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Dutch King Apologizes For Netherlands' Role In Slavery

A Look At The Dutch Role In History

Why In The News?

- **Dutch King Willem Alexander** Apologized For His Country's Role In Slavery And Asked For Forgiveness In A Historic Speech Greeted By Cheers And Whoops At An Event To Commemorate The **Anniversary Of The Abolition Of Slavery**.
- The King's Speech Followed **Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's Apology Late Last Year** For The Country's Role In The Slave Trade And Slavery. It Is Part Of A Wider Reckoning With Colonial Histories In The West That Have Been Spurred In Recent Years By The Black Lives Matter Movement.



What Was The Dutch Role In The Slave Trade?

- Like Other European Maritime Nations, The Dutch Were Quick To Involve Themselves In The Transatlantic Slave Trade. **Between 1596 And 1829**, The Dutch Transported About **Half A Million Africans Across The Atlantic**.
- Large Numbers Were Taken To The **Small Islands Of Curacao And St. Eustatius, In The Caribbean**. The Dutch Also Shipped About A Half Million Africans To Their Settlements In Dutch Guiana, Notably **Suriname**, Where They Worked Primarily On Sugar Plantations.

- The Dutch Put Slaves To Work In Their **Coffee, Sugar And Tobacco Plantations**, Apart From **Household Labour In Colonies**. The Centuries Of Slave Trade Funded What Is Known As **The Netherlands' 'Golden Age'** - The Period Roughly Between **1585-1670**, When Trade, Arts, Sciences And The Military Flourished.
- **By 1814, More Than 600,000 Enslaved African Women, Men And Children** Had Been Shipped To The American Continent, In Deplorable Conditions, By Dutch Slave Traders.
- In Asia, Between 660,000 And Over One Million People By The **Dutch East India Company**. When Slavery Was **Formally Abolished In 1863**, It Was Not The Slaves Who Received Compensation From The Dutch State, **But The Slave Owners**.



What Else Is The Government Doing?

- The Government Will Make **€200 Million** Available In A Fund For Measures Aimed At Raising Awareness, Fostering Engagement And **Addressing The Present-day Effects Of Slavery**.
- July 2023 Is Being Marked As The **150th Anniversary Of The Abolition Of Slavery**, As, While It Was Formally Abolished In 1863, Another 10 Years Were Required To Put It Into Practice.
- A Criticism Frequently Levelled At The Netherlands Is That Its **School Education System** Does Not Adequately Engage With Its **Colonial And Slave Trading Past**.
- Give The Netherlands' Role In The **History Of Slavery A Substantial Place In Education**, As This Is Where Young People Come Into Contact With History. Apart From This, The Country Is Also Looking At **Returning Artworks Looted During The Colonial Period**.



Not Everyone Is Happy With The Apology

- Some Activist Groups Had Asked For **Monetary Reparations** To Have Been Made And For The Process Of Recognizing History To Have Been More Consultative With **Modern Day Descendants Of Those Impacted By Slavery**.
- The Country Has Seen **Allegations Of Systematic Racism** In Its Police Force And Other Government Services, Dual Nationals Have Been Unfairly Accused Of Childcare Benefits Fraud, And Migrants Have In General Been Found To Have Lower Levels Of Educational And Professional Success Than White Dutch.
- The Apology Itself Has Been A Long Time Coming. Sections Of The Dutch Population Feel The Nation Today Has Nothing To Apologies For In Crimes Committed Centuries Ago, While Some Fear That An **Apology Can Open The Floodgates To Demands For Reparations**.



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