



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

DISCRIMINATION: DEATH: DENIAL: Remembering Roma in the Holocaust

1. Under the rule of Nazi Germany, the Roma were persecuted, detained and executed as part of the Holocaust. Roma call the Holocaust the Porajmos, which means the 'Devouring' in Romani language.
2. There was segregated provision even in extermination camps. In the extermination camp at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, section BIIc was known as the 'zigeunerlager', or 'Gypsy' Camp. Men, women and children were imprisoned together, forced into slave labour and tortured. Josef Mengele took a particular interest in the Roma and made them the subject of horrific experiments.
3. August 2nd is assigned Roma Holocaust Memorial day because on the night of 2nd August 1944, the remaining 2,897 Roma women, old men and children from the so called "Zigeunerlager" or 'Gypsy' camp were killed in gas chambers. There were no Roma and Sinti survivors from Auschwitz concentration camp.
4. The number of Roma killed has often been underestimated as a result of Roma being sometimes grouped in Nazi records under headings such as 'remainder to be liquidated', 'hangers-on', and 'partisans'. It is estimated between 1/3 to 2/3 of the Roma community living in Europe at the time were exterminated approx. 500,000 Roma. In addition at least another 500,000 were displaced, dispossessed, or had their identity papers lost or destroyed.
5. Under the July 1933 sterilisation law, many Roma were sterilised against their will.
6. As was the case for the Jewish, the outbreak of war in September 1939 radicalised the Nazi regime's policies towards Roma. Their 'resettlement' to the East and their mass murder closely parallel the systematic deportations and killings of the Jewish people.
7. By the summer of 1938, large numbers of German and Austrian Roma were rounded up and sent to concentration camps. They were forced to initially wear black triangular patches, which classified them as 'asocials', or green patches, which was a symbol for 'professional criminals'. Finally a brown triangle was used for Roma and the letter Z (Zigeuner) was put in front of the number tattooed onto each prisoner.

8. Before being exterminated, Roma were subjected to medical experiments. At Sachsenhausen, they were subjected to special experiments that were supposed to prove scientifically that their blood was different from German blood.
9. Along with the camps, ghettos were set up in major cities, set apart with brick walls and armed guards – from these areas, countless Roma and Sinti were murdered and buried in mass graves. Along with this mobile death squads were deployed.
10. Under Antonescu's rule, it is estimated that over 25,000 Roma were deported to camps in Transnistria, a region in the Soviet Union occupied by Romanian and German forces. Food was scarce, medical care absent and prisoners were subjected to forced labour, starvation, disease and brutality. In 1944, when the camps were liberated just 11,000 Roma had survived.
11. The genocide of Jewish people was recognised during the Nuremberg trials and the German government paid war reparations to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust.
12. The genocide of Roma people wasn't formally recognised until 1982. Until then, the West German government denied that Roma were subjects of racially motivated persecution. Instead, it was insisted that Roma were imprisoned for their 'asocial' and 'criminal' characteristics, allowing the government to avoid responsibility for racial discrimination and compensation for genocide.
13. A pig farm remains on the land of Lety concentration camp in the Czech Republic where many Roma families perished in WWII.
14. Today Roma continue to be subjected to racially motivated hate crime, violence, persecution, expulsion and discrimination. Recent rise of anti-Gypsyism across Europe is embedded within the anti-Roma rhetoric and discourse, which fuelled the events of the Porajmos.

More information on Roma in Ireland at <http://www.paveepoint.ie/project/roma/>
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