

provided Burmese victims with more than 4,600 prostheses and 3,000 crutches since 1999' notes the Australia Karen Youth Project (AKYP). 'Only Afghanistan receives more assistance of this kind from the ICRC' AKYP added. *Picture an almost invisible landmine from*

<http://www.maginternational.org/>



Landmine survivors desperately need help. Tribal Refugee Welfare of Western Australia has organized an event to raise funds for victims of landmines in Burma. Scheduled for Saturday 31st October, 6.00 – 9.00 pm, at Australia Asia House, 275 Stirling St Perth. The evening will feature delicious Burmese food, entertainment and a short documentary film. All funds raised will be used to provide food and medical care for landmine survivors in refugee camps. For more information call Connie on 9349 4073.

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Romani history, culture and traditions exhibition

The Romani people have struggled for centuries to overcome discrimination and exclusion.

Like European Jews they survived genocide and have struggled to retain a unique culture while ruthlessly persecuted by church and state. In the 21st Century, in spite of protests from the Vatican and human rights groups, European Roma continue to be targeted by discriminatory legislation and vigilante groups. At the same time Roma have created a rich heritage of art and culture that has inspired artists and composers, including Vincent Van Gogh. *Picture Romani immigrants arriving in Australia in 1907. Image provided by Yvonne Slee.*



Western Australians have the opportunity to experience this rich heritage with a Romani Exhibition organized by Romani Australian United Perth WA. The exhibition will be open from 17th October to 19th October from 10am to 2pm at the Ethnic Communities Council of WA meeting room, 20 View St North Perth.

'This will be an extensive, lively, colourful and educational exhibit with Romani artefacts, picture boards, history boards, showing Romani Life from the time we were taken out of India until this day' explained Dave Slee, one of the display's organizers. 'The exhibition will address all aspects of Romani history and culture, including the holocaust. We will also have photos of paintings of Romani people from the late 1800s and we'll be running a PowerPoint slideshow on Romani culture with commentary and music. Romani food will be served with light refreshments on opening day. This is an important event and a great opportunity to have our culture seen and better understood by the greater public' Mr Slee added.

For more information contact Yvonne or Dave Slee on 9344 3984.

70th anniversary of WWII

September 1st 2009 marked the 70th anniversary of the German invasion of Poland, which sparked the Second World War. *Picture A Ten year old Polish girl mourns the death of her older sister, who was killed during a German air raid from* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invasion_of_Poland_\(1939\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invasion_of_Poland_(1939))



The total toll of the 1939-45 conflict will never be known but Professor Joseph V. O'Brien, Department of History, John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City estimates that 60 million people were killed, including 40 million civilians.

Second World War killed more civilians than any other conflict. 'The greatest human losses were suffered by combatants and civilians of the Soviet Union and China' notes Professor O'Brien. 'In the near two-and-a-half year siege of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) by the German forces, 1 1/2 million Russians alone died from shelling, bombing, disease and starvation, a figure that exceeded all the military casualties of the U.S.A. and British Commonwealth combined. The cruelties perpetrated by morally depraved units of the Japanese army in China is demonstrated most vividly in the torture and massacre of civilians and the barbaric killing of war prisoners in the infamous rape of Nanking, that took the lives of over 300,000 Chinese. Other mass civilian deaths, apart from the singular destruction of European Jews, comprise the hundreds of thousands of slave labourers in the Japanese-held Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia) as well as the 1 1/2 million deaths in Bengal as a consequence of war-related famine.'

European Jews suffered unimaginable terror under Nazi rule. 'The Holocaust - the most profound example of man's inhumanity to man in history, was a product of World War II' said Ester Steingesser of the National Council of Jewish Women. Behind the front lines civilians suffered rationing and the terror of air raids, a horror undreamed of at the hopeful dawn of the Twentieth Century. Historic cities, Warsaw, London, Coventry, Rotterdam, Berlin, Dresden and Tokyo were gutted by bombs.

The 1939-45 War also triggered a humanitarian crisis. 'In the immediate post-war period, millions of ethnic Germans were expelled from the liberated countries of eastern Europe, many of whom died in displaced-persons camps' notes Professor O'Brien. 'For China alone, an estimate of 60 million homeless has been estimated. Similarly, millions of German and Japanese prisoners-of-war required repatriation. It



took ten years, for example, before the last German prisoners were released while unknown numbers of surviving Japanese soldiers left on the Asian mainland disappeared without trace.'

While Australia was spared invasion, almost a million Australians, men and women, out of a population of just over six million, participated in the Second World War. Australians served in Europe, North Africa, South East Asia and the Pacific. For the first time since European settlement the Australian mainland was attacked, with Japanese air raids on Darwin, Broome and a submarine attack on Sydney Harbour. Millions of other Australians suffered the heartache of being separated from loved ones serving overseas or in prisoner of war camps.

Picture *Australian troops advance into Bardia, North Africa, 6 January 1941* from <http://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/ww2.asp>

Sadly the number of survivors of the 1939-45 War is rapidly dwindling, leading to fears that this terrible conflict will be forgotten, particularly when there is an organized and apparently well funded, movement to deny or minimize Nazi crimes. 'How many people read a book or a document about the Holocaust?' Ester Steingießer asked. 'How many countries teach this chapter of horror from World War II in their Schools?'



It is so difficult to believe that this really happened, that educated people could turn so easily into monsters. What have the world learned? Quoting the writer and survivor Elie Wiesel, who lost his family in the Buchenwald Concentration Camp: 'Had the world learned, there would have been no Cambodia and no Rwanda and no Darfur, and no Bosnia. The world hasn't learned. I think that is why Buchenwald is so important.' ' **Picture** *Forced labourers in Buchenwald (Elie Wiesel is 2nd row from the bottom, 7th from left); 16 April 1945*

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buchenwald>

Seventy years later the Second World War stands as a sombre warning against settling our differences in ways that lead to destruction.