

## **New travelling exhibition explores 1939 rejection of the Jewish refugee ship *St. Louis***

Ottawa, Ontario, March 20, 2018 — A new travelling exhibition presented at the Canadian War Museum explores the plight of more than 900 Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany in the summer of 1939. Produced by the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic and its partners, ***St. Louis – Ship of Fate*** recounts the refugees' journey, and the refusal of several countries — including Canada — to admit them.

“Anti-Semitism persists in Canada and in the world,” said Mark O’Neill, President and CEO of the Canadian War Museum and the Canadian Museum of History. “The ease with which Canada turned away a desperate people is one of the darker and lesser-known chapters in our history. ***St. Louis – Ship of Fate*** not only shares the tragic saga of the *St. Louis* and her passengers, but also reinforces the need for vigilance in the face of hatred and discrimination today.”

When the luxury liner *St. Louis* set sail from Hamburg in May 1939, bound for Cuba, it carried hundreds of Jewish passengers hoping to escape the growing dangers posed by Germany’s Nazi regime. But Cuba turned them away, and the United States denied the ship entry. When no other nation in the Caribbean, South America or Central America would open its doors, Canada became the last option for the refugees before they would have to return across the Atlantic.

Despite the efforts of some concerned Canadians, the government of the day refused to take in the refugees, which forced the *St. Louis* to return to Europe. The refugees were accepted by Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands and France. Unfortunately, the three latter countries were overrun by Nazi Germany in 1940. Of the more than 900 Jewish passengers who returned to Europe, 254 were killed in the Holocaust.

Through historical photographs, postcards, archival documents, texts and audiovisual presentations, ***St. Louis – Ship of Fate*** traces the refugees’ desperate journey across the Atlantic and back again. By exploring the attitudes of the day, the exhibition encourages reflection on how far we’ve come in our approach to refugee crises.

***St. Louis – Ship of Fate*** was produced by the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, a part of the Nova Scotia Museum, in collaboration with the Atlantic Jewish Council and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. This travelling exhibition is presented in Ottawa from March 21 to April 29, 2018.

A separate special display entitled **The Canadian Jewish Experience** will be shown in the Museum's Lobby, until April 29. This multi-panel exhibition, developed by the Canadian Jewish Experience, explores nearly 250 years of Jewish contributions to Canadian society. For more information about this exhibition, please visit [cje2017.com](http://cje2017.com).

### **Canadian War Museum**

*The Canadian War Museum is Canada's national museum of military history. Its mission is to promote public understanding of Canada's military history in its personal, national, and international dimensions. Work of the Canadian War Museum is made possible in part through financial support of the Government of Canada.*

### **Maritime Museum of the Atlantic**

*Founded in 1948, the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic is Canada's oldest and largest maritime museum. Starting with a small space at Halifax Dockyard, by Canada's centennial year the museum had become the Marine History section of the Nova Scotia Museum. In 1982, it was established as a core attraction on the Halifax waterfront and today is considered one of the region's most valuable historical, cultural, and educational institutions.*

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High resolution images and credits are available at [media.warmuseum.ca](http://media.warmuseum.ca).

### **Media contacts:**

**Yasmine Mingay**  
Director, Public Affairs  
Canadian War Museum  
Telephone: 819-776-8608  
[yasmine.mingay@warmuseum.ca](mailto:yasmine.mingay@warmuseum.ca)

**Avra Gibbs Lamey**  
Senior Communications and Media Relations  
Officer, Canadian War Museum  
Telephone: 819-776-8607  
[avra.gibbs-lamey@warmuseum.ca](mailto:avra.gibbs-lamey@warmuseum.ca)

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