

Conference: Citizenship and National Socialist Persecution

University of Fribourg, 11 – 12 June 2026



**Département d'histoire contemporaine /
Departement für Zeitgeschichte
MIS 03, Room 3117
Av. de l'Europe 20
1700 Fribourg**

Please register by email until 31 May:
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Programme and information
about the lecturers:



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Programme

Thursday, 11 June 2026

08.30: *Coffee*

09.00: Welcome Remarks

09.30 – 11.30: Panel: General Considerations on Nazi Persecution

09.30 – 10.00: Kim Wünschmann: «Enemy Aliens» in Nazi Germany: The Treatment of Foreign Civilians between Convention and Ideology

10.00 – 10.30: Raphael Schäfer: Margins of Manoeuvre: Diplomatic Protection and the Limits of International Law in the Shadow of the German Reich

10.30 – 11.00: Corry Guttstadt: The persecution of Jews in line with foreign policy

11.00 – 11.30: Discussion (Discussant: Alexa Stiller)

11.30 – 13.30: *Lunch Break*

13.30 – 15.30: Panel: Persecution of Foreign Citizens

13.30 – 14.00: Niels Pohl-Schneeberger: «Problem Management» between Race Ideology and Diplomacy. The National Socialist Persecution of Jews with Foreign Citizenship in the Holocaust

14.00 – 14.30: Bernd Rother: Who is a Spaniard? Citizenship and Persecution of Spanish Jews in Nazi-Europe

14.30 – 15.00: Fabienne Meyer: The repatriation of Swiss Jews from France as a last resort before deportation

15.00 – 15.30: Discussion (Discussant: Karlo Ruzicic-Kessler)

15.30 – 16.00: *Coffee Break*

- 16.00 – 18.00: Panel: Areas of Intervention for Foreign States**
- 16.00 – 16.30: Pontus Rudberg: Between Political Considerations and Humanitarian Action: Sweden's Response to Jewish Refugees, 1933–1947
- 16.30 – 17.00: Beate Meyer: Foreign Jews in Nazi Germany: Between Deportation, Internment, and Rescue. Negotiations, Arguments, and Decisions as Reflected in the Records of the German Foreign Office.
- 17.00 – 17.30: Karlo Ruzicic-Kessler: The Swiss representation in Vienna and the Handling of Persecution Cases
- 17.30 – 18.00: Discussion (Discussant: Christina Späti)

Friday, 12 June 2026

- 08.30 – 10.30 Panel: Foreigners in Neutral, Collaborating and Occupied States**
- 08.30 – 09.00: Michael Mayer: Bargaining with Citizenship: How Denaturalization Shaped Persecution in Vichy France
- 09.00 – 09.30: Maria Fragkou: The Sovereignty of Exception in French Consular Jurisdiction: The Legal and Political Framework of Subject Protection Amidst Bilateral Diplomatic Frictions (1942-1943)
- 09.30 – 10.00: Jan Daniluk: A Swiss Journalist in the Gears of the German Machinery of Terror – The Case of Arthur Wyss (1940-1942)
- 10.00 – 10.30: Susanne Bennewitz: Negotiating the effect of the Nuremberg Laws on Swiss citizens
- 10.30 – 11.00: *Coffee Break*
- 11.00 – 12.00: Final Discussion and Closing Remarks**

Following the Nazi seizure of power in January 1933, foreign nationals residing in Germany, as well as their countries of origin, were confronted with laws, decrees, and practices that violated customary international law on aliens and bilateral settlement and legal protection treaties. Based on the principle of "racial inequality," the Nazi regime targeted all "alien" and "racially inferior" persons, regardless of whether they held German or foreign citizenship, and reduced their legal status below the minimum standard of international law. Furthermore, the unequal treatment of Jewish and non-Jewish people violated the treaty-based equal treatment clauses enshrined in bilateral settlement agreements, according to which the contracting states were obligated to treat the nationals of the other party equally regarding certain legal positions as their own citizens. Nazi Germany justified the inhumane and discriminatory treatment of foreign Jews by claiming that it ensured they were treated equally to German Jews (but not to non-Jewish Germans).

To protect their own citizens, the respective countries of origin had consular and diplomatic protection at their disposal. However, as the Swiss legal scholar and diplomat Peter Anton Feldscher explained as early as 1930, Switzerland had no "obligation to grant protection [...] and responsibility for the proper fulfillment of the protective task exists only towards the people as a whole and not towards the Swiss citizen as an individual." Thus, according to the understanding at the time, it was "ultimately a matter of political consideration" how "the representation of Swiss interests vis-à-vis foreign countries could best be carried out."

In practice, the question of diplomatic protection ultimately took place within the tension between "higher national interests," such as maintaining proper diplomatic relations, and the defense of the sense of justice recognized in international law on aliens as well as in the respective legal system.

The conference "Citizenship and National Socialist Persecution" addresses questions that have received remarkably little attention in research to date. It mainly focuses on the analysis of state interventions to protect foreign citizens in Germany and the territories occupied by Germany during the Second World War. Furthermore, it examines the reactions of the German bureaucracy as well as collaborationist governments to foreign interventions and the resulting conflict between "pragmatic foreign policy", the goals of National Socialist ideology, and the willingness to collaborate.