

PRESS RELEASE

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Statement of the Central Council on the planned S-Bahn route in Berlin and the protection of the Memorial to the Murdered Sinti and Roma of Europe

The director of the Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Uwe Neumärker, and individual associations of Sinti and Roma are again starting appeals and signature collections, because allegedly the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe murdered under National Socialism in Berlin is threatened. Once again, as in the past, false claims are made that the monument will be "irrevocably destroyed." There is no question of "destroying" the memorial, which the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma has worked for decades to enforce against multiple oppositions.

The Berlin Senate had invited to a discussion, on September 28, 2023, about the current planning status of the S-Bahn route, which is to be laid below the monument to the murdered Sinti and Roma of Europe, where a subway line already runs.

The representative of Deutsche Bahn explained in this conversation that after several years of examining 50 routes, only the presented variant 12h is up for discussion as the only feasible one, which - after renewed assurance of Deutsche Bahn - will explicitly not restrict the access of visitors to the memorial even during the planned construction measures.

Since the beginning of the talks in 2020, the Central Council had called on Deutsche Bahn and the Berlin Senate to examine all possibilities for a route that would not affect the monument. In these talks, however, the Central Council has also stated to the Berlin Senate, Deutsche Bahn and the German Bundestag that if there are no other alternatives for the routing after all examinations, the Central Council will not close its mind to talks to find a joint solution for this important transport project for Berlin, as the Central Council already stated in a statement in May 2021.

"The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma recognizes the necessity of the construction project of the new S-Bahn line, which is important for the infrastructure and for millions of people in Berlin. As German Sinti and Roma, we consider ourselves a natural section of the German population and this country. That is why it is also important for the Central Council that a solution is found here, together, with the railroad, the Senate and the German Bundestag in the interest of all," said Central Council Chairman Romani Rose.

"The public discussion must not lead to Sinti and Roma being blamed for the failure of this important project in Berlin and right-wing extremists and nationalists using this

propagandistically for their antigypsyist hatred. The Central Council warns against an emotional discussion in the public eye about the failure of the important transport infrastructure in our country being carried out on the backs of our minority. The board of the Central Council sees itself here in the political responsibility for the security of our minority and for a common future," said Romani Rose.

As a condition of its approval, the Central Council expects Deutsche Bahn and the Berlin Senate to obtain expert opinions in the further planning process to ensure that the tunnel route of the S-Bahn will not lead to any vibrations at the site of the monument.

According to the plans available to the Central Council, 5 or 6 trees on the site of the monument would have to be felled in the construction process. However, it should be noted that the ensemble designed by Dani Karavan will be restored in its entire perception with the trees, through new plantings - even with already larger trees. The Central Council expects the Berlin Senate to present the free planning design reports, which have already been announced by the Senate and the railroad in 2021.

The Central Council feels deeply connected to the artist Dani Karavan and appreciates the design of the monument created by him, which is recognized worldwide. The Central Council has made it clear to the Berlin Senate and the railroad that the artistic design of Dani Karavan must not be violated.

Thus, Dani Karavan stated in this regard in a joint press release with the Central Council in July 2020: "Protection and preservation of the monument is the first priority, we need to know exactly what is planned here. The monument is not the Black Basin alone, it is the entire site. Only when we see what is concretely planned, we can say how we deal with the requirements. Any intervention in the monument must be coordinated with the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and with me as the artist responsible."

Dani Karavan also signalled his willingness to find a solution in a letter to the Central Council in February 2021. In doing so, he considered relocating the access shaft underneath the monument if it is ensured that the ceremony of the daily changing of the wildflower in the centre of the monument can continue without interruption and if the monument is fully restored.

The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma has now asked Berlin Senator Schreiner and Senator Chialo, as the responsible commissioners of this important transport project for Berlin, for a public clarification in order to objectify the discussion and counteract the misrepresentations.