

**Commemoration Ceremony
on the occasion of the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day
Strasbourg, 2 August 2022**

*Speech by Constantin-Alexandru Manda, Representative of the Council of Europe's
Advisory Council on Youth*

**Madame Director Luciani,
Mister Deputy Permanent Representative Griffin,
Distinguished members of the diplomatic body,
Dear guests,**

If we were saying the name of every victim of the Roma Holocaust, one per minute, for all between 250.000 and 500.000 people murdered during this genocide, we would need between 70 and 140 hours.

Unfortunately, we are not doing this - but **we must remember** all of them, victims of man's hatred of man.

We also must remember the hundreds of thousands of survivors of the Roma Holocaust, living examples of hope and abnegation. After the Holocaust, European society was shocked and terrified. We promised by one voice that these atrocities would not happen again.

But, we failed. Srebrenica and Bucha are witnesses of our helplessness.

We must learn from what the Holocaust survivors saw with their own eyes and fight every day **not to let these horrors happen again on Earth**. Otherwise, without concrete actions and commitment, "never again" are just empty words.

Europe is the house of everyone who wants to live in here, regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, or religion. We have to say it out loud and protect our beautiful diversity and cohesion from the politicians who claim the opposite in the name of hate.

I am in front of you today not just as an Advisory Council on Youth representative but also as a nephew of two Samudaripen survivors.

In 1942, the fascist Romanian regime sent my maternal grandparents and their families to the concentration camps of Transnistria. **There, tens of thousands of Romani people faced two years of hunger, fear, violence, illness, brutal treatments, and murders.** Auschwitz-Birkenau,

Sobibor, Treblinka, Buchenwald, Syrets, and the other dozens of concentration camps also saw the same atrocities.

In one sentence: the mass extermination of an entire community because our language, culture, and roots differed.

But, the discrimination against the Romani people in Europe did not start in the 1930s. The genocide which happened in the dark days of the Second World War **is just the culmination of centuries of hate speech and measures by which people from the Roma community were treated by their states like second-class citizens.**

In our days, unfortunately, despite the international rules and recommendations, or the international organization's efforts, the discrimination of Roma communities in Europe and the Anti-Romani sentiment are still critical issues.

Eighty years after the Roma Holocaust, in many European countries, the Romani people are still facing systemic discrimination and institutionalized racism.

We have segregated schools or classes for Romani children, lack of access to essential health services, and denial of employment on ethnic grounds.

We have forced relocation to ghettos with unacceptable conditions for habitation, walls built around the Roma ghettos to separate them from the rest of the city, and demolition of the Romani's informal settlements.

We have hate speech, which is spread by high-level politicians.

We have abuses, violence, or even murders of the law-enforcement agents.

And these are just a few examples of what Romani people from Europe are facing nowadays, many denying their ethnicity out of fear.

All the Romani children in Europe should have proper access to quality education in non-segregated classes and schools. **And the member states must do the best of their abilities to ensure that all the Romani children are included in education.** The authorities' indifference today condemns tomorrow's Romani adults to poverty and underdevelopment.

The history of the Romani people is part of European history. The Romani culture is part of the European culture. And must be treated as such. In the history classes, all Romani children in

Europe should be able to learn about the Roma Holocaust and the centuries of discrimination and intolerance lived by their ancestors.

In the Joint Council on Youth, we are working on the Roma Youth Participation Draft Recommendation, scheduled to be discussed by the Committee of Ministers in the following months. **We are calling the member states to ensure that the voice of Roma young people is heard and taken into consideration in the decision-making process**, according to the Council of Europe's strategic documents on Roma and Travellers integration.

Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

But for remembrance, we need actions and commitment. From everyone: member states, politicians, organizations, activists, and individuals.

Dikh he na bister. Look and do not forget.

Thank you!