

23 July 2018

**Speaking Points for the
Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers
on the occasion of
European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day
2 August 2018**

**Blaženka Babić, Deputy Permanent Representative of Croatia
to the Council of Europe**

On the night of 2 to 3 August 1944, all the remaining Roma in the so-called “Gypsy camp” in Auschwitz - 2,897 men, women, and children – were taken to gas chamber V and exterminated. Their bodies were burned in pits next to the crematorium.

With humility and reverence, we gather here to reflect, remember and honour them all.

All of us have a special obligation. An obligation to never lose sight of what went wrong and how it happened. An obligation to be ever vigilant in the face of persistent anti-Gypsyism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, Homophobia and other forms of hate in Europe in our time.

We have seen boots marching on our streets, neo-nazis openly parading on our squares shouting out their hate propaganda. Almost seventy-five years after the fall of the Fascist regimes in Europe, their symbols, mind-sets and language are with us again. Some still seek to deny or diminish the fact of the Holocaust.

We must take an uncompromising stand against any present-day attitudes and statements that could lead the way to new crimes against humanity, to new victims sharing the fate of those whose memory we commemorate today.

The Holocaust of the Roma is an under-taught and under-recognised topic. We must also not forget, that still today there are too many Roma who face discrimination; who are victims of hate speech and hate crime in Europe. Romani children continue to face segregation and special education at school.

Such segregation, coupled with racist speech, leads to de-humanisation, and can create a climate that enables violence, examples of which are still all too common in some of our member States.

Since 2014, the 2nd of August is officially recognised by the Croatian Parliament as the International Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day. The Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers would like to take this opportunity to commend the concrete steps taken by some member States to raise awareness of, commemorate and teach about the Holocaust of the Roma.

We also encourage efforts to ensure that memorial sites are maintained in order to allow for dignified remembrance.

The Croatian Chairmanship recalls the commitments of the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019), adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2016, to promote

remembrance and education about the tragedy of the Holocaust and to give particular consideration to the experience of Roma during the Holocaust in the framework of education on Roma culture and history.

The Council of Europe's work in promoting the importance of living together, of respect and of the understanding of the other, based on our principles of human rights and freedoms, remains more relevant than ever.

The Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers is committed to ensuring a continuation of the Council of Europe's work, as well through its Chairmanship priority – efficient protection of rights of national minorities and vulnerable groups - with special attention dedicated to the promotion and protection of the rights of members of the Roma national minority.