



75<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
2 August 2019

# European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day

Press Release

## **Jesse Jackson at the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day on 2 August in 2019 at Auschwitz-Birkenau**

Heidelberg, Germany 16 July 2019 – On 2 August 2019 the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day will be commemorated at the memorial site in Auschwitz–Birkenau. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the murder of the remaining Sinti and Roma in Auschwitz–Birkenau. Rev. Jesse L. Jackson Sr. and Romani Rose call in their speeches to condemn the increasing racism, antigypsyism and antisemitism in Europe and worldwide and to work consistently for the rule of law and democracy.

In 2015, the **European Parliament** declared the 2 August as the "European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day" to commemorate the 500,000 Sinti and Roma murdered in Nazi-occupied Europe.

Every year, the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and the Roma Association in Poland in cooperation with the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum commemorate the persecution and murder of Sinti and Roma during National Socialism with an international commemoration ceremony at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial for Sinti and Roma. This year, the Auschwitz survivors Else Baker and Éva Fahidi-Puztai will speak on behalf of the victims.

The commemoration will be attended by Holocaust survivors from several countries, as well as high-level representatives of governments, delegations of parliamentarians, representatives of international organizations and the civil society.

From March 1943 to July 1944, the National Socialists deported thousands Roma and Sinti from eleven European countries to the German concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, of which almost all were murdered there. On August 2, 1944, the last remaining 4.200-4.300 Sinti and Roma in camp section BIIe were killed. Various accounts speak of attempts of resistance on that day, as well as of a resistance against a first planned liquidation of the camp in April-May 1944.

### **Award Ceremony for the Special Prize of the European Civil Rights Prize of Sinti and Roma**

The director of the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński will be awarded the Special Prize of the European Civil Rights Prize of Sinti and Roma on the evening of 1 August. He will receive the distinction for his tireless efforts to keep alive the memory of the genocide of the Sinti and Roma at the memorial site of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Prize is donated by Dr. h.c. Manfred Lautenschläger, a long-time supporter of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma.

The award ceremony will take place as part of the evening event along with the **concert of the Roma and Sinti Philharmonic Orchestra**. The orchestra with its musical director Riccardo M Sahiti has set itself the task of preserving the musical heritage of the Roma.

### Jesse Jackson

The Rev. Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr., founder and president of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, is one of America's foremost civil rights, religious and political figures. A close companion to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rev. Jackson has played a pivotal role in virtually every movement for empowerment, peace, civil rights, gender equality, and economic and social justice since the 1960's. A two-time presidential candidate, Rev. Jackson has led massive voter-registration drives across the South. He was at the forefront of the fight to free South Africa and has traveled the world on missions of mercy, setting hundreds of captives free. On August 9, 2000, President Bill Clinton awarded Rev. Jackson the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. A hallmark of Rev. Jackson's work has been his commitment to youth. He has visited thousands of high schools, colleges, universities and correctional facilities encouraging excellence, inspiring hope and challenging young people to study diligently and stay drug free.

### Else Baker

Else Baker was born in 1935 in Hamburg. After her birth, Else was adopted by Auguste and Emil Matulat. As Else's biological mother was categorised as "gypsy" by the Nazis, Else was taken by the Gestapo to the Hamburger Freihafen in March 1943. She was supposed to be transported to Auschwitz - Birkenau with other 328 Sinti und Roma, but her adoptive father managed to get her released. In April 1944 she was taken by the Gestapo again and sent to Auschwitz, where she met four of her biological siblings. She survived several months in Auschwitz thanks to an older Roma woman, Wanda Fischer. On 2 August 1944 she was transported to Ravensbrück with one of her biological sisters. All her other siblings were murdered in Auschwitz. Else's adoptive father constantly struggled to release her, risking his own life. After writing many letters and visiting offices his courageous attempt was successful and he was allowed to take Else home from Ravensbrück in September 1944. Else Baker immigrated to Britain in 1963, and in 2005 she was the first Sinti woman received in audience by the British Queen on the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz Extermination Camp.

### Éva Fahidi-Pusztai

Éva Fahidi was deported with her family after the occupation of Hungary by the Wehrmacht on 27 June 1944 from Debrecen to Auschwitz-Birkenau. While the SS murdered her mother and sister in the gas chambers, in mid-August Éva Fahidi was taken to forced labor together with other Hungarian Jewish women in the Münchmühle concentration camp in Hessian Allendorf. Éva Fahidi-Pusztai lives in Budapest today. Her personal memories of the Holocaust were first published in 2004. A year later, a considerably expanded edition appeared in Hungarian. Already on her arrival in Auschwitz-Birkenau on 1 July 1944, Éva Fahidi was confronted with the inhumane conditions under which the Sinti and Roma had to live in Section BIIe. Her descriptions are an important testimony to the murder of the remaining 4,200-4,300 Sinti and Roma on the night of 2 to 3 August 1944.

### "DIKH HE NA BISTER!" - International Youth Remembrance Event

DIKH HE NA BISTER ("Look and don't forget" in Romani) – the Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative brings together 500 young Roma and non-Roma from over 25 countries on the occasion of the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day to advance remembrance, recognition and education about the Roma Genocide. The 6-days lasting event (29.7.-04.08.) in Krakow and Auschwitz is a space of learning about the past, as well as of reflection about the role of young people in Holocaust remembrance. DIKH HE NA BISTER empowers young people in their struggle for justice and equality, and against antigypsyism and all forms of racism and nationalism in Europe today. DIKH HE NA BISTER was founded by ternYpe International Roma Youth Network and its member and partner organizations in 2010; it is co-organized with the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma and in cooperation with the Council of Europe.

### Accreditation

Marius Lüdicke will gladly be at your disposal for accreditation and further inquiries ([marius.luedicke@sintiundroma.de](mailto:marius.luedicke@sintiundroma.de)).

Additional information can be found at <https://zentralrat.de/en/2august>

### Interviews

The commemoration on 2 August will be attended by the few elderly people who have survived the genocide of the Sinti and Roma. This event is of great importance to them and their relatives, because it honors them and their fate. On prior request we can arrange interviews with some of the survivors as well as with the speakers and participating institutions.

Thomas Baumann is available for your interview requests ([thomas.baumann@sintiundroma.de](mailto:thomas.baumann@sintiundroma.de)).

The activities in the framework of the remembrance day are kindly supported and co-financed by

## Program

### 1 August 2019

- Attention:** at 17.00 there is a moment of silence and commemoration of the Warsaw Uprising
- Venue:** Auditorium Maximum
- 19.00-20.00 Welcome of international delegations and representatives
- 20.00-22.00 **Concert in memory of the Sinti and Roma murdered 75 years ago**  
 Roma and Sinti Philharmonic Orchestra
- Recognition of Dr. Piotr Cywinski**, Director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, with the special award of the European Civil Rights Prize of Sinti and Roma
- 22.00 Reception

### 2 August 2019

- Venue:** Auschwitz I – State Museum
- 08.30-10.00 only for invited institutional representatives and media
- Meeting at Auschwitz I with Museum Director Piotr Cywinski**  
 Official welcome at the Museum (conference room in Block 12)  
 Guided visit of Block 13 (Roma and Sinti), Block 27 (Shoah) and main exhibition  
 Entry into Guest Book of the Auschwitz Museum
- 10.15 Departure to Birkenau
- Venue:** Birkenau, camp section B II e
- 09.00-10.30 Arrival/welcome of the guests for the commemoration
- 10.00 Start of reading of names by Roma youth (in section B II e)**
- 10.00-10.30 Entrance of the guests, walk to memorial, guests are seated
- 10.30 Arrival of VIP delegations in Birkenau, welcome of guests by organizers
- 10.40 Walk to Sinti and Roma memorial
- 10.50 Arrival at memorial: meet the survivors and VIPs
- 11.00-12.15 Commemoration ceremony: address of survivors and Jesse Jackson**
- 12.15-12.45 Commemoration: ceremony of wreaths and flowers**
- 13.00 Walk from the memorial to the entrance/parking
- 13.15 Transfer to Centre for Dialogue and Prayer (2-3 km)
- Venue:** Centre for Dialogue and Prayer
- 13.00 **Lunch and Reception**, hosted by Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, and the Association of Roma in Poland in cooperation with the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau
- 14.30 **Commemoration ceremony: Speeches by international organizations, parliamentary and governmental representatives**
- 15.30 end of the political part
- 16.00-20.00 Option 1: visit of the Roma Museum in Oswiecim
- 16.00-20.00 Option 2: visit of Auschwitz Museum, in particular block 13
- Venue:** International Youth Meeting Centre in Oswiecim
- 16.00-19.00 International youth event “Dikh He Na Bister”, meeting of young 500 Roma with Holocaust survivors