims of Nazi persecution and reunited more than 1,200 people with loved ones missing for over 50 years. All tracing services of the American Red Cross are provided at no charge.
- Survivors needing documentation of internment, or information about the fates of missing loved ones can obtain information available at the International Tracing Service (ITS) simply by contacting the American Red Cross office in their community. Survivors living overseas can contact their national Red Cross society. In Israel, that society is called Magen David Adom. In addition to the ITS archives, the Red Cross has access to millions of records in other archives located throughout the world.
- The ITS, in Arolsen, Germany, is the single largest repository of original Nazi documents in the world. Its vast records cache includes lists of persons interned in concentration, forced, and slave labor camps and ghettos, as well as post war documents of displaced persons and people who immigrated to countries around the world.
- The Holocaust and War Victims Tracing Center obtains documentation from the International Tracing Service more quickly than is possible for an individual. This is because Tracing Center volunteers translate all requests into German and the requests are submitted in batches. These batches receive special handling when they reach Arolsen and complete responses are received within 6 – 9 months.
- The administration of the International Tracing Service (ITS) is determined by government treaty (the Bonn Accords) and the American Red Cross Holocaust and War Victims Tracing Center is not involved in its governance, processes or procedures.
- Since 1955 the International Committee of the Red Cross has administered the International Tracing Service, which is funded by the German government. An International Commission consisting of government representatives from 11 countries, including Italy, Great Britain, Belgium, Luxembourg, Israel, Germany, Greece, The Netherlands, France, the United States and Poland governs the ITS, as codified in the Bonn Accords.
- Historians have sought access to the ITS archives for Holocaust research for many years. In May, 2006, the International Commission/ITS voted unanimously to open the archives for authentic research. Issues of client confidentiality, who will be allowed access, the methodology and costs of duplicating the records, are among the many issues still to be decided, but the ITS is continuing to digitize the records, which are expected to be shared with the Commission members soon.