Dubnow Institute

The Age of Humanitarianism

Jewish and other global migrations between Empire and Decolonisation

Annual Conference
7–9 December 2026
Dubnow Institute, Leipzig



Monday, 7 December 2026

13.00 **Yfaat Weiss, Sebastian Willert, Eliana Hadjisavvas, Sebastian Musch**
Introduction & Opening Words

13.30 **Humanitarian Bureaucracies and Networks**
Chair: **Sebastian Musch**

Özlem Sultan Çolak
Between Relief and Resettlement:
Armenian Migration to Argentina in the Interwar Period

Michal Frankl
What is in a refugee case file?
HICEM, transnational management of Jewish migration and knowledge production in the 1930s

14.30 Coffee Break

15.00 **Governing Humanitarianism during Colonialism**
Chair: **Enrico Lucca**

Joseph Finlay
In Search of Home:
Jewish Colonial Governors in the British Empire

Bilha Shilo
Refugee Insiders and Outsiders: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Limits of Institutional Humanitarianism at the Outbreak of WWII

Sebastian Willert
University Solidarity and Colonial Entanglements: Academic Humanitarianism between Empire and Decolonisation

16.30 Coffee Break

17.00 **Keynote**
Chair: **Elisabeth Gallas**

Joanna Newman
Between a Rock and a Hard Place:
Refugee agencies and the search for rescue, 1933–1941

Tuesday, 8 December 2026

10.00 **Keynote**
Chair: **Nicolas Berg**

Kader Konuk
A ‘Tribunal of Humanity’:
Armin T. Wegner's Conception of Justice and the Talaat Pasha Trial

12.00 Lunch Break

13.00 **Humanitarian Relief in Post-War Shanghai**
Chair: **Monika Heinemann**

Tobias Brinkmann
Permanent Transit: The Evacuation of Jewish DPs from Shanghai 1949/50

Sara Halpern
The Limits of Relief: Jewish Refugees and Humanitarian Governance in Postwar Shanghai

14.00 Coffee Break

14.15 **Humanitarianism in Colonial Africa**
Chair: **Moritz Schmeing**

Jochen Lingelbach
World War Two Refugees in British Colonial East Africa

Matteo D’Avanzo
A Non-Colonial Empire? Jewish Humanitarian Networks in Ethiopia, 1922–1974

15.15 Coffee Break

15.30 **Jewish Migration in Colonial and Decolonial South Asia**
Chair: **Jan Gerber**

Benjamin Zachariah
Receiving Jewish Migrants in India

Shaul Marmari
'Non-Belongers':
India's Baghdadis and Decolonization

Sebastian Musch
Jewish Refugees in British Ceylon:
White Subalternity from World War II to Postcolonial Independence

17.00 Break & Transfer to Cinema

19.00 **Screening of Documentary**
Memory is Our Homeland
Opening Words: **Jörg Deventer**

Conversation with **Eliana Hadjisavvas** & **Jonathan Kołodziej Durand**

Venue:
Schaubühne Lindenfels, Karl-Heine-Straße 50, 04229 Leipzig; Registration required

Wednesday, 9 December 2026

9.30 **Humanitarian Networks, Mobility, and Jewish Migration in the Danube-Balkan Region**
Chair: **Ruth Nattermann**

Andreas Pfützner
The Crisis of the Fussgeyer

Anca Filipovici
The Contradictions of Humanitarianism: Exploring the Hungerflucht or the 1947 Romanian Jewish Exodus to Vienna

10.30 Coffee Break

10.45 **Activism, Humanitarian Relief, and the Politics of the Universal**
Chair: **Martin Jost**

Annika Heyen
"Stop Hitler Now!" - Jewish Activism Between Protest and Diplomacy on the Road to Bermuda

Rebekka Grossmann
Our Vietnam: Jewish Humanitarian Activism and the Vietnam War

Laura Gagliardi
Between Empires and Decolonisation: Anatol Rosenfeld, Intellectual Hospitality, and the Critique of Colonial Thought in Brazil

12.15 **Sebastian Willert, Eliana Hadjisavvas, Sebastian Musch**
Concluding Remarks

13.45 End of Conference

Speakers

Dr. Nicolas Berg, Dubnow Institute, Leipzig | **Prof. Dr. Tobias Brinkmann,** Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA | **Özlem Sultan Çolak,** University of Vienna | **Dr. Matteo D'Avanzo,** Van Leer Jerusalem Institute | **Prof. Dr. Jörg Deventer,** Dubnow Institute, Leipzig | **Dr. Anca Filipovici,** Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, Cluj-Napoca | **Dr. Joseph Finlay,** Birkbeck Institute for the Study of Antisemitism, London | **Dr. Michal Frankl,** Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe, Prague | **Dr. Laura Gagliardi,** University of Cologne | **Dr. Elisabeth Gallas,** Dubnow Institute, Leipzig | **Prof. Dr. Jan Gerber,** Dubnow Institute, Leipzig | **Dr. Rebekka Grossmann,** Leiden University | **Dr. Eliana Hadjisavvas,** Birkbeck Institute for the Study of Antisemitism, London | **Dr. Sara Halpern,** German Historical Institute Washington | **Dr. Monika Heinemann,** Dubnow Institute, Leipzig | **Annika Heyen,** Osnabrück University | **Dr. Martin Jost,** Dubnow Institute, Leipzig | **Jonathan Kołodziej Durand**, Montreal | **Prof. Dr. Kader Konuk,** Technical University Dortmund | **Dr. Jochen Lingelbach,** Bayreuth University | **Dr. Enrico Lucca,** Dubnow Institute, Leipzig | **Dr. des. Shaul Marmari,** Dubnow Institute, Leipzig | **Dr. Sebastian Musch,** Osnabrück University | **PD Dr. Ruth Nattermann,** University of Leipzig/Ludwig Maximilians University Munich | **Prof. Dr. Joanna Newman,** Goldsmiths, University of London | **Dr. Andreas Pfützner,** University of Cologne | **Moritz Schmeing,** Leibniz Institute of European History, Mainz | **Dr. Bilha Shilo,** Hebrew University, Jerusalem | **Prof. Dr. Yfaat Weiss,** Dubnow Institute, Leipzig/Hebrew University, Jerusalem | **Dr. Sebastian Willert,** Dubnow Institute, Leipzig | **Dr. Benjamin Zachariah,** Einstein Forum, Potsdam

Topic

The 20th century witnessed profound waves of Jewish migration and displacement on a global scale. Empires served as important arrival hubs for Jewish migrants, yet they were also sites of persecution and uprooting. The decades between the 1910s and the 1970s, from the decline of the Ottoman Empire to struggles for independence across Africa and Asia, were marked by colonial expansion and decolonisation, extreme violence, the Holocaust, the Cold War, and fundamental shifts in the concepts of borders, citizenship, and humanitarian governance. This period of imperial fragmentation compelled many to seek new lives in unfamiliar and often hostile places, rendering migration a defining aspect of the modern Jewish and non-Jewish experience. At the same time, the persecution of and violence against other minorities throughout the world led to large-scale domestic and international forced migrations.

Networks of support, hospitality, and solidarity proved crucial. Improving access to migration pathways enabled individuals to navigate restrictive border regimes. In an emerging era of humanitarianism, individuals, relief actors, and various stakeholders coordinated efforts to facilitate travel, acquire necessary documentation, distribute food supplies, secure employment and/or work permits, and support the newcomers' arrival.

This year's annual conference of the Dubnow Institute aims to broaden the focus on empires and migration to a more comprehensive global perspective. It will examine the interconnections and relationships among various humanitarian support and solidarity networks, including grassroots movements, traditional concepts of hospitality, and professional organisations that facilitate, support, and organise migration. Its comparative approach analyses how different regions responded to migration and the support systems in place. Against this backdrop, this conference will examine the dual role of empires as both havens of refuge and catalysts of forced migration.

Venue

Leibniz Institute for Jewish History and Culture – Simon Dubnow
Goldschmidtstraße 28, 04103 Leipzig

Concept and Organization

Dr. Sebastian Willert (Dubnow Institute); Dr. Eliana Hadjisavvas (Birkbeck College); Dr. Sebastian Musch (Osnabrück University)

In Cooperation with

Birkbeck College, IMIS – Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies, Osnabrück University

Participation and Registration

Due to limited capacity, registration for the conference is required. If you are interested in attending the conference, please contact Dr. Sebastian Willert via email no later than 2 December 2026: **willert(at)dubnow.de**

The film screening on Tuesday, 8 December, can be attended independently of the conference. Registration via the registration form is required by 2 December 2026 at the latest. Bags and IDs may be checked at the entrance.

Registration:

Contact

Leibniz Institute for Jewish History and Culture – Simon Dubnow, Goldschmidtstraße 28, 04103 Leipzig
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Cover Illustration
Felix Nussbaum (1904–1944), *The Refugee*, Oil on Canvas, 59.7 cm x 74.7 cm, Brussels 1939, Photo: public domain.

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IMIS Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies

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This Project was financed by the Saxon State government out of the State budget approved by the Saxon State Parliament.

