

# Auschwitz memorial launches Facebook page

October 15 2009, By MONIKA SCISLOWSKA , Associated Press  
Writer

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(AP) -- The memorial museum at Auschwitz has launched a Facebook page, hoping that the popular social networking site will help it reach young people around the globe and engage them in discussions about the former Nazi death camp and the Holocaust.

The site, which opened earlier this week, already has more than 1,800 "fans" who have subscribed, with the number growing by the hour - some 500 signed up Thursday morning alone. Many have left messages in English, Hebrew and Polish, the majority expressing the sentiment: "Never again."

"This is a kind of an experiment on our side," memorial spokesman Pawel Sawicki told The Associated Press on Thursday. "Facebook is the tool that young people are using to communicate, so if we want to reach them, we should be using their tool."

Already, the museum launched a a Polish-language page on YouTube at the end of 2008 and an English-language page two months ago. Some 22,000 people have viewed the films so far.

The Auschwitz memorial is not the first Holocaust-related organization to venture onto Facebook: The Simon Wiesenthal Center counts more than 2,000 "fans" on its site and has also used Twitter. There is an unofficial Facebook page dedicated to Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, which says it plans to launch an official page in the coming weeks.

Facebook, which turned 5 this year, counts more than 175 million users worldwide.

The Anne Frank memorial has a [YouTube](#) channel, as does Yad Vashem, which offers information in English, Hebrew, Spanish and Arabic.

"Everyone's using the Internet and trying their best to reach out to as many people as possible, and obviously one of the best ways of reaching young people is through the modern use of technology," said the Wiesenthal Center's Efraim Zuroff in a telephone interview from Jerusalem.

Though the Internet is also rife with far-right sites that attempt to distort or deny the Holocaust, Zuroff said that was no reason for others to dismiss using the Web.

"The vehicle depends on the content," he said. "If the content is helpful, if the content is educational, there's no reason not to use the vehicle.

There are also already scores of [Facebook](#) groups dedicated to Auschwitz started by individuals, but the Auschwitz page - found by searching the site with the keywords "Auschwitz Memorial" - gives the opportunity for people to comment and participate in discussions moderated by the memorial's staff.

So far, the site has seen no postings by Holocaust deniers, Sawicki said.

If they do show up, they will be quickly removed, Sawicki said, saying that to engage Holocaust deniers in dialogue is "a waste of time."

"I think we have more important things to do than try to convince a very small group of people" that the [Holocaust](#) happened, he said.

Between 1940-45, some 1 million people, mostly Jews, were killed or died of starvation, disease and forced labor at the camp, which the Nazis built in occupied Poland.

Sawicki said the memorial's 1 million annual visitors are primarily students and other young people.

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