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Remember and learn from Roma genocide memories, says Council of Europe

Strasbourg, 01.08.2011 - Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, has called on Europeans to respect the memory of Roma killed by the Nazi regime during the Second World War by committing to building a better future for generations to come.

Speaking on the occasion of the commemoration of the night of 2-3 August 1944, when several thousand Roma were massacred at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp (tragedy known as Samudaripen or Pharrajimos by Roma communities), Mr Jagland said that lessons must be drawn from the past.

"A day of commemoration gives us a time to reflect on how we are living up to the pledge of 'never again'. The sad truth is that Roma in Europe still suffer widespread rejection, discrimination and even racist violence and hatred.

We must develop legal measures to counter discrimination and promote a better integration of Roma in society. A better knowledge of Roma culture and history, especially the darkest pages of Roma persecution, helps to counter prejudice and intolerance.

The Council of Europe wants to keep the memory alive with the teaching of the Samudaripen in classrooms, whilst at the same time encouraging tolerance and fairness to the Roma in every country."

Mr Jagland also encouraged teachers and the general public to visit and use the unique database set up by the Council in co-operation with OSCE/ODIHR which provides information, teaching and training material on Samudaripen: www.romagenocide.org