



INTERNATIONAL  
**HOLOCAUST  
REMEMBRANCE**  
ALLIANCE



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## **Hate Speech and Antigypsyism in the Media Conference**

### **Closing Remarks**

I would like to express my sincerest thanks to all the organizers – ERIAC, the Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Team, and the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma – for putting together this conference on such an important topic. My name is Michaela KÜchler and I am the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance – the IHRA – under the German Presidency.

Antigypsyism is not new. Indeed, it is centuries old. And during the Second World War, it came to a head, as antigypsyism became an essential element of the persecution and annihilation policies against Roma perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. Despite great efforts, the stereotypes and prejudices about Roma have not been delegitimized or discredited vigorously enough. Unfortunately, they can still be deployed largely unchallenged. This continued widespread acceptance of antigypsyism is linked, in part, to the long existing neglect of this history. Still today, this history remains under-researched and often downplayed. I would therefore like to speak briefly about how remembrance and awareness-raising tools are central to countering antigypsyism.

We must remember the genocide of Roma. We must acknowledge that the neglect of this genocide has contributed to the prejudice and discrimination that many Roma communities still experience today. This was underlined in the 2020 IHRA Ministerial Declaration and the IHRA's 34 Member Countries share a commitment to doing so. Its neglect only works to support its denial and distortion. Commemoration of the genocide means above all, remembering and honoring the victims and survivors. This is not the task solely of Roma communities, but of all of society, including especially, the political level.

In remembering this genocide under National Socialism, we must also draw attention to the prejudices against Roma and Sinti during and after the Second World War. We must show that, then as now, such exclusionary attitudes both affect the targeted minority while threatening the basic democratic values of society as a whole. Commemoration cannot take the form of an empty ritual. It should help us uphold the democratic principles that form the basis of our societies. This means that adequate policies should also work to support remembrance activities of Roma and Sinti civil society. Remembrance can help strengthen identity. And those who feel strengthened in their identity will feel emboldened to face the challenges of the present head on.

Of course, commemoration is not enough. We must also support research and education programs about the genocide of Roma and about antigypsyism more generally. That is, we must work to raise awareness. I would therefore like to point to two important tools which can help with this work.

In October of last year, the IHRA's 34 Member Countries adopted by consensus a working definition of antigypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination. Though non-legally binding, it can serve as a practical tool in helping to understand antigypsyism and the various ways it can manifest itself. We know that this phenomenon is pervasive in our societies, but that all too often it is left unchallenged. The working definition lists examples, which can also help in identifying cases of hate speech and antigypsyism in the media, for instance. Importantly, the working definition can help raise awareness of this phenomenon in the process. After all, problems that can be identified are harder to ignore.

The IHRA has supported research to safeguard the record of the genocide of Roma and education efforts for many years and will continue to do so. Currently, the IHRA and its Committee on the Genocide of the Roma are also producing teaching guidelines that will provide proper access to this usually widely neglected part of history.

Together, remembrance, research and education can help chip away at the persistent scourge of antigypsyism and its toxic acceptance. Conferences like this one show that we are moving in the right direction. There is indeed the sense that governments, institutions and individuals are – finally – beginning to wake up. A broader coalition is being built around the issue of countering antigypsyism, and this should give us some room for cautious optimism. After all, action in this area is critical, for the future of Roma communities, and the viability of democratic societies around the world.