

# Fritz Bauer Institut

## *Geschichte und Wirkung des Holocaust*

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## Fritz Bauer Institute

### *History and Impact of the Holocaust*

The Fritz Bauer Institute is an independent interdisciplinary research and education center with a focus on contemporary history. It studies and documents the history of National Socialism's mass crimes — particularly of the Holocaust — and their impact until the present. One focus of its work is facilitating relevant German and international research by means of publications, lectures and exhibitions.

The Institute is named for Fritz Bauer and is dedicated to his memory. Fritz Bauer (1903–1968) was a returned Jewish emigrant and, from 1956 on, a Hessian district attorney (Generalstaatsanwalt), who strove for the reconstruction of the legal system in the Federal Republic of Germany and fought for criminal persecution of Nazi crimes.

The Fritz Bauer Institute was founded in 1995 by the State of Hesse, the City of Frankfurt am Main and the Friends' Association Fritz Bauer Institute as a foundation under German public law. It was granted An-Institute status in autumn 2000, affiliating it with Goethe University Frankfurt am Main, and maintains its registered office in the IG Farben-Building on the university's Westend campus. The State of Hesse, the City of Frankfurt, Goethe University and the Friends' Association Fritz Bauer Institute are represented on the Institute's foundation board. The friends' association and the academic advisory board support and accompany its work. In 2017, the Chair for Research on the History and Impact of the Holocaust, the first of its type dedicated to this subject in Germany, was created in the History Seminar of Goethe University. The chair is linked to directorship of the Fritz Bauer Institute.

## History of the Fritz Bauer Institute

The Fritz Bauer Institute was inaugurated by the State of Hesse, the City of Frankfurt am Main and the Friends' Association Fritz Bauer Institute as a foundation under German public law with registered office in Frankfurt am Main on January 11, 1995 — 50 years after the liberation of the National Socialist concentration and extermination camps.

The initiative was started by Frankfurt Mayor Volker Hauff, who, impressed by his 1989 visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust remembrance center in Jerusalem, launched a debate in 1989 on erecting a holocaust center in the »country of the perpetrators«. The City of Frankfurt am Main set up a planning

group in its department for culture and leisure. The group's final report entitled *Frankfurter Lern- und Dokumentationszentrum des Holocaust* (Holocaust learning and documentation center in Frankfurt) simultaneously served as the roadmap for the work of the Fritz Bauer Institute. Dr. Hanno Loewy, who had already been in charge of the preparatory work for establishing the Institute, was named as its founding director. He was succeeded by directors Prof. Dr. Micha Brumlik (2000–2005), Prof. Dr. Dietfrid Krause-Vilmar (provisional director, 2005–2007), Prof. Dr. Raphael Gross (2007–2015) and apl. Prof. Dr. Werner Konitzer (provisional director, 2015–2017). Effective May 1, 2017, Prof. Dr. Sybille Steinbacher assumed directorship of the Fritz Bauer Institute and has since simultaneously occupied the newly endowed Chair for Research on the History and Impact of the Holocaust in the History Seminar of Goethe University Frankfurt am Main.

After relocating a number of times, the Institute moved into its present facilities in IG Farben-Building on the Campus Westend of Goethe University in summer 2001. A cooperation agreement was concluded that maintains the Institute's status as an independent institution, while affiliating it as an *An-Institut* with Goethe University, which joined the Institute's foundation board as its fourth member. Relocating the Fritz Bauer Institute to this historical building reflects this affiliation.

## Fritz Bauer (1903–1968)

Fritz Bauer was born on July 16, 1903 to a Jewish businessman's family in Stuttgart, where he grew up and attended school. He studied law and economics in Heidelberg, Munich and Tübingen, earning his doctorate. In 1930, he was appointed as a local district judge in his hometown, making him the youngest judge in Germany. He became politically active at an early age, having already joined the Social Democratic Party (SPD) as a youth. At the beginning of the 1930s, he headed the Stuttgart local group of the Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold defence league, an organization whose stated mission was to defend the parliamentary democracy of the Weimar Republic.

Just weeks after the National Socialists came to power, Bauer was dismissed from his position as a judge and detained several months for political reasons in Heuberg concentration camp on the Swabian Alb. In 1936, he fled to Denmark initially and later to Sweden, where he survived the war years.

During the year in which the Federal Republic of Germany was founded, Bauer returned from exile, with support from Kurt Schumacher, party leader of the SPD. Bauer considered judicial prosecution of Nazi crimes fundamental to establishing a democratic system of justice, making this the objective of his legal work. In Braunschweig, he initially became a director of regional courts and was later appointed as a Attorney General at the higher regional court. Hessian Minister President Georg-August Zinn brought Fritz Bauer to Hesse in 1956, where Bauer worked as Attorney General in Frankfurt am Main.

Bauer dedicated intensive efforts to investigation of NS-officials suspected of having committed serious crimes. He provided the Israeli secret service Mossad with a crucial hint to Adolf Eichmann's whereabouts, which led to Eichmann's capture in Argentina in 1960. The organizer of the death transports to extermination camps could be brought to trial in Jerusalem, in 1961. Bauer also initiated the Auschwitz trial, which was held in Frankfurt from December 1963 to August 1965. He considered the trials against Nazi perpetrators as a means of self-enlightenment and self-cleansing of West-German society.

Monday morning, July 1, 1968, Fritz Bauer was found dead in his apartment in Frankfurt am Main. A trial against participants in the »euthanasia« program, that Bauer prepared, did not take place.