



The following is a joint press release from the Conference of European Churches and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe.

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Porajmos: Remembering Roma lives lost during World War II

Today, 2 August, marks Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, commemorating the extermination of more than 3,000 Roma children, men, and women at Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944. On this day the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) recall this event, honour the memory of those who died, and encourage all to work for reconciliation with the 10 to 12 million Roma people living in Europe.

Throughout World War II, Roma were subject to widespread imprisonment and murder. These genocidal events are part of a long history of persecution of and violence against Roma people in Europe. Today, Roma continue to experience discrimination and marginalisation across the continent. They are targets of hate speech and crimes, and too often children are still put in segregated classes or schools.

“Remembering the Roma lives lost at Auschwitz and the persecution during the Nazi-regime is critical. Recognising injustice done is a very first step in our work for reconciliation,” remarked CCME General Secretary Doris Peschke. CCME recently joined the Alliance against Antigypsyism, to help combat prejudice against Roma people and to promote their social inclusion.

“Some seventy years after Porajmos, the Roma Holocaust, circumstances are still unacceptably difficult for Roma people in Europe,” added Fr Heikki Huttunen, general secretary of CEC. “We must be conscious of this European-wide injustice and the shameful fact how difficult it has been for us to even recognise the Porajmos. In this time when new and old prejudices are being invoked and hate speech often replaces reason, we in the churches must be more active than ever in our service for the dignity and human rights of the Roma. Our mission is to work for a Europe that is a safe and nurturing

home for all its inhabitants."

The European Roma and Travellers' Forum (ERTF) calls on Europeans to observe a moment of silence at noon in memory of the Roma victims. CEC and CCME encourage all to join in this action. In April 2015, the European Parliament voted with an overwhelming majority to adopt 2 August as Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day.

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The Conference of European Churches (CEC) is a fellowship of some 114 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican and Old Catholic Churches from all countries of Europe, plus 40 national council of churches and organisations in partnership. CEC was founded in 1959. It has offices in Brussels and Strasbourg.

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. Members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches and Councils of Churches as well as church-related agencies in presently 18 European countries. CCME cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.

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