

# European Holocaust Memorial Day for Roma and Sinti

Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2 August 2025

Speech by Mr Theodoros Rousopoulos

President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

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Dear friends,

During my visit to Block 13 last year, I was struck by a photograph. It showed a young Roma man, naked and starved. But half of his body was covered by a black strip. When I asked why the answer was: to “protect” viewers from the shock.

Let me say it clearly: As a politician and as a historian I fully disagree with this.

We must not cover the truth—not in images, not in words, not in history.

If we do, we risk covering the very pain that must be remembered.

Yes, it is painful. But truth is often painful, and truth must remain visible—even when it wounds.

Because a masked past will soon fade out and will become a forgotten one.

And forgetfulness is the breeding ground of repetition.

Some say that without memory, we have no past.

From this same place last year I told you that without memory we have no future.

This is why the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe that I am honoured to be its president has made the remembrance of the Roma and Sinti Holocaust a clear part of its mission.

And I am proud to say that, following my initiative, we now have a dedicated Rapporteur on Roma Issues in the Parliamentary Assembly: Mr. George Stamatidis my compatriot from Greece, who is here with us today.

We took this decision because anti-Gypsyism did not end with the war. It still poisons lives, feeds marginalisation, and challenges our democracies.

And as we look at the world today, we cannot ignore the suffering caused by ongoing wars — from Ukraine to the Middle East and beyond. These conflicts once again target civilians, displace families, and endanger the very values of human dignity and coexistence that we are here to uphold. It looks like some haven't received lessons from the past.

Dear friends,

My message this year is the following:

Let us not censor the pain of the past.

Because if we blur history, we invite its return.

Truth, no matter how painful, is the first step to justice and to a better society

Thank you.