

**Hedwig Jastrow, age 76, takes her own life on 29 November 1938
so as not to have to bear the compulsory forename¹**

Handwritten letter by Hedwig Jastrow,² Berlin, dated 28 November 1938

If only no one would undertake any attempts to resuscitate someone who does not want to live! It is neither an accident nor an attack of depression. Someone is leaving this life whose family has had German citizenship for over a hundred years, following an oath, and whose family has always kept this oath.

For forty-three years I have taught German children and cared for them during all kinds of hardships, and for even longer I have carried out welfare work for the German nation in times of war and peace.

I do not want to live without a fatherland, without a homeland, without an apartment, without civil rights, ostracized and reviled. And I want to be buried with the name my parents gave to me and bequeathed to me – a name which is unblemished.³ I do not want to wait until a stigma is attached to it.

Every convict, every murderer, retains his name. It is an outrage!

1 LAB, A Pr.Br. Rep. 030-03/1953; published in English translation in Christian Goeschel, 'Suicides of German Jews in the Third Reich', *German History*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2007), pp. 22–45, here p. 29. This document has been retranslated from the original German.

2 Hedwig Jastrow (1862–1938), teacher and headmistress; poisoned herself with coal gas in her apartment in the Wilmersdorf district of Berlin on 29 Nov. 1938.

3 From 1 Jan. 1939 female Jews had to assume the additional forename Sara and male Jews the forename Israel, unless they already had a forename that was regarded by the Reich Ministry of the Interior as typically Jewish: see Doc. 84, 17 August 1938.