



THE
FORGOTTEN VOICES
OF THE HOLOCAUST

C O N C L U S I O N S

6-7 APRIL 2016
ROMANIAN PARLIAMENT
HUMAN RIGHTS HALL
BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

1. CALL FOR THE OFFICIAL RECOGNITION OF THE ROMA HOLOCAUST BY EUROPEAN STATES

Ignorance among the general public is a fundamental source of hate and stereotypes. Forgetting the suffering of the Roma during the Second World War is just as harmful as their actual suffering during the war. It has repercussions today: hate speech, hate violence, anti-Gypsyism and Holocaust denial.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enact laws officially recognizing the Roma Holocaust and setting an official commemoration date (2nd August). This would respond to European Parliament resolution of 15 April 2015 on the occasion of International Roma Day – anti-Gypsyism in Europe and EU recognition of the memorial day of the Roma genocide during World War II (2015/2615(RSP));
- Set up practices of commemoration: commemorative ceremonies, museums, memorial plaques and stones. Importance of providing these remembrance initiatives also in the Romani language.

2. NEED FOR A CONSENSUAL TERMINOLOGY OF THE ROMA HOLOCAUST

The participants underlined the need for a clearer political agenda, especially regarding States which do not accept the Roma Holocaust terminology. They call for a wider acceptance of the term "Holocaust", but acknowledge the reluctance of States to use that word for political reasons. The Roma community insists on the use of the word "Roma Holocaust" but cannot reach a consensus on the equivalent term in Romanes.

Several arguments emerged from the debate:

- The debate on the terminology is of primary importance as it is a question of ownership of the past;
- The term Holocaust has the advantage of being established and recognized and transmits the sense of gravity of the tragedy;
- The various Roma terms - *Kali Trash*, *Porrajmos*, *Pharrajimos*, *Samudaripen* - which are currently used are extremely important for identifying the Roma Holocaust (just as the term Shoah identifies the Jewish genocide). There is however the need for the Roma community to reach a consensus on a single term for a clearer identification of the tragedy. Once agreed, the Roma community, historians, scholars and international organisations should use it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Set-up an ad hoc committee of representatives of Roma organisations to agree on the term to be used to define the Roma Holocaust.

3. REINFORCEMENT AND FUNDING OF THE RESEARCH ON THE ROMA HOLOCAUST

Recent research has provided fresh information on the genocide of the Roma which research should be continued and deepened. Research could be extended to the long periods of slavery in several European countries: a condition which facilitated the Holocaust in the WWII.

It is high time – seeing the reawakening of the racist, xenophobic, neo-fascist parties, attacking again with varying strength in the different countries – to put the pieces of history's mosaic in their place. Also historians have brought to the attention of the conference participants information on facts which are very little known by the general public.

The deeds of the Roma resisters, partisans, anti-fascists and ordinary men and women who fought for freedom or helped others to survive by hiding and aiding them needs to be deeply documented and publicized.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage universities and education institutions to carry out research on Holocaust and how slavery conditioned the Holocaust ;
- Governments, Foundations and Academic Institutions should allocate more funds to historical research on the Roma Holocaust and related studies;
- Encourage scholars and historians to develop a common framework for the variety of narratives of the Roma Holocaust. This would make transmission, especially through school curriculum, easier.

4. EFFECTIVE COMPENSATION SYSTEM FOR ROMA VICTIMS

The participants emphasised the obstacles Roma faced in the compensation programmes, and questioned why so few survivors were effectively granted compensation. Roma were asked to produce documentary evidence which was either unavailable or does not exist. They had to fill in complex administrative forms which pose a problem because of the illiteracy of many of the Roma survivors. Administrative assistance was non-existent.

The accountability of the perpetrators (individuals and states) was also questioned. Why were there so few condemnations? Many even continued their activities until the 1980s.

It was suggested to develop inter alia a litigation strategy: holding the State responsible to obtain systematic and comprehensive reparations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Set up a more comprehensive system of compensations extended to families and communities;
- Create a lobby for a comprehensive and fair system of compensation/reparation and restitutions.

5. THE CONSTRUCTION OF A ROMA IDENTITY THAT IS ENABLING AND EMPOWERING DEPENDS ON DEVELOPING HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE MEANS TO DISSEMINATE IT

Research in and dissemination of information about Roma history, including knowledge about the Holocaust, is key to empowering new generations in the struggle for rights and recognition. Just as they are empowered by historical knowledge, they must be enabled to construct that knowledge for themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen the Roma movement for recognition as equal citizens, especially among the younger generation;
- Set up Roma institutions and encourage the building of a Roma intelligentsia to fight invisibility;
- Roma activists, scholars, historians, scientists should work more in unison to meet the challenges Roma face today.

6. CALL FOR RECOGNITION OF ANTI-GYPSYISM AS A SPECIFIC FORM OF RACISM BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEMBER STATES

The declared objective is to fight stereotypes and racial prejudices. The widely accepted "reasonable anti-Gypsyism", according to which rigid and highly disputable measures against Roma are legitimized and normalized in present-day Europe, must be fought urgently. Polls such as those of the FRA, show that governmental anti-Roma practices, such as expulsion and profiling, are mostly supported by the people, which is highly problematic.

The reasons behind these practices are ambiguous: Roma issues are regarded as security problems which infringe the social order. It gives the impression that public authorities are repressing "bad things" when they are actually frequently targeting Roma.

This ethnic approach to policies affecting Roma leads to an intolerable acceptance of racism against Roma, unleashing anti-Roma hate speech, and allowing European States to violate the human and citizens' rights of the Roma (but also of migrants and refugees).

Particularly when the Roma are singled out for differential treatment to other citizens - as in ongoing evictions and deportations - and when these are not adequately challenged, the situation of the Roma today reminds us of that of the 1930s. A stronger protest against this alarming trend is urgently needed, most of all because this tendency shows that anti-Gypsyism is also and problematically rooted at institutional levels. Today's "anti"-policies (anti-illegal immigration, anti-crime) often lead to the targeting of ethnic groups, which should be condemned.

The participants called on the responsibility of the States to stop the process of criminalization of Roma, to combat more firmly institutional anti-Gypsyism, and be accountable for situations in which they contribute to the exclusion of Roma. It is also their responsibility to enact social policies, because it is necessary to provide better living conditions and to combat anti-Gypsyism at the same time at all societal levels.

The participants underlined the responsibility of the majority in anti-Gypsyism. In fact, stereotypes tell us more about the majority than the minority. Education is therefore the key to combat anti-Gypsyism, as well as reducing poverty which is another vector of hate nowadays.

Reparation should go beyond the Holocaust, and tackle today's exclusion and anti-Gypsyism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recognition of anti-Gypsyism by member States to further the prevention and condemnation of anti-Roma crimes, with a view to a stricter application of the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC); States should develop initiatives and allocate funds to effectively combat anti-Gypsyism, also at the institutional level;
- Prevent an ethnic approach to policies and society;
- Improve social policies in favour of Roma;
- Develop awareness- raising initiatives (DOSTA! campaign) and carry out education programmes to fight prejudice and stereotypes of the majority;
- Appoint a Coordinator for Anti-Gypsyism within the European Commission (similar to the Coordinator for Anti-Semitism and the Coordinator for Islamophobia).

The coordinator would act as the contact point for the Roma community while contributing to the development of the EC's overarching strategy to combat hate crime, hate speech, intolerance and discrimination. He will contribute to other relevant policy areas such as education, as well as those geared at combating radicalisation and violent extremism. He will liaise with the Member States, the EP, other institutions, relevant civil society organisations and academia with a view to strengthening policy responses designed to address anti-Gypsyism.

7. TEACHING OF ROMA HISTORY AND ROMA HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE AND COMBATING ANTI-GYPSYISM THROUGH EDUCATION

The participants asserted the responsibility of European states to raise awareness of anti-Gypsyism through schooling in ways that can prevent the early internalisation of stereotypes and prejudice and combat tendencies to social segregation.

Including Roma history and remembrance into school programmes aims at building a culture of tolerance and respect at the local level in particular through education, combating harmful stereotypes at school and developing the consciousness of all pupils – Roma and non-Roma. It will enhance their sense of shared identity, and of belonging to the European society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Explicit commemoration of the Roma Holocaust should be a part of school and community education, and it is appropriate for commemorative activities to be associated with an agreed date for international commemoration. Setting a key date in the history of the Auschwitz-Birkenau 'Gypsy' Camp – the moment of resistance in May 1944, or the dissolution of the camp in August 1944 - as the commemoration date would make an appropriate link between the genocide of the Roma and the globally familiar symbols of Holocaust/Shoah;
- Teaching about the Roma Holocaust should be an explicit and integral part of teaching about the Holocaust as a whole, incorporated with teaching on the Shoah and on the impacts of Nazi and Fascist racism on whole populations;
- Teaching about the Roma Holocaust needs to be embedded in an approach to teaching national and pan-European histories that takes account of the presence and experience of Roma in each national context and also their common history as a people. The CAHROM should draw up a draft recommendation on the inclusion of the history of Roma in the school history books, and as a matter of course that history should reflect the social, political and cultural achievements and contributions of distinguished Roma individuals;
- Romani historians and experts should be consulted in the preparation of teaching materials.