



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

Message from President Michael D. Higgins
Event to mark the 80th Anniversary of the Roma Genocide
Wednesday, 18th September, 2024

As we mark the 80th anniversary of the Roma Genocide, where over 500,000 Roma and Sinti were murdered in concentration camps or mobile death squads in Nazi-occupied regions of Europe, it is our duty to ensure that their memory lives on in our collective consciousness, that we stand united in saying that such horrors must never be allowed to happen again.

The Roma Genocide is a stark reminder of the devastating consequences of unchecked prejudice, discrimination, and racial hatred. Ensuring that we recall this horrific period, that all the victims are remembered, so that mistakes of the past do not repeat themselves, is of the utmost importance.

On this day of remembrance, we are called not only to reflect on the past but also to confront the present. The same dangerous forces that led to the atrocities of the Roma Genocide are still present in many parts of the world today.

How shameful it is, that in 2024, the Roma and Sinti communities across the world continue to face discrimination, marginalization, and deep-rooted racism, denying them the full enjoyment of their rights and dignity. They suffer from barriers to education, healthcare, and employment, with too many still forced to endure conditions of poverty and exclusion.

As President of Ireland, I reaffirm our commitment to building a society in which everyone — regardless of ethnicity or background—can live free from fear, discrimination, and prejudice, a society where all can fully participate and flourish, a society where the dignity and rights of every person are protected, especially for those who have been marginalized for too long.

May I also pay tribute to the crucial work of Pavee Point. For nearly four decades Pavee Point has contributed significantly to improvements in the quality of life, living circumstances, status and participation of Travellers and Roma through working innovatively for social justice, greater solidarity, development, equality and human rights, helping to improve the quality of life of Travellers and Roma, and addressing the real needs of these communities. It is work of the highest importance.

Today, as we remember the unimaginable suffering of the Roma and Sinti during the Genocide, let us honour the victims by pledging to create a world where such darkness can never take root again, by reaffirming our commitment to combating all forms of discrimination and racism, in striving to build a more just and compassionate world, a future where diversity is celebrated, where equality, respect, and compassion are the cornerstones of our society, and where justice and humanity prevail.

Beir gach beannacht agus guidhim síochán dúinn uilig d'on toadhcháí.



Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland